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February 2016



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Scottish Church Census – 8 May 2016

Save the date!

8 May, 2016 is the day on which your congregation is invited to be part of the Scottish Church Census. Every local congregation across Scotland, in every denomination and none, can be part of this comprehensive study of church-going in Scotland.

The Scottish Church Census will focus primarily on church attendance, both on Sunday and mid-week, asking for numbers by age and gender. With the changes in modern lifestyles, there will also be space to find out how often people come. Mid-week activities are becoming more important, and one section will deal with attendance at worship, and other activities outside of Sundays. The two-page questionnaire finishes with some sponsored questions of particular interest to researchers from charities or universities.

The answers from all the congregations will be able to be compared with each other and with previous Scottish Church Census results, so for example it will be possible to identify how far people travel to church, or whether people attend mid-week services more often than they were fourteen years ago in the 2002 Census.

How can your congregation be part of the Census?

Census Sunday is May 8 2016. Shortly before this, the minister of each local church will receive a two-page questionnaire along with clear instructions on how to complete it. About half of the questions deal with general things about the congregation, for example the denomination, when the congregation started, and involvement with certain charities.

On May 8, count the number of people attending worship, from those in the crèche to your most senior worshippers. There are lots of ways of doing this, from a visual count to sticky dots on a sheet, different colours of 'tickets', or you can use the pre-printed slips that will come with your Census form. People can complete them and hand them in during or after the service. If you use the pre-printed slips then they can just be returned to the researchers, or complete the full questionnaire form.

As soon as possible after May 8, the questionnaire should be returned using the reply envelope provided. The researchers, Brierley Consultancy, will then computerise and analyse the data. All congregations who take part in the Scottish Church Census will receive a short report on its findings, and if you've said that you are willing to have the congregation postcode and results used in research, you'll receive your updated demographic and deprivation statistics as soon as possible after this date.



For more information about being counted in the Scottish Church Census, please see www.scottishchurchcensus.com



Postcards fail to tell the whole story

For many in Scotland their image of Dunoon is of a picture postcard town, where relatively wealthy people have holiday homes or retire. However this is not the full picture of the town with a broader demographic than the past.

In recent years Dunoon Baptist Church has identified a relevant, unmet and pressing need for young people locally. Whether due to budgetary pressures or other priorities, activity funded by the local authority to engage with its young people appears at best to be extremely limited. There is a growing sense of disillusionment among many of the teenagers with a distinct lack of facilities and opportunities for them in the area.

Currently the church youth group attracts over 60 teenagers on a Friday evening. On top of that there could be up to 15 teenagers attending the Sunday morning service. For the church this represents a great challenge and encouragement in equal measure.

The church has a real heart to reach out in Christ's name to the youth of the town, something they have been seeking to do for the last 20 years. The church has recently purchased a piece of land adjacent to the church building on which they hope to construct a purpose built building primarily for the benefit of young people.

Their application for funds from the Ministry Resource Fund to support a youth worker fits perfectly with the vision of the church and will bring significant benefit to the community. It is anticipated that the role of the youth worker would be to build bridges with the young people with an emphasis on providing a safe place for young people, running appropriate clubs and activities that will be fun as well as giving opportunities to learn life skills and explore the Christian faith. The financing of a youth worker will come through a combination of church giving, a three year grant from the Robertson Trust and our Ministry Resource Fund.

Refugee Crisis Response

When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:33-34

As we continue to pray regularly for all those who find themselves wandering this world in search of a safe home, a place of peace and where life can be lived with dignity, the refugee crisis continues with millions in Europe and the Middle East facing the winter weather living in refugee camps and by roadsides.

At the Baptist Union of Scotland council meeting in September 2015 it was decided that an offering should be gathered to support churches that were engaging with refugee crisis throughout Europe. The offering was gathered initially at the Assembly and then more widely from Baptist Churches around Scotland.

To date we have received approx. £25,000 for this appeal. Just before Christmas we were able, on your behalf, to send £8500 to both BMS World Mission and to the European Baptist Federation for distribution to Unions in Europe who are facing the challenge of migration on a daily basis. You can read some of the stories from the projects you have supported on our website www.scottishbaptist.com

The remaining £8000 is now available for use in Scottish Baptist Churches that are engaging in refugee projects. We are inviting churches, working directly with refugees, to write in before February 29th with a description of the work being undertaken, the financial cost to the church and a request for funding support.



In what ways do Scottish Baptists take the Bible seriously?

I've enjoyed the short BBC series "My Mediterranean with Adrian Chiles", as he explores the relationship between the three monotheistic faiths present in the Mediterranean region. It has allowed me to look afresh at how many view the concept of religion in the world, and how we as evangelicals come across in a pluralistic world. One of the men interviewed in the programme stated, "Evangelicals take the Bible more seriously, they read it, believe it and try to live by it." It is a bold statement to say that you take the Bible more seriously in one tradition of the church over another.

So here's two questions from me at the start of this year: In what ways do Scottish Baptists take the Bible seriously? How might we increase our engagement with it in 2016?



Is it simply about how much time we spend reading it? A few years ago, along with over fifty other members of the local church, I completed the Bible in a year. Many will have started the New Year with this intention. Can I encourage you to keep going, as I found it truly inspirational and a great way of engaging with the wider messages of the Scriptures? Taking less time to read than a TV soap or daily news broadcast, we travelled together, discussing the Scriptures when we met as well as online, and together we rejoiced when God used it to speak to us, including my calling to serve as your General Director.

In the past week, I have looked at how much personal Bible Reading is actually encouraged within our evangelical circles and compared it with other traditions of the church, and it doesn't look good! The average daily reading plan produced by evangelical organisations has significantly more words written by a human author in the last year than the enduring word of God. What does this tell us? Might we have lost confidence in the ability of the word of God to speak to us alone? Other reading plans used in other Christian traditions appear to hold a discipline of simply listening to the word of God. For example, the Anglican app, "Daily Prayer", suggested for my morning reading 4 Psalms, 2 gospel readings, 1 reading from Genesis and another from the prophets. And for evening devotions it suggests readings from the Psalms, the prophets, the gospels, the epistles and the book of Revelation. And if I wake in the night, 3 short Scripture readings will see me through to morning.

But it is not all about quantity in private devotion. We believe in the gathering of believers together to read the Scriptures, to hear the word of God; to listen to what it has to say to us and to those gifted to preach, teach and prophesy. So how much listening to the written word of God is happening in our churches? The established churches have a rich tradition of liturgy and will include at least an Old and New Testament reading in every service, often of quite some length. Within our own less formal approach to worship, there is still the tendency to include a reading of Scripture somewhere in the service but the quantity seems to

be diminishing. It may be the result of the importance we generally place on exegetical preaching, which may mean the sermon is focusing on just a few words of Scripture. It may be because our modern style of worship has drawn us away from using Scripture as a call to worship, or reminder of the revelation of the God we worship. Often hidden away in the sermon, mixed with our human words or read immediately before the sermon, it can come across as the prelude to the main event.

Those who know me well will also expect me to say something at this point about how much of the Bible is heard by children who come to church. My great concern is that in many of our churches, the answer may be none. They are taught the stories of the Bible in their Sunday groups without ever hearing the actual biblical account and any Bible reading that does happen in the service is often once they are gone. "Evangelicals take the Bible seriously"? Of course they do, our commitment to preaching is clear evidence of that. We are also good at beating each other up about lack of devotion, lack of prayer and lack of Bible reading. Many carry burdens of guilt about the quality of their "quiet time" and I do not want to add to that burden. However, I do want to encourage us to examine our corporate practices and to consider how we might grow the amount of direct Bible engagement we experience when we gather for worship in 2016, finding creative ways of allowing the word of God to dwell richly among us.



Rev Alan Donaldson

General Director

Baptist Union of Scotland

January Prayer Link

February 7th

John Craib (Chaplain, HMP Low Moss)

Give thanks for a Muslim Senegalese prisoner who has decided to follow Jesus and is going to be baptised soon. Please pray for the group meeting to explore the life of Joseph and the lessons we can gain from his story for our lives.



Bourtreehill Baptist Church

Praise: Thank God for the continued provision of finance to fund our ongoing community project. Praise God for the successful completion of an Alpha course. Thank God for the faithfulness and the commitment of the members.

Pray: Pray for the church as we seek to put into

practice our theme for the year 'Reflect the Image'. Pray that the contacts we have made in a socially deprived area will become disciples of Jesus. Pray that we may obtain the finance for work that needs to be done on the church building.

Brae Baptist Church

Praise for the strong faith of our fellowship.

Prayer for future leadership as I retire at end of May.

God bless you all and thank you for keeping this most northerly outpost of our Baptist community in your prayers.

February 14th

Philip Craven (Chaplain, Inverclyde Royal Hospital, Greenock)

Praise point: Hospital chaplaincy is a privilege. Praise God that I have the honour to walk with those who struggle, talk with those who despair, and rejoice with those who recover.

Prayer point: Pray for the work of my chaplaincy colleagues, that we might be sustained emotionally, physically, and spiritually through the often difficult situations we find ourselves called to minister to.

Bridge of Don Baptist Church

We are deeply thankful to God for the obviously encouraging ways our church's ministry is extending to an increasing number of people, particularly in the local area. We have received great feedback from many following our recent Advent activities such as Toddlers' Nativity Service, School Services, other children's and family events, as well as our Christmas and New Year Services. We would really appreciate you joining with us in praying that God's Kingdom will continue to become known by these folks. Please also pray for our own church family as we worship the Lord and serve Him before others. There is a tangible sense that some of our hard-working members are tired. Please pray that we will know the encouragement of continuing to meet regularly together on Sundays and at other times and, as we do, that we will be strengthened by the presence of the Holy Spirit who reminds us of Jesus where true rest can be found.

Bristo Baptist Church

We give thanks to God for the great success of all our 250th Anniversary events in 2015. They were all well attended and we had great opportunities to make new friends and deepen relationships. Please pray for the new outreach initiatives that will begin soon: a Men's Breakfast, a Songs & Stories Toddler Group and an English Conversation Class.



Broughty Ferry Baptist Church
building a Christ centred church

Praise: Very encouraged over Christmas with people new to church attending services together with professions of faith

Prayer: The church took a decision in December to extend our Panmurefield premises; pray for all that is involved in carrying through a major building project.



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February 21st

Broxburn Baptist Church

Buckhaven Baptist Church



Thank God for the faithful members and adherents of Buckie Baptist. Please pray God will be glorified in all we do as a church.

Please pray as we seek God to provide for a part time youth worker. Our aim is the youth worker will continue to build on the good relationships built in the local high school and primary school.

Thank God for a baptism on the 7th february. This has been a encouragement to the wider congregation. Lastly praise God he has been so faithful to us as a church.

February 28th

Leslie Edge (Chaplain, Prince & Princess of Wales Hospice)



a community ignited
by a passion for God

We praise God for His leading in calling us to release the Rev Mark Morris with his wife Pauline to replant Dennistoun Baptist Church and the commitment shown by the two Churches to see great things for God's Glory.

We ask that you would pray for wisdom here at Calderwood as we seek to accommodate growth in a restricted building and as we consider launching a Social Enterprise scheme to build on our Community Care work.

