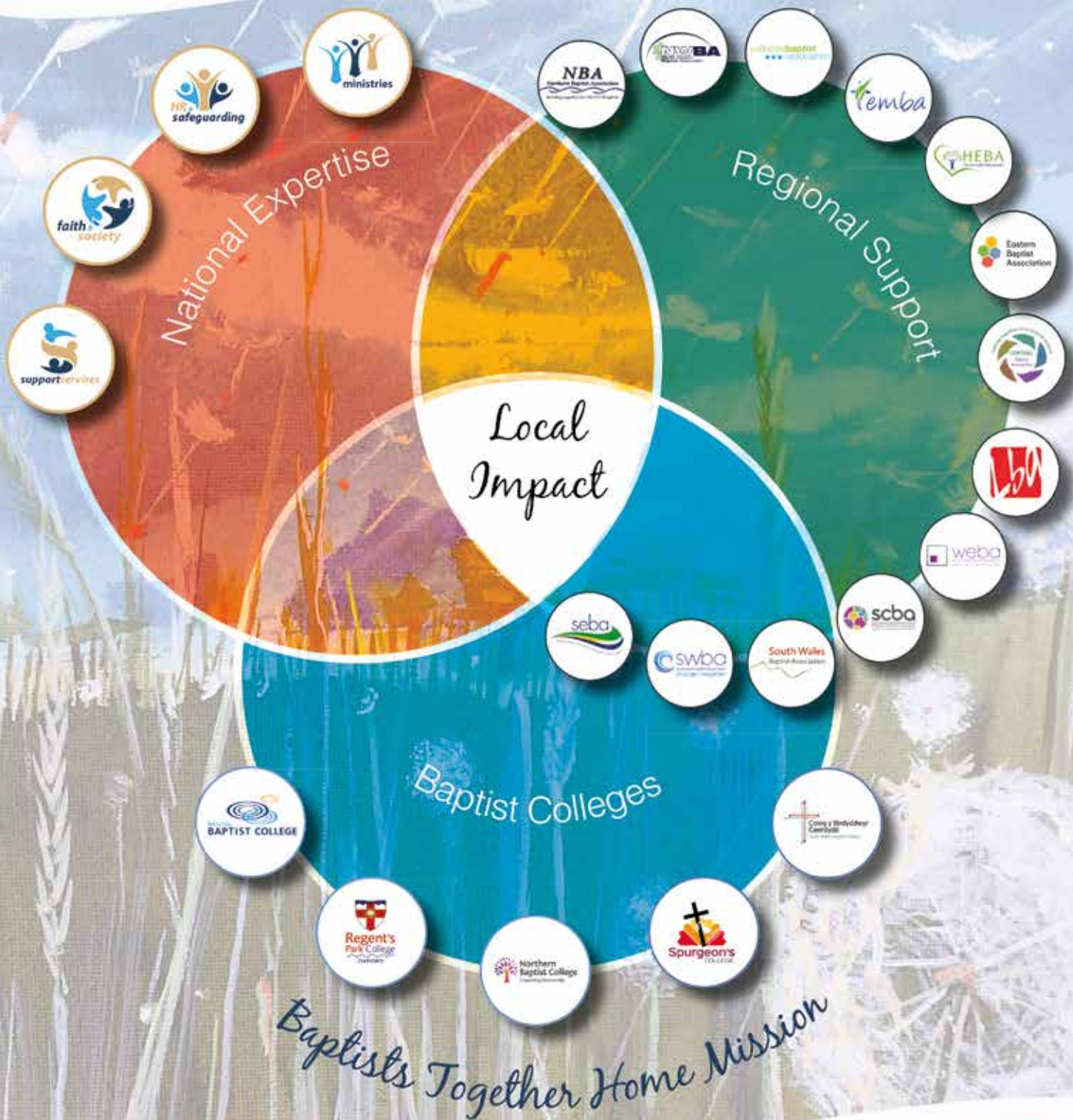


TOGETHER

£3.00



Baptists Together Home Mission



Baptists Together Loan Fund

Baptist Union member churches can apply to our loan fund for help with a variety of projects.

We are able to help churches who are looking to enlarge, improve or redevelop their existing church premises – or who are wanting to buy new premises. We can also help churches to buy a new Manse or other residential property for a church worker. The Loan Fund is also able to help churches faced with paying off their debt to the Baptist Pension Scheme. In addition we can offer bridging finance which is at a higher rate of interest.

We are here to help Baptist Churches with their mission and we also understand the way Baptist Churches work. Having been around for many years we have helped hundreds of our churches in this way.

For more information visit

www.baptist.org.uk/loans

CURRENT TERMS

**Loans available above
£25,000**

Variable Interest Rate
currently 3% above base rate

**Loan repayments
between 10 and 20 years**
available depending on loan
amount and type

Fee free
subject to certain conditions

The BUC is only able to enter into a loan that is a relevant credit agreement (as defined by the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (Financial Promotion) Order 2005) as lender for the purposes of the business of a church (or if the church is unincorporated, the business of the church trustees) and not for any other purpose.



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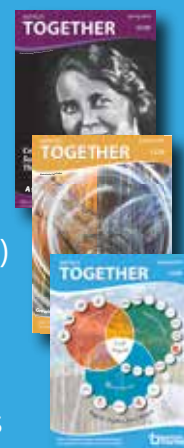
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- Easy plans to follow with lots of ideas for games, crafts and activities
- Top tips on how to plan, promote and run your party
- Ideas on how to share the gospel at Halloween

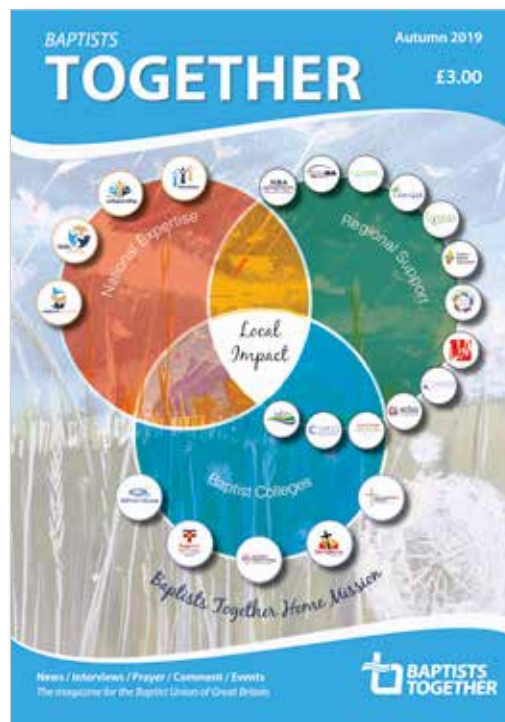
The Home Mission story

Your church gives to Baptists Together Home Mission. What does this mean? This is the first edition of the magazine since its launch in 2013 to have such a Home Mission focus.

When we give our Home Mission money we achieve local impact in all sorts of wonderful ways, by combining regional support and national expertise. The stories you are about to read show the ways our constituent parts come together to enable us to join in with God's mission. Our churches and our people are reaching people with the Good News of Jesus – and we are all playing a role in this.

So this edition of *Baptists Together* magazine explores the kind of movement we are, and the way your participation, prayer and money contribute. There may be aspects of which you are unaware. We begin by exploring the history – 'It is false economy to starve an Andrew Fuller!' to what the appetite! Next, our Support Services Team Leader, Richard Wilson, explains how we are currently financed and in the process attempts to bust some myths.

Home Mission stories then follow which illustrate that local impact with regional support and national expertise.



Finally, Lynn Green sets out the honest reality of our picture today and offers thoughts for prayerful consideration. For a myriad of reasons, Baptists Together Home Mission income has shown a decline in real terms over the last decade. It's our key source of income, so what happens next? We believe God hasn't finished with Baptists just yet, and that we have a unique contribution to make!

We hope to show that the way we are able to share resources through Baptists Together Home Mission isn't about self-preservation, it's about equipping each other to play our part in God's mission. There is already so much happening. But together, how much more can we achieve for the sake of the Kingdom?

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<p>1902</p> <p>TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND</p> <p><i>Raised £250,000 for evangelising and other projects - including a new Baptist Church House in London</i></p>	<p>1912</p> <p>MINISTERIAL SETTLEMENT AND SUSTENTATION SCHEME</p> <p><i>A new scheme proposed to support mission and the ministries of churches which could not pay a stipend</i></p>	<p>1914</p> <p>SUSTENTATION FUND</p> <p><i>The initial funding target of £250,000 was reached which would produce an annual income of £15,000</i></p>	<p>1917</p> <p>GRANTS TO MINISTERS</p> <p><i>More than 460 grants to ministers were made, sustaining and supporting ministry from shared funds</i></p>	<p>1940s</p> <p>HOME WORK FUND</p> <p><i>The fund was renamed and adapted to secure an agreed ministerial stipend for those in receipt of grants</i></p>	<p>1970</p> <p>HOME MISSION FUND</p> <p><i>The annual appeal has continued to adapt to meet the challenges of the day and is renamed the Home Mission Fund</i></p>	<p>2013</p> <p>FUTURES PROCESS</p> <p><i>As a result of the 2012 Futures Process, Home Mission grants are now awarded by Associations</i></p>
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“It is false economy to starve an Andrew Fuller!”

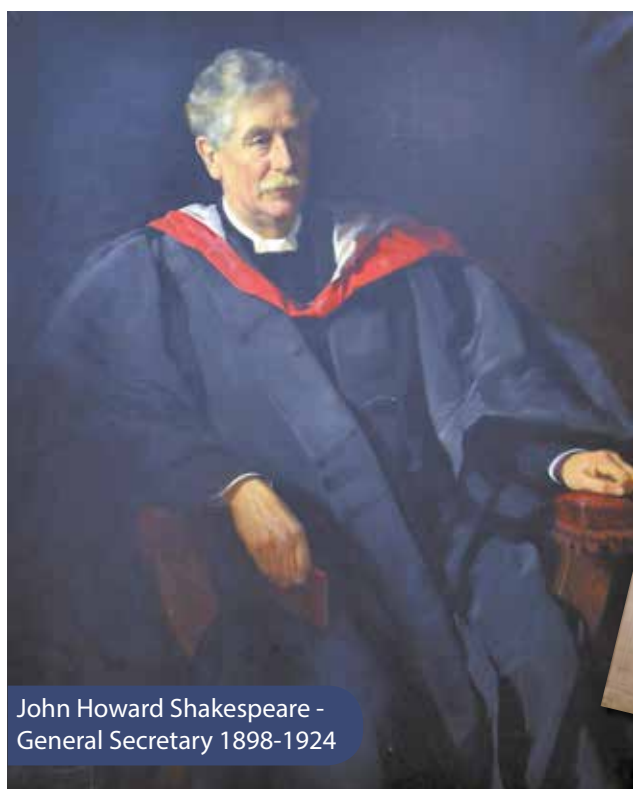
Baptists Together Home Mission is a vivid illustration of how much can be done for the Gospel when Baptists work together. Here’s a brief account of its history by Peter Shepherd and Paul Hobson

“It is false economy to starve an Andrew Fuller!”

It’s the 1912 Baptist Assembly and General Secretary JH Shakespeare is in full flow.

Citing the early plight of the great 18th century Baptist theologian, he explained how Fuller’s salary from his church at Soham was “inadequate to provide for the expenses of a rising family...”

“He was greatly depressed and nearly brought down by sorrow and sickness to the grave.”



John Howard Shakespeare - General Secretary 1898-1924

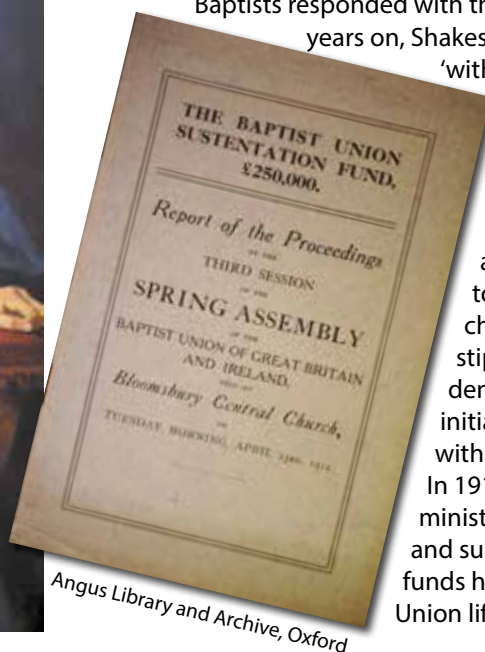
Andrew Fuller, of course, as all those present knew, had played a key role in the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society. He was “the greatest theologian we had at the end of the 18th century.”

Shakespeare was invoking Fuller because he had moved a motion to adopt a new scheme: the Ministerial Settlement and Sustentation Scheme, and the accompanying Sustentation Fund which would pay for it. The fund would enable central financial support for mission, particularly to support the ministries of small churches which could not pay a stipend.

It proved a masterstroke: Shakespeare’s Assembly address was ‘rapturously received’ according to Ian Randall in *The English Baptists of the 20th Century* and the resolution passed unanimously. Not everyone was in agreement with this new direction for the denomination, but effective mission was the goal and Baptists responded with their pockets too. Just two years on, Shakespeare was able to announce

‘with enormous satisfaction’ that the initial funding target of £250,000 (around £29m today) for the **Sustentation Fund** had been reached.

The Fund would produce an annual income of £15,000 to help cash strapped churches pay their minister a stipend, as well as fund other denominational initiatives. This initial capital would be supported with annual offerings of £5,000. In 1917, more than 460 grants to ministers were made. Sustaining and supporting ministry from shared funds had become an integral part of Union life.



Angus Library and Archive, Oxford

“Churches needed to act together”

This was a key marker in the story of Baptists Together Home Mission, but in many ways the story can be traced back much further. Baptists have always been a missionary people. Believers' baptism and Christian discipleship are personal responses to hearing and believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the duty and privilege of every Baptist church to bear witness to this Gospel in deed and word. But from the start it was clear that individual churches could not adequately fulfil this call from God on their own, and therefore they needed to act together.

Historically, one of the principle ways they did this was through their associating together with other Baptist churches, which enabled them to support each other and to co-operate in this missionary enterprise.

Another way of working together in mission and evangelism was through societies established specifically for that purpose. The Baptist Missionary Society, formed in 1792, was the most famous of these, but there were others devoted to mission at home.

A Baptist Home Missionary Society began its life in London in 1797, and over the years supported many itinerant evangelists. The Baptist colleges, which were themselves expressions of co-operation between the churches, also sent their students out to preach as part of their training.

There was a biblical imperative behind this co-operation: on the one hand, the strong helping the weak, and also local churches reaching out to support one another. These are principles laid down in the New Testament.

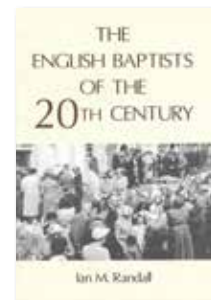
A national strategy for the dawning of a new century

As the 19th century drew to a close, many began to feel that the different ways in which churches co-operated in mission at home, through associations, societies and colleges, should be better organised. There needed to be a national strategy to cope with the demands of the modern world. The obvious way of doing this was through the Baptist Union.

Under the dynamic leadership of Shakespeare, General Secretary of the Union between 1898 and 1924, a series of reforms were undertaken with the aim of enabling churches to work together nationally, rather than in the somewhat piecemeal way of the past. Money was raised for the Union to support church planting and other missionary initiatives: the first major project he undertook was the promotion of what was called a *Twentieth Century Fund* for the denomination. The goal was to raise £250,000 for evangelising and church extension, student scholarships, a new Baptist church house in London, and educational and other projects.

the fundraising campaign was successful, not so much due to old loyalties as to new enthusiasm

Despite this being a massive target, the churches responded to the fresh challenge put before them. In 1902 the fundraising campaign was successful, not so much 'due to old loyalties as to new enthusiasm', noted Ian Randall in *The English Baptists of the 20th Century*. 'This Fund was an astonishing achievement and signalled Baptist denomination renewal.'



Over the next few years, processes for ensuring that ministers were properly trained and paid were put in place; various different funds were amalgamated and put under the stewardship of the Union; a new order of deaconesses to engage in urban mission was established; a scheme to facilitate the movement of ministers between churches was set up. ('The number of new initiatives at the beginning of this century makes breathtaking reading', wrote David Coffey in *The Home Mission Story*). So that these initiatives could be sustained, an annual financial appeal to the churches was made (the Sustentation Fund) – and here we have the official beginnings of Baptists Together Home Mission.

Developments across the years

The annual appeal has continued ever since, consistently adapted to meet the challenges of the day. In the 1940s it became the new *Home Work Fund*, which aimed to secure uniformity of treatment for all Associations and an agreed ministerial stipend for those in receipt of grants. In 1970 it became the *Home Mission Fund*. Its scope has broadened into the 21st century: Home Mission grants are now made by Associations – a change which arose from the 2012 Futures Process – with a renewed focus on mission.

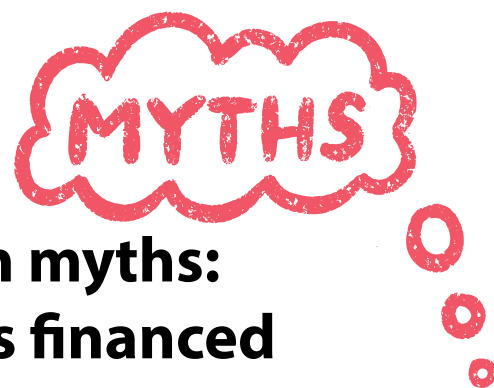
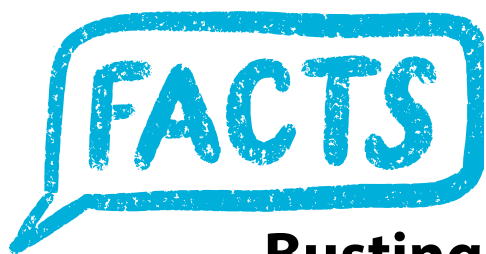
Douglas Sparkes, author of 1995's *The Home Mission Story*, stated that throughout the history of Home Mission 'it has not been possible consistently to sustain the level of income to meet demand'. Factors have been the general economic climate impacting on church finances, alongside an emphasis on the local church overriding concepts of responsibility for other churches.



'Over the years Home Mission in its various forms has achieved so much', he concluded. 'So much more could be accomplished if it was given in all places the priorities that Baptists ought to accord it.'

Peter Shepherd is a Baptist minister and the author of several articles and two books on Baptist history: *The Making of a Modern Denomination* and *The Making of Northern Baptist College*.





Busting Home Mission myths: how Baptists Together is financed

Where our money comes from, where it goes, how it is managed – and some myths busted.
By Richard Wilson, Support Services Team Leader

Prior to taking up my role as *Support Services* Team leader within the Specialist Teams based in Baptist House, I had already been treasurer of *Caversham Baptist Church* for seven years. I can still remember as a treasurer not understanding how the finances of the Baptist family worked and I'm sure that is not unusual among ministers, treasurers and secretaries in our Baptist churches. In this article I'm aiming to explain how our financial model works; where the money comes from, where it goes and how it is managed.

As Baptists, our focus is always on the local church and mission, and this philosophy drives our finances. Our funding is heavily reliant on the generosity of our churches and their members: our financial model is different to every other denomination. Whereas others are able to demand that their individual churches contribute a particular percentage or figure, giving to Baptists Together Home Mission Appeal is a free-will gift.

Our key priority when spending is how we can support our churches in their mission, rather than how we can support denominational institutions.

As
Baptists, our
focus is always
on the local
church and its
mission

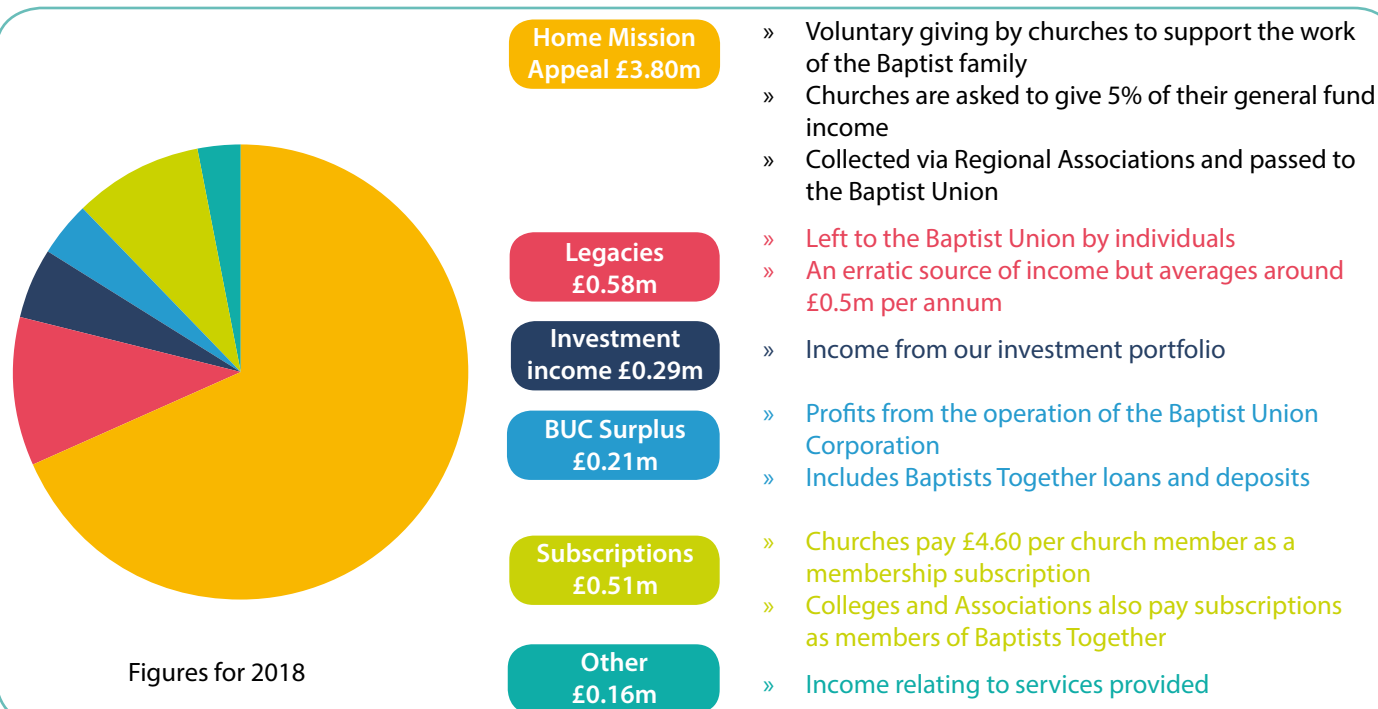
Where our money comes from

The starting point for any financial model is always the gathering of resources. Our key income sources to the Home Mission Fund are shown in the chart below (figures for 2018 provided).

Together these income sources provide the resources to support the life of our Baptist family, amounting to around £5.5m.

Myth 1: Baptists Together has huge resources that are being hoarded.

False! If only! We aim to keep our operating costs small and look to invest the money that we have directly into mission rather than support significant overheads. We keep some modest reserves in relation to our expenditure for rainy days, but don't wish to keep funds back unnecessarily.



Other funds

Our Baptist Union has a few other sources of income.

The largest of these is from the assets of churches which have closed. As part of the Family Solution, we have a policy of allocating these receipts directly to the Pension Reserve fund in order to address the challenge of the deficit in the Baptist Pension Scheme.

We also hold a small number of benevolent funds, the largest of which holds some investments which generate an income to support pastoral grants to support those working in our Baptist family when they have needs.

Where our money goes

Once we have gathered our resources, we then distribute them to support churches, deploying funds at local, regional and national level.

Regional support

Funding the 13 Regional Baptist Associations, including the teams of regional ministers, who support the churches in their area

Local impact

Grants to directly support mission in local churches and pioneering projects. Allocated by Regional Associations

National expertise

Funding the c40 staff in the Specialist Teams based in Baptist House to provide advice on specialist areas (legal, property, safeguarding, ministry)

Myth 2: There's a vast team in Baptist House.

Simply not true! There are currently 20 full-time and 19 part-time members of staff at Baptist House. This is proportionately fewer staff than any of the other major denominations.

There is one part of the Baptist Family that is not represented above – namely the five Baptist Colleges. They are independent charitable entities with their own funding streams (principally student fees). They don't directly receive funding from the Home Mission Fund, although some funds at Regional and National levels are used to support training. However, it's fair to say that funding ministerial training in the 21st century is a challenge that will need to be addressed in the next few years.

Myth 3: Only grants to churches are 'real mission'.

Simply not true! We fundamentally believe that everything we do is mission. The work of our regional and national teams is focussed on supporting our member churches by equipping them to fulfil God's mission in their local area. While grants to local mission projects are the most direct expression of this, the national expertise in the Specialist Teams and the regional support available to churches are equally essential in enabling our churches to continue in their mission.

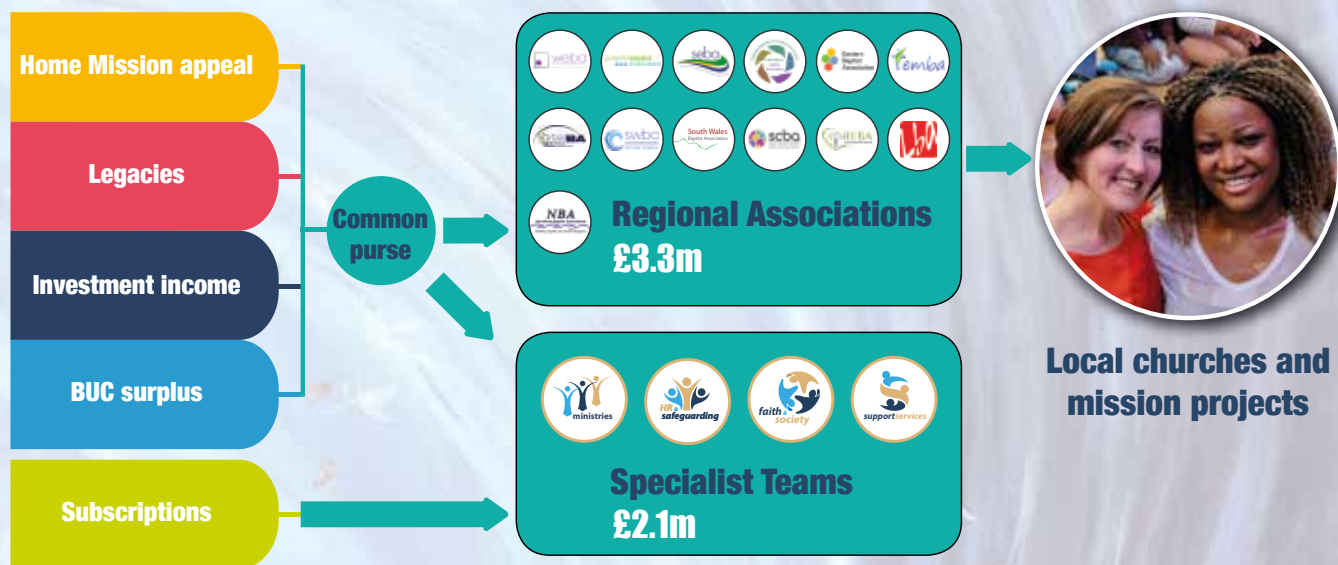
The Subscriptions and income from services are directly allocated to the national Specialist Teams, with all the remaining money pooled into a 'Common Purse' that is then allocated between the Regional Associations and the Specialist Teams according to a formula overseen by the Baptist Steering Group (see diagram overleaf).

Myth 4: Subscriptions pay for 'overheads' and the Home Mission appeal pays for mission grants.

False! This is a common misconception. Because we believe all our work is mission, we have no difficulty with using money from the Home Mission appeal to run these operations. To pay the costs of the staff and overheads of the Specialist Teams and Associations would require a much higher subscription, several times higher than the current rate. This was explored by Baptist Union Council in November 2018, but it was decided not to progress this approach.

The Regional Associations, which are legally separate bodies from the Baptist Union, use the resources they are allocated to run their Associations, including their teams of regional ministers and make grants to support mission in local churches and pioneering projects.

Where our money comes from and goes to



How is it managed? How are decisions made?

We believe it important to be open about how the decisions relating to finance are made in our Baptist family. After all, the resources are entrusted to us by God and we need to have good stewardship of those resources.

The overall distribution of funds to the Specialist Teams and Regional Associations is overseen by the Baptist Steering Group (BSG), which comprises representatives from Specialist Teams, Regional Associations, Colleges, Baptist Union Council and Baptist Union Trustees. You can read more about BSG at www.baptist.org.uk/bsg.

The Trustees of the Baptist Union of Great Britain charity (which is the legal body behind Baptists Together) are then responsible for overseeing the operation of the Baptists Together Home Mission fund in line with the decision of BSG. They directly manage the expenditure of the Specialist Teams who are employees of the Baptist Union of Great Britain charity. The Trustees are appointed by Baptist Union Council and are ultimately accountable to the Baptist Assembly, where all the members of Baptists Together, our churches, Colleges and Regional Associations, are represented.

The expenditure of the Regional Associations, which includes the costs of the regional teams and the grants made to support mission projects in their areas, is overseen by their Trustees, who are ultimately accountable to their member churches, via the Association Assemblies

our key priority when spending is how we can support churches in their mission


and AGMs. As good stewards of our shared resources they also report back to the Baptist Union Trustees on how they have spent their share of the Baptists Together Home Mission fund.

We encourage our churches to participate in the life of Baptists Together in Regional Association AGMs and Assemblies, and the national Baptist Assembly so that their voice can be heard in setting our priorities.

Our system is not perfect, but it is supporting our churches and ministers in all sorts of ways, some of which you will read about in the following pages.

We hope that by helping you to better understand it you can encourage your church and feel confident that your church's subscriptions and Home Mission giving are really serving the mission of God in our Baptist family.

Richard Wilson is Support Services Team Leader



Baptists Together - a movement of local churches, regional associations and colleges supported by three specialist teams. Collectively known as Baptists Together.

The Baptist Union of Great Britain - the legal body behind Baptists Together

PASTORAL FUND GRANTS

Empowering
Acts of
Kindness

Do you or someone you know need financial assistance?

The Baptists Together Pastoral Fund can help by providing a grant to allow someone to:

- Support their family during hard times or a change in circumstances
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- Receive counselling
- Continue in their current role, which may otherwise not be possible
- Take a retreat or holiday to recharge after a difficult period
- Address other needs, as appropriate

The Pastoral Fund is normally open to anyone working in a Baptist organisation.

To find out if you qualify, and for more information, visit
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Home Mission

Enabling Kingdom growth



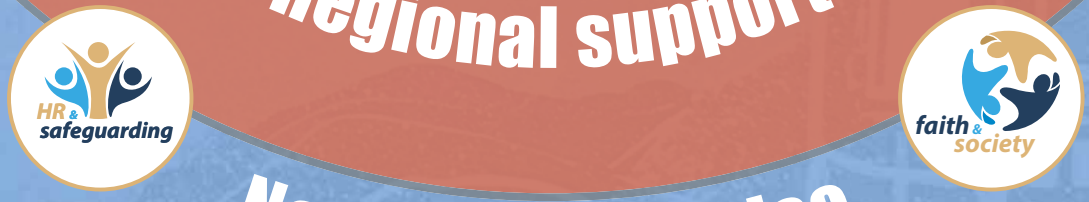
Home Mission enables Baptists Together reach our mission potential



Local impact



Regional support



National expertise

Baptists Together Home Mission funding combines national expertise with regional support to produce local impact. The stories over the next few pages demonstrate how this is happening in different places and contexts across the country



From hostility to hope

A Baptist church supported by Home Mission has been at the heart of a grieving community's response to a gang-related murder

On 2 June 2018, 17-year-old Tavis Spencer-Aitkens was stabbed repeatedly as he walked back from the shops in Packard Avenue, Ipswich. His murder shocked the community, and laid bare tensions that had been bubbling for several years. During the three month trial, the jury heard Tavis was killed in revenge for trouble that flared between two rival gangs. At an emotional public meeting convened by Ipswich Borough Council and held at nearby **Nansen Road Baptist Church** days after the tragedy, many blamed police and councils for neglecting the area, calling for investment in youth facilities, rather than cuts and closures.



Photos: Nansen Road Baptist Church

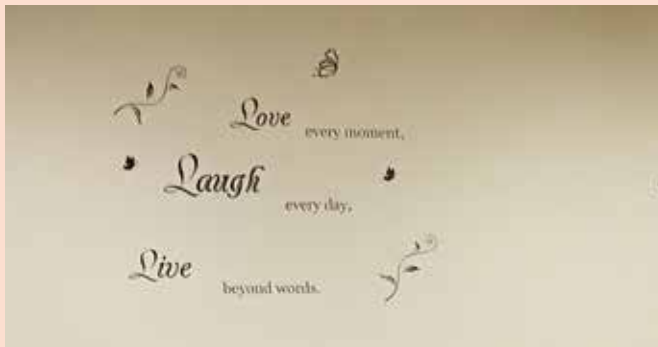
Peterson Anand, the minister at Nansen Road, understood the concerns. Tensions had been building for some time, he said: "In the six years of my pastoral ministry at Nansen Road Baptist Church, we had sensed that there was something seriously wrong about the safety of our young people in the community. Many had been caught up in the drug related networks and county lines gangs - when criminals from major cities such expand their drug networks to other areas of the country", he explained.

"We seemed to have lost touch with our young people; there was a lack of trust."

The tragedy served to galvanise the community. Within a week of the murder, a community day with food stalls had been organised. The place was full and raised funds for the funeral.

Longer term solutions were explored. Over the years Nansen Road has been committed in reaching out to children and young people, organising events such as 'Stay and Play' for children and parents in school term times. Its prayer and burden had also been for a youth club. "Right from the beginning, people were saying we need to do more," Peterson said. "Concerned families of the community approached us to share the need of having regular events for young people. We had felt the need for this and have been praying for several years."

Despite reaching out to different organisations and agencies, it had never quite happened. However, the church's vision for a youth club was now shared by Neville Aitkens (Tavis's father) and wife Helen Forbes (Tavis's stepmother) who wanted something good to emerge from the tragedy. "They wanted to move forward in life after the heart wrenching experience of losing their son," Peterson said. "They want to give young people a safe, positive, peaceful and prosperous future in the community. →"



"They wanted to create a youth club."

With the church also receiving new youth workers in the form of John and Amanda Southgate, momentum was building.

Neville and Helen worked alongside the church's leaders, elders and deacons to plan the youth club and ensure all the legal processes were undertaken. Peterson and his colleagues expressed their vision in different meetings and the church agreed that its hall would be the venue for the youth club. Around £1000 was raised by the community to buy the equipment.

After months of vision and planning, the new youth club – called *Reflections* – opened on 27 June. Run by volunteers from the community and the church, its aim is to give the children a safe environment and help them develop better relationships with each other, and help give them a sense of purpose and meaning. On the opening day it was full of children aged 8-16 playing different games, such as pool and table tennis, engaged in art and craft activities, music and computers. The event was covered extensively by the local media – the same media which had reported on Tavis's murder 12 months previously.

Speaking to the *Ipswich Star*, Mr Aitkens said: "Through all the emotions, what better way could there be to give something back, make Tavis proud and keep children safe. We had youth clubs growing up and everybody knew each other, from all across town and we never had any of these gang problems."

John Southgate, Helen Forbes, Peterson Anand, Neville Aitkens and Amanda Southgate



Photo: Oliver Sullivan | Archant Norfolk

Peterson described it as 'overwhelming and exciting' to see both church halls converted into the youth centre. Initially *Reflections* will run each Thursday between 6 and 8pm, but the plan is to open on Tuesdays as well, though further resources are required to enable this to happen.

He said he had seen a change of attitude among parents of the young people in the community.

"They are much more serious about the need to bring their children and young people to our events. This was evidenced through our Easter Fun Day in April and Disco Time in May. Parents have requested us to do more events like these to keep their children away from the street and away from the danger of gang culture to provide them with a haven.

"It is wonderful to know that the community and the church have come together in partnership to start this Youth Club Centre. This will help our church to reach out to our community with the love of Jesus. We believe God is changing the attitudes of the people in the community and we are praying that God may open their spiritual eyes to see and accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Saviour. Nothing is impossible for God as we have seen a fresh move of God's Holy Spirit for saving the lives of people from darkness to the marvellous light of Christ. We give all the glory and praise to God."

Nansen Road Baptist Church has received both financial – in the form of a Home Mission grant – and practical support from the *Eastern Baptist Association*.



Eastern Baptist Association

"The Eastern Baptist Association has helped guide us in preparing our 'Mission Action Plans' and the Baptists Together Home Mission grant helps to develop the mission of the church as well as support the minister for ongoing pastoral and administrative leadership. Without the Home Mission grant, we couldn't continue to support the ministry of the church."

Peterson Anand, minister of Nansen Road Baptist Church

"It has been our privilege to work with Peterson and the team at Nansen Road Baptist Church and to help and to support them with their life changing ministry in the community. As well as awarding the church a Home Mission grant, we have been delighted to spend time with them talking about how they can engage with the people around them so that they can bring the healing love of God to a community that has known such a great tragedy."

Graeme Ross, EBA Regional Minister



'Seeking to build something that is of God'

How Home Mission is enabling a Christian presence in new housing developments

It's likely that many of us live close to a construction site. The number of new homes being built in the UK has soared to its highest levels in a decade: more than 160,000 new build homes were started in the year to June 2017, according to government sources, a 75 per cent increase on the 2009 figure when the housing slump was at its peak. With Government projections on population growth suggesting an added 210,000 households in England between 2014 and 2039, this rate of construction is unlikely to slow anytime soon.

Many of these developments are huge in scale, creating brand new communities with corresponding amenities that such a community needs. How can and should Christians respond to such developments? What does church look like where there is effectively a blank slate? One ecumenical approach in Leicestershire, with Baptists at its heart and enabled by Home Mission funding, is turning heads.



Sue Steer is the Pioneer Community Worker in Lubbethorpe on the edge of Leicester. Here a new town is being born, with 4,000 homes scheduled to be built in the next 15 years. The desire for a Christian presence from the outset was initially recognised by Bob Almond, minister at *Kirby Muxloe Free Church*, and taken onboard by the local Churches Together group (CTiL). Four denominations (Baptist, Methodist, URC, Church of England) agreed to fund a role. Sue, a newly accredited Baptist minister, successfully applied for the role and started three years ago.

At that time no residents had yet arrived on the estate.

Sue was able to spend her first six months getting to know the area and building relationships with a range of people: the builders, developer, local council, local residents opposed to the development. She had no fixed idea of what the church would look like in the future, and no agenda other than to be a welcoming presence and help build a healthy community by loving and serving it. It means her role involves listening and discerning: what do people want? How do we join in with what God is already doing?

She developed good relationships with the sales teams, and in the early days was often found in the sales offices getting to know people ahead of moving in. With 300 homes now built and between 15-20 new arrivals each month, certainly developments have begun to take shape. New arrivals receive a welcome pack including the offer to bless their new home. Gifts of bulbs and chocolate accompany this.



Sue discovered the community particularly wanted a toddler group, which she was happy to set up in the Hub, the portacabins in which she has a semi-permanent base. This has proved a really good way of connecting with young families. Very early into her time Sue started a Tuesday night group, where people meet for food, and to develop a rhythm of prayer. Every month they will look at something from the Bible.

As someone tasked with building healthy community, Sue sees her role as a facilitator, encouraging residents to start things and build relationships. In this way a Saturday morning café, a book club and a walking club are up and running. "We want people to connect with their neighbours and build friendships." She has recognised the importance of events that connect people, and as she has got to know new residents, has become aware of social isolation. →



And it's not just residents: she is a welcoming presence for all stakeholders. For instance, doctors new to the estate are asking 'how can we work with you?'

It's still very early days, but the results are tangible. Sue knows residents who have moved to the development because they are aware there is a strong community growing. District councillors have visited alongside churches from Hinckley to learn what's happening.

Having initially been wary, the developer has been so impressed by Sue and her team's efforts to build community he's encouraging other new developments to have a church presence at the centre (see quote in box on right). In June they were told the plot the Hub is on will be developed. Because of the healthy relationship with the developer, they have secured a new plot next to the school and a village square, meaning it will remain very visible.

It's a genuinely ecumenical project. There is a particularly strong Baptist involvement: Sue is well supported by some members of nearby **Whetstone Baptist Church** and Kirby Muxloe Free Church, who have taken an interest in the development and help run the toddler group and deliver the welcome packs. The **East Midland Baptist Association** and regional minister Mike Fegredo, who has a focus on pioneer ministry, work closely with her. "It becomes a two way thing. I receive regional support, and through my ministry the Association is learning from a pioneer and about new ways of being church. We are looking at how we can actively learn together."

More widely she is supported by the likes of Penny Marsh and Ali Boulton, Baptists who are also serving new housing areas.

She describes it as faith in the public square, with Christians genuinely building community.

In the summer Sue began hosting a Mossy Church service – a cross between a Messy Church and outdoor church service. The area has a history of agriculture, and 40 per cent of the development will be green space. The first service explored the story of Abraham and his call by God to move to a new place, and how God was faithful to him. They built dens to represent tents, and bee homes and insect hotels.

"We wanted to connect with the history of the place, and are trying to connect with what's happening in people's lives with an outdoor feel."

But ultimately she doesn't know what church will look like in the future in Lubbesthorpe.

She is aware that this is a constantly evolving situation. Less than 10 per cent of the homes have been built.

It becomes a two way thing. I receive regional support, and through my ministry the Association is learning from a pioneer and about new ways of being church. We are looking at how we can actively learn together.

The estate will continue to grow. She is therefore open to the possibility of demands and needs changing, and doesn't want to become too wedded to delivering particular activities. With 4000 homes there are likely to be different expressions of church. Sue would like the ecumenical relationships that have underpinned her ministry to remain strong. She hopes the Christian presence will continue to be open.

"We recognise we are in a world where the traditional church is in decline, and we have to work out how to respond to that. There is no easy way forward, but there is scope to do so much."

Sue brings together all that's happening in this reflection: "We're out there at the very beginning seeking to build something that is of God."

Quote from the developer

"From past experiences on other large residential urban extensions where far too late in the projects the idea of creating a community using faith were unsuccessful, I was extremely wary of what was being imposed upon the Landowner by Churches Together and the District Council. What became very clear early on was that by promoting and working really hard to create a sense of community, as opposed to pushing one variation or another of the Christian faith, that a high percentage of the new residents bought into the community ethos. They almost have a yearning for being part of a community which is really difficult to create in a new development, in the middle of a muddy field, and which they did not expect to find at New Lubbesthorpe from the outset.

From this I am encouraging landowners and promoters to follow the CTIL model and aim to create a sense of place and community at the very outset on new major residential schemes."

Martin Ward, *Director, Mather Jamie*



Photos: Dave Steer



The church has committed to employing and training local people to run its café, which offers fantastic opportunities to young people

Photo: Raluca Curcan | joyfulheart.co.uk

“People are really responding to the love of God.”

How lives are being transformed at Mill Hill East Baptist Church in north London

Katy* had been dealt a rough hand in life. Her mum died when she was young. Her growing patchwork family, squeezed into local social housing, struggled to cope with her. She found school difficult, mostly through lack of focus and poor attendance. She was known as someone who lit up every room she was in, usually by lighting a fire! She had attended some of the youth programmes at **Mill Hill East Baptist Church** in north London, and it wasn't unusual for her to lash out at the youth workers, such was her rage and frustration.

However, the fellowship at Mill Hill East saw something in her. They recognised that circumstances were making it tricky for her to use her God-given gifts.

*name changed

It was a challenge getting Katy involved in working alongside Frances, the church's community pastor employed using a Home Mission grant. She was offered a job in the church café and it took a while for her family and school to agree, as they saw church as another distraction in a messy life situation. Katy initially found dealing with customers, taking orders and even turning up a challenge. But week by week Frances worked alongside her, offering her patience and grace, affirming all that God had made her to be. It was day to day, week to week. There were ups, and downs.

And then Katy started turning up early for work. She started to ask about the songs that Frances used to sing as she made coffee. Curious about the love she saw in those around her, she came along to church. At first uncomfortable and feeling a little alien, she was eventually someone known by name and welcomed by everyone. Members started to notice that she was playing the worship songs on her phone, that she was praying and engaging. She then wanted to be baptised!

The turnaround was a work of the Spirit in her life. Someone who was first encountered as aggressive went around smiling and loving every person she met. This insecure and unsure teenager then arranged a fun run, dragging her youth leaders round with her and raising money for cancer research, in memory of her mum. She is now an integral and valued member of the fellowship. →

local impact - regional support - national expertise





It was the kind of transformation the church had hoped and prayed for. Mill Hill East Baptist Church had a history of pouring itself into community, but had seen little in the way of disciple-making. When Josh Kane arrived as minister in 2016 the fellowship was dwindling and ageing, despite still being a community hub.

With more intentionality, a commitment to sharing stories of how Jesus is working in their lives, and helping people on their journey with Jesus, the church has seen around 30 baptisms and its average Sunday attendance grow to 80-90 these last couple of years. A number of people from a non-Christian background have been baptised. Josh says while it has been exciting, it is also very 'labour intensive'. "It's about living with the person day to day. There is lots of messy stuff."

"All these good works, but no clear path to Jesus. How do we change this?" Josh explains.

After much prayer, the church approached the **London Baptist Association** (LBA) about the possibility of support to call a pastor to lead its café. Working with the LBA, the church carried out both a mission audit and a community survey – and these revealed parallel aims. "We spoke in language of sail and anchor – we wanted to provide both opportunity, and depth and stability", says Josh. "The community survey revealed that people were looking for opportunities. If they had left school early, they didn't have job prospects. Also, a number of community spaces had closed. They didn't use this language, but it was sail and anchor."

The support of the Association team has been as important as the money. There is a sense they are walking with us – celebrating our triumphs, providing wisdom in the challenges

Which means that as well as the funding, he has been extremely grateful for the support of his Association and local cluster of ministers. "The support of the team has been as important as the money. I've often been in touch with them. Having that prayerful support – there is a sense they are walking with us – celebrating our triumphs, providing wisdom in the challenges. And engaging with the Baptist clusters has been key."

A couple of social workers who have previously worked with Katy visited the church one day, and couldn't believe the transformation. "They said: 'What have you done with her?'" says Josh. "It's been a really beautiful gospel thing."

The church focused on its café, and committed to employing and training local people and offering fantastic training and mentoring opportunities to young people. The LBA Mission Partnership funding has enabled the ministry of a community pastor to do this.

"For many, it's a slow journey. We've offered patience, and acceptance. People are really responding to the love of God."



Photos: Mill Hill East Baptist Church

Inner city hospitality

Osmaston 'Ozzy' Road Baptist Church in Derby is based in one of the most deprived communities in the country – and its significant ministries reflect this.

This inner city church is geographically close to a number of services for homeless people and those struggling with addiction. Over the years it has developed several projects responding to those in need, run in collaboration with Derby City Mission and Youth with a Mission. They include:

Recovery Project (50 come each week for food, prayer and Bible stories)

Storehouse (80-100 people every week come to eat, socialise and address issues)

Dove Project (started by an ex-homeless person and provides food and advice)

Daily Bread (teaches people how to cook on a budget)

As local services have closed with the onset of the austerity era, so the church's involvement has grown. In 2018 the church served 23,000 meals, for instance. In 2013 Derby City Council effectively shut down provision for the homeless. This led Ozzy Road to spearhead the Derby Night Shelter project which has operated every winter since. It has 300 volunteers and uses six different churches. The project provides food, shelter and support for its guests. Each year almost 300 different people use it, making it the largest church-run shelter in the country. A housing solution is found for most by the time it closes in spring. The effectiveness of this ministry has led the Council to approach them on how they can now best help the way forward. While many have found practical help, all have been treated with dignity.



Minister Graham Watkins (left) chats with guests at the Recovery Project



"The thing we are really good at is creating an atmosphere of welcome and hospitality," says minister Graham Watkins. "We see people as our guests."

The church also has a significant ministry to three local schools. With each school, there is a weekly pattern of assemblies, computer and craft clubs. The church teaches children to tell the Christian story with amazing results, considering these schools are 80 per cent Pakistani-Muslim. "Other religions care about telling our story and we all recognise the importance of grace and commonality," Graham reflects. Three times a year (harvest, Christmas and Easter) all three schools come to the church for a joint celebration – around 600 people. It has all helped to build trust in the community. While there are sensitivities and difficulties involved in converting from Islam to Christianity, an Asian fellowship (consisting of Christian-background believers) has started at the church.

Ozzy Road receives Home Mission funding for its Associate Pastor, Eliza Pinder-Ashenden, who has developed a growing ministry among the Roma population. Eliza is half Slovakian and has a real heart for Roma people. It started with a weekly youth outreach and has resulted in an enthusiastic new congregation – the Zoe Roma Church. The church also has links with Roma villages in Slovakia, and has seen first hand the level of prejudice that exists there. They are also exploring the possibility of a new school ministry in the community where Eliza lives.

In so many ways **Ozzy Road Baptist Church** is ministering to people in its midst but on society's edges – and the funding and regional support that Baptists Together Home Mission provides has anchored its activities. "We are a mission-focussed church, committed to preaching and living out the Gospel in ways people will understand – and Home Mission has just allowed us to do more," says Graham.

Photos: Osmaston Road Baptist Church



“God allows access for everybody”

January saw the launch of Open Hands Signing Church, a church led by Deaf leaders which is accessible to all. Susan Myatt, the first Baptist Deaf minister, is its pastor.



Susan's is a ministry that began in the local church and has been embraced by the wider Baptist family as it has developed. Susan was the first Deaf student at a Baptist college; she is now an integral part of her Association team; and she received a substantial Baptists Together Mission Forum grant to help in the integration of deaf and hearing people and to develop ministry among the Deaf Community.

How would you describe Open Hands Signing Church?

Open Hands Signing Church provides a fantastic opportunity to have a church led by Deaf leaders, to empower them but also to enable them, and all Deaf people attending, to have a direct relationship with God and to grow in their faith and spirituality in their beautiful language. At the same time, it's a good opportunity to build relationships with hearing people who also attend **Open Hands Signing Church**. They can learn about Deaf Culture, and there is always a voice-over available to ensure access throughout. Deaf and hearing people embrace each other and can embrace God together.

What is Open Hands Signing Church's vision?

In May 2018, I was part of the hearing congregation at **Rising Brook Baptist Church**, when God suddenly revealed to me that the Deaf people sitting in front of me had gifts that he wanted to use. God revealed that it was time to set up a church that could use their skills.

The image God gave me was from Acts 2: 1-13, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the crowds, and everyone was speaking in other languages... but instead of other spoken languages, I saw the tongues of fire and everyone signing in different sign languages! Such a beautiful, inclusive vision! It was a scary moment! At the same time though, it was very exciting to take that next step: “Should I...?”. Within a matter of a few months the elders and ministers had agreed that this pioneering vision should begin in October 2018, and then, after a period of confidence-building and empowerment, should be officially launched in January 2019.

At Open Hands Signing Church we use signed Bible readings, songs, drama and prayers and visual PowerPoints and resources to share and develop in our faith. God allows access for everybody, not just hearing people using speech. That gives me hope. We do not have to be restricted to worshipping through sounds, we can worship using our own visual spatial language, one that incorporates our hands alongside facial expression and body language.

What are your reflections on the first six months?

It has been incredible to see Deaf people involved in the worship team, coming together and growing in their faith. They are very eager to lead the worship, and witnessing this is amazing!

As part of the development of Open Hands Signing Church, we have brought all of the previous deaf groups under the new 'Open Hands' church. So we now have Open Hands Bible Study, Open Hands Craft Group, Open Hands Deaf Café. The demand for our BSL courses has increased too. The vision I originally received of people signing undergirds all of this.

The monthly Open Hands Signing Church service fell on Easter Sunday this year. This provided the opportunity for the whole Easter story to be presented in drama sketches - from Palm Sunday to 'He is Risen!'. This had a huge impact on everyone there (Deaf and hearing alike). It was so different from the familiar experience of Easter Sunday in many churches. In addition, one Deaf person was baptised during this service. She had become a Christian after having experienced God's love whilst practising a story about love as part of our Open Hands drama group a couple of months earlier. She is the first Deaf person to be baptised at Open Hands Signing Church! This was then an opportunity for other Deaf people to understand the real meaning of baptism as a commitment to God as 'active observers'.



Maybe sometimes, pictures and demonstrations give a depth of meaning and experience that words may not... for everyone? Certainly for Deaf people who use British Sign Language or other visual means to access and share information. It wouldn't have been any good sending Deaf people home with a Bible story that they couldn't access (English being a struggle for many Deaf people)!

How have you been supported by the Baptist family in seeing this ministry developed and released?

I had wonderful support from Glen Marshall and his colleagues at *Northern Baptist College* from 2012 until 2016. The *Heart of England Baptist Association's* Team Leader Adrian Argile, along with the other regional ministers and staff have been amazingly supportive and patient with me on this journey. I can't thank them enough for their ongoing support and encouragement. At Rising Brook Baptist Church, Martin Young and the team have been on my journey with me from the beginning. We have all grown in our ability to empathise with the needs of both hearing and Deaf people as we seek to build God's Kingdom together. I am really thankful to all my colleagues at Rising Brook for catching the vision and enabling Open Hand Signing Church to become a reality. I also very much appreciate the work of volunteers

from Rising Brook in supporting the practical set-up and running of Open Hands Signing Church services in the nearby Library venue every month.

'I can do all things through him who strengthens me.'
Philippians 4: 13

Working with Mike Lowe, Communications Enabler in the Faith and Society Team, Susan is creating a series of reflections in British Sign Language. These are available at www.baptist.org.uk/bsl



It has been incredible to see Deaf people involved in the worship team, coming together and growing in their faith





ministries

“It’s all about church support”



HR & safeguarding



faith & society



support services

Baptist churches have access to advice and support on a range of specialist topics to enable them to fulfil their mission



“I should think in the 15 years I’ve been here, we’ve had direct contact with more than half our churches on various issues,” notes Steve Wing, the Operations

Manager of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB). It’s a sense of the reach of the Support Services Team of Baptists Together. The work of the team is divided into three main areas – Finance, Pensions, and Legal and Operations, which incorporates the Baptist Union Corporation (BUC).

The team provides a comprehensive suite of guidance to enable churches to operate effectively and substantially reduce their need to buy in external advice. It also provides bespoke advice to support churches where they have queries or complex issues, without charge to members.

Steve says that we provide support to the full range of Baptist churches. Whilst our larger churches might have more legal or financial expertise within their congregations, they still come to us for specialist advice and they regularly make use of the BUC’s deposits and loan offerings.

Many of our smaller churches don’t have experts in their congregation, so we do spend a lot of our time supporting them with areas where they would otherwise need to pay for advice. “We’ve supported churches with as few as six people. We help churches of all sizes, and try to have a ‘can do’ approach to what is required. It’s all about church support,” says Steve.

“We have also supported Baptist Colleges and Baptist Associations.”

Some of the areas in which our churches are supported are outlined opposite.



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Church governance

One key area is helping churches understand and update their constitutions (how they are organised and governed), as well as their obligations as charities.

Two big areas of work in recent times have revolved around the advent of Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIO) - a new type of legal entity for non-profit organisations - and helping churches adapt to the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May 2018.

Property trusteeship

BUC continues to support member churches by acting as a *Property Trustee* for church buildings, manses and other properties. The majority of our member churches are unincorporated associations, and are unable to directly hold property. In total it holds 2261 properties across 1,060 churches. Help is given on building maintenance, boundary queries, drawing up building hiring agreements and trust matters.

National settlement

Through the work of the National Settlement Team, 65 Fully Accredited ministers were settled in 2018 (2017: 40) along with 26 Newly Accredited Ministers (2017: 32).

Theological reflection

The Faith and Society Team engages in theological reflection and research to provide information and study resources on a variety of social and political issues.



Baptists Together Deposit Scheme and Loan Fund

The Support Services Team operates the *Baptists Together Deposit Scheme* and *Loan Fund*, which offer churches access to finance at competitive rates of interest with much lower fees than commercial lending.

The Deposit Scheme offers competitive rates of interest of up to 1.35% on deposits from member churches, associations and other Baptist bodies. Deposits increased by 20% in 2018, having already increased by 40% in 2017.

Using the funds deposited under the Deposit Scheme, the team continues to offer loans to churches for acquisition and development of church buildings and manses, and for pension cessation event debts.

Guideline leaflets

The Support Services Team has published and maintains more than 100 guideline leaflets, written specially for Baptist churches, on topics including church finance, charity governance, legal and trust issues, listed buildings, property and tax, all available at baptist.org.uk/resources

Counselling to ministers

The Churches' Ministerial Counselling service provides counselling services for a growing number of denominations and dioceses, and is co-ordinated by the Ministries Team. In 2018 it provided short-term counselling support to 88 Baptist ministers and adult members of their households.

Safeguarding

We fund DBS checks for our churches: in 2018 10,300 checks were processed through our DBS checking partner. All volunteer checks are free of charge for Baptist churches.

The national safeguarding team provides support to churches, associations and colleges by providing template policies, procedures and best practice guidelines.

Human Resources

Our HR Manager provides specialist guidance and support to churches on employment matters, including recruitment, performance management and attendance issues. More than 100 churches used this service in 2018, saving them the costs of seeking legal advice on common employment issues.



Ebbsfleet's first 1-mile fun run - the Mayor of Dartford gets ready to send them off!



Photo: Nick Johnson | theimageworks.net

"Baptists move quickly!"

Penny Marsh is part of the South East Baptist Association (SEBA) team in North Kent and leads the Kent Thameside Church Planting Project.

She feels called to plant a church in Ebbsfleet Garden City, currently scheduled to have 15,000 new homes. Around 650 of those homes have been built, and Penny is already well known in the community there. She and the team aim to share faith in creative and relevant ways, and provide a space where people can discover the transforming power of Jesus.

Penny currently lives in nearby Gravesend, and has been looking for an opportunity to move into the new development. Earlier this year one particular plot came up - a rare plot in that it has a large studio space over the double garage. This would offer the opportunity of a meeting space and enhance the scope of Penny's ministry.

However, without a buyer for her own home, Penny and her family weren't in a position to make an offer. She feared she was going to run out of time and lose the house to another buyer.

She spoke to her Association, which in turn suggested she contact Steve Wing, the Baptist Union's Operation's Manager.

"Steve was very helpful," Penny said. "He listened to me and said, 'I don't know how we are going to do this, but we'll find a way to help.'"

That way was for the *Baptist Union Corporation* to loan the money to SEBA to buy the house. Penny and her husband would pay the extra interest and legal costs, and buy the house from SEBA once their own sale went through. With this solution in place, the house was secured. It all happened within six days of her first approaching the Association. She relayed the story to an Anglican friend, whose comment was "Wow, Baptists move quickly!"

As it happened, Penny was able to sell her own house and negate the need for SEBA to buy the house, but without the wider support, this house would not have been secured. Penny will move in October.

The significance is in the scope the new house will offer.

"With this particular property there is the studio space. It will enable me to have an office, and a space for meeting.

We can offer an Alpha Course, a home group, a space for reflection at one of our events. There are all sorts of things we can do, and we'll be able to use that space in creative, missional ways.

"We will be much more part of the community by living there. So far we have been doing mission as a 'guest' in the community. Now that community that we know and love are welcoming us!"

She added: "We are really beginning to see things come together now - it is an exciting time!"

Kent Thameside Church Planting Project is a SEBA project, supported by Home Mission and direct giving. It is SEBA's response to the enormous mission opportunities in North Kent.

There are three main strands to the ministry in Ebbsfleet: a coffee morning that addresses social isolation; Sunday Active around health and fitness (Ebbsfleet has been designated a healthy new town, which has an emphasis on building communities which support a healthy lifestyle); and regular events such as an Easter Egg hunt, Play in the Park, summer fun day and a Christmas Community carol service at the new primary school.

Penny is happy to host visits to Ebbsfleet, or to come and share more.

Contact Penny

at penny@seba-baptist.org.uk or through the Ebbsfleet website ebbsfleetbaptistchurch.org.uk



An interview with

Tracey Vallance

Team and Events Co-ordinator, Faith and Society Team

What's your role and what does it involve?

In my current role as Team and Events Coordinator, I am responsible for coordinating all the Team's projects and events from conception to completion such as Baptist Assembly, *Baptists Together* magazine, venue finding to day to day admin support such as team meetings and website support. The scope of the role is very varied.

Can you talk about your sense of call to this role?

I joined the Baptist Union in August 2011 on a six month temporary contract in the Mission Department, supporting the local church in mission with initiatives and events. As a family we had recently relocated from Essex and I wanted to explore the possibility of working full-time again. The six month contract gave me this with the option to walk away - that plan didn't work because eight years on and I am still here!

Whilst my role may have changed at times, my reason for being here hasn't. I have always wanted to do my part for the kingdom and by doing what I do well releases others to do what they do well. Like many others here at Baptist House, I see this as more than just a job, it's my ministry - it's what I am called to do so that I can use the gifts God has given me.

What are some of the positive aspects of serving the team here?

My passion and enthusiasm for administration and project management is what drives me. I thrive on a challenge and love it when a plan comes together. To see a project through from conception to completion is really rewarding. I love working in a team, we all have a part to play in what we do and it's our different gifts and strengths that makes everything work. I love the fact that my day is never the same from one day to the next.

When and how did you realise that your administration/organisational skills could be used by God to make a difference?

I have always been passionate about administration and for it to be done well. I thrive on the challenge to deliver the best I possibly can in all situations, which in turn allows others to fulfil their role to the best of their ability.



All of us do elements of administration in our daily lives but we don't all have the gift of administration, and in my experience the two are very different. Over the years, I have realised that having a vision of what good administration looks like, how it can be used to make a difference in church life, the creativity and freedom it brings as opposed to doing it because you have to - that's what makes the difference.

So often administration is taken for granted, not appreciated for the gift it is and undervalued. For many years this was definitely my experience. Whenever I heard a talk or preach on the gifts, (1 Cor 12:28) administration was very often glossed over or not mentioned at all and the focus has often been on the other 'bigger' gifts of prophets and teachers, so for many years I didn't value or appreciate the gift I have. However, through the encouragement of others who recognised this gift within me and the opportunities they have given me, my own personal relationship with God and through my career, I came to realise this was my gift and passion and that I needed to step into it in the best way I could.

Your administration gifts have also been in much demand at local church level, haven't they?

Yes, throughout my career I have primarily worked for national Christian organisations or the local church, all of which have had their own challenges but all have contributed to my growth and understanding that my skills are my gift and my ministry, and this is how I can serve. Being able to offer my expertise and enable churches to be better at what they do is a real passion for me. I have been very fortunate that I have been released to work alongside churches on specific projects from time to time. I love seeing churches grow through the changes they make in their approach to administration and the encouragement they give to those in these roles.





Photo: Esther Smethurst

The life of a Regional Minister

Like an iceberg, only a small fraction of the work of Associations is actually seen. It's both reactive and proactive, but it's all mission, writes Carl Smethurst, Regional Minister for Mission in the South West Baptist Association

A couple of questions that I get asked a lot are, "Don't you get sick of 'fire-fighting' in churches?" and, "Wouldn't you rather be doing *mission*?" I gently raise an objection if those two questions are asked together – 'fire-fighting' in difficult circumstances in churches is part of God's mission, in my opinion – but I think I know what might lie behind the questions. It seems a lot of people perceive the work of Associations to be far more 'reactive' to problems happening in our churches than 'proactive' in serving God's mission.

Like an iceberg, only a small fraction of the work of Associations is actually seen 'above the surface'. Association staff teams are actively involved in the Mission of God in relationship with our family of churches 24/7, all year round pastorally supporting ministers and church leadership teams, helping churches navigate their way through challenging circumstances, assisting churches during pastoral vacancies, providing training, giving advice on all kinds of different issues, plus much, much more.

I have to admit, though, that at a passing glance much of the work of Associations may seem more 'reactive' than 'proactive'. I am concerned that our culture might attach greater worth to creating the 'new' rather than valuing the 'established', but equally we are called as God's people to discern the 'new thing' that he is doing. For me that implies having a proactive, prophetic perspective alongside reacting appropriately to the needs of established churches.

Just over three years ago the **South West Baptist Association** (SWBA) made the decision to move to a collegiate structure where each of the three team members leads in a particular area; Ministry, Operations Management and my role, *Regional Minister for Mission*. Of course there is some overlap – I'd be concerned if there wasn't(!) – but this structure does enable me to be more proactive in serving God's mission in relationship with our churches and pioneer ministers. We have been blessed to see a number of new worshipping communities and

pioneer ministries begin in the SWBA over the last few years, but maybe the best way to illustrate one of the aspects of my role is to briefly share a story of something new that God has led us to work on together...

About 18 months ago I received an excited call from the pastor of one of our churches on the North Devon coast. "Carl, the Spirit of God is opening doors for the gospel in the town like I've never seen before – can we meet to chat about it?" Regional Ministers receive many calls each week; this type would definitely rate among my most favourite! A week or so later we met, chatted and prayed.

It would be fair to say that this small church (about 20 in size) in North Devon is primarily made up of folks of more senior years but who are passionate about Jesus and have found ways to be actively and sacrificially involved in God's mission in their town. The church runs a number of missional initiatives among some of the most challenging and marginalised people

in the community, and as I talked with the pastor it became clear that God was opening doors for this work to expand and for new opportunities to be explored. There was also a new openness to Christians being involved in chaplaincy in the large local secondary school, for example.

The pastor was approaching retirement (ill health has meant he has now retired) and saw that, while vision and willingness were strong, the church members didn't have the energy to further develop and explore these new opportunities. We agreed that they should spend some time praying and discerning how God might be leading them. Shortly after our conversation, Lynn Green (Baptists Together General Secretary) visited the church and shared her vision that God was calling us to be Beacons of Hope to our communities. This resonated strongly with the church members who arranged for me to meet with them to discuss calling a Missioner – a Pioneer Minister – to the town. They were prepared to give sacrificially all they could to this new post, both personally and from the church's small reserve, but needed help to find the extra funding required and to recruit and support the Missioner when appointed. The church will receive a Home Mission grant to support the Missioner and I am presently working to find the funding for accommodation since the church no longer owns a manse.

We're almost there now. This exciting new role borne out of a small, elderly church's desire to serve the mission

My experience of Regional Ministry has helped me realise just how 'white the fields are to harvest'

of God in their town and the Spirit of God at work opening new doors for the gospel, is almost ready to advertise. I believe God is already preparing the heart of the person he will call to this new post. If you're interested (or you'd like to buy a house on the beautiful North Devon coast for a new Missioner to live in!), please get in touch with me.

In addition to my input, different members of the SWBA team have been working with the church in recent times to help support their leadership team, resolve their pension debts and advise them on building maintenance issues. This is a great example of the Baptist family locally, regionally and nationally working together to discern and resource the mission of God in one of the most beautiful but most social deprived coastal communities in the UK

The thing is, I could share at least another dozen stories of similar possibilities to mobilise the church in God's mission in the South West right now. Across the whole Baptist family there would be many, many more. I believe God provides for that which he gives vision for. I can't help thinking that God might choose to do that through the faithful prayer and giving of a family of churches who are committed to supporting his mission in places beyond their own.

The reality is that there is not enough given to the Home Mission Appeal each year to adequately resource Associations in serving our family of churches and most Associations are running considerable deficit budgets, rapidly using up any reserves they have available to continue to support, equip and release people for God's mission.

My experience of Regional Ministry has helped me realise just how 'white the fields are to harvest'. I am also increasingly convinced that our ways of working in partnership together for the gospel (Philippians 1:4-5) means our family of churches are uniquely positioned to respond to local missional opportunities but with the full weight of support of both a regional and national family.

For me as a Regional Minister for Mission, Baptists Together Home Mission doesn't only represent providing money to support each other's mission. It's also about developing a prayerful partnership with each other and, from time to time, physically moving to places God has called us to so we can partner with a church or pioneer in a different part of the family. If we can learn what it means to partner with each other for the gospel locally, regionally and nationally, I am confident that our family of churches will be ever more useful in the hands of God to see lives and communities transformed in to the likeness of his Kingdom. Let's crack on...

Carl Smethurst, Regional Minister for Mission in the South West Baptist Association



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Association grants

**We want to equip churches for mission
- and this is reflected in the way our Associations discern how to distribute funds**

Yorkshire Baptist Association



There is an expectation that churches who receive Home Mission grants in the Yorkshire Baptist Association (YBA) will join a learning partnership. There is an intentional missional focus about these partnerships: by participating in them it is hoped churches will grow in their discipleship and their understanding of God's call on their lives.

The partnerships involve a community of people from different churches who meet regularly to learn, reflect and encourage each other.

"Learning partnerships at their heart recognise there is something valuable in learning," explains Mission Enabler **Kezia Robinson**.

"There's something in receiving teaching from the front, but also getting wisdom from in the room – hearing about people's joys, and sorrows, sharing their context and ideas.

"We've found that it increases people's confidence in themselves and who they are in God.

"As an Association, learning together in mission increases our connectivity and Association strength."

There are currently five learning partnerships operating within the YBA. They involve mission action planning; whole life discipleship (in partnership with the *London Institute for Contemporary Christianity*); a pioneering learning community; a *Fresh Expressions* learning community which takes a church through the *Mission Shaped Ministry* course, and a learning community for those involved with parent and toddler groups.

Churches receiving Home Mission funding will sign up to a learning community. If they grow in their missional capacity, they can apply for another grant. "In the past Home Mission might have been thought of as palliative care – but being part of a learning community requires a lot from a church, and not just the minister," says Kez. Learning communities are wider than Home Mission, however, and open to all – around 25 per cent of churches are taking part, of varying sizes and contexts. The Association began its learning partnerships around four years ago, and is now beginning to see a number of positive, strong relationships emerge among the churches involved.

"They aren't a silver bullet," continues Kez, "but we are seeing increased confidence and stronger relationships. If a church puts out an appeal, you are much more likely to help if you've been in a room together for several months. It feels like there is support in the journey."

learning
together in
mission increases
our connectivity and
Association strength;
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confidence in
themselves and who
they are in God

London Baptist Association



The London Baptist Association moved several years ago away from a traditional model of Home Mission grants. Whereas before we might have continued to sustain a church-based pastorate in those settings which could not afford a full-time minister, we now require any applicants to demonstrate that their funding will have a missional impact – and only allow people to have support for a finite time before the project must become self-sustaining.

Yes, we still support local churches and ministerial stipends but even these need to have a 'missional edge' rather than a characteristic of maintaining existing structures or the status quo. So, now, we support a range of projects as a 'pump primer' rather than a 'maintainer' with recipients ranging from a youth charity in South London (*The Hebe Foundation*) to a new form of church springing up in Coulsdon (*Old Lodge Lane*).

Phil Barnard, LBA Regional Minister Team Leader

West of England Baptist Association

Near the beginning of his letter to the Philippian Christians, the apostle Paul writes, 'I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel...'



The concept of partnership is becoming increasingly important to us in WEBA. One of the primary ways that we are experiencing this is through 'Re-Imagine', our missional learning community for church leadership teams. Through 'Re-Imagine', we as regional ministers in WEBA are seeking to help our church leadership teams to consider and explore how they might learn to lead their churches more effectively by modelling and facilitating deeper discipleship and engagement in the mission of God. And to be doing so in the challenging and ever-changing, multi-faceted mix of cultures in which we now live.

As we look to the future and consider how we might best partner specifically with our churches who receive a Home Mission grant, we are recognising the potential impact and value of the shared journey that 'Re-Imagine' offers. It is for this simple, yet important reason that we are now exploring how we might best link up our churches who receive a Home Mission grant with the benefits of fully engaging in the 'Re-Imagine' process, and making this a necessary 'stepping-stone' to the financial support that a Home Mission grant affords.

Alisdair Longwill, WEBA Regional Minister



Afternoon Tea at Shinfield Baptist Church – a bi-monthly traditional tea attended by mostly non-church people



The story of Shinfield

Baptists Together is an interconnected web of churches, Associations, Colleges and Specialist Teams, that together enable us to connect with wider ecumenical partners for the sake of the Kingdom.

Recent developments at *Shinfield Baptist Church* in Reading are a good example of Christians teaming up fruitfully to help people experience and grasp God's love shared in Jesus

Shinfield is just south of Reading, and the Berkshire village has had a Baptist church since 1908. The church received some Home Mission funding in the 1980s and 1990s, but by 2013 faced doubt over its future, and considered closure as an option.

The church's current pastor, Nathan Hunt, who was then training at *Regent's Park College* to be a pastor, moved to Shinfield in the final year of his training. Nathan, who grew up in a village, says he and the congregation gelled instantly. "It was love at first sight! I met a group of people who felt called to the village. But never once did they say 'You have to do it this way'. They were constantly open to new ideas."

In the early months the church held a charity coffee and cake morning, drawing on the talented bakers in the congregation. The event proved popular, and was the start of someone joining the congregation and giving their life to Christ. "The church hadn't had a success for a number of years, and were so encouraged," Nathan said.

"You grow if you give"

With his training completed, Nathan felt called to remain at Shinfield. The church developed a partnership with *Wycliffe Baptist Church* in Reading, where Nathan was a member. Not only did Wycliffe provide some initial financial support to help with the rebirth, they backed Nathan's request to approach congregation members to move there too. And so in September 2015, ten adults and five children moved across from Wycliffe to become members of *Shinfield Baptist Church*. Other local Christians, with the blessing of their fellowships, joined the revived church, sensing God's call for them to participate in a renewed sense of local mission. →



It has required both openness and respect on the part of existing and new members, but the church became financially self-supporting within one year and has continued to thrive. Relationship building has been a priority, and the church and its members have enjoyed making connections with local schools, parish council and businesses as well as partnering with the local Anglican church. Charity cafés, village Christmas carols, toddler groups, pancake races, holiday clubs, Alpha and local friendships are all key elements in the church's programme to help people experience and grasp God's love shared in Jesus. Members are active in local political, sports and musical groups as well as serving the community as school governors.

It is now looking to restart a closed Baptist church in a neighbouring village (*Beech Hill Baptist Church*) and has financed this itself to date under the auspices of the *Southern Counties Baptist Association* (SCBA). Beech Hill is close to a development that might eventually see 15,000 new homes, so is in a particularly strategic location.

Partnerships with other Baptists and wider ecumenical support have been key to helping Shinfield rebirth its congregation and potentially plant out. For instance, Nathan says the partnership with Wycliffe is a good example of how a church can be reborn with the support of another local church, both in terms of finance and people. Wycliffe has a vision for growth,



Knights of the King – Children's Holiday club led by Shinfield Baptist Church with a team drawn from a partnership of five local churches of different denominations

but is not prescriptive about how, so was relaxed about helping. Shinfield would not be where it is now without its support. Nathan believes their gift has had an impact way beyond what was initially hoped. He wonders if

larger churches can be looser with finance and people, not least for their own sake. "You grow if you give. You've got to find new worship leaders and new leaders, but it forces you to train new people."

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Shinfield has received a gift of £5K from the SCBA 'church of the year' award. While it didn't need this to become self-sufficient financially, it has helped in its missional activity, such as running things like Alpha and subsidising the weekend away.

Ecumenically Nathan was part of a weekly cross-town prayer meeting for Reading pastors, which was a great encouragement, and has worked closely with the Anglicans in the village who have become great friends. He received coaching and advice and practical support from a New Frontiers church in town (Reading Family Church) and had been previously helped by Holy Trinity Brompton in spending time with them learning how to plant and graft churches.

Partnerships with other Baptists and wider ecumenical support have been key to helping Shinfield rebirth its congregation and potentially plant out... Nathan now supports the wider Baptist family by sharing the story of Shinfield in the Firestarters network

Nathan has also supported the wider Baptist family by sharing the story of Shinfield in the **Firestarters** network. Firestarters are growing churches, helping grow churches (for details, see firestartersuk.com).

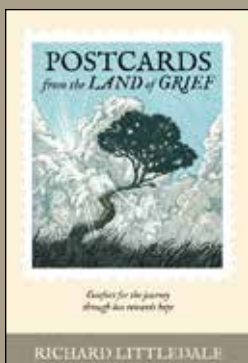
Back at Shinfield, developments continue. The church appointed Sallyann Hunt as Associate Pastor in September 2018 on a part time basis, overwhelmingly sensing God calling her to this role. Just as the church's appointment of Nathan in 2014 was a financial step of faith that was more than provided for by God in

the following years, so the associate pastor appointment, taking the church beyond its existing annual income, was a carefully considered move to 'walk by faith and not by sight.' It is now also considering rebuilding its dated facilities.

"The church is concerned to see Christ's love and influence felt in a village that is set to double in size in the next ten years," Nathan says. "We pray continuously towards this purpose and have seen much fruit as God responds graciously to our prayers."



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Jeannie Kendall is the Co-Minister of Carshalton Beeches Baptist Church





A college view

By Glen Marshall, co-principal Northern Baptist College

Since becoming co-principal at *Northern Baptist College* five years ago I've developed a mantra (so to speak) that I believe helps to keep my ministry on track. My mantra takes the form of a series of questions:

- » What kind of God do we serve?
Therefore...
- » What kind of world do we want to see?
Therefore...
- » What kind of church must we become?
Therefore...
- » What kind of leaders do we need?
Therefore...
- » What kind of college should we be?

In the ministry of our colleges, as in many other ministries, it's so easy to lose sight of the big picture, the God picture, the stuff that really matters. When I'm swimming against a tide of marking, wrestling with university regulations and trying not to miss too many deadlines my mantra reminds me that the college exists

not for itself, but to serve our students that they in turn might better serve our churches, enabling them to work and pray for the transformation of God's beautiful but broken world so that it might better reflect God's glory.

My colleagues in the other Baptist colleges might put it slightly differently but I know they too share the same approach. This means of course that the ministry of colleges is in many ways a second or third tier ministry rather than the kind of frontline ministry where Baptists Together Home Mission giving is rightly focussed. We may not be on the front line of mission, but we are called to help shape people who are.

The frontline of course looks very different depending on where one is called to serve. Some of our students and our graduates serve in local churches just as I did for 20 years before moving into college ministry. One former student in East Manchester is now serving in what was his placement church, seeking to build a multi-ethnic community in an area all too familiar with ethnic tensions. Others are engaged in innovative

and adventurous forms of ministry – see for example Susan Myatt’s story of church planting with deaf people elsewhere in this magazine.

The colleges themselves do not receive money directly from Baptists Together Home Mission. We are dependent on student fees (Baptist ministers in training are responsible for paying their own fees) and giving from churches and individuals who appreciate the value of our behind the lines ministry. Nonetheless as colleges we are keen advocates of Baptists Together Home Mission.

All Baptist ministers in training are engaged in significant hands on mission and ministry alongside their formal academic learning and other college work. Many of their placements are supported by Baptists Together Home Mission giving channelled through the regional associations. Your prayerful, financial partnership with the churches through Baptists Together Home Mission enables us to exercise our ministry.

Both Baptists Together Home Mission giving and the Baptist colleges are part of the glue that holds Baptists Together together. Rather like the collection organised by the apostle, Paul for the church in Jerusalem in its time of need, Home Mission giving is both a practical hard-nosed expression of our unity in Christ and a wonderfully effective way of helping us to do more together than we ever could on our own.

The colleges contribute to this unity in mission by helping those called into servant leadership to be faithful, imaginative, adventurous, Godly, and theologically savvy. And, unashamedly, we seek to do all this in a way that has a distinctively Baptist flavour. This is not because we are flag waving denominational fanatics but because we believe that distinctive Baptist



Photo: Spurgeon's College | Chris Gander

principles when understood, valued and embedded in relationships, are good for the health of the Church and important for the work of mission.

So, for example, as colleges we seek to form leaders who own and live out the Baptist commitment to evangelisation, communicating the good news faithfully, imaginatively and enthusiastically. We seek to form leaders who instinctively know that ministry and mission has to be embedded in and flow out of communities of disciples. We seek to form leaders who are enthusiastic about pursuing freedom and justice for all. These have long been values at the heart of the Baptist way of being church.

So, on behalf of all five of our colleges, let me encourage you to keep Baptists Together Home Mission at the forefront of your praying and high up on your list of priorities for giving. That in turn will give us the chance to partner with local Christians in hands-on formation for ministry so that together we might grow the kind of leaders who can nurture the kind of churches which can work and pray for the Kingdom so that the world might be filled with glory of God.

Baptists Together Home Mission giving and the Baptist colleges are part of the glue that holds Baptists Together together



Photo: South Wales Baptist College

Biglife / Europe
yorkshirebaptist
association

Photo: BMS World Mission

Disciple Making Movements

A new ministry in Yorkshire seeks to learn from Christians around the world

What can we learn from our Christian brothers and sisters around the world? How can our faith be informed by overseas developments in discipleship and evangelism? Are there appropriate ways of applying some of this learning to local contexts?

An exciting new role in Yorkshire seeks to explore answers to these questions. Peter Dunn, the former director of mission at *BMS World Mission*, will be based in Sheffield from September. Peter will have a new Europe-wide role with *Biglife*, a BMS partner, which seeks to empower believers worldwide to reach and disciple their own. Peter is also seconded to the *Yorkshire Baptist Association*, where he will be rooted as a local practitioner. The roles are therefore integrated, with the idea that as Peter develops his Big Life ministry, training, learning and new opportunities will flow between the two organisations. YBA provides a grant to Big Life.

Big Life has a particular emphasis on Disciple Making Movements (DMM) – groups small in size with a focus on mission and sharing the gospel. “It’s the idea that discipleship naturally comes from Christian community,” Peter explains “empowering disciples to make other disciples.”

The Big Life movement has been particularly prominent in India, where for several years now Baptists have heard of incredible church growth spearheaded by Benjamin Francis. But India is just one aspect of the Big Life story: there are now Big Life communities in dozens of countries around the world, and a growing presence in Europe which the organisation is seeking to build on with Peter’s appointment.

“DMM is not about imposing a rigid way of doing things, but listening to context and working out how to facilitate a faith community that’s appropriate to a particular set of believers”, Peter says. “It’s an approach that contrasts with more traditional churches, which have largely been attractional and monovocal. The DMM idea is to share teaching that empowers every believer to make disciples.”

Tredegarville Baptist Church in Cardiff is one local church that uses a DMM model, particularly in its ministry to Iranian converts. Peter has taught there. “My translator had been a believer for eight weeks. She had gone out and brought someone to faith.

“How do we encourage people to be confident in sharing their faith? How

do we move from passive participation to something more active?”

Peter will be looking to connect with those who want to engage with the DMM model in the YBA.

The YBA is seeking to support churches in Bradford as they seek to reach their Muslim neighbours through partnership with Biglife. There have been several meetings with Baptist church leaders and over 80 people turned out for a Biglife training day where they were given resources and encouragement to share their faith with family and friends and together become part of a disciple making movement.

Regional minister team leader Graham Ensor is excited about the partnership with Biglife along with the new opportunities it will bring. “Peter will help us reimagine what it means to be the church of Jesus Christ,” he says. “We want to encourage Christians to be bold in sharing the gospel and intentional in their journey of discipleship. Biglife has much to teach us from the world Church that will give us a renewed confidence in the gospel and a fresh urgency in the task of mission. Together we want to humbly offer our gifts to God for the renewal of his Church.”

BAPTIST COLLEGES

The Baptist colleges have always been deeply connected to the work of Home Mission. Over the years it has prepared church planters, evangelists, urban missionaries, rural workers, and pioneers and pastors of all kinds who have then been supported by Home Mission to serve the churches. Currently the colleges partner with a range of churches and pioneering contexts who have Ministers-in-Training supported by Home Mission. So, if you are sensing a call to Baptist ministry as a pioneer, pastor, church planter or evangelist then get in touch with us. We can help you make it happen so you can help others engage in mission. One recent student who has planted a church in the local community centre says "thank you all for being such an amazing college, and cheering on people like me".

www.baptist.org.uk/colleges



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Opening worship at the EBF Council in Lviv Central Baptist Church - September 2018



The European Baptist Federation – A Journey Together

Baptists Together are key supporters of the European Baptist Federation (EBF) – which means we help to fund mission, religious freedom advocacy and much more, write Helle Liht and Tony Peck

The European Baptist Federation (EBF) was founded in 1949 from the ruins of World War Two in a divided Europe. The early vision was of Baptists united in Christ across the continent as a sign of the urgent need for wider unity in our continent.

Today there are 60 member bodies with about 800,000 members in Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East, each of them being different and unique in their own context.

What brings us together and holds us together?

The first thing we need to say is that we are a *Federation*, not a *Union*. Our first Constitution in 1949 explains it with these words: '(The EBF)... is not a super-Union with powers above the national Baptist Unions, but a federation for co-operation between the various European Baptist Unions. The Federation fully respects the independence of national Unions and of local churches. The Federation welcomes the participation of the various missionary societies, boards and committees working regularly in Europe.'

The first person to act as EBF General Secretary, Dr W O Lewis, put some flesh on these bones when in 1952 he talked about 'Our Unity'. He described what many would see as the heart of the EBF life then and now. He said that it is their common life and witness that makes Baptists one. When we meet together to pray and sing a true spirit of togetherness is felt. And when we work together, differences melt away. Lewis concluded that the just 'being together' was the most important aspect of meetings of the EBF, with united action to follow.

And so it has proved to be over the past 70 years. Sometimes it has been important to say what the EBF is and what it is not. Indeed, it is not a super-Union and it is more diverse than any one of its members. We do not agree about everything nor do we do everything together. We come together around a statement of Baptist identity (www.ebf.org/statement) rather than the kind of detailed doctrinal statement everyone needs to sign.

So, to use the rich word of the Bible, we *covenant* together to do certain things that we can unite around, believing that it is God who has called us together in the EBF.

What do we do together?

There are certain things that we believe God is calling us to, and we agree to do together.

These include our shared commitment to **mission and church planting**. We share a passion to make Jesus known in our region, and to see his church built up and God's Kingdom extended. In the EBF we come together to express this commitment through our Mission Partnerships programme. Over 250 churches have been established in these past years and more are being planted, some of them in places where to be a believer is costly and opens you up to discrimination and persecution. These church plants are financially supported during the five initial years by the Baptist Unions in the EBF region and the EBF mission partners like **BMS World Mission** and others.

We also share the passion for mission when we once a year bring together different people to a mission conference where various themes are explored. The most recent conference explored the theme of mission and arts. The conference participants shared their gifts and experiences, which confirmed that God communicates also in non-verbal ways that do not totally translate into words. And this makes art essential to mission – it is universal and opens the possibility for a creative conversation.

We also come together as the EBF to **defend human rights and religious freedom** not just of ourselves but of others. Because we know that in this we are better together not just with each other but also working with the **Baptist World Alliance**, ecumenical bodies like the Conference of European Churches and the European Evangelical Alliance, and organisations such as Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations. We have learned that to be effective in defending religious freedom requires more than writing letters to governments who are not upholding it, but also careful research that underpins effective lobbying on behalf of those whose religious freedom is threatened. Our latest appointment to the EBF staff is a part-time researcher in this area.

One of the groups working in the area of human rights is our EBF Anti-Trafficking group. We network in order to advocate for the victims of human trafficking and participate in the projects which either help the trafficked people or prevent it happening.



Refugee integration conference in Götabro - April 2018

Photo: Helle Liht



The Mission and Art conference was a joint conference with IBTSC Amsterdam in June 2019

Photo: Helle Liht

Over 250 churches have been established in these past years and more are being planted

We come together around a **shared concern for high standards of theological education** in the EBF. Most Unions would like to have their own school or seminary, but this is often a struggle, both financially and in terms of accreditation and optimum size. Therefore in parts of our region there is a continuing need for co-operation in theological education, especially with the opportunities to develop online courses, webinars, roundtables, etc. Through the **International Baptist Theological Study Centre** in Amsterdam and the **Consortium of European Baptist Theological Schools** we can share resources and help one another in this.

And we also come together as the EBF to **help those in practical need**. We have **European Baptist Aid** as part of the EBF, bringing together partners to respond to disasters and human tragedies in our region. In recent years we have together responded to the need of many refugees and internally displaced people. God's miracles great and small are being seen as our churches engage with refugees who have lost so much and are trying to journey to a better life. Their lives are certainly being changed, not only by the practical help they receive, but also that they are meeting Christ through this experience.

And our churches are testifying that God is changing them too. Their vision of God's mission and God's Kingdom is being enlarged, evangelism and social concern are being more integrated, and they are discovering that God speaks to them too through the lives of refugees.

These are some of the things we unite around as part of God's family in the EBF. And we add to all that perhaps the most important aspect of all. That is simply our **'being together'** in our Council meetings and at other times; to deepen our fellowship in Christ, our friendship with one another and learning from another, our prayer for one another especially at difficult times, and our growth in grace together before God.



Tony Peck, EBF General Secretary

Helle Liht, EBF Assistant General Secretary





Here's the reality

I have provided many articles for our *Baptists Together* magazine over the years, but this has been the hardest to write. Here I am on my sixth draft trying to write a piece that brings together the tremendous faith that I have that Baptists have a significant role to play in our nations at this time with the unavoidable reality that Home Mission giving is in long term decline and could eventually reach a tipping point that will significantly hinder our participation in God's mission.

So, let's start with faith! I believe that our Baptist DNA gives us incredible opportunities to be church in our contemporary context and culture in the UK. Jesus being our 'sole and absolute authority' is a great foundation in a time where there is huge lack of trust in institutions. The liberty of the local church to seek Christ through Scripture and work out what it means to follow him in that place is empowering and enables us to move quickly when God calls.

Our desire to build covenant communities within churches and across churches invites fragmented and disconnected individuals and generations into belonging and participation. Our unequivocal passion for God's mission is inspiring and, after Jesus, is the major bond that unites us. My prayer is that we would really get our heads around this and deepen our sense that we as Baptists are a radical, mission movement with all the agility of a movement at the cutting edge yet which is beautifully rooted in insight and wisdom that has been forged over 400 years. I pray that we would get our heads around this so that we are energised to belong to this part of God's Church universal and we are confident in God's call to us and the part that we can play in his bigger purposes. If we are passionate about our Baptist DNA and loving being part of what God is doing in and through Baptists Together, then I believe that resourcing our future would flow out of that. I believe that we all want to invest ourselves, our time and our money in a dynamic, missional movement for the sake of God's Kingdom.



Photo: jcomp | freepik.com

We all have a part to play in Baptists Together being and becoming this sort of movement, and leaders in particular have the opportunity to embody and inspire others with our Baptist-shaped, Kingdom-focussed culture.

The stories that you have read in this edition, and SO MANY MORE, make it clear that Baptists all across the country are making a significant contribution to God's mission to the whole of creation. And I think these stories also show how interconnected we are; the different parts that form Baptists Together all need each other. Local impact – regional support – national expertise. Going it alone is not good and not of God. As you will have seen from these stories, working together makes sense and it also enables us not only to 'fan into flames' grass-roots initiatives, it also lets us follow God into new situations and opportunities. The interconnectedness of everything demonstrates that, in recent history, there has been a development from Home Mission giving being used solely to fund ministers in local churches, into a much broader strategy of mission enabling. This has been explored, discussed and discerned in our Regional Associations, and also more widely, through our Council. There has been a growing recognition that churches not only need pastoral leadership but also inspiration, encouragement, coaching and support and this needs trans-local leaders to build relationships and mentor others. We also need to be planting and pioneering new things if we seriously want to see the Kingdom transformation of lives and communities.



With this in mind, most Regional Associations have been encouraged by their trustees and AGMs to provide more trans-local leadership and there have been many different ways that this has been achieved. With a falling income, some has been achieved through creative and imaginative thinking, some through investing Home Mission giving into roles that will be able to equip a number of local churches for mission, and others have taken the step of faith to release reserves, trusting that bold, pump-priming initiatives will become sustaining in the long term.

Every Association is different because the approaches are shaped by the churches and ministers in that patch. What is the same though, is an uncompromising commitment to invest in God's mission as best we can for as long as we can.

the Lord is challenging us about renewing our sense of family connection

Continuing in faith mode, I also want to express huge appreciation for the faithful giving of so many of our churches over so many years. Our culture has largely been that churches give to support the Baptist family because they belong, and it is simply a practical outworking of our covenant. Giving to Baptists Together Home

Mission is a free-will gift, it is not a levy or a demand. The suggestion of employing a fundraiser causes many Baptists to shudder because it is so out of sync with our culture; both because we have faith that the Lord will provide for the Baptist family through the generosity of the Baptist family and because we are a movement that is mature in faith and shares the generous, encouraging heart of our Living God.

And so now, the reality zone. Giving to Baptists Together Home Mission has been in long term decline and, when adjusted for inflation, has fallen by 21% over the last decade (meaning that we can only afford 80% of what we did 10 years ago). This trend accelerated in 2018. Many things have contributed to this decline.



Photo: Mill Hill East Baptist Church

From a human perspective the UK's prolonged economic uncertainty, the Pensions crisis that has hit us alongside many other businesses and charities, the numerical decline of some of our churches, and the wider cultural shifts that have led to changes in how people identify with, and are part of, the historic churches, all impact our giving. And our current situation might simply reflect that there are fewer financial resources out there and that churches are being as generous as they can be with their own reducing resources. A faithful heart that shares as God has blessed them is a wonderful thing and makes the actual amount given of less importance. If this is reality then the Lord might be prompting us to do things differently or even do less and we will need to discern this in our churches, Associations, Colleges and Council and be wise about what we will be able to sustainably support across Baptists Together in the future. What I want us to be absolutely clear about, though, is the implications of this. We need to be aware that less financial resource in a time of rising salaries and increasing charity compliance will bring us to some stark choices about what we have to do and what we want to do.

The reason I am writing this now is that I don't want us to be sleep-walking into this. If this is where God is leading us, all well and good, we will seek him and follow him as best we can with the resources we have. But I don't want anyone turning round to me in the future saying, "we had no idea..."; "we assumed everything was ok..."; "we didn't realise that the shaping of the mission priorities of our Association and Baptists Together as a whole needed our participation".

I am aware that, for some of our churches, the reality is not a lack of financial resources but a lack of ownership and sense of connection

with Baptists Together. I often reflect ruefully, that the new church movements that some view with great admiration, do not have a culture where their leaders and churches minimise their commitment to their own stream and major on their connection to other churches in their locality. From what I observe, it's not an 'either/or' option, they robustly embrace a 'both/and' way of being. I also recognise that we live in a time where change is the new normal. Some will feel that the demise of past patterns of relating and participation are a source of sadness and a sense of dislocation from the wider Baptist family. Moving forward we need to keep working at nurturing and strengthening our value of 'feeling like one team'. This looks different now and will look different again in the future as we continue to listen and discern together in these ever-changing times. What remains constant is our commitment to covenant partnerships across Baptists Together for the sake of the Kingdom.

So, in the face of this reality, it is clear to me that the Lord is challenging us about renewing our sense of family connection. I am always so encouraged when I hear about local churches witnessing in and serving their local communities with sister churches from other streams and denominations. In fact, I believe that 'Unity movements' growing in our cities and towns across the country are part of a move of God in these days. But I am convinced that we Baptists have a unique and valuable contribution to make to the Christian church in our nations at this time. We participate in the wider mission of God through **Baptists Together** Home Mission, and the way we are able to share resources through Home Mission

isn't about self-preservation, it's about equipping each other to play our part in God's mission. Local churches supporting other charities is a vital expression of our Kingdom generosity, but I believe that we have the privilege and responsibility to share resources with our Baptist sisters and brothers through financial support to Baptists Together Home Mission, our Baptist Colleges and BMS World Mission as an expression of our family bond. As I said earlier, we need to ensure that we continue to live in a 'both/and' world where we share resources within the family to equip each other for mission and are also sacrificially generous for the sake of God's Kingdom.

we are the generation that together can face reality and take responsibility

Yes, we need to be real about the decline in Home Mission giving but I definitely don't believe that we should simply accept unquestioningly that this is just how things are. I believe that God has not finished with us yet! Rather than passively dwindling away by default, I want us to

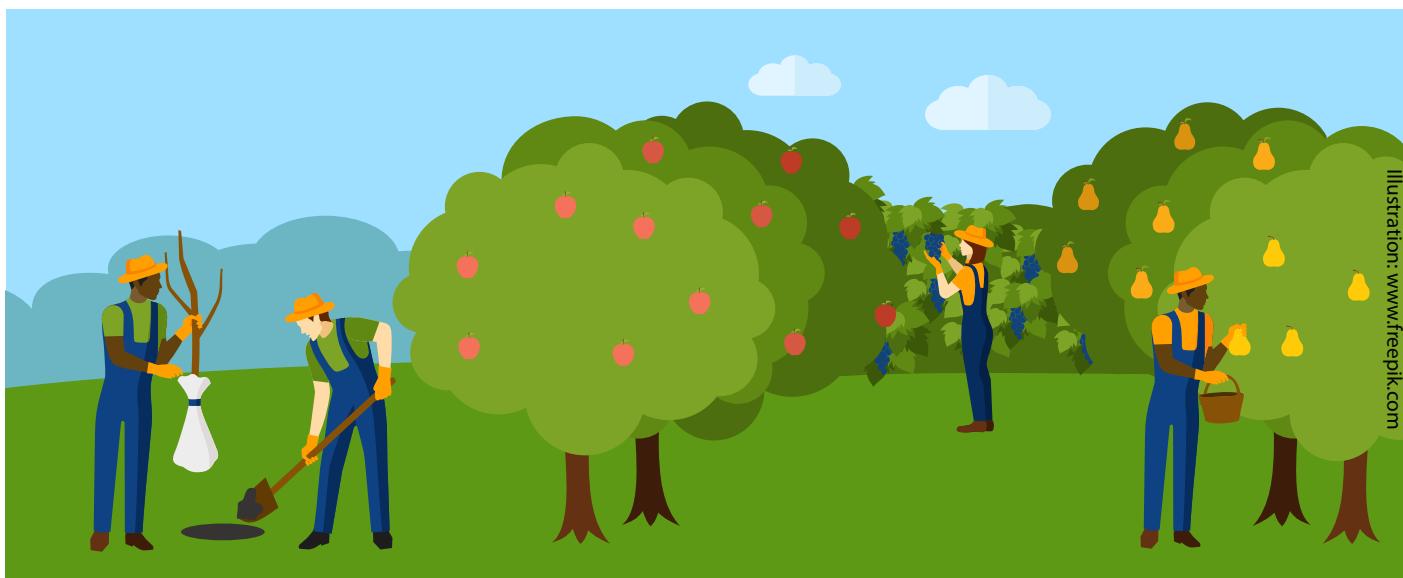
face reality, get on our knees in prayer and then start dreaming dreams and engaging our imaginations in faith about how we can strengthen our shared resources and the ways in which we share them. We can be inspired and encouraged by recalling our own recent history! When faced with the enormity of the Pensions deficit and the dispersed nature of our resources, we prayed earnestly, we worked collaboratively and imaginatively, and we shared resources so that our mission could remain central and continue in the future. Then we were able to combine reality with great faith and I have confidence that if we can find creative solutions to the Pensions deficit together, **how much more** can we achieve if we pray and work together and share resources for the sake of God's mission! We have demonstrated that we are the generation that together can face reality and take responsibility, so now let us together have the joy of seeing God doing immeasurably more than all that we could ask or imagine! Let's do that for the sake of God's mission.



Photo: Anderson Baptist Church, Reading

Lynn Green is General Secretary of our Baptist Union





Together we sow, together we reap

Baptist Union Trustee Philip Lutterodt, a Ghanaian Baptist theologian who has been ministering in England since 2006, offers a perspective on God's grace for Christian and church financial giving

God's grace is God's loving-kindness freely given to his undeserving creation and children. God's grace is God's favour. The abundant grace of God facilitates Christian stewardship of our lives, time, spiritual gifts, natural talents, money, and possessions.

God's grace enables Christians and churches to give financially to God's mission in order to grow and develop God's kingdom for God's glory. When we experience God's grace, it changes our attitudes and actions towards God, ourselves, people and life.

The grace of God helps Christians and churches to understand, believe and practise biblical Christian financial giving. If our financial giving is not within the framework of God's grace, we may form unbiblical attitudes and actions towards Christian financial giving and may eventually experience either 'donor fatigue' or financial abuse at the hands of unscrupulous preachers and fundraisers.

The Apostle Paul's letters to the Christians in Corinth indicate that the Jerusalem Christians were experiencing famine and poverty. In response to this challenge, Paul coordinates the collection of money for the suffering Jerusalem church. Surprisingly, the financially poor Christians in Macedonia gave abundantly to this missions' challenge. In the Corinthians' letters Paul appeals to the financially rich Corinthian Christians to emulate the financial missions-giving example of the Macedonian Christians.

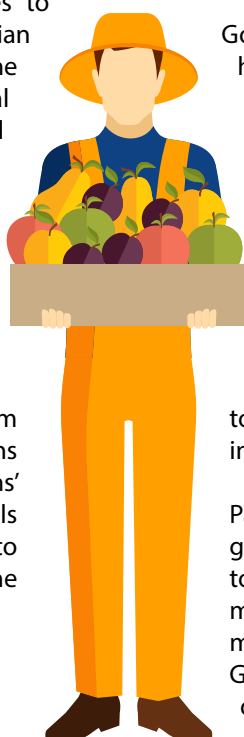
Is there a parallel today? In West Africa, despite the socio-economic challenges, each local church in

the Ghana Baptist Convention gives 25 per cent of its income to missions, out of which 20 per cent is for the mission work of the Convention (Union) and 5 per cent for the Association's mission work. The British Baptist family's recommended church missions financial giving is at least 10 per cent – at least 5 per cent for Baptists Together Home Mission and at least 5 per cent for BMS World Mission. If financially poor Ghana Baptist churches can give 25 per cent of their income to the Ghana Baptist family, surely financially rich British Baptist churches should be able to give 10 per cent of their income to the British Baptist family?

God gives the grace for Christians to give financially to his church and for churches to give financially to their denomination for the building of God's kingdom.

Although local Baptist churches may have their own mission activities, the concept of 'together we sow, together we reap' invites each Baptist church to give to Baptists Together and BMS a percentage of its financial resources for the regional, national and global growth of God's kingdom through the Baptist family. We plant the seeds of missions together and we harvest the fruits of missions together to God's glory. Consequently, we share together as a Baptist family in the pain of sowing and in the joy of reaping to God's glory.

Paul delineates a number of principles that are to guide biblical Christian financial giving. It is a guide to both the financial giving by Christians to God's mission through churches and Christian para-church ministries and the financial giving of churches to God's mission for their denominational home and overseas missions work.



We are to give:



Graciously

we want you to know about the *grace* that God has given the Macedonian churches.

2 Corinthians 8:1



Joyfully

For you know the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9



Generously

in the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy...

2 Corinthians 8:2

their extreme poverty welled up in rich *generosity*

2 Corinthians 8:2

finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a *generous* gift, not as one grudgingly given.

2 Corinthians 9:5

Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows *generously* will also reap generously.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7



Faithfully

For I testify that they gave as much *as they were able*...

2 Corinthians 8:3



Sacrificially

For I testify that they gave... *even beyond their ability*.

2 Corinthians 8:3



Humbly

they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this *service* to the Lord's people.

2 Corinthians 8:4



Devotedly

they *gave themselves first of all to the Lord*, and then by the will of God also to us.

2 Corinthians 8:5



Excellently

since you excel in everything... see that you also *excel* in this grace of giving.

2 Corinthians 8:6-7



Sincerely

I want to test the *sincerity* of your love.







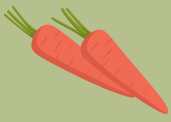



2 Corinthians 8:8



Earnestly

by comparing it with the *earnestness* of others.

2 Corinthians 8:8

	Willingly	Now finish the work, so that your eager <i>willingness</i> to do it may be matched by your completion of it.	2 Corinthians 8:11
	Proportionally	according to your <i>means</i> ... the gift is acceptable according to <i>what one has</i> , not according to what one does not have.	2 Corinthians 8:11-12
	Equally	set aside a sum of money <i>in keeping with your income</i> , saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.	1 Corinthians 16:2
	Eagerly	Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be <i>equality</i> . At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is <i>equality</i> .	2 Corinthians 8:13-15
	Enthusiastically	For I know your <i>eagerness</i> to help...	2 Corinthians 9:2
	Cheerfully	...your <i>enthusiasm</i> has stirred most of them to action.	2 Corinthians 9:2
	Blessedly	Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.	2 Corinthians 9:7
	Expectantly	And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.	2 Corinthians 9:8
	Thankfully	Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.	2 Corinthians 9:10
	Regularly	You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.	2 Corinthians 9:11-12
		On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money.	1 Corinthians 16:1-2

Philip pastors *Mitcham Baptist Church*, South London, and is a Baptist Union Trustee and a BMS World Mission Council member. Philip was born in Ghana, where he pastored churches, was a theological educator and academic dean, and was a council member of the Ghana Baptist Convention. He came to England in 2006 for doctoral studies in Leadership Ethics and to minister in the British Baptist family. His research interests are in Leadership Studies, Global South Christianity, Christian Doctrine, Christian Ethics and the interface between Theology and Psychology. He has also pastored a church in Switzerland and carried out ministry in USA, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic and Slovakia.





Prayers for Baptists Together

We are grateful to David Pile, a member of the Accompanying Group which prayerfully supports our Baptist Steering Group, for writing these prayers.

We give thanks to our Lord, our God and King, his love endures forever.

We thank you for our national team as they seek to help and support us in the mission of God in our local settings.

We thank you for the resources they produce, and the guidance they provide that help us navigate the legal and cultural landscape we face in our nation at this time.

We pray for Lynn and the Baptist Steering Group as they seek to find your pathway forward for our Baptist family.

We give thanks to our Lord, our God and King, his love endures forever.

We thank you for our regional teams and the support and guidance they give to local churches, minister, pioneers and others serving in our Baptist family.

We thank you for the wisdom they share, the grace they bring and the solution they seek to share.

We pray that they would continue to receive all that they need from the Lord in order to do all that God has called them to.

We give thanks to our Lord, our God and King, his love endures forever.

We pray for all in receipt of Home Mission grants, as they seek to minister your love and grace in the rich variety of settings you call each to.

Help each one to embrace the adventure with you and we pray that each would be empowered by you.

We ask that you would build your church through their efforts.

We give thanks to our Lord, our God and King, his love endures forever.

We thank God for the many churches, agencies and individuals who give to Baptists Together Home Mission.

We acknowledge the provision of the Lord through this channel.

We thank you for their ongoing generosity and ask that the Lord would richly repay them in multiple ways for their generosity to others.

Amen

Generosity

We thank you Lord that you have given us life, breath and all that we need to sustain us. We acknowledge that you are the source of all generosity.

Father we ask that we would be more like you and live more generously, including giving to Baptists Together Home Mission.

Help us to appreciate how blessed we are to play a part in the Lord's mission and that we can do this through supporting our sisters and brothers through Home Mission.

We ask that you would open our hearts and minds to perceive and respond to the opportunities that you set before each of us to be involved in this venture.

Please accept our gratitude, praise and thanksgiving because your incredible generosity includes giving us your son Jesus. Through his life, death and resurrection the way is now open to be in right relationship with you.

Amen

We stand on your word to us that you are the one who provides seed to the sower and bread for food.

As we sow into the opportunities for mission and service that Home Mission seeks to respond to, we are acting in faith with the expectation that there will be a harvest of righteousness, which will lead to greater praise and thanksgiving to you our God.

Encourage us to prayerfully support Baptists Together Home Mission and the seeds that are sown, so that it produces the highest yields possible. May this then lead to more investment in the future so that those who have benefited also become those who sow.

We ask that you would open the windows of heaven and pour out abundant provision upon our Baptist family as we seek to continue sowing into your Kingdom, that we would be able to respond to all who have needs and that, along with us, there may be many others whose expressions of thanks would overflow to God.

Amen



Illustrations: Chris Duffett



Adventure

We are aware that the culture and attitude to you and your Gospel in this nation has become increasingly negative, but we ask that we would share in the eagerness and enthusiasm of our early sisters and brothers, who were willing to face trials and ordeals as they shared Jesus with the people around them.

That we would have a fresh grasp of how much Jesus gave up for our sake, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that we through his poverty might become rich.

Encourage us to live lives that are more in line with our Lord and Saviour, that we might sacrifice more of what we have for the sake of others and that this glorious gospel would continue to bear fruit in expected and unexpected ways.

Amen

Ideas

- » Seek out a situation receiving a Home Mission grant in your local area or region and commit to praying for it for a period of time.
- » Pray that those receiving direct funding from Home Mission would have appropriate support and help around them to sustain them in the downs and ups of ministry.
- » Pray that the Lord would inspire all of us to embrace the adventure set before us with wisdom and perseverance.
- » Develop partnerships for prayer between those receiving Home Mission grants and a local church that is not receiving a Home Mission grant at the moment.

Home Mission: The future

How should we steward our resources in an age of potential decline? Phil Barnard offers these reflections

1 Engagement with Emerging Adults

I would agree with Carl Smethurst who says that we need to engage with Emerging Adults on this issue in far greater measure than we currently are. Our institutions mustn't be prescriptive, but take a listening posture. As a Generation X'er, I am conscious that my worldview (and corresponding ecclesial and theological framework) is vastly different to those in Generation Y and Z.

2 More part-time and bi-vocational forms of ministry

We already see much of this in London, especially in our newer churches, but I suspect we will see more. We have much to consider in respect of the ongoing cost of ministry. New forms of pioneering are likely not to attract so much finance from within. Those of us currently inhabiting 'full-time ministry roles' must be prepared for a rather different future – perhaps preparing the way in partnership with the colleges, for new forms of ministry to emerge. Pathways to ministry are changing and we need other models, away from the traditional 'pastor / teacher', in these new settings: social entrepreneur, pioneer, community organiser and evangelist. It's a reality recognised by the Ignite Report (our Ministries review).

3 Find other income streams to maintain our evolving structures

We have to prepare ourselves for an era where we are less reliant on congregational giving – and find other income streams to maintain our evolving structures. For Associations and Specialist Teams, this might mean putting our assets to better work such as investment in 'productive assets' (like rental property) or using closed church money (if it arrives) in creative and innovative ways which stimulate growth rather than 'saving for a rainy day'.

I was personally challenged at a recent Baptist Union Council when Simon Goddard (one of our National Pioneer Co-ordinators) urged us to be 'bucket list Baptists' rather than being overly cautious. For me, this should inspire us to keep in step with the Spirit as we look to a new move of God, rather than putting new wine in old wineskins.

4 Leaner structures

Our Specialist Teams and Associations will have to think carefully about our structures to ensure that these are lean and effectively reflecting our need. Associations, in particular, are custodians of the largest share of the family purse. How do we ensure that our finances are put to best use?

Part of me feels that, in all honesty, the institutional structures we have now (which came about due to a desire to become more like a denomination) are a mixed blessing in our bottom-up ecclesiology. This is a direct challenge for those of us who have become familiar and comfortable inside the institution.

The future is now. We must prayerfully seek opportunities and try to avoid the pitfalls of institutional thinking. God can do a new thing in our age. The question is – will we let him lead us?

Phil Barnard is the Regional Minister Team Leader at the London Baptist Association (LBA)



Working to end Modern Slavery

It is thought at least a fifth of Baptist churches have been in contact with people who have been survivors of modern slavery in their community – and it is therefore imperative that as a movement we equip ourselves to respond in appropriate ways to a growing epidemic described as a 'stain on our lives'.

This was among the key messages at the first Modern Slavery National Summits, which took place in Manchester and Oxford in June.

The figure was based on research among churches in the Eastern Baptist Association. Responding to a survey, 19 per cent had stated they had 'knowingly been in contact with people who had experienced slavery within their community'. Extrapolating this percentage across the denomination gives around 400 churches. However, given the question used the word 'knowingly', it would suggest the number of churches unknowingly in contact with victims/survivors of modern slavery – perhaps through their foodbank, night shelter and toddler ministries – is even higher, said Baptist minister Dan Pratt.



Dan, the EBA Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator founded and leads Together Free, the new Baptist movement seeking to work with local churches to end modern slavery and human trafficking.

Together Free hosted the two summits, which took place at Luther King House in Manchester and Regent's Park College in Oxford on consecutive days.

Other messages to emerge consistently throughout the summits centred on the growing scale of the problem – it is now thought for every 1000 people in England, two are enslaved – the potential and imperative for people of faith to play their part in addressing the issue (and the need for good partnerships to help them do so), and the long Baptist legacy of campaigning for freedom from slavery.

Together, we can all make a difference. For more information, and to listen to the talks, visit togetherfree.org.uk.

Global Baptists speak out on women, intolerance



Baptist leaders from about 40 nations voted to affirm women in ministry and to condemn religious-based intolerance during the annual gathering of the Baptist World Alliance in Nassau, the Bahamas.

Both resolutions were passed on 11 July after being discussed and edited during the week's meetings.

The resolution on 'recognising and affirming the calling of women in the church' marked the first resolution by the BWA on the topic since 1988, at which time the BWA had also met in the Bahamas.

The 2019 resolution, the strongest affirmation of women in ministry by a BWA resolution, passed overwhelmingly.

The second resolution expressed 'deep concern over recent instances of religious intolerance and religiously motivated violence around the world' over the past year.

Young adults and Baptists Together

A series of recommendations to engage and release young adults in mission and leadership across Baptists Together have been made

The recommendations arose from a new piece of research entitled 'Young Adults – 18-35s and the Church', which drew on the experience of practitioners from across the UK who are actively engaging with, empowering and releasing 18-35 year olds in the mission of God.

This research was commissioned by the Mission Forum last year. At its November 2018 gathering, Baptist Union Council identified a focus on this generation as a key priority. Report author Carl Smethurst, Regional Minister in the South West Baptist Association, presented his findings at the most recent Mission Forum meeting in June.

The report was warmly received by the Mission Forum, and the initial outcomes are:

- 1 A new National Young Adults Forum be formed and tasked and empowered to lead the national family of churches in engaging with this generation (in a similar way to the National Children, Youth and Families Round Table).
- 2 Mentoring of Young Adults (and others) to be developed for all leaders across Baptists Together (local, regional and national) with the desire that it becomes 'normal practice' amongst our family of churches/pioneers etc. This might look different in different settings but mentoring Young Adults was a key recommendation of the report.
- 3 A mapping exercise was commissioned of Internship programmes available across the UK and the development of a Baptists Together 'Kitemark' for Internship programmes that gives some national recognition will be explored.
- 4 Conversations with BMS to explore the possibility of rolling out Action Teams across the UK.
- 5 Associations will be asked to consider possibilities for mission to Young Adults (either within established churches, church plants, pioneer settings etc) and encouraged to explore how these might be developed.
- 6 The development of a training programme to help those churches who are wanting to engage in mission to Young Adults will be further explored.



Thanking the 'experienced and insightful' group who contributed to the report, Carl stated his prayer that the report does not remain on a shelf 'until a research student discovers it 40 years from now.'

Instead, he concluded, 'at this significant moment in the life of the Baptist family, (let's pray) we might embrace with faith the huge opportunities that God is laying before us to engage with and release this new generation in mission and leadership in this nation and beyond for his Kingdom purposes.'

Gavin Calver new chief executive of the Evangelical Alliance

Gavin Calver, an accredited Baptist evangelist, will be the new CEO of the Evangelical Alliance. He will succeed general director Steve Clifford, who announced in April that he will step down later this year



Gavin has been the Evangelical Alliance's director of mission since 2015, and he previously spent 14 years at Youth for Christ, six of which in the role of national director. During his time as director of mission Gavin launched the Great Commission hub, which inspires and equips Christians to share their faith with boldness and confidence. He is chair of the Spring Harvest Planning

Group, and regularly preaches and teaches in churches around the UK and beyond. Gavin is married to Anne, a Baptist minister.

He said: "I am privileged to be taking on this leadership role at the Evangelical Alliance. The Evangelical Alliance has been at the heart of evangelicalism in the UK since 1846. This unity movement, which has a rich and prestigious heritage of gospel unity in the church, has had a profound impact on the social fabric of the UK, and I am deeply humbled to accept the role of CEO.

"Every week I have the opportunity to visit and share with local churches that are living out the hopeful reality of the gospel, and I am continually amazed at what the church is doing. I am looking forward to the Evangelical Alliance developing even deeper relationships with local churches as we seek to understand and celebrate what God is doing in our communities."





Illustration: rawpixel | freepik.com

Where do we grow from here?

The theme of current President Ken Benjamin. It's a question for individuals, churches and Baptists Together as a whole. There are eight small group studies to help explore this theme.

baptist.org.uk/wdwegfh

Ken's website also features blog posts and updates:
wheredowegrowfromhere.org



The Little Worship Company - new children's resources

The Little Worship Company from Wonderborn Studios offers a range of world-class Christian children's media products (app, DVDs, books and curriculum), designed to inspire and delight children aged 0-7 years while helping families worship and discover God together. It launched earlier this year.

More information about the project can be found at:
littleworshipcompany.com



HOPE Together – Prayer 2020

HOPE Together is inviting Christians of all denominations to pray for 20 minutes on the 20th of every month, throughout 2020, each evening at 20:20.



HOPE Together will provide 12 prayer themes for the year, starting with resources for New Year's Eve, when many churches gather to see in the New Year with prayer.

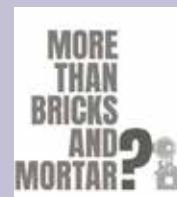
Prayer 2020 resources will be available in the autumn from:
hopetogether.org.uk

More than bricks and mortar?

Britain is facing a housing crisis – a claim which few people dispute. This has many symptoms that stretch across the whole of society. So how can we, as the Church, respond to the housing crisis in a way which is sustainable and community driven?

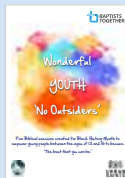
Our Joint Public Issues Team has launched this resource to help Christians reflect on the current housing crisis and how they could respond.

bit.ly/jpitbandm



Wonderful Youth 2019

This year's *Wonderful Youth* resource on the theme of 'No outsiders' has been created for Black History Month (October) to empower young people between the ages of 13 and 16 to become 'The best that you can be'. This new five-session resource is available to download free of charge and use with young people in your church.



baptist.org.uk/wonderfulyouth19

Frontline Sundays – London Institute for Contemporary Christianity

Five service plans with companion film shorts, sermon notes, activities, small group studies, and giveaways to help equip Christians for life on their frontlines.

www.licc.org.uk/ourresources/frontlinesundays



Together Free

Together Free is a Baptist-based network working with local communities and churches to harness the power of local knowledge and relationships to bring an end to Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. It held its first national conferences in June, and the talks are online.

Information and resources can be found at:
togetherfree.org.uk



Home Mission resources

See our website for stories of how Home Mission funds are being used, and to download our latest Home Mission videos and PowerPoint presentations to share with your church.
baptist.org.uk/homemission



**Peacemaking Sunday****22 September**

Resources available from the Fellowship of Reconciliation
www.for.org.uk/peacesunday

**Prisons Week****13-20 October**

Encouraging prayer and awareness of the needs of prisoners and their families, victims and prison staff
www.prisonsworld.org

**Christian Resources Exhibition (CRE)****15-17 October****Sandown Park, Esher**

Your one-stop shop for supplies, resources and ideas
creonline.co.uk

**Anti-slavery Day****18 October**

A day to raise awareness of human trafficking and modern slavery
www.antislaveryday.com

**Crucible Course****Starting 19 October****Exeter, Manchester, London, Southampton**

Equipping Christians to follow Jesus on the margins
www.urbanexpression.org.uk/crucible

**One World Week****21-28 October**

People working together to build a just, peaceful and sustainable world
www.oneworldweek.org

Events

**Sam Sharpe Lecture****22 October (London) and 24 October (Birmingham)**

Professor Verene Shepherd on the theme of Reparations
www.baptist.org.uk/samsharpe

**Bible Sunday****27 October**

Celebrating the continuing impact the Bible has on individuals and communities
www.biblesunday.org

**Easy First Steps...****in meeting your neighbours of other faiths 2 November**

Discovering what we hold in common with our neighbours across the faiths
www.baptist.org.uk/easyfirststeps

**International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church****3 November**

A day for prayer for our sisters and brothers who are persecuted for their faith
idop.ca

**Adoption Sunday****3 November**

Share the good news of our adoption into God's family and respond to the needs of children and young people in the UK care system
homeforgood.org.uk/resource/adoption-sunday

**Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer****4 November**

Resources on 'Arise and Shine through Service' from the Caribbean Baptist Women's Union
www.bwawd.org/2019-Day-Of-Prayer

**Baptist Union Council****6-7 November****Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick**

www.baptist.org.uk/council

**Remembrance Sunday****10 November****Interfaith Week****10-17 November**

Strengthening inter-faith relations and increasing understanding
www.interfaithweek.org

**World Aids Day****1 December**

www.worldaidsday.org

**Human Rights Day****10 December**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights turns 70
www.un.org/en/events/humanrightsday

**International Migrants Day****18 December**

www.un.org/en/events/migrantsday

For more, visit
www.baptist.org.uk/events



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15–17 October 2019
www.creonline.co.uk

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