

FREE

Feb 2020 - April 2020



# BLOOMSBURY NEWS

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## SUNDAY SERVICE at 11.00 am

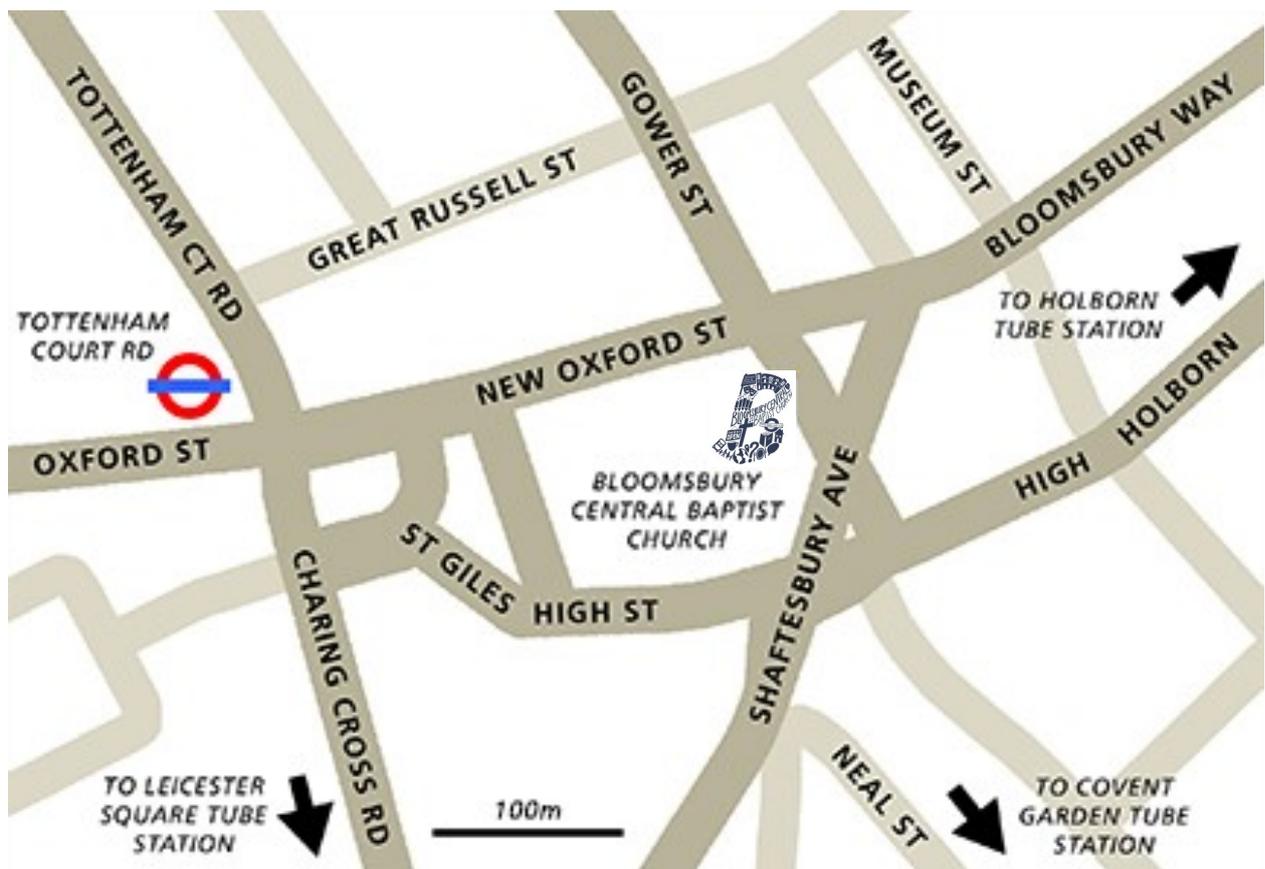
Followed by coffee and an affordable lunch at 12.30 pm

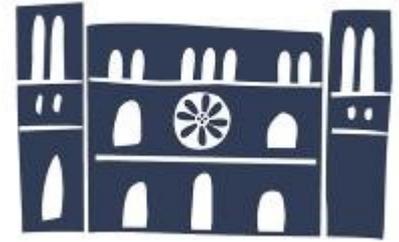
Minister

Revd Dr Simon Woodman

Communities Minister

Revd Dawn Cole-Savidge





## Bloomsbury's Team:



### **Minister: The Revd Dr Simon Woodman.**

Simon grew up in Sevenoaks in Kent, and has degrees in Biblical Studies from Sheffield, Bristol and Cardiff Universities. He has previously been a market stall-holder on Camden Market, a Baptist Minister in Bristol, and a Tutor at the South Wales Baptist College in Cardiff.

### **Communities Minister: The Revd Dawn Cole-Savidge.**

Dawn is pioneering new relationships and projects in the local area and developing the ones we already have. She oversees and develops work with those affected by homelessness.



### **Church Manager: James Fisher.**

James is responsible for everything to do with the building, including the letting of rooms, up keep of our beautiful grade 2 listed church, and supporting the ministry that takes place here.

### **Duty Lettings Officer: Solvita Šmulytė.**

Solvita will often be found on the front desk giving a warm welcome to visitors to the building.



### **Designated Person for Safeguarding: Libby Brown.**

Libby leads our safeguarding team which also includes: Safeguarding Trustee Luke Dowding; Deputy Safeguarding Trustee; Nyaueth Riam, and Deputy Designated Person; Dermott Davison.

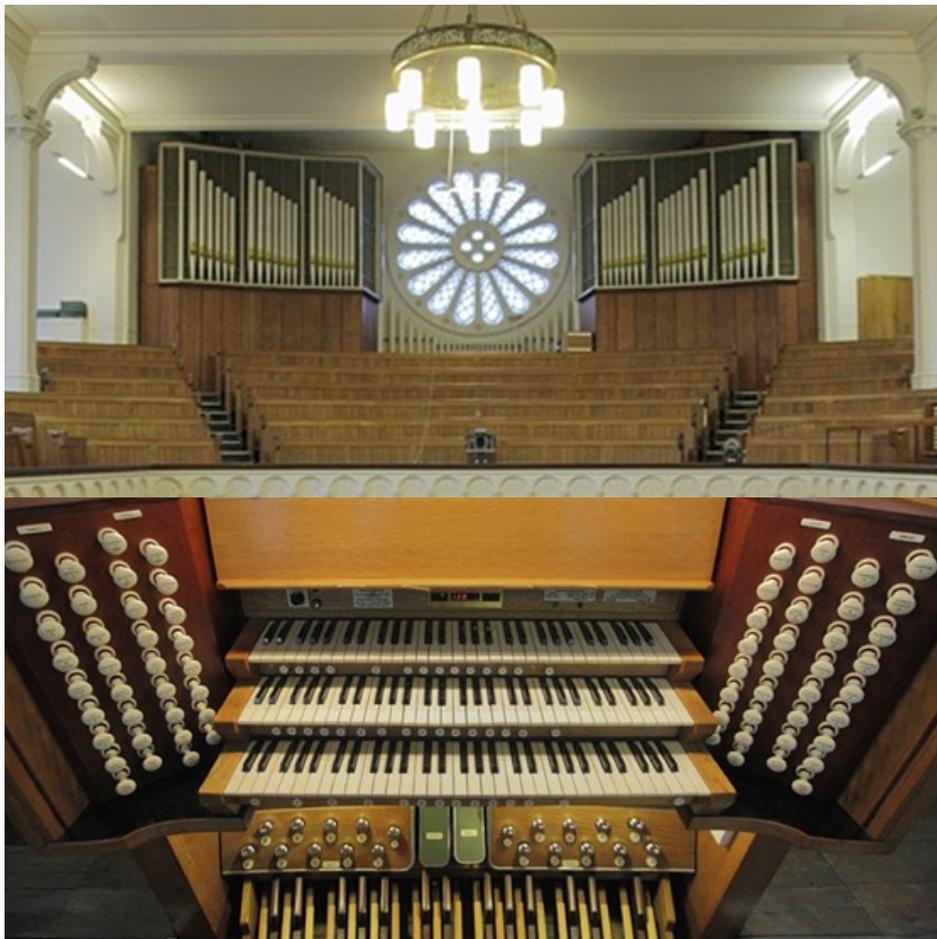


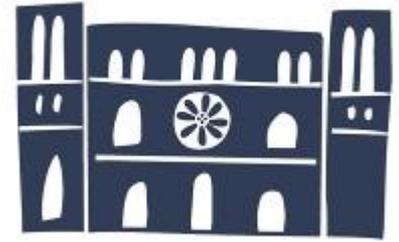
## Organ Music at Bloomsbury

Since the installation of the JJ Binns / Shepherd Organ in 2008 and the launch of the Saturday Afternoon Buffet Concerts in 2009, organ-based activities have featured strongly in the musical life of the church.

Our Sunday morning worship regularly uses the 'Bloomsbury Beast' (as our organ has become known) to accompany worship, played by our organist and musical director Mr Philip Luke.

In addition to regular Saturday recitals, we have links with various organisations including: Philip Norman Music Services (through the Organ days and Small Choirs Festivals; the London Festival of Contemporary Church Music; the London Organ Improvisation Course; the inaugural concert by OCSO (The Organ Club Students' Organisation) and the RCO St Giles Summer Course for Organists.





## Who are we at Bloomsbury?

The term ***Baptist*** is used to describe a broad variety of churches and people, and will mean different things in different parts of the world.



Perhaps one common belief is that, rather than being 'Christened' into the faith as an infant, Baptists hold that people should commit to Christ by their own conscious decision.

Whilst recognising that people come to Christ in a variety of ways, here at Bloomsbury, "baptism" emphasises above all else, the importance of personal commitment to Christ.

Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church was built on this Central London site in 1848, to bring together the wealthy and literary classes of Bloomsbury with the slum dwellings and poverty of St Giles in the name of Christ.

This says something of what the church still aims to be: a place where the use of gifts and resources benefits all; the coming together of those with the hunger for justice, the celebration of diversity, the hope of worshipping Christ amidst poverty and wealth.





## Minister's Notes

I've tried (but failed) to avoid using the cliché "2020 Vision" at the start of our first Bloomsbury News of the new decade. The reason I've failed is because one of the tasks before the first Bloomsbury Church Meeting of the Twenties was to sign off our new church Vision Statement: 'Provoking Faith in the Heart of London'. It's good - it's punchy - it's very Bloomsbury. We have arrived at this through a process of listening exercises, where as a church we tried to put our hopes and dreams for Bloomsbury into words, and you can read more of the outcome (along with our new Mission and Values Statements) in this issue of the Bloomsbury News.

But statements of intent will only get us so far... the harder task is still before us, which is to take decisions, both corporately and personally, that will bring our vision for Bloomsbury into being. If they serve us well, our new statements will keep our decision making about buildings, resources, and activities focussed firmly on the 'main thing', which is our discerned sense of what kind of community God is calling Bloomsbury to be.

As the years have passed, my once-perfect eyesight has started to deteriorate, and I now have to hold things at arm's length to read them; but taking this as a metaphor rather than just a sign of ageing, the ability to focus on the longer perspective is no bad thing. Sometimes we get so caught up with the stuff that is in front of our noses that we miss where we have come from, and where we are going. So a process of reflection, as a church, on who we have been and where we have come from, to inform our decision about who we will be and where we are going, is no bad thing.

I hope you are inspired by the words that we have used to express our hopes for Bloomsbury. But I'd like to leave you with a personal challenge: take a few moments to reflect on the last decade of your life - think about your relationships, your spiritual growth, the things you have done with your time and your resources, and then write your own personal 'vision statement', and offer it as a prayer to God for the future.

Simon.

# Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, 2020

## Mission Statement

Our mission is to discern God's loving and inclusive will:

we nurture faith and build community,

we confront injustice, create sanctuary, and deepen relationships.

## Vision Statement

Provoking faith in the heart of London.

## Values Statement

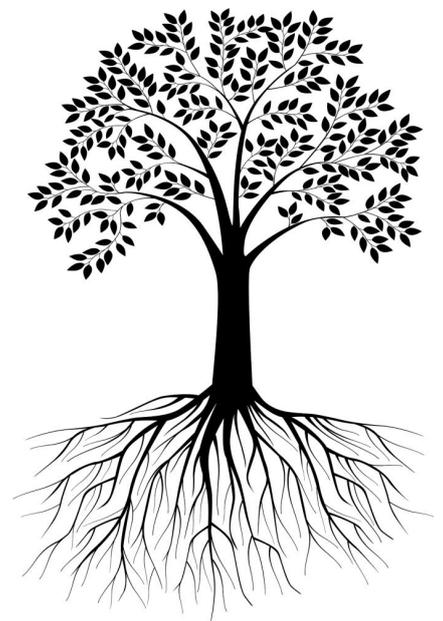
We strive to be:

Radically Christ-centred, proactively inclusive, empowering with justice;

dissenting yet faithful, thoughtful and reflective, relevant and outward looking;

diverse yet focussed, courageous and loving, hospitable and generous;

imaginative and risk-taking.



# CHURCH FAMILY NEWS



## Changes to the Diaconate

We are glad to welcome Fifi Oliver Evelyn, Howard Brown and Matthew Streeter as deacons. **Philip Cotterell** takes over as Treasurer from Howard Brown who has retired from the job after 20 years. We wish Howard a fulfilling and happy retirement.

### Matthew Streeter



I has been around Bloomsbury Central London Baptist Church since 1981, the son of Geoff and Sarah, I was dedicated here at Bloomsbury. We lived in Sunningdale where I was baptised.

During my time as a student in Birmingham I attended Bloomsbury less frequently but once back in the South East for employment I became involved in the kitchen rota again. My role in the kitchen developed and through the arm twisting of Maurice I became one of the lead cooks. During this time I served a two year period as the facilities lead on the PCC of the local Anglican church that both Mum and I attended.

In 2014 I moved from Sunningdale and found a local church plant that met fortnightly, it seemed natural to me that the other weeks I would attend Bloomsbury. This led to membership at Bloomsbury and feeling more at home here.

My nature is to service and support others' vision, This is normally expressed through the practical out working such as the kitchen, the facilities team and my Engineering profession. As such I look forward to supporting Simon, Dawn, the church officers, my fellow Deacons and the members over the coming years as we work through the Church vision and what that means for what we do.

# CHURCH FAMILY NEWS



## **Philip Cotterell**

I first came to Bloomsbury some time in 2011, when I'd recently moved to central London and was looking for a church. I first visited Bloomsbury because it was easy to reach on the Northern line and because it seemed likely to not have certain characteristics which I'd decided to avoid. The main reason I came a second time (and then a third, and etc.) after my first visit was that I was very impressed by the preaching of Ruth

Gouldbourne, a previous minister. I suppose the preaching at Bloomsbury is still the most significant thing for me, though individual ministers move on. I became a member in 2012 and was elected to the Diaconate in 2014.

What I admire and enjoy most about the church is that there is a commitment to putting our faith into practice in concrete and tangible ways. And it is a sanctuary from some harmful and destructive ways of being church.

My hope for the future of Bloomsbury is that, as the treasurer, inevitably I hope for the financial sustainability of the church and its ministries.

A memorable event at the church was my wedding! (A small part of which was conducted in Quenya; there are probably not too many ministers who would have embraced that idea.)



## **Fifi Oliver Evelyn**

Originally from the Highlands of Scotland, I came to London 8 years ago to pursue a career in fashion. I am a queer feminist artist and LGBTQI rights activist, so I didn't think I would ever find a church so welcoming and accepting as Bloomsbury.

An example I always use of how loving my congregation is comes from my Baptism 5 years ago, where the ministers Dawn and Simon made the water pink for me (my favourite colour)! I feel so at home here in this beautiful community and now so honoured to serve it and the church as a deacon!

# CHURCH FAMILY NEWS



## Births

From a very proud parent:

“On Thursday 19th December 2019, Dawn gave birth to a boy, Nova Micah Cole-Savidge, at 7:46am (5lb 4oz), and a girl, Ember Kirsty Cole-Savidge, at 7:47am (5lb) by Caesarean. We are overjoyed to welcome our wonderful twins into this world and can't wait to be the best parents we can be with the support of friends and family who have already gone above the call of duty in helping us get ready for this milestone in our lives.”



Dawn and Simon

## Deaths

**We remember friends who are coping with recent bereavements in their families, especially Ian, Dermott, Solomon and Win Vyvvan's sister**

### **Revd Douglas Sparkes:**

Members will remember Revd Douglas Sparkes who died on 1 January 2020 at the age of 92. He was a good friend and frequent worshipper at Bloomsbury. Douglas was Deputy General Secretary of the Baptist Union from 1982 – 1991 and a member of the BU Council until 2013. In retirement he and Doris were members at Datchet Baptist Church.

He had been in increasingly poor health over the last year and at the beginning of December had fallen and was taken into hospital and then moved to a care home shortly after Christmas. We remember Graham and the family at this time.

# CHURCH FAMILY NEWS



## Deaths (cont.)



### **Revd Keith Roberts:**

Friends gathered for a service of Thanksgiving following the death of Keith Roberts on 2 November 2019. Keith served as a Baptist Minister for many years. Latterly he supported Martin Taylor in their work in the area of mental health. Sadly Keith was diagnosed with dementia and spent his final years in a care home. He will be remembered for his ready beaming smile and his love of Wales.



### **Dr. Robert L. Doty: (always known as Bob)**

Dr Wesley Roberts from Campbellsville University USA writes:

“I'm saddened to inform you (and the church), that our mutual friend, suffered a massive heart attack in his office early this week and died on Wednesday January 8 2020. Bob taught English at Campbellsville College and University from 1973 until 2006. He was 84 years old and was looking forward to an upcoming mission trip in March where he was going to be the chaplain.”

He was a great personal friend of the late Seth Stevens and John Britt and visited Bloomsbury regularly. We remember Bob with great affection. He was a good man.

**Brenda Forward** died on November 17 2019. Brenda was a frequent visitor to Bloomsbury in her attendance at various LBA and BU committee meetings. She was married to Ernest who was a Baptist Minister. A service of committal was held on December 20 2019. A Thanksgiving Service was held on January 20 2020.

# CHURCH FAMILY NEWS



## **News from Afar (contributed by Faith Bowers)**

We had a greeting last week from Naivo, the Madagascan ophthalmic surgeon who was so grateful for Bloomsbury while spending an academic year on a course in London.

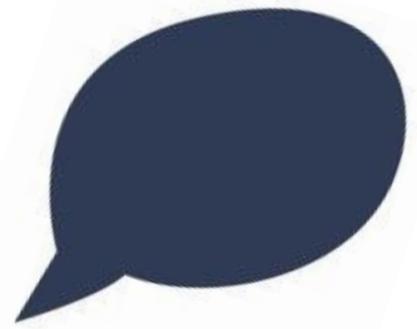
Those readers of Bloomsbury News will remember Naivo and Volana, and also that their elder son broke his spine in a beach accident. Naivo asked for our prayers. It seemed unlikely that Ntsoa would walk again, but in circumstances so improbable it seemed it must have been due to prayer, the surgeon was provided with all he needed to operate quickly and restore some limited control to the limbs. In spite of spending much of his final school year in hospital, Ntsoa passed the exams, learned to walk with crutches and went to college to study Agriculture .

Naivo's latest letter brought the amazing news that Ntsoa is now farming in a village 50 km from his parents, growing Tilapia fish, chickens and ducks, and planting 'litchi' trees (lychees?), mangos and sunflowers.

## **Pickering People by Dave Porter & illustrated by Jennifer Evans**

This is the final book in a twenty year project researching and recounting how and why his ancestors migrated from different parts of the UK to settle in Canada (and Australia). This volume focuses on several families living near Pickering, who chose to migrate to a single destination in Ontario Canada. During the 19th century over two dozen families followed their friends and neighbours hoping to find better lives for themselves.

# NEWS



## Overseas Women's Club



The Overseas Women's Club, so well described by Ruth in the remarks she made at the presentation on January 7 2020, ceased to function as a charity at the end of 2019. They chose to give the residue from the charity to Bloomsbury.

The picture shows Simon receiving the cheque from Elisabeth Campbell (Chair)

"Bloomsbury is indeed grateful for your charitable decision – I know it will be used wisely for those in distress.

The Overseas Women's Club was mooted by a small group of Bloomsbury members, I being one of them in 1958. Membership at the church was enormous with many nationalities. Companies were setting up their London Headquarters, thus principals of these companies came for several years with their wives and families.

We noticed that all the overseas members sat in their own groups. This we thought was sad. I suggested that a real English afternoon tea, which to my surprise was accepted. It worked wonders with people mixing and getting to know each other.

However, a new idea was suggested. Why not serve an inexpensive luncheon at which an interesting speaker would entertain and introduce them to the British way of life? This was where George Foss, Christine's husband, entered the scene. He was able to give Christine a wonderful list of potential speakers and so the Club grew into a truly cosmopolitan, international Club.

Among the most illustrious was the Queen Mother and Harold Wilson on the day he was elected Prime Minister. Christine was the driving force until age became an impediment when Loline Reed took over with her husband Ken.

They were marvellous hosts and they introduced us to a wide variety of new ambassadors and other VIP's.

Thank you."

Ruth Johnson

# REGULAR INFO

**PULL OUT PAGES TO KEEP FOR YOUR NOTICE BOARD!**

## **Sunday Worship**

Coffee available before the service

11am Morning Worship

**Studio Church** –Evening Service with Difference

6-7pm First Sunday in the month

## **Children & Young People**

During the morning service, young people gather in the foyer for their own activities.

## **Sunday Lunch**

You are welcome to join us for an affordable hot meal in the Friendship Centre at 12.30pm each Sunday.

## **Tuesdays @ Bloom**

Social activities for the active retired. Hot lunch (charged) Variety of talks, activities, board games on offer. Free coffee and opportunities to socialise.

## **Carer & Infant drop in**

A drop in for carers and pre-school children. 10.30am - 12.30pm alongside Tuesdays@Bloom.

## **Tuesday Art Group**

A supported art group for any ability from 1.30pm - 3.30pm running alongside Tues@ Bloom. Some materials provided.

## **Organ Concerts**

Take place on the last Saturday in each month. (except August).

For more info contact Philip Luke.

## **Small Groups**

Meet around the city and at the Church. Ask at the front desk for details.

## **The Evening Centre**

Operates every Tuesday.

## **Social Events**

Various events happen through the year. See the next page for upcoming dates.

# UPCOMING DATES

**Lent begins on Ash Wednesday  
26 February**

**Saturday 7 March .  
TWO:23 meeting at Bloomsbury**

**Sunday 5 April 2.00pm  
Church meeting**

**Thursday 9 April  
Maundy Thursday Meal**

**Good Friday 10 April  
Service at 10.30am**

**Easter Day 12 April  
Service at 11am**

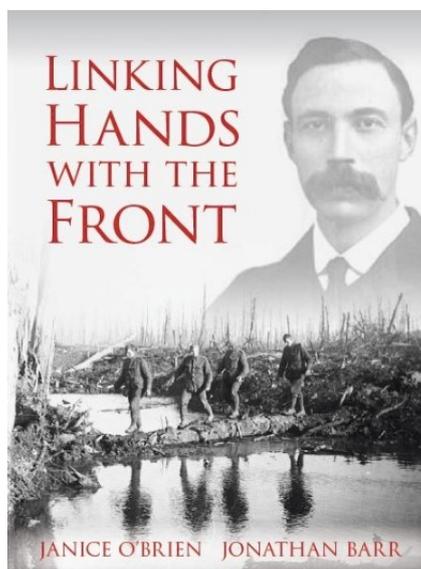
**8-10 May  
Baptist Assembly**



# BOOK REVIEW

*Linking Hands with the Front* is an account of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church in 1914 - 1918. Based on the church's magazines from the period, it tells the story of the "Bloomsbury Battalion's" service overseas and on the home front.

Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, has always attracted a diverse community of members and friends. In the years preceding the First World War, young men and women flocking



to the city for employment found within its walls a "home from home" and a church family.

With the outbreak of war Bloomsbury was immediately in the spotlight. The church's minister, Thomas Phillips was well-known as a pacifist who hated war but now he was confronted with the reality of seeing a substantial number of his congregation make the choice of how to respond to the crisis. Many joined the Royal Army Medical Corps, others the YMCA, but a substantial number took up arms. In December 1915 he wrote:

*"As to the number who have enlisted we are in danger of losing all count - there are over 300 connected with our different*

*societies and taking the men who have passed through Bloomsbury during the last ten years there must be over a thousand - that is there is a Bloomsbury battalion in the field."*

Gradually we were able to build biographies around a few of those names. They began to take on a new reality as we found out their personal stories. It was an emotional journey, as they had been part of a church where we too had worshipped, debated, grown and made friendships.

We studied the Home Front and found issues pertinent to today. Refugees, traumatised, displaced human beings were arriving from Belgium. How would Bloomsbury respond?



# BOOK REVIEW (cont.)

The Zeppelin raids over London, some within sight of Bloomsbury, leaving the congregation at times stranded in the church basement until the “All Clear” was sounded. The feeling of terror in the midst, sadly not unknown in London today.

With people pulled in many directions by the war and all the social and heartbreaking implications, how to preach the Gospel; the Good News of Jesus Christ, to a congregation in the midst of war? This was to be the constant focus of Thomas Phillips amidst the pastoral care needed by the congregation:

The pretty August wedding conducted by Phillips and reported of in the church magazines of 1913 held such high hopes for Christian service in the union of a couple dedicated to that calling - only to see it end in death of a conscript on a parched Greek hillside.

The young RAMC doctor, whose ambition in life had been to alleviate pain and suffering, killed by a shell whilst tending wounded soldiers in a dug-out in France. The young man whose call for mission service was interrupted by war, suddenly realises that the whole world is a mission field.

Alongside the heart-breaking news of death in the stories we also found optimism as the church rallied to support the

neighbouring military hospital.

Then there was the middle-aged lady member who rushed off to France in early 1915 to start a military hospital which would become famous in paintings and literature. She was also unafraid to face her critics after having bravely stood up and declared that certain tactics used by Britain were contrary to humanity and the spirit of Christ.

At the helm of Bloomsbury throughout the war years and indeed between 1916 and 1917 when he also served as President of the Baptist Union, stood the Revd Thomas Phillips, who kept his central focus on preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ.

*“Europe has got into a bad plight,” he wrote in November 1915. “The causes are many, and complicated, but they can all be traced back to selfishness.”*



# BOOK REVIEW (cont.)

Why do we remember? Why produce yet another book on the First World War? It is surely in remembrance that we learn of the futility of war. It is only in the study of war that we learn and pass on that learning to the future generations that they might know the cost of war. We give thanks for those who have sacrificed their lives for the freedoms we enjoy. For those who did what they felt was the right thing in the context of the times in which they lived, a world war which is now consigned to history but still has vital lessons for the world today.

*“War always comes as disaster. Most people work to prevent it, hoping it will never happen. If it comes then it is an expression of our moral failure, our inability or unwillingness to face differences and desires without killing one another...”*

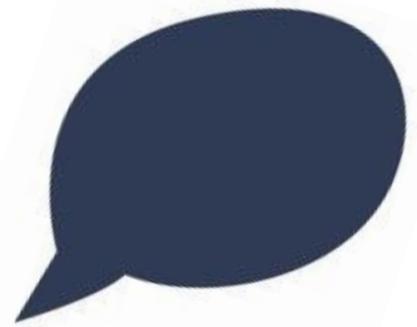
The Revd Dr Brian Haymes: Foreword - Linking Hands With The Front.

Linking Hands with the Front - A London Baptist Church responds to the 1914 - 1918 War, published by the Baptist Historical Society available for £12.99 (plus postage and packing) from [baptisthistory.org.uk](http://baptisthistory.org.uk)

The authors and Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church would be delighted to hear from anyone reading this who has copies of the 1916-1919 Bloomsbury magazines hidden away in their attic or shed.



# NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITY



Andy Palfreyman



After living on the streets for 30 years, this month I finally moved into my own place. I knew this was going to be life changing, but I was a little bit scared, because the mundane parts of domestic life are so alien to me.

I was a bit of a rebel as a teenager – I thought I always knew best and my relationship with my family broke down as a result. When I was 19, I left my home in Sandbach, Cheshire, for the bright lights of London.

The little bit of money I had soon ran out and I ended up living on the streets, which became my home for the next three decades. I have struggled for years with my mental health, and depression kept me from seeking help. I would mostly bed down in doorways in central London, around Westminster and Covent Garden. Most rough sleepers in the capital congregate here, as it is where most of the help can be found.

When I was first homeless, I got a job on a building site, but I had to give it up because I couldn't maintain my personal hygiene. I had nowhere to wash or change my clothes. I started work at 8am, and the charities that provided such facilities opened at 10am and closed at 5pm – when I finished work.

The streets can be frightening. I often suffered abuse from the public. Strangers urinated on me on numerous occasions; on one night, a couple of drunks leaving a wine bar thought it would be hilarious to set my sleeping bag on fire.

I am fortunate that I have never abused drugs or alcohol, although there was a stage when I depended on booze to get myself to sleep at night. I eventually got used to living on the streets. Although my life was monotonous – meandering between day centres and soup kitchens – it wasn't completely bleak. There is a camaraderie between rough sleepers. I had a group of friends who would share any change, tobacco or food they had been given, and I did the same for them.

Getting off the streets happened all at once. I used to go to the Swiss church in Covent Garden for a coffee and to pass the time. On one occasion, there was an art exhibition next door,

# NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITY



Andy Palfreyman (cont.)

featuring the work of Jenny Natusch. I went to see it and ended up telling Jenny my story. She listened to me, and I had the idea to take photographs of the doorways I had slept in over the years. My photographs featured in an exhibition called Cardboard and Caviar in the Swiss church and after that my life changed dramatically. I finally felt like an equal, that I could exist as a full member of society.

I have been off the street for five years and I have two jobs: official warden at the Swiss church and receptionist at Bloomsbury Central Baptist church. My flat has exceeded all my expectations. I have only a few essentials, but I have a big, comfortable double bed for the first time in ages. I have a love for upcycling. Recently, I was walking past a musical instrument shop where the owners were about to throw out an old guitar case; I rescued it and plan to transform it into a coffee table.

Having a flat in my own name felt so surreal that during the first few days I half expected someone else to be living there when I came home. When I moved in, I cried tears of joy all night. When I thought I had composed myself, all it took was for me to look around the room and I was in floods of tears again. After 30 years of

homelessness, I finally feel secure. I am looking forward to the rest of my life.

*Edited from an article in The Guardian*

# NEWS



## London Citizens Delegates Assembly:

How civic institutions can be at the forefront of social change

Simon writes

It was a privilege to host the London Citizens Delegates Assembly at my institution, Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, in November 2019. Over 500 community leaders from civic institutions across the capital gathered to show how our power to bring about change for justice is magnified when we work together. The choice of Bloomsbury for this Assembly was no accident: in addition to being a member institution of West London Citizens, it is a church with a long history of engaging in works of social justice.

Unusually for a Baptist Church, Bloomsbury was born as the result of one man's vision. Sir Samuel Moreton Peto had become fabulously wealthy by building railways and prestige buildings. He was also a Baptist and a Liberal MP, and his conviction was that Christianity should take money and power, and use them to bring about good news for the poor and the disadvantaged. He modelled this in his own business practice: he was at the forefront of fair employment in the Victorian era, and the Navvies who built his railways were paid weekly and in cash (instead of in arrears with vouchers to spend in the company shop, as was usually the practice). By this, he empowered his workers to take control of their finances and improve their lives.

Peto decided that it was time for the Baptists to have a central London church, and that he would build it. Bloomsbury opened in 1848, and was the first Baptist church in London to stand proudly on a main road. The location for his new Bap-

tist chapel was carefully chosen, on the border between the wealthy squares of Bloomsbury and the grinding poverty of the St Giles Rookery slum. He wanted his church to embody his conviction that Christianity should affect the poor as well as the middle classes.

The first minister was a man called William Brock, and he famously coined the phrase that, 'The Bible and The Times newspaper are the best materials for the preacher', expressing his conviction that religion should engage the issues of the world beyond the church. In 1851 the church's justice convictions were tested, with many visiting American Baptists coming to London for the Great Exhibition, and many wanting to come to see (and support) the new and famous Bloomsbury Chapel. The church at this point passed a resolution, which was advertised in The Times, that any visiting American who continued to support the 'abominations of slavery' would not be welcome.

Many other acts of working for social justice have followed over the 171 years since the church started, and notable speakers in the building have included Martin Luther King in 1961, the Dalai Lama, and more recently Jeremy Corbyn. Bloomsbury continues its long tradition of existing for the benefit of those beyond itself, and is proud to play its part in the social justice work of London Citizens in our time.

# Picture round up







**BLOOMSBURY CENTRAL  
BAPTIST CHURCH**

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