

## STORIES FROM THE GROUND

### Living a more honeycombed life?

Andy Goodliff on how Baptist churches in Southend have sought to work and walk together.



**B**aptists have always affirmed the primacy of the local congregation. In almost the same breath, we believe the local congregation should recognise it is not good to be alone, hence the importance of associating with other Baptist churches. We know this, and hopefully we seek it, but the practice of associating is one that often feels less than what it should be.

In the Southend area, there are more than ten Baptist congregations. Ten years ago,

in November 2012, we had a first joint service in a while. This was part of a renewed desire amongst the local ministers to discover ways of working and being churches together. We invited Roy Searle to speak and each church brought a hexagon reflecting its life, which we displayed together as part of a desire to live a more honeycombed life.

Two years later, in June 2014, eleven Baptist congregations made a covenant together to

be more than independent churches. The Southend Area Baptist Network (SABN) was launched. The covenant was a commitment to share in worship, mission and mutual support. There was genuine excitement about what might emerge going forward.

The reality has been much harder to realise. Yes there have been some good things emerge. For a season there were regular joint services. In the early years after the covenant service, there were

