

Assembly Review Survey (October 2016)

The Baptist Assembly has played an important part in our life as Baptists Together. Since 2013, we have been experimenting purposefully with the style and format of Assembly, with an overnight gathering in 2014, two one day gatherings in 2015 and 2016; and plans for a one-day Assembly in 2017 with an additional Sunday gathering.

The intention has always been to review the experience after the 2016 Assembly: to reflect on what Assembly means to us; and to look at options for the future. The beginning of that process was a survey and the following captures something of the responses – most often in the participants’ own words.

Who completed the survey? (About You Q1-12)

We received a total of 984 responses to our Survey Monkey survey, along with 18 additional comments via email which have been added to the survey (a total of 1000 people as 2 emailed extra comments in addition to the survey).

Ministers

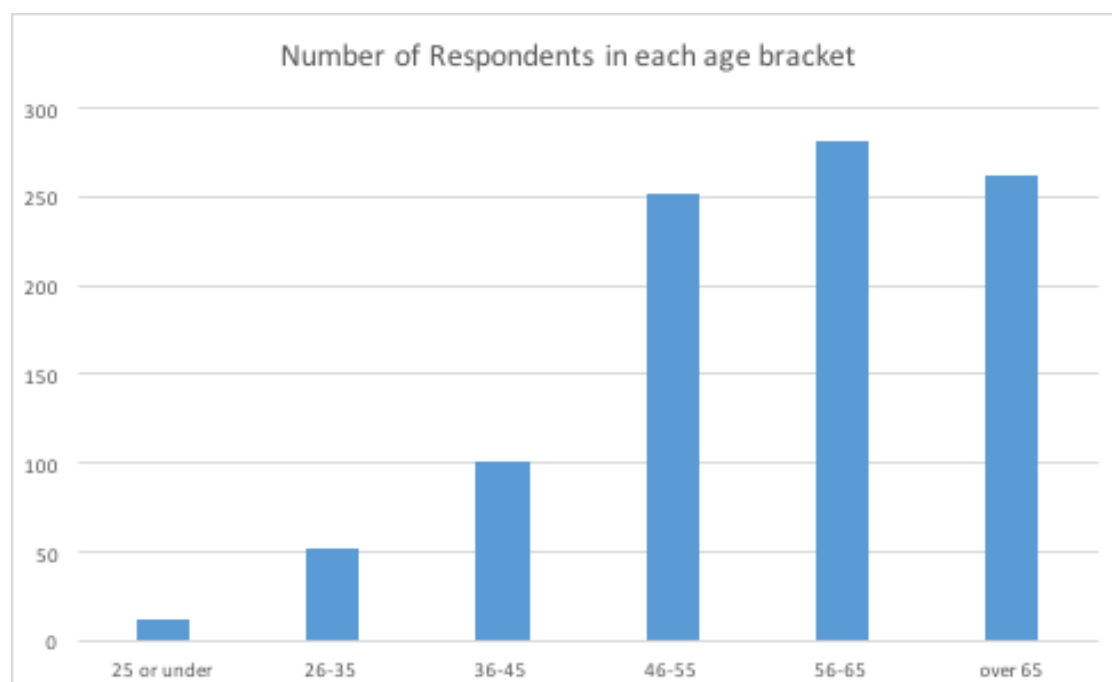
Of those who completed the question, 519 are ministers (52.8%) and 464 are not ministers (47.2%). 17 people did not answer the question.

15 of the 38 Regional Ministers completed the survey (39%)

Retired

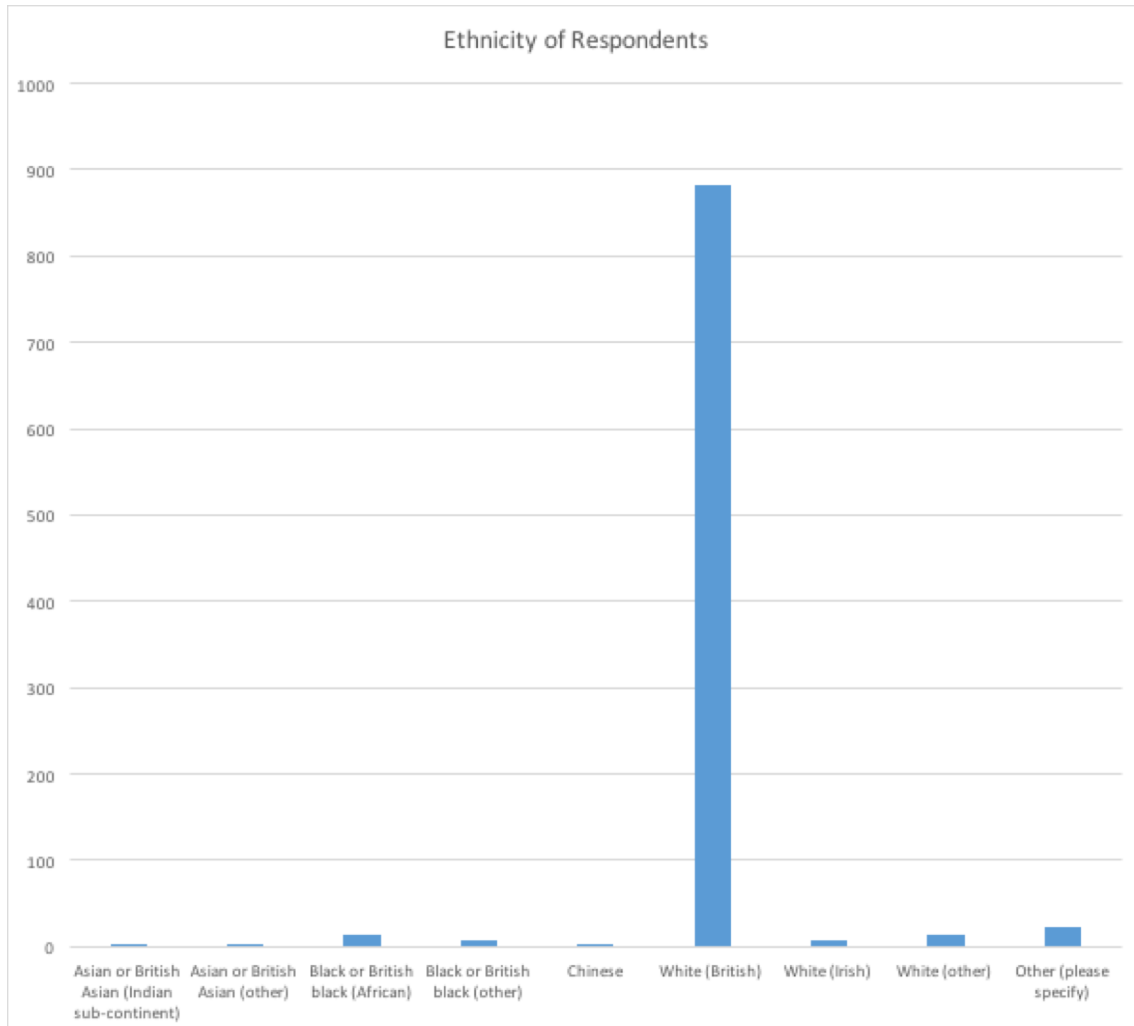
Of the 52% who responded to the question, 82 people (16%) identified themselves as ‘retired’.

Age



Ethnicity

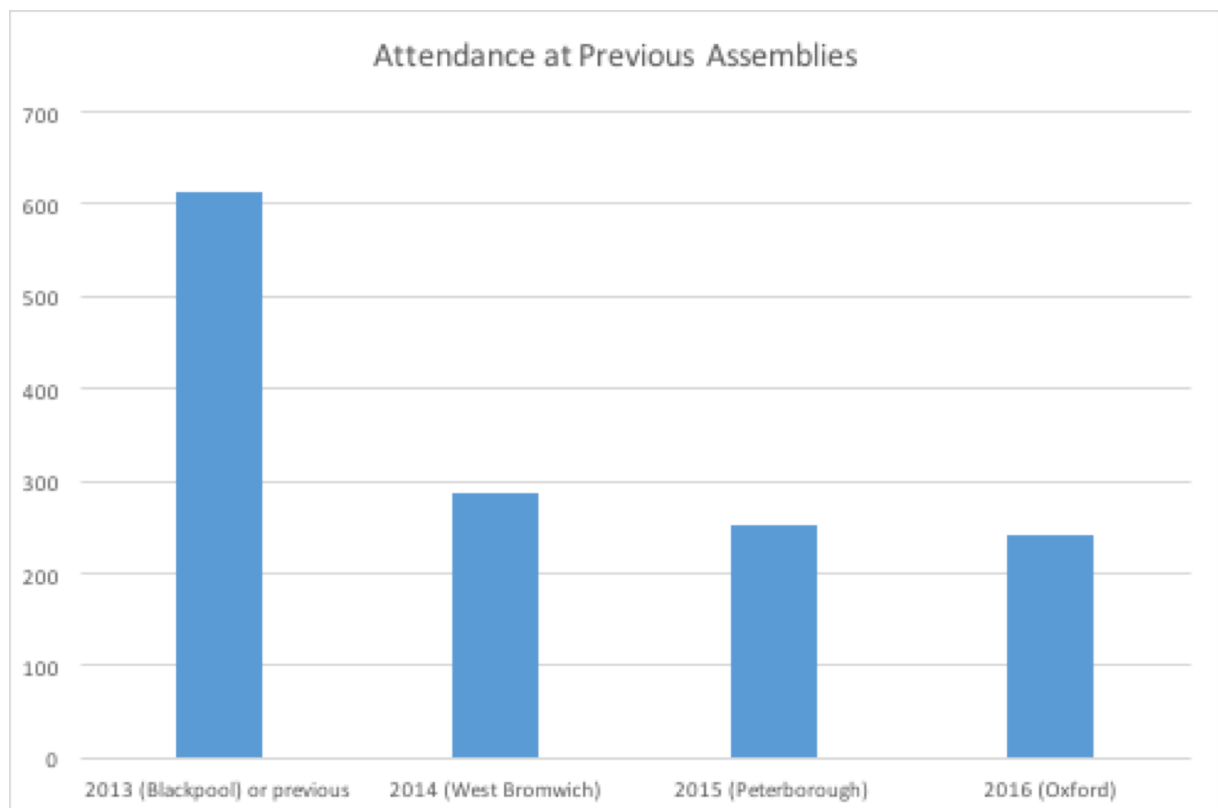
97% of the people responding to the survey completed this question, 92.5% of whom describe themselves as White (British).



Ethnicity	Number of people
Asian or British Asian (Indian sub-continent)	2
Asian or British Asian (other)	3
Black or British black (African)	13
Black or British black (other)	8
Chinese	2
White (British)	883
White (Irish)	7
White (other)	15
Other (please specify)	22

Assembly Attendance

733 respondents stated that they have attended Assembly before (74%) – thereby indicating that 251 had not (26%).



Attendance at previous Assembly	Number of people
2013 (Blackpool) or previous	613
2014 (West Bromwich)	286
2015 (Peterborough)	252
2016 (Oxford)	241

These figures indicate that:

25.6% of people answering the survey attended the one-day Assembly in Peterborough

24.5% of people answering the survey attended the one-day Assembly in Oxford

When asked whether they plan to attend the 2017 Assembly in Harrogate, 424 people said Yes (46.5%) and 488 people said No (53.5%)

Attendance: Ministers and Non Ministers

Non Ministers Age 36-45

It was my first experience of Baptist Assembly and I really enjoyed it. I came because I very much want to be a part of the future of the Baptist development in this country. I really

valued the day, understanding the concept of the Baptist Union here in the UK and overseas more fully, and understanding the strategic potential. **AK**

The highlight of assembly was the opportunity to catch up with people. That no longer exists. To sacrifice precious days of there has to be a compelling reason. The assembly isn't compelling enough. **GD**

Non Ministers Age 46-55

Not sure what I would gain by attending - tends to be only elders that attend **SG**

I did not attend Peterborough as it was too far to go for one day, I am willing to travel for a weekend and have been to assemblies all over the country. I enjoy assembly as it is an opportunity to hear the latest goings on in both union and bms. I have also been to seminars for treasurers and bms reps as both apply to me. The thing I value is the sense of family and unity being part of the bigger picture. **SG**

Thought it was for church leaders **AC**

We attended assembly as a family almost every year since it started being held over the bank holiday weekend (2000 in Plymouth) because it provided great fellowship and spiritual nourishment for all ages, was an excellent place to meet up with old friends from past churches etc., provided us with ideas and inspiration to take back to our church and provided a real sense of community within the wider Baptist family. The West Bromwich assembly failed us on so many of these levels, and there seemed good reason to believe that subsequent assemblies would be similar, that we have not attended since. **NE**

Assembly is as much about relationships, networking which diminishes for one day. As a family we loved the assembly, great kids then youth work. It has been part of my kids spiritual journey and development. Going for 3 / 4 days meant a short break, recovered from a long drive to enjoy and be part of what was happening. You cant get that travelling for 1 day. The Baptist family needs to come together to enable it to stay focused, to be a denomination to be reckoned with. We also need to hear God together and be a prophetic voice but this cannot all happen on 1 day. **SR**

Non Ministers Over 65

I very much enjoyed the worship of assemblies and the stimulation of a variety of events, speakers and the sense of togetherness when it was held over a weekend or more than a one day event. While one day assemblies may give a taster, there is not the same sense of involvement. Haven't got a clue about the current leadership , who they are where they are from and whether they are part of a decision making process with proper authority from body of church members., **PR**

Only attend when important/relevant matters are to be debated relating directly to my church. **CU**

Not worth it for 12 hours. When it was a full assembly there was plenty of teaching, BMS and HM information, church networking, opportunities for debate and discussion and real worship. I attended assemblies for over 12 years taking time off work to do so but now ---- how can BUGB call these one day affairs an assembly! I am not prepared to spend money and time travelling to a destination for a 12 hour assembly. BUGB has ruined Baptist life by the way we have been treated. **KCM**

I attended the weekend Assemblies which mixed the business with worship teaching and meeting with friends. It was a break we looked forward to each year. I attended as a Delegate for 11 years until the format changed **CG**

Ministers Age 26-35

One day is not worth the cost or time.

MITs – Academic deadlines are near the date that Assembly is held. When able to apply – no tickets available.

Attended because of handshake

Ministers Age 36-45

Handshake

Meeting friends

One day event doesn't work

More interaction needed, not just presentations

No tickets available

Ministers – Age 46-55

The aim, quality and value of Assembly is not clear

I attend to hear how God is working in other areas of Baptist life for encouragement and for my own prayers and to have a sense of overall vision and purpose within God's work as a whole. **FH**

The last 2 Assemblies I attended because they were for one day rather than a whole weekend. **IH**

I enjoyed assembly for the relationships it built and the opportunity for conversations and meeting people that otherwise I don't see. But the one day assemblies don't give that opportunity. Plus I've been unhappy with the direction our structures have taken and wanted a break from it all. **RH**

I have never attended. It has never seemed relevant to me. **AF**

Networking with friends, being inspired by what God is doing across the Union, being resourced, receiving teaching etc I have appreciated the longer assemblies in the past - there's something about chilling over a coffee after an evening session with old friends and

new in your B&B/not having to worry about a long journey home/ feeling like it's a real break away from church ministry with time to reflect. I feel the more recent 1 day assemblies have lost this. **CK**

I used to come to network, to hear some good lectures and to hear what the BUGB is doing (I liked the Public Resolutions for example - it made me feel that we had a voice as a denomination) **SN**

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BU Assembly is completely irrelevant and I would rather put my time and money to far better use in ministry, especially since there is no voice for those on the margins of Baptist life in a stage-managed Assembly. **SC**

Many people in this category are not happy with the one day model and are asking for a longer event to offset travel time and to allow more time for each element of the event.

Ministers – Age 56-65

One day model is not worth it.

Ministers – Age Over 65

I was very disappointed with the Assembly the last two times I attended, and am unlikely to attend again, especially as I now have to pay, as the costs are no longer covered by the Church. **MB**

Because Assembly should be at the heart of our Baptist associating. It should be a place where we Face big issues and make decisions about our shared community and structures - a place to celebrate and a place to grieve - a place of worship and prayer **RK**

Assembly Programme (Q13-16)

What are the highlights of Assembly for you?

What would you miss if it was not there?

- All groups mentioned *praise and worship* as a highlight
- The 46-55s and 56-65s mentioned *speakers* as being a draw, and the under 25s/26-35 valued *opportunities to learn*
- *Socialising/catching up with friends* was more mentioned by the younger age groups and the over 65s
- The *children's programme* as a highlight was mainly mentioned by the 36-45 age group
- *Ministerial recognition/missionary commissioning/being part of a wider Baptist family* was a draw for the middle age groups (36-65)
- The Over 65s valued hearing from the *President*
- The 46-55s mentioned particularly hearing about *Union and Association work*
- The Over 65s valued an *exhibition/bookshop*

- "Ministerial Networking, Ministerial Recognition, Ministerial conversation, Ministerial Celebration" (KW, 36-45)
- BMS presentation – "my view is that currently the BMS is the most successful aspect of the Union" (AH, 36-45)

What would you not miss from the programme if it wasn't there?

What should we not do?

- All groups mentioned *business/formal sessions/AGMs*
- Older groups (46 onwards) mentioned *Seminars/breakout groups/workshops*
- Older groups (46 onwards) mentioned various things to do with *worship* ('noisy' worship/too much standing/'samey' music/monotonous music)
- The Over 65s asked that Assembly not be *too rushed/try to cram too much in*

- "Yes, I want to worship God, but I feel that so much of the time is taken up 'Celebrating' that we cannot worship in other ways, like prayerfully considering and debating the future and life of the union." (LP, 26-35)

What could we do that would be appealing to you and make you want to come?

Is it to do with cost, venue, programme, speakers, something else?

- All groups mentioned *location/venue, cost and length* as being factors.
- The middle age groups particularly mentioned *travel time* and distance/cost/length factors: "If I'm going to have to travel a significant distance it needs to be for a decent amount of time" (KT, 36-45)
- The 46-55 were keen that any venue had parking
- Most respondents (of any age) wanted a *longer, weekend* Assembly. However there were significant numbers who valued a *one day* Assembly
- The younger age groups wanted a *varied programme*

- The 46-55 and 56-65 groups wanted *high quality speakers/teaching*
- “I think the programme being more varied than sitting in your seat the whole time” (SC, Under 25/26-35)
- “place of nourishment not strictly business” (TC, Under 25/26-35)
- “I also like having speakers from within the Baptist family, a real family event” (BD, Under 25/26-35)
- “Honestly, I don’t know whether it could ever be a priority. That’s not to say I don’t think it’s important or that I think it shouldn’t happen – far from it. It’s just there are so many other things competing and limited time/money.” (CM, Under 25/26-35)

Is it important that Assembly is intergenerational?

Is a children’s and youth programme important?

What should it look like?

Does providing a children’s and youth programme make you more or less likely to attend Assembly?

- There was general support from all ages for *children’s and youth activities*, but not necessarily for Assembly being truly intergenerational.
- Children’s and youth activities were seen as a way of *enabling those with children/young people to be able to attend*: ‘Don’t need it personally, but important for others’; ‘my children are grown up now, but important for children to be part of Assembly’
- Significant numbers across the ages said they didn’t/wouldn’t/hadn’t brought their children to Assembly as it *‘wasn’t that kind of event’*
- The over 65s made the point that intergeneration is not just about children, we need to include the older generation too
- “the youth programme at these events has not been attractive to me in the past as it is very prescriptive about what young people are supposed to be like” (anon, under 25/26-35)
- “all age worship is important but so is age specific worship” (KJ, under 25/26-35)
- “I wouldn’t say that we’re being intergenerational by doing that [providing a children’s and youth programme] though” (LP, under 25/26-35)
- “I would be unlikely to bring my children to a BU assembly” (MR, under 25/26-35)
- “I like that Assembly is intergenerational, but my own children are not keen on coming” (DM, under 25/26-35)
- “I’m not sure it is massively important. I think its hard to do intergenerational with over 1000 people. A youth and children’s programme important. But unlikely we would ever come as a family” (AG, under 25/26-35)
- “not important that it is intergenerational, but without a youth programme you will lose those of child-rearing years which IS important” (William Ruddle, 36-45)
- “Not sure it needs to be intergenerational but vital of course to have provision for kids and youth.” (CB – but representative of lots of responses, 45-55)
- “Yes. But we don’t put that across in our churches I don’t think. Can we have teenagers as delegates?” (KG, 55-65) – also calls to look at Quaker and URC models of youth engagement, and for a separate Baptist Youth Assembly.
- Intergenerational is not just about children, need to include the older generation too

- “Increasingly important if young people are to feel part of the wider Baptist family.” (JM, over 65)
- “I am all for everything being as intergenerational as possible. Perhaps this is bound to mean some separate sessions. I wouldn’t expect a typical 10-year old to appreciate the sort of theological or biblical or socio-political (gospel related) speaker that I’d appreciate, nor – probably – would I much appreciate what would appeal to them. But to be together – yes!” (PB, over 65)

Why Assembly (Q17)

There's certainly a consistent feeling that we need to gather: it's a reminder that we belong to something more than the local church, that we are part of larger movement, and that **connecting and the relationship building** that takes place at Assembly is too important to lose.

Other fairly consistent themes emerged: **to encourage and inspire one another, face challenges together, learn from each other, conduct some Baptist business (commissioning is a highlight), collective discernment and worship, to receive new ideas, celebrate our unity and diversity**

It's particularly important for **smaller churches**, to feel part of a larger body

The description "**the church meeting of our Union**" (or something similar) appeared a few times.

"Assembly can help cement the Union together"

Some said it should be for **debates and making policy**; others said **it shouldn't be so deliberative**.

There was a mix of opinion about **who it should be for**. The dominant opinion was that it should be for **everyone in our churches**, but there was a sizeable minority who said it should be **just for ministers**. Ministers need refreshment.

Other ideas featured things like more storytelling, more crowd sourced contributions; moving it midweek; splitting it in 2, moving it to a university campus, encourage more of an Association and College contribution, access to all who want to come; videoing speakers for regional gatherings

Issues

"Very few people in Baptist churches have any great loyalty to the denomination, so the things that make them even consider going to a Christian event – speakers, worship – are likely to be outweighed by the denominational stuff that has no interest"

Lots of concerns about just one day – not long enough

"I have no idea what it's for – one of the main reasons I don't go. It could be considering the denomination as a whole and taking decisions. It could be a large conference for Baptists. At the moment it doesn't feel like it does any of these things in particular." PF (26-35)

"It cannot be all things to all people all at once." JM 26-35

More space to ask “What should we be doing?” rather than “this is what we’re doing”. More deliberately deliberative.

What’s it for? Key words

Gathering/connecting people in Baptist churches for fellowship, resourcing, worship and prayer, discerning. Finding new ways of engaging in mission.

Celebrating together

Encouragement, inspiration

Face challenges together

Sharing ideas and stories

Discernment

Commissioning

Reminder that we belong to more than just our local church; Demonstrate “togetherness of our Union”

Highlight important issues

Some official Baptist business; Business/AGM

Help maintain unity through diversity

Finding a national voice

Contribute to shaping of the future of the Union. To debate and make policy (however others said it shouldn’t be deliberative)

“It is the church meeting of the Union”

All who can should be involved, but particularly those who have leadership responsibility (“take a break from pastoral responsibility”

Share sector ministry

Other ideas

We need to be trying to attract entire church groups

Moving it mid-week

More help for ministers to get there

Separate gathering specifically for ministers – more pastoral care and encouragement

Should be an attractive event in its own right, with attractive theme, keynote speakers from outside the Baptist family

Some press post event about what Baptists have got up and think
Meet on a university campus, so everybody comes together to be literally in a community

A more regional approach. More frequent roadshows?
Those leading growing churches should be asked to take prominent roles

More story sharing, listening and debate. More hearing from delegates. The need to sense what God is saying to the Union.

“I wonder why we gather in buildings with no windows”

Mandatory for ministers.

It should be a gathering just for ministers

Seminars should be on resourcing church, everyday problems, not just focusing on what to do about Trident

If the costs aren't being covered by demand, stop completely

A forum where people can pitch ideas, and look for collaborators. Less emphasis on centrally crafted programme, more on curating a range of crowd sourced-contributions

To allow many different fringe meetings to happen – all the people who spend the year on their own and could do with the encouragement

Maybe not every year?

Have valued the symbolic exchange of prayers (boxes in 2015, flames in 2016)

The word Assembly is off-putting

2 very different gatherings held less frequently (one a General Assembly; one a mini Spring Harvest)

Modify the BU/BMS dominance in planning Assembly – allow Associations/Colleges/another group a significant contribution

It's very Baptist – maybe something evangelistic could be added so Baptists could bring their families in to a non-threatening event

Anyone who can be should be there

'Develop a Baptist view on issues which if often noticeable by its absence

Video streaming a la Willow Creek, that can then be used

Doing the legal butts online to free up more space

Could the AGMs of BU and BMS be done elsewhere

A residential weekend every 3 years with 1-day events in between?

Is time to lead the Union in its theological deliberations rather than try to be all things to all men?

Same format, programme, content and speakers being replicated in different regions

Non ministers v ministers

Generally v little difference. The non ministers said it should be for everyone, while a smaller number highlighted the importance of ministers being there. Very few, but not no one, said it should be primarily for leaders only, or those with leadership responsibilities.

Quite a few non-ministers didn't answer the question

More ministers than non ministers said it should be for ministers only (particularly in the 46-55 bracket), but a significant number said it should be open to all.

Quotes

For gathering/Baptist ecclesiology:

"It gives a personal relationship to the wider family rather than being awkward penpals"

"If our forebears recognised they needed it, so should we!"

"Baptists Together more than just a strapline" AP

"We need to gather as a national movement because it is part of our DNA as Baptists to do so" JH 46-55

"Assembly is fundamental to the structure of Baptist ecclesiology" CR

"It's a way of encouraging a broader view of Baptist life – members of bigger churches don't appreciate the life of those smaller church and just what is happening in God's name around the country." CT

"I'm not sure how to answer this, except to say that I think it is good to gather together - even if nothing else happened - I think the 'assembling' is more significant than putting on a Christian conference type event. DM

“physical presence is a key component of Christian fellowship. If we lost the only way which we all can meet up, I would fear the consequence it has long term on the union. JJ

It's critically important to demonstrate the "togetherness" of the union in a way that is physical rather than technological and to seek the heart of God for our union and mission in that arena. ST

“it's harder to 'de-humanise' someone you're worshipping next to or having dinner or a pint with. DCS

Appreciation

“I have been a minister of a small church who sent delegates to the Assembly for the first time. It completely transformed them personally and corporately helped the church to feel part of a greater whole.” SMW

“I feel more linked with BU as a result. Sometimes as a church, we can overlook the connection with this organisation - I am keen to maintain this link and feedback to our own church when we return. No one else from our church attends sadly. I think cost may be a factor. As a couple we do thrive on big Christian events - it provides much to consider and always challenges us in our walk with Christ.” LH (56-65)

Difficulties of discerning

“There may be important issues to discuss but difficult to conduct debate in a large assembly.” AS

Discerning the mind of God for us as a denomination is problematic – churches can and do develop their own discernment. So the gathering should be celebration, lament, conversation, sharing. HG

General ideas/thoughts

“Baptist churches can be very isolated. I want an inspirational, forward looking event that brings us together to pray and to support each other.” ML

I would suggest a clearer equipping/training focus might be better (that's what conferences are normally for) NA (36-45)

“What is not reflected in the question is the fit between regional meetings/assemblies and the national assembly. Arguably the need to meet is best met locally, with national input where required.” AL

“It's also that non-ministers hear directly from BMS, or that ministers and others hear and learn together.” ME

“More thinking together on big topics (like poverty issues, refugee issues, SSM etc.) as a union of churches. There are representative forums for other groups but only this one for a national gathering of churches and Baptist members of churches.” MF

“It's about identity, and that's the trouble - most folk in most Churches in 2016 just see themselves as "Christians", and what they often see as "labels" leaves them cold at best, if not mildly hostile. It may not always be so, and perhaps therefore the main purpose of Assembly for the immediately foreseeable future is to maintain a sense of who we are as specifically Baptist Christians and maintain a dialogue.” MB

No idea!

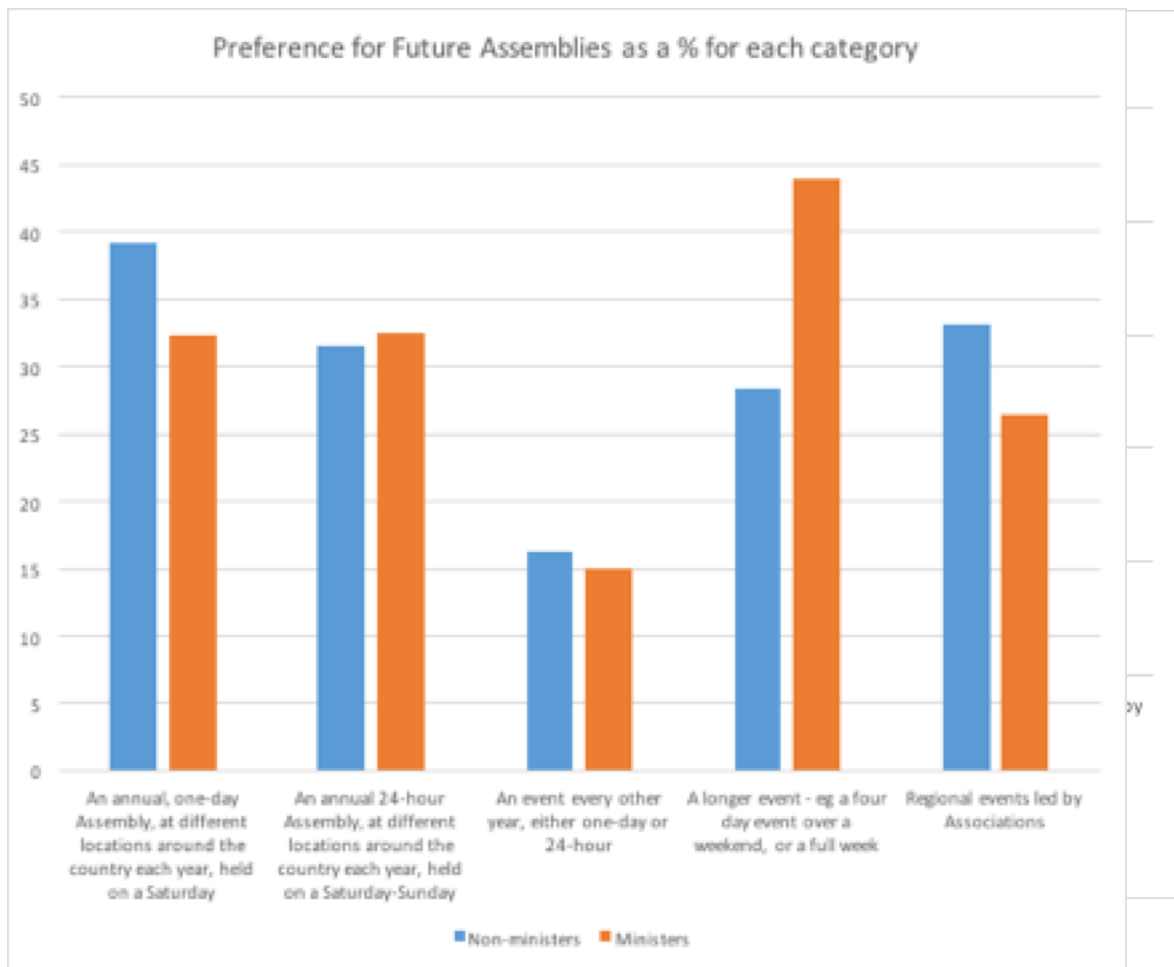
“No Idea, utterly pointless waste of money!” MPS

Good questions. 40 years a baptist and I have no idea JF

**Assembly Future
(Q18-20)**

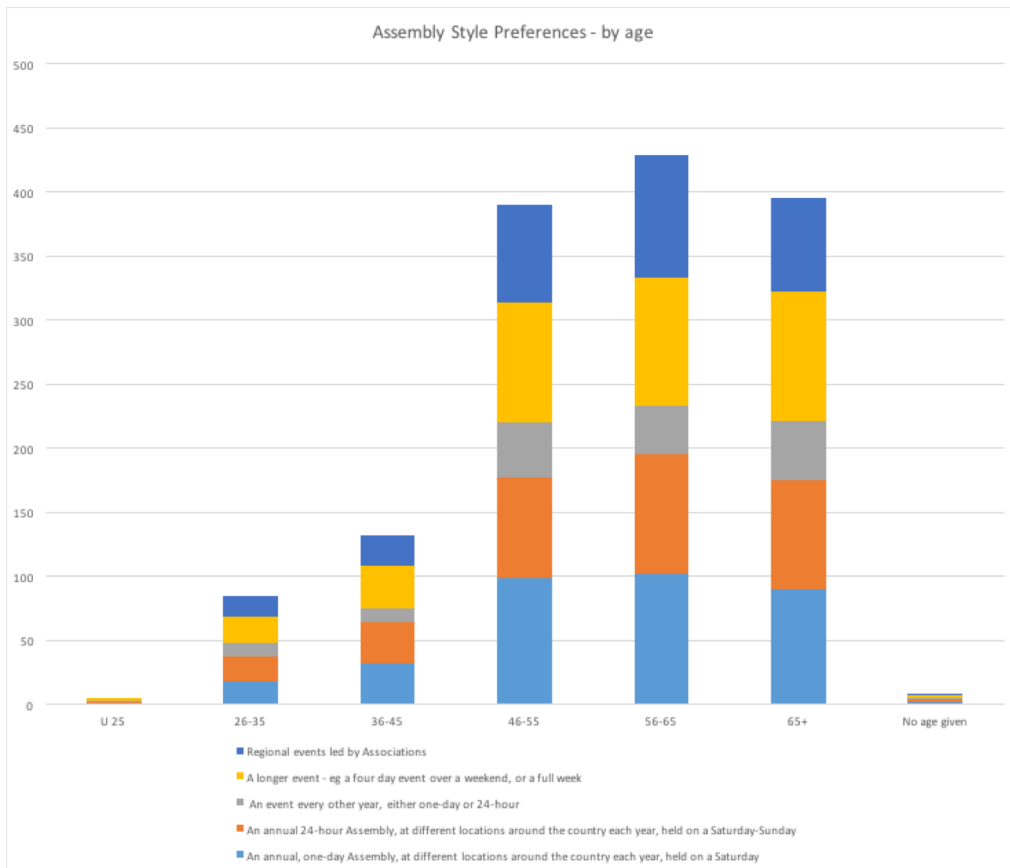
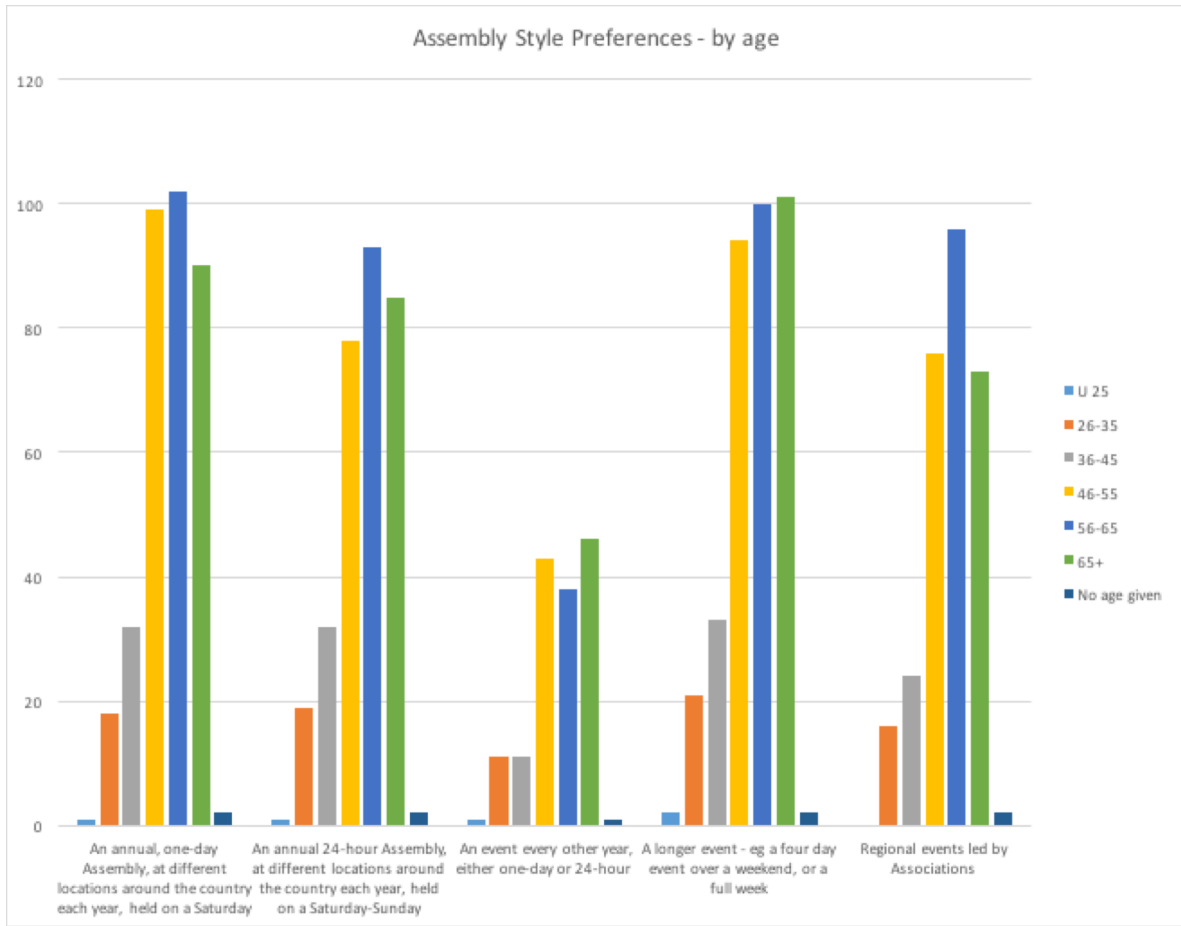
- Looking to the future, which of these options for Assembly would you support?

MINISTERS / NON-MINISTERS	Non-ministers (459 people)	Ministers (508 people)	Not specified (17 people)
An annual, one-day Assembly, at different locations around the country each year, held on a Saturday	180	163	1
An annual 24-hour Assembly, at different locations around the country each year, held on a Saturday-Sunday	145	165	0
An event every other year, either one-day or 24-hour	75	75	1
A longer event - eg a four day event over a weekend, or a full week	130	219	4
Regional events led by Associations	152	131	4



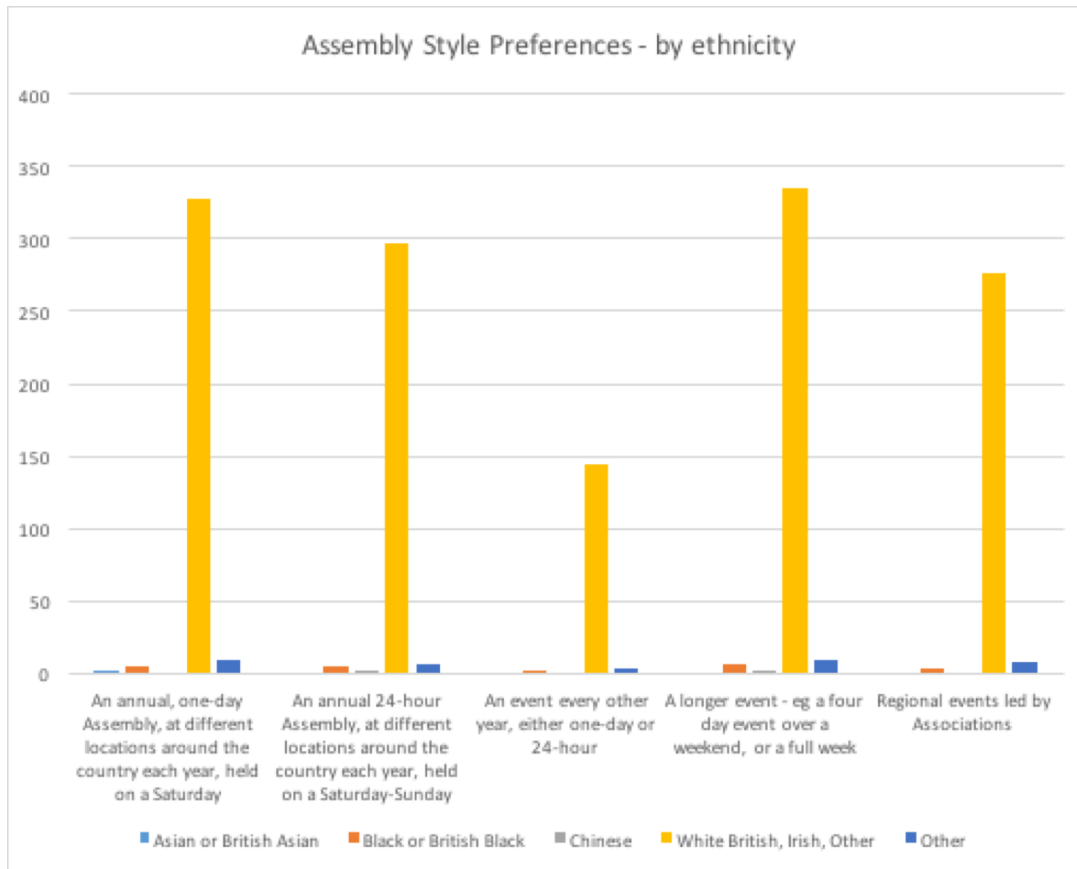
BY AGE	U 25 (12 people)	26-35 (52 people)	36-45 (101 people)	46-55 (252 people)	56-65 (282 people)	65+ (262 people)	No age (23 people)	TOTALS
An annual, one-day Assembly, at different locations around the country each year, held on a Saturday	1	18	32	99	102	90	2	344
An annual 24-hour Assembly, at different locations around the country each year, held on a Saturday-Sunday	1	19	32	78	93	85	2	310

An event every other year, either one-day or 24-hour	1	11	11	43	38	46	1	151
A longer event - eg a four day event over a weekend, or a full week	2	21	33	94	100	101	2	353
Regional events led by Associations	0	16	24	76	96	73	2	287



BY ETHNICITY	Asian or British Asian (5 people)	Black or British Black (13 people)	Chinese (2 people)	White British, Irish, Other (941 people)	Other (23 people)	TOTALS
An annual, one-day Assembly, at different locations around the country each year, held on a Saturday	2	5		327	10	344
An annual 24-hour Assembly, at different locations around the country each year, held on a Saturday-Sunday		5	1	297	7	310
An event every other year, either one-day or 24-hour		2		145	4	151
A longer event - eg a four day event over a weekend, or a full week		6	2	335	10	353
Regional events led by Associations		3		276	8	287

Little can be drawn from these figures, given the very small number of respondents who are not White British, Irish or Other



- **Comments/Why do you think this?**

Aim of Assembly

One of the most common themes expressed concerned the aim of Assembly. Much depends on who it is aimed at – and this will dictate the most appropriate timing. If it is mainly aimed at ministers, then a midweek event would work well, whereas if it is aimed at a wider audience, work commitments would mean that weekends would be preferable for most.

Many people were more concerned about the content – that it be inspiring, with visionary content, and time for discussion and fellowship – than the precise format. A few suggested inviting external speakers who may be a good ‘draw’ to attract people.

A National or Regional Gathering

Across all ages, people felt that a national gathering was important – rather than purely Association or Partnership based (only 4 people expressed the view that a national gathering wasn’t needed and that regional events were sufficient).

The majority of people who mentioned it, felt that Assembly should be annual (only 8 respondents suggested that it might take place every other year – possibly alternating with association events). This was important for continuity and to adhere to legal requirements.

The majority of all ages see the regional events as important, but not as an alternative to a national gathering.

A suggestion from quite a large number in the 46+ age groups was for an alternate years national Assembly with regional roadshow style events in the other years. These regional events would have national representation (and national coordination) – one person proposing that these should be free for members!

Venue

Most people were keen for the venue to vary, giving opportunity for it to be ‘local’ to different people each year.

A few favoured a single central location every year – which people could become familiar with.

Financial Considerations

- Across the ages, a large number of people are concerned about the cost involved in coming to Assembly, and many feel that longer events may exclude people because of the cost of travel and accommodation on top of the Assembly fee.
- People want to get ‘value for money’ and would be willing to pay for overnight accommodation in order to have the time to achieve more at Assembly
- They would be willing to travel further for a longer event
- The length of travel should not be greater than the length of the Assembly!
- Several people requested that we avoid expensive venues and suggested using a University campus (out of term time) or have a camping option

For several people, timing due to work / family commitments is key to their attendance.

One day Assembly

Those who like the one-day option felt that it was more easy to commit to (particularly if happening locally) and less expense involved in terms of time and money. However, they need to feel that it's worth taking the time out to attend – that their time will be well spent.

The overwhelming majority of responses felt that a one-day event was too rushed. There was insufficient time for theological reflection, fellowship, discussion of issues.

Many of the older age ranges (56+) described a feeling of disconnectedness from our Union, which hasn't been helped by the one-day Assembly. They want to feel more a part of what is going on.

Timing of Assembly

Numbers are pretty evenly split between having an annual one-day Assembly around the country on a Saturday, and returning to a longer event. (And little variation according to age or ethnicity – though we need to bear in mind that the number of younger and BME respondents was proportionally very low, so not a representative sample.)

A good number of people were keen on a return to the four-day bank holiday weekend – though several requested that we avoid the bank holidays.

Of those in favour of a longer event, some suggested a different format from previous long-weekend Assemblies (without saying what they'd like to see included).

A significant number of people (particularly from the 26-65 age brackets) proposed varying the duration each year – having a one-day or 24-hour event with an occasional 4-day Assembly – or alternating a one-day with a weekend / 24-hour Assembly. One person suggested holding a purely business meeting every year with an occasional 4-day weekend event with speakers and seminars.

A radical rethink

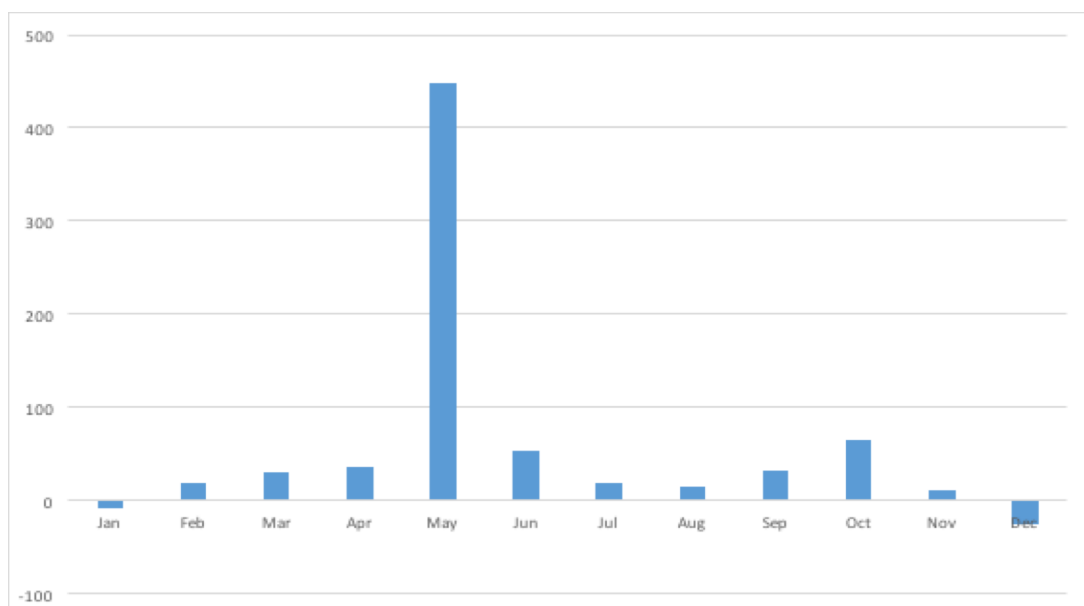
A number of people proposed making significant changes to the way in which we do Assembly, including:

- Use of webinars throughout the year so that information can be shared widely without needing to rely on Assembly
- Better use of 21st century technology such as using videolinks (of AGMS, Union/BMS business, keynote speakers) to local venues so that people can travel a shorter distance and still be part of the day. Individuals could engage in discussion on particular issues and then share their feedback with the 'central' venue.
- Combine Assembly with events such as Spring Harvest, New Wine, etc – by running a 'Baptist stream'
- Combine elements of Leading Edge with Assembly

- Launch issues for discussion at regional events in advance so that people have time to pray and discuss in their local church before sharing feedback at a national gathering
 - Use technology to facilitate sharing of issues for discussion in advance
 - Encourage special interest groups to hold other optional events pre- or post- Assembly
 - Do a big community activity together
 - Make Assembly something so radical that it makes the news headlines
 - Split up the time over a longer event into separate sections – Days for AGM, discernment, vision casting, separate times for worship, retreat, teaching – allowing people to buy tickets for all or part of it.
- In recent years, Assembly has been held in May. What time of year would you like to see Assembly held?

	Number for	Number against	Total
Jan	12	20	-8
Feb	30	12	18
Mar	33	3	30
Apr	40	4	36
May	465	17	448
Jun	55	2	53
Jul	28	10	18
Aug	24	10	14
Sep	43	12	31
Oct	74	9	65
Nov	12	2	10
Dec	4	29	-25

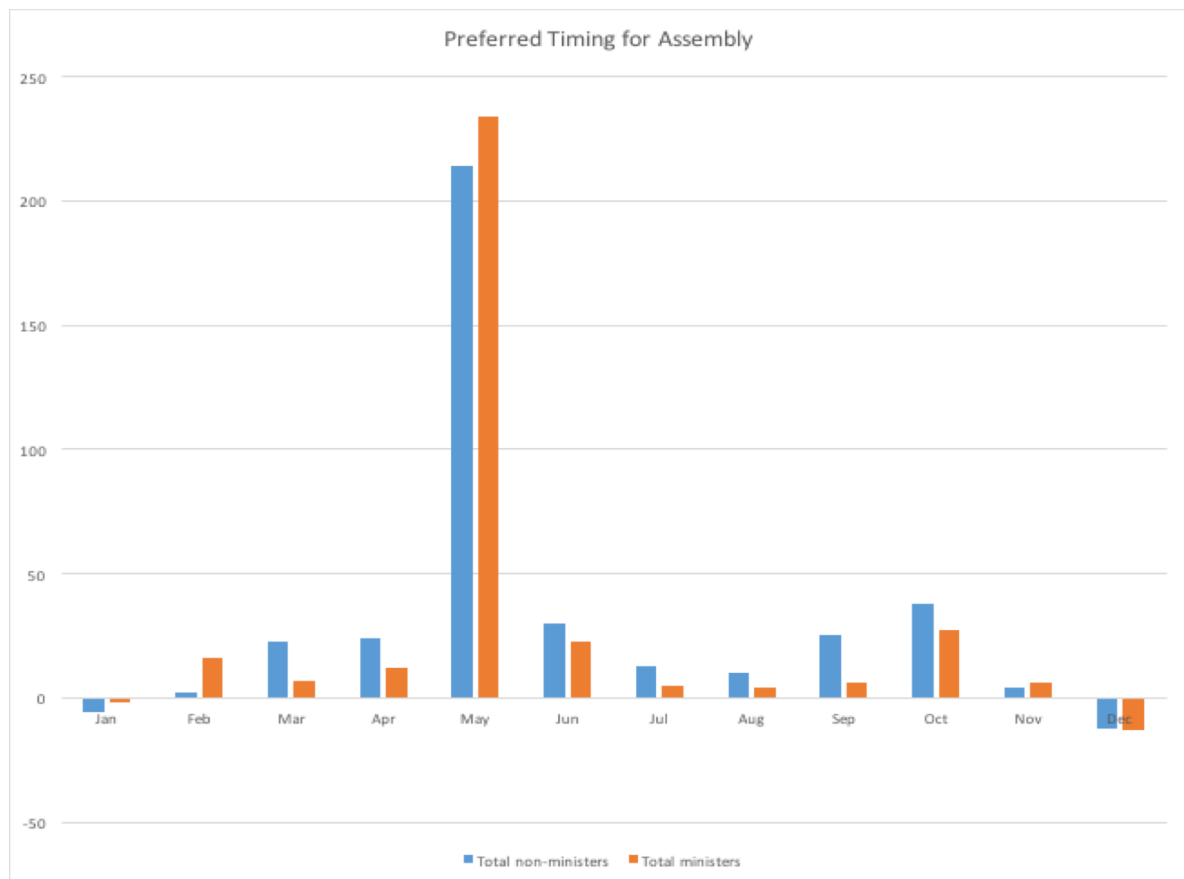
Other comments made about timing were:



Any time / no preference	131
Avoid Advent / Easter	23
Avoid Pentecost	3
Avoid Christian Aid Week	1
Avoid bank holidays	20
For bank holidays	16
Avoid school holidays	21
For school holidays	10

- Several people suggested avoiding New Wine, Keswick, etc
- Whilst May is a popular month, a number of people highlighted the difficulty for those taking exams at that time
- Four people suggested October half term as an option
- Two people requested that we avoid Cup Final day
- Since it will be impossible to find a time to suit everyone, some people suggested varying the time each year

The figures can be split according to whether or not the person is a ministers, as follows:

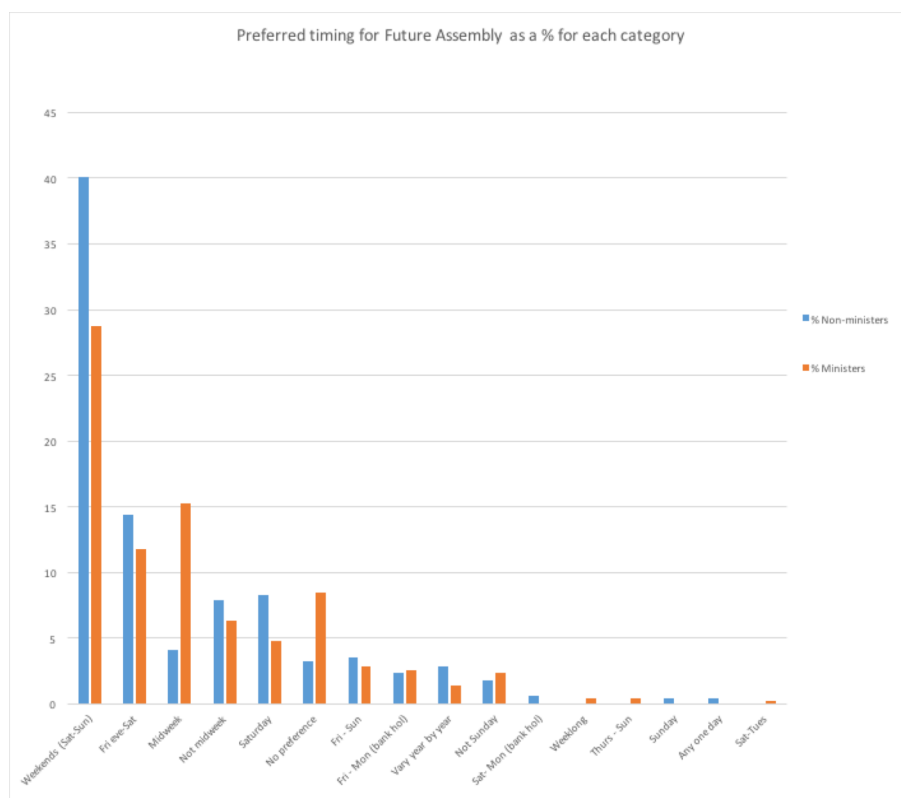


There were no particular trends by age or ethnicity.

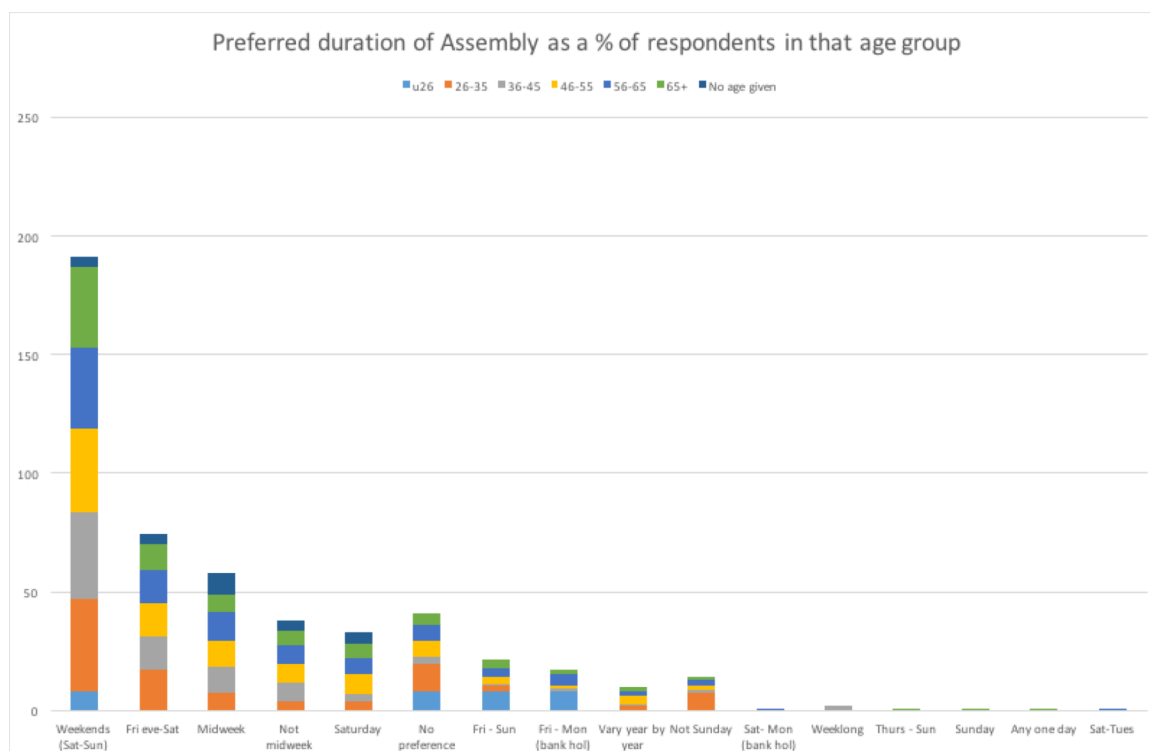
- **Should Assembly be held over a weekend? Or midweek? Or perhaps a Friday-Saturday?**

Again, a significant number of people (59) across the age spectrum (and ministers and non-ministers) stressed that timing of Assembly depends on the aim of Assembly, and who it is for. If it is primarily for ministers, then midweek would be preferable, but if Assembly is for the whole Baptist family, then weekends fit better with most work/ family patterns – reducing the need for people to take annual leave in order to attend.

	Non-minister	Minister	TOTAL
Weekends (Sat-Sun)	184	149	333
Fri eve-Sat	66	61	127
Midweek	19	79	98
Not midweek	36	33	69
Saturday	38	25	63
No preference	15	44	59
Fri - Sun	16	15	31
Fri - Mon (bank hol)	11	13	24
Vary year by year	13	7	20
Not Sunday	8	12	20
Sat- Mon (bank hol)	3	0	3
Weeklong	0	2	2
Thurs - Sun	0	2	2
Sunday	2	0	2
Any one day	2	0	2
Sat-Tues	0	1	1



BY AGE	U 25 (12 people)	26-35 (52 people)	36-45 (101 people)	46-55 (252 people)	56-65 (282 people)	65+ (262 people)	No age (23 people)	TOTAL (984 people)
Weekends (Sat-Sun)	1	20	37	89	96	89	1	333
Fri eve-Sat		9	14	35	40	28	1	127
Midweek		4	11	28	34	19	2	98
Not midweek		2	8	20	23	15	1	69
Saturday		2	3	22	18	17	1	63
No preference	1	6	3	16	20	13		59
Fri - Sun	1	1	1	7	11	10		31
Fri - Mon (bank hol)	1		1	3	13	6		24
Vary year by year		1	1	8	6	4		20
Not Sunday		4	1	4	7	4		20
Sat- Mon (bank hol)					3			3
Weeklong			2					2
Thurs - Sun					1	1		2
Sunday				1		1		2
Any one day						2		2
Sat-Tues					1			1



Again, in terms of ethnicity, with such a small sample of Black and Minority Ethnic responses, no particular trends could be identified.

BY ETHNICITY	Asian or British Asian (5 people)	Black or British Black (13 people)	Chinese (2 people)	Other (23 people)	White British, Irish, Other (941 people)	TOTALS (984 people)
Weekends (Sat-Sun)		4	1	8	320	333
Fri eve-Sat		5		5	117	127
Midweek		1	1	1	95	98
Not midweek				1	68	69
Saturday	2	3		2	56	63
No preference		2		1	56	59
Fri - Sun				1	30	31
Fri - Mon (bank hol)					24	24
Vary year by year				1	19	20
Not Sunday					20	20
Sat- Mon (bank hol)					3	3
Thurs - Sun					2	2
Sunday					2	2
Weeklong		1			1	2
Any one day					2	2
Sat-Tues					1	1

Other comments made:

- Whatever makes it easy to get under-40s along
- Link it with Spring Harvest
- If it's over a weekend, ministers should be allowed to attend without taking the Sunday as a holiday
- Alternate weekend with midweek events

- **Highlighted quotes from the Future of Assembly 'Other comments' section**

Comments in blue are from ministers, those in black are from people who are not ministers

I think the format is less important than the content, which has to regain the interactive discussion elements which have been lost in recent years. (PP (26-35))

Time is irrelevant - what matters to me is an event that knows what it is. Perhaps the assembly has lost its identity somewhat - if it could regain a strong focus, this would probably shape how and where to gather. (JS (26-35))

It depends what it is for. Personally I would like a Baptist alternative to the New Wine type conferences. But equally I can see the benefit of having a larger meeting of church leaders to pray together, worship together and receive some teaching. (PF (26-35))

Why not split some of the things that we would like to do into separate occasions. Call them other things? Maybe a longer event with separate sections: Days for AGM, Discernment, Vision casting separate times for worship, retreat, teaching. Allow people to buy tickets for all or part of it. (JM (26-35))

Every other year, done well, would be preferable to every year done poorly - but the best option is clearly every year done well. (ST (36-45))

I would love a longer event but practically this would not work for pretty much all of our church members. Also the longer the event the more prohibitive cost becomes. In my congregation this would mean that the event would be exclusive to retired, white middle class members. I would prefer to see assembly available to a much wider demographic. (FH (46-55))

I want options that build relationship. I don't want a Baptist holiday. I want time for meaningful discussion and opportunities to share ideas and a listen to thought provoking stuff that's connected to our voice in the wider world. I want to worship together in a way that is creative and inclusive in language and style. I want to be able to celebrate those who are doing good work. (RH (46-55))

If BUGB is serious about this, the Assembly should be making not church noticeboard news, but the BBC news. We get reports and coverage from various political party conferences and the occasional Church of England implosion. Are we not called to be salt and light, and to be counter-cultural - surely if we genuinely are, we will be making news headlines!! (HB (46-55))

With the potential looseness of the ties that link us together as Baptists and the devolution of much of the administration, there is a much greater danger of fragmentation. I know that there is complicated 'politics' around this and I am not seeking to comment on the rightness or wrongness of this, but one of the risks associated with greater 'devolution' is the potential loss of the ability to say anything meaningful...and a further loss of inter-dependence as people increasingly 'go it alone.' For

all the talk of 'watching over one another', we need to ensure that we create spaces where that can genuinely happen. Assembly can help counter some of those risks. (LC (46-55))

A one day assembly in a place where lots of interest groups can cheaply or even freely organise fringe events, so people can choose whether they want to just come for the day or make a weekend of it. The colleges could do a theology day, Incarnate could have some churchy planting stuff etc etc. Let each group organise their own thing, it will reduce the burden on the central organisers and the Fringe groups might bring in a new audience... (SH (46-55))

A shorter event may attract new attendees who can manage a day away from family/work routine to go to an assembly and experience it for themselves. I think longer events would mainly keep attracting participants who have been before. (KW (46-55))

Whilst there is a cost implication, and burdens in terms of staffing and planning, I miss the opportunity of a longer Assembly for such as the College reunion lunches (well my College reunion lunch was a good occasion!), and the Baptist Ministers' Fellowship pastoral session.(AH (46-55))

A 2-3 days conference (no more than 3 days) held annually but repeated in the north and the south. Or one event over 2/3 days with satellite venues around the country. I personally feel that there is a huge need within the Baptist movement within the UK for a excellent national annual Baptist conference with top quality speakers and worship leaders over at least 2 days. I also think a 4-5 summer holiday/conference would also be an excellent addition to the national timetable but only as an addition to the assembly rather than instead off. (JH (46-55))

Regional Events led by Associations I don't think are an option, we have our regional events already, but we are a Union of Churches, Associations, Colleges, Ministers and need a forum that we can come together in to listen to one another and seek God together. (RB (46-55))

Annual one day event (with accommodation available locally to ease travel for those as have need). Same central location every year (giving possibility of cost reductions due to future bookings etc, and meaning that everyone knows after the first year: how long the journey is, the route, what the venue is like, best places to stay, eat etc.) Possibly following a format as below (not that I've thought about it you understand ... 10:00 to 11:00 Morning worship leading into teaching (leading into spirit led prayer ministry?) 12:00 - 13:00 Seminars 13:00-14:00 Lunch 14:00 - 15:00 AGM/BMS sessions 15:00-15:30 Break 15:30 - 17:00 seminars 17:00-18:30 Dinner 18:30 - 20:00 Evening worship leading into teaching (leading into spirit led prayer ministry?) This provides a pattern that is instantly recognisable to anyone who attends other Christian festivals/gatherings in the year. Allows for a one day attendance not necessarily requiring overnight expense. Means that with the provision of seminars the attendees are not travelling potentially long distances for a church service that may well not be their preferred worship style and an AGM, but they get something more it too. The seminars can include arty creative things as well which could even feed into the evening worship maybe? (JB (46-55))

Weekends good for many who work in secular jobs, esp education. I realise some pastors do not like being away on Sundays, but we are Baptists and need to encourage all to feel part of the ministry whether Rev or not (AA (56-65))

Seems assembly is more for ministers and not lay people. Has the feel of a club and exclusive and not inclusive. Only relevant to a few. (PC (56-65))

Unconference - since the 1919 Assembly which decisively rejected an episcopalial structure, the Union has sought to create an episcopalian structure by stealth. We need to go back to the congregational philosophies that guided our predecessors so successfully - and which today underpin the most successful organisations. The whole of the Internet and the social media it has generated are based on congregational principles - to be relevant in the 21st century we need to restore these. (JH (over 65))

People need to know that their presence actually counts for something in Baptist life. (RK(over 65))

Assembly Finance (Q21-22)

General feel from all who completed the survey is that the current price of £29.95 was a fair price to pay for a one day event however, all age groups were prepared to pay a little more if they deemed the event worthwhile.

The cost of what they were prepared to pay differed within the different age groups and ranged from £35 - £50 for a one day event.

However, all who made this comment also recognised that this would not be possible for all who attend and therefore would not want the cost of a ticket to exclude people from coming.

There was great support for larger/richer churches paying more and subsidising the smaller churches, for churches to take responsibility in paying for their Minister and delegates to attend.

The amount people were prepared to pay for a 24 hour event varied dramatically and was primarily based on their own personal circumstances.

The majority of the 46 – 55 age group came through as being in a more affluent position than the other groups and cost was not huge factor to this group.

Young People and Children should be charged the same.

Due to the added costs of accommodation & travel the majority do not see the value of this expenditure for a one day event and this is the main influence on whether they attend, not the cost of the ticket. This concern lessened if Assembly was longer.

Many were surprised and shocked to hear that the deficit was covered by HM money. The consensus on whether this is a good use of HM money or not was split down the middle.

Those Against...

Felt the Home Mission money should be kept for supporting the churches and ministry.

Assembly should be self-sufficient

The ticket price should be raised to cover the costs

Churches should be prepared to cover the cost for those of their church who want to attend.

However, whilst they felt this was not appropriate use of HM money, they did not know what to suggest as an alternative.

Self-sufficient or not at all.

Those For:....

Felt that meeting together was key to being part of the union and that the Assembly should be a priority for all. Therefore, if Assembly existed to encourage local church in Mission and "family" then this was a good and justified use of HM money. However, if Assembly was seen to be an "added extra" then it should be self-funding.

Suggestions on how else Assembly could be funded.

Sponsorship

Raise the ticket price to a realistic price to cover the cost but offer concessions and group discounts to encourage more to come.

Let people know the real cost of the event and give the choice to over pay.
Special donation opportunities

If the aim and objective for Assembly was clear, it may encourage people to make it a priority.

Each church should underwrite the cost of Assembly

Good programme content (less business). If Assembly was appealing then more people would come!

Larger Churches should support smaller ones

Comparison of people who have only attended a 4-day Assembly, and those who have only attended a 1-day Assembly.

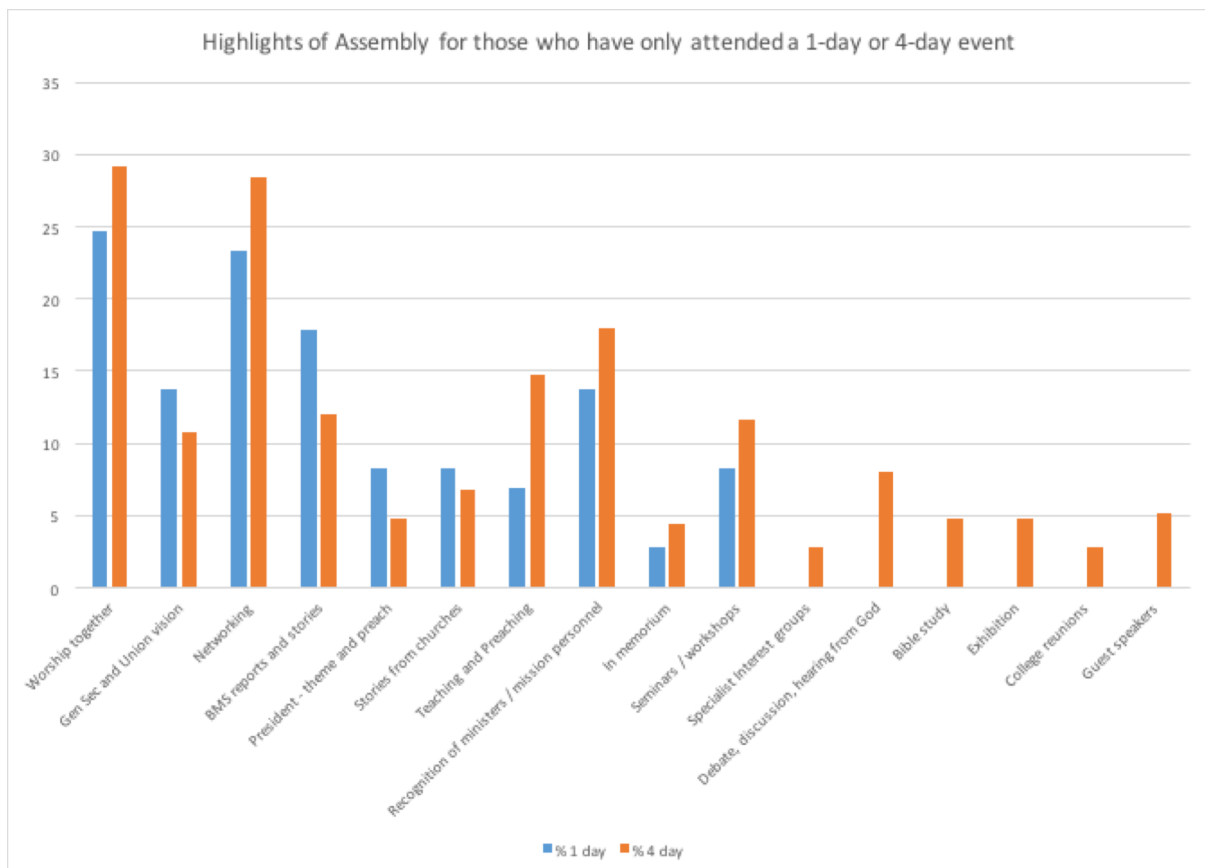
What are the highlights of Assembly for you?

The key highlights for all respondents were:

- Gathering together to worship
- Hearing about what’s going on within our Union – nationally and locally
- Being inspired by BMS reports and stories of mission personnel
- Getting a sense of vision about the future, and feeling part of the ‘bigger picture’
- Recognising new ministers and mission personnel
- Being inspired by good teaching and speakers
- Meeting up with people and having time for networking was key to all

For those who have only been to a 4-day event, a number of other highlights were mentioned – most of which have not taken place during a 1-day event:

- Seminars / workshops
- Specialist interest groups and college reunions
- Bible studies
- Exhibition
- Time for debate, discussion and the opportunity to hear from God

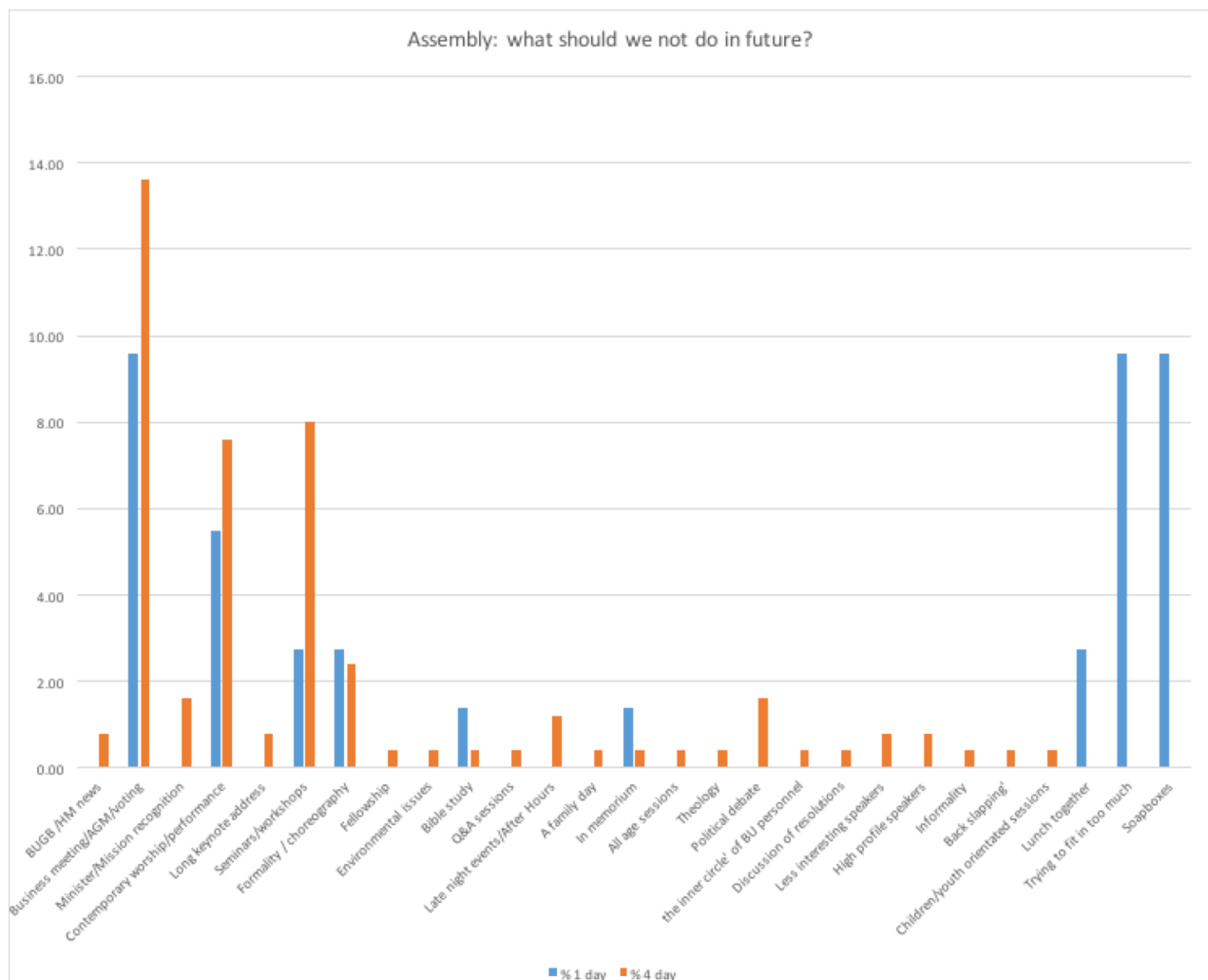


What would you not miss from the programme if it wasn't there?

When asked what we should not do in future, there was some consensus from all that the business parts of the Assembly – the AGM, voting and more formal parts – would be missed the least. There were also several people, from both the 1-day and 4-day groups, who felt that Assembly felt too ‘formal’ and choreographed, and they would like to see a more informal style with opportunities for discussion rather than being ‘talked at’.

There were also a lot of comments requesting a reduction in the amount of ‘contemporary worship’ – the length of time spent singing, the ‘performance’ nature of the sung worship (though this tended to be more often a comment made by those at the 4-day Assembly), the music being too loud.

Whilst the seminars have been a popular part of 4-day Assemblies, a significant number of people who have attended 4-day Assemblies felt that they would not miss this aspect of the event in future – or at least that the quality of seminars should be improved.

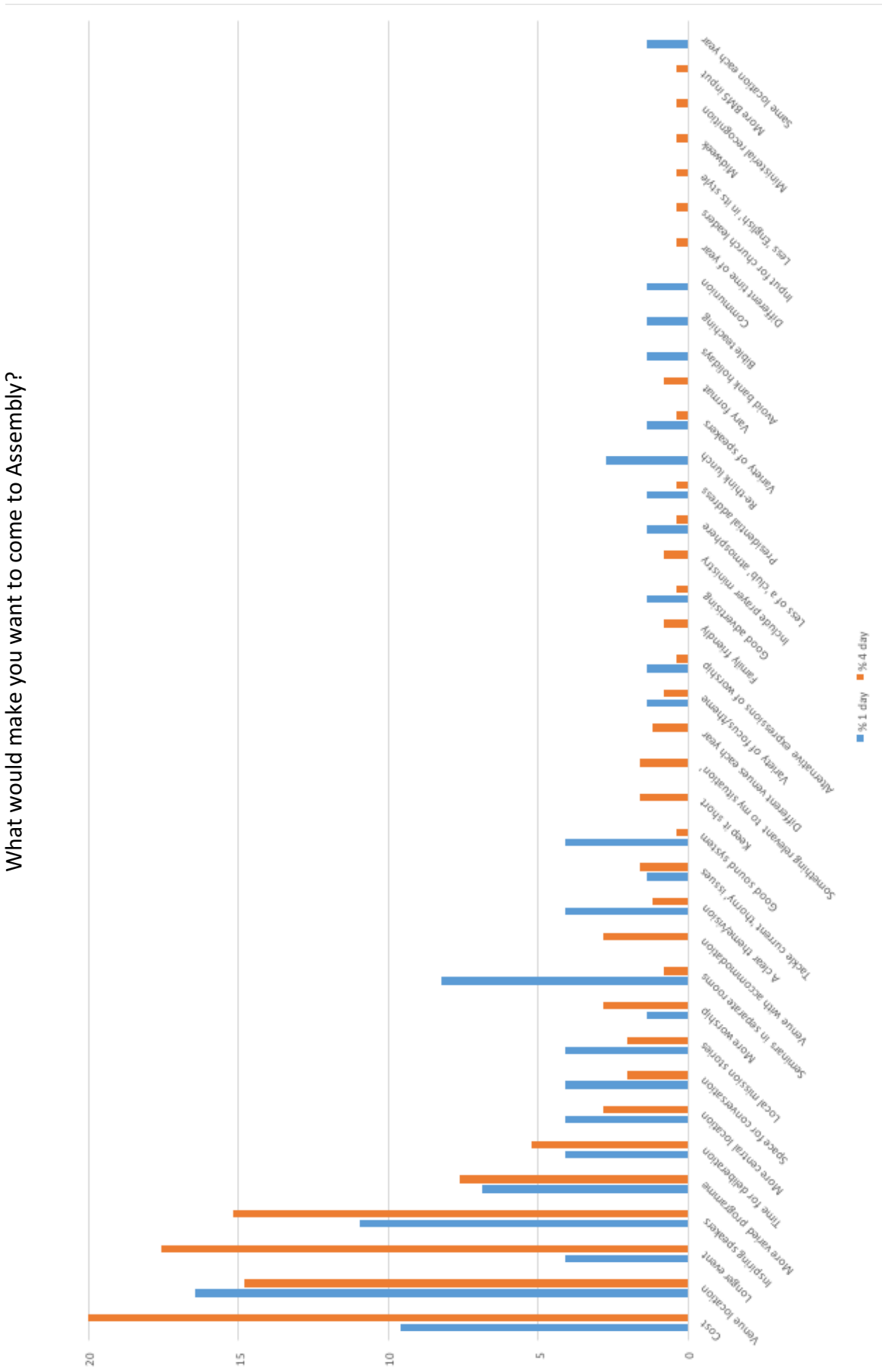


Those who had only experienced a 1-day event, not surprisingly, suggested that it would be better to have less in the programme for the day. They also commented that the Soapbox session in Oxford didn't work well.

- What could we do that would be appealing to you and make you want to come? Is it to do with cost, venue, programme, speakers, something else?

	1-day	4-day
Cost	7	50
Venue location/accessibility	12	37
Longer event	3	44
Inspiring speakers - possibly high profile international speakers	8	38
More varied programme (more participation/less information sharing)	5	19
Time for discussion/deliberation/debate/engagement with BU leaders	3	13
More central location	3	7
Cafe/space for conversation	3	5
Local mission stories (from small, large churches and sector ministries)	3	5
More worship	1	7
Seminars in separate rooms	6	2
Venue with accommodation closeby or on-site		7
A clear theme/vision	3	3
More participation/less information sharing	2	4
Tackle the current 'thorny' issues	1	4
Good sound system - easy to hear	3	1
Keep it short		4
Something relevant to my situation'		4
Different venues each year		3
Variety of focus/theme year to year	1	2
Alternative, creative expressions of worship (including BME/Iona influences)	1	1
Family friendly		2
Good advertising of programme in advance	1	1
Include prayer ministry		2
Less of a 'club' atmosphere (more inclusive)	1	1
Presidential address	1	1
Re-think lunch	2	
Variety of speakers from year to year	1	1
Vary format - short business meeting most years with longer style every 3 or 5		2
Avoid bank holidays	1	
Bible teaching	1	
Communion	1	
Different time of year		1
Input for church leaders		1
Less 'English' in its style		1
Midweek		1
Ministerial recognition		1
More BMS input		1
Same location each year	1	

What would make you want to come to Assembly?



The key responses for all attendees related to the cost and accessibility of the venue. A strong feature of many 4-day only attendees was the return to a longer Assembly – with a few 1-day attendees suggesting that this would be welcome to them as well.

A significant number of both categories of attendee requested ‘inspiring speakers’ and teaching – many of them suggesting inviting high profile and/or international speakers. A more varied programme in which people could have time to engage in discussion and have ‘have their say’ also featured highly for both 1-day and 4-day only attendees.

A selection of written responses from this section:

I felt like the Assembly was trying too hard and trying to cram too much in. A bit like a school assembly or all age service where it feels like every tool for engagement and every individual had to be used. Simply relax. Focus. Determine what the purpose is, tell us what that purpose is and advertise it, develop it, and make it about that purpose. It seemed to be trying to do so much that I am not sure what the main purpose of the Assembly is. *(RBL(36-45) – 1 day only)*

I would love you to explore other creative forms of presentation and worship. The worship, while encouraging to many I'm sure, was to me (who doesn't find sung worship the easiest way to engage) a little dry and predictable. I would love to see more thought going into creative expressions of worship (even if it were just for a short section). And I wonder if we could learn something from TED / Catalyst Live about other ways we could provide teaching? At the EBA Minister's Conference, we held a Pecha Kucha evening where ministers told stories of what Go had been doing in their contexts in the snappy, Pecha Kucha style presentation. It seemed to go down really well and felt extremely refreshing - I'd be happy to talk to you more about this if you would like. *(ST (36-45) – 1 day only)*

Something that recognises the mismatch between the National Resource and the majority of churches. I really enjoyed the quality of presentations, but I felt that their cost was equivalent to my church's annual budget! *(PE (56-65) – 1 day only)*

I just think it lacks depth - no time to discuss issues openly. Feels as though we are being managed. Views are taken to show consultation - decisions made by majority not necessarily Spirit led discernment. Ok writing post it notes etc... giving views but it is better to hear discussion so that together as one body we discern God's will for our denomination. *(Anon – 4-day only)*

The thought that our headlong rush into regional mediocrity could be halted. Someone needs to get British Baptist life back into a structure which delivers proper services to its constituency. If that debate was to be organised, I would be there. *(BJ (56-65) – 4-day only)*

The selection of venue, theme, music and speakers will fill me with hope or dread but it will not determine my attendance. I will come if I think there will be opportunity to meet others, hear something worth hearing and seek the mind of Christ with other Baptist Christians. *(RP (56-65) – 4-day only)*

The planning and delivery of the assembly in my mind feels too English. It would appeal to me if in the planning and delivery stage we could explore other cultures shaping it. (IO (36-45) 4-day only)

A couple of somewhat unrealistic suggestions here – on several levels!:

Eliminate cost to church members, as this is primarily a BU communication event the cost should rest with the BU (as supported by the churches of course). With tickets issued centrally on a first come first served basis to members to a maximum of 5 say for the first few weeks and then to more members closer to the date. I do realize that churches will usually pay costs for ministers, officers and delegates but I think attendance should be encouraged with open booking. An afternoon and early evening should do, there is no need for teaching or extensive worship. It is wise to poll likely attendance before the venue is booked. Try to spread the venues around the country on a 4 year basis say North, South, East and West. (AS (over 65) – 4-day only)

Make venue disability compliant; meet for at least two days; inform participants of accommodation and handle in-house i.e. without out-sourcing; (MJC (over 65) – 4-day only)

- **Is it important that Assembly is intergenerational? Is a children's and youth programme important? What should it look like? Does providing a children's and youth programme make you more or less likely to attend Assembly?**

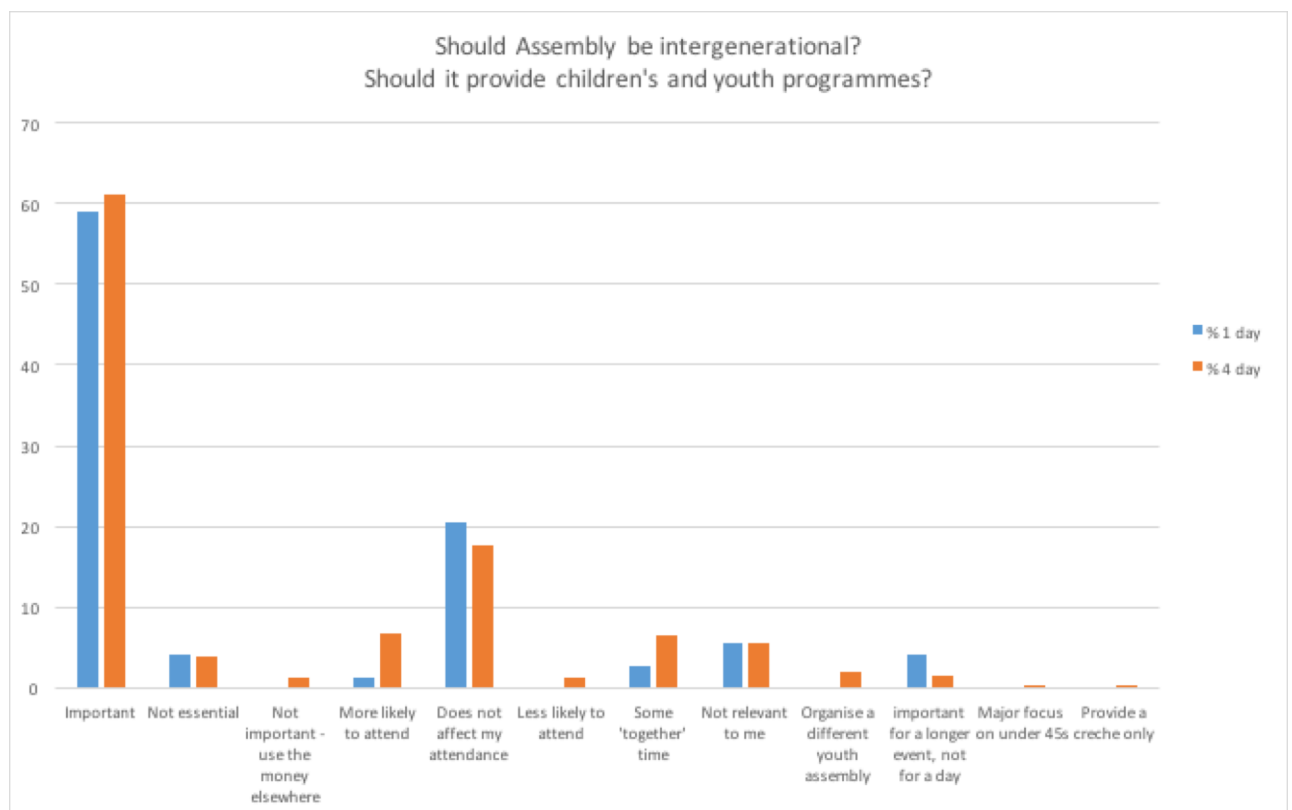
There was little difference in responses from those attending only a 1-day and those attending only a 4-day event in the past. Around 60% of respondents felt that it was essential to include all ages in our Assemblies. A significant number suggested that the overall programme should be more accessible and attractive to young people (particularly mentioning those who would be part of a youth programme) so that they can engage in the 'main' event.

[Unfortunately, because of the wording of the question, it was difficult to determine whether some respondents were in favour of an intergenerational Assembly (everyone staying together for the whole event) or children being welcomed but given their own programmes – but the 60% emphasised the importance of providing for all ages in some way.]

Sadly, 18 people felt that this question was not relevant to them as they don't have children themselves.

Five people who have previously only attended 4-day Assemblies suggested that a different Youth Assembly be organised allowing young people to feed their own ideas back to our Union structures.

	1-day	4-day
Important	43	153
Not essential	3	10
More likely to attend	1	17
Does not affect my attendance	15	44
Less likely to attend		3
Some 'together' time	2	16
Not relevant to me	4	14
Organise a different youth assembly		5
important for a longer event, not for a day	3	4
Major focus on under 45s		1
Not important - use the money elsewhere		3
Provide a creche only		1



A selection of written responses from this section:

Children and youth programs are vital as they are valued members of our worshipping community. Their needs should be appropriately met. I would most definitely not come if they were excluded. I have no children but I think we need to be inclusive. Surprises me this question is even raised! *(Anon – 4-day only)*

Don't affect me any more but if I was younger it would - though in an ageing Church, a one day assembly could possibly be intergenerational rather than having separate programmes. Would like to see youth involved as part of the whole Church; younger children probably need some alternative provision. *(SR (56-65) – 4-day only)*

This is a fundamental question concerning the aims and objectives of the Assembly. Looking at costs for a family to attend, I suspect that many people (as we did when our children were under 18 years) would opt for Spring Harvest or New Wine. *(JW (over 65) – 4-day only)*

Assembly needs to be intergenerational but this does not mean that all ages have to do everything together. A mixed programme of age-appropriate and all-age activities seems sensible to me. *(RP (56-65) – 4-day only)*

I've never taken my children or youths to Assembly. Not having a children's and youth programme would be one way to economise on money, leaders, and other servers. *(GSM (56-65) – 4-day only)*

I think it is good that it is intergenerational, and that means of course not just providing entertainment for children and young people but allowing to be involved in prayers, scripture reading, or bringing their own ideas. I don't have children so not sure if it would make me more or less likely to come, but overall I think it should reflect our churches so I would encourage it. *(LW (26-35) – 4-day only)*

The first question before answering this needs to be "What is assembly for?"!!!! *(TN (56-65) – 4-day only)*

Totally agree that we should be inter generational, however, I think sometimes we talk about being all age but don't ever seem to deliver that in reality. Integration of our youth and children should be an everyday habit of church life so why should our assembly be anything different. *(GB (46-55) – 4-day only)*

Less likely to attend. Future of BUGB rests in the hands of ministers and key church leaders relating together, not entertaining children and YP. *(PT (56-65) – 4-day only)*

I think it is necessary to be able to work the whole together - again this is from a rural point of view. Adults are able to listen to speakers, but I think children and young people need to be involved in activities which keep them busy, but they are still able to listen to the talks. They can do two things at the same time. The talks need to be sufficiently flexible for adults and children to be able to butt in with comments , questions etc. which means their needs are being met *(MN (over 65) – 4-day only)*

Church family IS intergenerational! We should expect to be hearing from voices across the ages. Great how 2016 began and ended together as family. I'd also be interested to hear from voices in local churches about effective engagement across ages 20's - 90's. *(CJ (46-55) – 1-day only)*

If we are inclusive as a community then this is vital. All age worship is important but so is age specific worship. Children and young people relate differently to society and learning and all the research suggests we need to find a way to do both/and. *(KJ (26-35) – 1-day only)*

Yes, but there must be times of presentations from the youths and children at the national assembly platform. So the youths and the children would meet separately but they will still come at particular segments of the assembly for worship and presentations. *(AO (36-45) – 1-day only)*

Children and youth programme is important but it also needs to reflect and meet some of the peoples cultural requirements *(DC (56-65) – 1-day only)*

I have no children. Like to have good quality speakers so children would be better having own programme *(MG (56-65) 1-day only)*

- **In your view, what is Assembly? What is it for? Why should we gather in this way? Who should be involved?**

There were no discernible differences in expectation for those attending 1-day and 4-day events. The feedback already given in the analysis of all responses give a good representation of the views expressed by these groups.

Baptist Assembly and Baptist BME perspective on Baptist Assembly.

Context:

1. Conversations with Baptist BME's to identify some of the reasons behind their low attendance at Baptist Assemblies.

Some reasons why BME's do not attend Assembly:

1. Increasing numbers of BME folk attend their own annual gatherings. These provide opportunities for networking and 'inspirational worship.' Cannon Street Baptist church is an example in question. It organises annual international gatherings for its church community. Trinity Baptist church does the same. Now with many Black Majority Baptist churches following this 'trend.' Annual gatherings will soon be the norm among Baptist churches where there are a preponderance of Africans and Caribbean's.
2. Black Majority annual gatherings seek to reflect the spirituality and theology of the gathered community. The worshipers are also able to comfortably engage their 'heart language' and 'heart worship' without fear of criticism. Identity and belonging are important factors in these spaces. Many BME's do not feel a connectivity or find belonging in Assembly.
3. Assembly does not attract BME's that embrace contextual theologies like liberation and black theology. Instead BME ministers are creating forums to engage differing theologies. These forums also validate their cultures, traditions and theologies.
4. All of The BME's that I spoke to that attended this year's Assembly are reluctant to return next year partly because of its limited emphasis on preaching. Key to the annual gatherings organised by Black majority churches is preaching. Its decreasing emphasis in Assembly discourages BME's from attending.
5. The culture of Assembly reflects its attendees. A sprinkling of Black and Asian faces on the plate form is unable to change the Assembly culture. If those responsible for organising the annual Assembly are committed to creating a genuine 'multicultural Baptist Assembly' which reflects the cultures and traditions of all cultures and genders then rigorous conversations with a culturally diverse group will be required to evaluate Assembly through a multicultural lens.

Suggested ways forward:

1. To begin relationship building with selected BME ministers (if possible)
2. To encourage BME's to nurture and foster worship spaces which validate their worship expressions

Conclusion: To recognise the complexity, challenges and demands of creating an Assembly that attempts to embrace diversity at its best and recognise that we may not be able to succeed at achieving an inclusive Assembly. Our differences in worship, ecclesiology and theology might prevent us from meeting this challenge.