



Update: December 2021

Dear Friends

Welcome to this month's Faith and Society Update with news, resources and events. We share these with you at the start of Advent; a time of waiting and listening, a time of expectation and holding.

Advent, which for many churches and leaders is so often the busiest time of year; a time of planning and preparation, a time of activity and pressure. This year is no exception although it comes with the added anxiety of Covid-19 and all the stories of humanity's failure. Maybe this is our Advent journey. We walk along the rocky path between Nazareth towards Bethlehem and we join Joseph and Mary on a very uncertain road towards a very uncertain future. And yet we receive and we share a message of hope in the midst of uncertainty, light in the midst of darkness and the certainty of God's love in the midst of change and disruption.

Our prayer this Advent is that you are filled with the love of the Almighty God in the midst of busyness and uncertainty. Our prayer is that you know his peace as you journey towards the Christ Child born in the uncertainty and vulnerability of birth in the worst of places.

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

This month's featured stories:



'They listened and they cared about us' - experiences of a Hong Kong family supported by their local Baptist church



British churches and mosques launch a new programme of local conversations - coinciding with national Inter Faith Week



A tree to remember - a new art installation at Belle Vue Baptist Church to help mark, celebrate and wonder at life

News:



Baptist Union Presidency - 2023-24

A reminder that we are inviting nominations for the person who will serve as Baptist Union President in 2023-24. The President may be female or male, lay or ordained, and will be chosen because of gifts and experience which will help to communicate our Baptists Together vision and mission priorities. [Click here for details of how to make a nomination](#). **Nominations must be received by 31 December 2021.**



Let's talk about... Baptist Assembly 2022

Let's greet, meet, eat, support and talk with one another at next year's Baptist Assembly! Next May we will be gathering in person at Bournemouth on 14-15 May to hear what God is saying to us as a Movement - with many creative connecting and conversation spaces. Following the huge success of our online Assembly this year we will also be broadcasting live our main sessions on YouTube. Best of all, if you [pre-register today you will receive a discount code before tickets go on sale](#) in the New Year.



Show Your Heart: New campaign resources

The Nationality and Borders Bill is continuing to progress through the House of Commons. At the next stage, expected to begin in the coming weeks, MPs will have the chance to offer and vote on amendments to the bill. Our Joint Public Issues Team has produced a new campaign pack to help you raise your voice on the bill to *Show Your Heart* for asylum seekers and refugees and work directly with your MP to influence them to vote for amendments. The resources help individuals and churches to prepare, pray, persuade and participate around the bill. [Click here for more information and to download resources](#).



Coronavirus Guidance

On 27 November 2021, the Prime Minister announced new precautionary measures in light of the emergence of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 in the UK. These focus on rules around international travel, and on the compulsory wearing of face coverings from Tuesday 30 November in shops and on public transport for those not exempt. Updated Government guidance on face coverings does not make it mandatory to wear face coverings in churches in England, though we note the ongoing recommendation that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces. Wearing face coverings remains mandatory in churches in Wales, as it has been throughout 2021. We continue to suggest that it is both sensible and appropriate for churches to take some measures to limit the spread of Covid-19 and we trust churches are already engaged in considering how to make Christmas events accessible and safe for all. We will monitor the Government guidance and statements in the coming weeks and update our guidance if necessary. [Please keep checking our website for the latest information](#).



Annual Returns process and Church Update

The Annual Returns process is now open and will be available until 31 January, so that Church Secretaries can provide us with the latest contact details and statistics for our churches. Thank you to all the Church Secretaries who have already completed their Return, and who maintain their records using the Church Update system throughout the year. We will soon be preparing the mailing list for our next *Baptists Together* magazine - please be aware that some recent changes may not have been updated before this mailing list is prepared. [Click here for details about the Annual Returns process](#).



Association for Church Editors annual Magazine Competition

The search is on for Britain's best church magazine! The Association for Church Editors organises an annual national competition for church magazine editors and for 2022 they are asking for A5 magazines printed in colour (even just on the cover). The closing date for entries is 7 February 2022. [For full details, please see their website.](#)

This month's featured resources:



December Prayer Diary

The [December Prayer Diary](#) is now available to download from our website. The particular themes this month are:

- The European Baptist Federation Mission Partnerships
- The Eastern Baptist Association
- Our Joint Public Issues Team
- Looking back over 2021 and praying for the year ahead

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



New Racial Justice blogs

Following the launch of our series of blogs last year, we are publishing a new set over the next few weeks. Last year's series of reflections was conceived by our Racial Justice Hub in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the worldwide protests that followed.

This year's blogs build on that series, and ask what happens next. How can we develop an anti-racist church? What does it mean to be genuinely multicultural? Click here [to find our racial justice blogs.](#)



Hope is here: prayers for Advent

For 2021, our Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) has produced five Advent candle-lighting prayers, for the four Sundays in Advent and Christmas Eve/Christmas Day services. These new prayers are themed around peace and justice, and are suitable for all kinds of services which feature the lighting of advent candles. [Click here for these and other Advent resources from JPIT.](#)



Hope for Lebanon - prayer in Advent

As we walk into the Advent season, the European Baptist Federation (EBF) has created short videos on different themes for each week. You and your church are invited to remember our brothers and sisters in Lebanon. Watch the videos, light a candle and pray for hope for Lebanon. The videos will be available on the [EBF Facebook site](#) or [YouTube channel](#). Thank you for joining in prayer for Lebanon.



Satellite before Christmas

This Christmas, the team at 4Front Theatre (who also provided the online children's programme at our Assembly this year) is offering a 1-hour-long fun faith-filled pan-tivity performance filled with festive fun for all! Join Larry and Tim for laughter, songs, fun and festive silliness as they prepare for an out-of-this-world Christmas party, but will the discovery of a strange glowing space rock ruin all their Christmas plans? There are three types of performance available - Filmed performance (£150), In-person performance (£450 + travel and accommodation), the DIY 4Front show (£150). For more details or to enquire about booking a show, please email: christmas@4front-theatre.com



LAMPS Collective - touring live through December 2021

LAMPS is offering two shows this year to bring everyone back together again for some theatrical family fun!

Babs of Bethlehem: With angels at the window, wise men at the door and preparations underway for a mysterious ViP guest, will innkeeper Babs ever be able to slow down enough to notice what really matters?

Bread and Starlight: This poignant and beautiful one-woman show tells the story of Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, and a very special Advent visitor. Bread and Starlight combines story-telling, song and space for reflection in a grown-up pause for breath before Christmas.

For details of both shows and booking see www.lampscollective.com



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed from 18- 25 January, and the theme for 2022 is 'We Saw His Star in the East'. Materials for the Week have been prepared by the churches of the Middle East with English and bilingual Welsh/English versions available to [download from the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland website](#) now.



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 events:



Unity in a Racialised Society - Thursday 2 December

Join Churches Together in England's first Racial Justice Working Group online webinar in partnership with Sankofa Collective UK and the Faith Forum with speakers Professor Robert Beckford and the Revd René August. Click here to [find out more about the speakers and book your place](#).



Holistic Mission Guide webinar - 4 and 7 December

A series of Webinars has been planned to highlight some of the articles from the Baptist World Alliance Holistic Mission Guide. These webinars will reflect themes related to Advent, Epiphany and Lent. The first in the series will be held on December 4 at 11:00 Eastern Time (16:00 GMT) with a Redux on December 7 at 16:00 India Time (10:30 GMT). Click here to [find out more and register](#).



Tax Talk - Friday 17 December

The UK tax system is one of the confusing issues for Hong Kong newcomers. Baptists Together has invited a Fellow of the Association of Certified Chartered Accountants (ACCA), Vincent Lim, to lead a seminar on tax and answer questions. **This webinar, from 13:00-14:45, will be delivered in Cantonese.** If you have new Hong Kong migrants in your community who might find this helpful, please [encourage them to register](#).



Fresh Streams - 10-12 January

The past season of ministry dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic has had many challenges and many opportunities for local church ministry and we need to encourage leaders who are tired, weary and in need of reconnecting with God. The three days at The Hayes Conference Centre will be just that - times of refreshing as we (re) connect with one other and (re) connect with God, as we spend in his presence. [Click here to find out more and book your place.](#)



Baptist Assembly - 14-15 May 2022

We are busy planning next year's Baptist Assembly in Bournemouth, when our keynote speaker will be Alan Donaldson, newly appointed General Secretary of the European Baptist Federation. Next year's Assembly will be a hybrid event with the opportunity to join with some of the sessions online. Please save the date, and plan to join us in person, or online. Pre-register to receive a discount code before registration opens in late January. [Further details are available on the Baptist Assembly website.](#)



Satellites - 9-13 August 2022

Satellites is a new five-day summer gathering designed to inspire teenagers to live with God at the centre of their lives all year round. Organised by Youthscape, it's taking place at the East of England Arena in Peterborough, 9-13 August 2022. Tickets are already on sale - and there's a super saver ticket rate of just £85 as an incentive to book this far in advance. [Click here for more information.](#)