

Belonging to
Baptists Together

**Our
Identity**

What does it mean to belong to Baptists Together?

This booklet is a short introduction to Baptists Together, exploring our distinctive identity as Baptists and what it means to belong in our movement. Our churches have always come together for encouragement, support and fellowship. Using the New Testament as our guide, we believe we should not live in isolation from one another but rather be inter-dependent. Our Declaration of Principle is the basis of our Union and a creative expression of our identity.



The basis of our Union The Declaration of Principle

That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer his laws.

That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who 'died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, and rose again the third day'.

That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.

Belonging locally

We are a grass roots movement, with people on the ground making Christ known. These opening pages explore the distinctive parts of our identity we share with each other - an identity built over 400 years.



The Lordship of Christ

Proclaiming Jesus is Lord is our confession of faith and expresses what it means to be his follower. As individuals and as churches, Baptists seek to make Jesus Lord over every aspect of their lives.



The authority of the Bible

It is through the Bible 'that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh' is revealed to us. Each church is then able to reflect on what God is saying to them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.



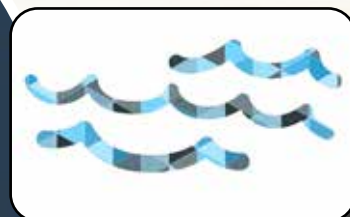
A believers' church

Baptists understand the church as a community of believers gathered by the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ for worship, witness and service. Central to Baptist worship is prayer and praise, listening to God's word in preaching and a gathering around the Lord's Table.



Believers' baptism

Baptists do not practise infant baptism but what is called 'believers' baptism'. This is because being a Christian involves making a choice to follow Jesus Christ, and nobody else can make this decision for us. It is a personal decision and infants are too young to make it. Faith has to be free, and not compelled. Believers' baptism symbolises this free decision.





The priesthood of all believers

In the Baptist model of a believers' church, every member has a role to play inside and outside of their church using their God-given gifts for his kingdom, including teaching, faith sharing, evangelism, social action, pastoring, guiding, serving, prophetic insight, praying, healing, administration or hospitality.

Religious freedom

Baptists were among the first people to call for complete religious freedom. If faith is only genuine if it is free, it follows that it is not the task of states and governments to interfere with people's religious convictions. It is historical fact that Baptists have thrown themselves into the fight against tyranny and political oppression.



The Church Meeting

In a Baptist church, an illustration of the priesthood of all believers is the Church Meeting. This is the occasion when all the members come together to prayerfully discern God's will for their life together. In Baptist churches the final authority rests not with Ministers, Elders or Deacons but with members gathered together in Church Meetings.



The missionary task

Baptists believe that each Christian has a duty to share their faith with others. Along with this emphasis on evangelism, Baptists recognise that mission includes all of us as ambassadors of Christ wherever God has placed us, and involves social action – promoting justice, social welfare, healing, education and peace in the world.



From left to right:
Emmanuel Baptist Church in Liverpool
Moortown Baptist Church.



Being part of God's bigger plan and purpose

As Baptists Together, we live out our calling locally whilst being part of a larger movement which allows a broader expression of God's Kingdom and purpose to happen.

There are so many ways you can join in, take part and share how God is at work across our movement. Here a just a few examples where you can share your energy and gifting.



Children, Young People and Families

How do we nurture faith in those children, young people and families whom God has put us next to? To quote John Westerhoff 'a faith that is living, imaginative, curious, provocative, beautiful, seeking, peace-loving and healing'. Please visit www.baptist.org.uk/cyf

See also from page 29 in the 2021 Annual Report.



Embracing Adventure

God-given creativity is being released across our Baptist movement, and we're finding ourselves in new places, doing new things, and sharing the wonderful gospel in words and actions with new people. See from page 10 in the 2021 Annual Report. www.baptist.org.uk/annualreport

Digital Revolution

Sunday service livestreams, Zoom prayers and Zoom Church Meetings have become part of the 'new normal' for many of our churches, but we're only scratching the surface of the potential the Digital Revolution offers us. See from page 33 in the 2021 Annual Report. www.baptist.org.uk/annualreport



Young Adults

Join in the exciting things God has been doing within and among young adults in our Baptist family, and what might be coming next, as we grapple with the urgent need to serve this missing generation through our ministry and mission. Please visit www.baptist.org.uk/youngadults

See also from page 39 in the 2021 Annual Report.



Baptist Union Environment Network

BUEN - Spanish for 'good' - aims to enable the Baptists Together family to be a prophetic movement in facing the climate and environmental crisis. Please visit www.baptist.org.uk/buen

From left to right:
Image from the 'Young Adults' report, 2021 Baptists Together Annual Review p41
Image from the 'Baptists during the pandemic' report, 2021 Baptists Together Annual Review p14
Image by user6164906, freepik.com





Regional Associations

The main work of Baptists Together in supporting churches is through our 13 Regional Associations. Each Regional Association has a small team of Regional Ministers and administrative staff, who support the churches in their area pastorally, assist in the settlement of Ministers, advise on mission and practical matters, and organise training events.

Each Association is a separate charity, but receives a substantial part of their income from the Home Mission Fund. This fund is made possible by donations from our Baptist churches, contributing to the family purse.

The regional associations are also responsible for investing Home Mission in churches and other organisations to support the development of Baptist mission and ministry where it would not otherwise be possible. This includes pioneering mission, church planting, renewing local churches and other mission project grants.

This map shows how our 13 associations are located across the country. To find out more visit www.baptist.org.uk/associations



Baptist Colleges

Our Baptist Colleges prepare women and men for pastoral and missional leadership.

The Colleges train the next generation of accredited Baptist Ministers and pioneers; they enable those wishing to specialise in chaplaincy, evangelism, counselling, pastoral supervision and children, young people and families' ministry; they provide a broad range of courses to enhance the skills of local church leaders; and they facilitate theological learning at every level from beginners' studies to doctorates.

Although the Colleges have their home in five cities – London, Manchester, Oxford, Bristol and Cardiff – some training can also be accessed through College hubs across the country. Visit www.baptist.org.uk/colleges to find out more.



The Specialist Teams

Through the work of the national Specialist Teams, in partnership with our Regional Associations and Colleges, Baptists Together provides underpinning support in all areas of Baptist life.



The Support Services Team (supportservices@baptist.org.uk) offers practical support and advice to churches across a broad range of topics including finance and accounting, tax, property, legal issues, church governance and church trusts. They also operate the Baptists Together Deposit Accounts, Loan scheme and the Pastoral Fund.



The Ministries Team (ministries@baptist.org.uk) supports all forms of Baptist ministry. They maintain the list of Accredited Ministers, operate the settlement process which helps match Ministers with churches and provide a suite of guidance leaflets and other support relating to ministry.



The HR and Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@baptist.org.uk) provides advice on HR issues and oversees safeguarding across Baptists Together. They develop national safeguarding policy and the training framework, and support Regional Associations in dealing with complex safeguarding cases.

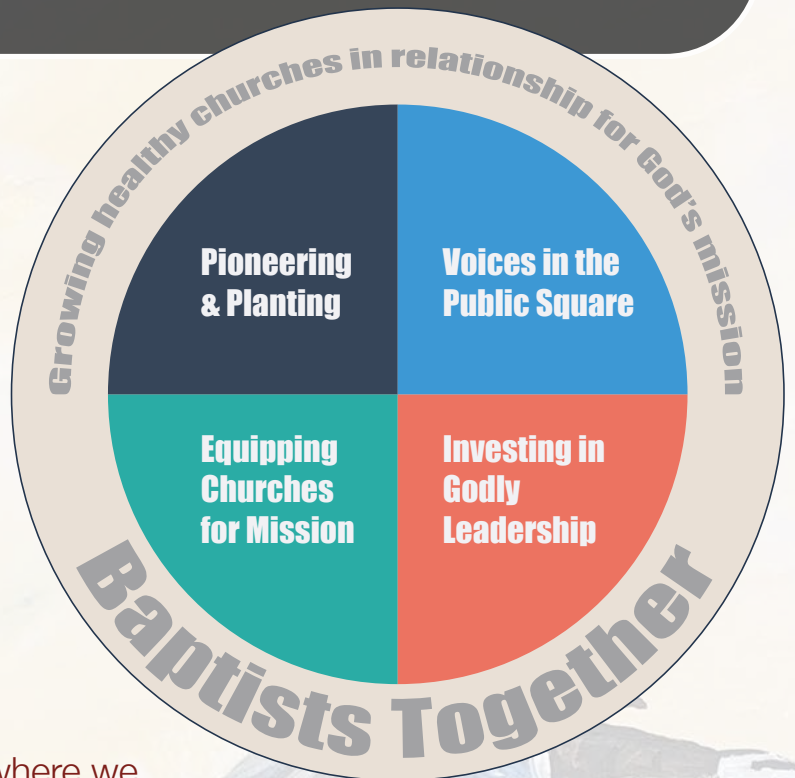


The Faith and Society Team (faithandsociety@baptist.org.uk) supports Baptists Together with resources and initiatives which enable mission, provide theological reflection and promote engagement with wider society. They are also responsible for communications across Baptists Together, which includes producing materials to explain the work of Home Mission (see www.baptist.org.uk/homemission).

Our shared vision

'Growing healthy churches in relationship for God's mission'

We seek to deliver our vision through...



Baptists Together is committed to intentionally developing a culture where we...

Seek to be a movement of Spirit-led communities

As those who have encountered the living Christ, to intentionally seek his will and purpose for our local churches and every expression of our shared life.

(Gal 5:22-25)

Feel like one team

Celebrating diversity; valuing, respecting and trusting each other as we work together in partnerships – making sure everyone feels included and listened to.

(1 Cor 12:24b-27)

Embrace adventure

Being serious about discipleship, willing to take risks, pioneer and move out of the comfort zone of familiar ways of doing things.

(Matt 28:18-20)

Inspire others

With a generosity of spirit, energise and motivate people to be all that God created them to be

(Eph 5:1-2).

Share a hunger for God's coming Kingdom

Nurturing a 'holy discontent' that arises from our desire to give practical expression to our vision of God's purpose for creation – confronting evil, injustice and hypocrisy and challenging worldly attitudes to power, wealth, status and security both within and beyond our Union.

(Matt 6:9-10).

To read the story behind our culture please go to www.baptist.org.uk/culturehistory

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