

Act justly
Love mercy
Walk humbly

BAPTIST JUSTICE GROUPS

Justice concerns belong at the heart of our faith.

To ensure that the life and structures of our Union reflect our commitment to these issues, a number of groups help us carry forward our commitments in these areas.

Racial Justice Group

Racial justice issues have been recognised as a key concern for our Union for many years, with the Racial Justice Working Group being set up at the March 1995 Council in response to the growing diversity of our country and churches. Since then it has worked towards seeing, in our Union, the realisation of the vision expressed in Revelation 7:9 – *'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 in front of the Lamb.'*

To enable our Union to become fully multicultural, our Racial Justice Group (RJG) has developed or commissioned some helpful resources and initiatives for churches. These include *Pentecost People*, a video-based resource to help churches experience multicultural worship and prayer; *Lest we Forget*, a series of five study reflections for small groups to provide further reflection and interpretation on The Baptist Union's *Apology* for slavery, and *The Journey* that has followed (the *Apology* itself was facilitated by the RJG), and the Sam Sharpe Project. Other significant initiatives include *Wonderful Youth*, a culturally diverse youth resource, and *Inspiring Leadership*, a gap programme which seeks to encourage mainly Baptist young people of colour, between the ages of 18-23, to develop their leadership potential in Jamaica with the support of our Union's long-standing partner, the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU), and *Journeying to Justice* (edited by Anthony Reddie), the first comprehensive appraisal of the journey towards equity

and reconciliation among British and Jamaican Baptists. Recent developments include the Racial Justice blogs and a series of webinars exploring issues of racial justice following the murder of George Floyd. The RJG, whose past moderators include Pat White and Gale Richards, has also spearheaded the development of Just Aware.

For more, visit baptist.org.uk/racialjustice

Just Aware

It has become increasingly clear that much can be gained by bringing together previously separate Baptist initiatives concerned with race, gender, and disability around a single focus on justice. One outcome of this convergence is the development of a new resource, Just Aware which can be used across our communities to help groups of Baptists explore and enlarge their understanding of and commitment to justice as a fundamental core value.



Just Aware is designed to help small groups within our Baptists Together community to deepen their commitment to issues of justice in their local context – facilitators can be available to lead sessions with groups of deacons, regional teams or any other group that thinks that Just Aware might be able to enrich their work of mission as Christian disciples.

Gender Justice Group

Baptists have been accrediting women in ministry for 100 years. However, despite ordaining women for longer than other denominations, significant challenges still exist for present day Baptist women and we are lagging in equality within some of our practices and structures. In 2020 we are still hearing painful stories, the silencing of women's voices, misogyny, sexism and outright rejection because of gender. This is not acceptable and is a deep cause for lament.

In 2019, Jane Day was invited to offer sustained input over three years to make progress and to overcome barriers towards greater equality in ministry in Baptist life. To date there has been much progress in equipping and enabling. There has also been an intentional offering of one-to-one and group coaching, as well as creative opportunities for women to serve at a regional and national level. The area of most concern is the lack of opportunities for women's stories to be heard. The Gender Justice Group is exploring opportunities for a deeper listening of their narrative, alongside a focussed piece of theological research.

For more, visit baptist.org.uk/genderjustice

The Baptist Union Environment Network

The Baptist Union Environment Network (BUEN) is a new Baptist network that connects people with a passion for the environment and climate change. BUEN - Spanish for 'good' - aims to inspire and enable the Baptists Together network of churches, associations and colleges to:



- » recognise the goodness of God's creation
- » share in God's mission to care for it and respond to the climate and environmental crisis in practical ways at local, regional and national levels
- » work for justice for creation and people impacted by environmental change

BUEN is building a network of environmental partners across our regional association life who can journey alongside churches to enable them to declare with God in worship, life and action that 'creation is good' (Genesis 1:25). In each association, it is looking for at least two environmental partners, one of whom comes from the millennial generation.

It is encouraging churches, associations, and national bodies to take steps towards being carbon neutral by 2035.

For more visit baptist.org.uk/buen, or contact BUEnvNet@outlook.com

The Joint Public Issues Team

The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) is a collaboration between colleagues in the Baptist Union, the Church of Scotland, Methodist and United Reformed Churches working together on justice and political issues. It combines the expertise from these denominations and helps churches increase their effectiveness by:



- » working together on justice and political issues
- » providing resources and support for people in local churches
- » responding to government consultations

The team has mobilised on a number of public policy issues – here is a snapshot of activity in recent months:

- » 'Stay Alert to Justice' Messaging – highlighting the injustices faced by those most adversely affected by the pandemic – particularly those in poverty, those with no recourse for public funds and the BAME community.
- » Daily calls to prayer for numerous communities around the world experiencing suffering/injustice. #stayandpray.
- » Promoting a re-shaping of the economy to enable the wellbeing of all people and the planet.
- » Ongoing scrutiny of Universal Credit and exploration of alternatives.
- » Reset the Debt - a campaign to address the growing household debt crisis caused by Covid-19.

Find out more and get involved at jointpublicissues.org.uk

Disability Justice Group

The Disability Justice Group exists to encourage our churches and members to value people of all abilities equally. We believe there is not only a justice issue here but also a mission opportunity. There are people with physical and intellectual disabilities in our neighbourhoods who are often overlooked or excluded. For us to be truly church we want to extend Jesus' welcome to them.

The Group is organised nationally and regionally. There is a national theology group that provides resources for local churches and promotes inclusion nationally and into colleges. Regional representatives link between the national and the local with the goal of at least one representative for each region. So far we have London, Eastern, South West, South East, North West covered.

For more, visit baptist.org.uk/disabilityjustice