



## ***Update: December 2024***

Dear Friends

Welcome to this month's Faith and Society Update with the usual selection of news, resources and events.

As well as the busy planning and preparations happening this month, Advent is a time of waiting and expectation. Our Advent journey takes us, as it did Joseph and Mary, along an uncertain road as we recognise humanity's failures and reflect on the troubling news from around our world. We pray that, in the midst of uncertainty and darkness, you will receive and share the message of hope, light and the reassurance of God's love.

May you know God's peace as you journey towards Christmas and rejoice that he sent Jesus, Emmanuel, to be our Saviour.

Every blessing

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

**Whilst we've carefully chosen these resources and events because we hope they will be useful to you and your church family, we are not directly responsible for the content from other groups and organisations.**

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

### **This month's featured stories:**



**How can you make your church open to ALL this Christmas? - so people from diverse backgrounds feel welcome**



**'Christmas can be both joyful... and sustainable' - Leigh Road Baptist Church has hosted its annual Christmas Eco Fayre**



**One doorstep... to a family of new believers - London City Mission and Rye Lane Chapel sharing the gospel in Peckham**

## News:



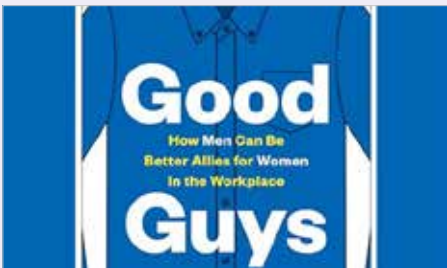
### Advent Prayer from Lynn Green

Our General Secretary has recorded an Advent prayer which can be downloaded and shared in your church services this Advent. As we continue in prayer for you, please join us in praying for one another across Baptists Together and share this prayer with others. Click here [to view and download the recording, and find the text of the prayer](#).



### Presidency Nominations 2026-27

**This is a final reminder** that we are inviting nominations for the person who will serve as Baptist Union President in 2026-27. All ministers, church secretaries and treasurers should have received an email from us on Friday 27 September outlining what the role entails, and how to nominate a person for this national role. **The deadline for receipt of all nominations is 31 December**, and the election discernment process will be held in the first months of 2025. [Click here for details](#)



### 'Male Allies' initiative to launch

A new initiative to enable male Baptist ministers to be better allies for women in ministry and leadership will begin in early 2025. The question of how male ministers could offer improved support for female colleagues was raised by the recent Project Violet research. One response to this is a series of Zoom sessions to explore the book *Good Guys - How Men Can Be Better Allies for Women in the Workplace*, by David G Smith and W Brad Johnson, taking place on Friday lunchtimes from 31 January to 14 March. [Click here to find out more](#).



### Join the Constituency Action Network

JPIT's Constituency Action Network (CAN) is a network of churches across the UK who are committed to building meaningful relationships with their MP and working with them to speak and act for peace and justice. Our goal is to establish a network of at least one church in every Westminster constituency in England, Scotland and Wales who is part of CAN. As part of joining CAN, alongside regular staff support and resources, you will receive a joining guide to help you on your journey through Faith and Politics. Click here [to read the latest blog](#). Click here to [sign up to receive the CAN Newsletter and join the Constituency Action Network](#).



### The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill

Last week, after hours of debate, MPs voted in favour of a bill to legalise assisted dying in England and Wales. This will now progress to the next stages in Parliament where the bill undergo further scrutiny and possible amendments before a final vote that may or may not see it become law. We have collated some information about the bill, some reflections from Christian perspectives and links to other resources to help you and your church explore the issue. Click here to [access this new area of our website](#).

## This month's featured resources:



### December Prayer Diary

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

- The West of England Baptist Network (Webnet)
- The Faith and Society Specialist Team
- The Southern Counties Baptist Association (SCBA)
- Christmas - rejoicing in God's sustained presence
- Reflecting on 2024 and asking for God's guidance in 2025

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



### Shine your light Christmas 2024

Imagine 100,000 Christians on the streets at Christmas singing carols and sharing the Gospel everywhere! Shine Your Light is a nationwide Christmas collaboration of many Christian denominations, taking place over the weekend of 13-15 December. Last year, hundreds of flashmob style carol events, open air Christingle services and nativity events from the small to the large - including some in Castles, country parks and housing estates - took place. This year, the vision is to see how the united Church can put Christ back into Christmas so that the whole nation can hear the bold proclamation of Good News and why we sing 'Joy to the World!' Click here [for more information and registration](#).



### New Christmas film 'relevant in the light of the ongoing Israel-Gaza conflict'

Churches are being encouraged to show a 3-minute animation from The Sanctuary Foundation. *Far from Home* highlights the significant link between the original Christmas story and the lived refugee experience being faced by those living in and around Bethlehem right now. The film is available as a free resource for churches, schools and community groups to use in the run up to Christmas, along with an accompanying resource pack to help support refugees. Click here [for more information and links to the resource](#).



### Christmas with The Chosen

The Chosen has created some free resources for communities in the UK to run a one-of-a-kind celebration: *Christmas with The Chosen*. Built around the short film *The Shepherd*, which tells the story of the Nativity, the resource offers an opportunity for local additions of live music or worship. It can be added to a Christmas service or put on as an entirely separate event free of charge. Click here [to find out more about the resources and sign up](#).



### Free Resources from Hear Your Way

Matt Holman is a pastoral assistant from Counterslip Baptist Church, Bristol and one of his favourite ways to pray is by using an 'activation' - hearing God through an activity. He is the author of *Activating the Voice of God in Your Home* and, working with Jess Thompson (Head of Accessible Church, New Wine), has released a [free accessible resource based on the book](#) - which includes pictorial prophetic activations to help those with Special Educational Needs access such resources. Matt has also created a [free Christmas activation](#).



## Resolve Course

What plans do you have for keeping in touch with visitors after your Christmas carol service? One idea would be to run *The Resolve Course*, produced by the Ugly Duckling Charity (which aims to stimulate meaningful conversations in contemporary culture, explore spirituality, and build relationships). This Course uses the potential of a New Year at a time when people are thinking about making changes to their lives. Each week during Resolve, people can explore what experts have to say about each topic, discuss as a group what they think with the question cards, and engage in a variety of practical exercises to help them bring about change in their lives. [Click here to find out more.](#)



## Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally observed from the 18-25 January. Materials for the 2025 theme 'Do you believe this?' have been prepared by the ecumenical community at Bose in Northern Italy, and help us to reflect on Jesus' provocative question to Martha in John 11:17-27. The pamphlet will be available in English, Welsh/English, Irish and Scots Gaelic. [Click here to order or download resources from CTBI.](#)



## Watch the new Future of Arms Introduction Video from JPIT!

'At the heart of the Christian message is a gospel of peace...' This video introduces the Future of Arms debate and hears from experts in the field on autonomous weapons, including former military chaplain and current Principal of Spurgeon's College, Philip McCormack. [Click here to watch the video.](#) [Click here to find out more,](#) including a briefing, podcasts and blogs of the topic.

## This month's featured events:



## Project Violet International Symposium - 15-16 January 2025

The Centre for Baptist Studies in conjunction with Baptists Together are organising this online Symposium, to which we are inviting academically-engaged Baptist women from around the world to discuss the findings of Project Violet and the actions arising from this extensive investigation into women's experiences of ministry. There will be three 2-hour sessions each day; 08:00-10:00, 14:00-16:00 and 19:00-21:00. We don't want cost to be a barrier to attending so please contact the conference organiser if cost is a concern as we have some bursaries available. Building on the experience of Project Violet we are making this a woman-only space in order to encourage women's participation. [Click here for further details and the link to register.](#)



## Theology Live - 25 January 2025

This day conference at Bloomsbury Baptist Church is for Baptists to explore theology together, with specialist input and time for discussion. There are many Baptists engaged in theological and biblical research, and this day-event brings them together to share their thinking, fostering a community of research amongst British Baptists. The day will comprise a series of short papers, reflecting the diversity of current Baptist theological engagement, with opportunities to interact with speakers. [Click here to find out more and book your place.](#)



### **Young People and Far Right Extremism - 15 February 2025**

The Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence has recently published a book, following a 24-hour consultation, titled *The Church, the Far Right, and the Claim to Christianity* with editors Helen Paynter and Maria Power. The Centre is now organising this event at Bloomsbury Baptist Church (London) to reflect on the influence of far right extremists on young people, the church's response, and what we can do moving forward. It is an event for church leaders, youth leaders, and anyone interested in how far right extremism and young people interact. [Click here for details and to book your place.](#)



### **NEW JPIT Conference - Saturday 7 June 2025**

JPIT is hosting another conference in 2025! More information will be released early in the new year, but for now, keep Saturday 7 June 2025 free! We look forward to seeing you all there.