



Candidate Information

Further to our call for nominations for the position of Baptists Together President in 2022-23, and following the stipulations of our constitution, we have received four nominations and these are now offered for election. We are pleased to share with you here the information they have provided and ask you to prayerfully consider which candidate you believe should serve as Baptists Together President. The question for discernment is who is the most appropriate candidate for this particular season in our Union's life.

ANDREW AND KATH DODD

Since 1992, we have been in ministry together at Hawkshead Hill Chapel in the heart of the Lake District. Always a small chapel family, we soon realised that this special place was to be shared, and a prophetic word clarified our vision to be an 'oasis' to all who walk by or call in to visit us. We have moved through 3 distinct stages: The whole family of God (of all ages) worshiping together; the major renovation and development of the buildings to include a retreat flat; the implementation of the 'oasis' vision. Chapel ministry has in some ways never been 'viable,' yet God has enabled the work to continue by means of some much-appreciated Home Mission support, the generosity of Friends and mainly through our joint bi-vocational ministry.



Since the completion of the building work, the ministry has expanded. The garden and chapel are now always open, and passers-by speak of a peace and 'presence', which has led to many profound conversations and some baptisms. We have good relations with the local Hill community, and we use the premises for community events. Our worship is flexible and participatory, and welcoming to Christians from many traditions. The location is ideal for retreats and we have been developing this ministry. In recent years we have enjoyed being part of the NWBA Team (Church Life) and this has given us new opportunities for development and ministry.

Prior to coming to Hawkshead Hill we were members of a large Baptist church in Lytham St Annes. Here we led the worship group as the church journeyed through the early years of the charismatic and vineyard movements, and between us were involved in many different areas of church life including youth work, Bible study groups, music ministry, diaconate, mums and toddlers and pastoral work.

We have worked ecumenically for many years. Andrew worked for 9 years for Churches Together in Cumbria and is currently the President; Kath helped start a local Churches Together Group, is a trustee of CTiC and teaching member of the Cumbria Ecumenical Spirituality Group. We have both trained as Spiritual Directors, and all of this has opened us up to the treasures of the wider Church.

For our vision, we have been drawn to Matthew 11:30, paraphrased by The Message as, 'Walk with me and work with me, watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.' We would seek to encourage a healthy work/life balance which brings joy in our relationship with God and with others; to encourage an openness to the Holy Spirit which releases living water; and to encourage the embracing of our identity as children of our Heavenly Father which brings gratitude, humility and lightness of heart - all of which are attractive to others and points them to Jesus. We would hope to undertake this by means of retreat and teaching days, drawing on all IT resources available, with an emphasis on personal contact with leaders and churches – with no situation too small to visit or engage with.

Whilst we are from a small Chapel context, we hold an expansive vision inspired and informed by our call and experience. We have been called to ministry together and together we would want to serve the Baptist family, bringing all that we can be, to help the Church, as the bride of Christ, to be all that She can be.

ANDREW: Came to faith at 18 through the ministry of a Christian rock band. He trained as a solicitor for 6 years, gaining a law degree, and became a partner in general practice in Lytham at 25; 11 years later he responded to the call to ministry received shortly after coming to faith; in 1988, he left the practice and began training at Northern Baptist College; he gained a BD (supporting his studies and the family by agency

work for the CPS) and was ordained in 1992. He was called to Hawkshead Hill and Ambleside Baptist Churches and became a Senior Crown Prosecutor in the CPS (one of the first to undertake bi-vocational ministry leading to accreditation); towards the end of his time in the CPS he started training in Gestalt psychotherapy; he retired from the CPS in 2014 and subsequently became a member of BACP.

KATH: asked Jesus into her heart aged 4; Diploma in piano performance; BSc in Maths and Social Science; teacher training; 2 years as a teacher with UFM in Brazil; piano teacher; school music teacher; trained for ministry with Cumbria and Blackburn Diocesan Institute (MA in Practical Theology) as well as with Northern Baptist College; ordained in 2001; administrator and initiator who is learning that every good idea isn't a 'God' idea, and is currently engaged in the 'relentless elimination of hurry'!!

We both love to walk the fells, read, and ride our electric bikes. Photography, poetry, and music are important to us. We have 3 married children, and 3 grandchildren. At this point in our lives and ministry we are ready to welcome new challenges, and, with the Baptist family, look forward to discerning God's will together.

For more info visit www.hawksheadhillbaptistchurch.org.uk

STEPHEN GREASLEY

Stephen was born and brought up in Wakefield, West Yorkshire. At the age of 19 he went to Churchill College, Cambridge to study History, and it was there in February 1980 at a Billy Graham Mission that he became a Christian. He was baptised at Eden Baptist Chapel in March 1981. Sensing a call to preach in those early days and, through the encouragement of Wakefield Baptist Church and the Yorkshire Baptist Association, he began training for the ministry at Regents Park College in 1984. The following year he married Sharon at Willowfield Parish Church, Belfast.



Their first Church was Matson Baptist Church, Gloucester (1988-1998). Matson is a 1950s council housing estate and it provided Stephen with a valuable introduction to urban mission and ministry. They saw steady growth during those years; partnered with two local churches to create a youth and community project; and saw a complete rebuild of the church premises.

In 1998 they moved, with their two children, to Pear Tree Road Baptist Church, Derby. This is a black majority Church serving an inner city area with a large Moslem population on the doorstep. Stephen became chair of the Derby Forum of Faiths working closely with other faith leaders in the city. He also became heavily involved in the EMBA and the work of Derbyshire Baptists taking a keen interest in the life and welfare of some of the smaller county churches. Stephen served on Baptist Union Council for a number of years, and it was his great privilege to be part of the Working Group that put together “Five Core values for a Gospel people.”

The congregation at Pear Tree grew significantly during those years. They developed a very successful ministry through a Community Cafe, and ran a regular Cafe Church on Sunday evenings. They also saw major building refurbishments. But sensing God’s nudge to move on, Stephen accepted a call to become minister of Gillingham Baptist Church, Kent, and he and Sharon settled there in 2011. Over the past years they helped to rebuild the congregation after a long pastoral vacancy; partnered with Christians Against Poverty in establishing a Debt Centre at the Church; and learned how to use the Church premises to develop and support community ministry and income generation. The Church completed a £1million building project in 2019 to facilitate better access to their Victorian buildings; create a more open and welcoming space; and enhance their community presence.

Stephen followed his passion for history by writing Church Histories for the three churches he has served. He also completed a History of the Baptists of Derbyshire 1650 -1914, as well as ‘John Smyth, Thomas Helwys, and the quest for religious liberty.’ Sabbatical studies allowed him the space to read, visit, and study issues connected with serving the poorest communities in our country. Incarnating the Gospel remains very much part of his Christian DNA alongside a love of preaching and grappling with the scriptures.

“If called to serve as Baptists Together President I would take as my theme “SACRIFICE” and explore the sacrifice of Jesus for us (and how that still has missional power), as well as our sacrificial response to Jesus. As disciples of Jesus today we still have the power to make things happen if we are willing to lay our lives on the altar for Jesus and be willing to become ‘Fools for Christ’. A call to renewed commitment and service would be a core strand in my Presidential theme. My fondest wish would be to have the opportunity of sharing this life transforming message with churches and Associations throughout the presidential year 2022/2023.

While this last year has taught us that technological solutions have a key role to play in the future mission of the Church, we need to remember that technology is only a tool. Ultimately the gospel is intensely personal, and as disciples of Jesus we cannot lose sight of this dimension as we look to reconfigure the Church for tomorrow.”

BETH POWNEY

I feel very privileged to be nominated for the Baptist Union Presidency at this time with so much change in our society and therefore I believe in our churches too. Let me take this opportunity to tell you a little about myself and then to share what God has laid on my heart for the Presidential year, should I be elected.

I am currently the Regional Minister Team leader for the Eastern Baptist Association, having served in both pastoral ministry and parachurch ministry before that. I live in Thetford, Norfolk, with my husband Stephen. Stephen is retired and our family of three children are all married and live in different parts of the country. We are now blessed with seven grandchildren, the latest of which being twin girls born in January this year. We delight to spend time with our family when possible and to enjoy the beautiful countryside of Norfolk, Stephen has a passion for model railways and I love many creative activities and have developed a love of doing jigsaws over recent months!



2020 has seen a resurgence of walking in our local areas and as I have taken many walks I have often walked in the forest around where I live. A forest has an amazing and beautiful eco-system which, by definition, is completely interdependent. The tiny acorn, the lichen, the moss, the fallen leaves, the fungi, the saplings, the mighty oaks and conifers all have their part to play to make this place healthy, breathing and alive. Our churches too are eco-systems which function at their best when every person is released to bring their voice to contribute to the mission of God.

Many of our churches do an amazing work of reaching out to a real cross section of our society and their churches reflect this. However, alongside this I am aware that there are many people in our churches who do not feel they have a voice. They feel marginalised, disadvantaged or not listened to, this can be for a myriad of reasons. Who am I talking about? Here are some possibilities.

This may be children and young people who don't fit in our systems; the young people who we struggle to understand because they are neurologically atypical and we think they are being disruptive; those with disabilities, visible and invisible; those who make life choices which may be strange to us and which may not fit neatly into our world or theological view; those who travelled to this country 20 years ago to find work and a home here, but who have sat at the back of our churches since, not being sure that they have a voice; those who feel the church is for the middle class and not for people like them; the women who over the years have been disenfranchised by male dominated systems. I am sure I could go on!

However I believe these are also the people to whom Jesus went first, the people who Jesus took by the hand and said come be with me, be drawn into the centre, do not sit on the side lines.

When praying about whether to accept this nomination, God gave me the phrase of being a 'voice for the voiceless'. I believe this is about raising up the voiceless in our churches, these voices need to be heard more loudly, for it is these voices who will reach those who are like them with the gospel. If our faith and our leadership is modelled in a monochrome way then where is the welcome for the rich diversity which is the human race for whom Jesus died to bring life to all peoples and all nations?

I want to celebrate all that is happening in many of our churches who do reach the disenfranchised and marginalised, but also to encourage us to go further, to be braver, and to release a myriad of voices who will bless and praise God's name and together grow God's kingdom and strengthen his church to be a reflection of all humanity.

HAYLEY YOUNG

Hi, I am Hayley Young, and I am the Regional Minister: Mission Enabler for the South Wales Baptist Association and also the minister at Rumney Baptist Church in Cardiff.

I have been in local pastoral ministry for 13 years serving in churches in SCBA, CBA & now SWaBA. I was called into ministry in my early 20s and was ordained when I was 24 after studying at Spurgeons College. I believe that the local church should be about people who are hungry to live out the way of Jesus. I believe in the power of God's word to change lives.



We are living in a time where things are changing.

Covid-19 made us stop and look at the world around us. Many of us were exposed to the ugly truths of divided communities: divide by their race, gender, religion, economic circumstances. These divisions are not just words but a dark reality for many people who are excluded, murdered, discriminated against and more.

But I believe there is hope for our communities.

The theme I would bring if I was President of Baptist Together is **'Building a Bigger Table'**

As a Baptist Movement we have the opportunity to bring Jesus to our communities by expanding a table: providing the kind of hospitality that Jesus offers.

We have a challenge ahead of us about how we can create a bigger table: to welcome more people. To spend **time listening, learning, hearing, knowing and respecting** everyone.

As a Baptist Movement we have a challenge ahead of us about how we relate to the culture around us and the digital world. Everything is changing at a fast rate. In the midst of this change, we have a generation that are already redefining the world in which they want to live.

I would like to encourage our churches and missional communities to find ways of creating authentic community online; embracing our Baptist DNA of radical dissent and enabling a culture where all generations are involved and heard.



I believe we need to create the space in both the word we live in and the digital world we inhabit to build a bigger table as we pull up a chair: **To be authentic, hopeful, compassionate, challenging and a Jesus focused community.**

As disciples of Jesus, our distinctions all reveal the unlimited beauty of God; who is the source of each of us. I believe this rich diversity is the Holy Ground where God speaks. It is this diversity that means we need to learn how to create a bigger table together.

It's a privilege to be nominated as a candidate for the BU Presidency: if elected I would aim to **encourage all our family across the Baptist Movement to pull up a chair and help create a bigger table...**

Baptist Union of Great Britain, Baptist House, PO Box 44, 129 Broadway, Didcot OX11 8RT
Tel: 01235 517700 Email: faithandsociety@baptist.org.uk Website: www.baptist.org.uk
Registered Charity Number: 1181392

January 2021