

BAPTISTS

Spring 2017

TOGETHER

Leading Matters



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The magazine for the Baptist Union of Great Britain

 **BAPTISTS
TOGETHER**



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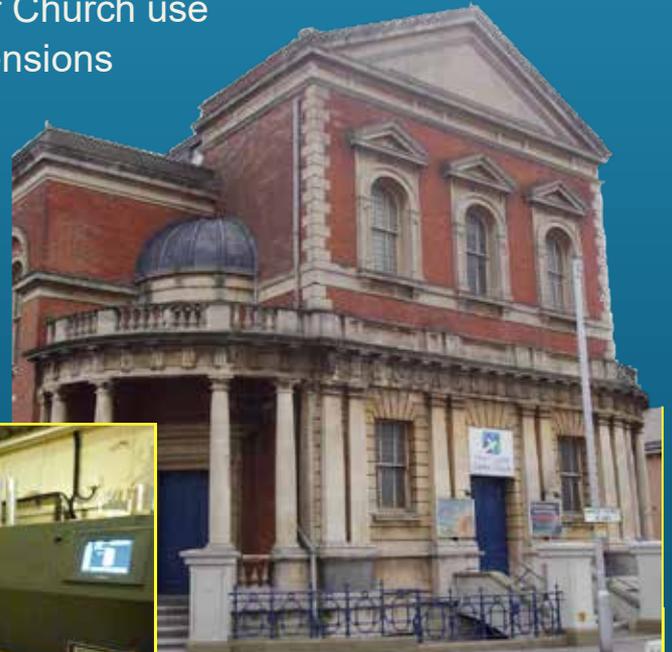


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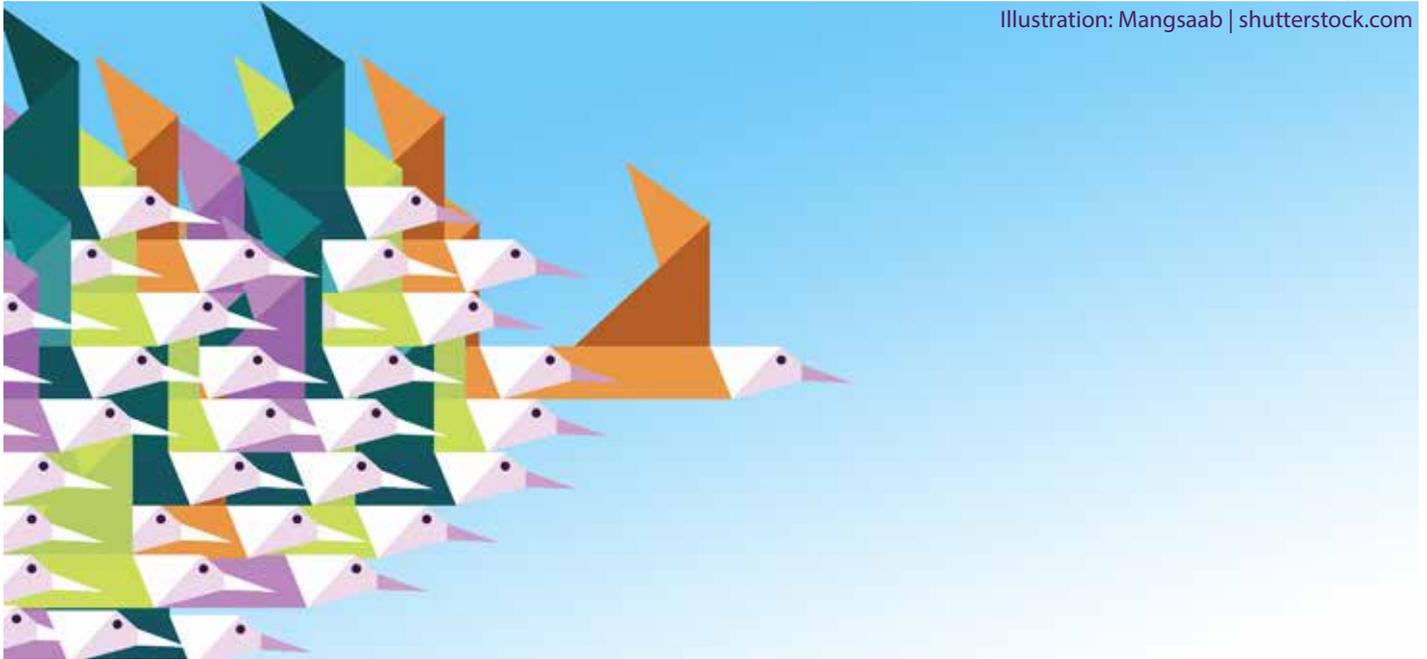


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SPURGEON'S
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There's a lot to learn from geese – particularly by the way they fly in formation. As we worked on this edition, an image of interdependence and collaboration became an appropriate symbol for the cover of our *Baptists Together* magazine.

Ornithologists tell us that each member of the flock has a vital role in ensuring the success of their shared journey from A to B. Leadership is a combination of direction setting, inspiration and mutual support. As each goose flaps its wings it creates an aerodynamic uplift for the birds behind, which has the effect of increasing the formation's

flying range by 71 per cent. When a goose tires of flying up front it drops back into formation and another one flies to the point position.

That sense of teamwork can be seen in other ways. There's encouragement: geese flying in formation 'honk' to encourage those up front to keep up with their speed. And empathy: when a goose gets sick, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to the ground to help and protect it.

Yes, it's an edition about leadership, a subject not without contention among Baptists. But emphasised here is the leadership that's all about

creating the conditions in which other people can thrive; one that provides warmth, challenge, opportunity and inspiration; a key part of the whole, but not a dominant, dictatorial one. It's leadership that's rooted in the example of Jesus, and one to which we aspire as Baptists Together.

We've looked back, looked around and looked ahead, and our prayer is that, whatever your leadership situation, you may be encouraged and challenged by the thinking and stories in the pages that follow.

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Photo credits: Unless otherwise stated, photos are taken from Baptist Union archives



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Baptists Together

is produced three times per year by:

The Baptist Union of Great Britain
Baptist House, PO Box 44, 129 Broadway,
Didcot, OX11 8RT

Tel: 01235 517700

Email: together@baptist.org.uk

Website: www.baptist.org.uk

Registered Charity Number: 1125912

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Printed and distributed by Verité CM Ltd
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BAPTISTS AND LEADERSHIP

The term leadership can split opinion among Baptists, but wholesome leadership is both biblical and vital in enabling others to thrive, says **Nigel Wright**.
So what does it look like?

Polarising views

Recent Baptist attitudes to leadership have been somewhat polarised, varying between those who believe it represents the skill above all others to be desired and those for whom it is a word from the 'Devil's Own Dictionary', along with others like 'success'.

For the former group the emergence of the language of leadership has several possible origins. At the most banal level it stems from the desire to be relevant to modern culture. After all, traditional descriptors such as 'deacons', 'diaconate', 'elders' and even 'minister' might be thought both archaic and opaque to modern hearers. Better to use a generic term that can be quickly understood, and 'leaders' is the most obvious. At a more reflective level are those who find the word 'minister' to be reminiscent of the old clergy/laity distinction and wish to insist that all God's people are ministers, not just one or several.

So we find the church newsletter that proclaims, 'Ministers: the whole congregation. Leader: Joe Bloggs'. This might simply create another unhelpful distinction. At the most significant level comes the insistence that pastoral ministry inevitably involves leadership. It is implied in the biblical image of the shepherd who guides the flock by leading it rather than following it. The shepherd's voice is one that is known and trusted by the sheep, as Jesus indicated, and the sheep will follow (John 10:1-6). This offers a clear biblical basis, and others may be offered.

Leadership is a necessary skill within ministry and everything depends of how it is exercised

Some of the caution of those who are less enthusiastic about the leadership emphasis undoubtedly has its origins in the bruising conflicts experienced from the 1980s with the emergence of Restorationist churches, also known (inaccurately) as 'the house church movement' or (more accurately) as 'the new churches'. However much such churches may now have attenuated their original stance, in the early days they placed a heavy emphasis on submission to elders within the local church and 'apostles' beyond it. The ideology of authority and submission, buttressed by an hierarchical understanding of the Trinity, was foundational to the movement and seen to be of the essence of what it meant to be in the kingdom of God. Elders were Christ's delegated authority and obedience to them was obedience to Christ. A sprinkling of Baptist churches moved over into the Restorationist streams and many others



Photo: Riccardo Annandale | <https://unsplash.com>

were influenced by them, thus creating a near panic in mainstream Baptist circles and an enduring caution about the imagery of 'shepherding'. Much of this suspicion was justified at the time. After all, 'It is for freedom that Christ has set us free' (Galatians 5:1), not for a new variant of ecclesiastical bondage. At the same time the reaction placed certain entirely legitimate concerns, and some biblical texts, almost completely out of bounds (take, for instance, Hebrews 13:17). In Baptist circles you mention some of these things almost at your peril. It is all part of the legacy we have inherited.

Working *in* the church, not *on* it

Shortly I shall set out what I believe to be a wholesome definition of leadership. But first of all I wish to assert that the leadership paradigm should not be our primary framework for understanding either the ministry of pastors and teachers, the 'ordained', or that of deacons and elders duly

appointed. As a paradigm, to stress leadership as the primary model risks deflecting attention from what is truly primary, namely the ministry and interpretation of the Word through preaching, teaching, the pastoral care of souls, the ordering of congregational life and the transmission of the faith to others. I suspect that the leadership paradigm subtly skews the work of ministry away from the pastoral engagement involved in the above towards a more managerial and detached way, working *on* the church rather than *in* the church.

Proper leadership... aims
at the facilitating of a
congregation in fulfilment
of its mission

Proper leadership is carried out in, with and through the activities I have listed and aims at the facilitating of a congregation in fulfilment of its mission. For this reason it is preferable to maintain the primacy of the ministry paradigm rather than the leadership paradigm. Ministers in particular are present in a congregation to stabilise its life through preaching, teaching and pastoral oversight, to galvanise its mission by motivating the people towards love for God, each other and God's world, and to maximise its potential as the people are enabled to share in the achievement of the congregation's primary purposes.

So, Yes to relativising the category of leadership and letting it take a lesser place. But this by no means implies that leadership is not part of what ministers, elders and deacons are called to do. This all depends of course on the nature and the style of the leadership we exercise. 'Servant' leadership,

'collaborative' leadership, 'indirect' leadership are all helpful clarifications but they all remain what it says on the tin, they are forms of leadership. Leadership is a necessary skill within ministry and everything depends of how it is exercised. Groups of human beings need forms of leadership to enable them to function healthily. Ministers who refuse to lead because they regard ministry and leadership as mutually exclusive are surely mistaken.

Leadership – a definition

Here is my preferred definition: *Leadership is about creating the conditions in which other people can thrive.* It is not about exercising command, gaining a following, boosting one's ego, compelling people to conform, using a congregation to achieve one's own ends or building a power base. It is about doing what is necessary to enable a godly, Christian community to thrive in the love of God and mutual fellowship. Of course, there are skills in the human community at large, and written about in a multitude of books, that might well inform Christian ministers in the exercise of their calling. And, of course, creating the conditions in which others can thrive might well require a wide range of styles to be adopted, not excluding at times an element of assertiveness when the well-being of the congregation is threatened.

Leadership is about creating the conditions in which other people can thrive

But for the most part, most especially in a Christian setting, such leadership requires being with people, knowing them and loving them, listening attentively to them, understanding what they are capable of at this time and in this place, interpreting the Christian gospel to them and among them, and then seeking to interpret back to them what the onward call of God might be. In other words, leadership of this kind only becomes possible when ministry, as we have described it above, is being faithfully and effectively exercised.

What has so far been said can be applied to any branch of the Christian church. Is there anything distinctive that *Baptists* might say? Perhaps not, since whatever their ecclesiology people remain pretty much the same across the spectrum. The following might however be claimed: Amongst Baptists, leadership and government are not the same. Under Christ and by the Spirit the congregation governs itself in freedom. It is not compelled, and its pastors, elders and deacons do not govern it: they facilitate and guide it under the shared government of Christ, bonding it in love to the one who is Lord. As Paul put it, 'I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him' (2 Corinthians 11:2).

Nigel G Wright is Principal Emeritus, **Spurgeon's College London**



... leadership requires being with people, knowing them and loving them, listening attentively to them, understanding what they are capable of at this time and in this place, interpreting the Christian gospel to them and among them, and then seeking to interpret back to them what the onward call of God might be.

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How will we equip our leaders of the future?

A briefing about Ignite

What is Ignite?

Ignite is the name given to our ongoing Ministries Review. The review is 'a thoroughgoing re-imagining of how we enable the ministries of God's people in the future', according to the Baptists Together website. It is looking at how we identify, equip and support the ministers and leaders that we are going to need 'to inspire and engage Baptist Christians in our shared commission to make Christ known in our contemporary world'.

The name Ignite draws from 2 Timothy 1:6: *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God.*

Ignite is seeking Godliness, excellence and flexibility in leadership.

What's happened so far?

A vision of the sort of patterns of future ministry and leadership had begun to be birthed in recent years. An Ignite Project Team was commissioned by Baptist Union Council (which is tasked with discerning the broad strategic direction of our Union) to produce a report that captured this vision.

The six strong team – led by Phil Jump, team leader of the North Western Baptist Association – distilled many hours of listening and consultation into a final report, published at the end of 2015 following feedback from Council.

The report explored three fundamental questions:

- » What sort of ministries will we need in the future?
- » What support will these ministries need?
- » What of these should be done locally, regionally and nationally?

An executive summary was sent to every minister and church to invite feedback.

When the report was published, General Secretary Lynn Green described it as "not the end... only the beginning of a period of generational change". She stressed that the report's suggestions are "not 'agreed' formally but are welcomed as concrete proposals to help us develop our thinking and plans for each of the areas."

What does the Ignite report say?

In short, that much is changing: the way in which ministry emerges and is exercised in our churches is increasingly diverse; 'ministry' is also expressed in an increasing diversity of roles and appointments. We need to be responsive and flexible to adapt to these (and future) changes, while still retaining a clear consistency of standard.

For example, the report recommends a new benchmark for affirming an individual's call to ministry that focuses more on character, than particular skills. It's called **Marks of Ministry**: 'a term that expresses less of an interest in what individuals can do, in favour of an emphasis on who they are and why they do what they do'. This takes into account how the kind of people offering themselves for ministry, the mission context and the way churches express and experience ministry are all changing.

It advocates a **more localised approach to ministerial recognition...** including a far closer working relationship between Association and National Ministerial Recognition Committees. The idea is that an individual's character and calling can be taken into account more fully, even where candidates do not seem to fit traditional perceptions of ministry.

... and a more collaborative and flexible approach to formation, to build on and develop even more effective relationships between an academic community and those who support ministry on the ground.

As part of this, Ignite highlights the need for more training and support of **bi-vocational ministries, (for those, perhaps, already in some form of paid employment)**. 'We sense a growing need to particularly embrace a pattern of ministry that has come to be described as 'bi-vocational ministry', recognising that in reality this refers to a variety of approaches and that for some the term bi-vocational feels inappropriate', it states, before continuing: 'By embedding flexibility into our processes, we enable diverse expressions of ministry to be embraced.'

There is also a strong emphasis on **continuing ministry development** – an intentional programme that enables all ministers to reflect on their experience and future vision to identify their on-going needs is advocated.

And covenant is given a prominent place, with the report calling for the introduction of a ministry covenant; to 'take seriously the idea that ministers are members of a covenant community'. Ministry will therefore be defined less in terms of achieved standards, but more in terms of a forward commitment to 'walk together and watch over one another in love'.

What next?

We are now at the stage of turning vision into reality. Following its publication, a number of key areas were highlighted by the Baptist Steering Group (tasked with planning the report's implementation) for initial focus.

These are:

- » Marks of Ministry,
- » covenant for churches and ministers,
- » the personal development plans for Newly Accredited Ministers
- » and progressing the database and process systems necessary to facilitate effective ministry support (which is heralding a much more collaborative approach across colleges, associations and specialist teams)

Developing Marks of Ministry

Much work has been done around Marks of Ministry, which, as stated, is all about identifying someone's character.

There are three stages to the Marks: Calling, Formation, and Ongoing Development. The first stage – Marks of Ministry Calling – was agreed in 2016. These Marks will be used to affirm an individual's call to ministry.

They focus on 10 areas and will form the basis of our Ministerial Recognition discernment from 2017. The 2018 students will follow through using it.

Marks of Ministry Calling:

- » Clear evidence of a call to Baptist Ministry that originates from God
- » A personal maturity and deepening of a candidate's relationship with Christ
- » A clear sense that God's purposes matter more to a candidate than personal goals and aspirations
- » A proven ability and adequate humility to listen and learn
- » Tenacity and character in the face of disappointment or struggle
- » A sense of belonging to the Body of Christ in all its diversity
- » Clear evidence that a candidate is someone whom others naturally trust and follow
- » An individual with measurable leadership potential
- » A growing ability to communicate
- » Fruits of ministry in the here and now

The full Marks of Ministry Calling document can be found in the Ignite section of the Baptists Together website www.baptist.org.uk/ignite

In a nutshell, what kind of leaders are we looking for?

"We are investing in Godly leadership," says Andy Hughes, Ministries Team Leader, "people who will enable others to flourish, press on with God and help them achieve all that God has intended through them.

"So we're looking for a serious commitment to discipleship, a strong calling to engage in ministry and mission, an ability to explain the gospel and make it relevant to people they are engaging with. The Marks aim to highlight the core qualities we are recognising, and they apply to ministers, evangelists, chaplains, pioneers – indeed all forms of ministry.

"It's about recognising someone's calling and character, and equipping them for ministry that's appropriate to their context."





CREATIVE TENSION

Anthony Clarke traces Baptist leadership through the centuries

Baptists from their very beginning in the 17th century have always insisted that there is a vital role for the whole church together – the many – but also a significant place for some who have particular responsibilities within a congregation – the few. The fundamental issue, to which different answers have been given, is how the few and the many relate together.

Early Baptists: the few and the many

Early Baptists expressed this by suggesting that a church (that is local congregation) consisted of officers and members, the few and the many. The officers had responsibility to 'feed and govern and serve', and a 1660 confession talks of the 'Elders and Pastors which God hath appointed to oversee and feed his Church.' Yet at the same time they understood the local gathered church also to be involved in governing the church. John Smyth, one of the early Baptist leaders, describes how the whole gathered church shared in the kingly ministry of Christ, as well as his priestly ministry, so that it is the believers together who 'have all power both of the kingdom and priesthood immediately from Christ'. It was not just the priesthood of all believers but the kingship of all believers as well, who

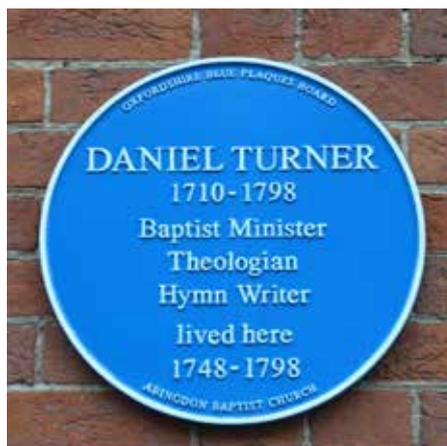
ruled together as the spouse of Christ. In this way early Baptists set themselves apart from the radical puritans who entrusted authority, and the keys of the kingdom, to the church officers alone.

Thus early Baptists set up a creative tension between the few and the many. Both exercised oversight in the church. The officers were appointed by the church to take on particular responsibilities, and to lead, but the whole gathered church retained a responsibility to oversee, to lead, the church as well. The officers were appointed by the local church (and could be dismissed by them) but were also understood to be appointed by Christ as gifts to the church. Through this creative tension early Baptists

understood themselves to be directly under the rule of Christ – a rule that was not mediated by those outside of the local church, but was exercised both through the gathered church and through those it set aside as its 'leaders'.

Through the centuries

The way this creative tension has been played out has varied through the centuries. In the 17th century there are examples of some churches not celebrating communion because their pastor had been imprisoned and it was thought not possible for anyone else to preside at the table – an idea that would feel quite alien today. In the 18th century, debate developed between Daniel Turner and John Gill about whether a minister could preach beyond the local church where they had been called – was a minister responsible to that church alone or were they a minister of the universal church, and in that sense bringing something to the local church from beyond. In the 19th century, with the rising influence of the Brethren movement and in opposition to the priestly stress of the high-church Oxford movement, there was a much stronger emphasis on the oversight of the whole church and a much less significant role for the few, including ministers.



The 20th century and beyond

The beginning of the 20th century saw the development of a clear nationally accredited list of ministers, and from 1948 onwards there were a number of significant reports commissioned and adopted by the Baptist Union Council which explored the nature of the church and the nature of ministry. One of the statements, appearing first in 1948 but then repeated in subsequent documents, continues to express this creative tension: 'Ministry is exercised by the whole Church as the Body of Christ, which thus 'preaches the Word, celebrates the sacraments, feeds the flock and ministers to the world'; but some individuals are called to spiritual leadership, exercising forms of ministry in a representative way on behalf of the whole.' Exploring the tension between the few and the many at this time is focussed very much on ordained ministers as the few.

More recently this balance has been expressed as 'the ministry of all and the leadership of some'. Influenced by a range of other, especially larger churches, which often do not come from a Baptist background, there has been a desire for some to give the few, the leaders, a much more significant role, because it makes decisions quicker and enables the church to focus on mission. This corresponds with the subtle change in language we use, replacing the seemingly old-fashioned term 'deacon' (which means servant) with 'leadership teams'. There has been, of course, the desire never to lose the emphasis of the priesthood of all believers and the role of all in exercising ministry, but the model in which the few lead and the many follow them misses the early Baptist stress on the kingship as well as priesthood of all believers.

'Creative tension'

Although there has been an ebb and flow at the heart of a Baptist approach to leadership, there has been this creative tension between the few and the many. Baptists have stood out from both the Brethren approach on the one hand and the presbyterian, episcopal or apostolic approach on the other. Baptists have wanted to appoint leaders but also for the gathered church to share leadership as well, in a way that the language of leaders and followers does not recognise.

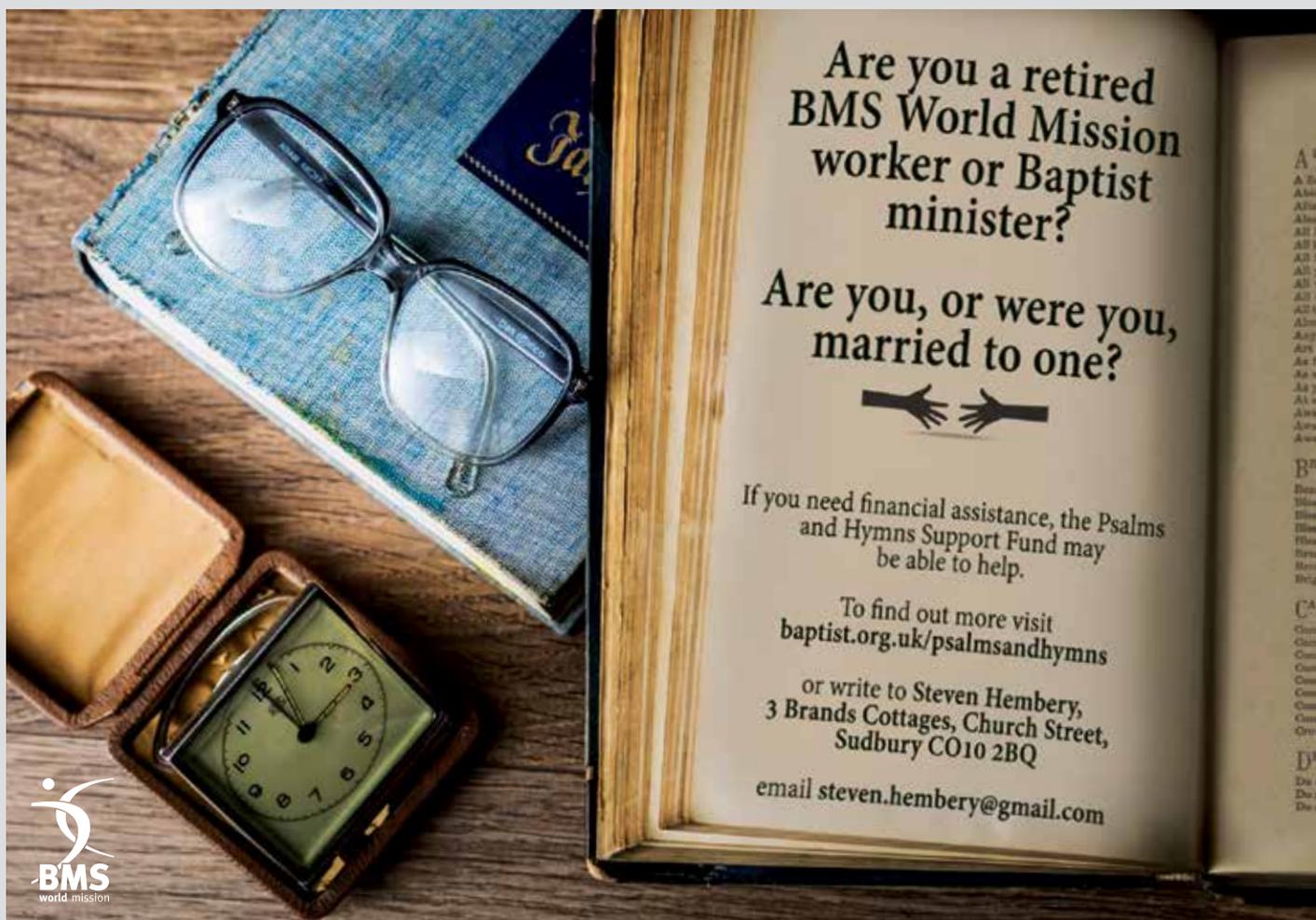
Not everyone will individually be a leader, and some are called to be leaders in a particular way, but alongside this, at the same time and in a creative tension, the whole church is called to exercise leadership too. This creative tension between the few and the many will shape the role of the few, the leaders, in a very particular way.

Further reading:

David Bebbington, 'An Historical Overview of Leadership in a Scottish Baptist Context' in Andrew Rollinson (ed), *Transforming Leadership: Essays Exploring Leadership in a Baptist Context* (Baptist Union of Scotland)

Paul S Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003) chapter 5

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Whole-church gatherings of Church from Scratch are infrequent, but are an opportunity to discern the mind of Christ together



Photo: Church from Scratch

What can different models of church leadership look like?
Here are two from pioneering contexts

Church from Scratch, Southend

'Partnership, not hierarchy'

Ivan King, accredited Baptist minister, is talking about the beginning of his involvement with **Church from Scratch**, a pioneering Baptist church in Southend on Sea. When he met founder Peter Dominey to discuss the role, he asked whether he would be the associate pastor to Peter's senior minister position. But no.

"Peter was crystal clear," Ivan explains, "this was about partnership, not hierarchy. And that's absolutely how it's been."

The lack of hierarchy extends to all. Church from Scratch is a relational movement, now 14 years old, where life is worked out in and among each other. There are no main Sunday meetings, no monologue sermons. The heart of its life – learning together, inspiring and discipling each other – takes place in people's homes. Several community groups make up Church from Scratch – and they are the church. To further move from a position of hierarchy, Peter and Ivan do not use the title 'Rev'd' (except when needed for official purposes), and have rejected other 'power' labels.

"We want to be part of a church where everyone is a minister/ministers to each other," says Peter.

"It's about empowering people to engage with scripture, and each other. So while we create Bible-based resources, it's up to the church as gathered communities to understand the Bible together."

Ivan adds, "It's not about acquiring more facts about the Bible, but finding a story to live by."

It's a facilitating style of leadership (the only time they want to be directive and coercive is when challenging injustices). They have different roles within the church. Ivan's is to support, encourage and empower people to be disciples, to be among them as they learn (and in turn learn from them). The heart of that is Ephesians 4.

Peter's role is more about imagination and disruption; helping people to imagine a different future for themselves. "I'm trying to disrupt, to challenge the status quo." Church from Scratch works among some of the most marginalised in Southend, and the

rejection of the ministerial labels can be a challenge for some.

"Some would like to put us on a pedestal, so we have to work hard to maintain our understanding of what it means to be leaders," says Ivan.

Although whole-church gatherings are infrequent, every time the church gathers is an opportunity to discern the mind of Christ together. There was communal discernment over Ivan's role seven years ago, just as there was when Church from Scratch commissioned Dan Pratt as a pioneer minister to build **57 West** (a recent Baptist church plant in the town centre). But the principal discerning together happens in the home. A lighter movement, its leaders are 'free from some of the inconsequential decisions some of our colleagues have to deal with in more traditional church members' meetings'.

"When we discern together we don't want to overburden people with unnecessary stuff," Ivan says. "It's people coming into relationship, building friendship, and through that they have an encounter with Jesus."

The Beacon, Stafford

"I'd very tentatively say 'Look at the fruit'. Is there is something in the method that's more than just for us?" asks Alex Harris.

Alex pastors **The Beacon** in Stafford, a Baptist church which has experienced exponential growth in the last three years. In 2013 it had around 70 members; now its weekly attendance pushes 350. Half of their new members have been baptised in the last two years.

The method Alex talks about relates to both the church's leadership structure and its focus on mission and evangelism. It's a multi-site church, with six congregations in four buildings. Once a congregation reaches 100 adults, it has to plant. The planting is very mission specific: there is a Chinese speaking congregation, a congregation that's geared towards the army and one for those playing sport on a Sunday morning. A new congregation has also been planted on a new estate where eventually 3,000 houses will be built.

Despite the different congregations, it is "authentically one church", Alex says, one which combines the intimacy of the small with the resources of the large. Each congregation is "always very relational, very mission specific. It gets people involved." But because they all belong to the same church, there is a need for just one finance team and one website.

It means leadership operates at several levels. The principal leader is Jesus. "We are his church. We take our direction from listening to him," Alex explains.

Alex, alongside two elders, provides theological oversight and takes a strategic view of the whole.

A central body of deacons oversees five departments, such as finance. This then releases the local leadership teams to concentrate solely on mission and evangelism.

"We try to release the local level for one thing – to reach people for Jesus," says Alex. "Leadership is all about releasing. Enabling. Of being shepherds so others can flourish."



Photo: P L Milgate

Alex is very clear that the structure needs more work, as things have moved so quickly.

"We're still trying to work it through. It's like the vine has just exploded: it's fantastic, but the trellis around it is a bit rickety."

He adds: "God brought this about. We realised it was happening, and pursued it.

"The momentum of seeing people saved is enormous. People are thrilled to see so many baptisms."

Alex Harris - pastor of The Beacon in Stafford



Photo: The Beacon Church



My leadership

A self-confessed 'shy kid', **Margaret Gibbs** now pastors a Baptist church in London

I was blessed to grow up in a very affirming family and in a church that gave all of us children and young people a range of opportunities to be involved in different aspects of church life. Looking back I see I tended to take up the opportunities that came my way, but being a shy kid it still took years and years for confidence to grow. Significant here, having become a teacher, was getting into cross cultural mission with BMS. I found that living in other cultures and worshipping in other languages enabled me to break out of some of the personal restraints British culture and social expectations had embedded in me, bringing greater freedom of expression personally and in preaching and worship.

Another significant help was when particular individuals made space and encouraged me to take a step forward into a new experience or opportunity. I recognise that these were not often things I could have brought about by myself. Give and take, knowing and being known individually and in community are important for emerging into Christian leadership. Invitations need to be offered as well as sought. I appreciate those who at times risked backing me and very much want to do the same for others, especially those who would not presume to lead otherwise.

It has always been interesting to operate in cultures that are not used to having women in leadership roles, in church or society in general, outside women's groups. The contexts I have mainly worked in did not have women pastoring churches or preaching at the time and one had to tread very carefully so as to challenge but not to scandalise local expectation or, in some cases, international colleagues. Of course there were frustrations and sacrifices in this, but I also found consistently that once people really get to know you, respect and trust begin to grow. Basically people will quietly seek advice or assistance from those they believe are able to help, regardless of title or position. In some cases this means settling for being an 'honorary man' or as a single person being treated as a 'third sex', and serving in the gaps thus opened. Not comfortable and certainly not ideal but there can be grace in this and one hopes a first step towards something more positive.

My years on the faculty of the Albanian Bible Institute were significant for crystallising a calling into formal ministry. Some in that international and multi-denominational group felt strongly and in all conscience that Bible and theological teaching staff should all be male. I was the only woman teacher at the time yet the classes were made up of a quarter to a third of women sent by their churches to train as leaders.

The situation made me go back to scripture, culture and my own experience for careful reflection. Whatever the arguments found in the intricacies of translation choices and the pros and cons of scriptural and cultural points, a touchstone for me was that Jesus intentionally sent women to tell vital and strategic revelations about who he was. So far so good, but when a final decision was eventually taken regarding the faculty in Albania it felt like agony for a good while. It set me on another path which wouldn't have been my choice at the time, but for which now I thank God.

Authentic Christian leadership is through the choice, gift and grace of God

So what does authentic Christian leadership by women look like? A challenge for me has been the lack of direct female role models in my working situations until quite recently. I have learnt a lot from many really godly male leaders I've encountered, and have noted some things to differ from, yet also wonder how this overall male dynamic might have influenced my style. Is it automatically feminine by virtue of my being a woman? I don't think it's that simple. Imagining different ways of leading from a standing start is difficult but we must persevere in order to fill out the whole of what Christian leadership can be. Thanks be to God for all those who have pioneered as women in leadership, often through opposition or lack of appreciation last century and this.

Fundamentally I believe no-one ministers by right, whether by title, position, being or not being male or female or anything else. Authentic Christian leadership is through the choice, gift and grace of God. And God, it seems, loves to choose the things the world considers foolish to shame the wise.

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



Staff and students of the Albanian Bible Institute in 2000



Photo: Albanian Bible Institute

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

Finding a way to increase the number of Black and minority ethnic (BME) ministers and leaders is a challenge faced by most mainstream denominations, not least Baptists.

By Wale Hudson-Roberts



Negative memories

Answers still evade us, despite copious research. Negative institutional memory is one of the reasons behind the reluctance of some people of colour to commit their talents to our colleges, associations and churches.

This reality was highlighted in a recent conversation I shared with five African and Caribbean professionals. Despite their abilities, when at secondary school they were put into the lower 'bands', and as a result some left school with few qualifications and some with none. At great cost to themselves and their families, they were forced to carve out their own career paths. Negative institutional memory - formed by their secondary education, solidified by subsequent institutional experiences - has discouraged them from engaging their leadership skills in communities they have been forced to become suspicious of.

These friends are not alone. Their stories are replicated many times over in many different parts of the country. Among many people of colour there are understandable concerns about sharing their God-given talents with communities that have historically invalidated their humanity, be it in the plantation fields of the Caribbean, educational institutions, corporate or charitable organisations, local Baptist churches or our structures. Negative institutional memory evokes suspicion of the institutions and remains an omnipresent reality, refusing to diminish.

There are clearly other reasons for reluctant engagement, a propensity for fatigue being a second. It is not easy to be the only person of colour in a meeting challenging white privilege, and helping others to consider a wider landscape beyond themselves. It is not easy to be the only person of colour challenging inappropriate use of language, use of stereotypical images and apparent 'normality' – or one of the few people of colour 'recycled' on the meeting circuit. With this as a backdrop, engagement can be regarded as too high a physical and emotional price to pay. As for those already serving, either fatigue or disillusionment (sometimes even both) set in. It should come as no surprise that few people of colour are willing to make the necessary sacrifices involved in sharing their leadership abilities with Baptists Together. Deep wounds, serving as a reminder of the past, are a deterrent to participation. →



Ministerial recognition at Assembly 2016

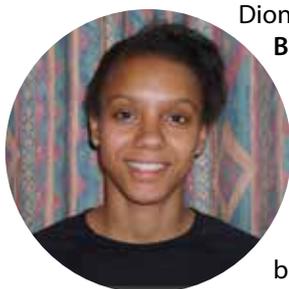


Regional Minister Dave Ellis leads worship at Assembly 2015

An inspiring future?

In an attempt to address these concerns our Union's Racial Justice Group proposed an *Inspiring Leadership Programme* targeting young people of colour between the ages of 18- 25. Part of the idea is to nurture the young people's leadership abilities in Jamaica and, if possible, address negative institutional memory, and a range of other barriers that challenge healthy participation.

Tailormade, together with young people, by the Faith and Society Team and Jamaican Baptist Union (JBU), the *Inspiring Leadership Programme* aims to inspire young people to explore their Christian calling or business opportunities in either the United Theological College of West Indies (UTC) or a respected Jamaican business.



Dion White, 24 and of **Brixton Baptist Church**, is the first person to participate in the *Inspiring Leadership Programme*. She travels to Jamaica in 2017 for a six month internship. She will be mentored in three stages – before flying out, while in Jamaica, and on her return. She has high hopes.

"It will be a theological adventure which is bound to serve me well for possible future ministry in the UK," Dion says. "Away from the pressures of life in the UK, shaped by JBU practitioners, activists, pastors and theologians, I am sure I will return to the UK with an appetite to share my gifts with my local church and wider Baptist body. I am so praying that this programme will begin to develop a new crop of BME young leaders who are able to invest their God-given skills in making our Baptist Union a far more mission-centred community. The programme's strong emphasis on a three-prong mentoring approach should lay some of the foundations for me to become an effective leader - both in and out of church".

Preparing young people of colour to participate more fully in Baptist life, catching them before they have become disillusioned, is a good way forward. The hope is that the likes of Dion White and subsequent members of the *Inspiring Leadership Programme* will be equipped and sufficiently encouraged by their internship to participate in Baptists Together. However, it will be important that on their return they are buoyed by networks and mentoring to ensure that history is not repeated.

Spurgeon's College tutor
Dotha Blackwood leads an
Assembly Bible Study

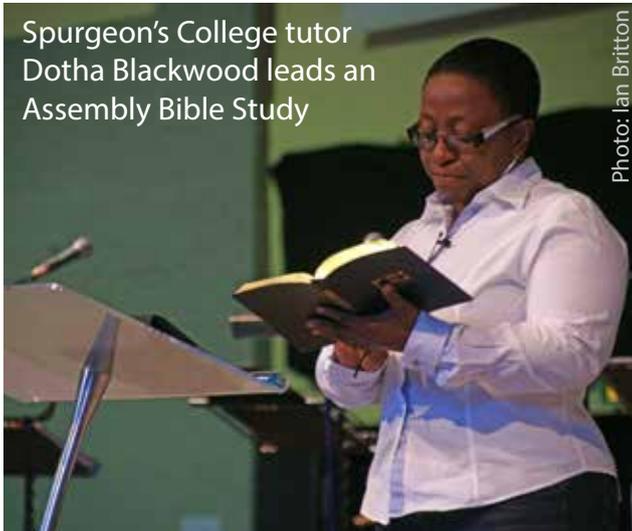


Photo: Ian Britton

'A massive relational effort' still needed

As a person of colour, 'navigating white spaces'¹ can sometimes be very challenging. Negotiating the structures that people of colour have had little, if any, part in creating and shaping is demanding. Add to the mix ethnicity, and an intrinsically British way of doing God's business, people of colour can feel trebly disenfranchised. Regrettably there are no easy solutions. Contrary to popular narratives there are many people of colour ready and able to invest their

¹ 'Navigating white spaces' is an expression regularly used by David Shosanya, a regional minister in the London Baptist Association

leadership talents into the Baptist pool, but there is an understandable reluctance. Wearing various hats, being seen as a representative and spokesperson of all black and Asian British Baptists, adds to the spiralling list of reasons for reluctant engagement in Baptist life.

Having reflected a pretty pessimistic picture, where do we go from here? Nothing can replace the strenuous and sometimes painful work of developing healthy relationships with BME church leaders. This is not a secondary option. The prerequisite for diminishing negative institutional memory and gradually breaking down the walls that divide us requires a massive relational effort. Developing justice-orientated relationships with BME leaders, young and old, has become a matter of significant importance. This long-term strategy might mean that I (and my colleagues of a similar age) may not witness the full benefits of unconditional relationship building. Future generations will. It is with the present, but even more so the future, generations in mind that Baptists Together launches the *Inspiring Leadership Programme* on the tenth anniversary of our Union's Apology for the Transatlantic Slave trade in the hope that this relational expression will encourage an increasing number of leaders of colour to declare "yes we can" to Baptists Together.

Wale Hudson-Roberts
is the Justice Enabler of the
Baptist Union of Great Britain



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The Enabling Leader

Giving people the tools to face their problems is a style of leadership that encourages congregations to develop their giftings.

By Sharon Prior



Thankfully the days of expecting the minister to do everything are coming to an end, and volunteers in the congregation are more willing to take on roles within the church, especially when they are encouraged to do so. How can a church leader ensure that all the gifts of the congregation are used well and effectively?

In reflecting on what church leadership might need to look like in the 21st century, pastor and author Brian McLaren uses King's theory¹: people are not looking for a 'Sage on the stage, but a guide on the side.'² A guide who will enable them and equip them to move forward and develop to their full God-given potential. This means that ministers need to focus much more on enabling others than doing the work themselves. It requires leaders to empower and release others in their ministry rather than to focus on themselves, and to be someone who will walk alongside people as they develop.

John Adair writes about the importance of a leader keeping a balance between team, individual and task. As church leaders we need to ask whether we focus on one of these to the detriment

1 McLaren Brian *Dorothy on Leadership* <http://www.brianmclaren.net/emc/archives/imported/dorothy-on-leadership.html> (accessed on 18-10-16)
 2 King Alison *The Journal for the Scholarship in Teaching and Learning* <http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=ij-sotl> (accessed on 18-10-16)

of the other two?³ As a church leader myself, I want all the work that is set up within the church to be sustainable for the long haul, and in order for that to happen, those in both salaried and voluntary roles need to be managed well and developed in their gifting. I certainly need to focus on getting the task done, but also on recognising the needs of the individuals in the church and building good team morale.

In my experience of working with ministers there is a strong desire to fix things when people come to them with an issue: it's more natural to tell people what to do to solve their problem. However, this is not the attitude of an enabling leader; it's much better to listen and help people to work out their own ways forward to resolve it. This way of helping people takes time and allows people to make their own mistake, but is vital if we want people in the congregation to develop into maturity (Col 1: 28-29). Jesus constantly challenged people to think for themselves and work out their ways forward (Matthew 16: 13-20). He gave them choices and let them make their own decisions (John 6: 66).

This will mean the church has a culture of developing individuals, so that everyone wants to see others develop, although the minister needs to lead the way. Having led in mainly small churches it is very important to develop the gifts of everyone as this helps the body to work better together.

3 Adair John *The Inspirational Leader* London: Kogan Page Ltd 2004 page 36

The professionalisation in some churches can work against this enabling ethos. They expect to have everything done in an excellent way, but where is the space for people to learn by making mistakes? We all need safe places where we can work out our gifting.

So how can a leader encourage the church to develop an enabling culture? Here are some suggestions:

- » Develop an expectation that everyone in church will offer their gifts to the work of the church and community
- » Help people to identify the gifts and skills that they can offer
- » Give opportunities for people to try out things that they have not tried before to test their gifting
- » Evaluation is crucial and people need to have others who will give them feedback on what they have done and how they might improve – this needs to be intentional as it will not just happen by itself
- » Develop a mentoring culture within the church, so that everyone is in an intentional, accountable relationship for their own spiritual development

All this starts with the leader and it is important we decide what kind of leader we want to be.

A sage on the stage – or a guide on the side?

Sharon Prior is a senior tutor at Moorlands College, and church leader at **Iford Baptist Church**



Elnur and Lynn at the European Baptist Federation Council meetings in Estonia - September 2016



‘We were so dependent on God we needed to speak to others about him’

Lynn Green interviews Elnur Jabiyev, former General Secretary of the Azerbaijan Baptist Union

I had the privilege of representing our Union at the **European Baptist Federation** meetings in Estonia last year and, as always, was inspired by the leaders I met and the mission in which they are engaged. Of the many great conversations I shared, the one I had with Elnur Jabiyev stands out in my memory and I would like to share it with you. Elnur was the General Secretary of the Azerbaijan Baptist Union before persecution led him to seek refuge in the UK. He is now Minister for International mission at **Streatham Baptist Church** in London and also CEO of Turkic Belt Ministries.

Elnur, having been a Christian leader in a context of persecution, what was it like coming to lead in a context of freedom?

In Azerbaijan I lived as part of the persecuted church but, even so, we were still fully committed to preaching the Gospel. We were so dependent on God we needed to speak to others about him. When I arrived in the UK in 2009, I realised that this was a country where Christians were free to worship and evangelise, which I saw as a wonderful privilege.

However I found this wasn't something Christians in this country found easy to do. Sometimes it's something they were even scared of doing. Even though surprised by this, I realised my experience could be used to encourage them.

Thinking specifically about reaching out to Muslims, let's recognise that God is bringing many thousands of them to our country, giving us an opportunity to share with them in the safety we enjoy.



So, tell us more about how you used your experience to encourage UK Christians in evangelism?

To help with this in our church, I arranged a time to talk with those interested in sharing their faith with others. I talked about some of the challenges I had faced in Azerbaijan but also explained how evangelism had still been very fruitful. This allowed me to encourage them to use their God-given gift of freedom to speak out about Jesus and to expect great things to happen in their context as well. Then I took them out into the community and, by approaching and speaking to people, demonstrated how to speak about God with people. This helped them realise that this isn't a particularly scary thing to do!

One of the really important things for church leaders to recognise is that, as well as encouraging their congregation to go and evangelise, they must lead by example and show they are involved in it as well.

I sometimes think that, as Christians in the UK, we have forgotten or take for granted the goodness of the good news! But you are not only confident to share Jesus with others, you also have experience of witnessing in a Muslim country. What encouragement would you give to churches who are wanting to reach out to their Muslim neighbours with the good news of Jesus?

Reaching out to anyone requires us to really experience the reality of Jesus' words to his followers in Acts 1:8 where he promises the infilling power of the Holy Spirit. Without his enabling we can't do anything.

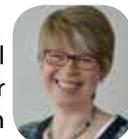
Thinking specifically about reaching out to Muslims, let's recognise that God is bringing many thousands of them to our country, giving us an opportunity to share with them in the safety we enjoy. We need to be prepared to commit time, love and energy to develop friendships with them. We also need to recognise that some of the fears we might have about engaging with them are typically unfounded and that they

will normally welcome the opportunity to discuss questions of faith and for us to tell them about Jesus, whom they respect as a prophet. They are also normally very open for Christians to pray with them about things that are going on in their lives.

Be imaginative about how you can engage with them - meet them where they congregate, join them in social activities, allow them to use your buildings for things they are planning. Remember that these are people for whom Christ died and we have an open opportunity to show them the deep love of God and to speak with them about Jesus in a way that points them to him.

Thank you Elnur, for sharing with us. It is really helpful and inspiring to see ourselves through your eyes. Thank you for challenging us to have confidence in the Lord, to lead by example and not to be afraid to share about Jesus in our communities.

Lynn Green is General Secretary of our Baptist Union



Turkic Belt Ministries supports persecuted Christians in Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran and Central Asia. For more visit www.turkicbeltministries.co.uk



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Cultural attitudes and church leadership

Highlighting the varied expectations and values different cultures associate with leadership could be a blessing for our ministers as they serve diverse congregations. By **Osoba Otaigbe**

Over the years, while running the Friendship Plus project and working in various church leadership positions in the UK, I have found that most people have the same expectations for their leaders across the board. They want leaders who are honest, just and trustworthy; leaders who are intelligent with the ability to problem solve and are confident in their abilities; leaders who can inspire, encourage and motivate others to coordinate their efforts and act as a team; and leaders who strive for excellence.

But aside from this set of universal traits, different cultures actually have different expectations and values that they associate with leadership. As our churches become more culturally diverse, identifying and highlighting these differences could prove to be a blessing for the church. Even more helpful than identifying these differences will be discovering ways to reconcile them.



Leadership Behaviours, Styles and Qualities:

There are multiple different ways to lead an organisation or a congregation. The leadership styles and behaviours that leadership scholar Peter G Northouse¹ has identified in his research apply to church leaders just as much as to business leaders.

His categories can be applied to the following Biblical figures:

- 1 The Apostle Paul typifies the **Charismatic/ Value-based Leader**. These leaders have the ability to inspire their leadership team and their congregations based on a set of shared core values.
- 2 Ezra is more of a **Team-oriented Leader**. When the exiles returned to Jerusalem, it was Ezra who organised them into various groups according to their jobs and talents so that they might work together and get the job done.
- 3 When he worked with his father-in-law and divided his leadership team into leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, Moses was acting as a **Participative Leader** involving other members of his leadership team in the process of making decisions and carrying them out.
- 4 **Humane-oriented Leaders** strive to be supportive and considerate of the members of their congregation and their leadership team. Joshua, son of Nun, represents a clear example of this type of leadership style with his continual admonitions to his people to not fear and to be strong and courageous in the face of adversity.
- 5 In the formation of the nation of Israel, King David acted generally as an **Autonomous Leader** by generally acting independently and expecting his leadership team to do the same.
- 6 **Self-protective Leaders** take actions that ensure the safety and security of their congregations and themselves. Nehemiah's actions in organising the returned exiles to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem can be considered one example of such leadership.
- 7 And finally **Servant Leader**. Jesus is the ultimate example of this type of leadership: the desire to serve first, coupled with a number of the above qualities.

¹ Peter G Northouse; *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2007

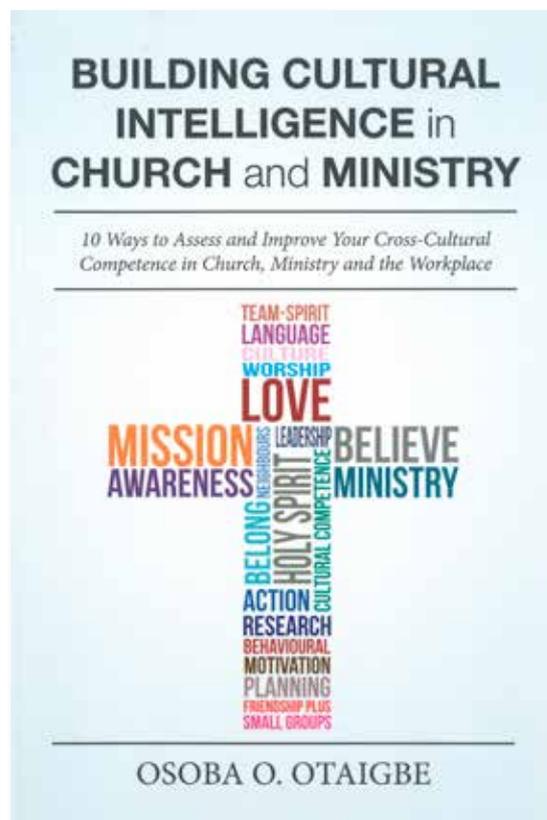
Friendship Plus is an organisation that seeks to build bridges across cultures through cultural intelligence self-assessments, workshops, coaching and networking. To run the assessments and Building Cultural Intelligence in Church and Ministry Workshop in your church email: assessments@friendshipplus.org.uk or call the Mission Enabler Rosemarie Reid on 07956 959177.

Cultural value orientations:

Since denominations and congregations form cohesive groups, they act as cultures and subcultures within themselves. A given congregation's social values may be shaped by the country they belong to, whether they are in a rural or urban setting, as well as the denomination itself. As with the different leadership styles, there is no one-size-fits-all formula to the cultural values any given congregation should have, but being aware that different Christians from different backgrounds bring such different values to the table can be very helpful in resolving conflicts that trace back to these differences.

Friendship Plus, in partnership with the Cultural Intelligence Centre, runs online cultural value orientations, as well as workshops for de-briefing the feedback report from these assessments. The feedback report reveals 10 cultural value orientations that appear in different cultures around the world.

On the next page are some examples from the report of how different churches exhibit these orientations and how we can reconcile the differences to engage and manage 'the elephant in the room' – the different expectations we place among leaders. In my early years in ministry, I personally struggled with church leadership until I managed to identify this. Recognising these orientations will help a leader better understand their congregation.



Cultural intelligence (CQ) is the capability to relate and work effectively in culturally diverse situations. For more details about the online self-assessment visit www.friendshipplus.org.uk Online CQ assessments are a product of Cultural Intelligence Centre.

1 Collectivism vs Individualism

Individualism: *Emphasis on individual goals and individual rights.* Whatever your leadership style, with Individualists, allow for autonomy and recognise the importance of rapid decision-making.

Collectivism: *Emphasis on group goals and personal relationships.* As a leader working with Collectivists, give time to consult with others and work on building consensus. Recognise the importance of long-term relationships.

2 Low Power Distance vs High Power Distance

Low Power Distance: *Emphasis on equality; shared decision-making.* When leading groups with Low Power Distance, forgo formalities and create ways for others to question or raise objection.

High Power Distance: *Emphasis on differences in status and only superiors make decisions.* With groups or individuals in this dimension, follow the chain of command carefully without questioning or challenging authority publicly.

3 Low Uncertainty Avoidance vs High Uncertainty Avoidance

Low Uncertainty Avoidance: *Emphasis on flexibility and adaptability.* With Low Uncertainty Avoidance groups avoid dogmatic statements and invite them to explore new ideas.

High Uncertainty Avoidance: *Emphasis on planning and predictability.* With High Uncertainty Avoidance groups, give explicit instructions and rely on formalised procedures and policies.

4 Cooperative vs Competitive

Cooperative: *Emphasis on collaboration, nurturing, and family.* Leading a Cooperative group or individual requires using communication to build rapport more than to achieve tasks.

Competitive: *Emphasis on competition, assertiveness, and achievement.* When working in a Competitive environment, it is the task that takes priority and communication serves to report information related to the task.

5 Short Term vs Long Term

Short Term: *Emphasis on immediate outcomes (success now).* With Short Term groups, prioritise quick-wins and focus on the present implications.

Long Term: *Emphasis on long term planning (success later).* In Long Term settings, invest now for the future, while emphasising long-term implications.

6 Low-Context/Direct vs High-Context/Indirect

Low-Context/Direct: *Emphasis on explicit communication (words).* With individuals from Low-Context groups, be direct and explicit in your communication and focus on getting your message across clearly.

High Context/Indirect: *Emphasis on communication (tone, context).* With High Context individuals, recognise the importance of silence and reflection, paying careful attention to what is not said.

7 Being vs Doing

Being: *Emphasis on quality of life.* When working in a Being environment, affirm who the person is, not just their performance and manage the relationship.

Doing: *Emphasis on being busy and meeting goals.* In Doing environments, affirm individual and group accomplishments and new opportunities and manage the process.

8 Universalism vs Particularism

Universalism: *Emphasis on rules; standards that apply to everyone.* With Universalists, provide commitments in writing and make every effort to abide by them. When changes are needed, provide as much rationale and advanced warning as possible.

Particularism: *Emphasis on specifics; unique standards based on relationships.* When interacting with Particularists, demonstrate flexibility whenever possible and invest in relationships; show the role of context in how you made a decision.

9 Neutral vs Affective

Neutral: *Emphasis on non-emotional communication.* Avoid showing feelings in working with Neutral groups; manage your emotional expressiveness and body language and stick to the point in meetings and interactions.

Affective: *Emphasis on expressive communication; sharing feelings.* With Affective groups, open up to people to demonstrate warmth and trust; work on being more expressive than you may typically prefer.

10 Monochronic vs Polychronic

Monochronic: *Emphasis on one thing at a time; punctuality; work and personal life separate.* In dealing with Monochronic individuals, provide follow-through and expediency when possible to build trust; apart from that, when a deadline can't be met, propose an alternative and stick to it.

Polychronic: *Emphasis on many obligations; comfortable with interruptions; work and personal life combined.* With Polychronic individuals, find ways to be flexible on deadlines that are less important; explain the relational impact for you if a deadline isn't met.

Understanding these differences in cultural value orientations and how to reconcile them will lead to:

- » more effective pastoral care that better meets the needs of each person;
- » improved spiritual formation that is able to connect with each person;
- » teaching and discipleship designed to impact each person, and mission activities that can meet people where they are.

Osoha Otaigbe is a mission strategist and author of *Building Cultural Intelligence in Church and Ministry*. He is pastor of **Tooting Junction Baptist Church** and an Advanced Cultural Intelligence Certified Facilitator.



David and Dorothy McMillan in the IBTSC library in Amsterdam with the Centre's Rector Stuart Blythe

Building a strong Church means investing in its leaders

BMS World Mission is committed to empowering strong and effective indigenous leaders for God's people around the world.

"If mission agencies do not invest heavily in leadership, it's bad stewardship," says David McMillan, a BMS worker in the Netherlands. "It's critical that indigenous leaders are raised up, trained, equipped, and resourced for the good of Christian witness."

An important part of BMS' five-year strategy is to empower strong and effective indigenous leaders.

We're doing this by equipping people with leadership skills and with biblical understanding. By 2020, we want to have developed missional thinking among 20,000 people in the UK and 10,000 people overseas. The work David and his wife Dorothy are doing at the **International Baptist Theological Study Centre (IBTSC)** in Amsterdam is helping us to reach this faith-stretching goal.

BMS partner IBTSC exists to provide high-level theological education to current and future Christian leaders from across the world, with a particular focus on Europe. Their former students are leading churches, seminaries and mission agencies and are serving in countries such as Czech Republic, Russia, Moldova, Lebanon and Ukraine. Amongst its graduates is the centre's current rector, Stuart Blythe.

Some may argue that training well-educated leaders is not important in comparison with life-saving health work, the provision of justice, or sharing the gospel – but we believe training leaders has a vital role to play in 21st century mission. We need strong leaders in order for all the life-saving work to be supported and enabled. We need them to be influences for good and to shape the future of our churches, our communities and our world. These leaders can't and shouldn't all come from rich Western countries. We want to empower leaders from the World Church, called to serve in their own countries and contexts. Leaders who we can, in turn, learn from.

Dorothy McMillan in the IBTSC library



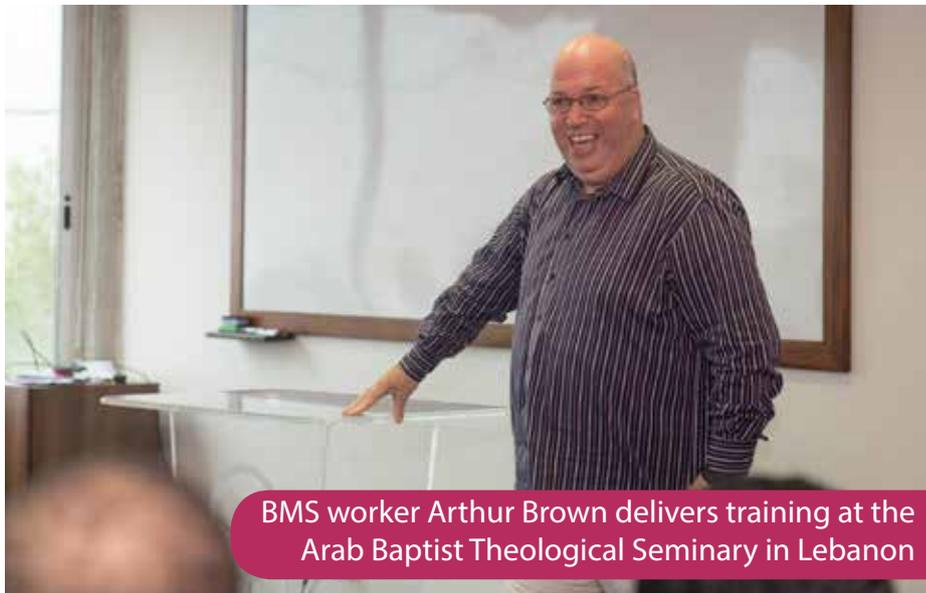


Training session with Laura-Lee

"If people learn to lead well and to think strategically then it's much easier for people to follow," says Dorothy McMillan, "and the Church and the missionary world can work much more effectively."

Master's and PhD-level education through IBTSC is just one of the ways BMS is supporting future leaders. We're proud to be training leaders from a huge range of backgrounds and experiences. In Lebanon, we partner with the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, training up leaders from across the Middle East and North Africa who will often be returning to serve in contexts hostile to the gospel.

In Peru's Amazon, we are enabling river pastors to access theological training for the first time in their lives. Through our training centre in Nauta, we are reaching different areas of the rainforest every year, inviting the isolated pastors we meet to come to six residential training weeks and to learn with a community of other Christians.



BMS worker Arthur Brown delivers training at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Lebanon

"Training is important at all levels, so that we have strong leaders who understand the needs of their church, the needs of their mission agency," says Dorothy. "Ultimately, what's most

important is that the gospel is more effectively communicated."

We would love you to stand with us as we pursue the goal of equipping Godly leaders for service across the globe. ■



BMS partner worker Pastor Luis baptizing young leaders with UK Baptist pastor Neil Brighton in Peru



All photos: BMS World Mission



The South West Baptist Association gathers small churches together for a network day

Leadership in smaller churches



Photo: Hilary Taylor

There are many encouragements amid the challenges of leading smaller churches, including growing network support, writes **Hilary Taylor**

Small church is a big deal in our Baptist Union. There are approximately 1000 churches with fewer than 40 members across the country. This makes up half our denomination. Leaders in small churches ideally need experience, love, patience and diplomacy among their gifting.

Encouragement...

There is much encouragement in leading a smaller church:

- » In a small church, leaders tend to know everyone well
 - » Decisions at church meetings are put into action quickly
 - » There is often high commitment and support from the members
 - » People can be encouraged to step out and take risks
 - » A small church can be like a hospital, where a GP (minister) and specialists 'fix' broken people
 - » With small numbers, leaders can more easily use different styles of teaching to suit the congregation. In an average group, there are different learning styles: 20% of people are auditory - listeners
40% of people are visual - pictures
40% of people are tactile - movers and does
- How do you put across God's truth in a way that people enjoy and remember? Visuals, objects or activities are often easier to use in small churches.

... and challenges

There are also many challenges about leading smaller churches:

- » It is important to know everyone's gift and give jobs to suit skills
- » Many small churches face money issues
- » Leaders don't want to see the church close on their watch
- » Leaders often do too many jobs, get tired and sometimes burnout
- » There tends to be a lack of skills for secretary and treasurer roles
- » Intense relationships in smaller churches can lead to compromise on big decisions
- » There is often a high percentage of people with life issues
- » Facing building issues can be emotional rather than practical

**God uses the leader who has a dream,
is willing to risk failure,
expects the church to grow
and who never gives up**

Leadership in smaller churches

Leadership operates on a variety of levels determined by the time and resources available. There are full time leaders, part time leaders and bi-vocational leaders, who juggle a part time job alongside their part time church work. There are leaders who have a full time job and lead the church in their spare time and there are students who are part time at College and part time in a local church. There are also reluctant leaders, who are happy to be deacons but suddenly find themselves in a position of church leadership in times of a pastoral vacancy. Leaders of smaller churches are both men and women, although it is interesting to note that in the Baptist family 80 per cent of women ministers are working in churches with 40 members or fewer.

To see a group of God's people develop in their faith and reaching out in service to the local community is a rewarding job at every level.

The role of the congregation

In a small church, you may look around the congregation and not see potential leaders. Pray that God would show you his thoughts on this, and if he shows you someone, be bold enough to take risks with them. It could be that your prayer has to be for a new person to come to fill the role. The relationships built in a church are key to a leader's enjoyment of the job. Everyone will be happy to commit and work hard in a friendly, relaxed environment. Smaller churches are more relationship driven than programme driven and the relationships can be quite intense. New leaders and new members may find it hard to penetrate established friendship circles.

It's small... but it's God's church!

It is important to remember that God knows each church – its limited resources, the level of energy, of time and skills. It is his church and he has a plan for reaching people with the gospel. Rather than trying good ideas, it's important to be doing God ideas. Do a few things well and always strive for excellence.

God uses the leader who has a dream, is willing to risk failure, expects the church to grow and who never gives up. This may well involve change - if you want something you've never had before, you'll have to do something you've never done before.

Supporting each other

Associations across our Baptist Union are doing something they have never done before. The **Small Church Connexion** - part of the **London Baptist Association (LBA)** - has been running day conferences, celebrations, resources days, retreats and workshops for the 112 small churches in London since 2003. They have recently inspired other Associations to replicate the idea. The Regional Teams all work well with the smaller churches but gathering them together for day conferences is a new thing. This has been very well received and from the days together have come small church newsletters, databases and training. This works in various ways across our Union, and it's my hope that our smaller churches now feel that they have not been forgotten and love networking with others who understand church life for 40 people or less.

Hilary Taylor is the Small Church Enabler for the London Baptist Association, and a member of **Ashford Common Baptist Church.**

She is the author of a book and a blog called *A Toolbox for Smaller Churches.*

Visit <https://smallchurches.wordpress.com>



More information about smaller church networking is on the London Baptist Association website www.londonbaptist.org.uk/resources/advice-and-help/small-church-connexion

or join the South West Baptist Association Small Churches Facebook page.

A Small Church Connexion day in the London Baptist Association



Photo: Hilary Taylor





Larger Churches' Conference

With this issue of *Baptists Together* magazine focusing on leadership, we asked **Ken Benjamin**, one of the steering group for the annual Larger Churches' Conference, 'What is it you are getting from going?'

Imagine that you are trying to navigate your way from 'A', where you are now, to a destination that is new to you, which we will creatively call 'B'.

Along the way there are some people who you could potentially ask for help.

I'd suggest that there are three groups of people who are actually helpful.

The first, most obviously, are the people who have been to 'B', and have been sufficiently recently that their experience is still helpful and their directions still work.

The second group are those who are also on their way to 'B'. Even if they don't fully know the way, their insights are helpful, their company will encourage and you stand a better chance of working out the best way together - 'two brains are better than one'.

Thirdly, least obviously, are those who are also looking to get to 'B'. They don't yet know the way, but they can tell you, from experience, some ways that are definitely not the right direction!

Church leadership is so often about navigating a way forward and help along the way is vital. I value the annual Baptist Larger Churches' Conference because all three groups described in this illustration are there, ready and willing to share, in the most affirming environment I have experienced.

For me, this conference is my highest priority outside of my own church events. The box of comments opposite from recent participants show that I am not alone.

As a Union, we gain so much from meeting up with ministers with a variety of styles, approaches and sizes.

At other times, we gain by spending time with others where there is common ground including meeting with ministers leading similar size churches.

The Larger Churches' Conference is specifically designed for leaders of the larger churches in our Union (typically a membership of more than 180). The programme is intentionally planned to be relevant for the challenges the leaders face in leading churches. The aim is to encourage, to empower, to envision and to refresh the leaders in their roles. It takes place each autumn.

I've never found a sense that those who go to this conference think their churches are more important than others. In fact, I've rarely been in a group with less delusion of grandeur, but often there are unique characteristics that go with larger congregations and memberships.

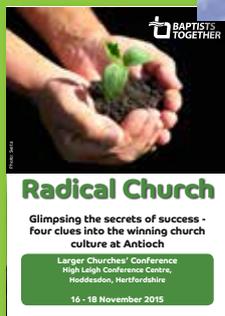
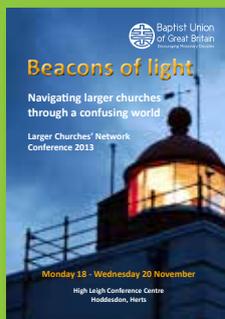
It's so valuable to gain insight from others who, for example, have the joys and challenges of staff teams, or who are also working out the dynamics of enabling participation in larger meetings. There is a wide variety of ways in which ministers of larger churches have unique leadership responsibilities, vulnerabilities and opportunities, and the chance to think and pray through these areas is what this conference is about.

Some of the most helpful navigation pointers are found around informal conversations over meals or at the bar at the end of the day.

We value the fact that the conference is always supported by Lynn Green and coordinated by Tracey Vallance, Team and Events Coordinator at the **Faith and Society Team** at Didcot.

Every year at this conference I find leadership challenges, encouragements and ideas that make a positive difference to my ministry.

Ken Benjamin is pastor of **Chichester Baptist Church**



Recent comments from ministers attending the Larger Churches' Conferences

Always come away encouraged. It is an environment where nothing has to be explained or apologised for, we understand where we are coming from.

This is so valuable, sustaining and empowering particularly because of its nature in serving pastors of larger Baptist churches.

Amazing levels of vulnerability, honesty, openness and safety to be real!

The opportunity for authentic open warm fellowship with great teaching, genuine sharing and inspiring worship with others who get my own context of service is such a helpful combination!

It is a great opportunity to discuss things I can't discuss with anyone in my congregation and which only pastors of larger churches are familiar with. I get to learn from the experiences of others in a similar position to me and I also get to make important connections and friendships with other ministers in my denomination.



2016
Larger
Churches'
Conference



Learning together



Photo: Lead Academy

Chris Porter shares how a new leadership training organisation transformed the culture of his church and released its missional potential

I got stuck in an aeroplane toilet once... seriously I did! The door wouldn't budge. I'm not a small guy and I put my entire weight into trying to shift it and it wouldn't move. An air hostess answered my cries for help and suggested that I push from my side and she pull from hers... so we did... and still nothing shifted. Eventually the flight engineer arrived from the cockpit with a crowbar. Who knew that they have crowbars on aeroplanes? Millions of pounds worth of high tech equipment and they carry crowbars... why?... presumably just in case someone gets stuck in the toilet! Anyway the crowbar worked and I was set free.

I believe that the church in the UK is stuck. No one can accuse us of not putting in the effort. Local churches, para church organisations and denominations are investing vast sums of money, staff and volunteer hours into running the church. If we are honest, however, we have to accept that not much is changing. Church attendance

figures are at best static and, despite some pockets of encouragement, the overall picture isn't great. In our Baptist network we have to be careful we aren't complacent. Attendance figures show that we are holding steady, but when you factor in population growth, we are only really treading water and we aren't having the missional impact that we would love to see. We aren't reaching our missional potential.

As the leader of a local church I have a yearning to see my church being more effective in mission. I long to see us having a great impact on our local community and I dream of the

day where *'The Lord is adding to our number daily those who are being saved'*. (Acts 2: 47). Over the years I have attended

loads of conferences and training events aimed at helping us be more effective. I have gone on my own, gone with other church leaders and taken teams from my own church to these conferences.

Many of those events have been brilliant and inspiring, but often times I have found myself getting quite depressed thinking about all the things I should be doing better, but never really having the time during the event to work with my team to develop an action plan so that things will actually change.

The culture of our church changed because of the action plans we developed with Lead Academy and we prioritised things that had a genuine missional impact.

Then a few years ago the church I was leading at the time - **Easthampstead Baptist Church** (EBC) in Bracknell signed up for a two-year programme offered by a brand new leadership training organisation called Lead Academy. Over those two years we attended four 'learning community' events each lasting two days.



A learning community was a new concept to us, but we loved it. We joined with seven other churches who were similar in size and vision to EBC and we journeyed together through those two years. At each two-day event we received short sharp pieces of learning and input from experienced leaders. Some of that input was from people who were actually at the venue and other input came as we Skyped people all over the world. We had church leaders, business leaders and practitioners who had led churches like ours into the next stage of their growth to speak to us. Then we had quality time in our teams to discuss, debate and reflect on what we had been learning. We also had time to reflect with the other church leadership teams on their experiences and to learn from them. Towards the end of each two-day learning community we developed an 'execute plan' for the actions we would take over the next six months before we met again. Each of the four learning community events had a theme: culture, leadership, discipleship and mission.

Over the two years we became a genuine community where we cared about one another and how we were doing. We prayed for each other and challenged one another and we held one another accountable to the action plans we had developed. We also had a two-day senior leaders' retreat which was a fabulous time of spiritual refreshment and reflection.



Photo: Lead Academy

We took four team members with us to each learning community and all of us were in complete agreement that our Lead Academy journey was unlike anything else we had experienced. It wasn't just a conference or learning event, it was way more than that and most importantly of all things changed in our church as a result. The culture of our church changed because of the action plans we developed with Lead Academy and we prioritised things that had a genuine missional impact.

I have just moved on from EBC to become Senior Minister at **Andover Baptist Church** but as I look back over the last few years of my time at EBC I can see how Lead Academy really helped us make progress towards the vision God had given us. The church grew significantly over those few years and currently 50 per cent of the regular attenders at EBC were unchurched before they started attending. EBC has a thriving ministry to older people, a large and lively Messy Church congregation,

We prayed for each other and challenged one another and we held one another accountable to the action plans we had developed

 **THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT**

Another conference to have benefitted Baptists is the Willow Creek Global Leadership Summit. Jeannie Kendall shares her experience

As I write this, I have attended my fifth Willow Creek Leadership Summit - I have never actually attended that many of any annual gathering, which is indicative of the value I place on it.

So, what is it? Basically, the summit is held in various venues across the UK in October and November over two days, consisting of videocasts, worship at each venue (certainly where we attend), a workbook, and time between each videocast to process the input, either individually or as a team. Speakers are American mainly, and with a mix of church and business backgrounds. Some may find that tricky to translate into UK church life, but I have not found that a problem.

The value to teams is excellent input on leadership (in theory and practice), time to be together and talk about how the teaching might impact on our own settings. It is challenging both personally, and in reflecting on the implications for the leadership teams within the church. As one of our deacons put it, 'As a deacon I felt the conference really empowered me to be a better equipped leader to serve God and my church.'

Why not try to find one near you and give it a try? For more details visit:

<http://willowcreek.org.uk/events>

Jeannie Kendall is co-minister of Carshalton Beeches Baptist Church



creative programmes that are blessing those in need in the local community and tools to help people on their spiritual transformation journey. Much of that was down to the plans we developed at our Lead Academy Learning Community events.

Now I need to make a confession: it was so good and our leaders were so convinced of the value of what Lead Academy were doing that EBC started giving me half a day a week to work with Lead Academy! I am a trustee and since my first experience of a Learning Community, more than 200 other churches have participated in Lead Academy Learning Communities. The feedback we receive from those

The church grew significantly over those few years and currently 50 per cent of the regular attenders at EBC were unchurched before they started attending

churches has been hugely positive and many churches experienced the same thing that our EBC team experienced. At Lead Academy we have run Learning Community programmes all over the country for churches in all kinds of different situations and stages of growth. We have worked with churches from all the mainstream denominations and we have run programmes in partnership with the Salvation Army, the Methodist Church, CPAS, the Evangelical Alliance and various Anglican dioceses. We are currently planning for a programme to start in Scotland in partnership with the Baptist Union of Scotland. We have also extended our offering so that we can invite churches to journey

on beyond the two years into a third and fourth year with us. We have introduced coaching as a key part of what we offer so that in the second year all of our churches are allocated a coach who visits them and encourages them to keep working on their action plans. As a church leader I am so grateful to Lead Academy for providing the crowbar that encouraged, inspired and equipped us at EBC to move towards reaching our missional potential. As a Lead Academy trustee I am really excited by what we see happening as churches join with other leadership teams to learn and grow together and ensure that they aren't 'stuck' and are effective in the mission and vision God has called them to.

Chris Porter was Senior Minister at **Easthampstead Baptist Church** until June 2016 when he moved to **Andover Baptist Church**.



For more information about Lead Academy check out www.leadacademy.net or email info@leadacademy.net



THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

No matter where you lead, the Global Leadership Summit is a world-class experience designed to help you get better and embrace your grander vision—the reason God called you to lead.

"It's all about the learning."

Bill Hybels, Senior Pastor, Willow Creek Community Church

Find out more:

WILLOWCREEK.ORG.UK

An interview with

Philippe Ndabananiye

From AWM Pioneers and Whetstone Baptist Church in Leicester

How did you come to faith?

Both my parents love the Lord, and took us as a family to the local Baptist church. At around 15, I went on an *Alpha* course with other friends in our youth group and after an encounter of the Holy Spirit committed my life to Jesus. After reading Colossians, I came to a deeper revelation that Christ is supreme over all and our all-sufficient Saviour; without him I would be nowhere. Soon after, I got baptised at 17, with three of my closest friends. It was a brilliant and memorable occasion!

What's your church - and what's your role there?

Whetstone Baptist Church in South Leicestershire. I have the privilege of serving in different ways but I particularly love co-leading a small group of new believers and being part of the church leadership team.

What are the key aspects of this role?

I've been on the church leadership team (CLT) for nearly five years. The CLT is called by God and commissioned by the fellowship to oversee the life of the church spiritually and practically as charity trustees. We meet every fortnight and dedicate time to both pray over the church and discuss how best to steward our gifts and ministries for mission while navigating pastoral challenges that come up.

What's your job away from church life?

Since 2009, I have worked full-time in the communications team for a ministry called AWM Pioneers (formerly known as Arab World Ministries), a church-planting mission agency with a heart for unreached people groups. My main tasks involve writing and editing our supporter magazine and website, and finding creative ways to communicate to different generations how God is at work in the Arab world, often in remarkable ways behind-the-scenes.

How did you get into it?

I had always wanted to work in radio and television, but was at a crossroads after completing my broadcast journalism degree. I felt torn between being involved in direct overseas mission or pursuing a path of being a Christian witness in mainstream/secular media. I pushed several doors to no avail. Eventually, the Lord opened the door for a way to combine both passions.



How do you balance the demands of working full-time and your leadership responsibilities in your church?

It's a challenge and a constant learning curve. I have gleaned wisdom from mentors growing up who modelled the importance of balancing work, ministry and family life. I have been blessed with good friends who keep my feet on the ground and ensure I actually have a social life by inviting me to stuff where I can just turn up and don't have to host, serve, organise or share. I have been blessed with a wife who loves the Lord and is supportive of my ministry but is also brutally honest if I over do it or forget to prioritise being at home. Most lately I've been blessed with a baby daughter who has a habit of changing a lot of my plans last minute!

Is there any verse particularly resonating with you at the moment?

Our small group are exploring Ephesians. I never realised how jam-packed full of deep truth this letter was. I'm still pondering our last key verse.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Ephesians 1:18-19



Leaders

Which leaders do our young people look up to and admire? We asked
There was a range of responses; from the internationally

"Malala Yousafzai because she is an inspiration regarding how young she is and also because what she wants to do with her life is phenomenal!"
– Noah, 13

"Malala Yousafzai because she led the way regardless of her age or her gender or her position in society and in spite of the threat she faced because she believed it was the right thing to do." – Isabel, 17

"Nelson Mandela because he stood for what he believed in, even though he was persecuted for doing so."
– Toby, 15

"Music teachers are very patient and persevere when things/ life is difficult."
– Jack, 13

"I aspire to be like Dan TDM (A Youtube Blogger) because he's really funny and brings people together."
– Leo, 11

"I admire our leader because she always organises for our youth group to go on fun, exciting trips and we are all grateful for this." – Lucie, 13

"Satoru Iwata (Former CEO of Nintendo) because throughout his time as CEO, Iwata would never fire anybody no matter how much a product failed. He was incredibly kind, generous and caring." – Callum, 13

"Sandra, because she helps out and organises lots of really fun things for everybody to do and is always happy."
– Robyn, 11

"Footballer Éric Abidal: he had cancer twice and continued to do what he loved doing." – Brian, 12

"Emma Watson is an inspirational figure, not because she's a good actor, but because she's used her status to stand up for what she believes is right. She has pioneered an equality movement (HeForShe) that she knew would bring her unpopularity, yet she did it still because she believed in it so much." – Isaac, 17

"Donald Trump: I don't believe in his values, but he's passionate about what he believes in." – Will, 16



Several young people felt they couldn't respond:

who inspire

youth leaders from a number of our churches to find out. renowned to those they know personally...



"The leader of the Boys Brigade, Mr B, because he's an amazing chess player. I want to be that good!" – *Liam, 15*

"Ghandi: he didn't give up trying to fight for justice." – *Seyram, 16*



"Louie Giglio, who is the head of Passion City Church in the USA, because of his sermons. Some of the messages behind them are really inspiring in the sense that they make you want to get up and change the way you live! Aside from that my main role models are people I know personally!" – *Matt, 19*

"Our youth leader is always helpful and engaging at Sunday School!" – *James, 13*



"Theresa May - because she has taken the role of leaving the EU even though she doesn't believe in it" – *Elinam, 12*

"Martin Luther King because he stood up for what he believed in and stood up against injustice in society." – *Nick, 13*



"Dave Morris – the previous Senior Minister – he spent a long time serving God at our church." – *Fraser, 12*

"Pete, a youth leader, because he was able to start the fire at our camping weekend." – *Max, 13*



"Emily Pankhurst is probably one of my strongest role models because of the inspirational movement she led towards women gaining the right to vote. This has proven so beneficial in today's society and is an invaluable opportunity for us to be able to have our say within democracy." – *Bex, 19*

"Michelle Obama because she's a good role model for women and uses her power and influence to help girls to have an education when otherwise they wouldn't." – *Flick, 17*

"Interestingly a number of teens said they didn't look up to anyone. When I asked why, they said 'Because it always turns out that they're corrupt in the long run'. I think that says a lot about the culture they are growing up in. There appears to be a loss of trust in people whether local leaders (such as teachers in school) but also nationally and internationally." *A Baptist youth pastor*

"Simon – because he's my dad" – *Joseph, 15*



A selection of books on leadership

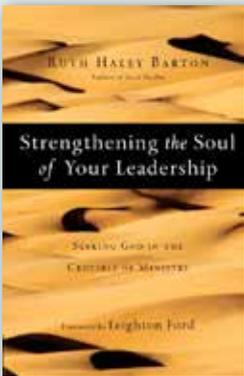


Leading out of who you are

By Simon Walker
Piquant Editions, 2007

The paradox of strong leadership from an acceptance of vulnerability and weakness.

In the first instalment in his *Undefended Leader* trilogy, Walker describes four ego patterns, formed during our childhood, which are the source of our drives and fears, and shows how they determine the needs we try to meet in our lives as leaders. Our natural instinct to use our leadership to meet our own needs rather than others' is what he terms 'defendedness'. One strategy of defended leadership is to build a 'front stage' and a 'back stage', which allows us to reveal or conceal aspects of our self according to how threatening we perceive our audience to be. Ultimately, he suggests, we need to locate a spiritual source of approval if we are to be fully available to serve others freely. A readable but challenging approach, with an emphasis on character, and applicable to every form of leadership.

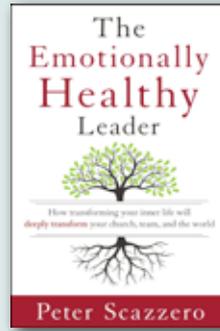


Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership

By Ruth Haley Barton
IVP USA, 2008

A book that offers practical guidance for leaders' own spiritual authenticity and health. Haley Barton, founding president of the Transforming

Centre (a spiritual formation ministry to pastors and Christian leaders) invites an exploration of what happens when spiritual leaders lose track of their souls. Reflecting on the life of Moses, and her own experiences as a leader, she explores topics such as responding to the dynamics of calling, facing the loneliness of leadership, and discerning God's will together. She also describes and recommends a number of practices to help leaders enjoy God themselves, as well as helping others to.



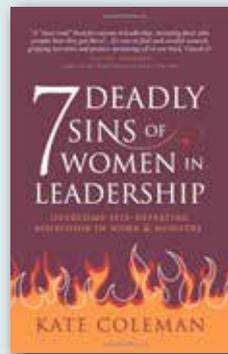
The Emotionally Healthy Leader

By Peter Scazzero
Zondervan, 2015

Scazzero, founder of a large, multi-cultural church in New York, encourages pastors and other ministry leaders to take stock of their inner and outer lives, to make sure they are operating in both areas with a spiritual and emotional surplus.

The first half focuses on four practices that shape a person's ability 'to lead from a deep and transformed inner life': facing your shadow; leading out of your marriage/singleness; slowing down for loving union (tending to your own spiritual well-being); and Sabbath delight. The second half looks at four tasks common to leaders: planning and decision making; culture and team building; power and wise boundaries; endings and new beginnings. Scazzero shows how the four practices described in the first half of the book change - sometimes radically - the way we do things as Christian leaders.

A book that encourages slow, considered self-examination (and includes the author's own ministry struggles), and gets to the core of beneath-the-surface issues of uniquely Christian leadership.



7 Deadly Sins of Women in Leadership

By Kate Coleman
Next Leadership Publishing, 2010

A consideration of the seven most destructive behaviours that women in leadership succumb to - such as struggling with self confidence and being a people-pleaser - and ways of dealing with them. Through the themes of education, empowerment and encouragement, women are equipped to recognise and affirm what is 'good' and unique about their leadership

Coleman, a former President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, has drawn on her considerable experience to produce a practical and insightful book, which was among the first to directly address female leadership with a Christian perspective. Her work (there is an accompanying 7 Deadly Sins leadership programme) has been used in a number of Associations.



Grove Books, which 'aim to stimulate and equip Christian community by providing clear and concise explorations of Christian living and ministry', has a dedicated leadership series. Recent titles include: *Vulnerability in Leadership*; *Evangelical Leadership: Challenges and Opportunities*; *Leadership Resilience in Conflict*; *Leading with Trust* and *Facing Disappointment: The Challenge for Church Leaders*. Visit: <https://grovebooks.co.uk/collections/leadership>

Events



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 18-25 January

The theme for 2017 is 'Crossing Barriers', prepared by the churches in Germany, based around 2 Corinthians 5: 14-20.

www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer



Homeless Sunday Sunday 22 January

An opportunity to listen to God about homelessness, and consider the action we are called to take

www.homeless-sunday.uk



BMS World Mission Day of Prayer Sunday 5 February

A day to pray for the work of mission, with the BMS staff in the UK and around the world

www.bmsworldmission.org



Church Action on Poverty Sunday Sunday 26 February

A day to focus on working together to close the gap between rich and poor

www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday



Fairtrade Fortnight 27 February – 12 March

Events and promotions to make sure the message of Fairtrade is getting a national voice

www.fairtrade.org.uk



Women's World Day of Prayer Friday 3 March

Theme 'Am I Being Unfair to You', written by women from the Philippines

www.wwdp.org.uk/resources



Justification and Justice Saturday 8 April Spurgeon's College

A symposium to be inspired by Martin Luther and Martin Luther King

www.baptist.org.uk/justificationandjustice



Easter Sunday Sunday 16 April



Baptist Assembly Saturday 13 May

Join us with a group from your church at the 2017 Baptist Assembly in Harrogate

www.baptistassembly.org.uk



Christian Aid Week 14 - 20 May

Support and pray for the work of Christian Aid

www.caweek.org/story

Resources

Anointed to do Good

President Rupert Lazar's theme which draws from Acts 10:38. Divided into six sections: relational, physical, integral mission, transformational, spiritual gifts and personal.

www.baptist.org.uk/anointedtodogood

Home Mission Stories

How your giving to Baptists Together Home Mission is changing lives.

www.baptist.org.uk/hmstories

Baptism Cards

A range of six baptism greetings cards, suitable for believers' baptisms.

www.baptist.org.uk/baptismcards

Safeguarding Policies

Safe to Grow (our Union's policy on children and young people) and *Safe to Belong* (adults at risk) are available from our website.

www.baptist.org.uk/safeguardingpolicies

Baptist Union Prayer Guide and Resources

www.baptist.org.uk/prayer

Regular Emails

The *Monthly Update* and *The Baptist Times News Round-up* (fortnightly). Sign up on the Baptists Together website:

www.baptist.org.uk

greenbarnes
www.greenbarnes.co.uk

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STOP**REFLECT****LOOK****LISTEN****REVIEW****With Mike Fegredo**

I've come to the conclusion that most people are creatures of habit. We fall into a pattern of living which works for us and allows us to do the necessities of life without too much thought. It's as though we develop some default settings which bring us back to our comfort zone when our pattern is disturbed. I've also come to the conclusion that churches are the same. Now I don't necessarily think there's anything wrong with this, but there are inherent dangers. For example, when the default pattern of a church has drifted from the core values of the gospel, or when the default settings effectively exclude those outside of the church. And the problem is compounded when a church is blind to its default settings.

In my work as a Regional Minister I've come to see great value in reviewing. Reviewing can help reset the default settings of a church. It can help us to see ourselves more clearly. It can open up options for development. And it can provide a context for us to hear God's voice.

When and how to review

- » Review at times of significant change, for example, during a pastoral vacancy.
- » Review regularly. Many people have an annual health check, or an annual appraisal at work, so why not review the church, or an aspect of church life, each year?
- » Review prayerfully. Reviewing should always be a prayerful process even when analytical tools are employed. We are, after all, seeking divine insights into our reality!

- » Review in company. Whilst it's possible to review internally as a church or a leadership team, experience shows that a neutral facilitator or accompanier will add significant value to the process.

There are plenty of tools available to help churches to review and most Regional Teams signpost the best ones, or can suggest someone to walk with a church through a process. Here's a simple menu of ideas for starters.

The power of a well-chosen question

"If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the answer, I would spend the first 55 minutes figuring out the proper questions to ask. For if I knew the proper questions, I could solve the problem in 5 minutes."
Einstein

Questions disturb the default setting; they take us to a different starting point and help us see things differently. New questions can help us to move outside the box.

For a broad ranging review, the following three questions get to the heart of things. They are simple, but don't rush them. The resources section gives further details.

- » What matters here?
- » Does God matter here?
- » Does what matters to God matter here?

For an outward focussed review, try these three:

- » Where do we see God at work in our church and community and how could we get on board?
- » If money and resources were no object, what great thing would we attempt for God in our community?
- » Who is God sending us to, and are we going?

Growing the good

We've grown accustomed to hearing talk of 'driving up standards' in the public sector, where the approach taken often focuses on fixing what is wrong. Appreciative Inquiry is an alternative approach which identifies what is good and develops it. Here's a simple exercise based on this approach which could be done in a small group, or with a whole church split into groups.

Define – start by asking "What does it mean to be a healthy, authentic Christian community?"

Refer to scripture, the vision and culture of our Union and the *Five Core Values*.

Discover – ask "Identify some moments in the last year when our church has lived up to this calling?"

What was it about these moments that made them so healthy and authentically Christian?

Dream – How could we build on these strengths to release even greater fruitfulness?

Design – From these possibilities, what will we do?

What will need to change to enable this?
For example, what might need to stop?

Deliver – Who will carry this forward?

A final thought

However we choose to review, we need a vision of God – the relational God who is always reaching out to his world in love, and is making all things new. We need a vision of church – sent into the world to love and serve in Jesus' name, not just the church of our limited experience and taste. A healthy review will leave a church grounded in reality, yet stretched beyond the shores of the everyday. A prayer of Sir Francis Drake strikes the balance well.

Disturb us, Lord, when
We are too well pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we have dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when
With the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life,
We have ceased to dream of eternity
And in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wider seas
Where storms will show your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.
We ask you to push back
The horizons of our hopes;
And to push into the future
In strength, courage, hope and love.

Resources

- » Vision and culture of our Union
www.baptist.org.uk/visionandculture
- » Re:focus – a comprehensive consultancy resource
www.baptist.org.uk/refocus
- » Open to God resource, especially the section on 'Renewing the Vision'
www.anabaptistnetwork.com/node/588
- » 'What matters to your church?' John Rackley challenges us to reflect on why we do what we do
www.baptist.org.uk/matters
- » Vision Building Skills in *Skills for Collaborative Ministry*. Sally Nash, Jo Pimlott and Paul Nash
- » Appreciative Inquiry - <http://coachingleaders.co.uk/what-is-appreciative-inquiry>

Compiled by **Mike Fegredo**,
a Regional Minister with the
East Midlands Baptist Association



Christ-like leadership

It says something about my age when I admit that the first film I ever went to see at our local cinema was Jungle Book. There is one particular scene that I have come to love more and more.

It's of three vultures, sitting on a dead tree branch waiting for something to happen. "What shall we do then?" asks one "I dunno – what do you think we should do?" caws another. "Dunno" – "So what should we do?" asks the third, and so it goes on. Dare I suggest that we've all at one time been in a meeting caricatured by that rather pointless conversation. I've used the clip withdeacons and leaders and all too often the refrain comes back "turn it off – it's too close to the bone!"

Yet it contains a very serious message – we all need leadership. Even if we're just going with a group of friends to the cinema, someone has to take a lead - which night? which screening? Often things get organised without anyone really noticing, but nonetheless if you look back you can recognise that leadership dynamics have been at work.

I struggle to understand when as Baptists, in some quarters at least, we seem to have developed something of an antithesis towards leadership. Sure, we can cite examples of individuals whose dictatorial, dogmatic style is a million miles from our collegiate understanding of Christian community. But just because some people have demonstrated bad leadership, doesn't mean we should jettison the idea outright. In fact, I would argue that this is not leadership at all; it may succeed in getting a group of people from A to B, but that can be achieved through coercion, control, manipulation, bullying and a whole host of other techniques.

Sadly, there are those in our world who define leadership simply as an ability to achieve a specified end. I have heard the most awful despots from history described as 'great leaders' solely on the basis that they have been able to exercise power and control over others. Surely true leadership is when a group of people act in common accord for no other reason than a shared sense of common purpose, belief and inspiration, not because they have been imprisoned in a system that offers no other choice.

I would suggest that the very existence of so many examples of poor leadership impels us even more as a prophetic people to nurture and develop those who can demonstrate true, Christ-like leadership among us.

I don't want to be part of a church in which I am controlled or manipulated, but nor do I want to be part of one that sits around all day shrugging its shoulders and wondering what to do. Our calling to be Spirit-led, congregational communities includes developing the spiritual acumen to recognise the God-given ability in those who have been called and anointed as leaders. Let us not allow our poor experiences of control and authority to blind us to the need for effective, missional leadership if we are to realise our potential as a Gospel people.

Phil Jump is the Regional Minister Team Leader at the North Western Baptist Association (NWBA)



Baptist churches 'Beacons of Hope'

"Our desire is that all our churches in Baptists Together may be 'beacons of hope', sharing the good news of Jesus in the places they are," said General Secretary Lynn Green during the October gathering of Baptist Union Council.

Beacons of Hope is being developed out of the *Beacons of Prayer* call issued to churches last year.

Lynn believes that churches that are *Beacons of Hope* in their communities are:

- » Inspiring a longing for God
- » Inspiring a longing for mission
- » Inspiring a longing for relationship

This has been expressed through a visual which also points to the practical outworking of these things in 'loving service, holiness and Holy Spirit empowering'.

"We live in times of challenge, uncertainty and political change and we have a distinctive role to play in our communities," Lynn said.

"We want our churches to have the confidence to be out in their community, sharing the good news of Jesus."

She said that *Beacons of Prayer* – a call to prayer to wait on God and make space for him to move – had resonated with many people.

It is hoped that *Beacons of Hope* would provide a visual focus that would continue to 'inspire and challenge us to be all that God is calling us to be'.

For more visit www.baptist.org.uk/beaconsofprayer

Parish Nursing continues to grow

The ministry of Parish Nursing, developing in the UK since 2003, is growing steadily. With 13 new nurses on board, 91 UK churches currently have a Parish Nursing service for their congregation and community. Thirty-two are Baptist or LEP Baptist congregations.

Increased interest means an extra training course has been planned, which will take place in Peterborough from 6-9 February. The other courses are at IMC Birmingham, in May and October.

Further developments include a Grove booklet, *Nursing and the Mission of the Church*, which summarises a rationale for health ministry and explains how churches may engage in this outreach.

In the most recent questionnaires, around 40 per cent of clients reported they had received spiritual encouragement or support, 40 per cent reported improved physical health, 50 per cent reported reduced anxiety, and 35 per cent reported increased social activity.

For more on Parish Nursing and to read the full story visit www.baptist.org.uk/parishnursing

The future of Baptist Assembly

The future of the Baptist Assembly was discussed at the most recent meeting of Baptist Union Council – and will be a main agenda item at the next one, too.

The Futures Process had recognised the need to do something different with Assembly, explained Faith and Society Team Leader Stephen Keyworth at the October Council.

There were a number of factors behind this, such as falling attendance, its growing cost, and organisational changes. A commitment to three one-day Assemblies for 2015-2017 had been made, with a review after the second year. A wide-ranging survey, undertaken last summer and early autumn, had received 1,000 responses.

The survey had asked people about programme, what they would do without, why have an assembly, and the future of it and what they would support.

It showed that similar numbers of respondents prefer attending a celebration-style event as those who prefer a more deliberative gathering with debates over serious issues. Connecting – people physically being together – was one of the key things to emerge

Stephen highlighted a number of quotes from the survey:

'Assembly is not working in its current format. Stop making it appealing. It is too essential to be popular.'

'Less of a jamboree and find room for serious debate on major issues whether in a Baptist context or outside of it.'

'Be bold, throw a vision of what the Assembly could be out to the movement and see who gets on board with it.'



He said that while there had been much to be proud of about the last two Assemblies, we had been 'tinkering at the edges of a four-day Assembly'. In order to really re-envision Assembly, we need to start a bit further back, 'with a blank sheet of paper'.

Stephen said a decision needs to be made at the next Council about the Assembly in 2018. The final one-day Assembly as planned in the three year cycle will take place in Harrogate in 2017.

A 'broad direction of travel' is needed in March for what happens in 2018 and beyond.

The 2017 Baptist Assembly takes place in **Harrogate on 13 May**, and booking opens in mid-January.

To find out more about this year's programme and book places, visit: www.baptistassembly.org.uk

To see analysis of the responses to the Baptist Assembly survey, visit: www.baptist.org.uk/futureofassembly

For reports on Baptist Union Council visit: www.baptist.org.uk/council

Investing in young Baptist leaders

A new programme to invest in young Baptist leaders will launch in March.

Transform is a **European Baptist Federation (EBF)** initiative that will offer participants aged 24-35 growth in Christian discipleship, character and leadership skills in an international setting. This will be achieved through a mix of training, mentoring and networking over a two and a half year period.



The programme is not only for pastors, but lawyers, educators and more, explained Teddy Oprenov, chair of the EBF Younger Leaders' Programme Working Group.

"It's for people identified by their Unions as having leadership gifts and who want to become more effective Christian leaders in church and society," he said.

Eight have already been selected, with hopes that a further four will join them as part of the first intake.

"Now is the time to invest in younger leaders to help them prepare for key leadership positions beyond their local church in Unions and wider society," Teddy continued.



Saturday 13 May 2017

10:30 – 20:30

Harrogate International Centre, Harrogate

baptistassembly.org.uk