



Update: January 2025

Dear Friends

Happy New Year!

2025 has arrived and we hope Christmas provided a real sense of peace with Jesus being born afresh in your life. As we now leave behind the year that has gone, we acknowledge the gift of a New Year and look to the journey which awaits us. **Central to this journey is prayer.** As Baptists Together we will continue to pray together in all the different spaces across our movement.

We have been working on a [prayer plan](#) for this year where each week a regional association, college, our priority areas along with others will offer a short prayer which we are sharing on social media and a dedicated area of the website – www.baptist.org.uk/prayingtogether.



We hope you will share these prayers online and locally.

We will also offer national online prayer gatherings through the year, [details of which are available here](#). The first will be on Wednesday 22 January - 19:30-20:00, [streamed from YouTube](#).

From now up until Baptist Assembly our prayers will link with the period of lament which was requested by **Baptist Union Council last year** following the release of the findings and requests for change from **Project Violet**. **An online lament area has been created which includes details of how people can contribute to this lament. These will be shared at Baptist Assembly.**

We hope you will also find plenty of other useful information and resources to support your ministry in our update below.

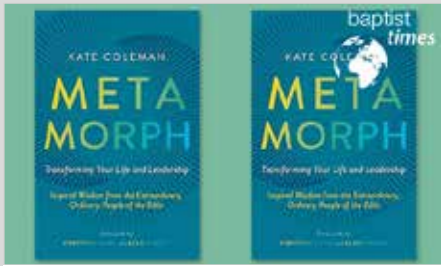
Blessings to you and those you serve...

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:



'A call to embrace transformation'
Kate Coleman introduces her new book *Metamorph*



Jimmy Carter - a Baptist Christian 'to whom faith and practice mattered deeply' - a tribute by David Coffey



The Message Bus - a state-of-the-art mobile youth centre - helps 'bridge the generational disconnect' in Teesside

News:



Election for President 2026-27

Nominations for the President of the Baptist Union 2026-27 have now closed. **Details of those who have been nominated will be sent to every church and minister before the end of January.** We would like as many as possible to be involved with the process of discernment, so please look out for this email, and share the profiles with your Church Meeting. Voting this year will primarily be online and will be open until 31 March.



Annual Returns 2024

The Annual Returns Portal for BUGB to receive church numbers for 2024 will be open until the end of January. It is a particularly important year for us, and our Associations, to understand the post-Covid numbers of people attending and engaging with our churches and we would be really grateful to receive the information. This is used by many of the Teams that deliver the services which are available to you – and our Young Leaders Development Coordinator (among others) is especially keen to see how numbers are doing this year. We ask your Church Secretary (or other relevant person) to give us the numbers as at, or as near as possible to, 30 November 2024. If there is any difficulty in accessing the system please contact churchupdate@baptist.org.uk Please **see here for the information required**. Many thanks - we are looking forward to getting your numbers.



Praying Together 2025

At the start of a new year our General Secretary Lynn Green is calling our movement to a continued commitment to prayer in the year ahead. As well as praying for our mission, for God's coming Kingdom in our communities, and that the whole Body of Christ will live and witness to Jesus every day, she is urging us to continue to pray into the Project Violet research findings - to express our lament and through this also share our hope for a future where every believer can fully play their part in God's Kingdom purposes. Click here **for information about prayer opportunities and prompts**.



President's Diary

Our President for 2024-25 is Steve Finamore who took office at our Assembly in May. Steve is writing a diary through his year as our President. Find out what he's been doing in his [monthly diary entries](#).

This month's featured resources:



January Prayer Diary

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

- Baptists Together family and all that this year will hold
- The South West Baptist Association
- The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- Holocaust Memorial Day

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



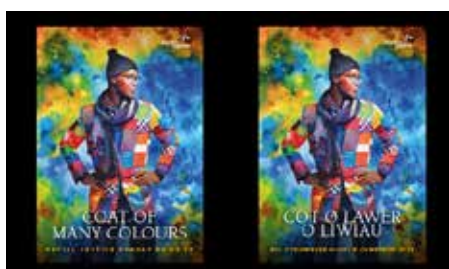
New Year, New Hope

Begin the year by engaging with Baptist minister and biblical scholar Helen Paynter's weekly series 'Why Hope?'. Helen takes viewers through some of the chief biblical reasons for hope - a deep dive into the rich and foundational truths of God's word, embedded in the rich themes and life-giving narrative of Scripture. They're each roughly 10 minutes long. Click here [to access this series of videos](#).



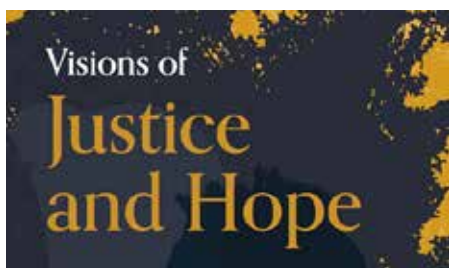
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025

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](#).



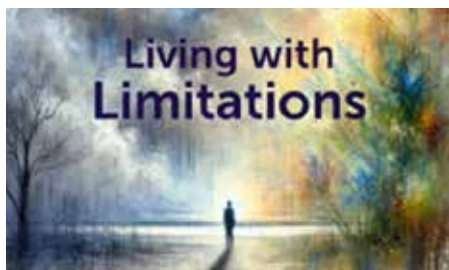
Racial Justice Sunday - Coat of Many Colours

2025 marks the 30th anniversary of Racial Justice Sunday - on 9 February. The theme from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland this year has the title 'Coat of Many Colours', reflecting the increasing diversity that exists in the churches in Britain and Ireland. Both the Old Testament, or the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament are replete with references to diversity, in this world and the Kingdom to come. Click here [for information and resources in English and Welsh](#).



Visions of Justice and Hope

This new resource from the Evangelical Alliance offers a guided journey into racial justice, experiences of racism within the church, and practical steps for fostering healing and meaningful dialogue. The resource is released by the EA's One People Commission (OPC) and South Asian Forum. Click here to read Baptist minister and OPC director Israel Olofinjana's [introduction to the new resource](#), which is available to download free of charge.



Living with Limitations

Baptist ministers Craig Millward and Simon Hall have been working on a new blog series entitled 'Living with Limitations'. They began with the idea that people who experience disability in their day-to-day life might have significant insights to offer and initiated a discussion with four deep thinkers, all of whom share openly and honestly from their own lived experience. The [blog series is now available on the Northumbrian Collective website](#), and additional blogs will be added between now and mid-March.



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.



New Year offer on the Spiritual Care Series!

During January BRF Ministries is offering the Spiritual Care Series course for £300 instead of the usual £360, a discount of over 15% on the standard six-user bundle. This tried-and-tested course is designed to help churches of all denominations develop their ministry to older people. Consisting of eight two-and-a-half hour sessions (including video material) it gives churches, chaplains, pastoral leads and carers the confidence, understanding and skills to provide effective, holistic spiritual care. Click here [for more information and to order](#).

This month's featured events:



Project Violet International Symposium - 15-16 January

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](#).



Praying Together 2025 Prayer Broadcast - 22 January

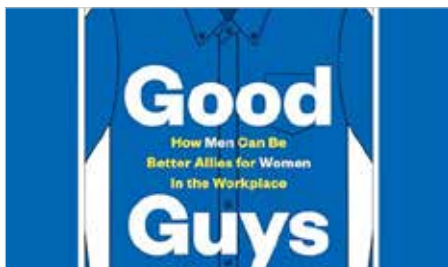
The first of our live, online national prayer gatherings will be taking place between 19:30-20:00. [Click here to join in this time of prayer](#).

Please share this and encourage others to pray too.



Theology Live - Friday 24 January

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](#).



'Male Allies' - from Friday 31 January

A new initiative to enable male Baptist ministers to be better allies for women in ministry and leadership will begin this month. 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](#).



Race, religion, rhetoric and far right extremism - 8 February

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland is holding this one-day conference in London that will see churches and civil society organisations explore solutions to challenge hate and violence. It will explore how the negative rhetoric and narratives linked to 'race' and religion, have fueled far-right related activities over the last decade and a half (especially the riots in August 2024), and threaten the cohesiveness of communities on these shores. It will discuss how we arrived at this situation and explore what solutions the Church and civil society organisations can offer to challenge this proclivity. Click here [for details of the speakers, and to book your place](#).



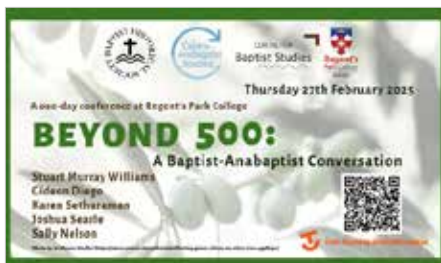
Young People and Far Right Extremism - 15 February

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](#).



The White Bonhoeffer Book Launch - Wednesday 26 February

The Centre for Black Theology, Oxford is hosting the launch of Tim Judson's book, which offers a 'pilgrimage' through Bonhoeffer's main theological and ethical themes, as well as his key works, with a particular gaze on the subject of race. It explores the themes of race and Whiteness by letting others guide the way, others who offer insights from a Global Majority perspective regarding what it means to be human, and how to live alongside others in a continually violent and disparate world. If you wish to attend the evening, contact Irim Sawar - office@newroad.org.uk



Beyond 500 - Thursday 27 February

This day conference at Regent's Park College, Oxford is being co-sponsored by the Centre for Anabaptist Studies, the Centre for Baptist Studies and the Baptist Historical Society on the theme: 'Beyond 500: A Baptist-Anabaptist Conversation' to mark the 500th anniversary of the Anabaptist movement. The speakers are: Stuart Murray Williams, Gideon Diego, Karen Sethuraman, Joshua Searle and Sally Nelson.

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



What did the Anabaptists ever do for us? - Wednesday 12 March

In another event to mark the 500th anniversary of the Anabaptist movement, Ruth Gouldbourne will deliver a lecture at Scottish Baptist College, Paisley on the distinctive contribution of the Anabaptists - covering themes such as toleration, women's freedom, and pacifism. For more information, email scottishbaptistcollege@uws.ac.uk



Firestarters Conversations - Saturday 15 March

Firestarters conversations are opportunities to hear the stories of growing churches, attend interactive seminars on factors influencing church growth, and reflect and discuss your own church and its future growth. This year the conversations will focus on microchurch and scattered models of church. This event will be held at West Clayton Baptist Church in West Yorkshire. Click here [for more information and booking.](#)



Baptist Assembly - 16-17 May

Look out for information coming soon about this year's Assembly in West Bromwich. For the time being, please save the dates!



NEW JPIT Conference - Saturday 7 June

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.