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HR & Safeguarding

Contributed by the HR & Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@baptist.org.uk)

A raft of new employment law changes came into force in early April 2024. This includes the introduction of carer's leave; reforms to the right to request flexible working; and updated rules on timing and notice to take paternity leave.

New national minimum wage rises

The rates of the national minimum wage increased on 1 April 2024, including an increase of the main national minimum wage (the national living wage) from £10.42 to £11.44.

In addition, the national living wage is extended to apply to workers aged 21 and over for pay reference periods beginning on or after 1 April 2024. (For pay reference periods beginning before this date, the national living wage rate applies to those aged 23 and over.)

Updated annual leave calculations for irregular hours workers

Changes to holiday entitlement and pay for irregular hours and part-year workers come into effect for holiday years beginning on or after 1 April 2024.

The key change is that holiday entitlement for irregular hours workers and part-year workers is now calculated using an accrual method. Under this new calculation method, entitlement accrues at 12.07% of hours worked in a pay period.

Updated statutory redundancy pay calculations

Employers that make employees redundant must pay those with at least two years' service an amount based on the employee's weekly pay, length

of service and age. The weekly pay is subject to a maximum amount, which is £700 from 6 April 2024 (increasing from £643).

Introduction of carer's leave

From 6 April 2024, employees who have caring responsibilities for dependants with a long-term care need are entitled to one week's unpaid leave in every rolling 12-month period.

Employers should incorporate carer's leave into their family-friendly policies and procedures and ensure that carers within the organisation are aware of the new right.

Changes to flexible working requests procedure

Significant reforms to the right to request flexible working take effect for requests made on or after 6 April 2024.

The key changes are:

- » making the statutory right to request flexible working a 'day one' right;
- » giving employees the right to make two requests, rather than one, in a 12-month period;
- » removing the requirement for an employee to explain what effect, if any, their request would have on the employer and how that might be dealt with;
- » requiring employers to deal with a request within two months, rather than three months; and
- » placing an obligation on an employer to consult with an employee before rejecting a request.

Change to the process for taking paternity leave

On 8 March 2024, important reforms to statutory paternity leave took effect. The changes mean that, where the expected week of childbirth is after 6 April 2024:

- » employees are entitled to split their leave into two separate blocks of one week, instead of having to take it all in one period; and
- » paternity leave can be taken within 52 weeks of the child's birth - previously, the leave had to be taken within the first eight weeks.

Extended redundancy protection for pregnant employees/maternity leave returners

From 6 April 2024, redundancy protection is extended to employees who are pregnant but have not yet gone on maternity leave, and those who have recently returned to work from maternity leave, as well as those who have recently returned from adoption leave and a period of six weeks or more shared parental leave.

Increases in statutory sick pay and family-related pay

The weekly rate of statutory sick pay increased on 6 April 2024. The new rate is £116.75, up from £109.40.

The weekly rates of statutory maternity, adoption, paternity, shared parental and parental bereavement pay increase to £184.03, up from £172.48. The increases take effect on the first Sunday in April, which in 2024 was 7 April.

The April 2024 version of our L08 Employment guidance notes contain more detail on all of these changes www.baptist.org.uk/resources/L08.



Ministry Matters

Contributed by the Ministries Team (ministries@baptist.org.uk)

Sponsor Licences for Baptist Churches

Anthony Collins have recently updated a guidance document for Baptist churches seeking to sponsor either a Minister of Religion or a Religious Worker. This can be found in the Resources area of our website under Guidance for Churches. This is a complex area and we strongly advise you to read the guidance document if you are considering sponsorship www.baptist.org.uk/sponsorlicences.

I Am Because You Are

There remains a number of ministers who have still not completed their equality and diversity training, called *I am Because You Are*. Ministers should watch the six videos and take some time to reflect on the questions, ideally in conversation with each other. Ministers who complete the training should let Ministries Team know by completing the form on our website: www.baptist.org.uk/eanddform.

Interns

Isabella Senior continues to gather together interns from across our churches. If your church has an intern and they have not yet connected with Isabella, please encourage them to do so, by email to isenior@baptist.org.uk.

Contact

Members of the Ministries Team may be contacted through the Team's contact page on our website at www.baptist.org.uk/meetministries. Alternatively, anyone going to Assembly can seek out either Lee Johnson or Tim Fergusson, the Ministries Team Co-Leaders, with any questions.



Legal and Operations

Contributed by the Legal and Operations Team
(legal.ops@baptist.org.uk)

Charities Act 2022

The Charities Act 2022 is being implemented in phases. Phase 3 came into force on 7 March 2024 and the Charity Commission released their updated guidance that day. The Legal and Operations team have reviewed the changes and we will update our guideline leaflets where necessary. An overview of the changes can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/charities-act-2022-guidance-for-charities

BUGB CIO Approved Governing Document

In preparation for Phase 3 the Charity Commission amended its model constitutions for CIOs (Charitable Incorporated Organisations). We have amended the BUGB CIO Approved Governing Document and are awaiting

approval of the revised wording from the Charity Commission. CIOs that are registering for the first time must include one of the Commission's revised clauses for statutory reasons; CIOs that have already registered do not need to make corresponding amendments to their constitution.

The revised document is available to member churches under a copyright licence from Anthony Collins LLP. Please contact Esther Campsall (esther.campsall@anthonycollins.com).

This does not affect unincorporated churches, whether or not they are registered with the Charity Commission.

Guidance on the Use of Social Media

In September 2023, the Charity Commission released formal guidance following a consultation on 'charities' use of social media'. In response to this, we have created guideline leaflet *L18 Use of Social Media for Churches* which covers the issues raised in the Charity Commission guidance from a Baptist perspective. We have highlighted key considerations that churches should address when engaging with any social media platform, such as copyright, risk management and the use of an individual's image. We have also included helpful practices for general users of social media as well as guidance for social media group administrators.

We encourage charity trustees to familiarise themselves with this guideline leaflet which is available from www.baptist.org.uk/resources/L18.

Copyright Breaches

We continue to hear from churches being pursued for copyright breaches. It is essential that churches understand that being able to freely access a video or picture on the internet does not give you the right to use it on your website, online service broadcast or in other forms. You must have permission from the copyright holder for any images, video or text that you use or to use their own photographs. It is strongly recommended that content is removed where the source is not known.

Churches should familiarise themselves with our guideline leaflet L14 Licensing for Entertainment and Copyright.

Investing Charity Funds

As a charity trustee, you must ensure that any decisions you make when investing charity funds are permitted within your constitution and the law and are in the best interests of your charity. This can be a complex situation and the Charity Commission has updated its useful guide that can help you make the correct decision. Investing charity money: guidance for trustees (CC14) can be found on the Charity Commission website.

Support for Churches with Listed Buildings

Contributed by our Heritage Officer
(listedbuildings@baptist.org.uk).

Please email us if you would like to be added to the listed buildings mailing list.

If you look after a historic Baptist chapel, then please get in touch to tell us about your building! It does not have to be listed; we are interested in hearing about all historic chapels. Knowing a bit more about your church and your building will help us to provide you with the best support possible, and to contact you right away when relevant funding (which can sometimes have very tight deadlines!) becomes available.

Please start off by filling in our short questionnaire – you can email Katie at kwylie@baptist.org.uk for the link.

If your building is listed, then we would also encourage you to take part in Historic England's Missing Pieces Project – which invites you to share your knowledge and pictures. There's probably lots your church remembers that the historians don't know! Historic England welcomes anything that celebrates and enriches the Official List Entry for your building, including photographs, facts, and memories. Contributing will also help to create a resource for you, or others looking after your chapel in the future, which you can use to plan alterations to make it fit for new missional and community needs.

Find out more here: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/missing-pieces/>



Pensions

Contributed by the Baptist Pension Team.

Routine queries should be directed to baptistpensions@broadstone.co.uk and non-routine matters directed to pensionshared@baptist.org.uk

Over the last few months, we have sent out a number of communications to both churches (as employers) and individuals (as scheme members) and those communications will continue over the next few months. We appreciate that many people tend not to get too excited around any pension-related information and the recent raft of letters have all been very technical – that's not our choice, it's simply a requirement of legislation that certain information is set out.

The key message we'd like to set out now is that the Defined Benefits (DB) Section of the Scheme is at an extremely important point, about to undergo fundamental changes which will impact on everyone. So – please take time to read the communications we have sent, and please also draw your Minister's (and staff) attention to the Member Communications and urge them to read and digest the information. If you, or they, have any queries at all, then please email pensionshared@baptist.org.uk

If you don't think you have been receiving these communications, or have any doubt at all, please email baptistpensions@broadstone.co.uk and ask them to check if you are registered as the relevant contact for your church (more than one contact person per church is perfectly permissible).

These notes are offered to provide general information for Baptist churches. We hope they will be helpful in highlighting new guidance and providing reminders about other important matters relating to the life of a local Baptist church. Although every effort is made to ensure that the information is correct at the time of publication, we make no representations, warranties or guarantees (whether express or implied) that the information is accurate, complete or up-to-date. Further, these summary notes are not intended to amount to advice on which you should rely and cannot be a substitute for formal professional or specialist advice. We do not assume and will not be liable to any party (who has either taken or refrained from taking action in reliance on these notes) for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions, whether resulting from negligence or any other cause. If you want to ask detailed follow-up questions, please contact us through the Baptist Union website.



Contact Utility Aid today
www.utility-aid.co.uk/contactform/BaptistUnion
Telephone No 0808 178 8170

What Utility Aid can offer you!

Utility Aid is the UK's leading energy broker for the charity and not-for-profit sector. As well as helping to secure new contracts with your Electric, Gas and Water, Utility Aid can also help with supplier problems, inaccurate bills, advising on renewable energy options, and your journey to 'Net Zero'.

Partner Member Benefits

Free Desktop Audit – If you don't know what your bill means or are worried you are being overcharged, Utility Aid will look over your bills, explain what it all means, and point out any discrepancies.

National Charity Tender – Utility Aid have set up purchasing baskets across the third sector which allows customers more purchasing powers and competitive rates on all gas and electricity contracts. Watch this video to find out more: www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gZXWllboxE.

Energy Audits on your Building – If you are looking to start your journey to Net Zero then it is recommended that you have an audit on your building. Utility Aid can offer you this at a reduced rate. Contact Utility Aid to find out more.

Environmental Issues

Contributed by Dave Gregory, Former President, Baptist Union 2018-19, Convenor of Baptist Union Environment Network (BUEN) and Director, John Ray Initiative – Connecting Environment, Science and Christianity.



Recognising the importance of environmental mission, the Baptist Union Corporation has included a new 'Environmental Considerations' section within their documents on Church Property, available at www.baptist.org.uk/property. This asks churches 'when considering maintenance and development of church premises, manses and land, [to] include a consideration of the environmental impact'. Within the documents are links to various resources churches may find helpful, although 'appropriate professional advice should always be sought in connection with the planning of any building works or projects'.

When including environmental considerations within the practical and missional life of churches, finance can seem to be an issue. Last summer we reminded churches of Carbon Offset Schemes run by local authorities. Details will vary from area to area, but it's been encouraging to hear of one Baptist church with significant community engagement being awarded a substantial grant, under their local offset scheme, towards refurbishing their roof - including improved insulation and solar panels. If you are considering a refurbishment or taking steps to reduce the carbon footprint of your building, please research what similar grants may be available locally.

As in all aspects of our discipleship, in thinking how we can share and keep in step with God's mission in caring for creation, inspiration is vital. A new film series has been released by BUEN and The Fuelcast. 'God Saw That It Was Good' is a series of four films that weave stunning visual imagery with a narrative entwining stories of science and faith, taking people deeper into the wonder, mystery and meaning of the world, allowing God's call to care for creation to be seen and heard. Why not watch and share with others in your church? (www.gstiwg.co.uk)



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. 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 2.5% 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.

