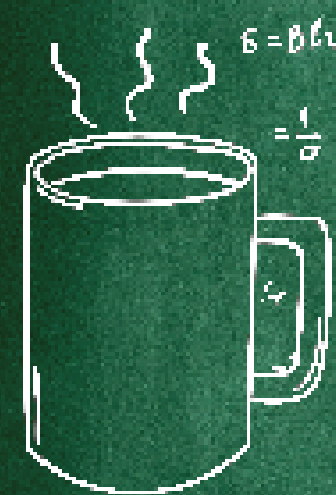
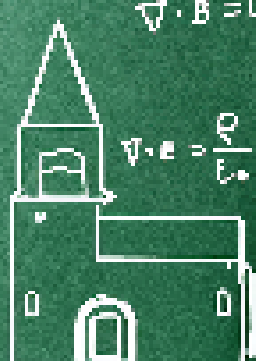
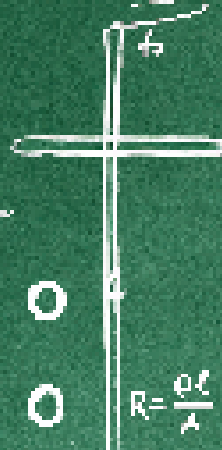
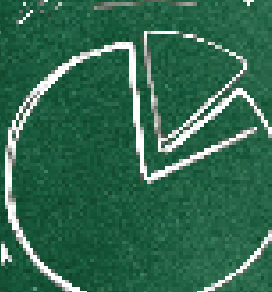


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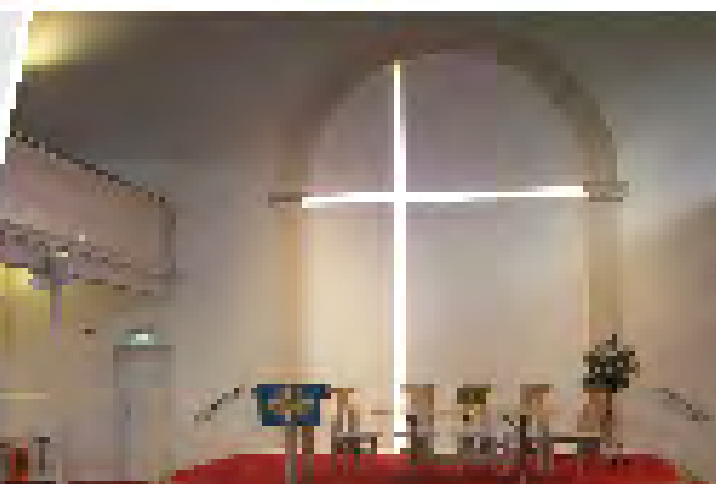
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MISSION: THERE IS NO SECRET FORMULA

At the 2022 Baptist Assembly delegates could contribute their thoughts to a listening board, at which Baptist minister Erica Bowler served as an intentional listener. "Mission was the biggest topic people wanted to discuss," Erica reported*. "There were fundamental questions about mission and how to do it, alongside practical questions about how to finance mission, how pioneers and emerging projects can feel supported, and how churches can act together to create strategy and support."

Such a focus on mission is no surprise as it's at the heart of who we are as Baptists – just look at our Declaration of Principle, which has a three-part focus on Jesus' authority, baptism and mission. 'Growing healthy churches in relationship for God's mission' is the Baptists Together vision.

The 2022 listening board feedback has directly shaped the Baptist Assembly since. Each subsequent gathering has had a mission theme as we've sought to discern and inform our mission and discipleship in the places He has called us. This year is no different and has a particular emphasis on gathering and sharing our stories of mission.

This edition of Baptists Together magazine leads into the Assembly 2026. Alongside reflections from General Secretary Lynn Green - who reminds us that there is no secret formula for mission - incoming President Alex Afriyie and others, it features a range of stories that seek to capture something of the breadth of mission and the

diverse ways Jesus is at work across Baptists Together. If there is no single blueprint, hearing each other's experiences is vital.

On which point, you will also find a postcard insert onto which we are encouraging churches, chaplains and faith communities to write their own mission story and bring it to this year's Assembly. Can you share one aspect of your church's mission that is bearing fruit? For more see page 61.

As ever, the editorial group hopes the stories and reflections can encourage and inform. We hope they show the ways your giving to Baptists Together Home Mission is facilitating mission.

And we hope you may be prompted to share your own story of fruitful mission on the postcard and join us at the Baptist Assembly in May. Doing so will enrich us all.

**baptist.org.uk/listening22*

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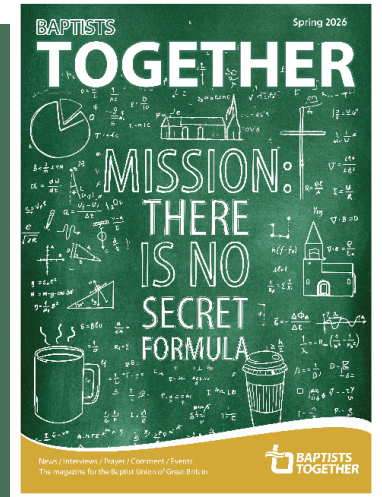
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FULFILLING JESUS' GREAT COMMANDMENT & GREAT COMMISSION IN OUR PLACES

There is no secret formula, writes General Secretary Lynn Green, but here are some important aspects when it comes to participating in God's mission

Paul's letter to the Colossians reminds us, 'All over the world this gospel is producing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.' [1:6]

Echoing this we hear and celebrate stories of amazing Kingdom growth and vibrancy from the global church. In the past year or so I had the privilege of worshipping at a Baptist Church in Nigeria and being inspired by their heart for equipping and sending out church planters. In Jordan I learned more about reaching the Arab world for Christ and that in the midst of all the complexities and challenges of that context the believers testify to the fact that the more troubles they face, the more ministry opportunities they have. Joining the graduation service at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Lebanon was a moving reminder of the cost of discipleship as I witnessed men

and women pursuing theological education to equip them for ministry in deeply challenging places. A preacher in Beirut called us to radical discipleship, 'God is not there to help you achieve your purpose, you are there to achieve God's purposes.' Whilst attending a global Baptist gathering, a brother from South Africa reminded us of their testimony, 'God is able – when it looked most impossible to defeat apartheid we fell to our knees with renewed fervour.' Surrounded by such a great, global, cloud of witnesses we are inspired in our own worship, discipleship and mission. With them we also give thanks and praise to the Lord that we are seeing fruitfulness and growth here in the UK as well.

Our vision as Baptists Together is 'Growing healthy churches in relationship for God's mission' and we are certainly seeing growth across our family. The data from our 2024 Annual Returns demonstrates that attendance is growing in 57%

of our churches and that all our metrics for Children, Youth and Young Adults showed an increase too. Add to this the fact that we celebrated over 800 more baptisms in 2024 than the previous year, we can definitely say, with the Apostle Paul, that the gospel is producing and bearing fruit right here, amongst us.

What is encouraging me so much is that all sorts of churches are growing in all sorts of different ways. This is because each church has its own unique missional fingerprint as each gathering of believers is called to worship and share Jesus in their own context. And I think this makes for a wonderful, beautiful and varied Baptist movement. Some churches are seeing growth through their Renew Wellbeing ministry, others through Messy

Church, schools ministry and Uniformed organisations. Some churches are doing life with those on the margins and Jesus loving disciples are being born along the way. Others are offering Alpha or Christianity Explored as a way for people to discover Jesus. Some are out on the streets evangelising and others are out there praying for healing. Some are making a Kingdom impact through foodbanks and community kitchens. Other churches are planting new churches and others are seeking to pioneer and discover God and His Kingdom in unreached spaces. And all of this makes it clear that there is no 'secret formula' and no single approach to mission that is the right one. What is important is that we are all seeking to fulfil Jesus' Great Commandment and Great Commission in the places and contexts where God has put

us. This is true for us as disciples, leaders, churches and pioneer communities. As we do this, we are creating thousands of different connection points that can connect with the wonderfully diverse array of people living in communities up and down the UK.

It is one of the brilliant aspects of my role that I get to see and meet so many different churches and leaders across Baptists Together and hear your stories. I am inspired and encouraged about what God is doing in and through Baptists and I give thanks for you in prayer. My vantage point also enables me to reflect on what I am seeing and so here are things that I am noticing are important particularly when it comes to participating in God's mission.

PRAYER

As I said earlier, our brothers and sisters from South Africa remind us that with God all things are possible. We need to continue and deepen our prayers as we intercede for our communities, pray for the Lord to touch people's hearts and seek God's Kingdom. Following our 2025 United in Mission Conference and Baptist

Assembly and my challenge to be ready for baptisms one church sent me an update about what happened next. Not having had a baptism at the church for six years, a Newly Accredited Minister went back to their church with the challenge, and they began to pray that they would have a baptism.

They continued to pray and in faith they set a date for a baptismal service for October! This is the message I received on Sunday 19 October, "Today we baptised 26 year old Peter with a packed church, amazing testimony and the Spirit moving in our midst." Praise the Lord!

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS SOWING SEEDS

Community engagement is one of our strengths as a Baptist family. We are often at the heart of our communities and people trust us. This is precious and not to be taken for granted. We love to bless and serve our communities, embodying and sharing Jesus to those around us, and we have been doing this for years in many cases. We love to be 'out there' not just 'in here';

we are 24:7 disciples on location. I really noticed the power of this during the Covid pandemic. In that time of crisis, the community relationships that had already been forged became vital channels of hope and connection as churches became vaccination centres, foodbank hubs, and early adopters of virtual worship and gathering.

Nowadays I see the fruit of all our relationship building and seed sowing through what has become known as the Quiet Revival. Churches that have faithfully run toddler groups, schools ministry and youth work are now seeing young people and 18-35s turning up to find out more about Jesus. Seeds sown are beginning to grow. Praise the Lord!

DISCIPLESHIP

The Great Commission challenges us clearly to make disciples and so the need for discipleship cannot be over-estimated. This is even more vital, however, in our current context. The rise in interest in spirituality among 18-35 year olds that has been highlighted by the Quiet Revival report means that many of those we are connecting with often have little or no understanding of Jesus and the Christian faith. Being able to walk alongside them in faith is a tremendous privilege

and hugely exciting, but it is also a long and probably messy journey too. Nurturing Christlike, fully rounded Jesus followers is God's call to us now and it will require much love, faith, patience, discernment, perseverance and Holy Spirit wisdom. But, of course, discipleship is vital for all of us. We live in rapidly changing, deeply troubling times and global instability is going to exacerbate that even further. Christian nationalism, social and political polarisation, growing inequality,

war and climate crisis will all increasingly affect us and our discipleship will be sifted. How will we be the people of God in these days and what will it mean to be faithful Jesus followers? Do our roots go down deep enough so that we can shine Jesus' love and light in our communities and also have the courage to be the prophetic, dissenting voices that will speak truth to power and resist the prevailing popular rhetoric?

So, my question to you is this, which of these areas do you need to strengthen in your own discipleship and in your church or missional community? Where is God calling you to go deeper? And as we each reflect on this, we pray for one another as Paul encourages us:

Lynn Green is the
General Secretary of
Baptist Union of
Great Britain



“So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honour and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.

We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light.”

COLOSSIANS 1:9-12

ALEX AFRIYIE



WALKING WORTHY

Introducing his theme, incoming President Alex Afriyie highlights three ways we can 'walk worthy' of our calling to represent Jesus in the UK today

As I prepare to serve as President of Baptists Together (May 2026–May 2027), I am reflecting on the times we are living in. They feel well described by the Japanese word for crisis, formed from the characters for danger and opportunity. We face global instability, political

and economic polarisation, and declining trust in institutions, alongside a growing sense that everyone is defining truth for themselves. Yet this is also a moment of opportunity. There is a renewed hunger for spiritual truth, particularly among young adults.

We are living in exciting times where young adults are turning up at church and looking for answers. We have seen this in the statistics from the Quiet Revival report¹ that has also been confirmed by our Church Annual

Returns showing growth in baptisms and church attendance, especially among young adults.² Something is shifting in our culture; on 10 January 2026 the Guardian reported the sale of Bibles had “reached a record high in the UK in 2025, increasing by 134 per cent since 2019 – the highest since records began”.

With around 1822 Baptist churches across the UK, places where people can encounter salvation, community and purpose, the key question is this: how can we walk worthy of our

calling to represent Jesus in the UK today? Drawing on Ephesians 4, I want to highlight three ways.

1. BY BEING JESUS-CENTRED COMMUNITIES (EPH. 4: 1-6)

Paul says, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." We know there are plenty of reasons to be divided but Jesus "himself is our peace, who has ... destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility". If we relate to each other from "every tribe, tongue and nation" through our worship of the lamb (Rev 7:9), then we will declare to the world "there is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Eph 4: 5-6). This will cause us to be a prophetic sign of heaven on earth, the answer to a divided world.

One of the things that encourages me as a local pastor in London is seeing working class and middle class white, black and brown people from a variety of backgrounds worshipping and doing community together as a Kingdom Family. There are examples of those with more giving to those who are struggling to pay their rent or have a holiday. This is God's vision of a shalom people (Isaiah 54:10). If we can demonstrate that what unites us is Jesus, then His people will flourish physically, emotionally, relationally and spiritually. Communities up and down the UK will therefore be impacted and "People from many nations will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the

mountain of the LORD, to the house of Jacob's God. There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths.'" (Isaiah 2:3 NLT) and therefore heal our spiritually barren society.

Our Declaration of Principle says, "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..." If we take Jesus as our authority to heal and save, then we will take Scripture seriously. This will cause us to take our relationship with Jesus seriously and with humility seek to work and worship together demonstrating that community of vulnerability and genuine love.

I am looking forward to seeing how others around the country are preparing to equip the young adults now beginning to turn up at our churches on Sunday mornings. The first thing I believe we need to do is to give them a strong foundation in the basics of the faith – an understanding of the gospel, repentance, assurance of salvation, their identity in Christ, baptism and the infilling of the Spirit. We also need to give them an understanding of building a strong intimacy with Jesus through the word, prayer, fellowship and worship (Acts 2: 38, 42). Another important area is a clear understanding of what belonging together as the church means and how we can be a witnessing missional community (Acts 2: 42-47).

Some reasons expressed by young adults as to why they are coming to church that I have heard from my context can be summarised in three ways. The first is a need for belonging. The second is a need for a sense of

purpose. The third is a thirst for truth in a confused world. One of the ways we have sought to answer their desire for belonging, purpose and truth in our local church has been by creating 'Food for Thought'³ discussions that look at the major issues of our day and see how we can apply the truth of the Bible to them in a loving missional way. We have noticed that Gen Z and millennials have especially benefitted from this.



2. BY BEING COMMUNITY ORIENTATED - RELEASING PEOPLE'S GIFTS AND MINISTRIES (EPH. 4: 7, 11-13)

Alan Hirsch speaks about creating an 'apostolic environment'.⁴ By this he means an environment where all the ministries and gifts of the Spirit are allowed to flourish and be expressed. To walk worthy of our calling needs leadership in our churches that encourages believers to express their ministries and spiritual gifts; where every member is a minister, where the minister or pastor along with other ministries is there to equip and release ministry in all (Eph 4:11-12).

We need to be communities that not only disciple new believers in the basics of the faith but equip them in their lives to

express their spiritual gifts and reach their God-given Kingdom potential.

We also need to be equipped in the fruit of love as we learn to share our sorrows and victories with each other. Often deeper forms of community and discipleship can be best expressed through smaller churches⁵ or mirco-churches⁶ and new, pioneering communities. Larger churches can do this through home groups or cell groups that not only do Bible study but also emphasise life-application and mission. Each church then becomes an equipping centre for life and mission. As we go into the world we go having been equipped to demonstrate as well as speak about our faith, “equipped for works of service” (Eph 4: 11-12).

3. BY BEING MISSION FOCUSED – SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

In a world hungry for authenticity, Paul reminds us that maturity comes through “speaking the truth in love” (Eph 4:15). When churches cultivate honest, loving relationships, we grow in unity and effectiveness for mission. Truth spoken without love wounds; love without truth fails to transform. We need both. Jesus welcomes everyone as they are, yet he also calls us not to remain as we are. In his encounter with the woman caught in adultery, he offers both forgiveness and transformation: “Neither do I condemn you... go and sin no more” (John 8:11). Authentic Christian communities hold these together, trusting in Jesus’ power not only to forgive

but to change lives.

Imagine churches filled with people committed to becoming more like Jesus, willing to speak truth in love, and confident in sharing the good news in their neighbourhoods. Such communities offer a powerful alternative to a polarised and superficial culture. The gospel remains “the power of God for salvation to all who believe” (Romans 1:16).

My hope is to inspire and be inspired by hearing many stories of how people are walking worthy of our calling to be Baptist Christians, united for mission, being eschatological communities of hope, a taste of the age to come in our 21st century, unstable, and uncertain world.

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1 Riannon McAleer and Rob Barward-Symmons, *The Quiet Revival* (Swindon: Bible Society, 2015), theresource.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/The-Quiet-Revival.pdf.

2 “National News”, We can choose to tell a new story – one of gracious growth, accessed August 26, 2025, baptist.org.uk/Articles/715969/_We_can.aspx.

3 An explanation of “Food for Thought” is available here alexafriyie.com/gifts

4 Alan Hirsch, *The Forgotten Ways: +reactivating the missional church* (USA, Baker Publishing Group, 2006), 152-155

5 baptist.org.uk/Groups/423439/Small_Church_Connexion.aspx

6 baptist.org.uk/Articles/695775/The_benefits_of.aspx



Alex Afriyie is President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain 2026-27. He will be inducted into the role at the 2026 Baptist Assembly in Harrogate

Alex has been the minister of London Network Church (East Acton Baptist) for over 30 years. He has been involved in Baptist Union leadership in various ways since 2010, including serving as a director and moderator of London Baptists over a 6-year period and being a member of Baptist Union Council

To find out more about his theme, watch him interview other leaders and more, visit alexafriyie.com

r/ BAPTISTS TOGETHER MISSION FORUM

Welcome to the Mission Forum!
What are you looking for?



Written by Sandra Crawford.
Sandra is a Community Baptist
Minister in Jaywick, Essex and
Convenor of Baptists Together
Mission Forum

This edition of the magazine is a glimpse into the different ways Baptists are sharing God's mission. Their stories show how mission is responsive to the local community, and steeped in prayer and discernment.

"Each church has its own unique missional fingerprint," Lynn Green notes *"Each gathering of believers is called to worship and share Jesus in their own context... this makes for a wonderful, beautiful and varied Baptist movement."*

As Baptists we cherish our independence which enables such variety. But we recognise too, Baptists have consistently sought to walk alongside, watch over and learn from each other. Working together enriches what we do – and the National Mission Forum is one expression of our covenantal relationships.

Emerging out of the Futures Process and the closing of the National Mission Department (2013), the purpose of the National Mission Forum is to maintain a national perspective on mission across the Baptist family and be a place for collaborative listening and action. We seek to discern what God is doing at the grassroots, and reflect this back across our movement.

An outworking of Baptists Together, the Forum intentionally comprises mission specialists and those with a passion for mission drawn from each Association, as well as representatives from the Specialist Teams and Baptist Colleges.

Mission Forum meets twice a year. Each Association is invited to bring a grassroots practitioner, so we continue to stay connected to the local church, and to ensure those in the room are representative of the diversity in our Baptist family. As we listen deeply to one another, we observe growing signs of God's Kingdom through the varied ministries of pioneers, chaplains, and local churches engaged in God's mission throughout our nations.

Insights, recommendations, and feedback are taken back to Associations by their delegates, and the facilitator of Mission Forum is part of the Core Leadership Team and Council to inform national dialogue.

Recent discussions have covered the following subjects:

- [The Quiet Revival](#)
- [The Rise of Christian Nationalism and Far-Right Movements: Implications for Mission](#)
- [Creation Care](#)
- [Baptists Together National Strategic Collaboration in Mission](#)
- [Migration](#)
- [Mission Resolution](#)

Over the years there have been many more conversations. We have kept in touch with our wider Baptist family too. Everton Jackson, Director of Integral Mission from Baptist World Alliance, the Federation of Baptists in Britain and Ireland (FBI) and BMS World Mission have all joined with us on occasions. Each has contributed a valuable perspective.

Reports of our gatherings are available on the Baptists Together website: baptist.org.uk/mfreports

We also presented a session at Baptist Union Council in October 2024: baptist.org.uk/oct24



r/MISSION FORUM'S PURPOSE

1. Mutual Support: Creating a network where mission specialists can encourage and learn from one another.
2. Reflective Practice: Observing and discussing what God is doing in mission - personally, regionally, and nationally - and initiating research or strategic plans as needed.
3. Inspiration and Best Practice: Taking initiative to inspire, develop, and encourage mission, sharing best practices across the movement.
4. Representation: Providing a voice for Baptists Together at national meetings and events, ensuring the movement's perspectives are heard.
5. Strategic Oversight: Informing those representing the Mission Forum on the Strategic Mission Grants Committee and receiving reports on grant allocations.



r/GRANTS

Over the past decade, Mission Forum has been responsible for overseeing the allocation of the Baptists Together Strategic Mission Budget to national and strategic projects. This funding pot was created following the sale of the Newington Court property in London. We seek to discern what God is doing at the grassroots of our movement, and resource with grants to fan that work of God into flame. It has provided support for a diverse array of mission initiatives. This pot has now been used and decisions about funding for national strategic mission initiatives is being considered as part of the Financial Model Review.



r/MISSION RESOLUTION

We hear compelling stories of communities being transformed and lives changed by encounters with Jesus. We rejoice in reports of churches witnessing baptisms and numerical growth. We draw inspiration from those whose steady perseverance, obedience, and compassionate acts share the essence of heaven's kingdom within their communities; and are challenged by prophetic voices that urge us to pursue God's justice.

In this way the Forum views mission and justice as inseparable, recognising that our call to obey the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) also means being sent, like Jesus, to embody and reflect his manifesto from Luke 4 - working to bring about God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

One area that has become clear in our conversations over the past couple of years is how we live in a rapidly changing world where UK culture is becoming more divided. We therefore believe it is more important than ever that we listen to one another and learn together.

The current proposed Mission Resolution was developed out of our conversations to work toward a common understanding of mission. Such an understanding can further unify us as we seek to recognise the movement of the Spirit and participate in mission that brings transformation to individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Baptist Assembly 2025 marked the beginning of a two-year process of discernment, dialogue, and engagement, with the goal of the resolution being adopted at the 2027 Assembly. We are currently carefully considering all the feedback and mission stories received through the Baptists Together website and will be present at Assembly 2026 to continue that listening process.

For more on the Mission Resolution, visit: baptist.org.uk/missionresolution



r/RENEW WELLBEING 'THE CHARITY GREW TENFOLD'

Renew Wellbeing received Mission Forum funding to accelerate and multiply its impact. Founder and Baptist pastor Ruth Rice says:

"When we applied for some funding back in 2018-19 to expand the work of Renew Wellbeing there were only a handful of Renew spaces opened by amazing churches wanting to be present, be prayerful and partner to see improved wellbeing in their churches and communities.

Thanks to the Mission Forum's incredibly generous support and the advice and help that came with it we saw the charity grow tenfold over the few years we received the funding. We were able to employ some part time team and reach out to many more churches and areas.

Little did we know we were about to face a global pandemic, but the faith put in us by the Mission Forum funders meant we could hit the ground kneeling when it happened, and roll out online training, support and a new resource to any churches realising they needed to address wellbeing issues and quickly.

Without the Mission Forum money I am not sure we would now have more than 300 centres nationally (and beyond), seven paid team, many volunteers, five books and loads of online resources to help churches be at the heart of what God is doing in renewing wellbeing. Thank you Mission Forum. Thank you so very much".

r/THE SMALL CHURCH CONNEXION TEAM

Mission Forum funding has supported the Small Church Connexion Team (SCC), which aims to provide a unique and supportive network for Baptists Together churches with 40 members or less. More than half our Union's churches are classed as small (below 40 members).

The SCC Team does this through hubs, which enable smaller Baptist churches to meet for training, resourcing and general encouragement: 19 have been planted, with 14 still active. Some are on their sixth event. The SCC has a growing team of ambassadors under Tim Lovejoy's leadership. The ambassador role involves building relationships of support and trust with the churches, and a listening ear to discuss their needs and identify ways in which the church could be helped.

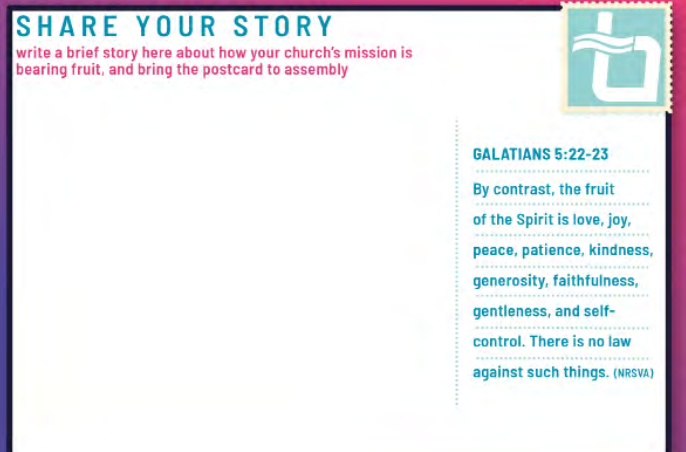
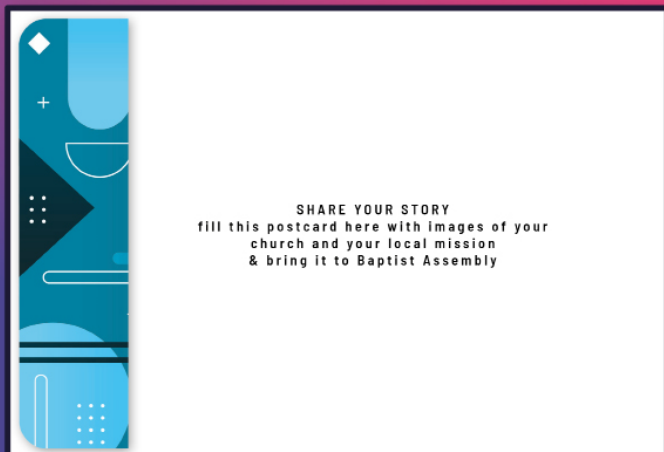
It also offers transitional ministry in some parts of the country, and has been a presence at several national and association events. It has been working alongside other organisations such as Baptist Insurance, E4:12, K180 and Big Life, all of whom encourage the small churches to reach out with the gospel.

"I want to celebrate something truly special in our Baptist family—the Small Church Connexion," says Kim Bames, secretary Waltham Abbey Baptist Church. "What began as an idea has grown into a movement of encouragement, unity, and shared purpose. It's reminded us that being small in number is not a disadvantage. In fact, it's often in the small, faithful steps that God does His biggest work.

This Connexion has shown us that when we come together—sharing resources, stories, prayers, and vision, we become part of something far greater than ourselves. We're not isolated congregations trying to do it all alone. We're a network of believers, walking together, growing together, and building something with lasting impact.

And we couldn't do this without Hilary Taylor. Hilary has poured her heart into this initiative—her time, her energy, her prayers, and her love. Because of her dedication, the Connexion isn't just a name—it's a living, breathing community."

This postcard - included in this magazine pack - is for you to bring to Baptist Assembly. We ask you to **SHARE YOUR STORY** of your church's local mission. They will all help us see how God is moving in all our local areas.





r/GROWING YOUNG LEADERS AND ENABLING THEM TO SEE THEIR POTENTIAL

Mission Forum funding contributed to the collaborative working and promoting of the intern programmes being offered across our Baptist movement. This included supporting the cohort of 31 young British Baptist leaders (aged 18-35) who attended the SENT23 gathering in Stavanger, Norway and the subsequent three-year mission-focussed learning community.

"They are a resourced group of young adults who are discerning their calling," says Jonny Hirst, a regional minister in the North Western Baptist Association and member of the core group of the Baptists Together Young Adults Round Table (YART).

"Individuals really grew and gained more clarity in their calling either in their church or workplace roles. They positively spoke out and shared testimonies of mission and stepping out into new roles; a couple of individuals discerned calling to recognised and accredited ministry.

The community has contributed to the growing momentum of 18-35s."

Representatives of this group have met with Mission Forum and contributed to our ongoing conversations.



r/OTHER MISSION FORUM GRANTS

EVERYONE EVERYWHERE – Conferences and strategy for mission – *see page 17*

COASTAL EXPRESSION – A thriving network of people living and working in coastal communities, supporting and learning from one another – *see page 46*

PIONEER AMBASSADORS – Four very part time ambassadors to those working in the margins in mission – *see baptist.org.uk/pioneerambassadors*

BUEN (BAPTIST UNION ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK) – Developing a national missional environmental programme of material – *see page 50*

HONG KONG PROJECT – Now moving into a church planting phase - *baptist.org.uk/hk*

FIRESTARTERS – Micro church movement working on scattered not small - *firestartersuk.com*

DIGITAL FUELCAST COLLECTIVE – Providing quality video opportunities - *thefuelcast.com*

URBAN EXPRESSION – Urban mission with local teams recruiting and deploying - *urbanexpression.org.uk*

PROJECT VIOLET RESEARCH – supporting the project investigating women's experience in ministry - *projectviolet.org.uk*

Evangelism in the

Everyone, Everywhere

Life of mission



Across our churches, the Everyone, Everywhere initiative is discovering a renewed desire to recover confidence in sharing faith and forming new Christian communities. Yet for many ordinary Baptists, the word evangelism can feel loaded – evoking pressure, uncertainty, or memories of approaches that didn't quite feel like us.

On 7 February 2026, Chrissy Remsberg, pastor of Beacon Church in Stafford, gave the keynote talk at an Everyone, Everywhere conference in the Central Baptist Association, and asked the question: "What if evangelism was never meant to be a specialist activity, but rather the natural overflow of disciples learning to walk with Jesus?"

What follows is the essence of what she shared...

Through looking at Scriptures we see that mission is not an optional extra or a heroic undertaking. Instead, it emerges from ordinary obedience, lived experience of God's presence, and participation in God's ongoing work of redemption.

This way of seeing mission normalises evangelism. It restores confidence to everyday Christians. And it reframes church planting as the fruit of discipleship, not the domain of experts.

Mission begins in the ordinary

Luke 5:1-11 offers one of the clearest pictures of how mission starts. Simon – who is not yet Peter – is exhausted, frustrated, and ready to call it a day. When Jesus asks him to let down the nets again, Simon's response is not exactly full of faith:

He is tired, reluctant and rather faithless.
He doesn't believe it will work.
But, he obeys.

"But because you say so, I will..." says Peter (5:5). It's an act of obedience rather than confidence that it will work.

That small, somewhat reluctant "yes" becomes the turning point of his life.

Mission often begins like this:
Not with boldness, but with responsiveness.
Not with confidence, but with simple, sometimes even reluctant, obedience.

We sometimes imagine evangelism requires polished answers or extroverted personalities. Instead, Scripture shows that the beginnings of mission are found in the small, unseen acts of discipleship – what Eugene Peterson called 'a long obedience in the same direction.'

Ordinary obedience prepares the ground for extraordinary encounters.

Evangelism flows from relationship, not technique

When Simon witnesses the miraculous catch of fish, he is overwhelmed. His instinct is not to celebrate but to fall to his knees in awe, recognising both his own unworthiness and the power of the one who stands before him.

Before Simon ever speaks a word about Jesus, he meets Jesus.

This is crucial. Evangelism is not primarily something we do; it is something that grows out of who we are becoming. It is the natural expression of a life being shaped by grace.

Some struggle with sharing faith not because they lack courage, but because they are longing for encounter – longing to experience God's power again, longing for their discipleship to be renewed from the inside. The ability to obey, to speak, to step out, is always connected to our experience of God's presence.

Mission is not a strategy we carry; it is a relationship we extend.

God's redemptive story shapes our mission today

Scripture repeatedly shows God saying, in essence, 'This is what redemption looks like.'

We see it in the commissioning of Joshua in Deuteronomy 31, and again in the commissioning of the disciples in Matthew 28.

In Deuteronomy:

- Moses prepares Israel for the next stage of their journey.
- Joshua is strengthened with the repeated command: 'Be strong and courageous.'
- The journey ahead is hard, but God goes before them and walks with them.

In Matthew:

- Jesus declares that all authority is his.
- Followers are sent to make disciples of all nations.
- And again, God promises: 'I am with you always.'

The connection is striking

What began with one leader and one nation becomes a calling for all disciples and all nations. Mission is not a new idea invented by the church – it is the ongoing unfolding of the redemptive story God has always been telling. When we step into evangelism, we step into something much larger than ourselves.

Evangelism and mission are inseparable

From these passages, a simple but profound truth emerges:

We cannot separate evangelism from mission.
To follow Jesus is to be drawn into his redemptive work.
To love God is to learn to love people.
To receive the good news is to naturally share it.



Every disciple is called to participate in God's mission in the world, and this includes evangelism, which involves:

- 1. Journey** – There isn't a detailed map, only the direction of obedience.
- 2. Courage** – The path includes fear and discouragement, but we can draw strength from knowing...
- 3. Trust** – The Lord goes ahead of us, preparing the way.
- 4. Presence** – We are never sent alone; Christ is with us always.

This is integrated mission: sharing faith not as a task, but as part of a life that embodies the love of God. When our lives demonstrate grace, our words become believable. When our churches embody Christ's presence, our communities become curious. When we love well, we witness well.

A simple invitation

If evangelism feels heavy or complicated, these passages invite us back to simplicity. Where might you be called to practise simple obedience? Where might Jesus be inviting you into deeper encounter?

Normalising evangelism begins here – with small steps, open hands, and a willingness to follow Jesus into the ordinary places where he is already at work. Mission then ceases to be a specialised activity. It becomes the natural life of a community shaped by God's love.

And that is something every Baptist Christian, and every Baptist church, can share in.

It's the ordinary story of Ronan and Jake. Ronan had known Jesus himself only about a year when his new work colleague Jake began to ask questions about his own spirituality. Ronan and Jake shared a bus ride to work each morning and so Ronan would share something from the Bible for them to discuss for the 20 minute journey. They'd pause at lunch time and began to pray a simple pray of thanks together. Ronan invited Jake along to a church. This was late last year. In March Jake gets baptised. It's a story of simply being who you are, sharing Jesus with those around you. A story of a small act of 'But because you say so, I will...' obedience to share Jesus.

It's the ordinary story of **Bentley Baptist Church in Doncaster** who – seeing a part of their community in need – converted an old betting shop, opened a café and community provision and placed at the heart of it a simple and authentic church expression. Some worship, a Word, lots of relationship and Jesus did the rest as a new church in just the place and just the way it was needed emerged, now called Stepping Stones. It's the small act of 'But because you say so, I will...' obedience in an ordinary local church.



Chrissy Remsberg is the co-leader and pastor of Beacon Church, a Baptist church in Stafford. She co-leads the Firestarters Network with Alex Harris

Everyone, Everywhere is a Baptists Together wide collaboration that seeks to equip Baptists to share Jesus fully: everyoneeverywhere.church

Cups & Saucers | aopsan | Freepik





Dwelling, Discerning & Exploring

We're in a new context, a change of era – and that means discerning where God is moving in our neighbourhoods, and then taking risks to join in, says Roy Searle

Roy Searle is familiar to many Baptists. A former President of our Union (2005-6), Roy has been a Baptist minister since the early 1980s. He has pastored large and small churches, led the Northumbrian Community, and taught at many leadership training institutions. From 2016 to 2025 he served as a Baptists Together Pioneer Ambassador, working to support and encourage those called to the margins. On starting this role he spoke of his passion for “the renewal and reimagining of the church in the changing world and how the gospel engages with contemporary life.” Together with friend and Canadian missiologist Alan Roxburgh, Roy recently co-authored a book exploring this

reimagining in greater depth. Called *Forming Communities of Hope in the Great Unraveling*, it addresses the challenges faced by churches today. It is informed by their combined 90 years’ leadership, and conversations the pair have had with dozens of current leaders (for whom Roy and Alan host online discussion tables).

The book argues post war certainties are certainties no more and society (and the church) have changed - the great unraveling. It has led to uncertainty and anxiety. However, there is hope: God is at work in the shaking and we need to reorient our attention to discern what the Spirit is doing.

In the context of this edition of Baptists Together magazine, how might this thinking help us reflect on mission?

Defining reality: ‘We are in a place we’ve never been before’

The post pandemic world is the book’s context. “We talk about a 75 year story in the first part of our book,” says Roy. “The story basically emerging at the Second World War where we – with our human agency – were seen to be the winners. We could control and determine things. If there’s a problem, we could find

**GOD is at work in
the shaking -
how do we join in?**

resolution to it. If there was a challenge, we could overcome it. We've got it.

"But the whole experience of exile during COVID and lockdown was the realisation that we haven't got it. Post-lockdown for Alan and me, in conversation with other leaders, helped us realise we're in a place that we've never been before. It feels very different. Culturally, societally, ecclesially - things have changed."

Not least for the church. Lockdown removed "the stabilisers of a Sunday gathering in a building", Roy continues. "We became innovative, went online, got to know our neighbours." Post lockdown, many were asking where is church? What does it mean now?

And through his conversations since 2020, Roy says many leaders across the Western Church are leaving ministry worn out, disillusioned, weary, exhausted. "There's a lot of anger and anxiety around the church these days, mirroring society. This is rooted, I'm sure, in uncertainty. When you're uncertain, you get anxious and angry. The default is 'take back control'; when what we need to be doing is to humbly recognise our dependency upon God and to ask the deeper questions as to what is happening."

Dwelling, discerning and exploring

The book's premise is that God 'is in the shaking', and still on the move. The authors cite similar periods of unrest, both in the Bible (Jeremiah, Luke or Acts) and church history (the Benedictines, the Celts). For churches, there needs to be a move away from an emphasis on our human agency,

to see God as the primary agent.

Roy and Alan highlight three key practices to help adapt: *dwelling, discerning and exploring*.

In terms of dwelling, primarily we need to dwell in God, right where we are.

The first call upon our lives is to love God with heart, soul, mind, and strength. We need to seek God. We need people to think deeply and theologically. How we love God and how we think of God should shape everything we're doing in our churches.

And we need to dwell where God has called us to be, in our communities, neighbourhoods where we live, work, and hang out.

As we dwell with God, we are called to discern what the Spirit is saying to us, and what is God doing within those communities. It requires a relinquishing of control, technique, management, running programmes, and calls for attention, listening and discerning.

Inevitably, if you're dwelling and discerning, it will lead to exploring. This was the case both for Jeremiah's contemporaries, and the early church. Roy cites Acts 16, when Paul receives a vision to come to Macedonia, after the Holy Spirit prevents them entering Bithynia (modern day Turkey), which ultimately leads to the first convert in Europe (Lydia). "They're travelling, but the Holy Spirit stops them. And then they meet some women by a riverside. It wasn't in the plan. It was discovering, joining in the adventure, not having things prescribed."

Guests, not hosts

Roy underlines how doing life in this way is 'starting with where God's at work - not with the church.'

This requires churches and their members to learn how to be 'guests within our changing cultures'. This is a post-Christendom model, explains Roy, which chimes with Jesus' command to go into the world.

"A Christendom model is, we're the host. We invite people to come and join us. That's great - but that's not the context where we find ourselves today.

"In a post-Christendom society, we must get out and do what Jesus said. It's the Great Commission. I believe we've been training people and equipping churches to invite people to come into us. What I think God is doing now - and he did it in lockdown - is turn the church out into the world."

Mission in the local church

The book recognises how important leaders are in developing the awareness of the need for change. Roy says he is encouraging leaders to be "permission givers, facilitators, enablers, endorsers, affirmers - just supporters."

He highlights his own church - **Portrack Baptist Church**, which is led by Rachel Holland.

"If you go there on a Sunday gathering, it doesn't look like a Sunday service as such. It's a gathering, and the whole church has been looking at a passage of scripture. We started looking at John in 2025, and by October had only reached chapter 6 as we responded to what God was

GOD is turning the church out into the world

saying to us as a church. We weren't getting through a series, but learning to dwell together with Scripture and be responsive to what the Spirit was doing in our lives and neighbourhood.

"Rachel, who models a different way of leading, is encouraging and permission giving in helping us to dwell, discern and explore. She is asking and facilitating people to share what they are sensing God is saying to them, alone, individually, and what God is saying to them, to us, as a church. It's a very different way of doing things but it is good and so transformative. It's so liberating to hear people share where they have sensed God at work in their lives, beyond the 'walls of the church'. It moves us out of the pastor, teacher, leader at the front, telling people, this is what God says, to releasing and empowering the people of God.

"This is where as Baptists, we really should be in our element. Our ecclesiology reminds us we are all ministers, dwelling and discerning what the Spirit of God is doing. Leadership, yes, but no place for autocratic, coercive, manipulating expressions, more a togetherness as we all come around the Word with an openness to the Spirit's leading."

When reflecting on joining in with what God is already doing. Roy mentions another church in the north, **Alnwick Baptist Church**, led by Chris and Caroline Friend.

Alnwick has several missional communities which function in small and diverse relational ways. These missional expressions operate services, usually held outside the church building within the neighbourhoods and communities where the members of the church live and work.

"Chris and Caroline, together with other leaders of the church encourage people to discern what God's doing in their lives, and they're affirming and supporting them in exploring and experimenting.

"In the changing post Christendom contexts we find ourselves are both challenges and opportunities. So I think for our churches, if we can encourage people to dwell in God, dwell in Scripture, help people see where they are and discern what God's doing, we can then join in the adventure of what God is doing. And out of that will emerge a different way of being church, doing what the Spirit calls us to do."

"There's a narrative of hope"

Roy readily admits his book is challenging but believes "it contains prophetic insight, apostolic imagination."

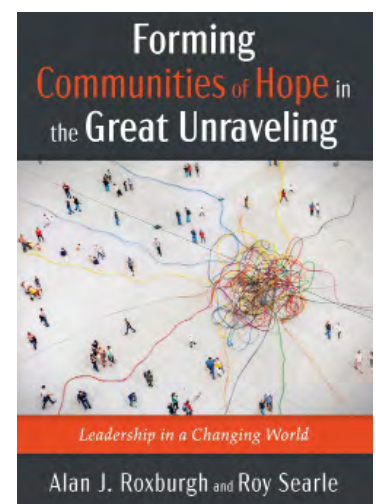
"What we're really pleased is with, even those who've disagreed, is that it's got people thinking and talking," he says. "It's a call to return to God. And in returning to God, there's a narrative of hope. We want people to engage with the story of hope."



Forming Communities of Hope in the Great Unraveling by Roy Searle and Alan Roxburgh (pictured) is available on the Baptists Together shop

If you would like to know more about *The Commons*, (an initiative following the book) and its opportunities to bring leaders together around online table conversations, see: thecommonscooperative.com

Roy and Alan, who with Baptist minister Simon Mattholie lead *The Commons*, are currently creating an accompanying workbook.



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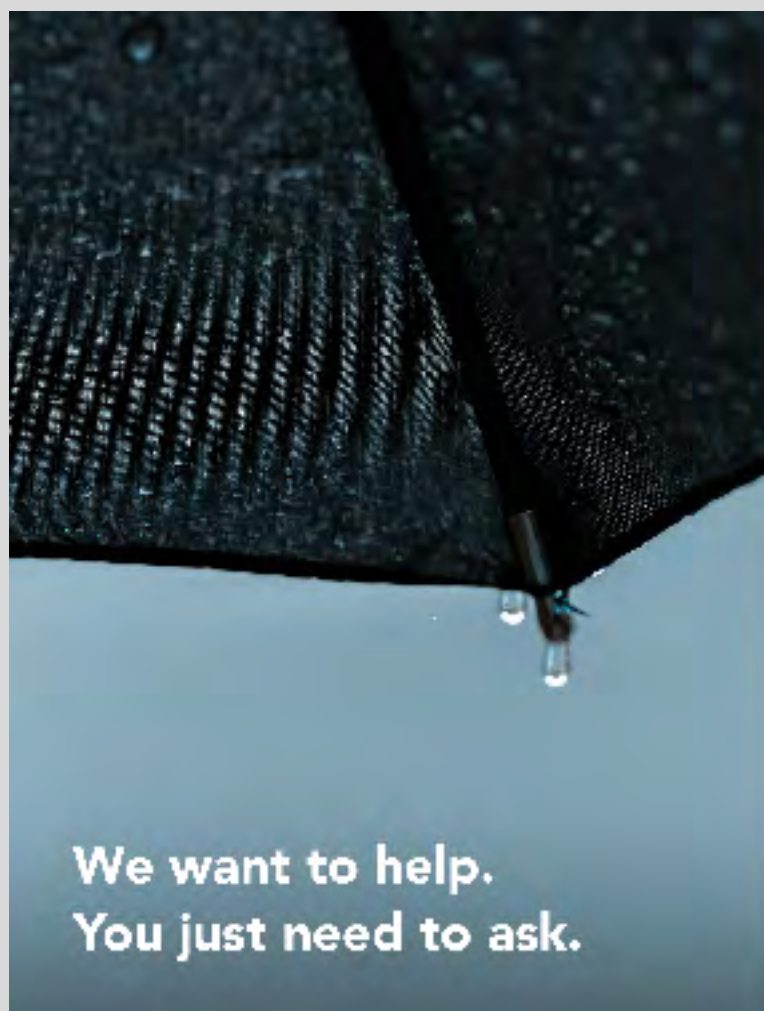
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RESISTING THE SECULARISING DRIFT OF SOCIAL ACTION

BY JON KUHRT

At Streatham Baptist Church, we host a community meal on Wednesday evenings called The Vine. A wide variety of guests come along – some are sleeping rough and struggling with addictions but almost all face challenges associated with isolation and poverty.

The purpose of The Vine is to offer three things to our guests: food, connection and community. So to do this we play games, have a fun quiz and all eat a great meal together.

We chose the name because vines provide food and refreshment but also embody unpredictable growth and a sense of connectedness. And it is also a metaphor Jesus uses about himself in John 15-

'I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener... Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.'

The explicit role of faith

When we started we thought carefully about the role that the Christian faith plays in what we offer. We did not want to just provide the resource of food. We wanted to create a place of relationship and connection: to both each other and to God. We consciously wanted the meal to 'remain in Jesus' and avoid the secularising drift that affects so many church-based projects.

Back in 1997, the community theologian Ann Morisy (also a Streatham resident) wrote spirituality in social action in her influential book *Beyond the Good Samaritan*: "Community ministry takes seriously the fact that people have spiritual needs, and if churches do not help people address these needs then few other agencies will. Churches have often been duped by our deeply secular culture into providing welfare for those in need without being clear about how this helps the Church fulfil its primary task."

Liturgy

Ann coined the term 'apt liturgy' to describe spiritual words and practices which can be used alongside social action. These words need to be appropriate to the context and be shared in the right spiritual temperature – neither 'too hot nor too cold'.

At The Vine, we have used a liturgy which we have printed out on sheets (which due to our demographic, we also make available in Polish). Before we eat, we stop, ask for quiet in the room and invite everyone to join in to pray a blessing if they are happy to do so. And at the close of the evening, before guests leave, we invite people to say these words too:

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you, wherever He may send you.

May He guide you through the wilderness, and protect you through the storm.

May He bring you back here rejoicing once again into our doors. Amen

There is nothing ground-breaking in these words and they only take a brief moment to say, but they play a significant role in each evening by giving us a time to pause, reflect and be grateful together. They create a sense of 'depth' and mutuality as everyone speaks as equals before God. Somehow, the prayers change the room.

As well as diverse guests, we also have a mixed group of volunteers who are not all churchgoers. But in the four years since we started, we have not had one single concern raised about our prayers. In fact, it's been the opposite, many people have said this is what they expect in a church.

Deeper needs

It is great to share food together but we know that material needs are only part of the challenges many of our guests face.

My thinking has been very influenced by the missionary theologian Lesslie Newbigin. As a young man in the 1920s, he went to South Wales to help run activities and holidays for unemployed men. Although it was a Christian-based initiative, it had a strict liberal ethos which meant volunteers were not allowed to talk about anything religious. Newbigin reflected:

"I became less and less convinced that we were dealing with the real issues...these men needed some kind of faith that would fortify them for today and tomorrow against apathy and despair. Draughts and ping-pong could not provide this...they needed the Christian faith."

Ever since reading these words, the phrase 'draughts and ping-pong could not provide this' has challenged me. Faith, belief, purpose and meaning are deeply connected to what people most need – today more than ever. Why would a church initiative ignore them?

I believe that social action projects should not accept the common 'secularising drift' that occurs within so much church-based social action. We should retain a missional distinctiveness that enables Christian hope to be integrated alongside practical action.

After over 30 years of working with people affected by homelessness, it is this belief that has taken me to work for the Christian charity Hope into Action, who provide housing for people who are homeless in partnership with local churches.

Rather than allowing faith to be 'skimmed' out of social action, we believe in a 'full fat' approach. We housed almost 500 people last year and 60 per cent wanted to be prayed for and 14 took the decision to be baptised.

Realities like this, both in my local church in Streatham and through national organisations like Hope into Action, show that those involved in social action should rightly have confidence in the relevance of faith to the challenges our communities are struggling with. Alongside the increase in sales in Bibles and more young people coming to church, it is further evidence of a spiritual search that so many are on.

But the practical integrating of overt expressions of faith alongside social action requires confidence, clarity and creativity because there are many, both outside and within the church, who will voice negativity and nervousness.

These are my take aways to keep social action missional:

1. **Build confidence:** Faith is more than a 'starter-motor' for social action but can remain its engine. Our confidence needs to be both theological as we appreciate its priority to God and also sociological as we appreciate its relevance to the issues our communities and individuals face.
2. **Be clear:** If we are vague, defensive and incoherent then it will increase people's suspicions. We need to be clear and intentional about how faith is expressed and shared within a social action project is run. We should listen and encourage non-church-going volunteers or staff to be open about how they feel. In my experience, I find that they are far more open-minded than we imagine.
3. **Be creative:** No one wants clunky, awkward or cringy 'God slots' which are simply crow-barred into a project to tick a spiritual box. It requires creativity to develop approaches which bring spiritual depth in an inclusive and meaningful way.



Jon Kuhrt is the CEO of the national Christian homelessness charity Hope into Action. He has worked with people affected by homelessness for over 30 years and is a former government adviser on rough sleeping. He hosts the Grace+Truth blog (gracetruth.blog/) and is a member of Streatham Baptist Church in South London

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How one Association is partnering with its churches in mission

“It is still early days, but the best way to describe what is happening is that churches are being ‘nudged’ in mission,” says Joth Hunt, Regional Minister Team Leader South of England Baptist Association (SEBA). “Simply raising the profile of mission and changing the conversation has begun to bear first fruits.”

In 2025 SEBA launched its Partners in Mission initiative, which sees the Association offering greater support to its churches, pioneering and church planting initiatives wherever possible. It is inspired by Paul’s expression of gratitude for the church in Philippi.

‘I thank my God every time I remember you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the Gospel’ - Philippians 1:3-5

Partners in Mission is about “partnering in the mission of God together as we serve and support each other,” explains Joth.

“We recognise many local churches and pioneering initiatives are often limited with the resources available to them. But by partnering with the Association our hope is that a wider resource becomes available and even greater possibilities realised.”

Each partnership is unique and prayerfully discerned by the local church. SEBA's role in the partnership is to walk alongside, offer support and advice to help the church find the best mission tool to become more effective in mission. This could be mission companions, partnering with other churches, seminars, workshops or mission grants.

It is particularly for churches who would value the support from the wider association in a variety of ways, whether they are local churches wanting to be more effective in mission, churches who want to support other churches, or churches in danger of closure.

There has been an appetite for this kind of support. More than 300 people attended the Partners in Mission launch events in March and May 2025. "These were intense, full-on days involving keynote speakers, seminars, and the presentation of Partners in Mission as a concept," says Andy Twilley, Regional Minister. "Often people leave these events looking weary, but here you sensed a real energy had been generated."

Over the summer, the Association saw a steady flow of churches reaching out to explore what this could look like in their local context. At the time of writing more than 40 churches had engaged.

"We are deeply committed to mission being bespoke," continues Andy. "It isn't about us dictating how mission must be done; it's about allowing the Holy

Spirit to help a church discern God's shape for mission at this specific period in their journey. "While every path is different, we have been involved in several discernment processes that are already yielding fruit."

One church hadn't seen a baptism for some time, but its involvement with Partners in Mission coincided with 12 baptisms on a single Sunday. While that number might be extreme, a general increase in baptisms isn't.

"We are seeing a similar trend in other churches that are now dusting down their baptistries after years of inactivity," says Joth. "We are leaning into our identity as Baptists and talking more about the importance of these public declarations of faith."

For instance, Partners in Mission has reshaped the relationship between the Association and its Home Mission supported churches. The initiative has opened an appetite for a deeper conversation, and for the Association to come alongside to facilitate intentional mission. Initially some churches were surprised by the higher level of accountability and intentionality this entailed, but it too has led to baptisms.

One aspect of the partnership has seen SEBA work with several churches to create succinct mission statements, says Andy.

"The statement itself is almost secondary; the key is that leadership teams are talking about mission," says Andy.

"They are asking: "Who has God called us to be?" and "How can we be a relevant expression of church in 2026?"

Another development is the exploration of partnerships between large and small churches. In one part of the Association a large church is currently in conversation with a small church a few miles away to develop a covenantal partnership, a conversation generated specifically because of Partners in Mission.

"The full story is yet to be known, as it is early days, but we do have over 40 churches that have begun some kind of Partners in Mission story," says Joth.

"It's all about exploring how we can be more effective together for the Kingdom, than we can be in isolation."

For more, visit seba-baptist.org.uk

The following two stories feature Partners in Mission churches by: ***Ewhurst Baptist Church, & Westvale Baptist Church***

The further story of New Life Church, Blackboys can be found online: baptist.org.uk/newlife

STORIES

F R O M T H E

LOCAL CONTEXT



“A more missional attitude” Ewhurst Baptist Church

Minister Ben Scadden on missional developments at
Ewhurst Baptist Church

“Partners in Mission has helped affirm what we were already doing, while encouraging us to be much more intentional,” says Ben Scadden.

Ben has been the minister of Ewhurst Baptist Church in Surrey Hills for four years. Prior to its involvement with Partners in Mission, the church was already engaging in several activities to connect with its community, including a popular donkey trail around the village on Palm

Sunday, a nativity trail and a lunch club, in partnership with St Peter and St Paul, the Anglican church in the village. This had initially started as a warm space response to the cost-of-living crisis. It also runs a long-standing toddler group.

Ben and his deacons have now met with Andy Twilley several times as a Partners in Mission church. They have crafted a new mission statement, which in turn has helped the church shape a

plan for the year ahead, as well as tweak what it’s already doing.

For instance, on Andy’s advice, Ben now gives short reflections during the lunch club, which have been well received. The church is to increase its all-age services from four times a year to six, to better connect with the families from the toddler group.

There has been a direct impact on the congregation too. In November Ewhurst held two whole-church sessions with Andy, in which he taught how to become more missional in our everyday lives.

He introduced the Pray for Five initiative, where members commit to praying for five specific people. Ben also interviews a church member about what they will be doing 'This Time Tomorrow', part of the LICC (London Institute for Contemporary Christianity) Frontline Sundays material. Study groups with a missional focus have been re-engaged.

"It helps the congregation realise we are all on a mission, serving God wherever we are during the week," says Ben.

"Both Andy and my mentor, Duncan Threshie, have encouraged me to take the church on this journey of deliberate prayer, and I can see the congregation is really buying into it. They want to be invited into the journey of asking God to provide for the needs of our community.

"It's definitely creating a more united missional attitude among us."



Pray for 5 encourages everyone to choose 5 people they know, and pray for them to come to know the amazing, life-transforming love of Jesus. It is a Thy Kingdom initiative: thykingdomcome.global/stories/pray-



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“It’s helped with our discernment”

Westvale Community Church

Interview with Miranda Odysseos-Beaumont, minister of Westvale Community Church

Westvale Community Church is a new church seeking to serve the Westvale Park housing development near Horley. The development began in 2005 and will eventually become home to 1,500 households.

Miranda Odysseos-Beaumont is the NAM (Newly Accredited Minister) following her time as a MIT (Minister-in-Training) at the Home Mission supported church, and has been building relationships in the development for several years. The founding charity, Westvale Christian Community Trust, overseeing the church, is a Registered charity which has subsequently won the bid to operate the Neighbourhood Hall community centre on the development. The building is a civic building, meaning it will be owned by the local council, but run in partnership with local stakeholders and charities for the benefit of the community.

Miranda’s background is in community work, and the proposal for the building – informed by her many years of missional listening – focused on education, health, and well-being.

“We’re facilitating building community, and we happen to be Christians doing that,” Miranda explains. Although much of the initial journey happened before joining Partners in Mission, the church is now using the PIM tools and support from the Regional Ministers to guide its vision planning and mission strategy. This partnership is helping the church look at how the Trust will operate the centre effectively.

“Partners in Mission is helping us think about the needs of the community, and giving us different ways of thinking and some tools,” Miranda says. “It’s helped with our discernment and got us thinking about our mission statement.

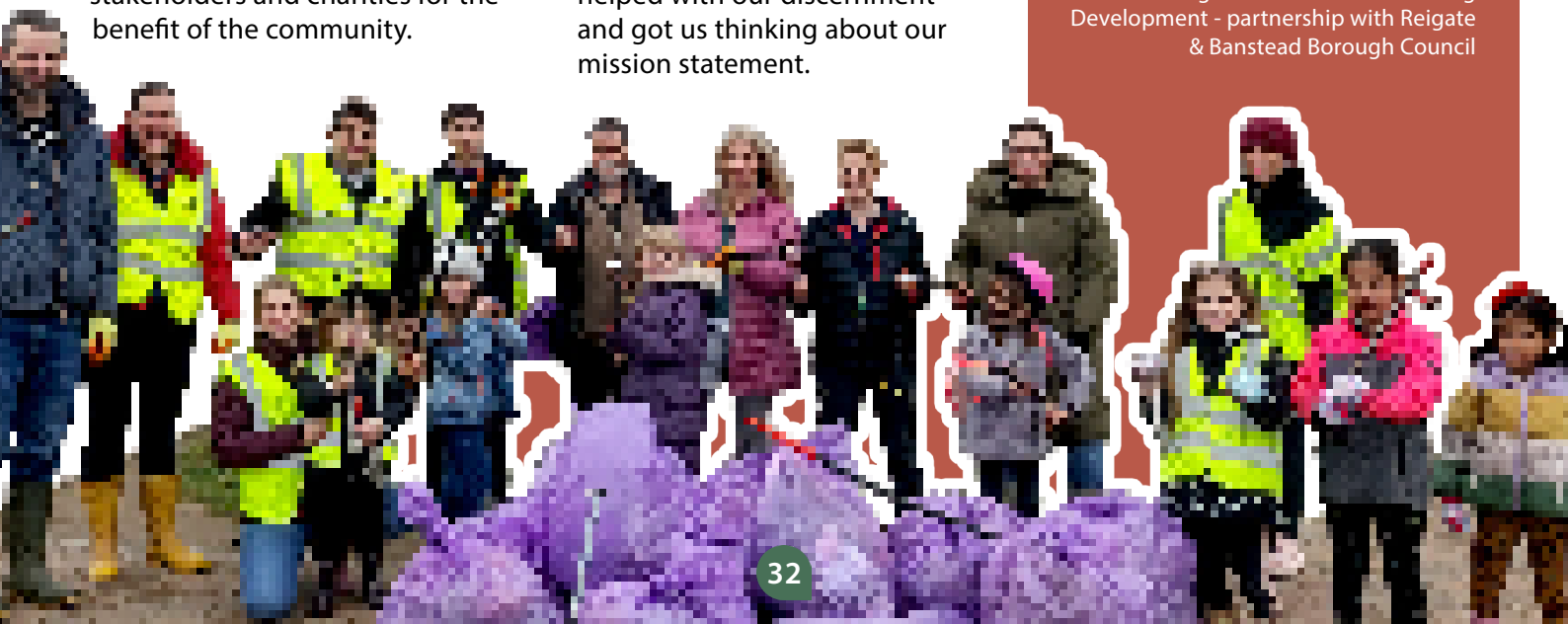
“I’ve now done some teaching on where our spiritual gifts and our talents can support us. I’m working hard at taking the church on the journey of continuing to listen and discern what God wants for us and for the community.”

Miranda adds the partnership with SEBA through Partners in Mission is so crucial.

“Being a pioneer minister in a small church can be isolating. In this way I also really value the SEBA Pioneers Network, and the Small Church Connexion. It’s about being part of something bigger – and it all helps us with direction, support and oversight.”

Miranda and SEBA created a short Home Mission film in November 2024. Watch it here: bit.ly/westvalehm

Litter Picking on Westvale Park Housing Development - partnership with Reigate & Banstead Borough Council





Connecting with food - and at Christmas

A weekly community meal at New Mill Baptist Church in Tring helps to alleviate loneliness – and a farm animal event at Christmas has become a community attraction. By Jackie Buie

At New Mill Baptist Church in Tring, our greatest connection on a weekly basis is via our community café which we run on a Thursday. Over the last years the number of regular attenders has grown to around 25, most of whom are not our own church folk. Having a three-course home cooked meal is a great attraction, as well as the fact we don't charge, but only ask for donations: no one needs to feel awkward or excluded.

It's a firm favourite and alleviates, for that day, the feelings of loneliness we know is such an issue for the elderly.

Our greatest attraction to the local community is our petting farm animal event which happens in our graveyard area, on the Sunday afternoon closest to Christmas.

In conjunction with the High Street Baptist Church, we provide a free entrance to the event, where the small children get a donkey ride and dress up in nativity costumes, while enjoying warming hot chocolate. In 2025 we must have had around 200 come over the afternoon, some of whom stayed around for our Carols by Candlelight later in the afternoon.

It was such a buzz, and lots of fun was had by the children.

**The Revd Jackie Buie,
minister at New Mill
Baptist Church**

'We want to show the love of Jesus to all'

New Mill Baptist Church is a group of ordinary people aiming to follow an extraordinary God. We are a friendly, caring church whose aim is to serve and honour God as we lovingly support one another and the community around us. We want to show the love of Jesus to all ages of people and welcome any who choose to visit us, regardless of their background.

As New Mill Baptist Church, we aim to be good news people by seeking to:
***Glorify God
Grow in Grace
Go with Good News***





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“People are desperate and don’t need entertainment; they need Jesus”

Rye Lane Chapel has seen lives transformed in its community through a combination of evangelism and responding to local needs. Pastor Phil Woolley shares the church’s story

STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

Rye Lane Chapel in Peckham, South East London, is a very old church. It was established in 1818, has been led by 10 great men of God over 200 years, and I am very aware that I stand on the shoulders of giants. I have been leading since July 2021. While the demographics have changed dramatically—shifting from a white church to a black majority church over the last 50 years—the faithfulness of those who prayed for its future has remained constant. Many people have prayed for the future of this church over all its years.

A SPIRITUAL SHIFT: WORSHIP AND HUMILITY

The church had been hit hard by Covid, and in 2021 there were almost no children or teenagers. The average age of the membership was in the high 60s. It was in danger of closing in the next 15 years.

The church had already begun to pray for the Holy Spirit to teach them about worship and abiding in His presence, so when I joined it felt like I hit the ground running. I had cut my teeth in praise, worship, evangelism and discipleship, and these experiences shape how I lead the church today.

In our worship, we wanted to create space for the Holy Spirit

to minister, so we made changes early on, moving away from the traditional ‘hymn-prayer sandwich’ model to create an atmosphere where people could worship more freely. We introduced modern songs while still honouring hymns.

We focused on specific prayers for revival based on 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If my people... will humble themselves and pray... then I will hear from heaven.” We also took to heart the challenge in Revelation 2 regarding the Ephesian church—we didn’t want to work hard but forget our first love. Jesus must always come first. Prayer and the preaching of God’s word have always been fundamental in the life of this church.

PARTNERING FOR EVANGELISM: LONDON CITY MISSION

One of the most significant shifts at Rye Lane was the way we partner with London City Mission (LCM). For decades, this has been through one missionary. But LCM have restructured and now operate in an Ephesians 4 model, equipping all for the work of ministry. So instead of having one missionary do the work for us, we now work with a team that trains our congregation in evangelism and in one case, youth leadership. They’re helping us with so many different things. This training has given church

members the confidence to engage in prayer walks and door knocking evangelism in the local housing estates.

An example is one of our church members Catherine, who has an immense love for her neighbours, and sprung to life after attending training. She gently led a woman named Linda—someone who had experienced a horrendous childhood of trauma—to the church. When Linda was baptised, she said “I felt like something was free... for the first time in my life, I have a Father who loves me.”

We’ve sought to add as many forms of evangelism as possible.

REACHING OUT TO MARGINALISED AND BROKEN PEOPLE

Peckham has a recent history involving gang culture, knife crime, and drug abuse. In our prayers, we asked God to clean up Peckham and allow us to look after the broken. We do this in different ways.

We host a ‘Friday Outreach’ where we offer free tea and coffee. Many who attend have mental health issues, and it has become a safe, warm space for them. Sometimes they just need to be alone, away from the bustle of life. Some enjoy chatting with our team. Some want to engage in conversations about the Lord.

In early 2024, the Lord spoke to us through Isaiah 58 about 'true fasting'—sharing food with the hungry and providing shelter for the wanderer.

We had been working with refugees and asylum seekers since 2022. We had learned that a local hotel was housing asylum seekers living in basic conditions on only £8 a week. Along with other pastors in Peckham, we asked what can we do?



Because I had taught English as a second language for 15 years, I offered to run a class at the church. Other pastors helped by serving coffee or looking after toddlers while parents studied. We wanted to design a place that would be safe—a warm space for people to engage.

After this word from Isaiah, we suddenly had an influx of Latino and Iranian people. A charismatic Mexican couple we led to the Lord brought 20 to 30 others from the hotel. An Iranian family who fled for their faith found us on their first Sunday in London and began inviting their friends.

To handle the language barrier, I bought translation equipment on Amazon. We now run our services in three languages simultaneously. I also translate my sermons into narrative form via Google Translate and send them to the congregation

the night before. It has created a culture where seekers feel seen and heard regardless of their mother tongue.

While it's bittersweet when the government rehuses our members in other parts of the country, we are thankful for the time we have with them.

A SEASON OF HARVEST AND NEW BIRTH

From late 2023 into 2024, we experienced a six-month season where almost every weekend someone was being born again. Some came because they were invited, others were drawn by the youth ministry. One person even heard an 'inner voice' while walking past the church telling them to go in. We've found people – especially young people – are ready to hear the truth of the gospel uh because they need hope. They need the truth.

I believe pastors mustn't be afraid to preach the full gospel. I make an altar call almost every Sunday. By the grace of God, we have baptized 64 people in four years, with more scheduled soon.

COLLABORATING FOR THE FUTURE

As a church where I am the only full-time paid worker, we realised we needed help. We began to pray for collaboration and partnership. Now, we host two Christian charities in our building that specifically serve the Latino and Muslim communities.

Our focus for 2026 is moving the church from a 'consumerist' mentality to a 'missional' one. We are re-establishing life groups and teaching people how to study and memorise scripture.

Peckham's demographics are shifting again—it is becoming younger and more white—and we are now preparing for how to evangelise this changing community.

I want to thank God for his faithfulness: we've simply chosen to believe God's word and act upon it. People are desperate, lonely, and broken. They don't need entertainment; they need to know Jesus loves them and wants to forgive them.

TRANSFERABLE PRINCIPLES

"This is a story of faithfulness and growth," says London Baptists regional minister Hany Abdelmasih.

"There are clear, transferable principles here: the intentionality about outreach to people, being attentive to the community and its need, being attentive also to the church limitations and what they can and cannot do, as well as intentional partnership with others to provide the needs of the community and the new believers.

And a very key principle is the trying principle: trying and if it doesn't work, stop it. Start something new and continue to be attentive, most of all, to the Lord and how he leads you."

Phil Woolley is the minister of Rye Lane Chapel, Peckham

This article is based on a talk Phil gave as part of the London Baptists (LB) Mission Hub Hour. To access this, and other LB Mission Hub Hour talks, visit: londonbaptist.org.uk/mission-hub-resources

One doorstep... to a family of new believers - to watch a video of the impact of evangelism door knocking, visit: baptist.org.uk/ryelane





Planting a Baptist church in the West Midlands

How a consistent, pastoral presence has led to the gospel taking root. Interview with Mark Francis-Green

“It takes years of trust and hard work,” says Mark Francis-Green, the minister of Castle Vale Baptist Church. “Church planting is not an easy thing. It needs consistency.”

“But so much has happened. People are getting to know the church is there, and who we are. The gospel is being shared, and some are wanting to be baptised.”

Mark is the pastor of Castle Vale Baptist Church, which he has led since it was planted in 2015.

There was scepticism when he first arrived.

“The first question the community asked of me when I started was “How long am I here for?” And I said 10 to 15 years and beyond. It’s up to the Lord how long. A few people laughed. But I’m now at the 10-year mark. “That’s what’s needed to win their trust, to understand we are not here short term.”

EARNING TRUST - MINISTERING AS SCHOOL CHAPLAIN

Castle Vale is a large housing estate in east Birmingham. It was significantly regenerated in the 1990s having been one of the city’s most deprived neighbourhoods.

The regeneration is now widely seen as one of the UK’s most successful housing projects (BBC, December 2025). With modern, energy-efficient homes, a rebuilt school, new sports facilities and a revitalised shopping centre. Nevertheless Castle Vale is not immune to wider social pressures – it has a higher-than-average rate of working-age residents with no qualifications and below-average employment rates.

Mark has ministered to many at times of acute tragedy through his role as school chaplain.

Being new to the area and thereby not knowing anyone, and with a background in youth work, Mark offered his services free of charge to Greenwood Academy, the local secondary school. Within four months the school officially employed him as a chaplain two days a week, recognising the need for a pastoral presence at a time of increasing mental health issues. Ten years on, Mark remains employed by the school. In that period the school community has been rocked by several deaths, including suicide and a murder of a parent. “We’ve faced some terrible issues,” says Mark. “There has been a lot to do.”

The role has enabled him to build relationships with teachers, parents and pupils, generally serve the community in whatever

way is appropriate. This has seen him invited to lead funerals, and helping reluctant pupils attend lessons.

LAUNCHING A COFFEE MORNING

The church meets at the school, meaning there is a helpful synergy between this and Mark’s chaplaincy role. The church has undertaken many activities to best serve its community.

One example includes launching a coffee morning post-Covid, to help combat isolation.

“In Castle Vale people don’t speak to you, they close the doors,” Mark explains. “But people wanted somewhere to go, and this is what we gave them. The opportunity to come out of their home, go to a warm space, drink coffee, craft, talk to people. It addresses issues like loneliness, allows them to meet other people.”

Through talking and listening they began to hear and better understand issues some were facing. Around 14 began to attend regularly.

Mark explains the coffee morning was birthed out of Matthew 28 and its command to go out and make disciples. After three years he subsequently sensed the café needed to be a space where the gospel was intentionally shared.

“We would always pray at the end and share a nugget of a scripture. We did that from day one. After about three years we insisted it’s time we started sharing the gospel and introduced Christianity Explored. But we lost a number of people, because they weren’t interested.”

Mark discovered people have a difficult background with church, often feeling they were forced to go as children, and keen to break away as adults. But there is a latent interest among some – a small core of locals continued to come, and numbers are once again beginning to grow.

“Some people embrace it (the Christian faith). Some people resist it. It’s not easy, but the people there now have come to a place of acceptance and want to know more about Jesus. “So we are going through Christianity Explored and it’s covering the life of Jesus. Sometimes they ask us why we’re doing it, and we show them Matthew 28. This shows them it’s not just me, but all of us, are called to go out and make disciples.”

“We have people who are uncertain about faith, but we also now have others making

inquiries about baptism.”

SHARING THE GOSPEL

Sharing the gospel is a key aspect of life at Castle Vale. A section of the church’s website is devoted to evangelism and the church’s commitment to “making the gospel known in word and deed.”

Around four years ago, Mark discovered the church had access to money in trust from another Christian charity. He used the grant by partnering with Birmingham City Mission to employ a missionary one day a week. The missionary knocks on doors to let people know about the church and its activities, and shares the gospel in the Castle Vale shopping centre.

“We know we need to keep reaching out to the people,” Mark says. “We know they need to see us more than once, twice, and continue those conversations. Hopefully through those conversations, trust and relationship can grow and they can come to a place of faith.”

The funding for this is due to run out, so that’s another challenge Mark faces.

“We don’t know what will happen in the next six to eight months because we have no funding left. But we know we need to continue the work.”

“IT’S NOT A FORCING PROCESS”

The church has launched a Boys’ Brigade, runs a holiday club every summer, and serves a popular Christmas Day lunch. It is also exploring launching summer community event.

“We have all these different activities, engaging people, sharing the gospel and listening to them, trying to respond to their needs where we can,” Mark says. “They’re coming back slowly. We have to look at how we help them to read and understand the scriptures, to understand it’s not a forcing process. They need a personal relationship with the Lord, accept Him as their Lord and Saviour, and need to come to a place of repentance.”

He’s now at the stage of looking to local people to form a leadership body.

Mark adds: “Making disciples is not easy. There will be challenges, including rejection.”

“We continue and ask the Lord to give us strength, faith, courage and wisdom.”



The Heart of England Baptist Association supported Castle Vale Baptist Church with Home Mission funding for the first six years of its existence.

See this video for more:
bit.ly/castlevalle



“He is a light for these people here”

Lisa Isaac shares the story of Golau Baptist Church in Llanelli, tracing its beginnings as a small youth group to a newly constituted, Home Mission-supported church that meets in unconventional spaces

EARLY BEGINNINGS: THE MISSING GENERATION

I was a primary teacher for eight years, but felt called by God to leave teaching and go into ministry. I took the pathways course at Cardiff Baptist College. I'd grown up in a traditional Baptist church in Llanelli, (Greenfield) just west of Swansea, and I began to notice a significant gap in our church community. There was a missing generation—people roughly between the ages of 10 and 50. There were activities for small children and older adults, but very little in between.

So just before COVID, my husband and I started a small group for teenagers on Sunday afternoons. We'd look at Bible stories and just enjoy some social time. Around the same time, we started a very accessible Bible study for adults who hadn't been brought up in the church, meeting in a local café.

ADAPTING THROUGH COVID: GARDENS AND PARKS

When the pandemic hit, we had to stop everything. However, in 2020, as things calmed down and we were allowed outside, we restarted these groups in our garden. We realised teenagers, in particular, were desperate for a place to socialise.

Since traditional church spaces weren't available, we started a youth club in a local park, playing rounders and cricket. It grew from there. We started a group for adults as well. We saw more and more unchurched people—both teens and adults—attending our studies and social groups. We even began monthly worship sessions to give them a flavour of worship without the pressure of a full, traditional service.

A VISION FOR A DIFFERENT TYPE OF CHURCH

Halfway through my ministry course, I began to worry about what would happen to these groups once I finished college. I didn't think a traditional church would work for them. I felt God telling me these people didn't just need a group—they needed a church of their own.

After mulling this over and speaking with my tutors and the South Wales Baptist Association, the vision for Golau Baptist Church began to take shape. Llanelli already had traditional English and Welsh-speaking Baptist churches, but we needed something bilingual and accessible for those who found traditional environments off-putting.

I was really blessed Pantygwydr Baptist Church in Swansea - a church where I did a placement

while at college - said they'd be willing to partner with us, so they became our sending church. Their minister Matt Carter is the moderator for South Wales Baptist Association.

SEARCHING FOR A PERMANENT HOME

As I neared the end of my studies in 2024, we needed to find a venue. My dad and I went on a prayer walk through our area to find the right spot.

We discovered two incredible locations within one week – and both were keen for us to use their buildings:

- The Llanelli Goods Shed: This is an old railway goods shed near the train station that had been turned into a community building. It even has a train inside! We use this for our Renew Wellbeing space and holiday clubs.
- The World Horizons Building: A mission building near the beach that historically housed missionaries. They loved our vision and allowed us to use their space for our Sunday services and youth club.

We felt very blessed, and again, God was a light guiding us to the right direction.

THE NAME: GOLAU

Golau in Welsh means light. I always feel that God is a light—he is a light shining in the darkness for us. And that would be a way for people to come to know of him, and for others perhaps who don't know him yet, that we could be a light for them.

The church is bilingual, so we wanted it to be a Welsh name, a simple one, but also a name that had a lot of meaning. And the fact is Jesus is the light of the world, and he is a light for these people here.

WEEKLY PATTERNS IN 2026

Now, in early 2026, our weekly pattern is quite diverse:

- Sundays at 4pm. We have four different styles of service throughout the month: traditional, family-style, café church, and a bring and share service on the sofas.
- Youth & Young Adults: Youth club follows on Sundays at 6:00 PM. We also have a Teen Study Social on Wednesdays and a Young Adult Life Group twice a month for those aged 16 to late 30s.
- Community & Study: We hold a Renew Wellbeing

space every Friday at the Goods Shed. Bible studies still happen in our home or garden, depending on the season.

GROWTH, BAPTISM, AND FUTURE STEPS

Most of the people from those original groups have stayed with us. We've seen teenagers grow into young adults who now help lead the younger ones, and unchurched adults have grown into leaders within the church. We are even preparing for a baptism study in March for those ready to take that next step.

The support from Home Mission and the South Wales Baptist Association has been vital. They provide half of my stipend, allowing me to focus on the church, and they've acted as a missional steering group, helping us with the complex paperwork of becoming a constituted church. On our first anniversary in September 2025, we officially became a part of the Baptist Union, and all in the Association have been such a help.

I've always had a heart for people who weren't in church,

and want to provide a space where they can ask questions. I want people to have a home where they can speak, listen, and get their questions answered - somewhere where they just feel comfortable. You can see they need something, but they don't realise it's Jesus. It's amazing when they find Him.

Lisa Isaac is the minister of Golau Baptist Church in Llanelli

Watch a Home Mission video from South Wales Baptist Association featuring Lisa introducing Golau Baptist Church: bit.ly/goloubaptist





“Putting a smile on the face of the building”

Camberley Baptist Church, by ministers
Richard and Fran Bellingham

Camberley Baptist Church (CBC) has a long history. It is the oldest church in the town and the building predates that of Sandhurst Military Academy which was the catalyst for the building of the new town of Camberley. However, while the building is large, the congregation is small and vulnerable to closure.

Some years ago, CBC was a part of the Three Counties Baptist Church, three churches on the borders of Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire. They shared everything, including leadership, charitable status, and resources. The hope was that this union of three small churches would ignite mission and church growth.

However, the Three Counties Baptist Church has now folded, with one of the churches closing, another leaving the Baptist fold and CBC continuing with reduced numbers. When speaking to church members they say the disentanglement of Three Counties was very painful and protracted. They viewed the whole merger of the churches as a failure on many levels. We are very grateful the previous minister here spent so much time and energy in this matter.

Our mandate on being called to CBC was to love the congregation and build community in whatever way we felt fit. We have the building which is reasonably well resourced and the support of the membership to try something different. The first thing we did was start litter picking around the buildings, engaging in conversation with people passing by. This gradually led to a regular coffee morning and intentional links with local housing associations, health providers, mental health groups, local counsellors and politicians. The coffee morning has become a hub where other agencies occasionally come to promote themselves and provide social capital.

When we arrived, many in the community thought that the church had closed, but by repainting the doors, litter picking, tidying the garden area, opening the doors for hospitality to all, as one person said, “you are putting a smile on the face of the building”. There has been no mission activity other than simply being present and hospitable. There have been no evangelistic campaigns. And yet, by the grace of God things are happening, the congregation is slowly growing, and it is none of our doing. As Jesus said, he will build his church.

When we first arrived at CBC we found an old communion cup, in two pieces, each part in a different cupboard. We took it to the local repair café, who did sterling work in knocking the cup back into shape. While it is unusable as a communion cup, (the insides are rusty), it sits on our communion table as a reminder. God is the one who takes the broken, the forgotten, the dismembered, and fragile and puts them back together creating something new. It might look a little bit as before, but has a new function and purpose. In the case of the communion cup it is used for flowers, or lifted symbolically during the communion service.

We have only been at CBC a year, but it has been an exciting ride and we are looking forward to seeing what the Holy Spirit has in store for the church over the coming years. If there is one thing we have been learning it is that church growth doesn't come from anything we do or say, it simply comes from our being obediently living out the gospel in our daily lives, opening the doors and inviting all to come and have a coffee.

Richard and Fran Bellingham
are ministers of Camberley
Baptist Church, Surrey



Making room for people to belong

Ian Pethick reflects on his first term as a Baptist intern at Buckland Road Baptist Church in Poole

There's a particular reality to being part of a small church. You can't hide. You can't drift in and out unnoticed. You are known by name, missed when absent, and tend to be gently (sometimes firmly) drawn into whatever is happening. Those were some of the very reasons I wanted to serve my internship this year in a small Baptist church in Poole.

At Buckland Road Baptist Church (BRBC), our mission is to be 'the loving centre at the heart of the community.' That's an inspiring statement but it also asks practical questions. Who are we making space for? And how do we become a church that doesn't simply welcome people in theory, but learns to welcome in ways that are tangible, thoughtful, and real?

Two new events from my first term stand out, very different in style, but surprisingly connected in what they taught me about welcome, belonging, and the shape of Baptist community life. One was hosting a high tea and a dementia-friendly carol service for the first time. The other was a day in Cambridge for young adults to meet, connect, and begin building a network of support.

At first glance, the two could not be more different. But both, I think, point to the same instinct:

making room for people to belong.

THE GIFT (AND CHALLENGE) OF SMALL CHURCH LIFE

One of the realities of a small church is that a small number of people often carry a wide range of responsibilities. There can be a strong desire to do more to serve more people, try new initiatives, and respond to needs in the community while also feeling constrained by the question of who will make it happen.

The biggest thing I've learned in this first term is this: people rarely say no when you invite them into something meaningful. In a small church, where everyone is already stretched you have to get creative.

BECOMING MORE DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY

Back last summer we hosted excellent dementia training from the Dorset-based charity Prama, and we began asking what the next step might be for BRBC if we wanted to grow as a dementia-friendly church. Out of that came a simple idea: offer a dementia-friendly carol service, paired with a high tea, designed especially to welcome people living with dementia and the families and carers who support them.

Planning the event did something important straight away and it forced us to make practical changes to our church building to make it more accessible. The actual service was deliberately shorter, had a clear printed order, and consisted of familiar carols sung in our church hall while still sitting at tables.

We also wanted the afternoon to feel genuinely special. So, we reached out to local businesses, and we were overwhelmed by generosity. We were given support in the form of mince pies made by the chef of a local care home, a beautiful Christmas cake from a local Christian retreat centre, china sets from a local tea room, and even two waitresses from a local restaurant listed in the Michelin Guide, who helped serve and make guests feel cared for.

What struck me most was how church members, carers, local organisations, and local businesses all contributed in different ways to create something welcoming. In a small church, you sometimes wonder whether you have enough capacity but then you see what happens when the wider community is invited into the vision too.

CONNECTING YOUNG ADULTS IN SMALL CHURCHES

Earlier in the year I attended a Small Church Connexion meeting, and it sparked something I've been carrying for a while: a desire to develop a network that supports young adults connected with small churches, especially those who may be one of only a few (or the only one) in their age group. Many young adults love their church deeply, but still find it hard to connect with other Christians in a similar life stage.

My first experiment in trying to respond to that was a day retreat in Cambridge, an opportunity for young adults to meet, connect, and simply enjoy time with peers. We called it Hub 22. I was able to host it thanks to the generosity of Westminster College and the Woolf Institute in providing a venue, catering and accommodation for our meet-up. It was a small start, but it felt like an important one: a reminder that community does not have to be limited to your local context, and that sometimes a change of setting helps people open up, talk honestly, and build friendships.

Following this first meet-up, the aim is to build on what we've begun using social media to create more opportunities for young Christians from small churches to meet and support one another.

If you are a young adult in a small church, or you know someone who might benefit from connecting, please get in touch by sending me an e-mail: intern@bucklandroadbaptist.church

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD

If I had to sum up what I have learnt from my first term as an intern in a small church, it would be this: inviting people in, making space, and trusting the Spirit, can mean a small church with a big heart can be a real blessing to the wider community it is a part of.

Ian has 12 years' teaching experience and, alongside serving as a Baptist intern at Buckland Road Baptist Church (BRBC), is studying Theology, Mission and Ministry at Westminster College, Cambridge.

To see how Baptists Together is supporting 18-35 year olds nationally, visit baptist.org.uk/18-35s

Connect with Matt Ceaser, 18-35s Co-ordinator, @baptistyoungleaders on Instagram

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“We have a common belief and love for God we would love to share with others”

Harefield Baptist Church, Middlesex by minister Val Pyper

Harefield Baptist Church is a friendly and welcoming fellowship, with a heart for Jesus Christ. We are based in Harefield, Middlesex, England.

The church runs a number of regular events aimed at involving the local community and supporting worthwhile causes. Our aim is to be an ‘active’ church bringing the love of God into everyday life.

Examples of this include a bereavement support group which brings folk together to share and support each other through grief (Ecclesiastes 3:4).

Our Chatterbox a group for under 5s is a safe place for children to play and for the adults to get support. The community hotspot is where folk from the village come and share hot soup and bread and have space to play board games and someone to talk to.

Crafty time is a group which meets to encourage others to learn new skills and support each other we have donation box which is then given to a charity chosen by the group. All the events we hold are free to the community.

The wonderful thing about Harefield Baptist Church is it is made up of individuals who either have a belief in Jesus Christ or are willing to have an open mind to find out who He is.

We exist to worship God and to enable those who don’t have that relationship to find Him also. We’re not around just for ourselves; we are here to help those outside the church to realise what they’re missing out on. We want people to experience for themselves the transforming love of God who can answer all our questions. Laughter is often heard in our

services and there is continued effort to provide something that all ages can find fun yet appropriate. We believe in acceptance and respect for everyone, acknowledging that God has a plan for each one of us. Our goal is to bring everyone we encounter into a true understanding of God so that people can encounter Jesus on a personal level.

You will find people from all walks of life at Harefield Baptist, and we are committed to making sure others are welcomed and accepted into our extended family. We are very different people, but we have a common belief and love for God that we would love to share with others.





Connecting in coastal communities

Barney Barron introduces Coastal Expression, a network helping to bring together those ministering on the margins in our coastal towns

My wife Sara and I have long had a sense of call to stand in solidarity with those who are often treated by society and systems as less important, less powerful or less worthy, whether that be socially, economically or politically. This led us in 2002 to move to Leigh Park, a low-income community and large housing estate near Portsmouth. We spent 16 formative years there, where we bought up our four children.

We came to a point however we were ready for a new adventure and we certainly felt God was unsettling us. Having been commissioned by Urban Expression to explore towns and cities along the south-coast of England I had something of an epiphany on a train journey through Cornwall.

It was the realisation that this beautiful county, where I had enjoyed many family holidays, had far more of a story to tell than the perceived idyll of coastal life. There is an undercurrent of isolation, economic injustice, addiction, limited employment opportunities, lack of housing/unsuitable accommodation for local people etc. This is coupled with the decline and closure of churches in coastal communities where anecdotally it seems many denominations are divesting resources from these more isolated communities to

invest in larger towns and cities inland. Increasingly old church buildings and chapels on the coast are being repurposed into private housing and holiday accommodation.

This epiphany led us to move to Looe a small fishing town in Cornwall in 2018.

I soon started to connect with other pioneers in coastal communities around the UK and although every story is unique, I was beginning to pick up significant common threads. I also noticed while there were other networks supporting mission in rural and urban contexts, there wasn't anything that I was aware of supporting coastal pioneers. As a result, there was a feeling of general isolation and lack of connection with those who could resonate with the unique challenges and opportunities of incarnational ministry in coastal areas.

Coastal Expression was formed. There are now 80 people from around the UK on our mailing list, 30 of whom are regularly connecting, encouraging, learning from and praying for one another. We are spread across the UK with a creative variety and means of embodying and sharing the good news.



COASTAL PIONEERS

Sandra and Tony are Baptist pioneers in Jaywick, Essex. According to statistics Jaywick is the most economically deprived ward in the country. Sandra and Tony are not there to plant a church or start a project but to be present in love and solidarity with their community. What they have discovered is a community that certainly has its challenges but is so much more than its statistics.

Ocean Church was innovated and is led by John Good, a Baptist pioneer in Poole, Dorset. They are opening up opportunities for people to explore faith through fun, food and using nature to explore the Christian faith. You will usually find them gathering outside by the water.

Esther Day based in Lowestoft trained as a Baptist pioneer through the Light College. Esther offers creativity, wholeness and wellbeing rooted in Christian faith.

Graham is a Baptist minister who retrained as a barber to help fund his pioneer ministry in Hartlepool. "I've been a Baptist minister for more than 25 years but I'm having some of my most substantial and valuable times of ministry since I started barbering three years ago," he says. "It's nowhere near a church building or gathering, but it most definitely is ministry."

COULD IT BE MAGIC?

It isn't just about the activities being hosted by the pioneers, it is most importantly the relationships being made. Many of the coastal pioneers have joined sea swimming groups which often have a very deep sense of community. My wife recently met a lady sea swimming whom she'd never met before. The lady told her of some "magic" she had experienced. When she was staying on a campsite, she had told the owners in conversation of a problem she had with a frozen shoulder.

The site owner asked if she could pray for her and she agreed. The lady experienced the discomfort lifting and movement returned to her shoulder. She was perplexed as she never experienced anything like it before, but her husband and friend were cynical. When she shared her story with Sara and found she affirmed her experience, she wanted to know more and asked if Sara would stay in contact so they could meet again.

ENGAGING WITH 'THE SPIRITUALLY OPEN'

There are many different and exciting stories of God at work as we connect with people in coastal communities. While these pioneering activities and shapes of community might be different, the common thread is they are connecting with and engaging people who are often spiritually open but probably wouldn't, for a whole host of reasons, enter a church building.

And Coastal Expression is helping us. We are grateful for the prayerful and financial support given to us by the Mission Forum Grants Committee that has made it possible to develop and grow Coastal Expression.

Barney Barron is an experienced Baptist pioneer who has planted and revitalised churches, founded youth and community charities, and built networks to support pioneers. He is a Baptists Together Pioneer Ambassador

Photo | Hannah FH | Unsplash





“Young people are wanting to engage and ask questions”

Churches in Salisbury, Wiltshire, were surprised – and delighted – when 100 participants signed up for their Youth Alpha Course. Interview with Hannah Giles

The sessions saw the predominantly secondary school aged children grow in their knowledge of Jesus, take more ownership of their faith, and develop friendships with their peers across the city.

“We were hoping for around 40, possibly 50,” says Hannah Giles, the Youth and Families Worker at Salisbury Baptist Church. “But in the last week or so before starting, numbers went up significantly.”

“We wondered if we had the space. It was logistically challenging and complex, but by God’s grace and by a fantastic team of volunteers from our churches we got into our stride, and we were delighted with how it all went.”

“We discovered our young people are wanting to engage and ask questions while getting closer to Jesus - and our Youth Alpha provided a safe space for this to happen.”

ECUMENICAL COLLABORATION, AND THE INITIAL IDEA

The sessions came about following the regular meetings of youth workers in the city. The Youth Alpha materials had been recently refreshed, and Hannah and Sophie Stokes, from St Francis and Hope Church, felt passionate about running the revamped course.

They chose the autumn term and were joined by Georg Knights, the newly appointed youth worker from St Paul’s Church.

The course was advertised among the children and young people at the each of the churches, alongside leaflet dropping in Salisbury city centre.

The sessions were held each Sunday evening at Salisbury Baptist Church. Around 85 per cent of the participants were connected to a church, though a significant number were not regular attenders. Several more were new to faith, coming to the course via an invite from a friend, or the leaflets. Ages ranged from Year 6 to Year 13.

Wider church support was crucial. A group of helpers were keen to make the course a reality, ranging from young people acting as table leads, cooking, or being part of a prayer team that met on Zoom while the sessions were happening.

Hannah says: “All our churches run the adult Alpha. They want to encourage people to ask questions, and to seek Jesus through that space, so they were really up for supporting us and doing it collaboratively.”

FOOD, VIDEOS AND BRILLIANT CONVERSATION

Hannah and the team assigned the young people to tables, according to age. They were also mindful of mixing people up from different churches, so new friendships could be made. The tables remained the same throughout the 10-week course to build consistency and develop relationships.

Hannah and Sophie hosted, and every week a different young person would share their own testimony: the things they loved about going to church and being part of that community; how being a Christian has affected their life; and how does God play a role in what they do? These included people from the Bridge Youth Project, a local youth charity which specialises in school chaplaincy.

Participants ate a meal together each week, prepared by a group of volunteers from the churches. The Alpha Course material was shown, and discussions followed around the tables.

“We found the videos were brilliant in just engaging conversation, and the reflections the young people came out with were also brilliant,” says Hannah.

“You can really see they do think about their faith and deep questions. What is our purpose? Why does God do this? They have so many questions.”

Worship music and prayer were introduced part way through the course.

The sessions would see a 90 per cent retention rate.

“They’ve just loved the friendships they’ve made,” says Hannah. “It’s really helped them just knowing there are other people who are seeking, who have the same questions or have a faith in Jesus. It’s given them courage.”

“And many of the young people said the worship really helped and the food was ‘banging.’”

“MANY SAW A BREAKTHROUGH” - RESPONSE AND FEEDBACK

With so many of the participants committing to the full course, many developed the confidence to take ownership of their faith for the first time, says Hannah. “They are taken to church by their family, and here they were asking: ‘Actually, do I truly believe in those things?’

“And for many, you saw that kind of breakthrough. You could see them thinking: ‘This is the point where I decide that I’m coming, because I believe this is true.’ They are now feeling empowered in that.”

Hannah, Sophie and Georg carried out a questionnaire following the course. Sixty per cent said they learnt ‘much more’ about Jesus, while 30 per cent said a little.

The sense of belonging and being in a safe place was a key feature, and developing friendships was vital.

NEXT STEPS

Hannah and her fellow organisers have looked at ways to continue the momentum into 2026.

Citywide youth worship nights are being held on the first Sunday of the month, aiming to equip young people to lead and participate in worship. The young people have loved gathering again and seeing friends from other churches. Youth discipleship groups are running collaboratively, with different nights to accommodate various schedules and provide more opportunities for the teenagers to go deeper in their faith.

In time, another Youth Alpha will run. “They’re eager to get other young people to come along because of the experience they’ve had,” says Hannah.

“Our vision has always been to enable them to encounter Jesus, deepen their understanding and for them to feel confident to share their faith. We felt this happened throughout, and we would value prayer as we take our next steps.”

For more on Youth Alpha, visit: alpha.org.uk/youth





Entwined – Life with Jesus in a changing climate

The Holy Spirit is drawing people with a heart for climate justice towards Jesus, writes Dave Gregory, convenor of the Baptist Union Environment Network

THIS IS WHY WE'RE CREATING A NEW DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCE THAT WEAVES IN A BIBLICAL VISION OF SHARING IN GOD'S LOVE OF CREATION

Perhaps like me, you've been hearing lots of stories about people just turning up at church. They may have had little contact with the Christian way of life previously, but for whatever reason they have a sense of wanting something more in life.

Maybe new folk have been turning up in your church recently out of the blue. I had the joy of meeting someone like that recently. I had been invited to speak on Climate Justice at one of the larger churches in our Baptist network. At the end of the service, a young adult approached me. Six months before they had walked into the church on their own and gave themselves to the Lord.

It turned out that they – like many in their generation – were anxious about how climate change and the environmental crisis might erode their hope for the future. A few years before, they had been involved in the large climate demos in our towns and cities. What amazed them that day was that someone was speaking about how God shared their

passion for creation, both people and its creatures.

In this time of growing expectation and excitement over what God is doing in people's lives across the nation, I wonder how many people the Holy Spirit is drawing towards Jesus who like the person I spoke has a heart for climate justice? Who, along with many anxieties people carry today, are fearful as to how climate change might affect their future?

Does our gospel speak about it? And how might we nurture discipleship that is fit to share in God's mission in the changing climate of the 21st century?

Entwined, a collaboration between BUEN – the Baptist Union Environment Network and

YART – the Baptists Together Young Adult Round Table – looks to meet this challenge. It aims to widen the discipleship path we envision people towards as they follow Jesus. From one shaped by a personal relationship with God through Jesus and sharing in a local church's life and mission, to one that, alongside these vital aspects of the gospel, weaves in a Biblical vision of sharing in God's love of creation.

Funded by a Mission Forum grant, *Entwined* will be a fresh approach to inviting people discover life shared with Jesus in the early 21st century. Among its fragmented relationships with self, others, and creation, it will nurture a following of Jesus that brings healing and wholeness to each of these.



In ten sessions, each with a short, visually attractive film produced by the Fuelcast, *Entwined* will take people on a journey through the story of the Bible, from creation to the incarnation and the events of Easter. Every third session will be set in an outdoor setting, resonating with many people finding that nature connection improves their sense of mental well-being, along with the opportunity to re-discover the value and wonder of creation, and through, it the wonder of the creator.

There will be 'So What' moments too that invite and challenge people to express God's love and life in practical ways, looking to bring healing and wholeness to self, others and creation.

The aim is to launch *Entwined* at the Baptist Assembly in May 2027. Ahead of the launch, we are seeking churches to pilot the material in autumn 2026, providing vital feedback on how the course helps participants follow Jesus. Our goal is to invite people of all generations to place their faith in Christ and embrace

a 'Whole Earth Discipleship'—one that reflects God's purpose to 'reconcile to himself all things... making peace by the blood of his cross' (Col 1:20).

To find out more about *Entwined*, drop into the BUEN stand in the Network Zone of the Baptist Assembly in Harrogate, or contact BUEN at BUEnvNet@outlook.com

Baptist minister Dave Gregory is the Convenor of the Baptist Union Environment Network (BUEN)

HOW MIGHT WE NURTURE A DISCIPLESHIP FIT TO SHARE IN GOD'S MISSION WITHIN THE CHANGING CLIMATE OF THE 21ST CENTURY?



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SLOW WISDOM

IN THE BAPTIST CHURCH

Are you looking for a way to help your church in discernment? Consider using the *Slow Wisdom* video course, writes Ruth Moriarty

How was your last church meeting? I wonder did the long-running disagreement about the car park get resolved? Did the same person question the format of the minutes again? Did you reach your quorum and how many members turned up?

For too long, Baptist church meetings have been known to be either difficult, dull or poorly attended.

And yet, from researching our Baptist practice of gathering together to discern as members of the body of Christ, I have

seen a way of discerning that is different and might help us to change. *Slow Wisdom* recognises the reality of church meetings but also calls us to reflect on the purpose of discernment and how we might be genuinely open to the work of the Holy Spirit among us as we discern God's purposes for his church and his world.

The marks of *Slow Wisdom* are slowness, prayer, listening, hearing, consensus agreement and prophetic participation. The *Slow Wisdom* course is one way to share part of Baptist theology and practice at the church meeting with existing and new members alike.

In the course, there are five videos and a course guide creating a free training session for your ministry context.

IT EXPLORES:

The Experience of discernment

Biblical principles and history of Baptists

Slow wisdom – six marks of discernment

Embodied Christian practical wisdom

Practical ways forward for the Baptist church

You could use it at your church, in home group or with a group of ministers. Each video is about 10 minutes long, and ends with a question for further reflection and discussion. It is designed to facilitate a half day training course or it can be used over five weeks in a small group.

The videos and course guide are available at baptist.org/slowwisdom

In addition to the course, the *Slow Wisdom* book is an in-depth analysis of Baptist discernment. The videos link to the book for further information on how Baptists can discern the mind of Christ together. It is available through the Baptists Together online bookshop.

HOW AND WHY I CREATED THE COURSE

I'm a Baptist minister at Christ Church New Southgate and Friern Barnet and a research associate for the Centre of Baptist Studies at Regent's Park College. *Slow wisdom* is the result of my doctoral research at the University of Chester on the church meeting. My aim was to create actionable research for local churches, not a dust-gathering report. This informed my decision to self-publish through Amazon (print and ebook) and to create a free online video resource enabling the research to be as accessible as possible to our Union.

My prayer is that *Slow Wisdom* will renew the church meeting, so we might build the kingdom of God together as churches and honour the Spirit as he speaks through each of us in the gathered body of Christ, the Baptist church.

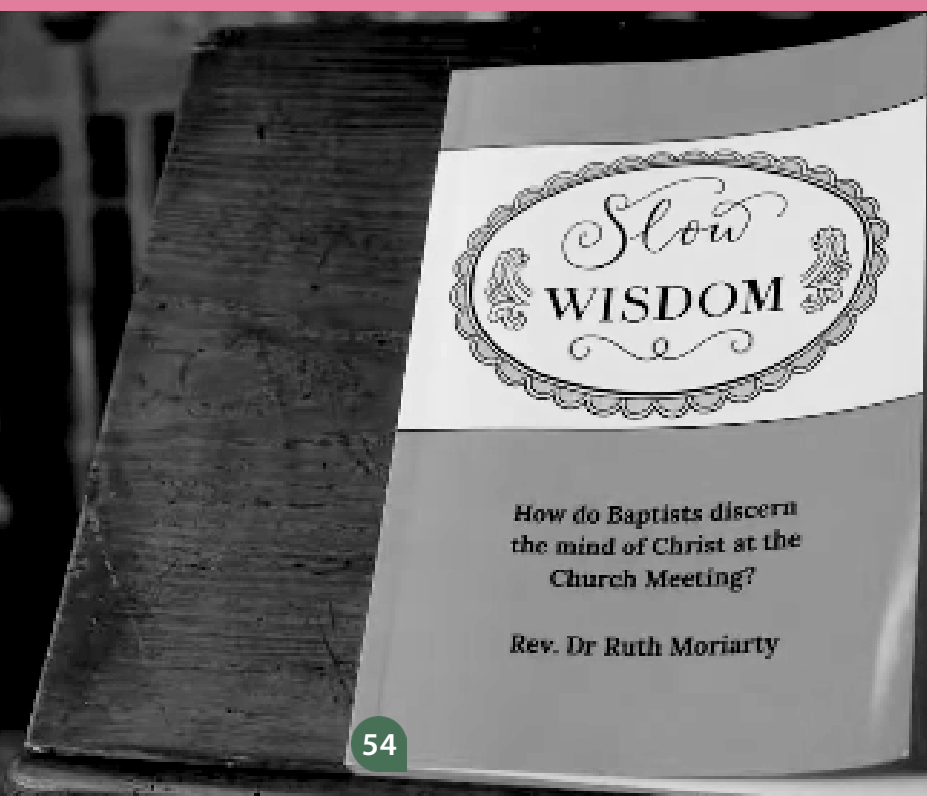
THE VIDEOS

The videos were filmed at Christ Church New Southgate and Friern Barnet Baptist/URC with members and local minister Martin Allen.

Each person spoke the words of participants in this qualitative research:

'Desmond' Martin Allen
'Toyin' Patricia Balogun
'Fiona' Diana Bensted
'Nell' Lynda Eade
'Matthew' Roger Oram &
'Daniel' Curtis Valentine.

The films were created by *Fuelcast* and generously funded by *London Baptists and Southern Counties Baptist Association*.



HOW CHURCHES ARE ALREADY RESPONDING TO SLOW WISDOM

"Slow Wisdom came at just the right time for us. As a church in transition, with many big decisions to make, the material gave us practical tools we could use immediately in our church meetings. It helped us re-discover the significance of church meetings within the Baptist tradition and find ways to communicate that well to our diverse congregation."

The Revd Moises Mendoza, Crofton Baptist Church

"Rooted in detailed practical research, scripture and Baptist principles, Slow Wisdom will inspire any reader to re-discover the church meeting as a beautiful and radical opportunity to discern the heart and mind of Christ."

The Revd Dr Craig Gardiner, Cardiff Baptist College

"Slow Wisdom helped us to reconsider the importance of placing Spirit-led discernment at the heart of our church meetings and how to find genuine unity in our diversity as God's people."

The Revd Carl Smethurst, SWBA Regional Minister

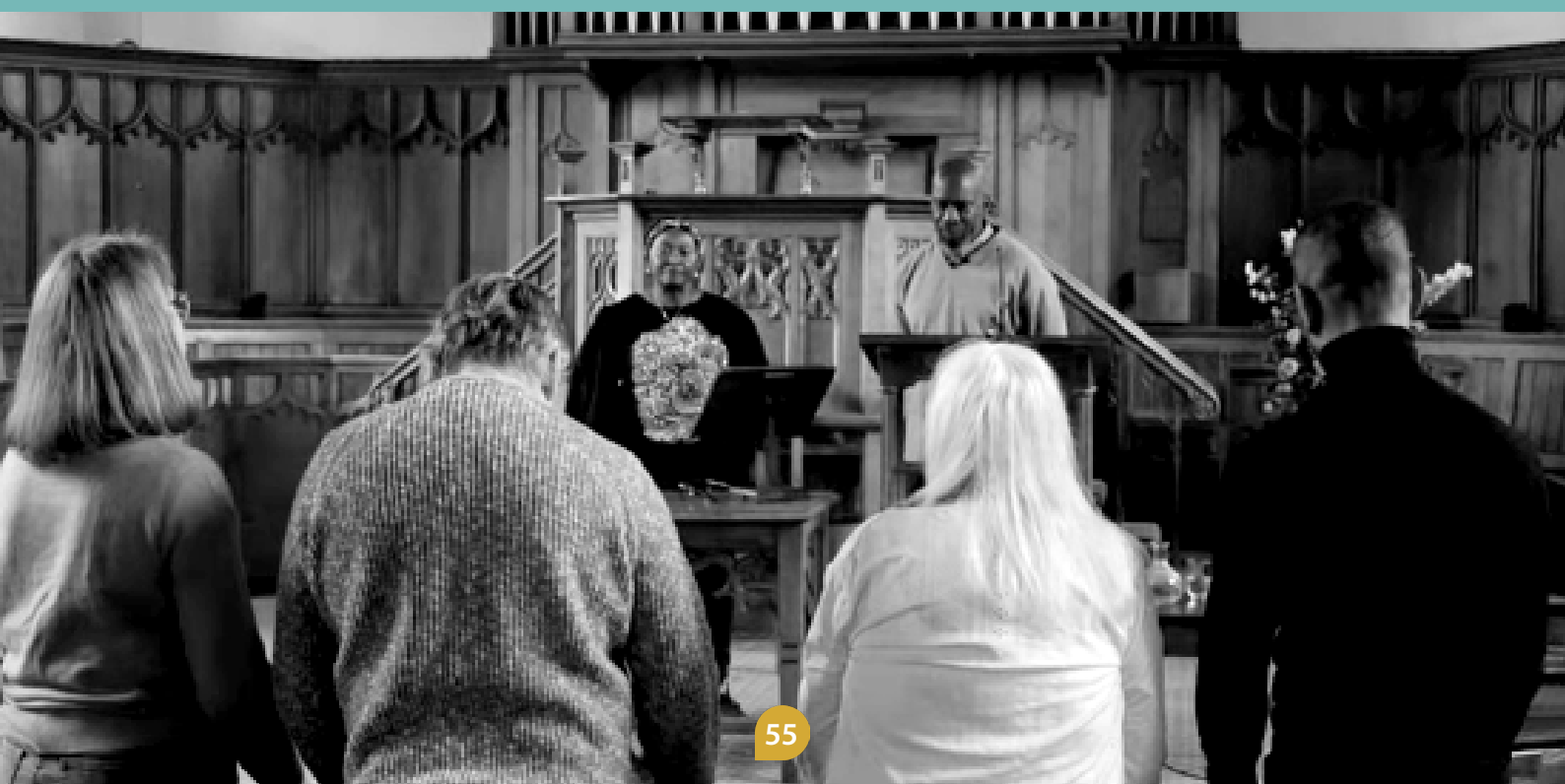
"THE MARKS OF SLOW WISDOM ARE: SLOWNESS PRAYER LISTENING HEARING CONSENSUS AGREEMENT & PROPHETIC PARTICIPATION"



Ruth Moriarty is the minister of Christ Church New Southgate and Friern Barnet Baptist and URC, London.

Ruth completed a DProf in Practical Theology at the University of Chester, in which her qualitative research explored the practice of discernment in Baptist churches.

From this research she created Slow Wisdom, a discernment training resource for churches. Access the Slow Wisdom video resource at: baptist.org.uk/slowwisdom



RESOURCES



FUNDING MISSION

Need extra funds to support your mission? Baptist Insurance has its own grant scheme, and has supported many Baptist churches. Find out what it supports and other church stories here: baptist-insurance.co.uk/grants

Baptist Insurance also provides a list of grant funders for churches - this list has been assembled by researching and cross-checking multiple lists of funds that are currently available. All funders on this list are open to churches.

Access the list here: bit.ly/bifunders

LONDON CITY MISSION

Resources to help build up Christians for urban mission. Features stories, podcasts, blogs, how to guides and more. Guides include '10 ways to build gospel bridges into your community' and 'How to share your testimony' lcm.org.uk/resources



PROXIMITY HUB

A free resource hub for churches, leaders and anyone working in urban ministry and mission. Tools include a mission mapping resource – get to know your community better and plan how to impact it. It is part of the Message Trust. Baptist minister Tom Grant is the Head of Proximity. proximityhub.org

RURAL MINISTRIES

A growing network of rural churches, pioneers and practitioners. RM exists to 'inspire, empower, and support denominations, churches, pioneers, and those with just a glimmer of an idea who are called to live in rural communities across the UK.' ruralministries.org.uk





WHEN CHURCHES MERGE - A VISION FOR MISSION WHICH PUTS RELATIONSHIPS FIRST (INSTANT APOSTLE) By Manoj Raithatha

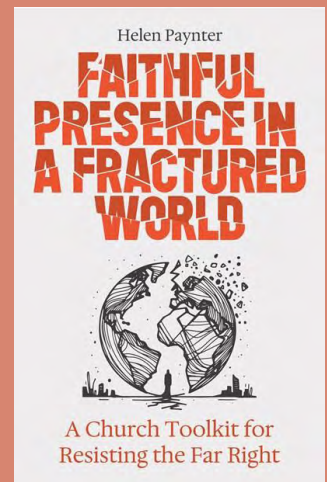
Following the merger of two Baptist churches in 2024, minister Manoj Raithatha has now written a book reflecting on all aspects of the process, including the covenant theology that underpinned it, as well as the practical realities.

It's not a book for those seeking to replicate our model, he writes - rather, it's written with the aim of 'inspiring churches to talk to one another and to see what might be possible when we are prepared to pray, envision and work together'.

FAITHFUL PRESENCE IN A FRACTURED WORLD - A CHURCH TOOLKIT FOR RESISTING THE FAR RIGHT By Helen Paynter

As Christian nationalism and far-right ideologies gain traction in society and within parts of the Church, this new volume of essays, edited by Baptist minister Helen Paynter, offers practical, theologically grounded tools to help local church leaders respond. Offers concrete and achievable steps ranging from youth engagement and interfaith dialogue to housing justice and digital literacy.

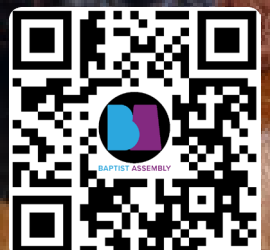
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BAPTIST ASSEMBLY



PRAYERS

BE SENT (REFLECTING ON JOHN 20:19-23) BY MIKE SHERBURN

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

(NRSV)

You are a lighthouse.
You are a guide, repeating the light.
You are unmissable, unmistakeable;
And you are mine.

You are the tree on top of a lonely hill.
The traffic light on a high pole.
The Angel of the North for the motorway traveller.
You are the Spinnaker Tower by the water.
And the pillar box by the village green.

You are not to blend in.
You are to stand tall and noticeable where You are.
Where I have placed you.
Where I have chosen you to be.
Because I have sent you.
And I didn't send you by accident.

This is your place. This is the place
I have put you.
You are where you are by my hand.
And I did not send you to go unnoticed.

The pillar box is everyday and ordinary.
And it goes unnoticed from day to day.
But it is not camouflaged.
It does not hide.
It will not be obscured or screened.

The traffic light on the high pole shines its light.
Day and night
Calling on, warning and stopping those
who would race by.

The tree on the hill calls to passers by
Inspires the walker to climb and see.

The Angel of the North spreads its wings in
greeting to every traveller.
The Spinnaker watches the passing ships and
echoes the shape of each
wind-blown sail.

You are not to blend in.
Repeat the light.
You are to call out, to greet, to inspire;
To echo every voyager.
To call on and warn and invite to pause.
This is what you are to do.
Be sent. Be placed. Be present.
This is what you are to do.

Mike Sherburn
is the minister of
Watchet Baptist Church.
Access his spoken word
poems on YouTube
@revmikeshernburn

Background | benzoix | freepik

BAPTISTS TOGETHER

NEWS

New insights into how people find faith

Reports showing how specific demographics find faith in Jesus have been released by the Evangelical Alliance (EA).

The reports are supplemental studies to the EA's Finding Jesus report (released in 2025), which analysed how adults in the UK are coming to Christian faith. The supplemental reports go deeper into four specific demographics: people aged 18–24 years old; people aged over 65s; those on lower incomes; and those from a non-Christian background. They highlight what first prompted them to become Christians, the challenges they faced, who helped them on their faith journey and life since. A fifth report compares male and female responses.

Project lead Rachael Heffer said "These five supplemental reports are a great tool for church and ministry leaders to better understand those coming to faith in their church and provide insight into how they can be discipled more effectively."

These were some of the observations in each group:

18-24 year olds

The report stated it was striking that 'the hospitality, generosity or service of Christians' was cited by 51 per cent (compared to 38 per cent overall). 'Despite their scepticism, when Christians are warm and generous, offer community and live out their faith, young adults are impressed

by that authenticity. Having grown up cynical of leadership and institutions, in a world of fake news, influencers and abuses of power, Gen Z are hungry for people who are sincere in wanting to live out the gospel of Jesus by blessing others.'

Those aged 65+

The over 65s were significantly more likely than other groups 'to struggle to understand the relevance of Jesus to their lives,' stated the report. This might be a response to their earlier experiences of church which 'inoculated' them against understanding the real significance of the gospel. Equally, having lived most of their adult life without Jesus, perhaps seeing the point in changing now is hard. 'This might well impact the way we choose to communicate the gospel to older people. What does Jesus mean to, have for, and ask of them in this later life stage?'

Those with lower incomes

This group of people (whose household income is less than £20,000) is diverse but 'showed higher levels of general spirituality' said the report. Asked to describe their beliefs before they decided to follow Jesus, 40 per cent of these participants were open to spiritual matters before exploring Christianity.

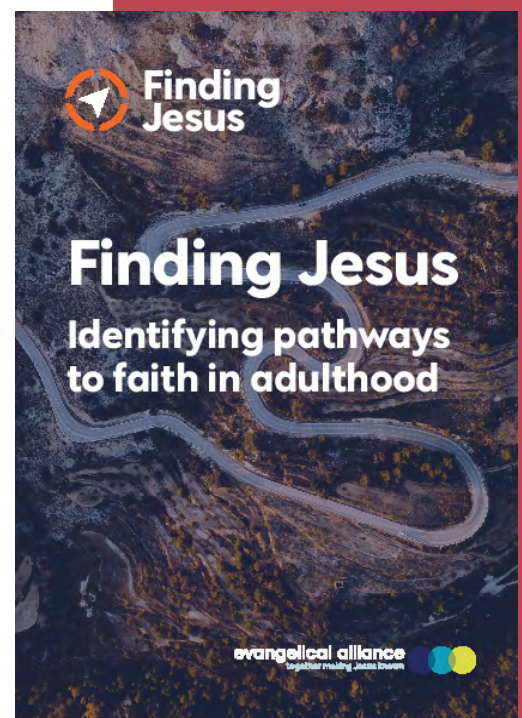
They also tended to have less historic contact with Christianity than other groups. Only a fifth

had Christian parents (compared to a third of the wider sample).

No Christian background

While not true for everyone, the majority came to faith quickly, 74 per cent reporting it had taken them a year or less to make a decision to follow Jesus once they started exploring Christian faith. 'It seems likely that rather than having to unpick a lot – as older participants had to – they were coming to the gospel with fresh eyes and quite quickly decided they believed in the claims of Jesus.'

To access both the Finding Jesus report and the supplemental studies, visit: eauk.org/resources/our-resources/reports/finding-jesus



Share your story of mission

Throughout this edition we have explored the incredible breadth of mission across Baptists Together. We've seen that mission isn't confined to a set program or specific equation; there truly is no secret formula. Instead, mission is found in the unique, often quiet ways that Jesus is at work through people like you, in places like yours.

But the stories in these pages are only a snapshot. To truly understand how the Spirit is moving across our Union, we need to hear from you. Included with this magazine, you will find a postcard. We are inviting every church, chaplaincy, and pioneer project to use this space to capture a snapshot of mission in their local context. We aren't looking for polished reports or impressive statistics.

We want the authentic, the experimental, and the fruit-bearing moments that point to how God is at work in our communities, and how you are joining in.

Mission thrives on encouragement. When we share our stories, we realise we aren't alone. We find new ideas, we offer hope to others, and we build a collective picture that is as diverse as the communities we serve. This is why we are making these stories the heartbeat of our time together at the Baptist Assembly this year.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Reflect: Use the prompts on the card (or the blank space) to jot down one aspect of mission that is currently bearing fruit, in the fullest, Galatians 5 meaning of the expression, or teaching you

something new.

Bring it to Harrogate: We want to see these cards—and the people behind them—onsite! Please bring your completed card with you to the Baptist Assembly this May.

Gather and Share: In Harrogate, there will be a dedicated space to display these cards, allowing us to literally walk among the stories of what God is doing across the length and breadth of our Union.

There is no formula—there is only the story of God at work among us.

We can't wait to see you, and your story, in Harrogate this May.

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BAPTISMS

BAPTISTS

Each month the *Baptist Times News Round-up* email shares stories of recent baptisms. This is both to celebrate how God is working among us, and encourage prayer for those newly baptised. Here is a snapshot of the messages and stories we have received in 2025/26:

Here at **Darlington Baptist Church**, County Durham, we celebrated the baptisms of Lucy, Sarah and Stuart alongside two of our youth Izzy and Josiah. This makes 50 baptisms in the last four years at DBC. We thank God for all He is doing in our midst.

Vicky and Barry Thompson, joint ministers

We are delighted to announce that we had three baptisms at **Spalding Baptist Church**, Lincolnshire on Sunday 2 November, which was also our church's 379th anniversary! Two of our young people, Alicia and Harry, along with Penny, gave wonderful and heartfelt testimonies, as they witnessed to their faith through the waters of baptism.

Diane Clay, secretary

It was a privilege to baptise Sue and Ruth into the membership of **West Craven Baptist Church**, Barnoldswick. Sue and Ruth both told their stories which included the significance of our Renew Wellbeing Café in their journey to faith and church membership.

This service came just two weeks after three other people made the commitment to join the church as members of our family – we are very encouraged. God is good!

Julie Bryan, minister

We were delighted to baptise Sammy and Jess at **Amphill Baptist Church**, Bedfordshire on 7 September and hear two very powerful, heart-warming testimonies from these young people. They spoke of God's loving kindness, how the Lord can draw people to faith all of His own doing, the reality and power of Jesus, the impact of the gospel and of the Holy Spirit, and God's good work of healing, friendship, encouragement and saving grace. Lots of teenage friends and family in church to witness and celebrate this. God is good!

It was a wonderful morning of joyful worship and an encouragement to the whole church family too.

Andrew Goldsmith, lead pastor

A succession of sevens - the call to baptism for Kristen and Sylvia - from **Tytherington Baptist Church**, Gloucestershire - began during a Bible study of Mark 7, discussing the significance of the number seven. The date was 7 July (month 7) and it was during the 7th hour of the evening. Fitting in baptism classes took us to a baptism date of 7 September (the ancient Roman month 7). Then it turned out that both Kristen and Sylvia's first marriage dates were 7 September.

We are so grateful to everyone who has been part of Kristen and Sylvia's journeys of faith, and to the church family at **Wotton Baptist Church** who hosted the service and heated their baptism!

Brian Allen, pastor, and Louisa Lockwood, minister-in-training

Brixham Baptist Church, Devon had the privilege of baptising two members of our congregation. Jean and Andrea have both been coming to our church for a number of years. They wanted to commit themselves more fully to Jesus. We shared their joy as they came out of the water.

Julia Andrews, secretary

A C R O S S

TOGETHER

As a new church, established in the **Ebbsfleet Garden City**, Kent (much of which is still under construction), we were thrilled to celebrate our first baptisms.

Five were baptised. Three of these were from one family, Delicia (13) was the first to express a desire to be baptised and as we explored this with her family, her Mum, Kata, and Dad, Greg, also decided they would like to be baptised too.

In addition to these, Jarred and Hannah were baptised. Hannah is part of the weekly coffee morning and then started to explore faith with us through our Sunday gatherings. Jarred has been coming along with his father who is part of our run group.

For me, this was a particular encouragement as a pioneer minister – these were the first baptisms I have led as a fruit of the ministry I have been involved in – I have waited 27 years for this!

Penny Marsh, minister

Roma was baptised at **Raglan Baptist Church**, South Wales, on Sunday 5 October.

Carol Soble, minister

We were delighted at **Carters Lane Baptist Church**, Halesowen, to baptise by sprinkling and receive into church membership our very good friend Maurice who, by his own admission, at 87 had come late to baptism! A joyful occasion shared by us all at the service.

Phil Turley, secretary

Please pray for Michelle who was baptised at **Earlsfield Baptist Church**, Wandsworth, south London in September. Her testimony spoke of God powerfully taking her from addiction to faith in Jesus and being filled with the Holy Spirit. Pray she will continue growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Keith Parr, minister

We were delighted at **New Whitemoor Baptist Church**, Nottingham, to baptise Chantelle and to hear her publicly share her testimony of how she came to faith, as well as her 102 year old grandad Marcus sharing with joy how he had seen God working in Chantelle's life. The church was full with friends and relatives joining to celebrate the occasion and to share together in a meal afterwards.

Rachel Boneham, secretary

At **Fleet Baptist Church** in North East Hampshire, Jay and Sam, aged 17 and 21, both shared in their testimony of how a friend had brought them along to Alpha and how it had transformed their lives.

Jay shared that although sometimes life is not easy, that 'with God all things are possible.' His friend had been baptised earlier this year and encouraged him to take this step and helped baptise him.

Sam's friend had invited him to come along to church but it wasn't till a year later when he came along to Alpha. During the away day he was prayed for, no expected electric shock, but joy, which has not left him. It was a packed church that witnessed their baptisms, with thanksgiving.

Ros Einchcomb, administrator

Maghull Baptist Church, in north Liverpool. Joe shared his testimony and was baptised before family, friends and church congregation.

John Brocken, secretary

If you would like to share news of a baptism in your church, please do so via: baptist.org.uk/btcontact

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