

Justice issues discussed at Baptist Union Council

Justice issues were at the heart of the October Baptist Union Council, which saw Council members approve six new measures that seek to embed justice concerns at the heart of our movement, as well as issuing a wider call.

Over the course of several discussions at the gathering, a number of threads emerged. These were:

- » There is much pain – in the room, in the movement, and in our communities.
- » Now is the time for action; there are wider calls for justice in society, and people are exhausted by talk without change – the time is now.
- » How do we reflect theologically on the range of justice issues facing us?
- » How do we raise awareness in both churches and ministerial training so we can become people of justice in our communities?
- » We need to be proactively investing in structural change; for this we need both research and effective measurement of progress.
- » Careful listening is essential to building diversity.
- » How do we address the disconnect in many churches that justice is not mission?
- » Justice is about walking with, not doing to.

Council members voted to approve the following measures:

- » Council calls for a *day of prayer* focused on justice issues in which lament plays a significant role.
- » Council commits to an *ongoing culture of listening*, including the development of a listening programme.
- » Council asks Core Leadership Team (CLT) / Trustees to resource *research across Baptists Together* to enable ongoing listening, discussion, and to further our justice work.
- » Council asks CLT / Trustees to *provide the resources* needed to create/distribute resources to help churches discern their own responses to justice issues.
- » Council agrees to look at '*bench strength*' in more detail at the March 2021 Council (succession planning and encouraging a diversity of leaders to develop).
- » Council commits to having an *annual diversity audit* of Council, using the diversity figures given in the Futures Report¹ as a baseline for measuring.

In agreeing to these measures, Council felt that it would be helpful to offer an additional call. While lamenting that Council hadn't reached the diversity figures as encouraged in the Futures report, there is a recognition there needs to be a greater diversity in leadership across the movement as a whole, and that everyone should be encouraged to reflect on this issue.

The call is as follows:

Council, in the light of the racial injustice seen so painfully and clearly over recent months, and lamenting our own lack of diversity, calls all of the churches, Colleges, Associations and Specialist Teams in our Baptist movement to join us in actively and immediately working for more diverse leadership.

Baptist Union Council seeks to discern the broad strategic direction of our Union, and these recommendations will be taken to the Core Leadership Team to implement.

¹ In 2012 the Futures Report explored how our Union would seek to work together in the future