

## Candidate Information

Further to our call for nominations for the position of President of the Baptist Union in 2020-21, and following the stipulations of our constitution, we are pleased to announce that two nominations were received, and are offered for election. Please do prayerfully consider which candidate you believe should serve our Union as President. The question for discernment is who is the most appropriate candidate for this particular season in our Union's life.



# Dawn Cole-Savidge

**Nominated by: 25 members of the Assembly**

It is an absolute delight to be nominated by 25 members of Assembly to stand for election as President of Baptists Together from May 2020. My journey to Baptist ministry has not followed a traditional path, and it is through this unconventional route that I have learnt to both live and minister. I have sometimes been told not to be too controversial, and my response has been a pledge to be “no more radical than Jesus”. I was accredited five years ago, and currently serve as Communities Minister at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church in London. However, my ministry actually began over 10 years ago, and from the beginning I have always found myself working both with and in the margins.



I am a committed Baptist, wholeheartedly affirming the role of the local church and the authority of Christ as revealed through the Scriptures. I have served this commitment to our Baptist identity through previous roles on Baptist Union Council, and through following God’s call by undertaking the accreditation process for Baptist Ministry. I have been a part of YLF, the national Baptist Younger Leaders Forum that spoke into Council, and more recently I have worked with the LBA and other young ministers across London to engage, encourage, and equip young lay leaders in our churches. I’m happily married to my wonderful husband Simon Cole-Savidge (we both took each other’s names), whose invaluable support over the 5 years we have been together has enabled me to tackle head-on the challenges of being a woman in ministry. He is my biggest advocate and I cherish the love that he shows me, and the wisdom he brings to my reflections on my life as a minister in the margins. I trained at Spurgeon’s College for my degree in Theology (following my first degree in Illustration from Falmouth College of Arts). Those of you who know me will testify that this combination of theology and a love and skill for art, leads to creative (and occasionally painted!) sermons, a novel approach to applying my faith practically in everyday life, and a consistent desire to be my authentic self.

Ministering in the margins has enabled me to view the world and our faith through many different lenses, and part of this journey has led me recently to come out as Pansexual. I consider myself to be an open-book and someone who often wears her heart on her sleeve, and whilst I’m unable here to get into the depths of the process that led to my coming out, I’m always open to questions and dialogue that come from a genuine place. My own personal experiences as someone on the margins, as a queer woman who struggles with dyslexia and often completely debilitating back pain, coupled with what I have learnt and continue to learn whilst ministering in the LGBTQ+ community, amongst the homeless, and with the elderly and vulnerable, all motivate me to accept this nomination for the Baptist Presidency. I also recognise the vast privileges that I have, I am accredited, white, educated and married to a wonderful man.

I will bring to the role my outsider’s perspective, balanced with a recognition of the ease and privilege I have, my lived experience of marginality, and my experience of the way our Union operates. My creativity will bring fresh ideas and I will champion those who also find themselves on the margins. It is my passion to lend my platform to those who aren’t normally offered one, and to challenge those who are often privileged because of: their race, age, gender, sexuality, physical or neuro ability, mental health, or even their theology. Whilst being President is a figurehead position, my focus will be on a vision for the year that uses the opportunity it offers to shine a spotlight and create a space for the voices that aren’t heard. I will bring together a group of people who will help share this message, and who will enable me to be held accountable.

I believe that it is through how we perceive and relate to the “other” that we best encounter Christ. Through intersectional inclusion and breaking down the barriers of privilege, we truly embrace all of creation and see a glimpse of the great multitude the author of Revelation describes:

*After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. Revelation 7:9*



# Yinka Oyekan

**Nominated by: 2 Regional Associations**

## **My Background:**

My name is Yinka Oyekan, and I am the senior minister at The Gate one of the Baptist Churches in Reading England. I am honoured to be nominated to stand for the office of President in our amazing Baptist family.

I was born in Edinburgh of dual heritage. My mum is Scottish, and my dad was Nigerian.

I was in Edinburgh studying accountancy when I was saved in 1984 through the ministry of Wester Hailes Baptist Church. I then with their support attended the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow (BTI).

## **My Particular Interest:**

I am particularly excited by the third declaration of principle. It makes clear that "It is the duty of every disciple to bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world."

And so, it is with interest that I am following the very excellent question posed by our current Vice president's proposed theme for his presidency "where do we grow from here". If elected I would love to contribute to the conversation with a follow-up question "how do we grow from here."

Whatever models or forms of mission or activity we embrace in our various congregations, the testimonies coming out of many of our Baptist churches are a great encouragement. Although we have reason to rejoice we can always do so much better. I see a great challenge in our third principle of declaration namely how do we enable and empower every disciple to be able to bear a personal witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.

## **My Past Involvement in Mission:**

I have had a long history in equipping and training individuals in evangelism and mission I've also been involved with Fiona, my wife in the pioneering of churches from scratch. After Finishing at the BTI, I went down to train with Don Double who headed up an evangelistic association called GNC. I travelled extensively supporting Don as his team leader in organising city-wide evangelistic missions throughout the UK and overseas. I was not only involved in supporting Don's mission but organised many of my own and between sept 91 and 2008 was involved in over 40 missions in nations and cities such as; Hungary, Zimbabwe, Germany, Philadelphia, Tanzania, New York, Bahrain, India, Waterford, Zimbabwe, Israel, as well as involvement in home missions in places such as; Cheam, Shotley, Oakhampton, Bleanporth Mission, Dartmouth, Vale of Belvoir, Corwen, St Columb, Coggelshaw, Cumbria, South Reading, Millom, Cumnor, Wellington, Trimly St Mary, Bromley, Penryn, Ipswich, Wellington, and many other places.

My main passion throughout has been in Church Planting because the building of a strong community of disciples is the ultimate goal of evangelisation. Through church planting, Fiona and I planted several communities from scratch. Indeed it was to rescue a failing Baptist Church that brought us to Reading in the first place.

## **An Outpouring of the Spirit:**

In 2008 the church in Reading experienced an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, this was followed in 2016 by a second evangelistic outpouring of the holy spirit labelled The Turning. This second outpouring has resulted in



thousands of believers across many denominations and streams going out onto the streets and sharing their faith with their communities.

Of course, while I am proud of my Baptist heritage, I realise that the job of mission will only truly ever have the biggest impact through working with others in our towns and cities in a collaborative manner. Partnering with other churches and streams (church groupings) will have the greatest impact in reaching the lost.

**Books:**

I have written several books/training manuals some which have been translated into French German and even Portuguese.

**Other Interests:**

In 2002 I stood for local elections (as a pastor), I love painting, I love playing the Sax, and I love writing songs.