

Ever heard of Smeatharpe?

I thought not! Neither had I until invited there recently. The tiny hamlet of Smeatharpe, with only some forty houses, is tucked into the Blackdown Hills in south Devon. Newhouse Baptist Church was founded in 1652, those early nonconformist believers meeting where the three counties of Somerset, Devon and Dorset joined, so that when threatened with arrest in one county they could move quickly out of its jurisdiction. When the well-known Puritan pastor and author Joseph Alleine went there to preach he was arrested en route and put in Ilchester Prison.

Under John Woolin's leadership, the church now has about thirty members, holds three preaching



services a week and distributes an evangelistic magazine in its local area every three months. It also holds area-wide Bible Teaching meetings in May and November.

In spite of appalling weather, the village hall was virtually packed for my Popular Christian Apologetics meeting and there was an augmented attendance when I preached in the church on the Sunday. It would be difficult to imagine a warmer reception than the one I received and when someone told me that a few weeks before his death her father had come to Christ while reading *Ultimate Questions* it made my joy complete.

'As much as I can, as well as I can, for as long as I can'

Back on the road

After many weeks at home researching, studying and writing it was almost a strange experience to ‘saddle up’ again at the end of February. The main schedule was another Popular Christian Apologetics tour, this time in the north-west, though the itinerary began and ended elsewhere.

My first stop was in **Ramsey**, a tiny Cambridgeshire town that grew around an abbey founded in AD 974 and where Jeremy Brooks is now pastor of Salem Baptist Church. I have known Jeremy since he was on the staff of Evangelical Press and it is always good to link up with him. The church dates from 1857 and had an unusual beginning. A Baptist church in nearby Warboys was divided on whether to retain its pastor,

David Irish, and eventually suggested he start a church elsewhere. In essence, his response was, ‘Provide a building for me and I will’! The church did exactly that — and 150 years later Salem is still functioning, with Jeremy Brooks as its eighteenth pastor.

The main building and some of the contents are Grade II listed, something that needs to be factored

into ambitious plans for radical redesigning and refurbishing, but the fellowship is in good heart and the meeting there was warmly appreciated.

Next up was **Coventry**, a Midlands city I rarely visit. Lower Ford Street Baptist Church was founded in 1852 and the chapel built in 1857 (coincidentally, the same year the church in Ramsey opened). Constituted as an independent Baptist church it adopted the name ‘Rehoboth’ (‘The LORD has made room for us’). The current pastor, Paul Watts, was appointed in 1985, since when the membership has more than tripled in size and James Young has joined the staff as an evangelist. During this time the interior of the church has been totally re-fitted, with old wooden pews giving way to comfortable and attractive chairs.

The church was nearly filled for an excellent meeting. One of the highlights was a very courteous contribution by a well-educated atheist (a classicist) who took a significant part in the Q and A session and in conversations afterwards.

Earlier in the day I had stopped off for a few hours at the Leicester home of Peter and Audrey Anderson and we had a delightful time ‘chewing the fat’, gratefully remembering times of blessing during our days in Christian Ministries and discussing issues relevant in today’s spiritual scene in the UK and elsewhere.

At Birmingham University



On to the north-west at last, calling first in Ashton-in-Makerfield so that Howard Williams could join me. Our first engagements were at Bridge Chapel, **Liverpool**, a work with such a remarkable story that I have left it to another page. After a Saturday night rally and two Sunday morning services there I preached in the evening at Cave Browne Evangelical Church, **Ashton in Makerfield**, Howard and Marlene Williams' home church (and virtually mine too when I am in the north-west!). It is always a privilege to minister to those who faithfully support me in prayer.

The following evening meant a trip to **Southport** on the west coast, for a return visit to Grace Baptist Church. I last preached there in the nineteen-eighties, and much has changed since then. Under the leadership of Peter Day, attendances outgrew the building and in a remarkable series of events the church acquired property just across the street. Hard work and expert advice led to much more suitable premises with a superb new facility that could seat nearly 250 people. Adam Laughton now leads a church with a membership of about 150 and the auditorium is usually filled on Sunday mornings.

There was an excellent attendance at our meeting and it is a long time since so many people came to me afterwards to express particular thanks for one part or another of the evening. These comments were capped by a man telling me that he had come to Christ some time ago while reading *Right with God*.

The next day Howard and I went 'international', as our engagement was at Ebenezer Baptist Church, **Mold**, in North Wales. Founded in 1880, the church was Welsh-speaking until the nineteen-fifties and now has a membership of 150 under the leadership of Maurice Kinnaird. This was my third Popular Christian Apologetics meeting there and it was a great encouragement to see this fine building virtually filled. The subject — Where is God when things go wrong? — obviously touched a nerve and I cannot recall ever previously hearing any of the many penetrating questions in the Q and A session at any previous meeting.

As Howard and I got into the car afterwards I reflected that with this meeting I had completed forty-six years in full-time Christian service. 'Ebenezer', with its biblical use as a reminder that 'Thus far has the LORD helped us' was certainly an appropriate place in which to mark this!

For the last night in the north-west we drove up to Cumbria for my third Popular Christian Apologetics meeting in **Kendal**, this time at Parr Street Evangelical Church, the long-time-ago home church of Stuart Briscoe. An encouraging crowd turned out on a bleak March night and the ministry was very well received. In the last issue of *Newsline* I reminisced about Swiss houseparties in the nineteen-sixties and referred to the fact that some guests had met their future spouses there: it was a special joy at Kendal when one couple told me that this had happened to them and that they had just celebrated their fortieth wedding anniversary.

The journey back home took in a meeting in **Birmingham**, where I spoke at an Outreach meeting organized by the university's Christian Union. In today's climate, CUs do not have an easy time, but some enthusiastic hard work produced a meeting which included many non-Christians, a fact reflected in some very direct and challenging contributions to the Q and A session.

Being back on the road had been a very rewarding privilege and left me with nearly 1,000 miles of grateful memories.

HOT OFF THE PRESS! —

As far as their future is concerned, there is only one question that ultimately concerns every human being on our planet. Old or young, rich or poor, robustly healthy or seriously ill, black, white or any other colour, we all face an issue that can be put in six simple syllables — *Where do we go from here?*

People invest a massive amount of time, energy, working, thinking, planning — and money — in the things they do in life. Their jobs, homes, families, possessions, hobbies, plans, well-being, hopes and pleasures take up every waking hour — yet every one of these things will be snatched away from them by death. Immediately before his execution, an American criminal said, 'You can be a king or a street-sweeper, but everybody dances with the Grim Reaper.' I imagine he gave hours of thought as to what his final words would be, yet he was only stating the obvious. What millions are asking is what happens when the dance is over.

This inescapable issue is what lies behind my latest evangelistic booklet, a complimentary copy of which is being sent to all regular readers of *Newsline*. As with all my previous evangelistic titles I am aware that almost the only way this one will reach those for whom it is directly intended is by Christians passing it on to them and it has therefore been written with the specific aim of equipping Christians in their personal witnessing.

Every believer is in touch with countless family members, friends and contacts who are not committed to Christ and are therefore 'without hope and without God in the world' — *or in the world to come*. They urgently need to turn their attention from passing preoccupations and to face up to the reality of eternity with its awesome alternatives of heaven or hell. Sharing these truths with others is not always easy, not least because of the many questions they raise: 'We know what happens to the body, but what about the soul or spirit? Will we remain conscious or be annihilated? Is there an intermediate state between here and our final destiny? Will we have an opportunity to put things right after we die? Is there such a place as purgatory? Is hell real? Who goes there? How long does it last? What is heaven like? *And do we have to wait until after we die to get the answers?*'

Evangelical Press has got behind this title in an unprecedented way and feel that because of its subject it may become more widely used than anything since *Ultimate Questions*, which now has over fifteen million copies in print in over fifty languages. EP is therefore carrying out extensive promotion of the title in the UK and overseas, encouraged by these enthusiastic endorsements:

'Blanchard's *Where do we go from here?* is biblical, God-honouring, page-turning evangelism at its best. Give a copy to every unbelieving friend you have, and then discuss this booklet a few weeks later with them one at a time.'

— Dr Joel R. Beeke, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan



AND A VERY SPECIAL OFFER

'In what has become his trademark style the author carefully examines various views on death and dying before setting out the biblical worldview in the clearest possible way. Writing plainly enough for a child to understand and with an intellectual integrity that will pull in the sceptic John Blanchard has once again hit the mark.'

— **Dr Alistair Begg, Senior Pastor, Parkside Church, Chagrin Falls, Ohio**

'What happens to us when we die? John Blanchard, who is a master when it comes to applying the timeless truths of the Bible to these postmodern times, sorts out the issues without guessing or surmising, but on the authority of what Scripture teaches. If you're looking for answers to life's ultimate question, here is one you can trust.'

— **Dr John MacArthur, Pastor-Teacher, Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California**

'This pastor has never read a booklet that presents a clearer and more compelling case for the soul's need of a relationship with Jesus Christ than John Blanchard's *Where do we go from here?*' I have just led our staff and church leadership to adopt it as **the** primary resource tool for evangelism in our city. We will buy it in bulk – it is that good.'

— **Rev. Wade Burleson, Pastor, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Enid, Oklahoma**

'As a pastor, I am always on the look-out for solid, compelling, short pieces that can engage people with the gospel in a generation that doesn't read, or think, nearly enough. John Blanchard never fails to help me in this. John had my full attention from the very first (gripping!) paragraph.'

— **Dr J. Ligon Duncan III, Senior Minister, First Presbyterian Church, Jackson, Mississippi**

'Most of us will not read another publication on the subject of death, but even if we did, we would be hard pressed to find a better one than this. It is Bible based, thorough and honest.'

— **Roger Carswell, Evangelist, Leeds, England**

In packs of ten, Evangelical Press is offering excellent discounts to the general public, but very special terms to regular *Newsline* readers as members of my support team.

You may therefore get copies at the following rates:

Single pack: £14.00; 2-4 packs: £13 per pack; 5-9 packs: £12 per pack; 10-49 packs: £11 per pack; 50-99 packs: £10 per pack. 100+ packs: Contact Evangelical Press for extra special offer. Up to 9 packs, add £4.00 for complete order; all other orders post free.

You can order online by e-mail from sales@evangelicalpress.org, by telephone (01325 380232) by fax (01325 466153) or by letter to Evangelical Press, Faverdale North, Darlington, DL3 0PH. **In every case quote Reference JBNL Offer May 08.**

Share this information with your pastor or with others who could join you in putting together an order that would attract the maximum discount. Above all, pray that God will graciously use the booklet to draw countless people to Christ in the coming days!



Some bridge!

During my recent north-west tour I spoke three times at Bridge Chapel Centre, Liverpool. On the Saturday night I was asked to address the subject 'The Christian Response to Darwin and Dawkins', then preached at two crowded Sunday morning services.

'Bridge' is a remarkable place, the name harking back to the original meeting place, a small mission hall near a railway bridge in Garston village. The work has grown in leaps and bounds since then, but the name has been retained as a reminder of its aim to be a bridge into the community. After renting part of New Heys School, in Heath Road, the church later bought the entire premises. Now it is a multi-purpose community and church complex, with over 2,000 people passing through it each week.

A friendly and welcoming café in the foyer offers breakfasts, home-cooked meals and other refreshments, and the centre houses numerous small group activities, each with its own suite of rooms and dedicated helpers. Groups include Children's Ministries, Student Ministry, Sports Ministries, Adult Ministries (including a film club



With Bill Bygroves, Senior Pastor at Bridge Chapel

and ministry to widows and widowers), Bible Courses, a Ministry of Care, a Thursday Club for adults with learning difficulties, Victim Support and a Drop-in Study Centre.

The work is sustained without taking up any offerings at its services, yet as well as setting aside 10% of its total income for mission, it also allocates a further 10% to a Compassion Fund. There are other very interesting details on

its web site, www.bridgechapel.com. It is always a delightful privilege to serve this remarkable Christian cause.

Pastor Bill Bygroves heads up an enthusiastic leadership team, yet still finds time to be the greatly valued chaplain to Liverpool City Football Club.

THANK YOU!

My warmest thanks once again to friends who have recently sent ministry gifts through the CM Trust. Your fellowship is greatly appreciated. Gifts sent directly to my home address are always acknowledged personally at the time.

ALBANIAN BREAKTHROUGH

There is excellent news for all *Newsline* readers with an interest in Project Albania! After a long struggle to comply with Albanian government regulations relating to the publication of overseas literature, the final hurdles have been overcome and the first four of the publications included in the project are now in print.

These are the book *Right with God* and the booklets *Evolution: Fact or Fiction?*, *Why believe the Bible?* and *Where is God when things go wrong?* All four titles were introduced at two recent conferences. The first was the Shepherds' Conference (associated with Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California) held in Tirana in March, when all seventy delegates were given a free copy of each of the publications and encouraged to develop their widespread use in their churches and among their contacts. The second was the Word Conference held in Gjirokaster in April and attended by forty delegates, each of whom was given a

copy of all four items.

These may seem quite small conferences by UK standards, but they are significant in the Albanian setting and *Newsline* readers are asked to pray that they will both prove to be effective launching pads for the widespread and effective use of the materials in the days to come.

We are grateful to friends at Albania Evangelical Mission for their agreement to have all Operation Albania titles published under its banner. Its firm establishment in Albania means that a wider distribution network can be established, making the titles more readily available to churches and other Christian causes working in the country.

The mammoth task of translating *Does God believe in Atheists?* is nearly completed and it is hoped to have this title in the hands of an editor in August, with a view to its publication in October, when I may be able to return to Albania to take part in its launch in university and other circles.

The aim is to translate *Has science got rid of God?* and *Can we be good without God?* next, with at least two further titles to follow. Project Albania is up and running!



Right with God



Why believe the Bible?

COMING ENGAGEMENTS 2008

At the time of going to press these are my engagements for the next four months. For up-to-date news of any additional meetings, visit www.johnblanchard.org. Please pray for God's enabling and blessing at these events — and if possible plan to attend any scheduled to be held near you.

- May** 15-18 DUDLEY, W.Midlands: Dudley Baptist Church Annual Bible Convention [Info: 01384 233 024 or 01905 797 308 or ernestrichardson@gmail.com]
24(am) IRELAND: Calvary Mission, Westport, Co. Mayo [Info: 00353 9423702 or calvarymayo@eircom.net]
24(pm) IRELAND: Bible ministry at Christian Golfers' Conference, -28 Westport, Co. Mayo [Info: 028 2563 1591 or tnutt@tiscali.co.uk]
- June** 7-8 PORTADOWN, Co Armagh: 50th anniversary services at Killicomaine Baptist Church [Info: 028 3833 7861 or 0786 0709469 or james.mccammick@tiscali.co.uk]
19* GLASGOW: Chryston Church, Main Street, Chryston, G69 9LA [Info: 0141 779 4188 or DMcA29@aol.com]
20* INVERNESS: Inshes Church [Info: 01463 772402 or ali.inshes@btinternet.com]
21* BUCKIE: Buckie Church of Christ [Info: 01542 833 606 or ljappy@hotmail.com]
22 ABERDEEN: Deeside Christian Fellowship Church, Milltimber, AB13 0JE [Info: 01224 733979 or enquiries@dcfchurch.org]
23* ABERDEEN: Deeside Christian Fellowship Church, Milltimber, AB13 0JE [Info: 01224 733979 or enquiries@dcfchurch.org]
24* PETERHEAD: Peterhead Baptist Church, 49 King Street, AB42 1TA [Info: 01779 477040 or 01779 471421 or ffg@puseyplace.fsnet.co.uk]
25* DUNDEE: Logie & St Johns (Cross) Church, Blackness Avenue, DD2 1HJ [Info: 01382 668514 or david@logies.org]
26* STEVENSTON, North Ayrshire: High Kirk, Schoolwell Street, KA20 3DL [Info: 01294 4633546 or revhighkirk@btinternet.com]
- July** 2-6 GUERNSEY: Research, committee work and preaching. [Info: 01481 257206 or focus@cwgsy.net]

Remainder of July reserved for research, study and writing

August *Reserved for research, study and writing*

*** Indicates a Popular Christian Apologetics meeting.**

JOIN THE TEAM!

Thank you for reading *Newsline*. If you have not seen it before and would like to receive future copies (by post or e-mail) please let me know at 'Sarnia', 81 Lambert Road, Banstead, Surrey, SM7 2QU. Telephone 01737 357501 E-mail: jbsarnia@gmail.com