

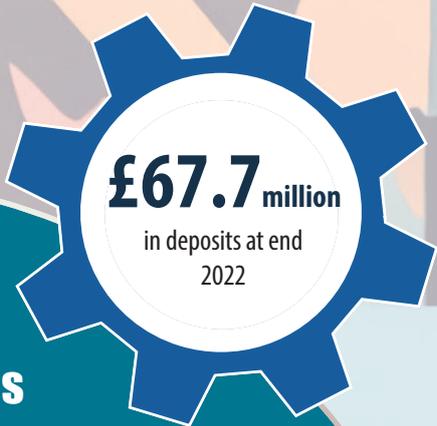


Specialist advice and support for churches

We continue to support churches with free advice and support on a range of specialist topics. Our aim is to provide a comprehensive suite of guidance to enable churches to operate effectively and substantially reduce their need to pay for external advice.

- We publish and maintain over 100 guideline leaflets on topics including church finance, charity governance, legal and trust issues, listed buildings, property and tax.
- We also provide bespoke advice to support churches where they have specific queries or complex issues not covered by our leaflets, which is provided via phone, email and site visits as appropriate. The scope of work we can carry out is supported by two of our staff holding Legal Practising Certificates issued by the Solicitors Regulatory Authority.
- In 2022 we launched a new self-assessment tool for Baptists Together churches, www.churchhealthcheck.org. This tool allows churches to assess their operating practices against good practice over a range of topics by answering a series of yes/no questions. It produces a report which directs them to the appropriate guidance to assist with any issues. Over 300 churches signed up to use the tool in its first month. New topics were added to the tool during 2022 with plans for further additions in 2023.
- A Facebook group for Church Treasurers was launched in 2022 and added over 250 members during the year. Participants are able to support each other in their valuable work.
- In the second half of 2022, welcome packs were developed for Church treasurers and secretaries. In January 2023, these will start to be sent out to new treasurers and secretaries once we are notified of their appointment. We will also send an example to the existing incumbents in these roles.
- Since 2020 we have been running the Baptist Heritage Initiative in partnership with Historic England. This has allowed us to provide enhanced support to churches with listed buildings in England to help them assess the condition of their building and put in place appropriate maintenance plans. Up to the end of 2022 50 churches have received a grant to contribute towards a condition survey of their building, of whom around half had never had such a survey done before. The project funding currently runs to September 2023 and we are exploring opportunities to develop further a follow-on project.

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Financial Services for churches

The Support Services Team continues to operate the Baptists Together Deposit Scheme and Loan Fund on behalf of the Baptist Union Corporation.

The Deposit Scheme continued to offer highly competitive rates of interest on deposits with Baptist Union Corporation (BUC) during 2022. The scheme continues to prove valuable to churches, with deposits of £67.7m, up by £6.9m over the year. £1.36m of interest was paid to Baptist organisations to support their work, more than three times the amount distributed in 2021, due to increases in interest rates payable.

Funds deposited enable the BUC to make loans to support Baptist work. Loans are offered with competitive interest rates and much lower fees than typical commercial lending.



Loans to churches support the acquisition and development of churches and manses and the settlement of pension debts. We also make loans to other Baptist organisations, with £2m on loan to the Retired Baptist Ministers' Housing Organisation to support its work in housing retired ministers, and £20m to support the Pension Family Solution. Overall loans fell by £1.2m to £40.5m.



Gateway Church, Poole



For the last 50 years the Gateway Church, Poole, Dorset, has known that substantial improvements were needed to its facilities. Various attempts had been made to improve the facilities, but complexities of the site and associated costs meant that these were not followed through.

In 2017 the church settled on a significant remodelling of the original building, demolition of its prefabricated hall and creation of a new building in the church car park. This new building, which is modern and spacious, is now being used as the main worship space while the original building is used on Sundays for children's and youth ministry. The project has been very well received by the local community, particularly the substantial living roof on the new building. As with all projects, there were challenges along the way, however, this is an excellent example of the church, regional association and BUC (via a Baptist family loan) working together to achieve something rather special.

The interior of the new building can be seen here along with from left to right Matthew Hosier (Church Minister), Mike Southcombe (BUC Director SEBA), Jerry Ponsford (BUC Director SCBA), Tim Chowns (Loan Fund Officer) and Richard Stamp (Minister).

£988,000

distributed to Baptist organisations following five church closures

2,221

properties in trust across 1,034 churches and other charities

Property Trustee Services for churches

The Baptist Union Corporation continues to support member churches and other Baptist organisations by acting as a Property Trustee for church buildings, manses and other properties. As the majority of our member churches are unincorporated associations, they are unable to directly hold property, so this service is a key practical support to churches in their work. We also operate the East Midland Baptist Trust Corporation on behalf of its Trustees.

As part of this service, we assist churches in the acquisition and disposal of properties, helping the church to comply with its trust deeds and Charity Commission requirements.

As Property Trustee, we also support churches that are closing. Whilst it is always sad when a church closes, we wish to ensure that resources are efficiently recycled into future Baptist work. We advise churches on the closure process and then dispose of assets, settle any liabilities and distribute the remaining funds to beneficiaries of the relevant trusts

£10.2 million

of property transactions supported

Supporting Baptists Together

The Support Services Team supports the internal operations of Baptists Together and the Baptist Union charity itself. This includes

- Administration of the Home Mission Fund to bring together the funds collected by regional associations and distribute them according to the agreed funding formula.
- Collection of Subscriptions from member churches, associations, colleges and personal members.
- Operation of the national web-based database of our churches and ministers, which is accessible to staff in the specialist teams and regional associations, enabling the teams to work more efficiently. In December 2022 we migrated to a new database system based on Microsoft Dynamics which will reduce the ongoing operating costs of the system.
- Operation of the IT systems that support Baptists Together.
- Supporting the operation of the governance structures that underpin Baptists Together, which are described on pages 64-79.

In 2021 we initiated a review of the financial model of Baptists Together, which governs the distribution of financial resources across regional associations and specialist teams. The first phase report was presented to Baptist Union Council in March 2022. Phase 2 is now underway and due to report to Baptist Union Council in 2023.

In January 2023, the specialist teams moved into a new space within Baptist House, reducing the space occupied by more than half. This frees up more space for letting to external tenants to generate income as well as reducing the environmental impact of the office due to reduced need for heating and lighting of space. The specialist teams are now on the same floor as BMS World Mission, which we hope will facilitate deeper relationships between the staff teams.

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