



Dear Friends

Update: March 2021

A year ago, in March 2020 as news of the pandemic had taken hold and lockdown loomed, we had little idea of the path things would take and the painful impact Covid-19 would have on our lives. More than ever we have been reminded of the uncertainty of life, and that we cannot control things in the way perhaps we once thought might be possible. In the midst of uncertainty, there remains the certainty of all that is God. God who has promised that he will never fail us or desert us.

We offer you this update in the context of uncertainty to help in a small way as we seek God together.

Can we draw your attention to the election process of the President of the Baptist Union 2022-23 which is included below? Details of the candidates and the voting process have been sent to all churches and ministers. We would encourage you to engage with this process and help us discern together as we walk forward into an uncertain future in the strength, guiding and leading of God.

Standing on the shores of Galilee, Jesus knew the reality of uncertainty in the lives of the people to whom he spoke and Jesus knows the uncertainty of our lives today, both individually and together. He told the story of the farmer who goes out to sow seeds, uncertain of where the seed would fall and what the growth would be. Planting the smallest mustard seed, only God knows the growth and the scope of the branches and the shelter it provides to the birds who build their nests in it.

We pray that in the uncertainty of these times, hope, faith and love will continue to grow.

Beth, Diane, Hilary, Jane, Mary, Mat, Mike, Paul, Steve and Wale
Faith and Society Team

This month's featured stories:



**CAMPAIGN FOR A
COVID-FREE
WORLD**

**Campaign for a Covid-free
world - campaigning for
equitable global access to
Covid-19 vaccinations**



**Bible reading in the
pandemic - survey finds
Christians gaining hope and
confidence with Bible**



**Learning to tell our story
afresh
- a Lent reflection by Ruth
Gouldbourne**

News:



Election for President - 2022-23

Following the nomination process at the end of 2020, we have received four nominations for the President of the Baptist Union 2022-23. Details of the nominees have been sent to every church and minister by email where possible, along with details of how to vote. **Please share the profiles with your Church Meeting** so that as many as possible can be involved with the process of discernment. Voting this year will primarily be online and will be open **until 31 March**.



123Go

Imagine with us... it's Easter 2022, and across the country thousands of people are **GOing** out onto the streets and into public spaces, creatively sharing **1** gospel, **2** by **2**, over **3** days! **123GO!** is a collaboration between the Light College & Collective, The Turning, and RiverTree Ltd seeking to make that amazing vision a reality. Ordinary Jesus followers sharing an extraordinary and life-changing message in a variety of ways - like prophetic art, acts of kindness and healing prayer. In 2021 we're preparing the ground by inviting you to spend three days prayer-walking your community. **Our first prayer initiative is happening 2-4 April. To find out more visit www.123go.life or join the community at www.facebook.com/123go.life**



WCC Stewards Programme 2022

The World Council of Churches (WCC) invites ecumenical youth to be stewards at the 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 2022. The Stewards Programme aims to bring together a dynamic and diverse group of 160 young people from all over the world, from 21 August to 10 September. They also get to be involved in the Ecumenical Global Gathering of Young People, and is a great opportunity to experience an international conference. The deadline for applications is 10 April. [Click here for details.](#)



Webinar recordings

Don't forget that you can catch up on all our webinar recordings on a variety of topics, which are available from our Resource Library. [Click here to find them.](#)

This month's featured resources:

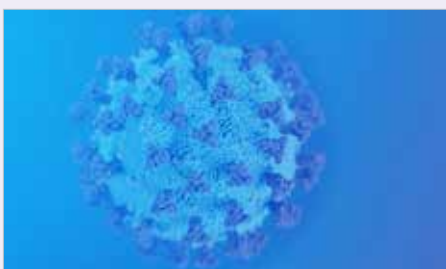


March Prayer Diary

The **March Prayer Diary** is now available to download from our website. The particular themes this month are:

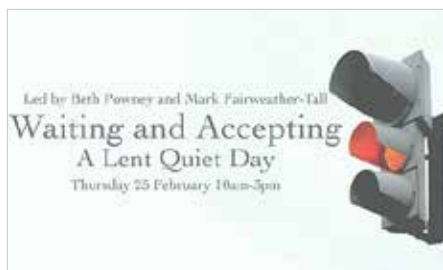
- The Yorkshire Baptist Association
- Mothering Sunday
- The Baptist Union Council
- The Joint Public Issues Team

Please print out a copy for those unable to access it.



Coronavirus Guidance

We are continually updating our guidelines for churches to reflect the latest Government guidance and ensure that everyone is kept safe. Please see the **Essential Guidance area** of our website for the latest information, which has been updated to reflect the easing of lockdown restrictions.



‘Waiting and Accepting’ – a Lent Quiet Day

If you missed our online Quiet Day last month, led by two of our association team leaders - Beth Powney and Mark Fairweather-Tall - you can still join in using the recording. They offered a much-needed opportunity in these troubled times for anyone in the Baptist family to take time out... to pause and rest in the goodness and sovereignty of God. [Click here to take part in the Quiet Day.](#)



Politics in the Pulpit?

This new lectionary-based preaching resource from JPIT is available by video and podcast. In weekly 30 minute episodes, they'll ask how reclaiming the justice issues present in the biblical texts helps us to be good news in the world today. Each week will feature a different guest in discussion with Beth Allison-Glenney to discern the political dimensions present in the Scriptures. Together, they will reflect on how they connect with the week's current news and our role in the Kingdom of God. We hope this will be a useful and inspiring tool to resource preachers and worship leaders. Episodes will be released on Tuesday mornings. [Click here for this week's episode with Dan Pratt.](#)



God's Grander Design

God's Grander Design is a 17 minute video that tells the story of what God has been doing on the brand new Graven Hill estate in Bicester through Orchard Baptist Church and Helen and Nick Baker. [Download the video to share in your church](#), along with sermon and small group notes.



Certificate in Parenting for Faith (online)

A brand-new Cliff College Online parenting course has been launched in partnership with BRF's Parenting for Faith ministry. This course will equip students to support parents and carers as they disciple their children and explore what parenting for faith might look like in their church and community. Led by Becky Sedgwick, this 12 session online course offers an opportunity to complete an assignment and receive a Cliff College Certificate in Parenting for Faith. [Click here for more information.](#)



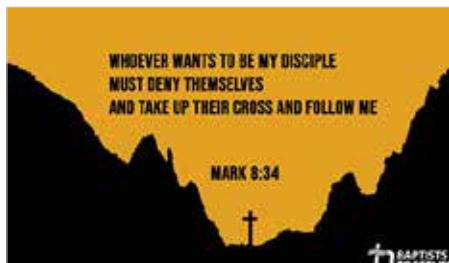
Babies and Toddlers: Nurturing your child's spiritual life

Rachel Turner's new book, *Babies and Toddlers: Nurturing your child's spiritual life* is part of an exciting and innovative new set of resources from Parenting for Faith. Written for parents and carers of very young children, this short, gentle, accessible guide shows how parents can help their children meet and know God, even as they themselves are exploring faith. Alongside the book are five short free videos and a free downloadable guide to help you use them to run sessions at pregnancy, baby or toddler groups. [Click here for details.](#)



A positive image

The Centre for Ageing Better has launched the first free image library showing positive and realistic images of people aged 50 and over. The images – which are free to download and use online and in print – depict older people in non-stereotypical ways. [Click here for details and a guide to usage.](#)



Visual Reflections

We regularly post visual reflections on our [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) accounts. These high quality images can be used for personal reflection and in churches, with our blessing. [Click here to find the current selection of images on our Flickr account.](#)

This month's featured online events:



Emotional Rollercoaster training - March and May

With thanks to the [Children, Young People and Families \(CYF\) Round Table](#), training from [Transforming Lives for Good](#) (TLG) on their new Emotional Rollercoaster resource will be coming to all our regional associations. [Click here for more details](#), and contact your local association to book your place for this online training on Zoom.



World Day of Prayer - Friday 5 March

This year's World Day of Prayer material has been written by women in Vanuatu on the theme of 'Build on a strong foundation'. Whilst meeting to pray in person may not be possible this year, the [resources are available to download](#) and there is also [a video about Vanuatu](#) which could be shared during an online prayer meeting.



Small Church Connexion Spring Retreat - Saturday 6 March

This online retreat will be led by Sandra Kimber on the theme 'Guided by a star...' Join with others and take some time out to see what God is saying in these strange and difficult days. [Click here for more information and to book your place.](#)



INVEST online open evening - Wednesday 10 March

INVEST is a year-long opportunity to explore mission in creative and innovative ways based within a missional context in the South West of England. It is for anyone who is a follower of Jesus who wants to spend a year growing deeper in their faith while serving the mission of God in some incredible settings in this stunning part of the world. This webinar is also an opportunity for church leaders & pioneers from the SWBA family who might be interested in hosting a placement to find out more about INVEST. You will need to [book a free place for this webinar](#) to receive the necessary Zoom details to attend.



The Rabbi and the Minister: Exploring Jewish/Christian Friendship - Thursday 11 March

Robert Parkinson delivered the Whitley Lecture in 2020, *Finding a friend: the Baptist encounter with Judaism*. He will reflect on this experience at the beginning of this event with Rabbi Fabian Sborovsky and they will both go on to explore Jewish/Christian friendship, drawing on their own friendship and opening this out for discussion/dialogue with participants. This online event starting at 19:30 will be facilitated by Andy Williams, Director of Inter Faith Relations at the Blackley Centre. To book please email andy.williams@blackleycentre.co.uk



DNA Christian Discipleship and Leadership taster days - March-July

Do you... Dare to dream about your destiny in God? Realise that your dream demands development? Want your life to make a difference? DNA is for EVERYONE; whether for you it is a Christian gap year, sabbatical, education or alongside work and family. Find out more about how DNA can help you at one of their Taster Days (currently being offered via Zoom). [See their website for details.](#)



Becoming a Sight Loss Friendly Church - 18 and 23 March

Torch Trust, the Christian sight loss charity, are holding free 30-minute Taster sessions about becoming a Sight Loss Friendly Church (SLFC). These interactive Zoom sessions offer an opportunity to hear about all the benefits of this free resource, as well as a chance to meet the SLFC team and ask questions. [Click here for information and to book your place](#) or email slfc@torchtrust.org



Interested in finding out more about Urban Expression? - 27 and 29 March

Joining a team? Forming a new team? Offering support? Or just interested? Since Urban Expression began in 1997, we have held Open Days from time to time, inviting anyone interested to spend a day with us. As we can't meet together in this way at present, we are instead offering a couple of Open Zoom calls – one on a Saturday morning, the other on a Monday evening – each for just 90 minutes. These will be opportunities to learn more, hear stories from teams and ask questions. Participation is free but please book your place to receive the Zoom link, at admin@urbanexpression.org.uk.



Five habits of CMD: Workshop - Wednesday 21 April

In October 2020, Baptists Together launched a CMD Handbook setting out expectations of recognised Baptist ministers for their continuing ministerial development (CMD). The approach centres on five habits of CMD which ministers are asked to adapt to their own needs and contexts. This workshop (delivered in two two-hour sessions 10am-12pm and 1-3pm) supports ministers in that process of adapting the five habits. Cost £35. Click here [to book for the workshop](#)



Attentiveness & Action workshop - Thursday 22 April

The Incarnate Network is hosting a series of online workshops around the theme of Attentiveness & Action. The next of these will be from 10:00-11:30 when Hannah Malcolm will help us reflect on the current climate crisis. Hannah is an ordinand who writes and organises around climate justice and the Church. [Tickets are just £5 and are available here.](#)



Black Light - April-June

Urban Expression and the Ascension Trust are running this online course over 8 evenings exploring various topics, including: The Black presence in the Bible and church history, The experience of Black communities in the UK, Reverse mission and multicultural church, Engaging with racism in church and society, Black and White in partnership. This is an updated version of a course first developed by Les Isaac and Stuart Murray Williams, which ran in London in the 1990s, and will be offered as a freestanding module alongside the popular Crucible course. Speakers include Ben Lindsay, Kate Coleman, Robert Beckford and Bev Thomas. [Click here for details](#), and [to book](#).



Baptist Assembly Online – 13-16 May

We are very excited that, being an online event this year, Baptist Assembly 2021 can be made available to all, offering a unique opportunity to bring a large number of people together to join in worship, prayer, Bible study and consideration of current issues. The sessions will be free for anybody to join via our website – but [register to join us](#) and we'll send you all the links you'll need in advance. [See our website for more about the weekend's programme](#), including seminar topics, [information about our keynote speaker Shane Claiborne](#), and registration. We hope you and your church family will be able to join us during the weekend.



Thy Kingdom Come - 13-23 May

Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray for more people to come to know Jesus. What started in 2016 as an invitation from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to the Church of England has grown into an international and ecumenical call to prayer. [Click here for details and resources.](#)



Baptist World Congress - 7-10 July

The Baptist World Congress is a one-of-a-kind opportunity for Baptists worldwide to stand together. For the first time in our history, Congress will be offered as a fully virtual event, making it more accessible than ever before. Join us online as the BWA family continues to stand together during this critical time – celebrating our unity across borders, languages, and ethnicities. [Click here for details and to register.](#)