

All In It Together – The National Church (Home Mission)

I remember one of the first lectures I had at Spurgeon's. Well, not really a lecture, it was the first week of introductions. We we're all just getting to know each other and the lecturers were also just starting to get to know us. Chris Voke (who spoke at my ordination) was the lecturer and he drew a very rough outline of the British Isles on a flip chart. We then had to come up to the flip chart in turn, introduce ourselves to the class, state where our church was and put a dot on the map using our extensive geographical knowledge. One person in the class was at a church in West London. He explained this to the class and put a dot on the map. The tutor then said, "that's not West London, that's Wales".

Sometimes we can have a very small perspective and we can forget that we are part of something bigger. This morning we are going to try to widen our perspective a little bit by thinking about the wider church. Last week we looked very widely as we thought about the world wide church. This morning we are looking at the National church. Churches in Great Britain. In particular we are going to be looking at the family of Baptists in Great Britain. Did you know that there are more than 2,000 Baptist churches in the UK? And we are part of that family. I met some of Theresa's family on Monday at Renford's funeral. They are a big family. And I don't just mean that the boys resemble a basketball team. There are a lot of people in Theresa's family. So don't upset Theresa, she has a lot of people in her family and quite a few of them are over 6 foot!

But even Theresa's family is small compared to the wider Baptist family. Think about it for a moment. This morning as we worship, we join with over 2,000 other Baptist churches in this country alone. All will have their own ways of doing things (because we're Baptists) but all of us share some things in common.

A primary school teacher asked some of the children in her class to bring in an object to share with the class that represented their religion.

The first student got up in front of the class and said, "My name is Benjamin, I'm Jewish and this is a Star of David."

The second student got up in front of the class and said, "My name is Mary. I'm a Catholic and this is a Rosary."

The third student got up front of the class and said, "My name is Tommy. I'm a Baptist, and this is a cheesecake."

So we share our love of cheesecake but more importantly, we share our love of the Lord Jesus Christ and we share a passion for telling others about him; sharing the good news of Jesus with a needy world. We are fortunate in this church to have a large building, good facilities and even two ministers. Other members of our wider family are not so fortunate. There are many struggling Baptist churches around the country. For various reasons, there are churches with depleted congregations, churches with serious building problems and churches that simply don't have the money to pay for a full-time minister.

That's where Home Mission comes in. In one Baptist Union publication, Home Mission is described as "one of those hard things to explain, like love, algebra or quantum physics!" So if by the end of this morning you understand what Home Mission is, then we've done pretty well. Home mission is described by the Baptist Union of Great Britain as "the Baptist family purse".

It provides funding for churches who are struggling financially but have still not lost their enthusiasm for sharing the good news of Jesus and following his commission to 'go and make disciples'.

This funding comes from those churches like us, who can afford to contribute to the 'family purse' in order to help less fortunate churches. So as a church we at ADBC give corporately to Home Mission and Home Mission then use this money to help other churches and projects that need financial help. It is a Biblical principle. We read this morning in Philippians 2:4

⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Paul sees this as having a Christ-like attitude, being like-minded with Christ. In the same way that Jesus thought of others above himself and gave of himself for us, we who seek to follow Christ need to also seek to think of others needs as well as our own. Today we live in a world where the chief principle seems to be every person for themselves. It was probably no different in the Bible times. Jesus said to his disciples that they would stand out if they showed love for one another.

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

(John 13:34-35)

Jesus said that loving one another shows that we are his disciples. When we are concerned for one another we follow in his footsteps, we are 'united with Christ' (Phil 2:1), we have a Christ-like attitude (Phil 2:5). Jesus reinforced this when he was asked which is the greatest of all the commandments:

³⁷ Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

Jesus said that the most important thing for us to grasp next to our love for God, is our love for others.

I heard a story of a woman who was walking past a shoe shop one evening. It was raining outside and as she passed the shop a boy caught her eye. He looked a bit worse for wear, his clothes were tatty and she noticed he had no shoes on, and though it was raining, his feet were dirty. The boy was looking into the shop window and seemed to be speaking under his breath.

The woman stopped and asked the boy if he was ok. "I was just asking God for some shoes" said the boy. The woman then took the boy into the shop and asked the shop keeper for half a dozen pairs of socks, a bowl of warm water and a towel. She then bent down and washed the boy's feet, dried them and put a pair of socks on him. She then got the boy fitted up with some shoes and paid for them. "I bet you feel more comfortable now" she said. The boy looked up at her with tears in his eyes and said "are you God's wife?"

Some of our Baptist churches are in need but they do not have the funds to pay for themselves. Through Home Mission funding and with a little support from wealthier churches, these needs can be met.

Here's one example of a church that was in need and how another church in the area lived out the principle of looking not only to their own needs but also to the needs of others. Here's what happened...

<DVD – Go... and work together> (BUGB "GO" DVD)

Some churches and some ministers have great potential but they do not have the means to reach it.

The American artist, James Whistler was never known to be modest about his talent. He once had a shipment of blank canvases on order but they got lost in the mail. When he was asked if the canvases were valuable, he replied, "Not yet, not yet". (J. John & Mark Stibbe, A Bundle of Laughs, p157)

Home Mission is about helping us all as a Baptist Family to reach our full potential. This year Home Mission gave £1.9 million to churches and ministries around the country.

We've looked at how Home Mission helps churches that are struggling financially, but it's not only struggling churches that benefit from Home Mission funding. Did you know that Ashurst Drive Baptist Church is a Home Mission church? And I don't just mean that we give to Home Mission, I mean we are also supported by Home Mission.

For a start, if it wasn't for Home Mission funding, then I may not be here because Home Mission funds the settlement process. When a minister comes towards the end of their training and they are looking to move into a full-time post with a church, there is a lot to sort out. There are a team of people, including Pat Took, who help to match up churches with students. When a church is looking for a new minister, the Baptist Union will help you find one but all of that requires a lot of work behind the scenes. That means that people are needed to do all the various ministerial and administrative roles that are involved in the process. Those people need to be paid and guess what? That money comes from Home Mission.

But I am fortunate in a way that I don't have to rely on Home Mission funding to live on. The staff that work for BUGB at Didcot however do, including Jonathan Edwards, the General Secretary of the Baptist Union.

Help and advice to ALL BUGB churches

Home Mission also funds help and advice for ALL churches that are part of the Baptist Union of Great Brittan (BUGB). This is both on a personal level (e.g. if Richard or I need some advice, there are people we can call to ask). Also as a treasurer, Graham receives advice to help him to understand the ins and outs of managing the church accounts (not an easy task, especially as Graham now has to submit full accrual accounts. Home Mission also provides support on a corporate level. For example, many of the publications that come from BUGB are funded through Home Mission giving such as Safe to Grow and Making a Splash.

Events

In addition, Home Mission also helps to fund events such as Leading Edge.

All of these things are ways in which we can support the wider Baptist family through Home Mission. As I said earlier, as a church we give to Home Mission and we have already looked at some of the ways in which Home Mission gives back to us. But did you know also that 25% of the money we give is guaranteed to be used to help projects within the LONDON Baptist Association.

So I hope that has helped you to understand a little about Home Mission and why as a church, we support Home Mission. Next week we will be looking at quantum physics, fortunately Richard is preaching next Sunday morning.

No, next week we will be looking at the local and trans-local church. We certainly do not want to neglect our own mission field, and neither should we. But as Paul said to the Philippians we need to have a wider perspective and think not only of our own needs but also to the needs of others. We are part of a wider family. We are all in it together.

Benediction

Today we've looked at how some other churches are going out into the world and making a difference to people and communities. We are part of that Corporately and we can also be part of that personally.

Because whether through supporting and equipping others or by taking action ourselves, we are all called to GO.

<DVD – "GO" (BUGB)>

And all God's people said...
AMEN.