



Dear Friends

Update: March 2024

This month's update comes to you in the midst of Lent. For many this is a time of quiet reflection and prayer.

As we prepare to follow Jesus's journey to the cross and onwards to celebrate the power of the resurrection, we take time to reflect on our own journey.

The beautiful hymn found in Paul's letter to the Philippians reminds us of the enormity of all that Jesus did for us. Taking human likeness, becoming as a servant, emptying himself; and all for our sake (Philippians 2:5-11). This surely shapes our own reflections, our own journey and challenges us to follow.

Lent is a time for personal and corporate reflection, seeking God alone and together. Together we have been joining in prayer each week and each month – the link to the **monthly prayer broadcast** (on Wednesday 13 March) can be found below.

We pray that your personal journey, prayer and reflection draws you closer to the heart of God's love. And together, as we journey towards Easter, we bow our knees and proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Every blessing

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



Feel free to forward this email to others in your church, or encourage them to sign up to receive our regular emails by completing the form at the bottom of every page of [our website](#).

This month's featured stories:



'How we examined the scriptures - every day' - whole church Bible reading week at Sandbach Baptist Church



Bruno and other friends: encounters and reflections - Baptist minister Ivan King honours ordinary people



For those in peril on the sea... How parish nursing in the north east is meeting the health needs of local fishermen

News:



Churches to champion voter registration

As a General Election approaches, a new initiative has been launched that will equip local churches to increase democratic participation through registering people to vote, providing information about the need to have appropriate photo ID, and encouraging people to vote on polling day. The Baptist Union of GB has been announced as one of the ambassadors for the **Voter Registration Champions** initiative set up by Citizens UK.

Our **Joint Public Issues Team** has some **helpful information** about it - including a podcast 'Ten minutes on... voter registration'.

The Electoral Commission has warned that 8 million eligible voters may not vote at the next General Election because they don't register to vote in time; 4 million eligible voters may not vote because they do not have appropriate Photo ID; and 14 million eligible voters may not vote because they are not motivated to turn out to vote on election day. This lack of participation is skewed – you are at greater risk of not being able to participate in the democratic process if you are: young, a non-UK national, rent your home, have moved recently, live in an economically-disadvantaged community, or are from an ethnic minority.

The Voter Registration Champions scheme has been set up to engage groups to address this, and encourage democratic participation, in a non-partisan way. **Local churches are encouraged to sign up**, as a way of helping to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate and be heard in the democratic process. Champions will be provided with free support and resources to help them enrol voters. Please consider whether your church could sign up.



Baptist Assembly 2024

'When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place!'

Registration for this year's Assembly in Telford from 17-19 May is now open. Baptist Assembly 2024 is over Pentecost weekend and will be a wonderful opportunity to be filled afresh with the gift of the Holy Spirit. We will dwell on the words of Acts 2 throughout and prayer will be central. Friends from across the Baptist family will be joining us for what is hoped to be a genuine, contemporary Pentecost for Baptists Together. Our General Secretary Lynn Green will be our Keynote Speaker - 'For me there is an expectation this will be a special and holy space and you won't want to miss out'. **Find out more on our website.**



Project Violet

Project Violet is a three-year participatory research project that is examining the place of women in Baptist ministry. The aim of the project has been to understand more fully the theological, missional, and structural obstacles women ministers face in the Baptist community in England and Wales and identify ways forward. Its findings will be released in early May - and to help the Baptist community prepare, five podcast episodes were released last month. Click here to **access the podcasts** and **find out more about Project Violet** on our website.



Apply now for The Bill Snelson Young Ecumenists Fund

Are you 18 to 35 years old, or do you know a young adult who would be enriched by an ecumenical experience abroad? The fund was set up in 2023 by Churches Together in England and the Snelson family in memory of Bill Snelson - a dedicated ecumenist, who was General Secretary of Churches Together England from 1997 to 2008. Applications are open until 31 March 2024. [Click here for more information.](#)

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:

- East Midland Baptist Association
- Mothering Sunday
- Baptist Union Council meeting
- Smaller Churches
- Easter

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



Resurrection People from Engage Worship

Engage Worship offers a new resource for churches to use after Easter. Resurrection People has a [Church Service Pack](#) outlining seven services. These include prayers, all-age ideas, readings, poems, songs, sermon outlines, responses and more. Accompanying downloadable videos, PowerPoints and scripts are included. It is accompanied by a [Personal Devotions book](#), with five readings per week allowing congregations to carry on the journey throughout the week, going deeper into the themes. These can also be adapted for small group study. [Click here to find out more.](#)



Hosting a Hustings

Whilst we do not have a date for the next General Election, we know that one will be called this year. During the period before a General Election, churches and community organisations often organise election meetings (sometimes known as hustings) where members of the public can listen to and ask questions of the candidates who are standing for election. They do this as a public service, to support the democratic process, to facilitate public debate and as a contribution to the common good. This opportunity for respectful discussion in a neutral space is often appreciated by candidates as well as voters. Our Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) has developed some guidance to help churches organise safe and successful events which comply with the law. [Click here to download the guidance](#) to help you prepare.



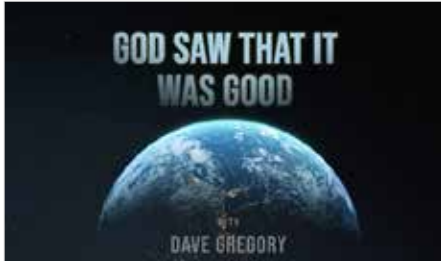
'Your Faith, Your Online World'

The Baptist Union has been part of a collaboration producing this innovative project aimed at empowering young people aged 11-16 to explore what it means to be a Christian and how that interweaves with navigating life online. The project aims to facilitate a space for self-reflection, faith exploration, and thoughtful, faith aligning online engagement. [Click here to find out more about this free resource.](#)



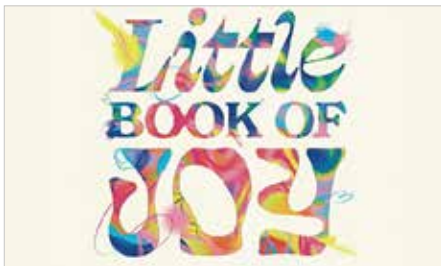
UK Church Administrators Network (UCAN)

Effective administration is crucial to the effective impact of the local church. UCAN exists to support the church and promote the Spiritual gift of administration by bringing administrators together, sharing excellent resources and providing high quality training opportunities. Click here to [find out more about joining the Network](#).



'God Saw That It Was Good'

This new series of films with Dave Gregory weaves stunning visual imagery with a narrative entwining science and faith, taking people deeper in the wonder, mystery and meaning of the world. Looking in fresh ways at our rich, full, and yet fragile world. The films are a collaboration between the [Baptist Union Environment Network](#) (BUEN) and Fuelcast Media, funded by a grant from Scientists in Congregations. They can be used alongside a downloadable resource with large and small groups of people who want to explore and understand God's invitation to share in caring for creation. Click here [to access the films and resource guide](#).



Christian charity launches new Little Book of Joy

Lifeworlds' new resource *Little Book of Joy* is the latest edition to the charity's Little Book series. Vibrant, upbeat and eye-catching, this pocket-sized booklet explores what the Bible says about joy, how it can be lost, found and restored. The Little Book range has wide-reaching audience potential, from schools to churches to students, and from individuals to community groups to chaplaincies, using the whole collection or singular titles. Click here to [order your copy of Little Book of Joy](#) - resources are freely available but donations appreciated.



Lifeworlds launches 'Little Brick of Little Books'

Alongside the release of the new *Little Book of Joy*, Lifeworlds has launched a new boxed collection, the Little Brick of Little Books, which comes pre-loaded with 48 little books - eight copies of the six titles in the range - *Little Book of Help*, *Little Book of Faith*, *Little Book of Chaos*, *Little Book of Prayer*, *Little Book of Jesus*, and the *Little Book of Joy*. Once used, the brick can be re-filled via Lifeworlds online store, where Bible resources are available for free or for a donation. Lifeworlds has also set up a 'Gift a Brick' scheme, inviting individuals and churches to gift a Little Brick for distribution to vital ministries such as hospital chaplaincies, youth groups, homeless outreaches, prison chaplaincies, or community outreach initiatives. For just £25 donation per brick, supporters can nominate a ministry of their choice. [Click here for more information](#).

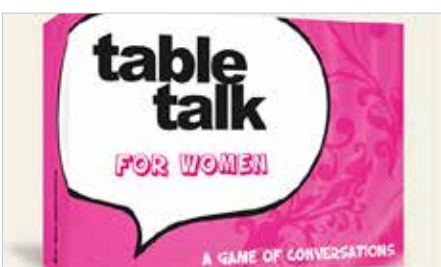


Table Talk for Women

This Friday is International Women's Day, and the Ugly Duckling Co is offering 50% off their *Table Talk for Women* conversation pack **until 13 March**. This resource helps create opportunities for women to have life-changing conversations about the important questions in life. [Click here for details and to order a pack](#) - discount is applied at checkout.

This month's featured events:



Welcome Conference - 8-9 March

Welcome Churches' vision is for every refugee and migrant to be welcomed by their local church. Bringing together Christians arriving and settling in the UK and the churches that are welcoming them, the Welcome Conference in Bedford is a unique opportunity to celebrate the incredible contributions that refugees, people seeking asylum and migrants make to their local communities.

Click here [for details and to book your place](#).



Praying Together Day of Prayer - Wednesday 13 March

There will be a live virtual prayer gathering from 10:30 - 11:00 when General Secretary Lynn Green will be joined by special guests Jade Zerk and Pete Everitt to lead us in prayer and reflection focusing on March Council. Please join in prayer at 10:30, or at any time using the recording of the prayer gathering. In this season of prayerful stillness and waiting, let's join together in prayer - please share this and encourage others to pray too, using the link: www.baptist.org.uk/prayingtogether



Hope for Justice conference - Saturday 13 April

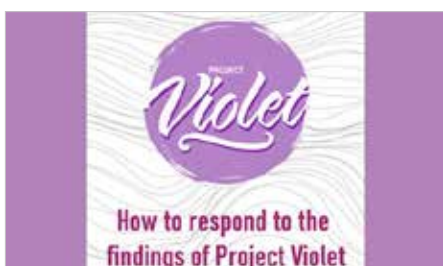
This day conference from the Racial Justice Advocacy Forum (RJAF) will focus on the critical issue of police and criminal justice reform/transformation within Britain, specifically from the perspective of racial justice. This meeting is your opportunity to share your views and vision for policing in Britain, as we journey toward the third decade of the 21st century. Your lived experience and insight will significantly contribute to the conference, making it a truly impactful and meaningful event.

[Click here for details and to register](#).



Paths of Peace – Mediation Skills for Interpersonal Conflicts - from Friday 26 April

What can you do when relationships become strained in your church or faith community? Do you want to help but are concerned about how – anxious not to make things worse? Baptist minister and mediation trainer Joanna Williams is hosting a five-session course for anyone interested in transforming conflicts in a church setting – and beyond. Click here [for more details, and to book](#).



Project Violet - sharing the results - Thursday 2 May

The findings from [Project Violet](#) will be released on 2 May. This significant piece of research began in 2021 and explores women's experiences in ministry. You are strongly encouraged to join the conversation and meet co-leads Jane Day and Helen Cameron as they help Baptists Together navigate the findings. Not to be missed! Click here to [register to join online](#) at 19:00 and hear the results firsthand.



Black Light Course - Starting 2 May

The Black Light course was developed 25 years ago by Les Isaac and Stuart Murray Williams to engage with contemporary concerns about racism and injustice. It explores the presence and contributions of black people in the Bible, in church history and in Britain today. It celebrates the remarkable growth of the church in Africa and the exciting 'reverse mission' impact on Europe. Running weekly from 2 May until the end of June - click here [for more information and to register](#).



Baptist Assembly - 17-19 May

We're looking forward to welcoming you and your church to this year's Assembly, when we'll be 'All together in one place' over the Pentecost weekend in Telford. Registration is now open, with tickets available for the whole weekend, or part of it. **Book by the end of March to receive 10% off the price of adult tickets** (tickets for under 18s are free). **Have a look at the [Assembly website](#)** for details of what's being planned, and book your place now!



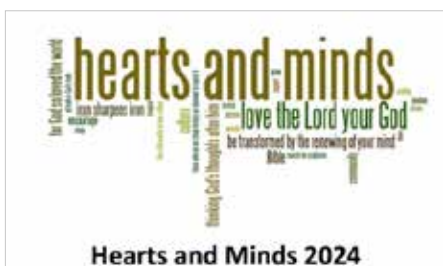
Explore online - Wednesday 22 May

Discover what parish nursing could offer to your local community by joining on Zoom for a free 1 hour session at 10am or 7pm hosted by Regional Nurse Coordinator Dawn Stephens. Find out what parish nursing is about and how it works. Just choose a time that is convenient for you then ask for the Zoom link at enquiries@parishnursing.org.uk



Baptist Church: Back to the Future? - Friday 7 June

Baptist Theology North will take place in Huddersfield with the opportunity to hear presentations from two different perspectives on Baptist church life - from Paul Fiddes and Alex Harris. Cost £30, including lunch and refreshments. For more information, or to book a place, contact Sally Nelson at sally.nelson@sthild.org



Hearts and Minds Conference - Thursday 13 June

This theological conference mainly for Baptist ministers will be taking place at Bristol Baptist College and will be an opportunity to present and listen to papers within a friendly, supportive environment. The Keynote speaker will be the Revd Dr Peter Morden. Hearts and Minds is an annual day conference sponsored by Bristol Baptist College, Cardiff Baptist College, and Regent's Park College. It is designed to create a hospitable space for Baptists to think and talk about theology together. To offer a paper, contact Helen Paynter paynterh@bristol-baptist.ac.uk by 1 May and to register, email reception@bristol-baptist.ac.uk by 1 June.



Cutting Edge 2024 Residential Conference - 24-26 June

The UK Church Administrators Network is offering this three-day conference in Northampton for Church Managers, Leaders and Senior Administrators. With the theme 'Serving with Love' it will include fellowship, teaching, equipping, resourcing and consider who we serve, the impact of serving with love in management and dive into learning some new skills through a range of seminars. Click here [for more information and booking](#).



Christian Resources Exhibition 2024 - 9-10 October

Join hundreds of local church leaders and anyone involved in Christian work and ministry, at the Marshall Arena, Milton Keynes to find new ideas and resources, specialist advice and inspirational worship and teaching. More than 150 organisations will be waiting to meet you, offering everything from contactless card machines to customised keyboards, heating to seating. CRE provides you with a great context for networking and creative thinking - your one-stop shop for church supplies, resources and ideas. Click here [for more information](#).



Thrive Conference - 18-20 October

Thrive is a network for those married to Baptist ministers in the UK - providing online prayer gatherings, local meet-ups, friendship and support. Their biennial weekend away will be taking place at High Leigh conference centre with speakers Barbara and Bill Carpenter, and worship led by Andrew and Jenny Fitzgerald. [Find out more on the Thrive website](#) and use this [booking form to book your place](#).