



## Faith and Society

In our work, the Faith and Society Team holds closely to the Baptist Together vision of 'Growing healthy Churches in relationship for God's mission' and the concomitant five core values.

The Team is constantly alert to helping associations, colleges and the local church in their mission and their worship. Holding the Union's vision and values before us, we have focussed on building the relational glue that holds our covenanted bonds.

The work of the Team is very diverse. From theological reflection to engaging on issues of justice in our contemporary context; from working with other denominations to enabling a Christian voice in the public square, we seek to connect and enable voices across Baptists Together. We make every effort to hold the breadth of this work gently, aware of the delicate nature of many conversations and interactions.

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### Communications - Feel like one team

Whilst we provide some resources, our role is often to signpost and to share the good that is already happening. We aim to listen carefully to our Baptist sisters and brothers so our offer can be contextual, particular and relevant.

#### Home Mission

Working with Fuelcast and the associations, four new Home Mission films have been enabled. Additionally a new Home Mission area of the website [www.baptist.org.uk/homemission](http://www.baptist.org.uk/homemission) was launched at the beginning of September. This includes a number of Home Mission stories to be used by churches.

The Baptists Together social media accounts continue to share stories and reflections from across the churches. In 2022 we worked with Baptists as some took over our accounts for a short period to provide a new and broader voice. An example of this was the 'Three Peaks Challenge' in aid of Home Mission and the sharing of Home Mission prayer points throughout the day of the walk.

#### Baptist Together magazine

Building relationships across Baptists Together is an important focus for the printed magazine. In 2022 this included sharing stories of churches and reflections on aspects of our life together.

#### Creation of a broad Baptists Together Communications support space.

The intention is for all those working in communications regionally and nationally to develop relationships, share with and support each other. This has enabled us to work strategically together when appropriate to increase the effectiveness of all our communications.

#### Co-ordination of Communications across Baptists Together

By facilitating conversations about the co-ordination of comms. across the specialist teams and with regional leads, the associations and specialists teams are able to understand the various workstreams that are running across Baptists Together.

The Comms team has supported and worked closely with the specialist teams in the production of a range of information packs, including employment and safeguarding. They have also worked closely with new projects to host and populate areas of the website; a good example of this in the work being done with the Intern programme.



## Communications - continued

### Baptist Times

*The Baptist Times* remains an important place to share and grow relationships by enabling Baptist voices to be heard across our movement, thus helping us to connect and listen well to each other.

### Online shop

A little over a year ago we updated our online shop ([www.baptist.org.uk/shop](http://www.baptist.org.uk/shop)), including adding a number of new titles to the range and streamlining the order process. We hope that the shop will continue to be a helpful resource for our churches.

During 2022, we have been particularly encouraged that the top selling items include *Making a Splash* (which explores the questions that are often asked about faith when someone is baptised – and is primarily aimed at younger people as they prepare for their baptism), *Baptism, belonging and breaking bread* (a study guide for preparing for baptism, written by Paul Beasley-Murray) and our membership and baptism certificates. The increase in sales of these items is an indication that, after a necessary pause on baptisms and new memberships due to lockdown, people are again making commitments to Jesus and their local church. This has also been backed up by increasing numbers of baptisms being reported to the *Baptist Times*.

### Crisis Media

The Team is available to advise churches on issues that have reached or may reach the media. We work with Ministries and the Safeguarding teams to provide appropriate wording and help churches know what to say and when.

## Embrace Adventure

### Hong Kong project

The project entered its second year in 2022 with the theme of connection and relationship; spreading the message of hospitality and the love of God. The aim is to build deeper relationships with churches as well as connecting the Hong Kongers. Based on the network of the first year, the project is continuing to grow relationships with the HK-welcoming churches and work with them, listening to their needs and concerns.

### Pioneers and Mission Forum

The team has been active in supporting the work of pioneers across Baptists Together, sharing learning wherever possible and enabling listening. The Mission Forum meetings are supported and enabled by the Team.

## Seek to be a movement of Spirit led communities

### Assembly

Assembly is a significant piece of work for the Team.

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## Justice - Share a hunger for God's coming Kingdom

### Racial Justice

As the Team focusses on building relationships and enabling careful listening, a number of projects were facilitated by the Faith and Society team in 2022, including:

- **Sam Sharpe lecture** - delivered by Professor Kehinde Andrews.
- **Visions of Colour** - An anti-racism course aimed at equipping ministers as they lead.
- **Racial Justice Advocacy Forum** - an ecumenical group that seeks to speak prophetically on behalf of Black and Brown Christians to the government on racial injustice challenges and reparations.
- **Wonderful Youth** - A new resource produced in conjunction with Christian Aid focussing on climate change.

### Gender Justice

Project Violet continues apace with the first group of co-researchers beginning to bring together their findings.

At the beginning of September 2022 representatives of the associations met together in Baptist House to reflect on the Baptist context for women in ministry and to enable the voice of women in Baptists Together as they advocate for others in their regions.



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### Public Issues

The Faith and Society team has continued to resource local churches as Baptists respond to the large number of social issues evident in wider society. The team also seeks to represent the Baptist voice in the public square, helped in large part by our participation in the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT).

The six hopes for society on which the work of JPIT is based are as follows:

- A just economy that enables the flourishing of all life
- A society where the poorest and most marginalised are at the centre
- A world that actively works for peace
- A planet where our environment is renewed
- A society that welcomes the stranger
- A politics characterised by listening, kindness and truthfulness

In 2022 this resulted in a large amount of the work being focussed on advocating around the cost-of-living crisis and the on-going refugee crisis.



## Ecumenical Partnership - Inspire others

### Representation

One of the ways in which we build relationships is by appointing people to represent Baptists Together in the wider ecumenical and global scene. An important part of Faith and Society's remit is to ensure that people are appointed who can articulate Baptist distinctives in these circles, network with others to facilitate joint action and that reflections are offered back into Baptist structures to enable learning and receptive ecumenism to take place.

### Ecumenical Relationships

We continue to build relationships with our ecumenical colleagues, both at local level encouraging churches to work with their neighbours through practical advice, and through more national means as our presence at the 2022 World Council of Churches' Assembly shows.

We also send representatives to other denominational spaces, such as the Church of England Synod.

### Theological reflection

In the application process for new churches and LEPs, the team is required to reflect theologically on what it means to be Baptist. It is important for this to be held across the movement and for theological reflection on identity, and other issues, to be enabled by the team, but not defined.

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