

Foundations 18 – Growing and going

Foundations, the new flagship event of the Association of Grace Baptist Churches (East Anglia) filled the Faith Mission Centre in Earl Stonham on a very hot Saturday 7 July. The Centre is a new facility with a large hall and breakout meeting rooms (as well as bunk room dormitories upstairs - a great venue for a youth group weekend), and this made an excellent venue for the day, with the combination of quality facilities in the stunning Suffolk countryside. Some two hundred people came together from Grace Baptist churches for a day focussed on churches that are 'growing and going' in their mission together.

The ministry in the two main sessions was given by Lewis Allen. Lewis and his wife Sarah moved up from Chiswick to Huddersfield to plant Hope Church in 2010. In the morning, Lewis expounded 1 John 4:7-21, asking 'How do we grow in Christ?' and looking at assurance in Christ as the basis of all our growth. That assurance flows out into serving others in the strength of God's love. Lewis challenged everyone not just to know the truth but to grow in expressing God's love in our service and relationships in local churches.

Three different seminars looked at how churches relate to their communities. Ray Evans (Bedford) discussed how we encourage the new, the needy and the neglected in our local churches, three groups who we all find ourselves in at one time or another. Graham Daniels (Christians in Sport) drew on his extensive experience of sports and university evangelism to increase our usefulness in personal witness. I led two sessions looking at local churches as spiritual movements, understanding the key elements of a healthy spiritual movement of churches.

In the final session of the day, Lewis expounded the parable of the prodigal son. This familiar parable is a warning to complacent, familiar religion and a summons to be made uncomfortable again at the extravagant, open-armed love of God the Father to the religious and the irreligious. Videos of both talks and all the seminars are now on YouTube, and can be found via the AGBC website www.grace-ea.org

On a blazing-hot summer's day (while England were beating Sweden in the world cup) it was encouraging to see people coming out in such numbers to hear and apply God's word. Simon Robinson, who chaired the day, said 'It's been very stimulating and thought-provoking, and incredibly helpful to have the opportunity to look specifically at many of the issues that are real for ourselves as churches.' Next year's 'Foundations 19' is booked for 29 June, and the main speaker is Bill James of London Seminary.

Jim Sayers