



## BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE FORMATION AND WORK OF THE NATIONAL RACIAL JUSTICE HUB

Many of the racial prejudices seen in our society today stem from the time of slavery and the inhumane way in which different ethnic groups treated each other. By the end of the twentieth century, British society had become much more diverse, but many black and minority ethnic people continued to be subjected to injustice. Sadly, our churches were not immune from this and our Union was encouraged to give time and resources to address their concerns.



The Churches' Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ) – part of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) - invited the Baptist Union of Britain (BUGB) for their representation at the race justice table. BUGB had a Social Action Desk in place within the Mission Department but had no specific provision for dealing with racial justice concerns. However, individuals and groups with an interest in pushing for greater awareness of and support for equal opportunities and racial justice within Baptist churches emerged in various parts of the country. Their tenacity and commitment ensured that the issues were not quietly forgotten.



In 1995 Keith Jones, then head of the Department for Research and Training in Mission and also BUGB's Deputy General Secretary, sought Baptist Council agreement for work on a race justice agenda to be initiated. A member of staff in the social action team, Anne Wilkinson-Hayes, was given the responsibility for this area of work. The first task was to approach a local Baptist to represent BUGB on the CCRJ; this representative's duties were extended in 1999 to that of Specialist Networker for Race Justice.

In 1997 BUGB's Racial Justice Task Group was formed; initially made up of individuals who were involved in the local initiatives referred to earlier. The Task Group in 1998 morphed into the Racial Justice Working Group (RJWG) mandated to advance racial justice within our Union. However, at this stage BUGB was still without a full-time racial justice coordinator, unlike some historic denominations which had already had full-time staff in place for two years.

In 1999 the Baptist World Alliance held a conference on racism and reconciliation in Atlanta, Georgia. This was attended by members of the working group and others. At this event a covenant was adopted; 'with God's help through a ministry of reconciliation to promote social justice through efforts to eradicate racism and ethnic conflict' and to seek reconciliation and the restoration of relationships between people. Members of the RJWG returned inspired and determined to redouble their efforts to promote racial justice on behalf of our Union.





In 2002, concerned that our work in this area was lagging behind that of other denominations, we appointed Wale Hudson-Roberts to be a full-time Racial Justice Coordinator to develop the work initiated by the Working Group. He, along with supportive personnel over the years, has impacted significantly on the business of our Union internationally, nationally and locally with regards to the racial justice agenda and work.

### **The Apology for Slavery**

Following a challenge from Karl Henlin (former President of the Jamaica Baptist Union) at our Assembly in 2007, the Racial Justice Group took a proposal to Council for an apology to be made by our Baptist family for their role in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. This resulted in the Apology Resolution which was unanimously agreed by Council in November 2007, and delivered to the Jamaica Baptist Union in Spring 2008.



## **THE APOLOGY FOR SLAVERY**

### **COUNCIL RESOLUTION NOVEMBER 2007**

As a Council we have listened to one another, we have heard the pain of hurting sisters and brothers, and we have heard God speaking to us.

In a spirit of weakness, humility and vulnerability, we acknowledge that we are only at the start of a journey, but we are agreed that this must not prevent us speaking and acting at a Kairos moment.

Therefore, we acknowledge our share in and benefit from our nation's participation in the transatlantic slave trade.

We acknowledge that we speak as those who have shared in and suffered from the legacy of slavery and its appalling consequences for God's world.

We offer our apology to God and to our brothers and sisters for all that has created and still perpetuates the hurt which originated from the horror of slavery.

We repent of the hurt we have caused, the divisions we have created, our reluctance to face up to the sin of the past, our unwillingness to listen to the pain of our black sisters and brothers, and our silence in the face of racism and injustice today.

We commit ourselves, in a true spirit of repentance, to take what we have learned from God in the Council and to share it widely in our Baptist community and beyond, looking for gospel ways by which we can turn the words and feelings we have expressed today into concrete actions and contribute to the prophetic work of God's coming Kingdom.

*The Resolution was agreed unanimously, and each member of Council bowed in silent prayer and personal commitment.*

*It was then proposed:*

In the light of our discussions concerning the transatlantic slave trade and the statement that arises from the discussions, Council asks the Mission Executive, Trustee Board and other appropriate bodies to continue to develop ways of promoting racial justice within BUGB and wherever possible in the world beyond.

*The amended Resolution was approved unanimously*

Wale Hudson-Roberts recalls that:

*'Many Council members could not understand why the November Council of 2007 was discussing a possible apology for the enslavement of millions of Africans - particularly as their generation was not 'responsible' for such heinous crimes. I am sure that Council members would have quickly condemned the twin evils of slavery and racism, but perhaps only a few Council members had reflected seriously on racism as the legacy of slavery. The presentations given during the Council debate by David Shosanya, Joe Kapolyo, Richard Kidd, and Graham Sparkes helped Council appreciate that legacy. A discussion ensued after the presentation, accompanied by some tears which preceded the surprise turn of the day: an Apology.*

*'Some months later, a delegation of four travelled to Jamaica to offer 'The Apology' to the Jamaica Baptist Union. Numerous conversations between British and Jamaican Baptists had taken place concerning an apology long before the 2007 resolution. The contribution of Karl Henlin, a Jamaican Baptist Pastor of the Gregory Park circuit of Baptist churches, was pivotal to the Apology happening. Invited by BMS World Mission to speak at the Spring 2007 Baptist Assembly, Karl Henlin encouraged the Baptist family to consider offering an apology for their role in the transatlantic slave trade. Indeed, his words and the words of many others long before and after him were eventually heeded.'*

**Representatives of BMS World Mission and the Baptist Union of Great Britain present the statement of Apology to representatives of the Jamaica Baptist Union - Spring 2008**



*Left to Right: Wale Hudson-Roberts (BUGB - Racial Justice Co-ordinator), Karl Henlin (JBU - Former President), Jonathan Edwards (BUGB - General Secretary), Stephen Jennings (JBU - President), Karl Johnson (JBU - General Secretary), Pat White (BUGB - Racial Justice Working Group Moderator) and Alistair Brown (BMS - General Director)*

### **The Journey**

In response to the Apology, the Racial Justice Group was commissioned to research the nature of racial prejudice and discrimination being experienced in all areas of our Union. The research findings reported to Council in 2011 included five recommendations, known as *The Journey*, which have formed the basis of the work of the Racial Justice Group ever since. The full report can be found at: [www.baptist.org.uk/thejourney](http://www.baptist.org.uk/thejourney)

The aim of *The Journey* was to ensure that our Union developed into a fully multicultural Union which includes providing access to resources and initiatives for:

- Building multicultural congregations
- Developing the leadership skills of black and minority ethnic youth
- Training of ministers and church members for culturally inclusive ministry and mission
- Multicultural events that strengthen the participation of BME individuals in Union life and celebrate the cultural diversity within our Union
- Establishing culturally inclusive Union structures (including Baptist House)

Since 2011, there has been some tangible progress in the working out of *The Journey* recommendations, one example being the resolution passed by Council in November 2012, which committed our Union to seeking to have an interim target of at least 20% black and minority ethnic individuals in the various roles that make up the structures of our Union. This has contributed to increased levels of ethnic diversity present in areas such as BU Council and on the staff teams of Baptist colleges. As a Union, we are thus beginning to hear about and be blessed by more diverse expressions of the gospel, which is enriching our shared Baptist life together, and better equipping individuals for mission and ministry in multiethnic and multicultural Britain.

It is worth noting that in May 2012, only a few months before Council was moved to pass this resolution, BUGB hosted a JBU delegation. The delegation offered some powerful insights into the importance of different cultural expressions of the gospel, as they blessed a number of our local Baptist churches, Regional Associations, colleges, central offices and structures, with their thought-provoking reflections from their contextual experiences on approaches to ministry and mission for the 21st century, and effective ways of growing leaders of all ages and backgrounds.

### Other Outcomes of *The Journey*

In addition to the numerous resources which have been developed by the Racial Justice Group and others in response to *The Journey*, a number of initiatives and events have been set up to inform and raise awareness of racial justice issues and celebrate multicultural relationships which have been forged.

These include:

#### *Sam Sharpe Project*



The Sam Sharpe Project was set up in 2012 by the Jamaican Baptist Union in partnership with the Heart of England Baptist Association, Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture, Northern Baptist Learning Community, BMS World Mission and our Union. Sam Sharpe was a Baptist deacon and enslaved person who played an important role in the 'Great Jamaican Slave Revolt' of 1831-2. He was one of the leaders of a group of enslaved people who took part in a 'sit-down strike' against slavery and was executed, together with more than 500 others.



An annual **Sam Sharpe Lecture**, hosted by various Associations and Colleges, investigates the legacy of Sam Sharpe by exploring subjects such as mission, race, class, neo-colonialism and other concerns. The lectures also provide an opportunity for potential Black and Asian Baptist scholars to demonstrate their gifting by delivering a scholarly lecture. Lectures have been delivered by Professor Robert Beckford, Neville Callam (BWA General Secretary), Delroy Reid-Salmon (pastor of Grace Chapel and author of *Burning for Freedom*), Joel Edwards (former EA General Director), Bev Thomas and Karl Johnson (General Secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union).

#### *I have a dream – the Unfinished business – Autumn 2013*

Marking the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream ...' speech, in which he called for an end to racism in the United States, a number of Baptist Associations explored the legacy of the speech, using the anniversary as an opportunity to explore whether things have changed.



#### *Bicentenary 2014*



2014 marked the Bicentenary of the relationship between the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU), BMS World Mission (BMS) and our Union. See the following timeline of the history of this relationship which was produced for the bicentenary souvenir booklet.

This milestone was celebrated in the UK and Jamaica, with bicentenary celebrations being launched at the Baptist Assembly in May 2014. A number of events took place, including the broadcast of **Sunday morning worship from Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church** (Birmingham) by BBC Radio 4. Two bicentenary BMS World Mission

Action Teams, made up of young people from the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU), British Jamaican young people and white British young people were sent out to projects in Thailand and Kolkata, India for their overseas placements.

# Timeline 1494 - 1813

1494

Christopher Columbus lands in Jamaica - inhabited by Tainos people. Subsequently, Tainos are exterminated.



1699

80% of people living in the Caribbean are African slaves



1670

Treaty of Madrid - Jamaica formally cedes to the British.

1655

Jamaica captured from the Spanish by the British.

1700s

By the end of the 18th century, the principal product of the island is sugar, generated by slave labour forcibly imported from Africa. Sugar production in Jamaica greatly enriches Britain.



1783

Arrival in Jamaica of emancipated preacher George Liele, who establishes Baptist work in Kingston.



1792

Formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in Britain, which sends its first missionary, William Carey, to India the following year.



1400s

1500s

1600s

1700s

1800s

1509

Spanish claim island. Slaves shipped from Africa to work on sugar plantations.



1672

The Royal African Company set up in Britain to regulate the African slave trade.

1747

Liverpool becomes Britain's busiest slave trading port.



1784

Moses Baker, another formerly enslaved African living in America, establishes church at Crooked Springs in Western Jamaica. With mounting opposition to Christian work among the enslaved population, he seeks help from BMS.

1788

Under pressure from abolitionists, British parliament begins to investigate the slave trade.

1807

Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade within the British Empire.

1812

Formation of the first Baptist Union in Britain.

With thanks to the Jamaica Baptist Union and John Briggs for their guidance in drawing up this timeline

# Timeline 1814 - 1914

## Early 1800s

Jamaican leaders Moses Baker, Sam Swiney, Thomas Swigle, George Gibb and Sam Sharpe offer testimony and costly witness in Jamaica.



1814

BMS sends John Rowe, a Bristol student, to work in Jamaica. Although he dies within two years, he pioneers a significant partnership.

1833

British Parliament passes the Slavery Abolition Act, followed by the implementation of the apprenticeship system and delayed full emancipation until 1838.

1842

Jamaica Baptist Missionary Society is established to engage in mission in other parts of the Caribbean and Africa. The first Theological College, Calabar, is founded to train ministers.

1865

Morant Bay Uprising - in reaction to an oppressive regime, with Paul Bogle and other Native Baptists taking a leading role amongst the protestors. Bogle, George William Gordon (a Native Baptist member of the Jamaican House of Assembly) and three Native Baptist ministers executed for sedition, along with 439 negroes. House of Assembly eventually abolished, and planter supremacy ends.



1838

British Parliament gives planters £20M as compensation for losing the services of the enslaved, while the enslaved receive no financial compensation.



## 1800s

### Early 1800s

John Rowe is followed by other missionaries including James Coultart, Lee Compere, James Phillippo, Thomas Burchell, William Knibb and Joshua Tinson. After 1831 they are not prepared to follow a 'no politics' rule in their missionary endeavours.



1831

Large-scale slave revolt provoked by a desire for wages, freedom and an additional Christmas holiday. Initially planned as a passive peaceful protest by Sam Sharpe, the rising is savagely put down by the plantation authorities. 312 slaves, including Sharpe are convicted and executed and 144 Baptist chapels are destroyed by colonist mobs.

1840

The Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society forms in response to prejudice of BMS missionaries toward persons of African descent holding pastoral office in Baptist churches.

1838 onwards

Baptists instrumental in establishing 'Free Villages' for the newly emancipated people, including a school and Baptist church.



1880s

Islanders gain the right to elect nine members of a Legislative Council and a new Constitution is adopted.

1860s

Increased sugar crop failure leads to unemployment. BMS Secretary EB Underhill commends diversification. Banana plantations are set up in 1870s.

1849

Formation of Jamaica Baptist Union.



1912

Opening of Calabar High School, a boarding school for boys (mainly sons of ministers).

# Timeline 1914 - 2014

1940s

Jamaica gains a degree of local political control, with the first elections under universal adult suffrage held in 1944.

1962

Jamaica achieves political independence from the UK, remaining as a sovereign state within the Commonwealth.



1970

Jamaica Baptist Union plays a leading role in establishing the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship, a constituent body of the Baptist World Alliance with the Revd Azariah McKenzie as its first head.

2014

The Jamaica Baptist Union has 330 churches, 122 ministers and approx 40,000 members.



1939

Jamaicans arrive in Britain to serve in the Armed Forces during World War II.

1948

The Revd David Jelleyman arrives in Jamaica to become Tutor at the Calabar Theological College. He gives 36 years of faithful and dedicated service, primarily to theological education.

1962-65

Jamaica Baptist Union pastor, the Revd CS Reid, serves at Moss Side Baptist church, Manchester.

2007

200 years after the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the Baptist Union of GB offers an Apology to Jamaican Baptists.

1929

Further problems for the Jamaican economy in the wake of the world depression and associated slump in the sugar market.

1900s

2000s

1938

Sugar and dock workers around the island revolt over wages and working conditions, leading to significant changes including an organised labour movement and competitive party system.

1958

Jamaica joins nine other British territories as a province of the Federation of the West Indies - withdrawing in 1961 after a referendum.

1966

The United Theological College of the West Indies is founded, with the Revd Dr Horace Russell serving as its first Jamaican president from 1972-76.



2007

Jamaican Baptist pastor, the Revd Neville Callam, is appointed General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, the first person of African origin to hold that post.



1948

The *Windrush* passes through the Caribbean on its way back to Britain, arriving in June 1948 with 492, mainly Jamaicans, aboard to begin life in Britain.



1964-65

Jamaica Baptist Union pastor, the Revd Clement Gayle, is invited to Britain to serve in the Racial Integration Programme.

2014

Jamaica has a population of nearly 3 million, with a diaspora living abroad of an estimated 2.5 million.

1941-44

With a lack of pastoral oversight in many of the island's churches, BMS re-engages with the Jamaican situation as one of its fields of mission.

## Refugee Response conference – April 2016

Recognising the current refugee crisis, a number of churches and individual Baptist Christians have acted on the immediate need to offer help and support to many thousands of desperate people. This conference was held to gather together churches involved in responding to the refugee crisis and was a mix of short presentations, workshops and opportunities to share and listen to on-the-ground experience. Some of those stories were shared in a plenary session at the 2016 Baptist Assembly in Oxford.

Subsequently, a new resource, *Moving Stories*, was compiled with material from people whose own stories have been shaped or impacted by significant people movement. At this time when we are especially conscious of migration, these nine studies bring a blend of biblical, historical and contemporary material, enabling individuals and groups of people within our churches to think about migration in the light of the word of God in the Bible. [www.baptist.org.uk/movingstories](http://www.baptist.org.uk/movingstories)



## Inspiring Leadership Programme



In response to the recommendation of *The Journey* to develop the leadership skills of black and minority ethnic youth, our Inspiring Leadership programme was piloted in 2017, with a second young person embarking on the programme in 2018. This annual two-month gap programme seeks to encourage mainly Baptist young people of colour, between the ages of 18-23, to develop their leadership potential in Jamaica with the support of the Jamaica

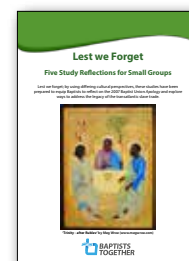
Baptist Union (JBU). The programme offers two streams for young people - the Christians in Ministry Stream for those exploring a call to Baptist ministry, and the Christians in Business Stream for those exploring opportunities in business. Find out more at [www.baptist.org.uk/inspiringleadership](http://www.baptist.org.uk/inspiringleadership)

## Marking Ten Years since the Apology

Ten years on from the historic Apology, we produced *Lest we Forget* a series of reflections and Bible study notes through different perspectives. Download from [www.baptist.org.uk/lest](http://www.baptist.org.uk/lest)



*Journeying to Justice*, a new book providing a comprehensive appraisal of the journey towards reconciliation amongst British and Jamaican Baptists across two centuries of relationship gives an historical overview. Find out more at [www.baptist.org.uk/journeyingtojustice](http://www.baptist.org.uk/journeyingtojustice)

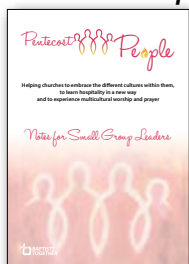


## Justification and Justice – April 2017

Five hundred years ago Martin Luther spearheaded the Reformation. Many years later Martin Luther King led the Civil Rights Movement. Two very different men, living in different ages both challenging injustice. This symposium shared the histories of both Martins and applied them to our churches.



## Pentecost People – published May 2017



A group comprising members of the Racial Justice Group and Regent's Park College developed a study resource for small groups to help churches to embrace the different cultures within them, to learn hospitality in a new way and to experience multicultural worship and prayer. This resource, launched at our Baptist Assembly in 2017, is made up of four video-based study sessions filmed in British Baptist churches, and additional resources to help people to explore the areas of Hospitable Church, Hearing Every Voice, The Global Church, and Dreaming the Dream Pentecost People can be downloaded from [www.baptist.org.uk/pentecostpeople](http://www.baptist.org.uk/pentecostpeople)

## Wonderful Youth – October 2018

This new resource for youth groups draws on culturally diverse images, exercises and activities which explore and celebrate some of the historical and current unique contributions from our multicultural society. The material seeks to affirm, both theologically and culturally, all young people between the ages of 13-16. Piloted in 2017, five new sessions considering themes from Paul's letter to the Ephesians have been designed to be used during Black History Month, Oct 2018.



The work of the National Racial Justice Hub (as it is now known) within the diverse Baptist family is ongoing; it will endeavour to work positively with strategic initiatives to ensure that the sin of racism is eradicated from Baptist life.