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Summer 2024

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The magazine for the Baptist Union of Great Britain

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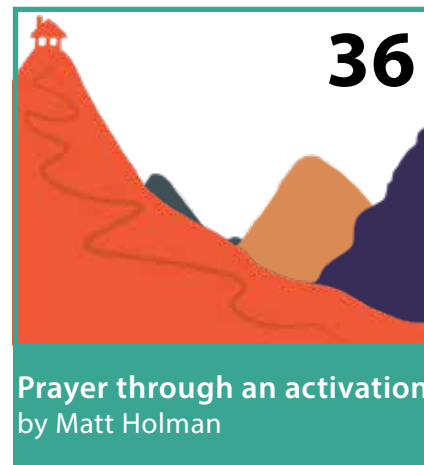
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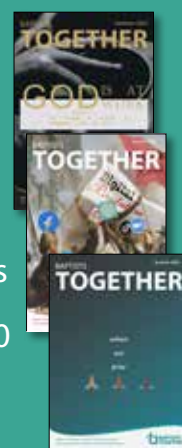
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WHEN WE PRAY

When Pete Greig founded the 24/7 Prayer movement he thought he had prayer sown up. "If only people would pray like us," he remembers, "then revival would happen."

But then his wife Sammy became seriously ill - and was not healed in the way he prayed for. Indeed, dangerous seizures remain an unwelcome part of her life. It led to Pete - the founder of a prayer movement now more than 20 years old - writing a whole book and more about unanswered prayer¹.

Prayer is of course an integral part of the Christian life: Jesus regularly took himself off to pray, encouraged persistence in prayer, and gave us the words of the most prayed prayer of all. Major events of the early Church were preceded by prayer. Paul encourages the Church in Thessalonica to 'pray continually'. The Bible is full of stories of prayer, and of prayers.



So we know God calls us to be prayerful, and so many of us are. But would anyone admit to having prayer 'sown up'? (In the gracious interview he gives overleaf, Pete readily confesses to being 'a bit insufferable' in the early days of 24/7 Prayer.) There's always more to learn, even for those who have walked with Christ over many years.

It's why, when Lynn Green and the Core Leadership Team

encouraged a season of prayerful waiting and stillness in December, it helped set the course for this edition of *Baptists Together* magazine. While prayer has featured regularly in the editions over the years it has never been the direct focus in the way it is here.

The pages before you attempt to showcase prayer from different angles across our Baptist movement. The edition is therefore not an introduction to prayer, but a snapshot in the ways it features in the lives and ministries of our people and churches.

Our hope as an editorial group - our prayer even - is that your own prayer life and connection with God will be enriched and renewed by what you encounter in these pages.

¹ *God on Mute - Engaging the Silence of Unanswered Prayer* by Pete Greig (2007, updated 2020)

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CREATING A CULTURE OF PRAYER

a conversation between
Lynn Green and
Pete Greig



Pete Greig has been teaching on prayer for more than 25 years. He founded the 24-7 prayer movement, which has spread into more than half the nations on earth.

He has written award-winning books about prayer, including *How To Pray, God on Mute*, and *How to Hear God*. And he also founded the Lectio 365 app, which many Baptists use today.

General Secretary Lynn Green recently met Pete at Waverley Abbey, where she asked him a range of questions about prayer

Reflections on the 24-7 Prayer movement

Lynn Green

One of the things you're most known for is the 24/7 Prayer Movement. This was something birthed in God's heart, but you obviously helped considerably to get it off the ground.

I wonder if you might tell us about the 24/7 Prayer Movement, its impact – and your own involvement?

Pete Greig

It's a great question, because on the one hand, 24/7 Prayer was a sovereign move of God. But sometimes I think we play down our role in partnering with God in things, maybe with good motives.

Augustine says, 'Without God, we cannot. Without us, God will not.'

And I like that balance.

We made sure the prayer room was very creative and interactive, which I think has been very important, especially for children in prayer.

We taught on prayer. It's amazing to me how prayer doesn't come up that much when it's on almost every page of the Bible.

The other thing we've done practically throughout the years is work very hard at gathering and telling stories. Because if you want to motivate people to pray, just tell them it works. And give an example, and they want to do it.

You may be thinking this is all very well for you, you're a prayer movement.

But I guarantee every single minister reading this, if you go to your congregation and ask "Who here has seen a real, genuine, no

exaggeration, miraculous answer to prayer?" You'll have many, many hands go up.

And if you then just start to ask people their stories, your faith will be rocketing by the end.

The apostle Paul says: '*Faith comes by hearing*'. (Romans 10:17)

I think it's very important to tell the stories of answered prayer, to inspire people and remind people this is the great power we have, as followers of Jesus.

Unanswered prayer

Lynn

How can you create a culture of sharing stories of prayer, when it needs to be more nuanced than just 'God's doing the miraculous' every week?

God doesn't always answer prayer. Sometimes we wait a very long time, and it feels like there's no answer. Sometimes it doesn't pan out like we'd hoped.

So how do you set that kind of culture that is both expectant and faith filled, but is also realistic about answered prayer and unanswered prayer?

Pete

This is very personal for me. In our first year of non-stop prayer, we thought we'd found the big red switch. We thought: "If everyone would just pray the way we were, it would make revival happen!" We were probably a bit insufferable.

And then my wife Sammy had an epileptic fit. It had never happened before. Our second child was seven weeks old. We found out she had a brain tumour - a very large brain



tumour. And we had over a month of not knowing if it was operable. We were incredibly lucky - blessed - that it was operable. That's another conversation for another time.

She had something the size an orange taken out of her skull and has had epilepsy ever since. I can't tell you how many times I've sat next to my wife, watching her slipping into these very dangerous kind of seizures - one normally involves an ambulance - and crying out to God to make it stop... and it not working.

Yet at the same time I'm seeing and hearing about miracles: my inbox is full of stories of answered prayer.

I realised in myself - and I suspect every church leader can relate to this - the tension to go one of two ways. I could have become a bit cynical, because I was hurting like hell, and just say, "Oh, it's all nonsense."

Or, and this was the greater temptation, to become fake - not be honest with the church, lest it ruin their faith - thinking "I've got to do God's PR for him". Not tell them my chaos and my questions.

My second book was called *God on Mute* about unanswered prayer. And I had a very famous Christian sit me down and say, "You cannot release that book. You're meant to be the guy who says this stuff works."

Lynn

What does it mean by 'work,' though? That's the whole point.

Pete

100 per cent. But actually *God on Mute* has brought more people back to faith in Jesus or



stopped them losing their faith, than anything I know. Here's where I would land this: I think the Bible is more honest about unanswered prayer than the church is.

Lynn

Yes. There's all the whole lament in the Psalms - they cry out to God and say, "What on earth are you doing?"

Pete

Between a third and half of the Psalms are lament - but almost all of them are flitting between.

What we're not supposed to do is get together in on a Sunday morning and be miserable. We're meant to get together and handle the paradox that this room is full of people whose hearts are breaking - and others who are celebrating what God has done.

Developing a culture of prayer in our churches

Lynn

I'm thinking of all the pastors out there trying to hold together the people on fire for God, and those who are heartbroken.

How do you hold that together in the life of the church? And how do you develop a culture of prayer?

Pete

Well, the first thing is that to be a leader, is to handle paradox. Continually. Unless you're wanting to lead a cult, you're going to have chaos - different views, different people in different places. And you're seeking to shepherd that. So it's a good question.

Let me be really practical. The first thing is - and you'd expect me to say this - a prayer room. They create a space that facilitates sharing and prayer in a way that our Sunday gatherings and small groups can't.

It's so moving as a pastor seeing people's heartbreak written on the walls - things that wouldn't be appropriate for someone to take the microphone and share on a Sunday. These are places of lament.

But you'll also see testimonies of God answering prayer, and so physically, it all comes together in a space like that, which in a way your question intimates is very hard to administer on a Sunday.

I think a lot of this, actually a lot of prayer in general, but certainly the paradox piece, is what we model as leaders. It's why we have to do our own soul work, because it's not easy to lead out of complexity.

If we model that transparency as leaders, where we are honest about our questions, but also honest about the miracles and things God has done, we can create a culture where people know it's okay to be vulnerable and to be hurting - and to testify to the great things.

Preventing burnout - how does a leader receive?

Lynn

It's hard being a church leader these days. How do you not get into burnout? Because obviously prayer is part of that.

But if you are reading this and you are in this place, what hope do you offer for a way forward?

Pete

Being a church leader is incredibly tough. I'm a local church pastor. As well as the 24/7 thing, we always talk about the pain and the privilege with our team here. There is great privilege, we all know that, but there are incredible pressures. All of us have to play the long game.

Your friendships are incredibly important. I hope we've kicked out this nonsense that you can't have friendships with people in your own congregation. It is nonsense. It's unbiblical. It's unhealthy. I know it's been taught in the past: we've got to get rid of it.

Prioritise your close friends, the friends who have been friends for 10 years or more, the people who are unimpressed.

You realise eventually that prayer just as a transaction - intercession, spiritual warfare, petition, which tend to be the types of prayer in our kinds of traditions - are problematic, partly because they don't always work.

Partly because we're dealing with such vast things, and partly because what it does to your relationship with God, if you're always asking - "please, please, please, please."

A friend of mine is a vicar. His son Connor was 17 at the time and doing A levels. He said, "Every day when Connor came home from school, he came to find me in my study.

"There's a couch in the study. And Connor just crashed out on the couch and stared at the ceiling and didn't want to talk. He didn't want to borrow the car keys, didn't want to tell me about his day. He just wanted to be in the same room as me."

And my friend - James - said, "I can't tell you how much that meant."

He said, "Later at dinner, Connor would definitely ask for the car keys, and then would probably talk about his day."

And James challenged me. He said, "How much time do you just spend lying on the couch staring at the ceiling with your heavenly Father? Or is it always: 'I need the car keys?'"

Learning how to just be still and know the presence of God every day has become essential to me. Reminding myself of the love and affection of God. And praying with that part of my brain.

If we only pray with that part of our brain that's about the frontal cortex, which is language, and it's measurable, we are missing out on something that Jesus considered essential. When He prayed all night, he can't have been using words incessantly.

So praying with the limbic region, which is about creativity, imagination, colour, empathy, learning how to pray non-verbally, is really important. I am convinced it's an essential part of a healthy spirituality and long-term sustainability in ministry.



Developing prayer meetings – some practical tips

Lynn

Pete, many churches have a prayer meeting. I wondered what tips you might suggest to help people?

Pete

Great question. I'm passionate about prayer meetings.

Here are some of the keys. Do whatever you can to stop it being boring!

Firstly, try and fuse worship with prayer. More and more worship songs are actually intercessory. If you look at the lyrics, many of our prayers can be worship. Have that flow – it's helpful.

Secondly, break up the prayer meeting with different models. Now this will work if you've got 10 people in your prayer meeting, or 10,000.

Sometimes get everyone praying all at once all together. Most people look terrified!

I tell them Jesus often prayed in a loud voice. In Acts chapter four when Peter and John came back to the church, it says they spontaneously all prayed all at once, and the room in which they were meeting shook.

And every single part of the world that is seeing revival prays in this way. So maybe we have to get over ourselves culturally, and realise there is something biblical in this?

Just start with 15 seconds or 30 seconds. We're not South Korean level yet where it's going to go on all night. And we've built that up - it's a culture in our church.

Next thing is to break the prayer meeting down into threes, ie nine people, three threes. And that means everyone prays rather than having to listen to one person.

They might struggle with that, because some people think, oh, gosh, I don't know how to pray out loud. I'll often say, right, we're praying into, say, a church plant. A, B, and C.

As, could you please pray for Johnny who's leading it?

Bs, can you please pray because we still need to find a venue.

And Cs, could you pray for people to come to Christ?

It's rather nice to lead, you step back and you find everyone praying! It's beautiful. It's a much better use of time.



Pete Greig is the founder of 24-7 Prayer, a prayer meeting that's continued for more than two decades, with communities all over the world committing to periods of continuous prayer.

24-7 Prayer provides learning and teaching on prayer with free resources, courses, apps and ideas. Find out more on 24-7prayer.com



Lynn Green is the General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Last December she called Baptists to embrace a season of prayerful waiting and stillness.

Creating a Culture of Prayer Conversation

Please use this QR code to find the videos of Lynn and Pete's conversation

- or visit baptist.org.uk/cultureofprayer



why hope?

In a world which seems to be spiralling more rapidly into chaos with every passing year, how can we pray with hope?

Baptist scholar Helen Paynter offers three biblical reasons

You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Matthew 24:6

It is not clear whether we really are seeing more international conflict, more ecclesial abuse scandals, and more cultural polarisation than existed in previous generations, or whether we simply have that perception because of the rolling news cycle on our media feeds.

But the fact remains that for many of us, it's hard to find reasons for hope at present.

A hundred years ago Robert Frost famously mused¹ that he didn't much care whether the world would end in fire or in ice, and the dilemma feels much the same today. Will it be the existential climate threat that gets us? Or will a new world war break out? Either will do it pretty effectively. And in the meantime, we continue to destroy one another in a million petty ways.

But the New Testament speaks a lot about hope. Hope seems to overflow from the hearts of the apostles as they pen their letters to the early church. And, let's face it, those disparate, harried, impoverished little churches, mainly peopled by slaves, had little reason to hope, in the human sense. But hope they did.

Once they had been '*without hope and without God in the world*' (Ephesians 2:12). But now, Paul is confidently able to pray a blessing over them, that '*the God of hope may fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit*' (Romans 15:13).

Abound in hope. A nice trick if you can do it. What's the secret?

Let me offer three reasons to hope.

We can hope because of the character of God.

Many, many years ago, a man stood on a mountain, which was already quaking and smoking with the presence of God, and boldly asked "*Now show me your glory*" (Exodus 33:18). What Moses received was not a vision

1 www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44263/fire-and-ice

of God in majesty, enthroned above the heavens, like Isaiah saw, but a revelation of God's name and his character. This was God's answer to his audacious request:

Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty... (Exodus 34:6-7)

This description of the covenant-keeping God, who abounds in steadfast love and faithfulness, so captures the imagination of God's people that it echoes through the rest of Scripture. When Moses wants to intercede for the people, he calls upon this description of God's beautiful character (Numbers 14:18). When Solomon consecrates the temple, all the people sing a song based on these words (2 Chronicles 7:3). When Nehemiah prays his great corporate confession, he calls on the God whom he knows to abound in steadfast love (Nehemiah 9:17). The Psalmists just can't keep silent about it (see most of the Psalms(!), especially Psalm 118). And Jonah even uses it as a cause for complaint (4:2) because God is more merciful than he would like.

Into the New Testament, John refers to it in his prologue, because the fullness of the character of God has now been seen in human form. *'The Word became flesh and tabernacled with us, and we [like Moses!] have seen his glory... full of grace and truth'* (John 1:14).

A God who is slow to anger. A God who is patient with us. A God who takes seriously the

harm we do one another ('by no means clearing the guilty'). A God who is merciful. A God who is faithful to his promises. A God whose character is the same today as it was back then on the mountain. That's a reason for hope.

We can hope because the Church is God's good idea.

Maybe it feels a bit of a come-down to move from contemplating God's sublime, unchanging character, to talking about the very human institution that is the Church. And aren't we all just a bit disillusioned with church? From the multiple scandals that break across our screens so regularly, to the theological tensions that are straining most denominational allegiances... and let's not even get started on local church politics! How can the Church be a cause of hope?

Well, Paul certainly thinks it is. Let's return to the fragment of Ephesians I quoted earlier, and read on a bit:

Remember that you were at that time without Christ... having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us (Ephesians 2:12-14).

But Paul's barely getting started in his exploration of the great wonder that is the Church. Because, as he tells us in the following chapter,

In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and

prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Ephesians 3:5–6).

And in Galatians, he presses the matter home,

There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28).

A body of people where ethnic distinctions, class distinctions, gender distinctions, are all irrelevant? It's a miracle! It's like a utopia! And of course, this is exactly what it is. It's God's good idea, a plan conceived in eternity past; it's his chosen means of blessing the world, birthed at Pentecost; and it's a radical community that pulls something of the new earth into the old one. Yes, we bend it and break it and generally make a mess of it. But it doesn't go away. The persistence of the Church is at once a testimony to the steadfast love of God, the reconciling work of the Saviour, and the marvellous indwelling of the Spirit. There's a cause for hope.

We can hope because the new heavens and earth are coming.

If the Church is a foretaste of the world to come, it's not the only one. Come back in your minds to an early morning long ago, when a man stepped out of his tomb into a garden. It was a Sunday. Why does that matter? Because on the Friday, humanity had finally pulled the whole house down on its own head. The sun was blotted out and the Creator himself was engulfed in the chaos.

But that was Friday. Now it is Sunday. The first day of the week (John 20:1,19). It is Day One of the new world.

And this is no fairy story, peopled with ghosts or fantasies or wishful thinking. This new world begins with a living and breathing man; a man you can share a meal with; a man whose wounds you can explore with your fingers. Flesh and blood. The firstborn of the new creation.

Yes, sometimes it's agony, waiting for the full unrolling of that plan. And the whole of creation feels it with us:

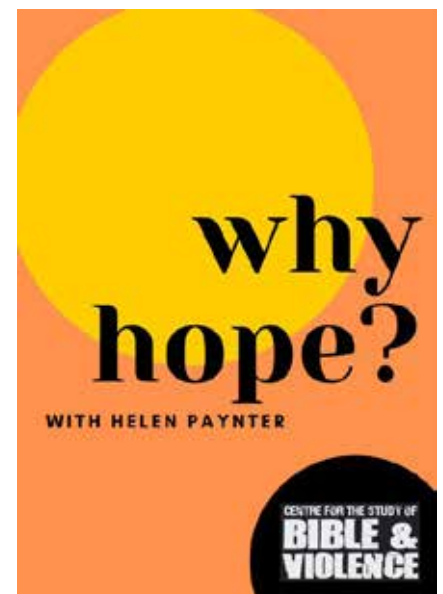
We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. (Romans 8:22–24).

Yes, in hope we have been saved. And hope does not disappoint us (Romans 5:5), for the one who has promised is true. We're back at 'steadfast love' again. Not a bad place to wait, in the meantime.



Helen Paynter is Tutor in Biblical Studies at Bristol Baptist College. She is the founding director of the Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence.

Throughout 2024 Helen has been taking viewers through some of the chief biblical reasons for hope in a series on YouTube: bit.ly/paynterhope





A reflection by incoming President Steve Finamore in which he introduces his themes for the coming year

My goal in this short article is to encourage us all to be more prayerful. I am particularly concerned that we should express thankfulness and that we should ask God to act in our lives. Doubtless, most of us will have lots of different things that fall into these different areas. There's lots I could write about but the ones I'm going to

mention are about God's Baptist people – our family of churches, associations and colleges.

Thankfulness - be intentional about experiencing gratitude

Firstly, I want to say something about thankfulness. Nearly every time I watch the television or visit the cinema, I'm confronted with adverts. Most of these encourage me to want things that I don't need and can't afford. Occasionally, they hit a nerve somewhere deep inside me and I find myself longing

for something that is out of my reach. If I'm not careful this can provoke me to be envious of those who do possess the car or watch that has become the object of my desire. A constant diet of advertising can leave me feeling dissatisfied and restless. The best way I know to address this is to be intentional about experiencing gratitude. It's so important to recognise that all the good things we experience come from God and that we should express our thanks for them. By and large, grateful people are not bitter or disappointed.

Do you ever feel unhelpfully influenced by advertising? Are there strategies you can think of that help you to handle this?

This line of thought got me thinking afresh about the things I am grateful for. Among other things, I'm reminded of my first encounter with a Baptist church. It was over 40 years ago but I can still remember the feeling that I had arrived home. Here was a community where I could belong, and to which I could make a contribution. When they asked if I could serve as a deacon and church secretary, I was deeply appreciative. I thank God for that church – and for the association and union it belonged to – because it has, for all these years, provided me with a sense of family and with opportunities to serve.

Do you remember your own first experience of one of our churches? Are there things about it that make you grateful?

Thank you for how you responded in the pandemic

I imagine there are lots of people who feel like me about a particular church or our networks of churches. This became evident during the pandemic. Our communities have always relied on people meeting together. When this was taken away, it was

a real challenge to our sense of purpose.

Yet everywhere you looked there were people who stepped up and found creative ways to maintain our sense of belonging to one another. It was often hard work and was frequently thankless. In many cases churches have emerged well from the experience of lockdown but many have struggled. Where that's the case, there are people who feel somewhat discouraged.

For what it's worth, I would like to say how grateful I am to God for all the people who cared for our churches during that period. Not just the pastors but the church secretaries, treasurers, elders, deacons and all those without a formal title.

To what extent do you feel that **your** church is still impacted by the lockdowns during the pandemic? How did you maintain a sense of being church together? Are there people you are grateful to for their work in that period?

These are just some of the reasons I am thankful to God, and I find that expressing my gratitude makes me appreciate what I have and makes me less concerned about what I don't have. It helps me to focus my prayers so they become less about what I happen to want – if I'm not careful, that can become a long list – and become about what God might be doing or longing to do.

We need more leaders

When I try to reflect on what God might be doing, one of the things I think about is the students I worked with while I

was on the staff of one of our colleges. We had ministers in training of all ages, but in the last few years we accepted a number in their 20s. There was a time younger students might have been turned away until they had more experience of the world, but it was clear that God was at work in their sense of calling.

I remembered my own experience of being asked to take on responsibility in the church and at work when I was in my early 20s. It was a challenge but extremely important in helping me to develop.

For these and other reasons, we accepted many of the younger applicants. Lots of them turned out to be excellent ministers and their enthusiasm and energy had a tremendous impact on the churches they served. I am not unaware of the current difficulties in the life of our union, but I do believe they present us with opportunities to reset our thinking in ways that give room for God to move. One thing we will need is more ministers who are equipped for that future, and I think we should be encouraging people of all ages to consider whether God might be calling them to be pastors, chaplains, pioneers, evangelists or other kinds of servants among us.

In the end, only God can bring renewal to our churches. But there may be things we can do to help clear the path. Do you have any suggestions? What should we be praying for?

... especially younger ones

More than this, I think we should have a particular emphasis on encouraging the emergence of younger leaders. I would like to see us all looking around our congregations and other gatherings and asking ourselves if there are young people we could encourage and mentor and in whom we could sow the possibility of serving God in ministry. I know this won't be right for all of them, but I can't help but feel excited about the difference that groups of young ministers might make in our churches. They could be the agents of the kinds of renewal for which many of us are longing.

Are there people you could be encouraging to think about ministry and other forms of service among us?

My prayer is that we all try to encourage this to happen. I would love to see a kind of recruitment drive for a fresh generation of leaders. It would be great to see a national campaign featured in our publications and then to see this taken up within all our associations and colleges.

However, the most important thing will be to get all our ministers and congregations involved. I'm aware that not all our churches include young people and that many of us will have other priorities, but I would love to see us all making a concerted effort to pray for God to raise up a new generation of leaders for our churches, and to see all of us looking for opportunities to encourage

young people to think about whether God may be calling them to service.

Next time you gather, be intentional and prayerful as you look around the congregation. Are there any young people you could be talking to about God's call on their lives?

I suppose I am suggesting that our prayers should look backwards and forwards; back, with gratitude, to what God has done in the past, and forward with expectation of what he will do next.

The Bible in Baptist Life

One of the themes I hope to pursue in my year as President of Baptists Together is the place of the Bible in Baptist life. There have been times in my own life when I have often found it hard to pray. When that has happened, I have sometimes found it helpful to pray the prayers found in the Scriptures. The most obvious example is the Lord's Prayer, but you can also use the prayers found in the New Testament letters, or the songs found in the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel and in the book of Revelation.

In addition, we can use the psalms as a kind of prayer book. There we can find prayers of joyful praise as well as ones that express sorrow and longing. The Scriptures are a wonderful resource for the life of discipleship and that includes the call on us to be people of prayer.



Steve Finamore is President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain 2024-25.

He is Principal Emeritus of Bristol Baptist College, which he led for 17 years until his retirement in 2023.



Tarry Awhile

Selina Stone introduces the Black Christian spiritual practice of 'Tarrying', in which believers actively wait to experience a manifestation of God's presence.

It has much to teach us in the life of faith, she writes - we are all tarrying for something.

Tarrying is a spiritual practice common to some Pentecostal churches, inspired by the story of Pentecost in Acts 2. In this passage of scripture, the disciples are gathered 'in one place' waiting or *tarrying* from the gift promised them by Jesus before his Ascension. Sure enough, the Spirit comes upon the disciples, in an unpredictable fashion: *'what seemed to be*

tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them' (Acts 2:3). The disciples speak in other languages, and people from many ethnic groups are able to hear *'them declaring the wonders of God'* in their own tongues (Acts 2:12).

The practice of tarrying for the Holy Spirit is not common across all or even most Pentecostal churches today. But it has its roots in a particular set of beliefs, that baptism in the Holy Spirit was a separate event in the life of the believer. This event needed to be evidenced by something, and the sign was speaking in tongues. This has never been agreed on by all Pentecostals, even from the start of what we know as Classical Pentecostalism at Azusa Street in 1906. But speaking in tongues often features heavily in Pentecostal and wider charismatic gatherings.

When practised, believers are invited to gather, with those who need to tarry for the gift of the Spirit being centred. Usually, there are older people in the faith and others who have already received their Pentecost, ready to lay hands and pray for the one who is still to receive theirs. Singing and intercessions will take place, growing in intensity, as the person prays and is prayed for, oscillating between weeping, speech, groaning and even silent waiting. The intercessors will sometimes discern a breakthrough is coming, and in some cases, the person will eventually burst forth with a language they have not learned, often accompanied by tears. In other cases, there is no outward sign, and so the person may be expected to tarry more, or simply to be content with the ministry which has supported them on that particular day.

This practice of hopeful waiting on God's presence and intervention has much to teach us in the life of faith. Whatever we might think about baptism in the Spirit or speaking in tongues, it is safe to say that in our lives of faith, we are all tarrying for something. You may not be tarrying for a spiritual gift, it may be for a sense of calling or direction, a dream or hope deferred. This expectant waiting or tarrying is common to all of our lives as people of faith in a much broader sense. This is I think, the wisdom that Black Pentecostal spirituality, here exemplified in the practice of tarrying, has to offer us.

Prayer and waiting can be frustrating aspects of our lives of faith. The delay in what we hope for, or the fact that we may never have it at all, can be heartbreaking. We can experience this disappointment in relatively minor ways which we can easily recover from, but also in life-changing realities which we cannot simply overlook. Sometimes our disappointment can totally upend our lives and our faith.

In more recent years I have come to look back to the faith of my ancestors whose belief in Jesus' presence and love for them remained strong in the face of the unthinkable. I think far back to the generations of my African and Caribbean ancestors who found

ways to remain connected to God even when their spiritual practices were under threat. They discerned between the false God shared with them by European slavers, and kept their eyes on Jesus. They recognised God as their liberator and held onto their faith in the God of Moses and the children of Israel who left Egypt. Faith was not something to question, it was their solid ground.

I think more recently of my grandparents who arrived in the UK from Jamaica in the early 1960s and were determined to remain for the sake of their children and grandchildren. Their churches were a haven, for sharing knowledge about jobs and schools, and for the spiritual renewal that reminded them that they had a divine name, better than whatever they may have been called during the week on the street or in work. Tarrying was for them a daily practice, not for the gift of tongues but the gifts of wisdom, and strength for the days ahead of them.

Tarrying, therefore, offers us important resources when we find ourselves in a state of struggle, of wondering where God is. In writing about tarrying this Lent, in my book *Tarry Awhile*, it became clear to me that there is so much in this tradition for those who are conscious of the world in which we live. It is easy and even understandable to be overwhelmed by the pain and violence we see in our human family each week. Whether at home or abroad we can find ourselves at a loss of what to say or do. Tarrying, the commitment to wait on God, is not an invitation to do nothing, but to receive from the one who knows all, loves all, and holds all things together.

In these moments, we might gain all we need to continue to struggle with hope, for a future of justice, peace and righteousness.



Selina Stone is a researcher at Durham University where her work focuses on belonging and theological education. She is a podcaster, preacher and writer of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2024 *Tarry Awhile: Wisdom from Black Spirituality for People of Faith*.



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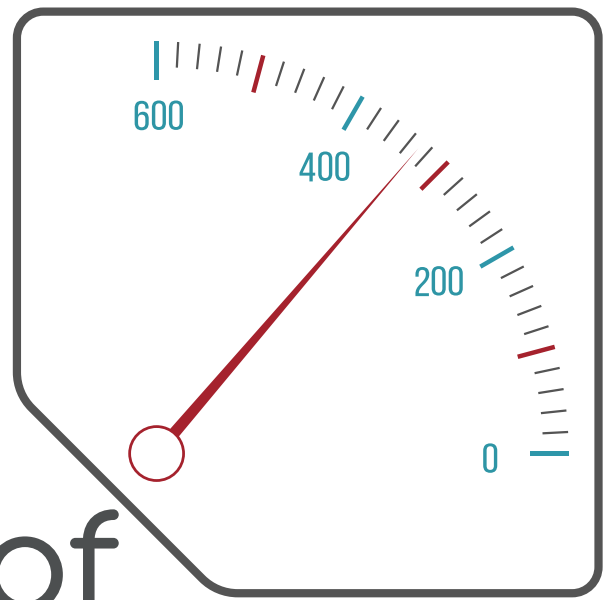
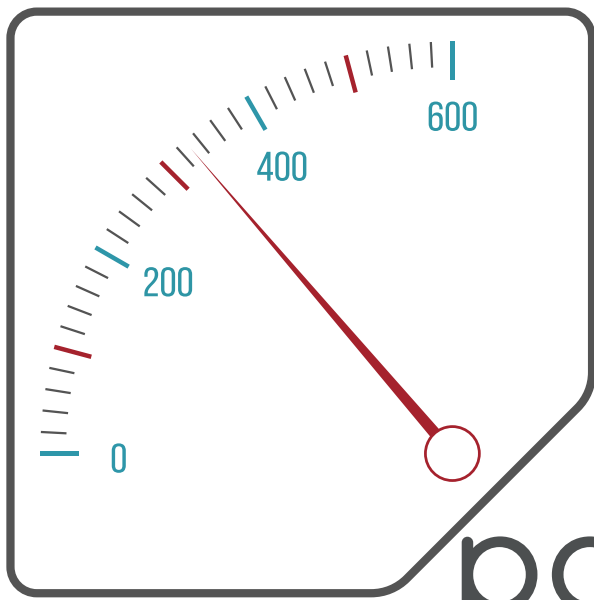
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The power of evangelistic prayer

Why prayer is at the heart of evangelism – and three evangelistic prayers anyone can commit to. By Chrissy Remsberg

Charles Spurgeon said prayer was the engine room of the church. It is the vital piece of ministry that engages us with the Holy Spirit. Evangelism is always a spiritual battle and prayer allows us to keep moving forward in that battle.

Within the Firestarters Network we believe the most effective way to fight this spiritual battle is through prayer. We have observed churches that have experienced significant growth through conversions have leaders who are committed to intentional, leader-led prayer and fasting. It is only the power of the Spirit at work that is able to *'make his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ'*. (2 Corinthians 4:6) Our work then is to join the work of the Spirit through prayer.

What motivates a commitment to evangelistic prayer is an understanding of what is happening through evangelism. 2 Corinthians 4:5-6 tells us the same God who said, *"Let light shine out of darkness,"* is also the one who shines his light into the human heart to give us the knowledge we need for salvation. Thus, when we share the gospel, universes are being created in human hearts.

This way of thinking about evangelism can be incredibly liberating because it reminds us we don't convert anyone. Those who become Christians do so only by the power of the Spirit. But at the same time, we can be filled with an incredible confidence that some *WILL* respond to the gospel. Some *WILL* become Christians. We know this because the great power that created universes, the power that healed the sick and raised the dead, is the power at work in people's hearts.

Therefore, as Christians we can engage in evangelism through prayer, preaching and serving

filled with an abundance of hope and freedom knowing that God is powerful and his Word never fails. We need not feel despair or fear because our confidence rests in God and his great power. Our work is simply obedience.

And this we can do!

What if evangelism was simply a faithful act of obedience?

The word 'evangelism' perhaps fills us with dread or fear. We may flinch from it the way we would a door-to-door salesman or telemarketing call. And maybe, for some, there are even feelings of guilt, recognising perhaps this is an aspect of our Christian discipleship that's being neglected.

I think these feelings are all valid and understandable, but I also happen to think they are unnecessary. From Matthew 28:19-20 and Jesus' command to *"go make disciples"* to Paul's encouragement to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5 to *'do the work of an evangelist'*, the Bible leaves

Charles Spurgeon said prayer was the engine room of the church...

little doubt that God's plan for bringing the hope of Jesus to the world is the Church. But I don't think this needs to fill us with dread or fear or guilt.

Eugene Peterson said that Christian discipleship is "a long obedience in the same direction". I believe evangelism requires this kind of discipleship, a simple, faithful obedience we are committed to for the long haul.

And I also happen to believe evangelism can be easier than we think or at least, if not exactly easy, certainly more accessible. You needn't be particularly courageous. You don't need a theological degree. An outgoing personality is not required. I don't think it's even necessary to have a particular spiritual gifting, though some will have that. What I believe you need is a commitment to the belief that evangelism is a spiritual act long before it ever becomes a physical one.

It's true the gospel needs to be spoken. Serving others is necessary as part of evangelism.

Paul said as much in 2 Corinthians 4:5, *'For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.'* But our speaking and serving will be infinitely more effective if it is driven by the work of the Spirit through the prayers of his people.

How exactly do you pray evangelistically?

At Firestarters we believe there is great power in evangelistic prayer. But what exactly are we talking about when we say that we should pray evangelistically? We would break this down into three simple prayers that anyone could commit to praying regularly.

Famous Five

Your Famous Five are five non-Christians who you see and interact with regularly, from someone at the school gate to friends and neighbours to co-workers and colleagues to family and loved ones. This is a list of just five non-Christians you have opportunity to interact with and hopefully get to speak to about Jesus.

We suggest you use scriptures to pray for these five, inserting their names into the Scriptures as your prayer that the Holy Spirit would move their hearts toward Jesus.

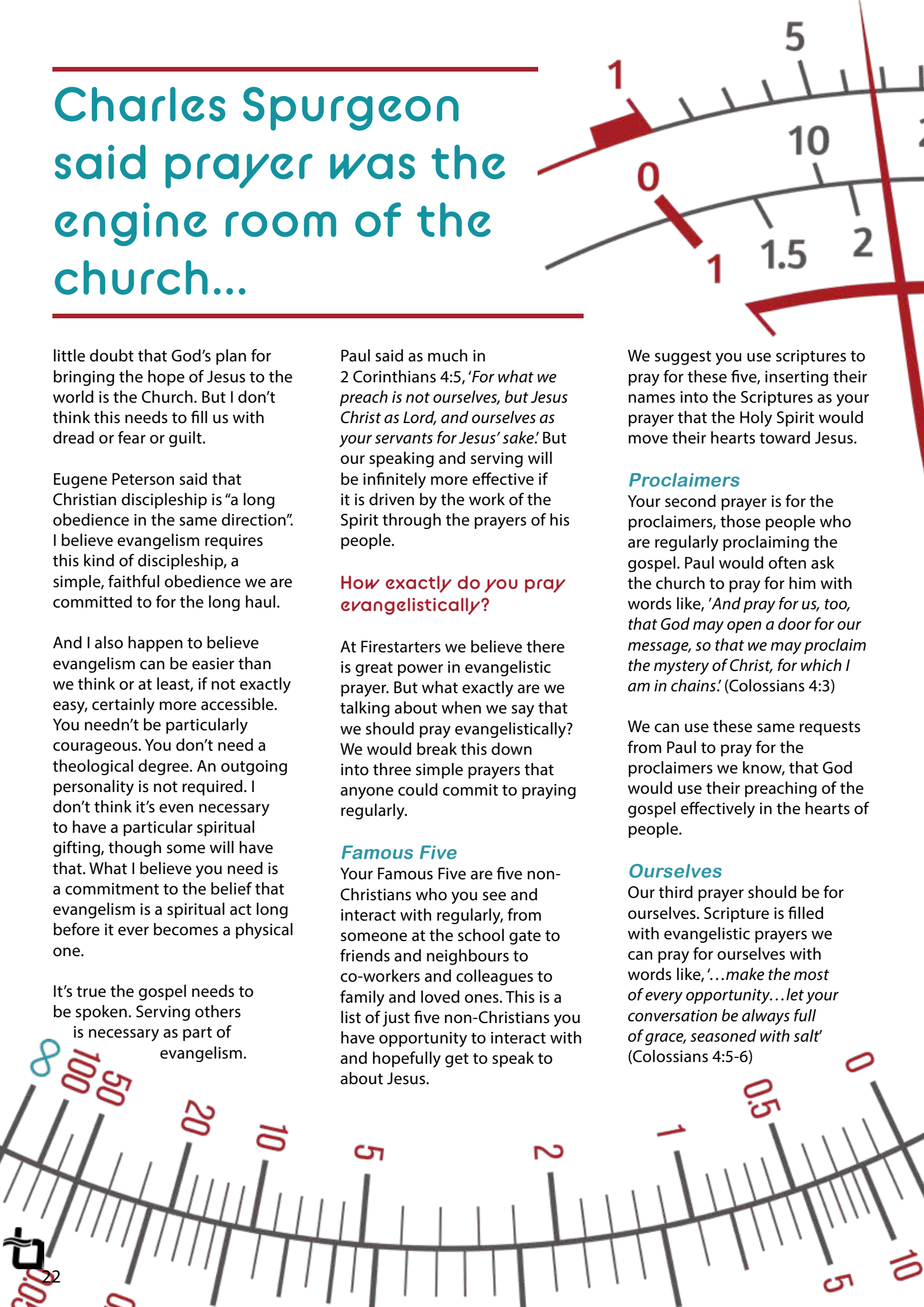
Proclaimers

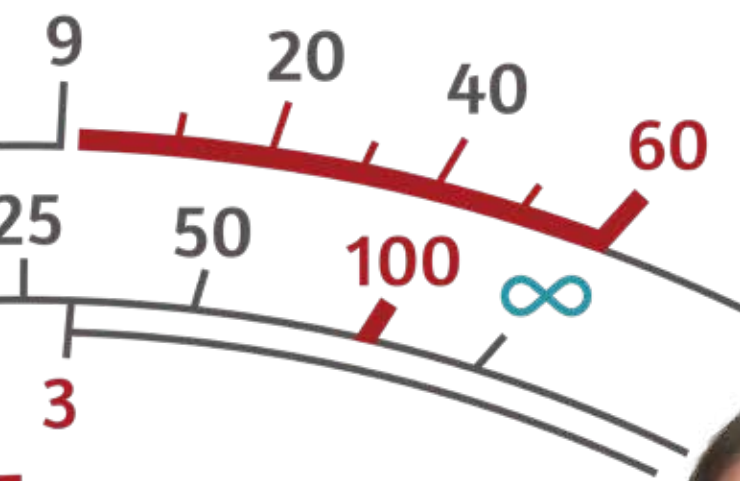
Your second prayer is for the proclaimers, those people who are regularly proclaiming the gospel. Paul would often ask the church to pray for him with words like, *'And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.'* (Colossians 4:3)

We can use these same requests from Paul to pray for the proclaimers we know, that God would use their preaching of the gospel effectively in the hearts of people.

Ourselves

Our third prayer should be for ourselves. Scripture is filled with evangelistic prayers we can pray for ourselves with words like, *'...make the most of every opportunity...let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt'* (Colossians 4:5-6)





and '...always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.' (1 Peter 3:15-16)

Sometimes, God will give us opportunities to speak the gospel and we must pray for ourselves that we will be prepared to share the good news about Jesus when those moments come. And perhaps, we might also need to pray that we can do what Jesus said in John 4:35 and have eyes that are open to see the fields are indeed ripe for harvest.

Everyone can be an evangelist

Evangelism is not ONLY prayer, but it is rooted in, motivated by, and made more effective through prayer. Evangelism is not only prayer, but perhaps, it cannot happen without it. At Firestarters we believe prayer is at the heart of what it means to be an evangelist. You don't have to be particularly brave, theologically trained, or outgoing to pray. You just have to be faithful and obedient. And that's why we believe that absolutely anyone can be an evangelist!



Chrissy Remsberg is the pastor of Beacon Church, a Baptist church in Stafford. She co-leads the Firestarters Network with Alex Harris.

The second season of the Firestarters Network Podcast covers evangelistic prayer (episode 4) and many helpful suggestions about Evangelism For People Who Don't Do Evangelism. You can find the podcast on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or anywhere you listen to great podcasts.

You can also find our latest podcast episodes on the website along with upcoming Firestarters Conversations, a free evangelism training workshop available for download, a book filled with the stories of growing Baptist churches and other resources.

Visit firestartersuk.com

God's Comfort Blanket by Claire Nicholls

May the arms of God surround you
With the fibres of his warmth
May his comfort blanket enfold you
As you shelter in his wings.

May the strength of God's embrace protect you
As the fleece and wool surround you
May you feel his love, his peace
As you rest in his arms.

May you gradually unravel
As the threads ravel round you
May you begin to let it go
And feel release in his grace.

May the arms of God surround you,
Protect you and enrobe you
May his comfort blanket soothe you
As you shelter in his wings.

Taken from *Gathering up the Crumbs*



PILGRIMAGE

PRAYER ON THE MOVE

Paul Revall walked more than 500 miles from his old home in the north east in preparation for a new ministry in Portishead. He explains why pilgrimage walking is an intentionally prayerful activity which enables encounter with and transformation by God through the practices it fosters.

Pilgrimage is a spiritual practice which has grown massively in popularity over the past few years, even amongst Baptists! It is often defined as a journey to a destination of spiritual significance. But the journey itself is usually more important than the destination. Pilgrimage is walking with an open heart, with the intention of being transformed. You might want to consider further what makes a pilgrimage different from a long-distance walk and how a pilgrim differs from a tourist.

I have become an enthusiastic pilgrim as I have discovered and walked ancient and modern pilgrim trails in the UK and abroad, and as a result of what God has done on these journeys. I have wrestled with my mortality and my own shortcomings, faced loss and bereavement, been challenged in my discipleship and much

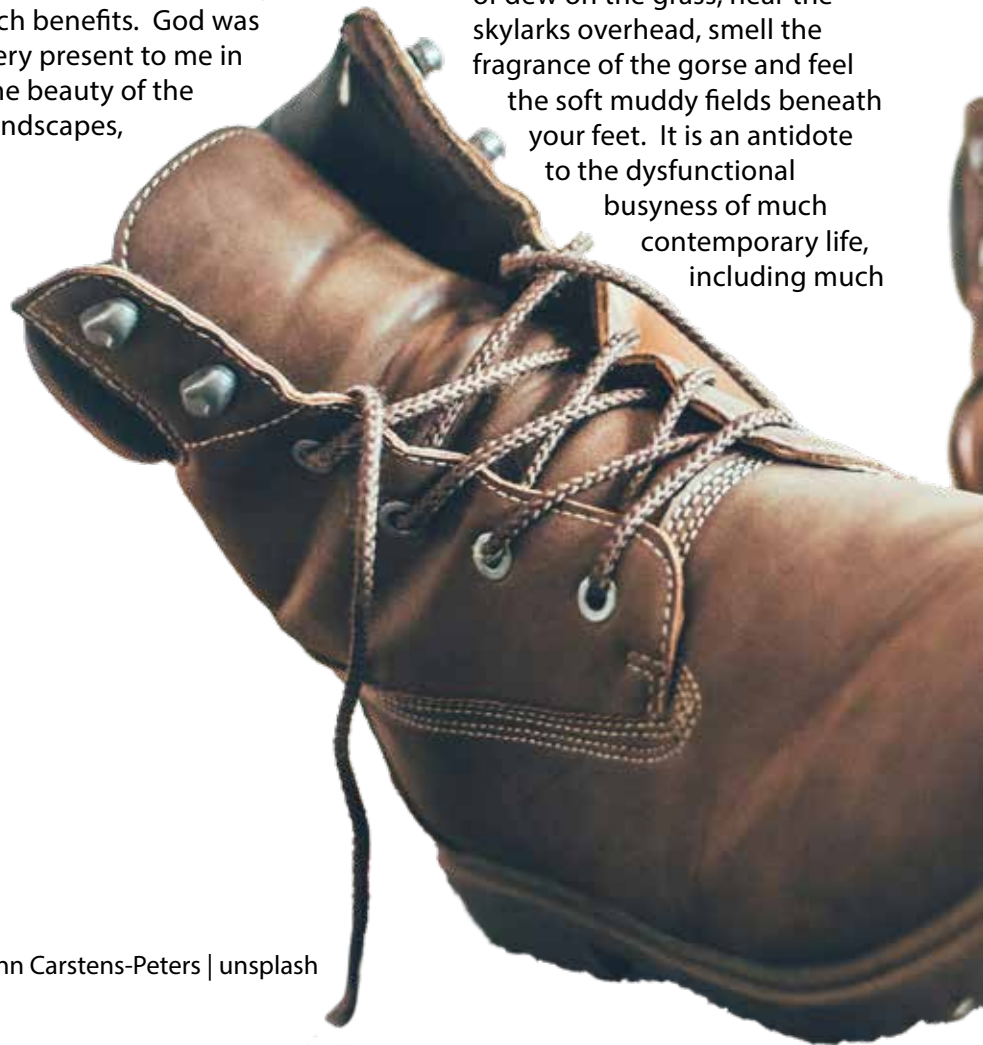
more besides as I have stomped up hills, through forests, fields and historic settlements, and as I have lingered in quiet places of prayer. Being a pilgrim has often been hard work, but the pain has brought much gain.

Last summer I planned and undertook a unique pilgrimage, walking 530 miles over five weeks from my old home in the north east of England to my new home near Bristol. The detail of that journey can't be told here¹, but suffice it to say the 'Camino Portishead' was a privilege to undertake which brought rich benefits. God was very present to me in the beauty of the landscapes,

the kindness of those who gave me hospitality, in the spiritual centres which I visited, and in the unexpected encounters along the journey.

SLOWING DOWN

Pilgrimage walking is an intentionally prayerful activity which enables encounter with and transformation by God through the practices it fosters. Firstly, walking is about slowing down and adopting a more healthy pace of life. Pilgrimage pace allows you to notice drops of dew on the grass, hear the skylarks overhead, smell the fragrance of the gorse and feel the soft muddy fields beneath your feet. It is an antidote to the dysfunctional busyness of much contemporary life, including much



of what passes for Christian ministry. By deliberately living slowly for more than a month I found it far easier to begin my new pioneering role without feeling pressure to achieve, perform and make things happen, but to trust that God will bring about his purposes in his timescale, which is so often much slower than mine.

A SIMPLE LIFESTYLE AND DAILY RHYTHM

Pilgrimage walking necessitates a simple lifestyle, travelling with a bare minimum of possessions that can comfortably be fitted into a backpack. There is a simple daily rhythm: get up, eat, walk, arrive and shower, eat and enjoy conversation, go to sleep. And repeat. The pilgrim comes to appreciate that the most valuable and enjoyable gifts God gives are free and don't require us to possess them: the kindness of a friend, some shared laughter with a companion, a sunset which captivates. Pilgrimage walking fosters a daily thankfulness and appreciation of even the smallest and

easily overlooked gifts which the Creator has made available to us.

DEVELOP THE PRACTICE OF AWARENESS

Finally, pilgrimage walking develops the practice of awareness: of God, of others and one's self. The time which a long walk offers forces the pilgrim to face deeper aspects of their psyche which are often kept hidden away in the busyness of life. Pilgrimages have helped me to appreciate and value those who are different from me, seeing more of God's image in others, even those whom I find more difficult. And there have been those times when I have become aware of the pilgrim God accompanying me, challenging or encouraging, but most often deepening my awareness of his limitless grace.

Pilgrimage walking can be a means of prayer in many ways. At its most basic level, feeling your own heartbeat, hearing your breath, planting each step on the solid ground - this is a prayer, a rhythmic acknowledgement that all of one's being is created and sustained by our heavenly Father. Pilgrims may wrestle in prayer with particular issues and leave them in God's hands when they reach the destination. Pilgrims will visit places of spiritual importance and wait there for God to speak. Pilgrims intercede for others as God brings them to mind along the path.

So find a pilgrim path near you and get walking! I have set up a pilgrimage ministry, Pilgrim Pathways, which offers guided pilgrimage walks, one-to-one spiritual accompaniment and online conversations around pilgrimage themes.

Do get in touch If you'd like help to walk a pilgrim path or explore spiritual disciplines associated with pilgrimage. *'How blessed are those whose strength is in you, who have set their hearts on pilgrimage'* (Psalm 84:5).



Paul Revill is a pioneer minister, working with his wife Barbara in Portishead.

For more information about his pilgrimage ministry, visit: pilgrimpathways.co.uk

A Prayer for Authenticity by Catriona Gorton

From fake jollity that denies reality
To real joy that transforms it
From forced smiles that fail to reach our eyes
To inner joy that makes them shine
From denial of truth
To indefatigable joy
Lead us, God of joy
Amen.

Taken from *Gathering up the Crumbs*

1 For anyone interested in more detail, I documented my pilgrimage here: facebook.com/WanderingforGod



STORIES FROM THE GROUND



Church growth, vibrant ecumenical relationships

David Evans highlights the impact of prayer walking

In autumn 2019 I became the pastor of Ford Baptist Church in Plymouth. It was a small church which had seriously considered closing. The congregation rarely got into double figures.

When the pandemic struck, like every church, we cancelled all of our church activity except for online. However, soon we were allowed to go for walks together and there was nothing to stop us from praying for the area as we walked – so we prayed. None of us had much experience of prayer walking, so we just prayed for peace and health for the homes in the streets we walked along, safety and blessing for the children in the schools, prosperity for the businesses and everywhere that people would reach out to Jesus and

that he would call them. Soon we were joined by David from the Messianic congregation that met at Ford Baptist, Jonny and Margaret from St Marks and the Lee Abbey Community, and then by Pastor Steve from Restore Church, a Pentecostal church nearby.

Has it made a difference? By faith we can say a definite and resounding “Yes!”.

All three churches have seen significant numerical growth since Covid. St Marks has developed a vibrant church fellowship where before there was nothing; congregations at Ford Baptist are double or even treble what they were before Covid; and Restore Church has problems fitting everyone in on a Sunday morning.

Part of this is also due to the fact, I am sure, we are now working together ecumenically in a very natural way. I have been in ministry now for 43 years (and ordained ministry for 35 of those) and this is the closest, most vibrant, ecumenical relationship between churches I have ever known. There are things that we do separately, but many things we do together or share in something the other church is doing. There is no sense of jealousy or competition and we rejoice in one another’s successes as if our own. The kingdom is being built.

Early in my ministry I used to be on various ecumenical committees in Lincolnshire. I remember the Revd Brian Levick, the ecumenical secretary (who seemed to me very old but was

probably about the age I am now!) saying, often in frustration, that things would be so much easier if we prayed together – how right he was! Prayer walking was always one of the highlights of my week because I walked not just with colleagues but with friends.

I have recently retired from being the minister at Ford and am thankful that I leave the church significantly stronger numerically than when I started. I would recommend prayer walking to any and every church – it is something that you can do whatever the size of your church and you only really need two people to start.

But beware! Once you start you never know what God might do!

David Evans is the minister of Morice Baptist Church in Plymouth, and was also the minister of the nearby

Ford Baptist Church until his retirement there earlier this year. He is due to retire from Morice in June.



Photo | Jonathan Devereux

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We are activists held together by contemplative prayer

with Sally Mann and Bonny Downs Baptist Church

A foodbank. A community food club. A debt advice centre. Supporting dozens of homeless and vulnerably housed adults with job search support, life skills courses, showers, laundry facilities, advocacy and signposting.

A family hub, sport and fitness sessions for all ages and abilities, a community garden, and wide support for the over 65s - the Bonny Downs Community Association (BDCA) is a busy place.

The charity was set up by Bonny Downs Baptist Church in 1998 to share God's love and blessing with the Newham community, and remains closely linked to the church. Its chair is Baptist minister Dave Mann, one of five ministers to share a stipend there.

"We're very much activists in a missional community in the middle of a crisis of poverty," says Sally Mann, another of the co-ministers at the church, and

who is married to Dave. "We live in an overwhelming context of need, and we are attempting to deal with these very traumatic needs in our community and in our church."

Yet despite, or perhaps more accurately, because of all this activity, the prayer life and practices of the team at its heart have taken an unexpected turn: they are now rooted in silence, contemplation and stillness.

It happened when the team began to explore different spiritual practices to develop greater resilience. In the months before the pandemic they introduced centering prayer at the start of the day, focusing on breathing to return to a sense of stillness as a prayer.

"Every day we'd spend at least 20 minutes in contemplative prayer, before we went on to do anything else together," explains Sally.

"You're saying to God, in this space that we're creating for silence, this is our prayer to you."

At the time this was just the leadership team. But when Covid hit - and the BDCA became the emergency food hub in the community - they began to extend the practice, which involved starting a morning online office.

Here they used a mix of centering prayer, Lectio Divina - a prayerful approach to Scripture - and an Examen, an Ignatian form of prayer. They developed a pattern of doing this every weekday morning at 8am - and haven't stopped since. When restrictions began to ease, Sally could welcome people to her house 'for porridge and prayer' alongside those online. It's broadcast through a private Facebook group (though the group is open to those who want to join it).

"It is actually the foundation of all the activity: we start our day waiting for God to direct us,

Photos | BDCA



which is a different sort of prayer," says Sally. "It's not intercessory prayer, which happens at other times in the day.

"For me, it's been an essential tool in discernment because there's so much we could do.

"My sense is I start the day really quietly, like a spiritual taking your shoes off, coming with nothing, just silence and stillness. It's all about new monasticism and sort of discovering old ways and taking bits of those traditions."

The practice has mushroomed, Sally introduced it when she became co-director of Red Letter Christians UK, and now her community's prayer calls go out to hundreds of activist Christians each day. A number of Baptists participate, including Sandra Crawford, who leads the session on one of the days. Given it is both calming and helps discernment, Sally believes such a daily office is 'the best way to prevent burnout'.

"Prayer isn't a trite thing to say, it's a necessary reality. So I think the effect has been that we've been able to stay in situations that are really very, very demanding emotionally and spiritually – and still have a really good time. There's not a heaviness about my community, despite the fact that we live with a lot brokenness. I'm sure prayer is being able to stay really joyful and hopeful."

Bonny Downs Baptist Church is working with Bonny Downs Community Association (BDCA) and NewWay project to redevelop the old Bonny Downs Church Hall into an 'Urban Abbey'.

The new building will provide a small number of housing units for community living above a ground floor community space.

This will be used in the daytime for services to those facing homelessness or food poverty. The studio flats will welcome vulnerable single people, who have experienced homelessness. Sally and Dave will live in the building, which received planning permission earlier this year.

Sally adds: "I feel like God has us on this journey of leaning into regular spiritual practices to make us resilient enough to go on the journey that God's got for us.

"We live out of our depth. We are all out of our depth, all the time. And I think that makes for a much healthier prayer life."

Search BD Virtual Church on Facebook to find the daily morning prayers [facebook.com/groups/911415119293421](https://www.facebook.com/groups/911415119293421) They use Daily Prayer with the Corrymeela Community, by Pádraig Ó Tuama.

As part of her involvement with Red Letter Christians UK, Sally helped launch a book in February called *Jesus and Justice - Stories of radical Christian living*.

The book documents 25 authors from the UK writing about their lived experience of seeking Jesus and justice in their communities. Many of those who share their stories participate in the daily morning prayers. Copies of the book are available from our online shop www.baptist.org.uk/shop

Red Letter Christians UK is a relational network for those who want to live for Jesus and Justice. Its focus is connecting and supporting Christian activists and community leaders across the UK redletterchristians.org.uk



"Powerful knowing Dave prays for me" - Mayor

Late in 2023 Dave Mann was presented with the Honorary Freedom of the Borough award at the Newham Civic Award Ceremony – the highest award Newham Council gives to residents.

In presenting the award, Newham Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz (*right*) thanked Dave for his support - including his prayerful support. She said:

"David has made an impressive long-term commitment to our borough. His work epitomises what it means to give back to your community and inspire change.

"I want to convey my personal thanks and gratitude to David because he has provided so much wisdom and sound counsel in the daily struggles and challenges of life.

"When you occupy positions of leadership you are inevitably challenged and it's especially powerful knowing that someone in our community keeps me close to his heart and prays for me and for my uplifting, and also prays for me to succeed."

Photo | Newham Council



Prayer at a Renew space

“A simple and accessible way of people meeting Christ” – interview with Ellen Price of Renew Stocky in Derby

Prayer is the heartbeat of every Renew Wellbeing space.

While each space will go about prayer slightly differently, a basic rhythm of prayer permeates them all. It's contemplative, liturgical, and centering, with silence, stillness and a focus on breath work often key. For Baptist minister Ellen Price it has been transformational.

“It's an inclusive, nobody shut out way of doing prayer,” she says, “and I've not experienced anything like it. I've seen people who haven't got faith begin their journey by joining in with this very simple and accessible way of meeting Christ.”

As the minister of Trinity Baptist Church, Ellen has overseen Renew Stocky since its launch.

“I'm just about to retire - and I wish I'd learnt about praying this way years ago.”

A place where inner habits of wellbeing are shared

Renew Wellbeing is a charity founded by Baptist pastor Ruth Rice which seeks to attend to people's mental and emotional wellbeing. It does this primarily through simple café style spaces run by local churches where hobbies and activities are shared or co-produced. Each church partners with a mental health professional from the

local council or other suitable organisation to ensure good inclusive practices for safe spaces.

Each Renew centre has a quiet room or prayer space where, the charity states ‘inner habits of wellbeing are shared’. The three simple principles underpinning all Renew spaces are: *being prayerful, being present and being in partnership.*

There are now around 250 Renew spaces around the UK (plus a further 20 children, youth and family Renew spaces.)

One of these is Renew Stocky, run by Trinity Baptist Church, Derby. It launched in September 2019 and opens each Tuesday from 12:30 until 19:00 in the Derby Homes Boyer Street Community Room, a short walk from the church.

The prayer rhythm at Renew Stocky

There are three prayer times at Renew Stocky, and the prayer space is open for anyone to use anytime.

The first prayer is at 13:30 based on Psalm 103. This is the Renew morning prayer with a section for people to express how they have experienced God, which is effectively praise; one for giving thanks; one for confession; and finally praying for others.

The same set wording is used each time. Participants can say something at each point or reflect in silence. Everybody in the Renew Space is invited to participate; not everyone will, but all will be aware that prayer is happening and will hear something of what's going on.

The second prayer time is at 15:30. This has evolved in a way that's specific to Renew Stocky, shaped by suggestions from the Renewers.

Ellen has learnt this prayer works best by beginning with quiet and encouraging deep breathing. The first part involves saying “Wow”. “It's encouraging people to think about what has made you say ‘wow!’ this week,” explains Ellen. “And I say if you think God's there, then you're saying: ‘Well done, this is amazing.’ The ‘wow!’ might be a blackcurrant crumble, a robin singing, someone being kind.

The second section is about giving thanks; the third is around concerns, either saying them out loud or reflecting on them in silence. The section ends with more silence and deep breath work, as Ellen invites those present to breathe in the peace and love in the room, and breathe out their concerns. “Not that the concerns are gone. But just for this moment we let go of them.”

RenewWellbeing

The evening prayer at 18:30 uses an Examen, a prayerful reflection on the day's events to detect God's presence and direction. There's a focus on what was good, and not so good, and asking help for tomorrow. "This is a quiet and peaceful ending of the day," notes Ellen.

'It's heavenly' - reflections on praying this way

Ellen says the consistency of approach – the liturgy is the same each time – has made it accessible to people not used to praying. They feel safe knowing what to expect. Nevertheless, each session looks different because different people take up the invitation to participate in the space, and each bring their own joys and concerns.

The middle session is the one in which most participate (other Renew centres report this, too), and Ellen believes 'wow' and 'giving thanks' have particularly resonated.

"It's about stopping and noticing the world around you, being in the moment.

"The 'wow' has become very special. Some people message me during the week to say a wow that has happened to them, something they've noticed.

"It's worship. Some don't get that, but for others it becomes clear over time. And for me it's what worship has become: stopping to enjoy what God is doing in the world."

There are clear health benefits, she continues, referencing the Bible verse '*Give thanks in every situation.*' (1 Thess 5:18)

"Research has shown this (noticing the good and giving

thanks) lowers our blood pressure, raises our immunity and makes us more creative. And if you do it with others, it unites those participating.

"God knew way back that this is actually having a physiological as well as a spiritual effect."

This more contemplative, liturgical way of praying is different to what many Christians are used to. It means some have to learn to adapt when they participate in the Renew space, for praying longer, extemporary prayers can be off-putting to those not used to it, notes Ellen, whose dissertation focused on community prayer. Praying alongside others, being considerate of them, with them rather than for them, and following a set liturgy is safe and accessible, and people connect with it.

Ellen adds how people encounter a peaceful presence when entering Renew.

"It's because it's all shaped around this rhythm of prayer. Everyone has that awareness that prayer is happening, whatever they think about God, as our prayer space is a screened off corner. People recognise that God is there.

"I've come to believe that the presence of Christ is in all of us in some way," she continues. "And so what I'm doing, particularly through that middle prayer, is helping them to recognise the presence of Christ in them.

"When they do, it's heavenly."

To find out more, visit renewwellbeing.org.uk

See books, page 39.



Photo from Renew Stocky | Trinity Baptist Church, Derby





We are sharing Jesus with people

Interview with Allan Barbazza, singer-songwriter and minister of King's Cross Baptist Church in London

Allan Barbazza has composed songs from his early teens. He set up a band in his native Brazil, where he released an album, and initially joined King's Cross Baptist Church as its worship pastor when he moved to the UK in 2016.

Many of his tracks are worship songs, written about his own faith. Others are directly for the church, often composed collaboratively (Allan's wife Anya Rose is also a songwriter). A desire to encourage intimacy with God and sing the scriptures lies at the heart of what he does, as the titles of his most popular tracks on Spotify testify: *Purpose*, *Fill Me Again*, *Romans 8*, *Faithful* and *Love Of My Life*.

He recorded and filmed a live worship album at his church,

with the tracks collectively racking up thousands of views on YouTube.

"But it's not about the songs becoming hits," he says. "It's really about the purpose of this music, how can we actually push the message to more people, because the more people the gospel is rolled out to, the more people can be reached.

"I don't always receive feedback, but when you hear testimonies that a song helped someone, you're like, wow - there is a bigger purpose to this.

"We are sharing Jesus with people. How to be intimate with God, how to sing scriptures, with all the power of the word and the power of Jesus. This can impact lives."

The composition of his songs is different each time, and there is no set formula – but all rely on an openness to God and the Spirit's promptings.

"Some are born out of a prayer time; some have come to me while reading the Bible," he explains. "With Romans 8 I'm reading the Bible and I record a voice note - and I just start singing. That's how the song came. It can have only been the Holy Spirit.

"I wrote *The Love Of My Life* during a week of prayer and fasting at my church. It was from Psalm 18. You can hear me crying on the original voice note, singing the words 'Jesus is the love my life'. It was powerful.

"Other times it's trying to figure out what God is saying to the church – there's a corporate aspect. In a song writing retreat in 2019 we wrote a song about the faithfulness of God, that he would never let us go. That when we're weak or feeling lonely, he is our strength. And that was important during Covid.

"If you don't find the space, whether to write something down as you're reading from scripture or spend time reflecting, you might miss what the Spirit is prompting."



A former policeman in São Paulo, Brazil, Allan Barbazza moved to London in 2016 as he was invited to join King's Cross Baptist Church (KCBC) to lead the worship ministry by the late minister Steve Latham.

In 2020, Allan completed his training for Baptist ministry at Spurgeon's College, becoming the Senior Pastor of KCBC in June 2023.

Access Allan's worship songs on:

YouTube:
youtube.com/@AllanBarbazza

Instagram:
[@allanbarbazza](https://www.instagram.com/allanbarbazza)

Linktree:
linktr.ee/Allanbarbazza

All Allan's songs are licensed through CCLI so churches can access and use them in worship.



Providing Baptist Ministers with a peaceful and secure retirement in their own home

rbmho.org

If a retiring minister does not have access to, or any other means of providing accommodation themselves, RBMHO may be able to help. We also help BMS missionaries who have primarily served abroad and spouses of ministers who have died whilst in service.

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If you need further information about our work or are able to make a donation please contact us on **07729 045422** or email admin@rbmho.org.uk



RETIRED BAPTIST MINISTERS
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Retired Baptist Ministers Housing Organisation is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered with the Charity Commission under charity number 1177649.





Scripture recognises there are different kinds of prayer

Nike Adebajo is a Regional Minister with the Yorkshire Baptist Association. Having helped facilitate ecumenical prayer gatherings in Sheffield, she emphasises the value in learning from other traditions – including from the global south and east

Part of my commitment to prayer started when I was a university student in Nigeria in the mid 1970s. A prayer movement swept through tertiary institutions, which led to an explosion with thousands of people making a commitment to follow Jesus. Nigeria now has one of the largest gatherings of Christians on the planet at the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) Holy Ghost Convention (conservative estimates put it at 1 million, though Kwiyani 2020 puts it at 2 million¹). Don't get me wrong, there are many challenges facing Christianity in Nigeria, discipleship being one of them; however, a desire to pray is ingrained in most Nigerian Christians.

After arriving in the UK in the late 1980s and moving to Sheffield in the 1990s, my family joined The King Centre which later joined St Thomas' Philadelphia, a bigger church which God had given more of a platform in the city. I was soon invited to lead on prayer, and from that I've helped to facilitate two ecumenical prayer spaces in the city.

These are emPower - a quarterly gathering for any Christians in the city who want to pray together; and Sheffield Leaders in Prayer, where church leaders across the city meet monthly for mutual encouragement and to pray for the city and the Church's mission.

emPower takes place in different churches with people coming from different streams and ethnicities.

We start every gathering by reminding people we are from different denominations/ streams and encourage people to make space for one another's spirituality. Worship is led by a team drawn from different churches across the city. We identify people, again from different churches, who can inform our prayer topics.

emPower is an amazing example of how coming together in that ecumenical space, journeying together and being willing to lay down our way of doing things and exploring other's, helps us to grow. One instance of this has been a Pentecostal minister who couldn't initially understand how one could be silent and pray; however, through journeying together, including participating in an emPower online lament during Covid lockdown, has come to recognise the power of these other forms of prayer. In the same way, there are many who value a quiet way of praying but who are now able to flex into something more exuberant. It's been such a joy.

As a regional minister, I see this beginning to happen at the local church. Many of our congregations are experiencing an increase in the number of our sisters and brothers from the global south and east and some fellowships are willing to try praying differently to reflect these new styles. I try to help identify differences in prayer styles, for instance, encouraging a congregation (appropriately) to pray in the style of Acts 4.24 when 'they all lifted their voices to the Lord'.

I'd encourage us all to be willing to lean into and learn to pray in different ways - intentionally make space for different prayer styles in our individual and corporate prayer life. One of my favourite scriptures on prayer is Ephesians 6:18: 'And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests...' Scripture recognises there are different kinds of prayer. There is a richness to the various Christian prayer approaches – may we be people who are open to that. Who knows, that may be a cure to some people who say they find prayer boring.

¹ Harvey Kwiyani, *Multicultural Kingdom Ethnic Diversity, Mission and the Church* (London, SCM Press, 2020), p29

Raising the spiritual temperature in Portishead

New Baptist initiatives are beginning to emerge in north Somerset - Lindsay Caplen explains why prayer has been key



“I think we really underestimate the power of prayer to prepare the ground,” notes Lindsay Caplen.

“Faithful, persistent prayer breaks up the ground for God to plant his seed.”

Lindsay is a Regional Minister in Webnet with a focus on pioneering and planting. Given such a focus, she feels it's important to be grounded in a local context of pioneer/planting.

She ended up living in Portishead when she moved to the Association, because for historic reasons there was a manse there. Portishead is a rapidly growing coastal town just west of Bristol of nearly 20,000 people. There is no Baptist witness here, though several initiatives had been developed over the years that are no longer operating.

It meant she and husband Andrew 'were stepping into a space that had been steeped in prayer'.

“Something that looks like it didn't flourish, or didn't really get off the ground, actually raised the spiritual temperature. I think it prepared the ground, and has allowed someone else to then come on in – we have found such a hunger to talk about spiritual things.

“So honouring what happened before is really important.

Nothing done in God's strength is wasted.”

One initiative to have emerged is the Salt House Church, which Lindsay describes as 'a fresh planting of the Lord.'

Lindsay prayer walked the area during the lockdown months - and an ensuing sabbatical - which involved much missional listening and deepened her sense that God was calling her to plant something fresh.

This has involved embedding herself in the community in appropriate ways; including introducing herself as a Baptist minister on a neighbourhood app which has led to several conversations; and joining a regular, but ad hoc predominantly male gathering outside Parsons Bakery.

The connections Lindsay made led to a weekly meet-up at her house called Open Table – a diverse mix of regular churchgoers and unchurched. She sensed God revealing the need for a network of easily replicable simple church gatherings across Portishead and nearby villages.

There's a Hong Kong aspect too, with a number of Hong Kongers having moved to Portishead (where it's cheaper to buy) after initially settling in Bristol, and a new Christian community forming.

The intention is that these simple churches would meet once a month to worship together, share testimony, preaching and teaching. This has in turn led to the calling of Baptist ministers Paul and Barbara Reville to work bi-vocationally as part of the new project, a calling 'steeped in prayer'.

The emerging work became known as Salt House at the end of 2023: there is a lighthouse and salt marshes nearby, and the community is seeking to become 'more salty and more lighty,' where they can have a greater positive impact in society, as ambassadors of the Kingdom of God.

“The diversity in such a small gathering is both awesome and challenging! We are therefore stepping out in faith, and certainly need prayer,” says Lindsay. “From its foundation God has been the focus. It's all needed to be based in prayer.

“We're not asking God to bless what we're already doing - we're actually saying, 'God we need you at the heart of our strategy here.'

“But the trajectory of Salt House is very exciting – it has the potential to multiply disciples and churches in a pioneering way, with the benefits of both small and larger churches.”

Praying Through an ACTIVATION

One of Matt Holman's favourite ways to pray is by using an 'activation', which simply means hearing God through an activity. He introduces one here.

When we look at scripture, we encounter many stories of how God speaks to humanity. I love reading those biblical stories as well as hearing current examples of how people connect with God today. Every single time there are notable differences in how he speaks - this to me is overwhelming evidence that the voice of God is not stale nor stagnant but always flowing, just like the rivers described in Ezekiel 47 ...so where the river flows everything will live...

Prayer, in essence, is positioning ourselves to engage with the living God and,

therefore, with the reality that we are created for an eternal, intimate relationship with him, just as he designed. When we think about how we interact with those close to us, we see that this happens in a variety of ways - it's no different with God.¹

Lynn Green states, in her call for us to be beacons of prayer, that God has been speaking to her from Isaiah 43:18-19:

'Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.

*See I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?*

*I am making a way in the desert
and streams in the wasteland!*

That passage has been significant to me in recent years because it is a powerful call to re-focus on Jesus and what he is doing in any given moment. It's a call to encounter God's perspective and to experience intimacy with Jesus while simultaneously finding ourselves in the desert, amongst life's challenges.²



Whilst God is the same yesterday, today and forever, he is also a continually creative God who is always doing a new thing. So, with Isaiah 43 in mind, my encouragement for us all at this time, is specifically to ask God to help us perceive the new thing in our lives - maybe this 'thing' is for us to encounter God's voice in a new way.

One of my favourite ways to pray is by using an 'activation': this simply means hearing God through an activity. There are endless ways to engage with God and the more time we spend with him the more we discover how we hear best. For example, if you struggle to focus in quiet moments, then using a physical activation could be a great way for you to pray.

Here is an activation that I hope will encourage you as you connect with God's voice, perhaps in a new way.

-
- 1 Why not look up these scriptures for a reminder of some of the ways in which God speaks to us:
2 Timothy 3:16 (scripture), 1 Kings 3:5 (dreams), Jeremiah 23:16 (visions), Psalms 19:1-2 (nature).
 - 2 Isaiah 43 was part of what inspired me to write the song 'Jesus is Holy' with Luke Wareham and Matt Caddick in 2022 (EP - Pure Heart)

Activation

- 1 Start by reading Ezekiel 47:1-12
- 2 Visualise yourself by that river (imagine the scene, look at a picture or even go and sit by a river - whatever works best for you)
- 3 Invite Jesus to come and be with you
- 4 Where do you picture yourself in that scene?
You might be standing on the bank; on the other hand, maybe you are ankle deep in the river or have jumped right in!
- 5 What else can you see or sense?
- 6 What might Jesus be wanting to say to you from this picture? - Ask him

Possible Interpretation

- On the bank: time of rest, observance - invitation to see God's perspective
- Ankle deep: needing to encounter the peace of Jesus (shoes of the gospel of peace - Ephesians 6:15)
- Fully in: Refreshment, restoration, healing



Matt Holman is a pastoral assistant from Counterslip Baptist Church, Bristol. He is the author of *Activating the Voice of God in Your Home*.

Matt founded HearYourWay prophetic ministries after years of a growing desire to encourage and equip others to hear the voice of God.
Hearyourway.co.uk

Matt has also released a free PDF resource for church workers:
Hearyourway.co.uk/free

RESOURCES

Prayer Apps

Several apps have developed in recent years which use technology to support our praying lives and bridge the gap between faith and the digital space.

Here is a small selection – all can be found on the App Store or Google Play.



Centering Prayer

The Centering Prayer mobile app supports the practice of centering prayer - a method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, prayer in which we experience God's presence within us. Advocates of Centering Prayer say it does not replace other prayer but encourages silence and deeper connection to God.

Created by the Contemplative Outreach spiritual network

Glorify
Your daily worship

Glorify

A daily worship app with curated Bible passages, daily devotionals, guided meditation and space to pray and reflect.

Created by Britons Henry Costa and Ed Beccle in 2020, it now has more than 10m users.



Lectio 365

Pray the Bible, every day.

Lectio 365

Lectio 365 is a free daily devotional app that helps you pray the Bible every day. The roughly 10 minute morning devotions are inspired by Lectio Divina, a way of mediating on the Bible. Its Night Prayers use the Examen practice to help you reflect, rejoice, repent and rest each evening.

Created by 24-7 Prayer



PrayerMate

PrayerMate helps you develop a discipline of prayer: organise your prayer life, know what to pray for, and actually pray. Pray consistently for the people and causes you care about.

PrayerMate is a ministry of Discipleship Tech, a London-based CIO 'using technology to help people grow in their relationship with Jesus'.

Go deeper - more material online

Read

A lamentable problem

Tim Judson, author of *Awake in Gethsemane: Bonhoeffer and the Witness of Christian Lament*, shares a brief overview of the biblical and historical tradition of lament.

baptist.org.uk/tjlament

Chat and Catch

A framework created by Parenting for Faith that encourages children to communicate with God on their own terms – and then to hear from him. Kate Irvine of Chipping Campden Baptist Church, explains more.

baptist.org.uk/chatcatch

Listen

Baptist minister Jonathan Vaughan-Davies chats with Brian Heasley, international director of the 24-7 prayer movement and author of *Be Still: A Simple Guide to Quiet Times*.

<https://bit.ly/brianheasley1>

<https://bit.ly/brianheasley2>

Course

Brian has also created a five session course which helps participants explore the simple, transformative practice of a daily quiet time with God.

24-7prayer.com/podcast_series/be-still/

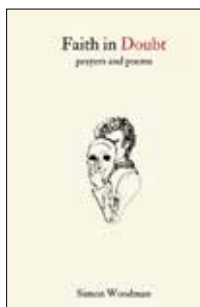
Books on prayer

Selected recent books on prayer by Baptists

Faith in Doubt: Prayers and Poems

By Simon Woodman
(Independent)

A selection of prayers, often with responses, Woodman has written as he has led his congregation (Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church) in worship.



'As a New Testament scholar he understands that words matter, so he has obviously taken time and thought before he invites the congregation to pray. The result is that the words are often fresh, engaging, searching and always honouring God.'
– Brian Haymes

Gathering up the Crumbs

Edited by Catriona Gorton, Claire Nicholls, Gale Richards, Helen Dare, Molly Boot, Ruth Gouldbourne and Sarah Bingham
(Baptist Union of Great Britain)



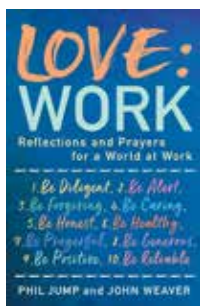
A collection of original worship material written, as part of the celebration of a centenary of Baptist women's ordination, by women who are accredited to serve in the churches of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Baptist Union of Scotland and Baptist Union of Wales. Written for all (lay and ordained) who appreciate resources upon which to draw for reflection and prayer.

'What an amazing book... 292 pages of carefully crafted words for occasions, events and experiences of a wide variety and order.' – Keith Jones

Love: Work - Reflections and Prayers for a World at Work

By Phil Jump and John Weaver
Darton, Longman and Todd

A companion for Christian disciples as they engage in various experiences of the world of work. The authors – both Baptist ministers – identify 'ten commandments' which can be used to focus on the outworking of faith in the office, boardroom or on the factory floor.



'A valuable book to help bridge the gap between world of faith, which for all too many is private, and the public world of work and daily life. It is a book to read and then to keep close at hand.'

– Amazon review

On My Knees - Rebuilding our confidence in prayer

By Chris Band
(Monarch Books)

Band approaches the subject of prayer by drawing heavily on responses from his own congregation (Headington Baptist Church) to their own experiences of prayer.

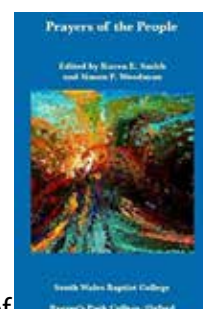


'Like a workshop manual - cannot fail to improve our understanding of prayer and its potential.'
– Martin Poole

Prayers of the People

Edited by Karen E Smith and Simon Woodman
(Centre for Baptist History and Heritage)

Includes prayers from nearly 100 contributors, who between them encompass the depth and breadth of British Baptist life. Prayers of gathering, adoration, confession, thanksgiving, petition, intercession, sending out, as well as prayers for seasons and services. Written to mark the ministry of John Weaver in 2011.



'In using their creative work, we are not 'reading when we should pray', but praying through the reading... allowing a book, as well as free prayer, to carry us into that eternal speech which resounds in the communion of the triune God.' – Paul Fiddes

Slow Down, Show Up & Pray

By Ruth Rice
(Authentic)

Full of personal stories, reflective resources and practical guidance, this book will enable you to maintain your own wellbeing and encourage churches to provide Renew spaces.



'This book is like a Narnian wardrobe, it pulls you into the possibility of a new way of doing things.'
– Shaun Lambert

Copies of *Gathering up the Crumbs*, *Love: Work* and *Slow Down, Show Up & Pray* are available to order from our online shop baptist.org.uk/shop



EVENTS

Baptist Theology North: Baptist Church: Back to the Future?

Friday 7 June
Huddersfield

Baptist Theology North provides 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 Bristol Baptist College

This theological conference mainly for Baptist ministers will be an opportunity to present and listen to papers within a friendly, supportive environment. The Keynote speaker is the 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 register, email reception@bristol-baptist.ac.uk by 1 June.

Fresh Streams Theology School: Ecclesiology Re-Imagined

19-20 June
Rising Brook Community Church
Stafford

In recent times our ecclesiology has come under the microscope like never before. At the 2024 Fresh Streams Theology School, theologians and practitioners will lead us to take a detailed look: What does the Bible say and history teach us? Should our structures be completely de-institutionalised and flexible? What is the Spirit saying? What about the future? Is there a Baptist way of being church that is sacrosanct to us?

Contributors include Stephen Holmes, Lucy Peppiatt, Ruth Moriarty, Ashley Hardingham, Roy Searle, Craig Millward and Simon Hall

For more info and to book visit freshstreams.net

Monthly prayer gatherings

Rural Ministries

Monthly Zoom prayer gathering 30 minutes to connect and pray with others in rural ministry. (first Tuesday of the month). ruralministries.org.uk

European Baptist Federation

Monthly prayer gathering to pray for peace and healing (last Wednesday of the month). ebf.org/give-and-pray



Operation Agri Resource Pack
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NEW for 2024!

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Or contact: admin@operationagri.org.uk
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The Send
7 July
Ovo Arena Wembley

The Send is a campaign activating believers to live a missional lifestyle by adopting and reaching real mission fields at home and abroad. The Send was born out of a prayer movement. They've been gathering and mobilising young adults into their missional call in several nations and are now launching The Send UK & Ireland.

Four hours of worship and commissioning takes place at the Ovo Arena, kicking off an arena tour.

For more info, see thesend.uk

Satellites
2-6 August
Bath and West Showground,
Shepton Mallet

Satellites is a summer event for young people organised by the team at Youthscape. It's a five-day gathering, designed to

inspire teenagers to live with God at the centre of their lives for the other 360 days of the year.

Satellites has a large Baptist presence – more than 40 Baptist youth groups representing nine Associations participated last year. This was facilitated by Isabella Senior, Young Leaders' Development Coordinator; Glenda Chadwick-Down, South West Baptist Association Mission Enabler for Children, Youth and Families; and Clare Hooper, Children, Youth and Families Round Table Facilitator.

Glenda, Clare and Isabella headed up the Chapel venue where they led daily office prayers – and are doing so again this year.

The theme for Satellites 2024 is prayer, with the event called Signal Fire. Organisers write:

'One of the greatest gifts we can give young people is to teach them how to pray. Prayer is the key that unlocks lifelong faith; it's a refuge in times when

everything else is failing; it's a compass when we're lost and a firework when we're joy-struck. Prayer is the subject of a thousand distinct metaphors, and they're all both true and insufficient.

'Why? Because prayer is direct connection with God, and the pathway to making sense of life itself.'

For more info and bookings visit: youthscape.co.uk/satellites

Thrive Conference
18-20 October
High Leigh conference centre

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 welcome speakers Barbara and Bill Carpenter, and include worship led by Andrew and Jenny Fitzgerald. Find out more on the Thrive website thrivebaptistpouses.org/events/

PENTECOST

ALL TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE

BAPTIST ASSEMBLY

TELFORD INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
17-19 MAY



FIND OUT MORE AT BAPTISTASSEMBLY.ORG.UK

PRAYING FOR OUR CHILDREN

How would those who lead our children like us to pray for them? And do they have recommendations on how we can encourage our children to cultivate a prayer life?

Baptists Together magazine invited members of our Children, Young People and Families (CYF) Round Table for their ideas

Prayer points for children

That they would hear God speaking above all other voices.

That they know their value and worth.

That they would know that God wants to and can use them now as they are rather than what they will be. That they would know their voice is a gift to the church and that they are loved by God.

That all children understand clearly who Jesus was, what he has done for them. For them to know they are loved so much, and in turn they might learn to love the Lord with all their heart, mind, soul and strength.

To know that you are loved by Daddy God beyond anything we can humanly understand.

Visit the CYF section of our website for more resources: baptist.org.uk/cyfresources

For prayer ideas and activities for children visit Prayer Spaces in Schools: prayerspacesinschools.com

Ideas for cultivating a prayer life

Talk to God like he is the best friend you always wanted.

I would be curious about how they're seeing God in their everyday life.

Keep a prayer diary. We are doing it at church and it's amazing to see how the Lord answers prayers.

I love the idea of a prayer journal/diary, where children who struggle to pray out loud or may be non-verbal, could communicate with God through writing their prayers down in words or pictures. As long as what they are writing is from their hearts and is directed to God - I still see that as communication with God, as he looks at the heart.

Speaking to God is easy, like chatting to a best friend. Remember you have to listen too. God really wants to speak to you, so expect to hear from him!

PRAYERS

Taken from the Baptist compilations
Prayers of the People (2011) and
Gathering up the Grumbs (2020)

Open Space, Still Centre

God, everywhere and nowhere,
in grace and love full and
overflowing...
as first in Christ,
You welcomed us with open hearts;
so now we welcome you into this quiet
and holy space.
Immerse us, we pray,
within your Spirit's generous flood
until we find our still centre
at home, in you

This prayer was written use at 'open
spaces' at the Baptist Assembly in
2004, by Richard Kidd

A prayer for transformation

Healing, redeeming transforming God,
hear our prayers for the world
Where there is ugliness transform
with beauty.
Where there is violence, bring peace,
Where there is deceit bring
truthfulness.
Where there is shallow superficiality
bring depth and authenticity.
Where there is evil bring forth
goodness
And where there is despair, bring
forth hope.

Roy Searle, Northumbria Community
Trust

A morning prayer

Lord, this as every morning, we come to you fragmented, confused, distracted.
Take our fragmented minds and create us again.
May we have a clear eye and steady focus, to see and serve you in all things.
Keep us honest, steadfast and kind, centred in your wholesome and life giving presence.
Into your hands we commend our spirits. Amen.

Patricia Took

Background | Rawpixel | Freepik

Taken from *Prayers of the People*

Love Regardless, a Prayer of Confession

He stands in the middle of the mess
I've made of my life
Casting not a glance at the debris
that surrounds his feet
And he looks at me
He looks at me
And simply says "Come"

And opening his arms
He welcomes me into an
all-encompassing embrace
I am held by those strong and loving
arms
And I hear his words of comfort in my
ear
As he reassures me
He reassures me
That all I have done is forgivable

That I am still loved
And worthy of his acceptance
And I begin to sense that acceptance
As I am securely held within the
Father's embrace
I know, I feel, within my soul, that
unfathomable peace

Ali Taylor

So Few Words

So few words
So much to say
Fill me with your Word, Lord

So much pain
In my heart holds sway
Fill me with your peace, Lord

So many troubles
Filling each day
Fill me with your strength, Lord

Each day, you speak to me
Each day, you comfort me
Each day, you carry me
Every day, you love me.

Gail Scholes

Prayers of the People is a volume of prayers from nearly 100 contributors who, between them, encompassed the depth and breadth of British Baptist life.

Gathering up the Crumbs is collection of original worship material written, as part of the celebration of a centenary of Baptist women's ordination, by women who are accredited to serve in the churches of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, Baptist Union of Scotland and Baptist Union of Wales.

See page 39 for details.

Sharing Abundant Life Both Near and Far

What matters most to you?

And what do you want to be remembered for?

Like you, our greatest desire at Baptists Together and BMS World Mission is to call the lost to our precious Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Our hearts for the Church and for mission are aligned and, although our contexts might look different, we're both striving to share the good news of the gospel to our needy world.

Jesus calls us "to make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28: 19) and in partnership with you, we do exactly that! Through your generous support of both organisations, you markedly transform precious lives with Jesus' love.

By partnering with Baptists Together, you're supporting the growth of many healthy churches in the UK. You're helping communities to flourish by encouraging church leaders to reach their full potential and by supporting community development at your local church.

You've also graciously stood with BMS to bring abundant life to some of the most marginalised and least evangelised communities in the world, as well as among people on the move. You've compassionately brought hope to many, providing pathways to education, flourishing livelihoods and crucial healthcare where injustice is prevalent.

And excitingly, we're partnering together to make it even easier for you to help those in need! For the first time, Baptists Together and BMS have joined together to ask whether you could help ensure this transformative work continues long into the future by leaving a gift in your Will to both organisations. By doing this, you'll ensure that whether near or far, lives will keep being reshaped with God's never-ending love. Gifts in Wills are desperately needed by both of us. They ensure that the Church of the future will be fully equipped, and that forthcoming lives will be powerfully changed, both in the UK and far from our shores.



Jesus calls us "to make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28: 19) and in partnership with you, we do exactly that! Through your generous support of both organisations, you markedly transform precious lives with Jesus' love.



You can share abundant life with future generations by leaving a gift in your Will. And to make it even easier, we're now offering the chance to write your Will for free!

BMS has partnered with expert Will writers, Octopus Legacy, who offer a quick and easy service thanks to their on-hand legal support and clear step-by-step process. You'll be able to write your Will free of charge from the comfort of your own home, online, over the phone or face to face in just 15 minutes! Do check out https://bmswm.org/write_your_will for more information or call BMS' Legacy Officer Lucy on 01235 517615.



Baptists Together have partnered with the National Free Wills Network which enables you to write your Will for free through participating solicitors.

Do check out baptist.org.uk/legacy for more information or email Karen at legacy@baptist.org.uk.

All the info you need!

Please make or update your Will today. You will need to specify separate gifts for both Baptists Together and BMS World Mission. All you need are the following addresses

BMS World Mission

PO Box 49
129 Broadway
Didcot
OX11 8XA
Charity number: 1174364

Baptists Together

PO Box 44
129 Broadway
Didcot
OX11 8RT
Charity number: 1181392



Baptist Union Council - March 2024

Most of the March 2024 Baptist Union Council was devoted to answering the question regarding Ministry and Marriage as defined in the Ministerial Recognition (MR) rules.

Council voted not to change the MR rules with 49 favouring no change (64 per cent); 27 advocating a change (35 per cent) and one abstention. A two thirds majority was required in favour of the change for it to happen.

Worship, prayer, scripture, discussions around tables and in plenary all featured in the lead up to the vote, which was conducted by secret ballot.

In November 2020 we received a request from 70 people who are part of Baptists Together (mainly ministers but some church members) to change the ministerial rules to make it possible for ministers to be in a legal Same Sex Marriage and be accredited.

This request went to our Ministerial Recognition Committee, which subsequently referred it to Council as the body which exercises spiritual and strategic oversight of the affairs of the Union. Council first discussed the question in March 2022, with further updates in October 2022, March 2023 and October 2023. Council in due course agreed to conduct a national consultation, which was open between May and November 2023.

Council members had been given access to the Consultation Report in February, while responses and reflections gathered by the independent Consultation Team

at the 2023 Baptist Assembly were displayed in various parts of the room.

Members subsequently agreed a statement, which was shared alongside a video message from General Secretary Lynn Green. (Access them at baptist.org.uk/consultation)

In this message Lynn said:

"Our meeting together has been bathed in worship and prayer, and whilst we've had some really honest conversations these were all shared with gentleness and grace.

"However you feel about the decision that has been made, please do remember that this affects real people's lives and these individuals are our brothers and sisters in Christ.

"I can assure you that Council laments all the pain that has been experienced through the process which has led to this decision and is acutely aware of the significant impact it may have.

"While they have reached the decision, Council recognises that the Consultation Report reflects a range of convictions across our Baptist family. Council is asking us all to demonstrate grace and respect towards those that hold different views to their own.

"Council is also asking us all to exercise pastoral care and sensitivity, especially to those who requested this change or who are unable to be in accredited ministry as we move forward."

Commenting after the meeting Lynn added, "I was pleased that the final vote so accurately reflected the views expressed in the Consultation rReport with 64 per cent voting for no change, and 35 per cent expressing a desire for the MR Rules to allow for the convictions of all around marriage to be respected and held in tension as a reflection of our Baptist ecclesiology."

Other items were discussed, including the Financial Model Review, for which there will be a special Council meeting on 4 June.

For the full Council report, visit: baptist.org.uk/mar2024



Project Violet findings released



The findings of Project Violet, a major research project on women's experience of Baptist ministry, were released on 2 May.

Project Violet is a three year collaborative research project examining the experiences and place of women in Baptist life, leadership and 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.

Sixteen women ministers have undertaken research. They met in April to agree a series of requests for change which build upon their research and theological reflection together.

All parts of Baptist life are being invited to discuss and respond to this between now (May) and September. A report of agreed actions will subsequently come to Baptist Union Council in October 2024.

Full details of the findings and how to respond to them can be found on the Project Violet website.

There is also a seminar at the Baptist Assembly featuring some of the co-researchers to explore what the findings mean for local churches, colleges, associations and other parts of our shared life together.

Speaking earlier this year, General Secretary Lynn Green said: "Project Violet has already had an impact... All Baptist groups will want to take time to consider the findings and make their response by the end of September."

Project Violet has been undertaken by the Centre for Baptist Studies at Regent's Park College, Oxford and funded by Baptists Together Mission Forum and Baptist Union Trustees.

For more visit projectviolet.org.uk

Everyone Everywhere - new national initiative to help ordinary Christians share Jesus

A new Baptist collaboration focused on equipping churches and individuals with the tools they need to see new people become Christians and new churches start in their communities has launched.

Everyone Everywhere aims to help ordinary Christians and churches see more people become Christians.

It will do this through events, training, resources, and mentoring.

"Working across our Baptist family, we want to kindle your everyday confidence to have spiritual conversations, invite friends to faith in Jesus, discuss the Bible with folk exploring big questions, and ignite little

conversations about Jesus all over your everyday life," says Alex Harris, part of the Steering Group.

Key offerings include:

- High quality resources to help ordinary people feel confident to say something about Jesus, especially around festival times like Christmas and Easter.
- Roadshow days for churches, clusters and associations who want to explore how to start new Christian communities and churches simply, cost-effectively, and fruitfully because they are seeing new people become Christians.
- Signposting the best of our Baptist resources so they are available to everyone, everywhere to access.

- Encouraging and supporting catalysing groups to champion local initiatives.

- Hosting national conferences for Baptists on church planting

Everyone Everywhere is a Baptist-wide collaboration, hosted by the St Hild Centre for Church Planting. It was first identified in the Baptists Together Mission Forum, and is funded by the Baptist Insurance Company.

It is steered by a working group of Alex Harris, Pam Davies, Andy Glover, Isabella Senior, Simon Goddard, Kwame Adzam and Paul O'Neil.

For more visit everyoneEverywhere.church





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www.baptist.org.uk/colleges





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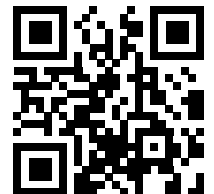
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