

Interview with David Smith for Bethany City Church

David, firstly can you tell us a little bit about yourself.

Well, I'm married to Donna, and we have a little girl Eve who is almost 3 and a half.

And I notice from the accent, that you're not local.

No, I grew up in a little village just outside of Paisley, in Scotland. We moved to Sunderland in April 2007.

So, what do you do for a living?

I work for Bible Society (Bible Society began in 1804 as the British and Foreign Bible Society) and my official title is National Prayer Breakfast Extension Officer!

Wow, that's a bit of a mouthful!

Just a bit, and it doesn't explain very well what I actually do!

Which is?

I'm part of the Bible Advocacy team, whose goal is to promote the relevance and credibility of the Bible in all walks of life. Today, the Bible is easily accessible and affordable, but people just don't read it. My team communicates with those who influence our culture such as, journalists, politicians, and artists, and we encourage them to read and utilise the Bible and to pray. There are four different sectors - Art, Education, Media and Politics. I'm part of the Politics section, and my role is to encourage partnership with other national Bible Societies, as they engage in Politics to make the Bible heard.

One of my colleagues is the Parliamentary Officer and his role is to co-ordinate the Christians in Parliament group (CIP) while part of my job is to organise, and oversee prayer breakfasts among key political figures.

"I AM PUZZLED ABOUT WHICH BIBLE PEOPLE ARE READING WHEN THEY SUGGEST RELIGION AND POLITICS DON'T MIX."

ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU, SOUTH AFRICAN ARCHBISHOP AND ANTI-APARTHEID LEADER



What have you been doing recently?

I have just returned from Africa where we held a National Prayer breakfast during the African Union Summit. We had 150 Pan-African leaders attending and it was the first time that the BFBS has been involved with the African Union on that level.

That sounds exciting!

It was! In attendance were the General Secretaries from countries such as, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Malawi to name but a few. Our key partners were Bible Society of Ethiopia and Beza (Ethiopian word for 'Redeemed') International Ministries. It was an incredible opportunity, and

connections with the United Nations meant access to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) who were holding meeting over the course of the weekend. We have already begun to organise the African Union Prayer Summit will take place in 2010.



How do you do all that work based in Sunderland?

Well, most days I work from home and once a week I visit Parliament, where I'm based in an MP's office in Westminster. I spend a couple of days a month at our head office in Swindon and I travel internationally about once a month.

Tell us more about the Bible Society

Well, the Bible Society was formed over 200 years ago in 1804 by, among others, William Wilberforce. The aim was to transform society and individuals by putting the Bible into their hands and to expose them to the gospel. It still does the same today, but on a global scale. In the UK alone there are three different Bible Societies, covering England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. BFBS sees what we call 'Bible poverty'- people today have a real spiritual need to be aware of what the Bible says, as it can help them in all aspects of life.



It sounds like a very interesting charity to work for?

It is! I come from a Christian family; I myself became a Christian when I was four, so many years ago! When I was growing up my parents were missionary secretaries for our church and we had many inspiring people staying at our house, including Brother Andrew (Dutch Missionary who took bibles into communist countries) and Richard Wurmbrand (Romanian Christian minister tortured under Communism for his faith) I think that is what encouraged me to go into this line of work. I have previously worked for Tearfund and over the years have come to appreciate the importance that the Bible can play in people's lives.

So how long have you attended Bethany City Church?

We started coming along last year, we are really settling in and feel part of the church. It just seems the type of church that cares about the important things and doesn't get caught up in what is not important; the church seems to have its priorities right.

Finally, what can we do to help and support the Bible Society?

Well, prayer is vital to our work, we need to champion the Bible and that isn't always easy - we want to encourage Biblical literacy in and out of churches. People can also give financially, something even more crucial in the current

climate. Two thirds of our funds are allocated to overseas work. We run a program called 'Bible a Month' which allows people to donate £5 a month, which buys a Bible for someone, who can not afford to buy their own. Our website will also tell people more about what we do and our latest news. And personally, I would appreciate prayer for the different projects I'm involved in, that fresh and exciting opportunities would come my way, and that I will rise to the challenge of this daunting task.

David, it certainly sounds as if you have a busy life with the work you do and your family. Thank you for your time, the BCC website looks forward to more updates on your work and the Bible Society.

To find out more about the Bible Society and its work visit the website at www.biblesociety.org.uk

(With thanks to our Press Officer, Rebekah Watson, for putting this together.)