

# Walking Together, Stepping Out

## SCBA Home Mission Community Day

On 1<sup>st</sup> October Southern Counties Baptist Association had its first Home Mission Community Day.

We entitled the day 'Walking Together, Stepping Out'. This phrase encapsulated the vision not only for this day together but for the development of our SCBA Home Mission Community.

### Walking Together

SCBA have built in the engagement with Home Mission Community Day as a key element of receiving Home Mission and Pioneer Fund grants, in order to deepen the friendship with, and support of, churches and pioneers as they step out in faith. We also want to nurture relationships between HM churches/pioneers, many of whom are either small churches, where it can be easy to feel alone, or pioneers, who can feel isolated or misunderstood. Walking together in covenantal relationship is key to our Baptist understanding, but not always easy to work out in practice. Establishing regular Home Mission Community Days are seeking to address this.

During the day we shared stories and insights, learnt from one another, networked and simply developed friendships. One of the SCBA Mission Enabling Group led us in a structured story telling exercise that used scripture to help us reflect, praise and lament.

We encouraged churches and pioneers to bring as many of their 'team' (however they defined it) as they could. We wanted to make friends with and partner whole churches and pioneering teams. We therefore chose a Saturday to make the day as accessible as possible. It was very encouraging that every church brought with them a team of between 3 and 8 people.

A key element of walking together is that we are the body of Christ together – the day was not about 'experts' and 'learners' but about discerning the mind of Christ together.

### Stepping Out

As Home Mission grants are all about mission, we want the funding to release and empower churches and pioneers to be able to join in more fully with the mission of God and to embrace Jesus' calling for us to be 'sent out'. Home Mission Community Day sought to encourage and inspire us to step out of our churches or comfort zone into our communities.

During the day there were opportunities to listen to God, pray, and to pick up ideas from one another to inspire us in our context.

At the end of the day we prayed together for one another as we were sent out.

### A Day of Blessing

My own pioneering mission locally (enabled by Home Mission funding) is centred on God's call to be an unconditional blessing. For me, therefore, it felt essential for this day to model this aspect of the missional God. Being realistic I knew that this might not be everyone's first choice of the way to spend a Saturday, but I wanted to make Home Mission Community a day of blessing rather than a chore.

To this end we ensured everyone was well fed and watered throughout the day with hot drinks and pastries on arrival, a hot lunch and other snacks during the day; we chose a central location and helped with car parking; and we welcomed children to join us and created a programme especially for them to enjoy. At the end of the day we had tea, coffee and cookies to take away for those who had a long journey.



Equally importantly we wanted people to be spiritually blessed. We were committed to ensuring that every church/pioneer was specifically prayed for during the day. We wanted the day to be inclusive and therefore wanted a range of opportunities for people to engage with God and hear his voice. This included an art and poetry reflection, prophetic art, music, peer learning, sung worship, exploring missional theology and sharing in groups.

We also gave everyone a 'party bag' which contained gifts to: help people engage in the day; take away to bless others; and to explore mission.



### **The Feedback**

The feedback at the end of the day was very positive. I didn't want to burden people with a formal evaluation form but at least one person from every context choose to feedback. Everyone responded positively – even people who had not wanted to come!

*'That was a truly edifying day. I still feel a bond with the other people and churches who attended that day.'*  
*'..it was great to be surrounded with so many like-minded people and to get to pray together with them'*  
*'Today has been so encouraging'*  
*'[We] appreciated the welcome and input at the HM day... And the catering was superb.*  
*It was a long day with an early start but well worth it'*

*'It was very helpful and I know all of us felt blessed and challenged by the day'*

We have set up a closed Facebook group to continue to connect, inspire and resource one another in stepping out in mission until the next time we can meet together.

### **Working in Partnership**

The vision for gathering together as a Home Mission Community arose from my work with Alisdair Longwill (West of England Baptist Association Regional Minister) as we worked together to rewrite the South and West Associations Partnership Home Mission grant forms and review the Home Mission process. We wanted to develop a closer more authentic partnership between grant receivers and the Association as together we seek to join in with the mission of God.

As the Regional Minister for Pioneer Mission Enabling, I worked with an SCBA Mission Enabling Group (MEG), made up of SCBA trustees and ministers, to realise the vision for the day.

It was great to work with Winchester Baptist and members of the wider Baptist family.

Working in partnership modelled something significant about what it means to walk together and step out in mission and was a great opportunity to learn from one another.