

TOGETHER

WHAT SHAPES US



What shapes our Union?
What's our culture?

Agreeing and disagreeing:
in love?

World War 1 Centenary:
Remember, remember

Pioneering:
How do I join in?



BAPTIST BUILDING FUND

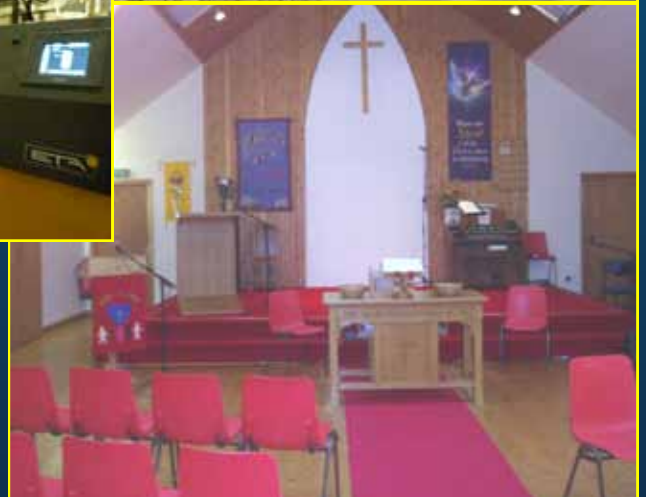


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Please visit our website at www.baptistbuildingfund.org.uk where you can view more pictures from some of the projects which the Fund has been able to assist.

If you require further information or have any questions that you would like answered please feel free to contact our Secretary:- David Leverett FCA
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What shapes us?

This edition's striking cover image comes courtesy of the main lecture hall of the Interact Baptist seminary in Orebro, Sweden. Designed when the college was built, the huge, 40ft stained glass window is an artist's impression of Jesus breaking through the walls into the world beyond. It dominates the room (there are no other windows) and the message is clear: when we come together in worship and learn from Christ we are being equipped to engage with the world beyond. It's a piece of art helping to shape the students' education, in the very place where they'll dig deeper into scripture. How can they fail to be influenced by Jesus pointing the way?



Photo [and cover photo]: Anders Blåberg

It's an image which helps to explore this edition's theme of 'What Shapes Us?', a question borne from a desire to reflect on where we are as a Union.

The fundamental challenge it poses (are we doing things for ourselves – or are we breaking through walls to affect God's kingdom?) is highly relevant to our aim of growing healthy churches in relationship for mission.

We are a body of disparate parts, so firstly we look at the question through the lens of some of our individuals. We then ask a number of churches and an Association to reflect on what shapes them. Several individual stories, each in their own context and words.

Another important question to consider is what shapes our Union as a whole. This was a key concern that influenced much of the thinking of our recent Futures Process, which in turn has brought about some significant changes in our shared life. We include an article which seeks to capture some of that journey and what has emerged from it.

Continuing the theme of shaping, we look at that vital period in a young person's life when they leave school, a time when faith is often tested like never before. There is also an in-depth take on how to handle disagreements, plus articles on calling, pioneering, children and World War 1.

Scripture tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). As you reflect on what is shaping your walk to and with him, may you be blessed and challenged by this edition of *Baptists Together*.

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Shining a light on gender based violence

Churches will be increasingly encouraged to take a stand against gender based violence (GBV), thanks to a ground-breaking new initiative from BMS World Mission.

Dignity aims to shine a light on the issues underlying GBV both here in the UK and overseas. Baptist Christians, mission personnel and BMS partners will be encouraged to think about how these issues affect them, what they can do to help other understand, and how they can take a stand themselves.

BMS has developed a suite of resources for the *Dignity* initiative, which will officially launch this autumn and run for 18 months.

These include a DVD for ministers and churches to help leaders engage with scriptural wisdom on gender based

violence. This aims to equip individuals and congregations to understand the range of abuse encountered in communities worldwide. It features ministerial reflections from Anne Wilkinson-Hayes, Head of Mission Enabling at the Baptist Union of Victoria, Australia; a theological overview of the issue from Stephen Holmes (University of St Andrews); compelling videos from BMS mission personnel; and small group resources.

Dignity will also be an umbrella for a wide range of mission initiatives, funding applications and advocacy co-ordinated by BMS.

BMS will be regularly sharing stories unpacking how GBV is affecting women and girls in the countries where it operates, and has already launched a



Photo: Alex Baker

BMS *Dignity* blog to share general news and developments in this area.

BMS General Director David Kerrigan said: "I believe this is really important, and it gets to the heart of the kind of justice agenda which we'll be part of in the years to come."

For more on the *Dignity* campaign, and to pre-order the DVD visit www.bmsworldmission.org/dignity

Visit the BMS *Dignity* blog, <http://dignity-gbv.tumblr.com>

Campaigning and resourcing for justice

Baptists have made several valuable contributions to the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) in recent months. JPIT brings together our Baptist Union alongside the Methodist and United Reformed Churches for a stronger collective voice on matters of justice. The partnership enables the denominations to pool resources and enable their congregations to better engage with relevant issues.

Members of the Faith and Society team have been actively involved in producing *Faith in Foodbanks*, a series of resources that help churches connect this growing ministry with their life and worship, and raises some of the questions that arise from the growing need that Foodbanks are addressing. Resources and reflections for Peacemaking Sunday have been written by Simon Woodman of **Bloomsbury Baptist Church**.

We also helped to promote through our networks an opportunity for a young person to experience a taste of parliament. Among those taking this up were Iziegbe Akhabau from **Greenford Baptist Church**, and Adam Green from **Wokingham Baptist Church**. Adam later reflected: "I decided to attend because I was interested in gaining an insight into what having faith while working in politics is like. We had a wide ranging panel with MPs from all parties, a cross-bench peer and a Bishop.

"I found it fascinating to hear the panel's view on the questions we asked. Later we heard some great talks from speakers on topics like the importance of multi-faith work to poverty in the UK. But the best part here was seeing the great work of the JPIT team by having their recent

publications explained to us by one of the team members."

As Faith and Society Team Leader, Stephen Keyworth helps to formulate JPIT's focus; this will include a number of initiatives to resource churches for next year's General Election.

Could the church see blood and organ donation as part of its giving?

Many Baptist Christians will better know Matt and Juls Hollidge as worship leaders at our Baptist Assembly and Leading Edge venue leaders.

But over the last 18 months Matt and Juls have been making their mark across many denominations through the **fleshandblood** campaign, a partnership between the NHS and mainstream churches to encourage blood and organ donation.

The couple from **Shoeburyness Baptist Church** in Essex run Kore, an agency which builds socially good ideas and is the key creative partner in the campaign. Kore has produced the eye-catching resources and messages which have enabled **fleshandblood** to receive widespread support: our Baptist Union is pleased to be an established partner, alongside more than a dozen denominations, organisations and festivals. There has been Government backing and the impact has been so great other faith groups working on similar concepts are being supported by

campaign organisers. It is desperately needed, as currently three people die each day in need of an organ transplant. One particularly memorable visual came in July during National Transplant week, when Matt and his team wrapped Carlisle Cathedral in a giant red ribbon.

The **fleshandblood** campaign encourages Christians to see blood and organ donation as part of their giving. It offers churches three basic challenges; to be a community that encourages people to speak openly about blood and organ donation; to encourage participation by attending blood donor sessions together and to promote the issue of blood and organ donation within their local community.

More information about the **fleshandblood** campaign, along with various reflection and discussion resources can be found at www.fleshandblood.org



Photo: Phil Jump

Baptist church magazines win awards

Two Baptist church magazines have been voted winners and runners-up in a national award.

Pulse, the magazine from **Stoke Road Baptist Church**, Gosport was the overall winner of the Association for Church Editors (ACE) 2014 award for A5 church magazines.

In second place was *The Beeches*, the magazine from **The Beeches Baptist Church** in Carshalton.

"We had a good response from various denominations, but these two were worthy winners of the top two awards," ACE Chairman John Farrow told *Baptists Together*.

"*Pulse* is a superb, eye-catching magazine, very well laid out and using excellent photographs.

"It will hold its own among the professional secular magazines, because it just asks to be read. It presents the Christian message clearly. An outstanding magazine and among the best we have seen in recent years.

"*The Beeches* is a very attractive magazine with an appealing page layout. It's rare for a church magazine to make such effective use of white space. It has an

interesting variety of articles and good headlines. The church should be proud to have a magazine of such quality."

Pulse editor Ruth Deverill was presented with the John King Trophy. She explained that the magazine aims to "attractively present the church in terms of its teaching, people and activities, mainly to reach people who are not yet fully part of the church, but also to keep church members informed and encouraged about what is happening."

She added: "I was happy that we won - surprised that our small magazine was the overall winner but recognise that many of the categories judged are down to the work of our designer, who gives her services free because her mother is a church member."



Photo: Association for Church Editors
Ruth Deverill receiving the award from Stephen Poxon of the Salvation Army, former editor of *Salvationist*, the Salvation Army's flagship paper.



Heather Shakespeare edits *The Beeches*. She said: "*The Beeches* magazine aims to inform, encourage, challenge and inspire.

"Our vision is that it will build faith and fellowship within the church and also impact the wider community as it is shared with friends, family, local shops and businesses and those using our church buildings.

"We are encouraged that ACE has recognised the efforts of all those involved and delighted that our magazine has been considered worthy of an award."



NEW DESIGN

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From

"I encourage everyone to buy a Real Advent Calendar..."

Diane Louise Jordan




Recent surveys show that knowledge of the Christmas story is fading.*
Among 5-7 year olds, 36% don't know whose birthday we celebrate at Christmas.
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*Survey findings from ComRes 2007, 2010, 2012.

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How are you shaped as a Christian?

We all have our own stories of God in our lives, and we wanted to know a little more about those influences, experiences and ideas. We therefore asked a number of people: "What shapes you as a Christian? What has influenced your faith journey?"



'Sharing the journey'

On reflection perhaps a life following Jesus alongside others has shaped me more than anything else.

Growing up I was fortunate to be in a church where people of all ages listened and gave children and young people chances to be involved in, and even influence, church life. We felt valued and this helped confidence and gifts to emerge.

Over the years I have been encouraged by several individuals who took trouble to offer me significant opportunities to grow and develop. As a woman in mission and ministry I guess this may not have happened otherwise.

Living and working in various cross-cultural ministry settings couldn't help but shape my world view and approach. For example, learning Albanian and worshipping together with Albanians helped develop a greater freedom of expression in worship for me than in English.

I also saw time and again that God is free to work in a variety of ways that I hadn't previously understood, because of the richness of world-view and context in diverse settings. The frequency of healing in Nepal is a case in point, not primarily because of pressing local need but rather a different starting point in spirituality and expectation.

Margaret Gibbs is the minister of **Perry Rise Baptist Church** in London. She was previously the BMS World Mission Team Leader for Asia

'Worship'

Apart from Jesus and the message of the cross, one of the most important things that shapes who I am as a Christian is worship. Worship is important for me in that it brings me back onto my knees before God in prayer. We were created to worship God in order to glorify, honour, praise, exalt and please him.

Worship is essential in creating an atmosphere for the word of God to flow and for God to move in our lives.

Worship is amazing because it can be done as a church, which is very important in stirring one another as a fellowship or as individuals (Hebrews 10:24-25) and can also be done individually. It's like a spiritual exercise which we need to do regularly, otherwise we become complacent and get into the danger of spiritual starvation. Worship encourages prayer and reading of the word of God.

When we come to worship, it should make us reflect on the majesty and graciousness of God in Christ in contrast to our unworthiness. God doesn't have to have our worship but we must worship him to please him. I believe our worship, praying, giving, and studying of his word bring us closer to him and help us think more like he thinks, therefore, becoming more like him and drawing closer to him (James 4:8).

Jessie Muchena studied Medical Engineering at the University of Bradford, and recently completed an internship at the Global Café, a Christian-run charity. She was a member of the Younger Leaders' Forum and attends **Stoke Newington Baptist Church**, London



'Shaped by life'

Friday 5 September, washing up after tea, the phone rings. I answer; our GP wishes to speak to my wife. A scan which at first had appeared to be innocuous is now causing concern. "Arrange to see a consultant at the earliest possible opportunity". Numb, we make an excuse to cancel an evening visit from a friend, and phone the family.

Earliest opportunity is the following week. Cancer diagnosis confirmed, major surgery to take place as soon as possible. Surgery appears to be successful but a course of chemotherapy follows, just to be certain. Cancer blood test count falls dramatically. Oncologist pronounces "Total remission".

But cancer blood test count refuses to disappear, then starts to climb again. More chemo. We ask for prayer in the church. Hair loss (again!), lassitude, nausea. We confess sin, ask the elders of the church to anoint with oil. We go to a healing service. My wife remains unfailingly courageous and positive. Medical treatment always impeccable, Hospice care beyond our expectations.

Tuesday 5 June, in the beauty of a summer dawn, a life less ordinary ends peacefully.

Then in the darkness comes the Word. **In the presence of God 'without fault and with great joy'**

And so the light shines and the darkness has not overcome it.

John Hermon is a deacon and secretary of **King's Sutton Baptist Church** in Northamptonshire. He lost his wife Mandy in 2007 after a long illness and subsequently wrote *Sometimes I Write Words*, an anthology of poems for various seasons of the heart, helping the reader find beauty in life amidst the pain of death



'Connection is key'

What should be shaping us? A minister's view

A few years ago a British Telecoms advert ended with these words: "The more connections we make the more possibilities there are."

Today I carry with me a phone, tablet and laptop; my music is in a cloud and accessed almost anywhere; and I am connected to other people all over the globe via Facebook, Skype, Twitter, Google and others. Yesterday, even one of my Primary School teachers asked

to be my Facebook friend ... I am so connected!

However, this word connection is a vital clue to how we grow as radical followers of Jesus.

Connected to Father God

The greatest commandment is to love God, but we connect to God by truly knowing him not just knowing about him. God desires intimacy with us – a deep connection. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai his face was radiant because he had spoken with the Lord (Ex 34:29). Is our time with God seen in our lives by others?

Connected to the words of Jesus and his Spirit

I never tire of reading the gospels, but I wonder how seriously I take the words of Jesus. As I heard the other day, "If Jesus was the Pastor of your church, you wouldn't go!" Jesus says some pretty wild things – it's no wonder they had to try and get rid of him! So let us get connected to the red letters again and

not just memorize them, but choose to live them. It will have a radical impact on your discipleship. We can do none of this without the Spirit who empowers us.

Connected to a church community

Our faith journey is not meant to be a solo sport. We need to be part of a church family. It won't be perfect because it is full of people like you and me. However, be vulnerable with others, get involved and shape your life so that others are drawn to you.

Connected to culture

We are still in the business of being a witness. Discipleship is about making other disciples. So get involved in the community around you so that you can make a transforming difference within it. Play sport, join an art group, have a coffee or walk with friends. Just be around people who don't know the Jesus story and if they ask, tell them.

Adam Eakins is minister of **Broadmead Baptist Church**, Northampton

Food for thought

How would we respond to the question: "What shapes us?" Are we truly shaped by Christ? What are the influences that particularly shape us? Are they those that help us become more like Christ? Are our values the values of God's Kingdom?

Share your thoughts at www.baptist.org.uk/shaped

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www.spurgeons.org

What shapes our church?

Coming together in Christian community is at the heart of our understanding of discipleship. As Baptists we place a strong emphasis on the place of the local church; we invite a number of local congregations to share "What shapes us as a church?"



Photo: Jo Criddle

'A church of whole-life disciples' Tamworth Baptist Church

Tamworth Baptist Church is the only Baptist congregation in a town of between 70,000 to 80,000 residents, and we are privileged to have good relationships with the other fellowships here.

We have been around for nearly 200 years and we are shaped by the rich tradition and history which this brings as we explore what it means to live as Christians today. We are a group of people (just over 100 adults and a growing number of children) who choose to spend time together to meet with God and to support each other. Many of us have made a commitment to follow Jesus Christ and are trying to work out what that means in practice. Others have not made that decision yet, for a variety of reasons, but enjoy being part of our community where all are welcomed and valued.

As we meet and share together we seek to encourage each other to grow nearer to God, get to know Jesus better and be strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

In early 2013 the church adopted this vision statement:
That we will be a church of 'whole-life disciples' who treasure every moment as an opportunity to live as fully-committed followers of Jesus Christ.

These are big concepts and present real challenges but we believe that this is what 'authentic, grown-up Christianity' should be about. We are shaped by the challenge of this vision and we are also shaped by the needs of our local community. From the many things which we organise and run within the church to the people we meet in our neighbourhoods, work settings and

social engagements, we are seeking to put our commitment to Christ into practice and to be involved in his mission. This is 'work in progress' but is an exciting and challenging way to live and serve as a community of God's people.

Graham Criddle - minister,
Tamworth Baptist Church, Staffordshire

'A diverse congregation united in worshipping Christ' Edmonton Baptist Church

Edmonton Baptist Church, in the borough of Enfield, has been a beacon of worship on Edmonton Green for 155 years. We are a tableau of peoples, cultures, and languages: at the last count there were 42 national flags on display. This diversity and our call to be one in Christ have played a key role in shaping our life as a church.

Our diversity is also shown in our ages, occupations, and spiritual backgrounds. We gather as Baptists, but we bring with us the richness of other Christian traditions - Anglicans, Pentecostals, Methodists and many more. The fellowship spans the spectrum of very new to mature Christian with some people finding Christ from non-Christian backgrounds.

However we come, wherever we come, we gather together as one to worship the true and living God. And that, to my mind, is what shapes us as a congregation. Our services reflect our diversity and encourage participation from everyone. This is seen in the weekly choice of music and style of

worship. What a joy to see God's people joined together and worshipping as one in Christ.

Our diversity informs our values, many of which are expressed in the church Declaration. We are a body of Christians pledged to welcome the stranger and look after the needy. To use our time and talents for the kingdom, and to understand and practise our faith. To this end, we are encouraged to be part of small groups, and to undertake training to equip us in the service of God in our part of the church family. Our breakfast and luncheon clubs are practical out-workings of our values, likewise our BMS contributions.

All of the above feeds into the Vision – what we are about as Kingdom people. We are about spreading the good news whenever we can, wherever we can, reaching people for Christ, reaching them as they are and telling them about the love of Jesus.

Beverley Davis - deacon,
Edmonton Baptist Church, London

Photo: Beverley Davis



‘Building friendship, building faith’

Dedworth Green Baptist Church

Past

We have inevitably been shaped by events at the start of the millennium when the church’s worship area was destroyed by fire, leading to a 10-year ‘exile’ in the adjacent school. As attendance fell, a faithful core of worshippers persevered with the building challenges until, in 2010, a new church building was opened with much rejoicing. However, many were in need of refreshing and a brief season of rest was in order.

Thankfully, God is good, and several mature Christians arrived over the following year or so, helping to revitalise church life and ministry.

Present

The tight-knit sense of community, developed during those years, strengthened the warm welcome offered by the church. Our desire to engage the local community led to Dedworth Green Baptist Church (DGBC) hosting ‘Windsor Foodshare’, a new initiative of Windsor churches, launched in October 2013 to show God’s love to those in need. Church member



Photo: Dedworth Green Baptist Church

Sarah Howard said: “At the New Wine Conference last year I sensed God calling me to co-ordinate Foodshare. It would be way outside my comfort zone but I knew I had to do it - and I know I could not have done it without God.”

Future Hope

A recent away-day led by Regional Minister Colin Norris identified people in need and families with young children as key groups that God has called us to focus on. Some already hire our building for their own activities. We were subsequently challenged at the Baptist Assembly to strengthen our relationships with them and demonstrate God’s love by replicating our Sunday welcome throughout the week.

‘Finding a sense of vision’ Swaythling Baptist Church

I was determined not to read *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren. ‘I’m not going to be driven by anything!’ I thought.

But after the first few pages I was hooked. We are driven, Warren points out, whether we like it or not, by strong personalities, the church programme, finance, and tradition - or simply a combination of all.

Phil Potter in *The Challenge of Change* points out the often unconscious - but deeply held - values that also underpin church life. Therefore, before you change a structure you need to change the values, he says.

Swaythling Baptist Church is a small church on a dead-end road on the edge of Southampton in an area well served by local churches. We were struggling to find a sense of vision and direction and so in 2009 we went through a guided process with the regional

One of my predecessors wrote a history of DGBC, entitled ‘Far More Abundantly’ (Ephesians 3:20). We are encouraged that each time we pray, however tentatively, the promise of that verse is fulfilled as God’s answers greatly exceed our prayers.

Matthew Scott - minister, Dedworth Green Baptist Church, Windsor



team at Southern Counties Baptist Association called *re:focus*.

Three months later, after meetings with the deacons, a church day, questionnaires, a community audit and asking some hard questions (not all hard questions; I particularly remember being asked “if the church were a colour what colour would it be?”) we were able to set out a vision statement and values that underpin it. These have led to the development of an action plan.

In particular, we discovered from talking to the local Police Community Support Officer that there were a good number of young people, on a local estate with no church presence, struggling to find their way in life. In response to this the church is actively exploring a mentoring scheme to get alongside them and offer friendship, encouragement and a steady presence in their lives. The work of reinforcing our vision and the values that underpin it continues.

Having it down on paper is not the same as people sharing and buying into those values - but it’s definitely a start.

Lawrence Fellick - minister, Swaythling Baptist Church, Southampton

Are you aware that having served the Baptist family over many years, some ministers find themselves unable to buy their own home in retirement?

WE ARE HERE TO HELP

RBMS, an independent charity which receives no central funding, has been addressing this challenge for over 30 years to ensure ministers can enjoy a peaceful retirement in a home of their own.



RETIRED BAPTIST MINISTERS HOUSING SOCIETY

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If you are in a position to make a donation or would like further information about the Society, please contact Stewart Green, RBMS. Call 01202 548890 or email: sgreen@rbms.org.uk



Photo: Emily Coles

What shapes our Association?

Baptist Associations have been around nearly as long as the churches that make them up: associating together is a foundational principle of our Baptist Identity, and it is through Regional Associations that we primarily express that commitment - but what makes them tick? Ruth Whiter asked three individuals within the West of England Baptist Association (WEBA) to think about what shapes the work they do at this regional level.

Nigel Coles' role as Senior Regional Minister is to have a strategic overview of God's mission through WEBA. Having been in post for 14 years, he recognises how that landscape is changing:

I now hear the word 'networking' much more than I do 'associating'. This is a good thing, as people have an idea of what we're talking about!

My observation is that things are far more real and honest in ministers' meetings than they were – it's a realistic expectation now that a local Baptist minister will look to their cluster colleague(s) for their first line of mutual support, encouragement and pastoral care.

I also think churches relate to our Regional Association in a far more positive way than previously. Across our WEBA region we're moving 'towards a missional association', which means a variety of things, such as:

Listening to what God is saying and spotting what he's up to. For example, we currently can identify 11 'missional communities' – some are existing Baptist churches, which were on the brink of closing and others are new, small, experimental, groups of people attempting to reach people for Jesus in a particular neighbourhood.

Trying to line up our resources to support our vision, rather than

perpetuating what we've always done. So, diverting Home Mission grants to bless what God is doing, rather than simply giving to keep things afloat; finding more creative ways of starting a new initiative, rather than looking for a whole time, fully funded minister. We're very grateful to God for people such as Aaron and Natalie Beale and Dan and Beth Doherty, who have moved their young families into Bristol and Portishead, respectively, to start something well before we are providing any significant funding.

We work with six core convictions now and these are shaping our regional team's values, as well providing a shape

Our growing understanding of how the relationship between local churches and a Regional network – in our case, the West of England Baptist Association – is worked out in practice is formed around six Core Convictions:

Jesus ... at the heart
Mission ... as the priority
Church ... as purposeful community
Relationships ... as being crucial
Discipleship ... as core activity
Organic structures ... as most helpful

for our Trustees' allocation of resources. They're also what get me out of bed in the morning!



Photo: Emily Coles



Sarah Whybrew

Photo: Emily Coles

Sarah Whybrew divides her time between admin for a local Domestic Violence charity, and a part time job in the WEBA office in Bristol, mostly helping to organise events and Nigel's diary:

To be honest it has taken me a few months to begin to really get to grips with what the role of WEBA is and sometimes it is still a bit confusing! For a relatively small staff team, we cover so many different areas of work.

What we do with our time is influenced by a mixture of different factors. We have our online calendar reminding us of meetings and events, monthly staff meetings, our individual to-do-lists, the vision and direction of the Regional Ministers. Churches look to us for guidance and support in anything from property matters, to safeguarding issues and legal matters, to help in discerning the will of God for their future. Hopefully there's a listening ear to the Lord in all of those things!

Within WEBA there's a huge variety of different passions and experiences and we each represent a different aspect of the heart of God. So on a day-to-day level we can often have different priorities, but I do believe that ultimately our goal is the same, to fulfil the Great Commission given to us by Jesus.



Photo: Emily Coles

- » WEBA is a network of about 123 churches and about 11 'small missional communities' in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, North Somerset, and Bristol.
- » There is currently a team of two full-time Regional Ministers, one part-time, and three office staff.
- » WEBA's activities are governed by a group of eight Trustees who bring a range of skills and experience from different walks of life.
- » WEBA runs its own Trust Company and a growing Payroll Company that helps churches all over the country (www.webapayroll.org.uk)
- » Following the Futures Process, WEBA has begun working with three neighbouring Associations to manage areas such as Home Mission Grants and Ministerial Recognition.
- » In addition to supporting full-time ministers, providing training and development opportunities for leadership teams is increasingly becoming a priority.



Home Mission Grants are changing. Association Partnerships are now setting their own clear missional criteria for the allocation of grants, and in the case of the partnership of four Associations that includes WEBA, this is allowing for greater flexibility. It is beginning to free up funds for creative mission because of the shorter period for which a grant will normally be awarded. There's also much more local input, with representatives from WEBA clusters taking part in the allocation process. **Paul White**, minister of **Sheep Street Baptist church** in Devizes, described his experience of meeting with other WEBA ministers to consider the applications for 2015:

"I have to be honest and say that I was not looking forward to being part of the Home Mission awards group. Before entering Ministry I was in business for over 20 years and the last thing

I wanted to do was get involved in figures and finances again. However, I was pleasantly surprised by the experience.

"We met together at **Downend Baptist Church** and quickly got to grips with the first few applications. Although we had allowed for a full day, I felt we would be finished by lunch time. This thinking proved to be premature as we then proceeded to spend a considerable amount of time wrestling, passionately at times, with a few applications that we particularly wanted to encourage. My own personal view is that we should look to where God is already at work and seek to join him in that work in whatever way we are called to do so, and my perceived burden at the task turned into a joy and a privilege as we saw what God is doing in the wider Baptist community."

Paul White - a member of the Home Mission awards group



Photo: Emily Coles



What shapes us as a Union?

In the last couple of years a huge amount of work has gone into re-imagining our Baptist Union. *Phil Jump* reflects on the journey so far



What shapes us? It's one of those questions to which, as Christians, we all know the right answer: We are shaped by God's Word in scripture; we are shaped by the Holy Spirit; by prayer and through the fellowship and influence of other Christians. Of course other things shape us too - our world constantly seeks to squeeze us into its mould; a key challenge of Christian discipleship is to live as an active participant in that world, yet remain true to our identity as followers of Jesus.

One of the things I have increasingly learned in my life journey is how influenced we can be by the environments in which we operate, and the values and behaviours of those around us. A clear example is the workplace - as I look back, I realise how much of my thinking and decision making as a young adult was impacted by the people I met there. I have come to recognise too how easily we can embrace and promote a particular set of values, yet unconsciously act and operate in ways that totally undermine them. This can be illustrated by the caricature of the preacher who boldly proclaims that we can only be saved by grace, with such venomous contempt for anyone who fails to think the same way, we are left wondering whether they have any concept of what grace actually is!

Perhaps this is why, at the very heart of the Church's self-understanding, is the call to be Christlike. Yes, we are called to believe in who Jesus was; we do well to embrace what Jesus said, but we are also invited to take as our example the way he lived and acted. The Apostle Paul reminds us that the purpose of leadership is to enable the whole church to 'grow into Christ'. Yet those of us who are privileged to be called to this ministry can too easily fall into the trap of being so busy telling people that this is how things should be, we fail to stop and reflect on whether the organisations and structures that we have built around ourselves also operate in a Christlike way.



Learning from the early Church

There is a well-known story in the Acts of the Apostles of when the early Church fell into exactly this trap. It came to light when its Greek-born members pointed out that their widows were being treated as second-class citizens in the daily distribution of food. The New Testament believers were doing the right thing; sharing their possessions and taking care of those in need, but in doing so were unconsciously still buying into the values and culture of the society around them. They had grown up in a world that treated anyone born outside of the Jewish community as inferior, and even though Peter had stood up at Pentecost, boldly announcing that God's Spirit was being poured out on all people - their actions and attitudes were saying something entirely different.

From this develops one of the earliest expressions of structured Christian leadership, something we see as definitive for the ministry of deacons in our churches today. Their task was not to organise the distribution of food - that was already happening - it was to help the Church go about it in a way that truly reflected what it was as the Body of Christ.



Photo: Emily Coles

Re-imagining our Union... and the link between mission and maintenance

This may all seem a far cry from recent events in the life of our Baptist Union, but I would suggest that this reality lies at the heart of what has come to be known as the Futures Process. It was a journey that began in 2011, when some serious questions were asked about whether our structures and ways of being were truly what was required for a missional church in the 21st century. We would have to admit that the process was fuelled by increasing questions over the financial sustainability of what was in place at the time, but this was not, and never became, the main issue. There is no doubt in my mind that as a Baptist community we were totally committed to authentic Christian discipleship and effective Christian mission – this is what we believed in, this is what we talked about and this was what we encouraged in others. But the question we had to face was, for all of that, were we truly operating and allocating our resources in ways that promoted and enabled this or, like the believers in Acts, were we doing the right thing in the wrong way?

Beginning to re-imagine our Union was no easy task, not least because of the conflicting expectations of those who had an investment in its life. Some of the clearest examples of that were the responses to the widespread consultation which attracted well over a thousand participants. One clear message was of a desire for something far less structured and organisational; much more able to be a responsive missional movement. Yet the same people, when asked what they valued most, cited more than anything else the legal, financial and other professional services that are vital to the support of local churches. These of course are very much organisational and structured in nature, and to a large degree need to be, if they are to be effective.

it is in our local churches that the mission of God will be most effectively and frequently engaged. But to be their best, local churches need support



Photo: © Maccj | Dreamstime.com - Lewis Hamilton Does A Trial Pit Photo

To me this illustrates the mistake we make when we imagine that mission and maintenance are somehow opposites. When Lewis Hamilton takes his car out onto a Formula One track, there is no doubt about what his mission is – to reach that chequered flag ahead of anyone else in the field. Yet that achievement is reliant upon one of the most competent and effective maintenance teams in the world – anyone who imagines that Hamilton can reach his goal without a pit crew, who can change all four wheels in the time it takes most of us to remember where the wheel brace is, is completely deluded.

This might serve as one illustration of what our Union is seeking to become. I remember saying to someone as the Futures Proposals were being drawn together, “if this delivers an all-singing-all-dancing Baptist Union organisation, it will have failed”. Like the driver on the track, it is in our

local churches that the mission of God will be most effectively and frequently engaged. But to be their best, local churches need support – they need the support of sister congregations in that shared endeavour of mission, and they need the support of specialists who can sustain them in being effective and wholesome Christian communities.

A new culture

One of the most prominent aims of the Futures Process was to develop a new culture, and one of the clear outcomes is a much more intentional and overt commitment to not simply ask “what should we be doing” but “how should we be doing it?” I think this is crucial; with the growing emphasis on whole-life discipleship we are increasingly recognising that what defines us as Christians is not so much what we do, but the way we go about it. If we are to foster the environment of which I spoke at the outset, then this needs to be modelled in every layer of our shared life.

we are increasingly recognising that what defines us as Christians is not so much what we do, but the way we go about it



Photo: Ian Britton





Photo: Paul Unsworth

Talking about a change of culture is one thing, defining and holding ourselves accountable to it, is another. One way in which we have sought to do that is by the establishment of a small group to focus on this, and it is my privilege to lead it. But if that change of culture is to become effective, then it needs to be embraced by our Union as a whole, and not simply be the domain of a few individuals. Our primary task therefore, is to encourage and cajole others. The Baptist Steering Group has invested significant time, working with Council and others, to define that new culture. In doing so, five key elements have been identified:

We must seek to be a Spirit led people

Our Union must feel and act like one team

We need to be a people who embrace adventure

Through our shared activities, people should be inspired

In our life together we should share a hunger for God's coming Kingdom

Are we there yet? – no, we've a long way yet to travel, but I sense that we are certainly on the way. One clear difference for me is that our leadership gatherings are increasingly places of significant prayer and openness to God's Spirit. It is very hard to trace a clear line to show how this directly impacts the life of our local churches, but I hope that Baptist Christians will nonetheless recognise and celebrate the significance of this – they can be confident that those who have been

if that change of culture is to become effective, then it needs to be embraced by our Union as a whole

entrusted with the leadership of our Union are seriously seeking God together and not being driven by bureaucracy and routine agendas.

We have deliberately sought to be more open and collaborative in how we do things. This includes using Facebook and other social media to encourage collaboration and invite people to contribute to the thinking and deliberation of BU Council. A new website, supported by this publication *Baptists Together* is seeking to make the work of our Union more accessible, and to provide a platform for local stories

to be shared. We have devolved the allocation of Home Mission resources to Associations so that investment can be much more responsive and adventurous. By investing in the development of the Pioneer Collective, we

are drawing together the gifts and vision of Baptist Christians who are engaged at the sharp end of mission.

At the heart of this is also a re-emphasis on the age-old Baptist principle of covenant. Our Union is defined primarily not by a set of legal procedures and regulations, but by the commitment of local congregations of Baptist Christians being committed to *walk together and watch over one another in love*.



Photo: Chris Duffett

Is it making a difference?

How is all of this making a difference to our churches? I would be interested to know – I suspect that many would argue that from their perspective very little has changed. Being a Regional Minister has taught me that it does take a long time for change to impact our community as a whole, but I hope there are signs of encouragement for us all. The focus on covenant also

reminds us that this is a two-sided coin; the difference these changes make will depend as much as anything on the willingness of everyone in our Baptist community to embrace afresh God's call to be a Spirit led, united, adventurous, inspirational, kingdom seeking people. For me, that's something worth committing to, even if it

takes a while to get there.

Such aspiration will never be realised either by human resolve or re-organisation, but through the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that the vision has been expressed through a prayer that is currently being shared with churches as two symbolic crosses travel amongst Baptists in the UK. The final stanza reads:

*Anoint us afresh with your Spirit
Unite us afresh in your love
Make our hearts restless in pursuit of your Kingdom
Grant us courage to embrace the adventure of your Gospel
Inspire us, fill us, send us*

Phil Jump is Regional Minister Team Leader of the North Western Baptist Association, and a member of the Baptist Steering Group



General Secretary Lynn Green:

Photo: Ian Britton

My Gideon Bible was the key influence in me finding faith – through reading those physical words on a page I encountered the Living Word, Jesus Christ. So it has always been very important for my discipleship that I continue to be shaped by the Word as I seek to grow in Christ's likeness. I do not come to the Bible looking for what I want to see; but I want the Word to 'address' me and shape me. I have found this to be a powerful and dynamic process.

But it is not only as I open myself to God through reading the Bible that I am challenged on my journey; preaching has played a major role. As a preacher I do not see that I am merely passing on the truths of God to others, rather I want to engage with God's Word and put it into practice in my own life. Then I feel that I can preach with authenticity as a fellow disciple on the road.

So how does this shape me? When preparing to preach, I begin with prayer; what we share must arise out of our personal relationship with Jesus. I begin by asking God what is on his heart, what does he want to say. Nearly anyone can fill 20 minutes in speaking to people, but I want to invite people into an encounter with Jesus through preaching.

As I continue prayerfully, my next step is to 'dwell' in the passage. I write it out, I notice things about it; I become aware of the questions that arise. Only then do I reach for the commentaries! I want to be true to the text and understand what is being said through it and how this relates to God's 'big story'. I ask myself, 'What

did the passage mean to those it was written for?' And 'what does it mean for us today?' As I dwell in the Word and allow it to speak to me, I find that a basic shape begins to emerge and I often find that drawing a mind map at this stage helps me to see the key points that are emerging. As I begin to fill out this basic shape I find Nancy Beach's three questions for preaching helpful: What do I want people to

know? What do I want people to feel? And what do I want to invite people to do? This helps me to add the detail and choose helpful illustrations.

The most important factor in all this, however, is TIME! Allowing the Word to speak to you so that you can speak the Word needs time for

prayerful reflection. When I was in local church pastorate I always started my prep on a Monday and I wasn't getting to the basic shape until Thursday and then the 'writing' would not come until Friday or Saturday. Even then some key insight would sometimes come to me on Sunday morning as I was prayerfully preparing to lead worship! I believe that time is critical in that it gives space for the Lord to speak and it also allows me to distinguish between what I might want to say and what the Lord is actually wanting me to say!

So for me preaching has not only been a privilege, it has also played a key role in my journey of discipleship. As I seek to be faithful in engaging with God's Word, I am changed in the process.

What do I want people to know?

What do I want people to feel?

And what do I want to invite people to do?

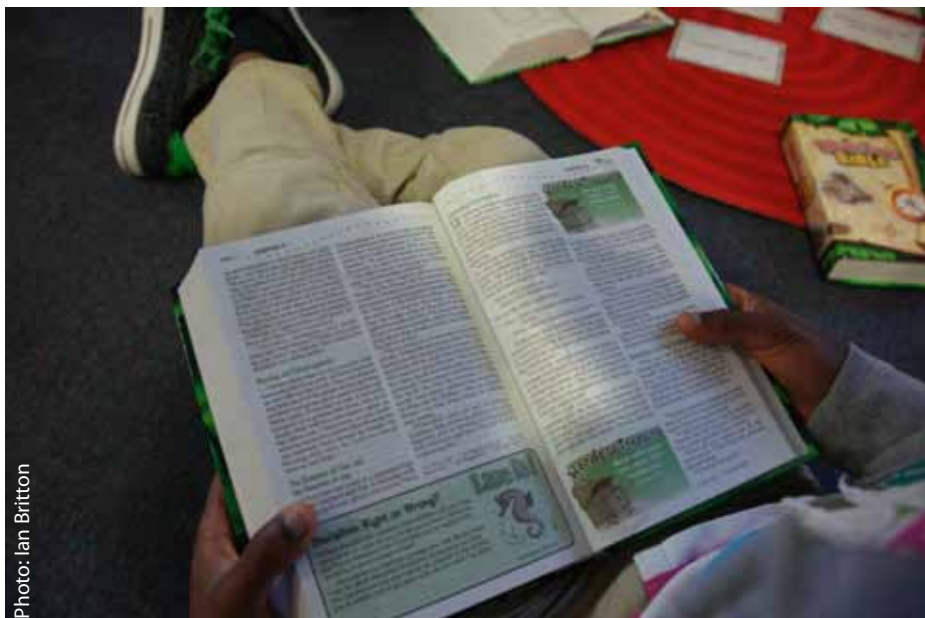


Photo: Ian Britton





Bringing restoration
Photo: © Spphotos | Dreamstime.com - Roman Wall Painting Photo

Agreeing and disagreeing – in love?

We are called to be one - we are called to discern the mind of Christ through our consensus, but we are human and sometimes we disagree. How do we hold these two things together? By Pat Took

Are Baptists a peaceable people? Do we live together in the reconciled love of Christ? Is our gospel of grace demonstrated in our common life? Well... sometimes. There are, praise God, many congregations that are laboratories of love, schools of grace. But it has to be admitted that as Baptists we find agreeing and disagreeing in love particularly difficult. And I think there is a not entirely dishonourable reason for this.

At the heart of our tradition lie two deeply felt principles which seem at times to be irreconcilable. In the first place we are congregational. We believe that the call of Christ is to community - a specific community, a particular congregation. We are called to take our place not just in the amorphous, anonymous, entirely loveable Universal Church, but among the collection of flaky and intransigent personalities that worships at Bethesda Chapel, Station Road. We are called to share the task of discovering and doing God's will for this specific, local and entirely problematic

How then can I hold together my need to dissent with a form of governance which is about consensus?

community; to walk with these people, to watch over and be watched over by these people; to speak the truth to them, to hear the truth from them, in the love of Christ. We hear God's heart together, in Bible studies and prayer meetings, in worship and in Church Meetings, listening to each other, paying attention to the prophets and visionaries among us but also to the least articulate and most timid. This is how we make our decisions and it governs the kind of leadership that is exercised among us.

But what if, having thought and prayed, having honoured Church Meeting, having suspended judgement and listened with respect and love to my brothers and sisters, I am profoundly uncomfortable with what has been discerned? What if, in all conscience, I cannot agree with that decision? I cannot persuade

myself that it truly expresses the mind of Christ? Then another deeply held conviction surfaces: the conviction that the individual conscience is inviolable. As a Baptist I believe that I am responsible before God for my own actions and decisions, and that this is not a responsibility I can delegate. I am a Nonconformist, a Dissenter, a Protestant. How then can I hold together my need to dissent with a form of governance which is about consensus? Where does the priority lie - with personal integrity or communal harmony? Should I submerge my conscience and 'go with the flow'? Should I get political and start campaigning for the decision to be overturned? Should I abandon ship?

For myself, I tend to be a 'peace at any price' kind of person. I resonate with Paul when he writes to the Philippians, 'If then there

is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing of the Spirit, any compassion and

The harmony Paul prays for is not an ironing out of difference but the harmony of difference held in creative tension.

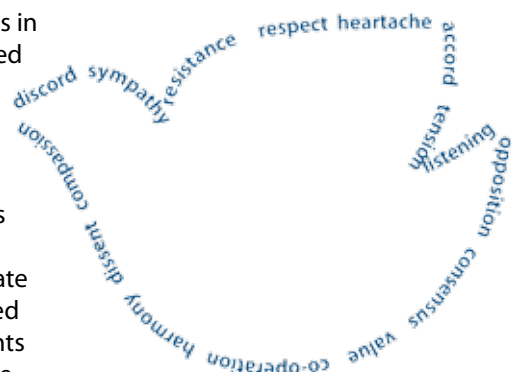
sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind!

The quality of common life that will fill up Paul's cup of happiness, and mine, is a fellowship of mutual affection, tenderness, humour, kindness and peace; something we all yearn for, sometimes experience, and never forget.

But what Paul yearns for is not a unity in which the individual is drowned, not a fusion which submerges each particular mind in a one-voiced unanimity. Such bland uniformity, such conformity, would be a falling away from the rich

For myself, I tend to be a 'peace at any price' kind of person.

freedom and reciprocity which is ours in Christ. Paul's own experience, mirrored in his letters, is of congregations full of dissident voices, struggling, failing and succeeding in finding God's way together. His metaphor of the body emphasises the disparate nature of congregational life: the need for a variety of gifts and temperaments if the fullness of God's mission is to be realised. So being of 'one mind' cannot mean always seeing eye to eye. It cannot mean complete agreement. The harmony he prays for is not an ironing out of difference but the harmony of difference held in creative tension. Nice work if you can get it!



Such harmony requires skills that can be learned, and must be learned, because this kind of common life does not come naturally. But above all it requires gifts of the heart; 'love, compassion, sympathy, accord'. And as Paul's thought moves on we see what 'mind' he is considering - it is, in fact the mind that was in Christ - the mind that let go - that did not fight his corner - that did not insist or bully or ride roughshod, but emptied himself for love and redemption. And this must be the well-spring of our life together. In the end it is about becoming mature in the flame of love - about the work of God's Spirit, the mind of Christ in the hearts of his people. It is about being willing, for the sake of love, to abandon ourselves - our pet projects, our well-articulated opinions, our need to win and our conviction that we are right. Sometimes this will require me to accept a decision that I question, having expressed my doubts and offered the outcome to God. Sometimes the rest of the community will decide not to press forward with something that clearly causes me distress. If we are blessed with wise leadership we might pause and then revisit the issue, looking for a new approach. Perhaps, on very rare occasions, we must part. But love is the touchstone.

We aim to agree in love: that is a peaceable and happy thing, provided the agreement is genuine and rooted in truth. When we disagree we need even more the mind of Christ to find ways ahead that express a loving integrity.

Might this be the Baptist way? Not static or comfortable, but creative, and energised by love for each other, for Christ and for his world?

How good when that is so.

Pat Took is a Baptist minister from London and Yorkshire, and a former President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain

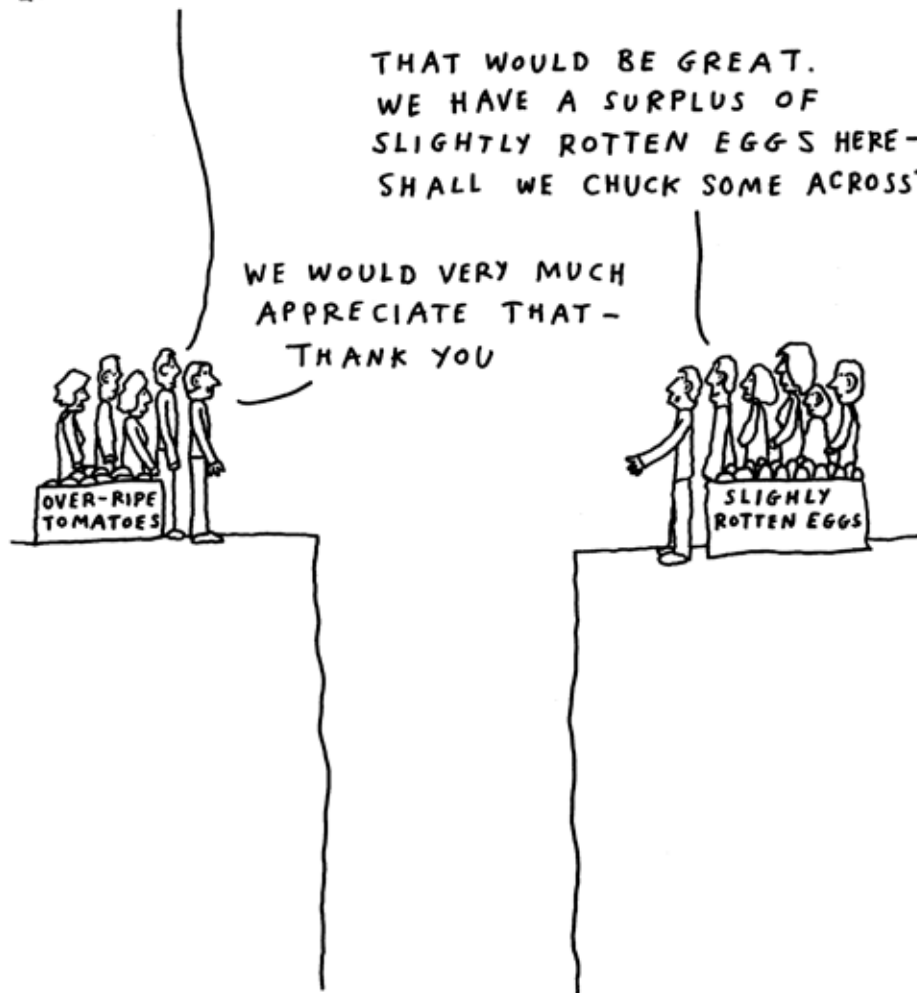


HOW CHRISTIANS CAN WORK TOGETHER ACROSS THE DIVIDE

WE'VE GOT SOME OVER-RIPE TOMATOES HERE - WOULD YOU LIKE US TO THROW SOME OVER?

THAT WOULD BE GREAT. WE HAVE A SURPLUS OF SLIGHTLY ROTTEN EGGS HERE - SHALL WE CHUCK SOME ACROSS?

WE WOULD VERY MUCH APPRECIATE THAT - THANK YOU



Cartoon: Dave Walker - used with permission





Photo: © Ivanderbiesen | Dreamstime.com
- World War One Cemetery, Belgium Photo

**Remember
remember**

Commemorations marking the centenary of World War One are in full flow. What should we make of it all - and how might we respond? Two Baptists offer contrasting reflections

'Important to recognise centenary – and Baptists' substantial role in World War One' by Neil Allison

I am presently a Baptist Minister and a full time army chaplain who has been on regular operational service, and this certainly influences my perspective on the centenary of the First World War. However, I write more from the perspective of an historian who has had the privilege of writing and lecturing about the First World War and the place of nonconformist Christians within that history.

Baptist churches played a significant role in supporting their members and adherents while they served through the furnace of a very brutal war. Most congregations will have a memorial to their war dead somewhere in their building and most of us are aware of the commonly expressed narrative concerning post war disillusionment, most ably expressed in the brilliant TV series *Blackadder Goes Forth*.

I believe it is important to recognise the centenary and substantial role of Baptists in that distressing period of history because it is 'our' history. Our faith is not worked out in some sort of spiritual vacuum, but must be embedded in the reality of living in the world - even a world at war. The historical reality is that most Baptists, individually and denominationally, supported the war. Some did so reluctantly but most were in no doubt that the war was necessary and just. Indeed, they felt they had been forced into it because of the German atrocities in Belgium and its threat to the rest of Europe.

'Little Belgium' caught the imagination of the Christian population in Britain and most saw it as a 'Christian duty' to serve in the conflict or actively support it. Baptist men flocked to serve in the military, which included a significant

number of ministerial students, and the Baptist women's groups worked hard to supply comforts for the troops and even raise money to provide ambulances. Even when the vast list of the dead was published and the injured, some horribly maimed and disfigured, were seen in British streets, support for the war did not generally diminish.

At the end of the war there was exhaustion but little dissolution was expressed, even by those who had been bereaved. Most at that time would have expressed the view that the war needed to be fought and the human cost, though staggeringly great, was the price of stopping tyrannical Prussian militarism. The language sometimes used, even by Baptists (especially on the memorials) gave the impression that by dying in such a cause would somehow get one into heaven.

It is important, during this centenary, that we take the time to understand how Baptists saw the war then and not see everything solely through a disillusionment that began to be

significantly expressed in the 1930s, becoming the generally held popular narrative by the 1960s. It is important that the war is not celebrated, just recognised.

It must also be acknowledged that the war was not just a European and 'white' affair. I have researched, for example, the West India Battalions and the significance of nonconformist Christians in them. It was an eye-opener for me to discover the neglect they experienced by the British authorities at the time. This episode is no less a part of the story of the Great War and needs to be told. I believe it is important that we do not sanitise the war - after all soldiers

and sailors take human life as well as lay down their own for their friends. I would also be concerned that we do not use it as an opportunity to propagate unhealthy nationalism or other political agendas, no matter how good.

The historical reality is that most Baptists, individually and denominationally, supported the war

When preparing for a service, my personal approach would be to take an individual or group of local Baptists who lived through the experience, and let them as much as possible tell the story for themselves. I know that some churches have letters from the 'Front' or from those standing up for their pacifist beliefs in their files, and these would make interesting reading to say the least. The local and personal story is always the most interesting and will give the centenary service integrity.



Neil Allison [pictured left] was minister of Glenrothes Baptist Church (1993-1998) and has been an army chaplain since 1998, serving operationally in Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia, Sierra Leone, Cyprus with the United Nations and Afghanistan. He has been the official historian for the United Navy, Army and Air Force Board since 2006.

'The uncomfortable modern parallels to the circumstances which led to World War 1 means Christians should redouble peacemaking and hospitality efforts', writes Bob Gardiner.

In our commemoration of the outbreak of the appalling tragedy that was World War 1, let us ponder the dangers posed to our world by nationalism, terror and massively armed brinkmanship diplomacy.

In 1914 a major European War had not been expected. It was not discussed seriously by the British cabinet until three days before war was declared. Commentators wrote that it came like a 'Peal of thunder out of a cloudless sky'. When Russia mobilised, the people had no idea who the enemy was; first believing it to be China, then England.

So why did it happen when it did? My detailed analysis of these issues can be found in the Spring 2014 edition of the *Baptist Peace Fellowship Newsletter*.

But briefly:
The old order in Europe was crumbling in the face of a tidal wave of nationalism that was asserting itself from Greece to Southern Ireland. Germany, a vibrant, newly united nation, which bore no resemblance to the chaotic jumble of small states of the past, was anxious not to be seen to fail its ailing ally Austria-Hungary.

Britain, seeing its position at the top of every economic league table seriously challenged by the USA, and fearing the demand for home rule in Ireland showed the potential fragility of its far-flung empire, could not afford to allow Germany to become an even stronger force in Europe.

Serb terrorists, encouraged by Russia, openly challenged the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. France, encouraged by its alliance with Britain and Russia, thought a new war with Germany might enable it to regain the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, lost in 1870. The nations' leaders were 'Sleepwalkers, watchful but unseeing, haunted by dreams yet blind to the horror they were about to bring into

As Christians we are called to set new agendas of reconciliation, generous hospitality and forgiveness, which can alone break down the forces of suspicion, rivalry, blame and distrust which so threaten our world.

the world' (Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers, How Europe Went to War in 1914*, 2012). And all the military leaders underestimated the way in which new technology would result in such devastating loss of life, foolishly ignoring the data of the American Civil War 50 years earlier, and the rapid advances made since then.

As pointed out in a recent leader in the *Economist*, the parallels with the world today are uncanny. *'The United States is Britain, the superpower on the wane, unable to guarantee global security. Its main trading partner, China, plays the part of Germany, a new economic power bristling with nationalist indignation and building up its armed forces rapidly. Modern Japan is France, an ally of the retreating hegemony and a declining regional power. The parallels are not exact but they are close enough for the world to be on its guard.*

'But the most troubling similarity between 1914 and now is complacency. Businesspeople today are like businesspeople then: too busy making money to notice the serpents flickering at the bottom of their trading screens. Politicians are playing with nationalism just as they did 100 years ago ... the European Union, which came together in reaction to the bloodshed of the 20th century, is looking more fractious and

ruined by incipient nationalism than at any point since its formation.'

Given those dangers Christians must be vigilant: militarism, nationalism and terrorism are all contrary to the demands of the gospel. The advent message calling on us to wake up remains relevant. The lazy-minded xenophobia which is infecting our current politics must not be allowed to set our agendas. Like all irrational fears it must be driven out by love.

As Christians we are called to set new agendas of reconciliation, generous hospitality and forgiveness, which can alone break down the forces of suspicion, rivalry, blame and distrust which so threaten our world. In 1914, Christians in Europe were engaged in talks to promote peace just as war broke out. They were too late. The Fellowship of Reconciliation was only formed when war was already raging. Let the memory of the tragedy of the First World War inspire us to pray and work actively for peace both within our own communities, our own nation and internationally.

Bob Gardiner [below] is chair of the Baptist Peace Fellowship. He was minister of Harrow Baptist Church from 1998-2013.



Photo: © Havana1234 | Dreamstime.com
Bayerwald Trenches World War One Flanders Belgium Photo



Prayer

Use these prayers at services to remember the First World War

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light
where there is sadness, joy.

O, divine master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen

© Alan Paton, taken from *Instrument of thy Peace*,
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Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we remember with thanksgiving those who made the
supreme sacrifice for us in time of war.
We pray that the offering of their lives may not have
been in vain.
By your grace enable us this day to dedicate ourselves
anew to the cause of justice, freedom and peace
and give us the wisdom and strength to build a better
world,
for the honour and glory of your name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen

Heavenly Father,
whose heart is selfless love, take pity on our divided
world;
and grant that we may follow in the steps of your Son in
giving ourselves
to the service of others and reaching out to the
marginalised and despised,
that peace and justice may triumph and your kingdom
come on earth.
In Christ's name we pray,
Amen

Taken from *Hear My Cry*: an illustrated collection of
Psalms, poetry, prayers and hymns for individual and
community reflection from Bible Society.
www.biblesociety.org.uk/products/9780564049233

Also see www.biblesociety.org.uk/ww1 for more stories,
complete order of service and downloadable videos



For what shall we pray?

What shall we pray for those who died
those on whose death our lives relied?
Silenced by war but not denied,
God give them peace.

What shall we pray for those who mourn
friendships and love, their fruit unborn?
Though years have passed, hearts still are torn;
God give them peace.

What shall we pray for those who live
tied to the past they can't forgive.
haunted by terrors they relive?
God give them peace.

What shall we pray for those who know
nothing of war, and cannot show
grief or regret for friend or foe?
God give them peace.

What shall we pray for those who fear
war, in some guise, may reappear
looking attractive and sincere?
God give them peace.

God give us peace and, more than this,
show us the path where justice is;
and let us never be remiss
working for peace

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Taken from Remembrance Sunday Worship
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How do i join in?

Pioneering is not just the domain of a few working on the fringe of church, it's something Baptists have always done, and continue to do, writes *Graham Doel*. Here are two very different examples of Baptist Christians in pioneering situations

Community collaboration in West Sussex

Baptists have always had a pioneering spirit. The call of the Kingdom of God has invigorated and enthused us down the ages. It has taken us to some unlikely places – and still does. When you enter the leafy roads meandering through the South Downs towards Upper Beeding, your imagination conjures up drinking Pimms on the lawn while watching cricket. You wouldn't expect the unassuming Baptist Chapel, hidden on a one-way street, to be a hotbed of Baptist pioneering. The members don't think about it that way either. They are simply living out their calling as Christians in their community, but they join the generations of Baptists getting on with living out the Kingdom of God in their setting.

Upper Beeding Baptist Church has a long history of sharing good news and taking evangelism seriously, and recently it has begun to focus on being a church in the community: not simply serving the community, but joining the community at the heart of its life.

As a tangible expression of this change, the church has started to use its building as a community café. When a church does this it is often seen in two ways: as an act of service to the community, meeting a need where one exists, and as a stepping stone for people towards church services. In Upper Beeding the café is seen as a place to collaborate with the community, creating café and community together so that, in some way, the Kingdom of God may be seen.

This aspect of pioneering is not complex or difficult, but it does involve a change of mind-set. Little things like involving people from beyond the church in setting up chairs and tables help. By allowing that, you are not doing the café for them but being with them in the creation of community space.

Christ calls all of us to a new place, those who go to church and call themselves Christians, and those who don't.

“What we are trying to be is a federation of missionary Christians thinking about how we act as missionaries in every part of our lives,” says minister **Peter Butchers** as he explains

the church's values. “This is quite different from being a church that has a mission to invite people along to this event or that. Christ calls all of us to a new place, those who go to church and call themselves Christians, and those who don't”.

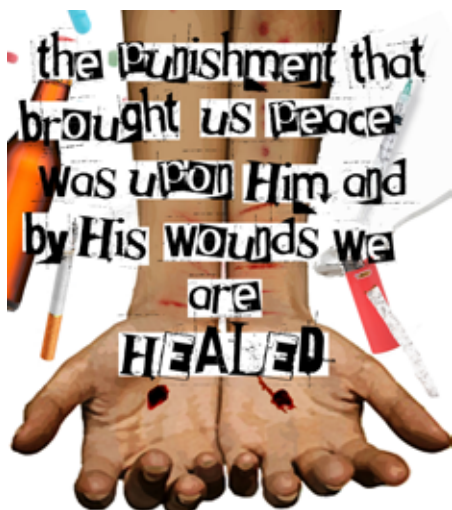
In the zone in Manchester

When you walk with **Gary Serra di Migni** through the streets of Manchester you can't help feeling that, in comparison to Upper Beeding, you are in a different world. The tightly packed houses are round every corner you turn. This is an area of vibrant multicultural life. The streets buzz with activity and the gentle hum of city life can be heard everywhere.

Facilitated by the church planting agency Urban Expression and the North Western Baptist Association, the team of which Gary is part deliberately took 18 months to listen to the community and to hear where God was already at work. As a result the team – called **Urban Expression, Victoria Park** - has begun to see itself as operating in three distinct zones: 'God at work', 'God in pursuit of justice', and 'God in bereavement'. The team do not receive stipends but see themselves as 'omni-vocational', working in situations where they can see the Kingdom of God at work.

Gary works for Asda. His choice of occupation was deliberate, thinking about what job he could do that would bring him into contact with many different people from a variety of walks of life. As he has stacked shelves alongside people he has made many new friends. He also works as a funeral consultant, conducting services for people who have no connection with churches.

One of their team, **Jayne Irlam**, calls this integrated view of work, faith and church as 'stepping into the slip stream of the Holy Spirit'.



A contemporary image Jayne had designed to help in her work with drug and alcohol users



Asda, Longsight
– where Gary from the Urban Expression Victoria Team chose to work because it brings him into contact with many different people from a variety of walks of life

During that period of looking and listening to the community the team made an unlikely connection between a Christian-run drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre and the local police force. Jayne was working with them as an on-call nurse. As part of her care for patients in custody who showed signs of addiction, she began to share about the availability of Christian rehabilitation services and to help them make an informed choice.

Her actions attracted the attention of the senior officers who invited her to a meeting.

Instead of being reprimanded for sharing about Christian-run services in the workplace, the effects of what Jayne was achieving were examined. As a result the approach that Jayne had been using was written into a policy called 'forensic referral' and trialled throughout the district. It has been measured as such a success that seven other police authorities are now trialling the referral policy. This kingdom-orientated work of transforming lives has been expanded because the team has listened to God, found out where he is working and followed him there.

So what is pioneering?

Pioneering work can be achieved whatever the circumstances Christians find themselves in. To be a pioneer is not necessarily about an Abrahamic-like call to leave everything and go to somewhere new. It can be about looking at the community you find

yourself in and asking the question 'Where is God already at work and how is he calling me to join in?'

That question has been asked by Christians down the ages. It is a question that is planted in the hearts of Christians by the Holy Spirit and it motivates them to action. When you talk to a theologian about this, they will call it part of the 'Missio Dei', which literally means the 'mission of God', or

the 'sending of God'. It is tempting to see pioneering mission as an activity for the Church, but the concept of Missio Dei sees mission as an attribute and an activity of God. God calls his Church to join in with the things he is doing, in the places he is doing them. There is an echo of Luke 10 where Jesus sends out the 72. He sends them out into communities encouraging them to find the person who will accept them, feed them, and receive their kingdom work.

These two stories demonstrate this principle in action. For the church in Upper Beeding it has meant the creation of a new space for enabling relationship and collaborating in community. In the North West it has involved responding to a need. Both stories reveal how God is using his people where they are.

And both these stories beg a question: "What is God doing near you, and how can you join in?"

Graham Doel is the UK Field Leader at BMS World Mission



We'd love to hear about what God is doing near you, and how you are joining in. Join the conversation at: www.baptist.org.uk/pioneering



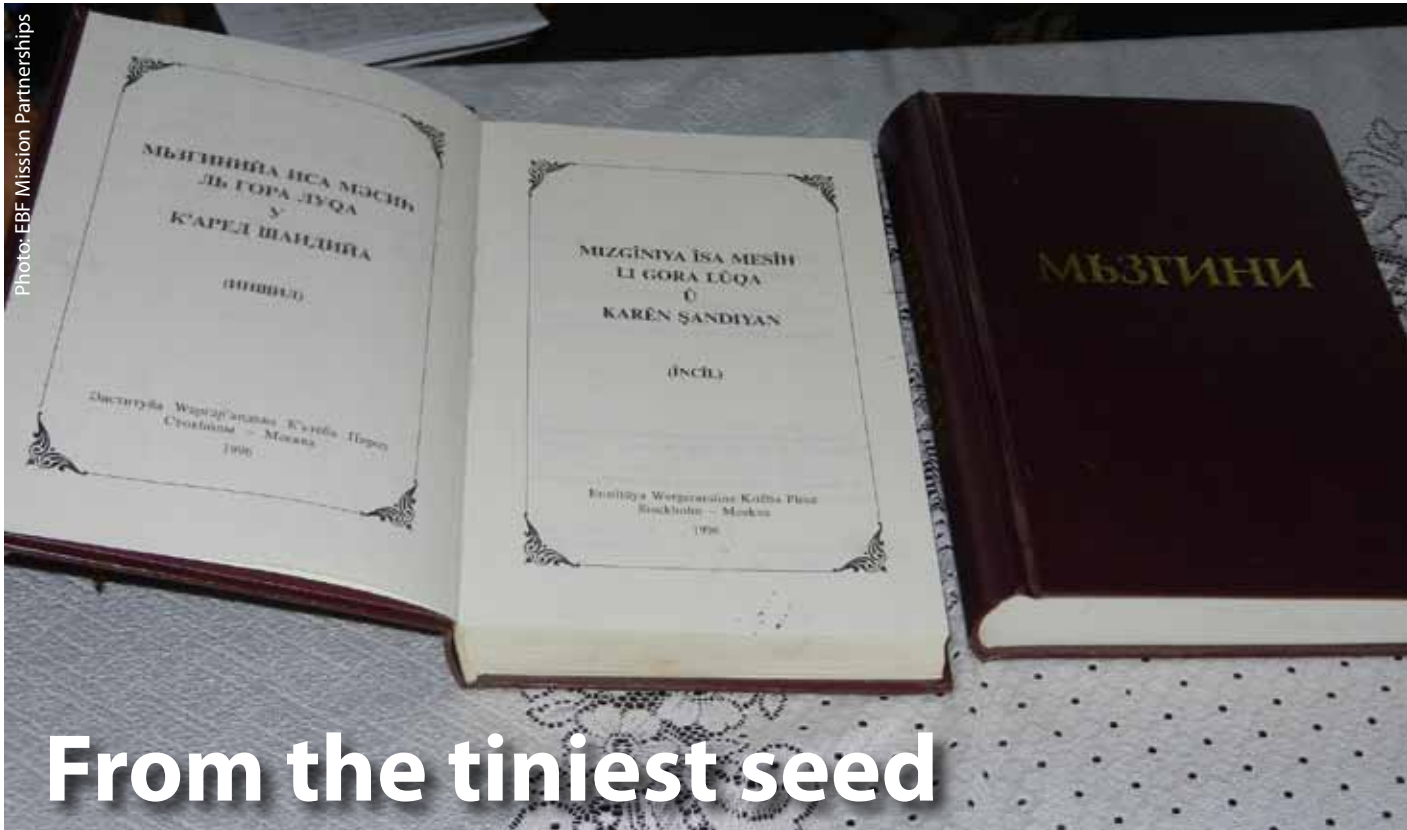


Photo: EBF Mission Partnerships

From the tiniest seed

Over the last decade thousands have come to Christ as a result of European Baptist Federation-supported church planting. Coordinator *Daniel Trusiewicz* explains more

The European Baptist Federation (EBF), with the help of its mission partners, facilitates evangelism and the planting of new Baptist churches right across our region. We have helped start about 200 new congregations and at least 10,000 people have become new believers.

There are many exciting stories – here are two.

'Grace' Baptist Church in Kiev and her church plants

Pastor Vladimir Omelchuk launched his church planting work in May 2003 in Kiev.



The Omelchuk Family

Photo: EBF Mission Partnerships



Grace Baptist Church, Kiev

Photo: EBF Mission Partnerships

There were just a handful of people at the beginning; their goal simply to start a new congregation. The work was based on home groups and targeted at youth and young couples. They developed numerous and effective programmes, ranging from contemporary church services to social projects, working with young drug addicts and teaching prevention in schools. This congregation now draws more than 300 regular attendees every Sunday.

They've even planted a couple of daughter congregations. Church planter Ihor, studying theology in Odessa, read a book about the

cell church which inspired him for mission work. He realised his dream by moving to Kiev, and soon, in cooperation with Vladimir, established a new church called 'Resurrection'.

Another indigenous leader, Andriy, moved to Kiev about four years ago at Vladimir's invitation and began mission work. The result is a new congregation called the 'Spirit of Life', which holds Christian meetings for families, sport activities and social work. The congregation meets in a district of Kiev where more than half a million people live. These people are still open for the gospel and the mission work is advancing.

New congregations in Armenia

The story from Armenia is no less exciting! In 1990, after regaining long-desired independence from the collapsing Soviet Union there were only four Baptist churches with a total membership 350.

Fast forward to 2013 and that figure jumps to 6,500 members in nearly 100 churches and church plants. The Armenian Baptists have been exceptionally active in the mission work! The EBF, together with its mission partners, is currently supporting three church plants in the Baptist Union of Armenia.

Some have reached out to the Kurdish minority in their country. Siaband is a graduate of the Baptist college in Yerevan and now leads a home group which meets in a large living room in his house. This Kurdish-speaking group formed a couple of years ago as part of **Ararat Baptist Church** (a town bordering with Avshar), where a sizeable Armenian-speaking congregation is located.



Kurdish church in Armenia

Photo: EBF Mission Partnerships

The Kurds distinguish layers of their own society. The highest and most revered are religious leaders, and the lay people are divided in two main clusters. People are born into particular clusters from one generation to another and must not mix with other groups. Gospel outreach is possible only through personal visits by Christian Kurds and the Bible is available in their language.

Siaband – who is Kurdish himself – says about 1,000 Kurds live in Avshar and he believes that he can develop a network for the Kurdish ministry in Armenia.

Through the EBF Mission Partnerships God has been at work, changing lives and transforming communities!

You can support EBF Mission Partnerships by praying, and encouraging your local church to adopt one of the indigenous church planters. As little as 3,500 Euros a year can provide financial support to one church planting family.

Find out more at www.ebf.org and write to the coordinator: mp@ebf.org

Daniel Trusiewicz is the EBF Mission Partnerships Coordinator



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University challenge

Many young people see University as a natural life stage. But what impact does this have on Christian faith and how should churches respond? Paul Hobson explores further

University is a pivotal period in life. For many it's their first experience of living away from the comforts of home, with all the adjustments and changing boundaries that entails. It's a time of opportunity when horizons are broadened, social circles expanded and the world seen with fresh eyes. Many thrive; others don't. Whatever their experience – emotionally or academically – students' lives are likely to be shaped in a fundamental way by their tertiary education.

Many young Christians drift from church involvement and their faith during this time. *Fusion*, an organisation which serves churches, develops student workers and links students to local churches, reckons 73 per cent of Christians don't commit to church while at university. It doesn't mean that all lose their faith entirely – some will re-engage, but others won't. It's a reality linked to the absence of 18-35 year olds in our churches, a group dubbed the 'Missing Generation'. Dig deeper and the overall figures are stark: according to *Fusion*, less than one per cent of students can be accounted for in churches or other Christian groups on campus.

Temptations

For Peter Cousins, minister at **Penrallt Baptist Church** and chaplain at Bangor University, the statistics are both understandable and 'alarming'. He explains that competing demands allied to new freedoms mean some Christian students simply fall away.

"They restructure their life at university," he says. "They have to. They don't have a place and have to find it. At home, their priorities are set by family and church.

"But at university it's a clean slate, they are starting again. They get into new clubs – and so they should! – and make new friends. It's a time of excitement.

"And if there are no Christians in their group, it can be easy to just drift away. They haven't got time to do everything, ... and that's fine, provided you are grounded in your faith.

"But I know there is a huge pool of students out there without any Christian input – and it really does concern me."

Peter says that student unions and churches which focus on students do a wonderful job of developing their faith. One of the biggest issues, as he sees it, is 'hooking' the Christian students during those whirlwind first weeks.

"A lot of big churches are doing great things with students, such as Cardiff and Sheffield.

"Here at Bangor we feed them – give students food and they will come! It's great and we love that. It's great to give them opportunities, to see students leading worship when they haven't before, preach, lead youth work, go to a nursing home. Certainly our students leave here with lots of Christian leadership potential.

"But it only works if they are in there. They come to university and there are other things going on. They very quickly get caught up in Freshers' week... it's a well-known problem.

"You can sit them down, tell them they must get involved with a church or CU or both, and they say "great"... but then don't do it."

How can a church help?

1 Preparation

Michael Shaw is minister of *Devonport Community Baptist Church* in Plymouth. He has both worked with Fusion and engaged his church with student ministry, and says preparation is key. “We need youth workers to be thinking now – how am I going to prepare our A-level students for next year? There should be a long preparation, not just at the end.

“Young people are tender shoots, they are still in the early formation stage. They are going to grow and develop.

“For example, many might have been brought up in Christian homes; then suddenly they have someone in their living room smoking a spliff and watching porn. Suddenly their world view is being changed. How will they react?”

The likes of Fusion and *UCCF* offer excellent resources to help prepare for some of the challenges ahead.

Part of the preparation may be investigating an area’s churches and Christian Unions. “Finding a church they are comfortable in is a very common theme,” says Anna Ratcliff, Baptist chaplain at *Nottingham Trent University*.

“It’s very hard to find a church – but if they do, that’s so so important.” She adds that researching local cultural groups, if the student is not UK-based, will also help them settle at university.

Researching and getting in touch with university chaplains is another sensible thing to do, adds Anna. Though “the last thing a student wants is for the chaplain to come knocking on their door,” she notes, “Christian students will often make contact if needed”. Peter also explains that some students rekindle a faith interest as university life progresses and course demands increase. Knowing who the chaplain is will make that contact easier.

Michael also admires the way some churches see their students as though they are going onto the mission field (which given the aforementioned figures, they are). “The New Frontiers churches are very good at sending students, commissioning them. I’d like to see more Baptist churches do the same.”

2 The university cycle – and keeping contact

“One of the best ways sending churches can support their students is by keeping in touch, and being aware of the different seasons of university life”, says Anna.

She suggests that a church allocates one person to keep contact with the student, and respond appropriately to the university cycle. “At the start of an academic year”, she explains, “there is a freshness, an excitement of leaving home for the first time, money in their pockets. Then comes a settling in period when reality strikes; a bit of loneliness and homesickness creeps in. April and May bring the exam season, and extra stresses.

“So maybe a letter or email to begin with;” Anna continues, “sending a food parcel or voucher during that settling-in period - students love food!; during exam time letting them know that you are thinking about them, praying for them; as they’re leaving for summer send a card saying well done for getting through the year. Be prepared for the loneliness. Loneliness and homesickness are normal. The reality is that most students experience it. It will happen.”

Keeping contact with students and noticing when they return were points highlighted by Michael, as it both values them and gives them potentially a vital reference point. When he was at university 20 years ago, his church in Esher wrote letters to him. With social media, Skype, texts and email, clearly connectivity is much easier now: the point is to actually do it.

“Make a fuss, include them,” he says. “If you can take them out for lunch, have a barbecue when they return, gather with other the students, that’s all good.

“Also when students come back they will have learnt new skills – utilise them in the church.

“It’s all about recognising this is a journey they are on, making them feel valued.”

Inevitably, some students’ faith will drift amid all university has to offer. But there is much a church can do to ready them for the journey ahead and encourage them while they’re there. And as Michael notes, it’s not simply about preparing for a three or four year period of studies, but a life of discipleship. “If you are a follower of Christ, how does that impact your life?” Good preparation and thoughtful, sensitive support are wonderful values to model.



The Barna Research Group has explored the lives of young people who drop out of church in the US. According to them it is ‘a myth’ to say university experiences are a key factor that cause people to drop out, even if those experiences are ‘adversarial’ to faith. More telling is how young Christians have been prepared for life beyond youth group. Only a small minority of young Christians has been taught to think about matters of faith, calling, and culture, it says. Most lack adult mentors or meaningful friendships with older Christians ‘who can guide them through the inevitable questions that arise during the course of their studies’.



Photo: Ammentorp | Dreamstime.com



Six ways churches can support their students

- 1 Help prepare them for some of the challenges they will face at university. Talk them through what they might face, get them to think about how they will respond. Useful material can be found at Fusion or UCCF.
- 2 Have one person designated to contact them regularly throughout the year. Remember birthdays, send food parcels or vouchers for restaurants; make a fuss when they return; be interested in all areas of their life.
- 3 Help them research the churches in the area. Discover if there are Fusion Student Linkup churches there. Recognise that one size doesn't fit all, and encourage them to find a church that will best suit them
- 4 With their permission, contact a university chaplain on their behalf, and ask the chaplain to drop them an email.
- 5 Big up the Christian Union. Having other Christians in their peer group is very beneficial. Visit www.uccf.org.uk to find out more.
- 6 When they leave for university, commission your students as you would a mission worker. Remember them in your prayers as you do with the mission workers you support. Check out the Student Linkup Box, school leaver's gift just released by Fusion.



A student's experience

Amy Burrows, 20, attends **Penrallt Baptist Church** in Bangor. In September she enters the third year of a Media and Communications degree at Aberystwyth University.

"My home church has been wonderful – very encouraging in prayer, and very welcoming. When I come back, it doesn't go amiss. A lot of the congregation shows an interest.

"There was lots of prayer in my exams. The youth worker sent me a Bible verse, which I found really helpful. They've also supported me in my decisions. It's really good to know I'm still part of the church, even when I'm not physically there, and has definitely helped me settle at university."



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A student's experience

"As a student who didn't take the traditional route of going away to university, I've found the support I receive from my church is completely different.

"Here a typical student has an unrelated church member assigned to them, someone with whom they can talk through situations and request prayer. When they return home from university, people take the time to enquire about the course, the minister of the church welcomes them back, the student provides an update and they are prayed for.

"This is great – but I don't receive any of that. I took the decision to go straight into paid employment and study in my own time. There are no church mentors. People are quite dismissive about the route that I have taken. In my case the minister even

trivialised what I was doing by telling me I wasn't 'a proper student'.

"For me it was incredibly hurtful. When you study a course through an alternative route you have to be self-motivated and disciplined to achieve the results you want, especially when working full time. Yet there has been a lack of appreciation, understanding and support for this. I feel unable to give the church an update on how the course is progressing - and it's made me question whether I should find a church where I'm more valued."

Anonymous, student in a Baptist church

Apprenticeships, full-time work, correspondence courses, NVQs ... there are many routes for school leavers besides a traditional university route. If we are going to see our young people flourish we need to think about how best to support them.

Further reading

Fusion - www.fusion.uk.com
Including its White Paper on Discipleship and Gen Y, which looks at some key characteristics of Generation Y and how that might shape our discipleship and evangelism
www.fusion.uk.com/whitepapers

UCCF: The Christian Unions
www.uccf.org.uk

Barna Research Group
www.barna.org
Including its article *Five Myths About Young Adult Church Dropouts*
bit.ly/1oHh9dO

Your feedback

What's your experience of being a Christian student? What does your church offer for students?

Share your thoughts at:

www.baptist.org.uk/university



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200 years - a chance to get involved

The rich 200-year association between Jamaican and British Baptists will be marked by a series of events this year

How it all began

The Revd John Rowe was the first British missionary invited to Jamaica to support the growth their churches were experiencing. Rowe, from South Penderton, and his wife were met in Montego Bay by the Hon Samuel Vaughan, a magistrate of the town on 23 February, 1814.

The relationship between Jamaican and British Baptists has continued from that day, forged during years of slavery, colonisation and the arrival of the *Windrush* from the Caribbean to the UK. The ties were deepened with the Apology in 2007, when our Baptist Union, through its Council, passed a resolution recognising our share in and benefit from our nation's participation in the transatlantic slave trade. The Apology was taken to Jamaica the following year via a British Baptist delegation.

Celebrations and a programme of theological reflections are being co-ordinated by the Jamaica Baptist Union, Baptist Union of Great Britain and BMS World Mission. They were launched at the Baptist Assembly in May 2014, with the first event taking place later that month at Spurgeon's College.



A specially compiled souvenir booklet has been published to mark the bicentenary and will be available to buy from each of the bicentenary events.

For full details about each event, and booking details, see www.200years.net

Bicentenary celebrations

15 Oct - *The third annual Sam*

Sharpe Lecture - 'Active resistance - Participating in God's Purpose' (Bristol)
Given by Delroy A Reid-Salmon - Research Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture, Regent's Park College, and Pastor of Grace Baptist Chapel, New York

18 Oct - '*Legacy: Learning from the Past, Embracing the Future*'

(Birmingham)
Key Caribbean activists will meet and share ideas on matters of theology, education, integration and leadership with young people

19 Oct - *Bicentenary Celebration*

services at Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church (Birmingham)
Three services through the day to celebrate the bicentenary. Early service to be broadcast by Radio 4.

20 Oct - *Welcome and Bicentenary Celebration*

(Sheffield)

21 Oct - *Leaders' Discussion: What makes for a healthy and inclusive church?*

(Sheffield)

21 Oct - *Black and Ethnic Minority Women in Leadership - The Way Ahead*

(Huddersfield)

21 Oct - *Bicentenary Celebration Service*

(Huddersfield)

23 Oct - *Black Theology Symposium* -

'Faith across the Atlantic: remapping the theological discourse' (Oxford)
Keynote speaker David Muir

25 Oct - *Jamaican and British Baptists Together - Let's Celebrate*

(London)
An evening with worship and entertainment including a Jamaican and British buffet

Find out more and book your place at www.200years.net

"Our friendship has withstood the test of time and represents a powerful testimonial of mutuality, collaboration, respect and continuity. There is no doubt in our mind that God has been and will continue to be with us as friends and partners and we can justly invite others to study and embrace our story as a template worthy of emulation."

Karl Johnson, General Secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union



"Two hundred years ago Jamaican Baptists sought support from British Baptists. Some 200 years later we observe the enormous contribution that Jamaicans have made to British Baptist life from both beyond the pond and in the UK. Their contribution must be acknowledged, enshrined in our history books - written, spoken, celebrated and reflected upon by present and future generations."

Wale Hudson-Roberts, the Baptist Union of Great Britain Racial Justice Co-ordinator





Photo: Ian Britton

A child-shaped Church?

... is not what I'm looking for, even though I'm a children's mission worker, writes *Naomi Swift*. But I am interested in giving children a voice... and making sure that I listen, for they can shape us as much as we shape them

As a Children's Mission Worker you'd think that my time was spent predominantly among children; championing them and their importance in shaping church life. In fact a lot of my time is spent working with adults and meeting people of all ages. The time I spend ministering among adults is not in any way less valid, it is a privilege, for it is all about recognising the importance of the parents and the wider church in bringing up a child. Everyone is vital!

We are sometimes guilty of compartmentalising our lives into separate boxes... how many of us do the same when it comes to the church and the different generations therein? In reality that is not the way a family works.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.
(1 Corinthians 12:27)

When working among children, a lot of our ministry and 'discussion time' focuses on them and their lives outside of 'church'. Often I can plan these times, yet have no idea how God will move within them, which is what makes them so exciting. It is a time for me to step back and hear from the children. Let them talk about what their life is like, who they talk to, how they speak to Jesus. They are the experts on what they are living through.

imagine the pressure of always seeing the perfect and trying to attain that yourself



Photo: Ian Britton

One way **Arise Ministries**, working alongside **Scripture Union**, is recognising that children's ministry doesn't just end after the Sunday Service is through **Limitless** - an initiative focusing specifically on mobilising children to share their faith. It included a weekend away where we gathered 15 children from five churches with one leader for each group. Discussing topics together really enriched me. The adults spoke about the challenges of evangelism in their lives as did the children, and we got to work through it together. The challenges we face in sharing God's love are similar, and we can learn from each other. A lot of the time we as adults feel we need to have things sorted to show our children, but imagine the pressure of always seeing the perfect and trying to attain that yourself?

Of course anyone who works with children, or is a parent, hopefully realises that this is a two-way thing. Children affect our lives and can shape us. I would not be the same person were it not for the opportunities I have had in children's ministry and every event I learn more. At the Baptist Assembly this year, for instance, I was alongside a child listening to God. She



Photo: Ian Britton



Photo: Ian Britton

told me how God said to her to be ready, because you never know where you are going to end up. Amazing! But it's not just me. A parent commenting on an article in *The Baptist Times* recently said,

'He (5 year old son) constantly amazes us with the things he says about God.'

Children have an immense capacity to shape our own walks with God, if we allow them and give them their voice.

So, a child-shaped church? I don't believe that is what God is looking for. A church shaped by all the generations within, altogether ... now that sounds interesting, exciting and an adventure. Are we up for the ride?

Some points to consider:

- » Next time you are working among the children at your church, ask them about what they do during the week.
- » At the next team meeting discuss how you can involve and support the children and families in your church.
- » Create a group and talk with church leaders about how children can help shape your church. Why not get some of the children involved in the group too?

Naomi Swift is a Children's Mission Worker with Arise Ministries.



Working on a local, regional and national level, Arise Ministries seeks to help the Church reach the children with the gospel, so that they have an opportunity to discover Jesus and become his followers.

www.ariseministries.org.uk



Photo: Ian Britton

Children have an immense capacity to shape our own walks with God, if we allow them and give them their voice.



Photo: Ian Britton



Photo: Ian Britton

**Racial Justice Sunday****14 September**www.ctbi.org.uk/CBC/644**Peacemaking Sunday****21 September**www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/issues/peacemaking/peacemaking-sunday/**The Big Welcome****21 September**www.baptist.org.uk/bigwelcome**Love Beyond the Musical, Wembley**

Powerful and uplifting musical retelling the entire story of the Bible

1 and 2 Octoberwww.lovebeyondmusical.com**Third Annual Sam Sharpe Lecture:**

Active resistance - Participating in God's Purpose

15 October - The House of Praise, Bristol

Speaker: Dr Delroy Reid-Salmon

Also marks the beginning of the Jamaican and British Baptist Bicentenary Celebrations

www.200years.net**Anti-slavery day****18 October**www.antislaveryday.com**Faith and Thought: Open Symposium on Homosexuality**

Scientific, Biblical, Social and Pastoral aspects

18 October - Bloomsbury Central Baptist Churchwww.faithandthought.org.uk**Catalyst Live**

Two days of top speakers, organised by BMS World Mission, headlined by Miroslav Volf from Yale University.

23 October - Sheffield**24 October - Reading**www.bmscatalystlive.com**Adoption Sunday****2 November**www.homeforgood.org.uk/adoptionsunday2014**Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer****3 November**www.bwawd.org/day-of-prayer**Remembrance Sunday****9 November**www.baptist-peace.org.uk**Inter Faith Week****16-22 November**www.interfaithweek.org**Prisons Week****16 -22 November**www.prisonweek.org**Advent Sunday****30 November****World Aids Day****1 December****Human Rights Day****10 December**www.un.org/events/humanrights

baptist assembly
Peterborough
16 May, 2015

Registration opens in October at
www.baptistassembly.org.uk

Photo: shutterstock.com

Resources

The Lydia QuestionCollection of Bible studies and personal stories from Baptists exploring women in leadership
www.baptist.org.uk/lydia**Faith in Foodbanks**Exploring the rise in foodbanks, including Bible studies, worship material, prayers and reflections
www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/faithinfoodbanks-resources**The Windrush Legacy**DVD with study guide featuring the voices of the *Windrush* generation, and modern immigrants. Copies can be ordered from the London Baptist Association on 020 7692 5592 or cynthia.arthur@londonbaptist.org.uk**BMS World Mission Share the Light Harvest resources**www.bmsworldmission.org/harvest**Peacemaking Sunday**Worship resources on the theme: 'The politics of praying for peace'. Written by Baptist minister Simon Woodman
www.baptist.org.uk/peacemaking**Let's Talk About Worship**Resource supporting Chris Ellis' year as President of our Baptist Union
www.baptist.org.uk/ltawFor **monthly prayers** visit www.baptist.org.uk/prayers



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Photo: Ian Britton



Assumptions we can make

**Are ministers and missionaries the only people with a sense of call?
We asked Baptist minister Ken Benjamin to respond**

The primary answer is no. We all have a sense of call: simply, to be a disciple is to be a called one - a follower of the way. There are many biblical references to calling.

Take 1 Peter 2:21 21: 'To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.'

Also look at Ephesians 4:1-4 - where the word 'called' is repeated. 'As a prisoner for the Lord then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called.'

Most of the biblical references to calling point in this direction - we are called to follow Christ wherever we are.

This is made clear by Paul in Colossians 3:23. As well as families, this is evidently written to slaves. No-one would say that was God's best for them, yet even in those circumstances there is a sense of call. Paul says 'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.'

There are also biblical examples of calling that are not ministry or mission. The story of Esther is one example, as is Joseph, who was called to serve as ruler under the King in Egypt.

How do we know where we are called?

In his book *The Call*, the Christian writer Os Guinness goes into more detail, talking about a primary and secondary calling.

Our primary calling is to love the Lord with all our heart. The secondary calling is more specific to our own context.

Generally someone's calling is a mix of their gifts, passions and style. I know I'm not called to be a ballet dancer - I don't have that gift, but I know someone who does. That is their calling. Eric Liddell famously said: "I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel his pleasure." He saw running as a way of glorifying God.

When thinking of someone's calling, I find the language of frontline, rather than workplace more helpful. It better describes where in your week you are most in contact with those who are not yet Christian.

The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) has a number of resources to help engage with this subject, such as *Life on the Frontline*.

LICC director Mark Greene has written much about the sacred-secular divide, the mistaken idea that some segments of our life are really important to God - prayer, church services - but others aren't, such as work, school, university.

It all matters, and it's the same here. Clearly people are sometimes called into full-time ministry in the church or a mission context, but to think only of ministry and mission has the danger of an implied hierarchy which I would want to reject.

There is a spiritual calling in any job or role. We are called to serve wherever we are.

Ken Benjamin is the senior minister of **Chichester Baptist Church** and an associate speaker for the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity.



This is the first in a new series where we tackle a commonly-held belief or acceptance that, when tested, might lead to a different conclusion. If you have question you'd like us to explore contact media@baptist.org.uk



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An interview with

Ian Britton

Church Secretary at Beacon
Lough Baptist Church, Gateshead,
photographer and filmmaker



Photo: Malcolm Burns

How did you become a Christian? Was there a key moment that led you to Christ?

I was privileged to be brought up in a Christian family and am a fourth or even fifth generation Christian.

I had a Brethren upbringing. Two major points stand out: as an 11 year old I went to a Christian camp, and on the Friday night made a commitment to Christ. From then on it was the usual kind of thing – school, Crusaders, more camps. Then at 16 a new family joined the Crusader group, and they went to the Baptist church (Stockton-on-Tees Baptist Tabernacle). I realised all the young Christians in Stockton went there – and from that point onwards I've always been involved in a Baptist church.

How did the experience in the respective traditions shape you?

I was very grateful in the Brethren church that there were always opportunities to voice our thoughts and prayers and read aloud. There was lots of interaction with grown-ups and we developed important life-skills. It saddens me when you see people pushing prams and speaking into their mobiles; or families at restaurants all looking at their smartphones. Where's the opportunity to learn conversation and interaction?

At the Baptist church I was very fortunate that for most of my time I was under the ministry of Neville Atkinson. It was Bible-based teaching from a series, so you really learnt and were challenged. He was very missional, and we were constantly blessed with new people coming into the fellowship. The church was also, I think, forward thinking for the time. We would bus in people from parts of Stockton-on-Tees where there was no public transport on a Sunday morning. It was an American idea - we had teams from America each year, and if Neville saw an idea that was working in the States he would try it here.

Ian Britton also gives generously of his time and talents in his local community by cooking meals for a lunch club and working with the Gateshead Foodbank. His professional photographs can be seen at: www.freefoto.com and worship videos at: www.reelworship.com

You are heavily involved in your church, the Christian community locally, the Northern Baptist Association, and have worked regularly for the Baptist Union - such as at the Assembly and on various films. What underpins all this involvement?

The most important thing is the spiritual side in my life. I work to pay the bills and hopefully there is just enough flexibility to do everything else. At the moment I'm on a short-term fixed contract with Premier, but I'm happy with that because we are working in partnership with churches to reach people who have become disconnected and draw them back to faith. It's exciting to be invited to project manage. Every project I get involved with I always look to the spiritual side.

Someone said to me that my style of leadership is enabling - everything I do draws people, churches and community groups together to do something. It's about working with people, trying to connect them and enabling a project to happen. I also try to use the particular skillset I've been given.

Working in your field, you've no doubt seen lots of changes!

The shape of the world is constantly changing, and at the moment I'm being asked to produce more video than stills photography.

I have been responsible for communication in the Northern Baptist Association (NBA) for 16 years – back in 1998 email was just beginning to be used and we were making VHS. Now it's downloads and short-form videos.

How do you relax?

I read everyday. I'm very shaped by books – mostly fiction, but some Christian books as well. I'm currently reading *Red Letter Christians* by Tony Campolo. I met him after he did an event in the NBA last year. My Goodreads app tells me I read 74 books last year. I can't go to sleep without reading something.

I'm an active member of Gateshead Camera Club – and as my Facebook friends know, I enjoy eating!

Who would you like to see featured here?

Send your suggestions for the *Baptist People* section of a future edition to media@baptist.org.uk





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