

SHARING A MESSAGE OF LOVE ON VALENTINE'S DAY

On 14 February each year millions of cards, flowers and tokens of love and affection are sent and received with varying degrees of pleasure, relief and amusement.

There are several legends behind the origin of Valentine's Day, with at least three different St Valentines mentioned in early religious texts. The most accepted version of the origins of Valentine's Day is that it is the day when Valentine, a priest in Rome, was assassinated by Emperor Claudius II. It is believed that the young priest conducted illegitimate wedding ceremonies in the capital. Claudius claimed that married men made poor soldiers and consequently decreed that all marriages of younger citizens would be outlawed. Valentine, however, maintained that marriage was part of God's plan and purpose for the world. He continued to conduct marriages in secret in the name of love.



Valentine was jailed, beaten, stoned and ultimately beheaded, but not before he fell in love with the jailor's daughter. It is said that on the evening of his execution he passed her a note which read 'from your Valentine', inspiring the modern traditions of Valentine's Day.¹

¹ BBC website



Valentine's Day is a popular event in current culture, with an estimated one billion cards sent each year (making it the second largest card-sending occasion of the year). It is therefore an ideal opportunity for the church to share something of God's faithful and boundless love for us.

This Mission File aims to get your church thinking about ways in which to share God's love at this time of year. If you try any of the following ideas, or others of your own, please let us know how you get on!

♥ Use the Valentine's Day weekend to advertise your church, reminding the community of how much God loves them and that church is a place to experience God's love. Perhaps order posters from Christian Publishing and Outreach (CPO) which can be overprinted with details of events. Order the Valentine's Day posters and folders to publicise your event, or to use as invitations to specific events. See <http://www.cpo-online.org.uk>



♥ Produce Valentine's Day cards for church members to send to their friends and neighbours with a text reminding them of how much God loves them. Perhaps use the over-printable folders from CPO, or design your own cards.

♥ Invite couples who have been married at the church in the previous few years to a candle-lit meal. Perhaps include a short talk on a marriage-related subject.

♥ Arrange for church members to offer free or low-cost baby sitting for couples with young children, to enable them to have an evening out on Valentine's Day. Perhaps this could be repeated on a regular basis?

♥ Invite people to watch a film together (something which deals with relationships, as appropriate to the age/background of those who will attend) and follow it by a discussion over refreshments. Don't forget to check that you have the correct copyright licence to allow you to show a film - see http://www.ccli.co.uk/licences/churches_showing-films.cfm for details

♥ Give away gloves (G-loves) as a symbol of kindness and a reminder that God loves us.

♥ Make kindness fashionable again – do something kind and pass it on, eg encourage church members to serve the community through a 'clean up the neighbourhood' day, offer to take an older neighbour out for a day, invite a lonely person for a meal, etc.

♥ Advertise marriage preparation courses, not only to couples being married in your church but have a word with the local Registrar about offering such courses to those being married in Civil ceremonies.

Suitable courses include:

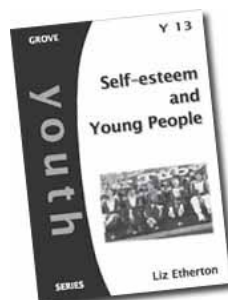
- *Marriage God's Way* - a DVD course by Selwyn Hughes ideal for use in groups or by couples on their own. The pack has two DVDs, workbook and audio CD and is available from CWR for £34.99. Order from <http://www.cwrstore.org.uk>

- *The Marriage Preparation Course* at Holy Trinity Brompton has been run since 1985. It is now available for others to use, whether in a large group or with one or two couples in a home environment. For more details, see www.themarriagecourse.org

- A new resource being developed by Care for the Family and Holy Trinity Brompton will be coming soon. *Prepare for Marriage* is an initiative to support couples starting out in married life, and more details will be available from www.prepareformarriage.org. This new website will provide resources for engaged couples about marriage preparation courses, wedding planning, and much more. Couples will be able to find out about courses that are available in their local area, read useful and relevant articles, and access practical help for the issues that many engaged couples face.

♥ Offer low cost wedding services – see *Heavenly Weddings that don't cost the Earth* by Susan Sayers ISBN: 978 1 84417 297 9 Price: £9.99

♥ Run a workshop on self-esteem for teenage girls / boys. A useful resource for this is the Grove booklet Y13 *Self esteem and young people*, by Liz Etherton ISBN: 9781851747078 (Price £3.50). After exploring the meaning of the term, this helpful study offers some biblical reflections before setting out practical approaches to building self-esteem.



- ♥ Begin a series of Bible studies for homegroups which look at issues of love and relationships.

Courses include:

- *Connect Bible Study What does the Bible say about Friends* (the American TV series) ISBN: 9781859997758 £3.99

- *A Journey of Love* study guide by Kate Hayes, published by Scripture Union ISBN: 184427232X (Cost £3.99). How can we share the good news with an apparently uninterested world? Delve deeper into John's portrayal of Jesus' mission, and discuss what it means for us to reach out to others in love today with the help of these interactive studies.

- *Song of Songs – Love in the City* Bible study available for download from <http://biblestudies.stores.yahoo.net/soofsoloinci.html>

- ♥ Make the theme of Sunday's services 'Love' as a reminder of God's perfect and faithful love, and celebrating our relationship with him and each other. Perhaps use a sketch



from the book *Actually Love?* by Pete Townsend ISBN: 978 1 84417 246 7 Price: £13.99.

This series of sketches can easily be used during the 'adults only' section of the service. With an introduction to each sketch

and pertinent Bible verse, each one could be used as a link to the main sermon. The sketches use the minimum of props and require two actors. Overall, the sketches are intended to be fun to perform, fun to watch and fun to reflect upon as you wonder whether it's . . . actually love.

- ♥ Organise a 'memory day' for those who have been bereaved – sending personal invitations and giving opportunity for people to be prayed for and share memories of loved ones.

- ♥ Hold a craft morning for children to include making and decorating heart shaped biscuits. Invite parents and carers to come and be served coffee and biscuits at the end of the morning. As an expression of love for their parents/carers, the children could be encouraged to decorate the tables and serve the refreshments.



- ♥ Encourage married couples to work together through *Building a Better Marriage - 15 Minute Life Changer* a booklet by David and Maureen Brown. Through thirty short daily readings, practical insights and ideas for reflection and action, this book offers real help to rebuild and strengthen relationships, revealing biblical perspectives on:

- o Establishing good foundations
- o Importance of trust
- o The marriage covenant
- o Communication
- o Love and respect
- o Building to last.

Available from CWR for just £1.25 per copy, your church could make a Valentine's gift to all the married couples who attend. Order from <http://www.cwrstore.org.uk>

- ♥ Offer a service of re-affirmation of wedding vows, with a celebratory meal afterwards.
- ♥ Hold a competition to find the longest-married couple in your community with prizes from the local businesses and shops.

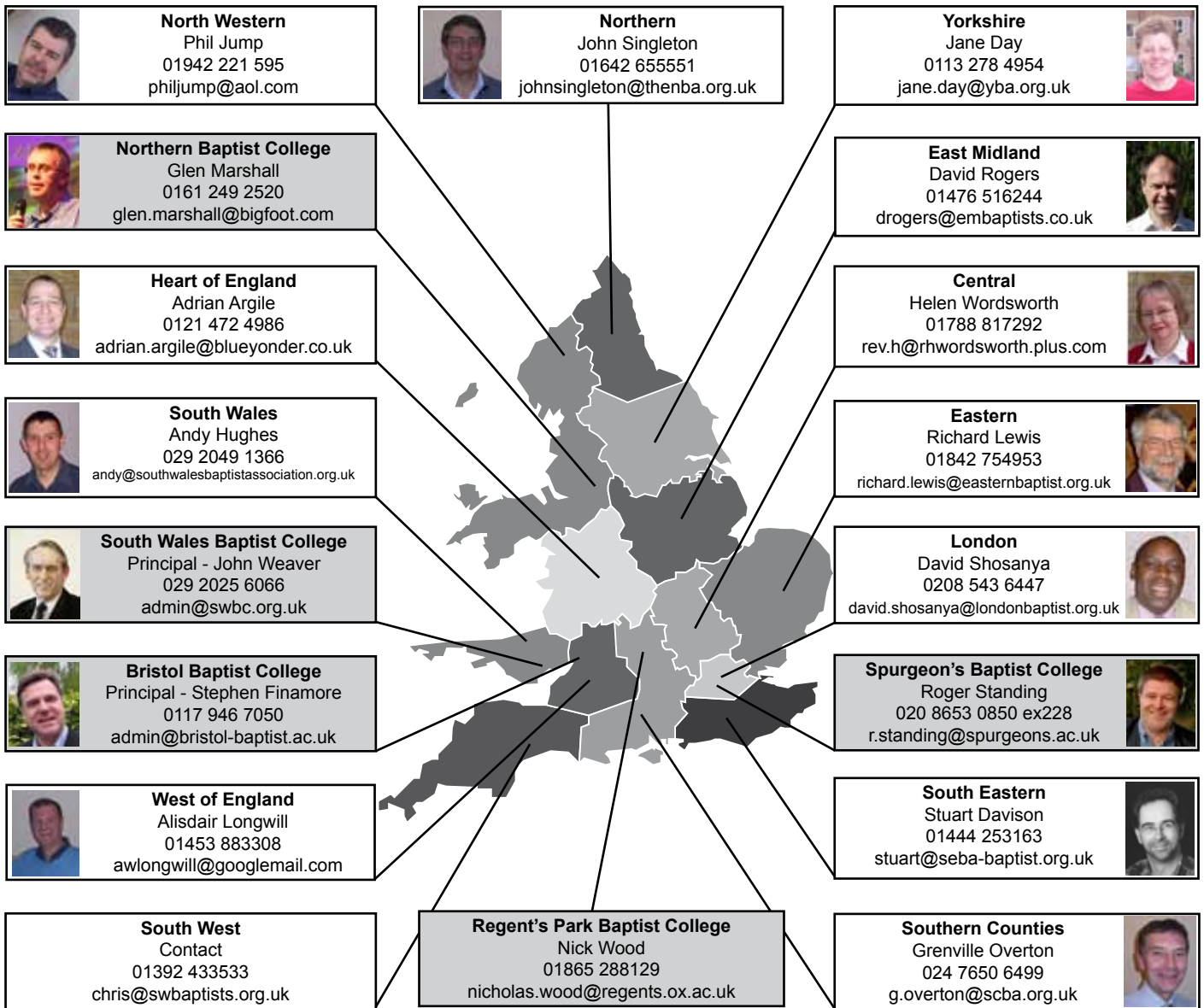
Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

1 Corinthians 13: 4-5



This leaflet is one of a series which has been produced by the Mission Department.

For more information about mission ideas for Valentine's Day please contact your local association or college (see contact details below) or contact the department on 01235 517713 / email mission@baptist.org.uk



www.baptist.org.uk/mission

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