

# Editorial - A Place To Belong

## Paul Beasley-Murray

Over the years I have experimented with a variety of 'strap lines' for our church in Chelmsford.

At one stage, for instance, stated on church publicity were the words, *Central Baptist Church – going Christ's way and making disciples*. Perhaps for church people this constant reminder of our mission statement was helpful, but it must have meant very little to people outside the church.

More recently, we used to say on letters going out from the church: *Central Baptist Church – transforming lives and changing community*. No doubt for church people this constant reminder of two of our values was helpful. Furthermore, it would have had some meaning for people outside the church. It was not, however, an attractive statement. True, it might have attracted Christians in other churches to be part of our community, but I can't see it holding much attraction for people of no faith.

So I dreamt up another strap-line: *Central Baptist Church – a place to belong*. Ideally I would have preferred to have stated: 'Central Baptist Church – *the* place to belong', but some of my colleagues felt that was over-egging it! This surely is a much better strap-line as far as Jo (or Joe) Public is concerned. In a world where many are lonely and are crying out for community, people want to belong to a group where they feel loved, valued and affirmed. On reflection, we need to make more of this strap-line: we need to create well-produced car stickers for people to use!

Of course, there is a danger in using such a strap-line. People within the church could be lulled into believing that this is the sum purpose of our being. If, for our members, church is simply 'a place to belong', then very rapidly we adopt a club mentality. This in turn leads to the terminal illness '*fellowshipitis in extremis*'. It is at our peril that we forget that our mission is in fact to 'go Christ's way and make disciples'.

The fact is that, for internal purposes, we need mission statements. We need to remind ourselves that '*we exist to go Christ's way and make disciples*'. We need vision statements such as '*We want to be a strong and vibrant town-centre church where*

*every member is passionate for God, passionate for one another, passionate for others, passionate to grow in the faith, and passionate to serve Jesus'. Indeed, we need value statements: 'In our life together we seek to reflect the following aspects of a genuine Jesus community: warm and welcoming, risk-taking and God-trusting; excited and enthusiastic; sacrificing and resourcing; transforming lives and changing culture'.*

For those outside the church, however, we need an attractive strap-line, such as: *'Central Baptist Church – a place to belong'.*

## Treasure in Clay Pots

### Paul Beasley-Murray

*This sermon was preached at Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford, in July 2011 at a service of infant dedication.*

Geoff and Amanda, I wonder, what kind of parties your Zachary will be into in future years? Our children liked pirate parties.

The first pirate party was years ago when our eldest son, Jonathan, could not have been much older than five or six. We had to confiscate all the swords as the guests arrived – their weapons were lethal! That must have been a formative party for Jonathan, for one of his academic interest is pirates. Indeed, we had a pirate party for him last year when he turned 40, but this time without swords! Needless to say, it was particularly enjoyed by his nephews and nieces who turned up for the occasion.

This year we have constructed a pirate galleon in our garden, although for some strange reason one visitor thought it was Noah's ark – I have never seen a Noah's ark with a skull and cross bones! So, with the pirate galleon newly installed, our eldest grand-daughter asked for a pirate party to celebrate her 7th birthday. What's more she has asked for a treasure hunt, because you can't be a pirate without hunting for treasure.

All this came to mind when I was considering my text for this morning **"We who have this spiritual treasure are like**