

Candidate Information

Further to our call for nominations for the position of Baptists Together President in 2027-28, and following the stipulations of our constitution, we have received three nominations and these are now offered for election. We are pleased to share with you here the information they have provided and ask you to prayerfully consider which candidate you believe should serve as Baptists Together President. The question for discernment is *who is God calling to be the President of our Union in the coming season?*

Mark Elder

Theme: Word and Spirit

My name is Mark Elder. I'm the Minister of Tarporley Chapel in Cheshire. I also have the privilege of serving as part of the national leadership team of Fresh Streams and as the moderator of the North West Baptist Association.

As I look back on my 30 years as a Baptist Minister I am struck by how, at this present cultural moment in our nation, there is a thirst for truth and authenticity among many, especially younger people, and a searching and curiosity for spiritual reality, the like of which I've not witnessed in my time in ministry. Could it be that the shallowness of consumerism, materialism and individualism are finally being seen for what they are. This requires discernment but is a matter for rejoicing and an opportunity and encouragement for those of us at the coal face of ministry. I continue to believe in the local church, with all its failings, not least our Baptist family, and my burden is that in this moment - some have called it a liminal moment - we will take up the challenge of both widening our scope of influence in our communities and going deeper in our faith. With that challenge of going both 'wider' and 'deeper' in mind, my Presidential theme, should you select me, is 'Word' and 'Spirit'. We need both.



Of course this emphasis of Word and Spirit is nothing new. I became a Christian as a 19-year old, in part through one of the Christian festivals led by the late David Watson, a pioneer of the charismatic movement. Some of you may remember David who was a hero of mine, and he had a saying which has stayed with me:

'All word and no Spirit and we dry up; all Spirit and no word and we blow up. But with both word and Spirit we grow up.'

It's an axiom that has forged my life and shaped my ministry since the beginning, not to mention movements like Fresh Streams (and Mainstream before it). I would love the opportunity as President to travel round our Baptist family and talk about how a renewed emphasis on both might play a greater part at the heart of our movement. In my video profile I say a bit more about what is on my heart regarding this theme. Do take a look.

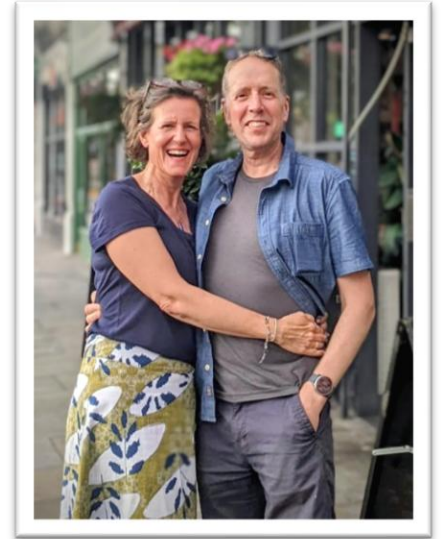
So, both 'Word' and 'Spirit'. That's my passion, that's what's on my heart, that's what I want to focus on and that will be my theme if you select me as your President.

I pray that God will speak to you in this process of discernment. Thank you so much for taking the time to read this.

Mairi and Graham McBain

Hello, we are Mairi and Graham McBain, Baptist Ministers and Community Pastors and members of Headland Baptist Church. We're serving in Hartlepool, in the beautiful North East of England. Our Presidency theme for 2027/28 is ***Beyond Sunday***—a call to recognise, support, and celebrate the many unique ways God is active through his Church across the whole week, in the everyday places where most of life is lived.

We currently serve as Community Pastors in Hartlepool, a role that gives us the privilege of seeing and experiencing God at work in everyday life amongst everyday people. This ministry is deeply fulfilling and genuinely exciting for us, where 'the ordinary becomes glorious, and the glorious is anything but ordinary'. Our calling is to be present in everyday spaces among people who are often overlooked and where hope can feel fragile. Day by day, we live among the community—listening attentively and joining in with what God is already doing. We've learned that Jesus has gone before us and is already at work in Hartlepool, as he is everywhere.



A distinctive part of this ministry is Graham's work as a qualified barber, alongside his roles as a Pastoral Supervisor and bike mechanic. Known locally as Graham The Barber (www.facebook.com/GrahamTheBarber55), the barber's chair has become a space of trust where conversations about faith, identity, and life flow naturally. While cutting hair, Graham is able to speak about Jesus and reflect something of his compassion and love.

Mairi has a ministry as a chaplain and advocate among the refugee and asylum-seeking community. As a regular volunteer at the local baby bank, she offers support, encouragement, and practical help.

In 2025, one of our highlights was partnering with Hartlepool Borough Council to offer free haircuts and hand massages in local beach huts. These spaces became gentle, sacred places where stories were shared, prayer was offered, and Christ's love was practically expressed.

Mairi also serves as Moderator of the Northern Baptist Association and following a career in HR is now a part-time Hospital Chaplain. We are also parents to three adult children, who continue to disciple us in what Christian faith looks like for Gen Z believers.

Our story began over 25 years ago in a Home Mission-funded church in Dagenham, Essex. We later served for seven years with BMS World Mission as church planters in Tirana, Albania, before ministering in Torquay, Devon, and Redhill, Surrey. Throughout our journey, our passion has been to help churches connect Sunday worship with the rest of the week and to move beyond traditional church walls.

Beyond Sunday is not a new programme or strategy for churches.

Beyond Sunday is about allowing the time and space to notice and celebrate where we can join in God's mission of love.

Our hope is to encourage and equip Baptists to live courageously and creatively as we step into the places where Jesus is already working.

We are Mairi and Graham McBain - excited to hear what's happening ***Beyond Sunday*** for you.

Gale Richards

A little bit about me and the ministry I am involved in...

I was born and raised in Birmingham, England, and I am a Baptist minister. I recently moved back to Birmingham having enjoyed living and ministering in Cambridgeshire for the last 9 years. I am currently serving in two roles at Regent's Park College.

The first of these roles is leading a research project that involves me working with groups of church members at six Baptist churches, in Birmingham. Together, we are exploring their respective church histories and identities, as an aid for mission, and the discipling of adults and young people in their contexts.

The second of these roles is a Placement Tutor for ministers on the Baptist formation pathway. I have the privilege of visiting these ministers in their placements, and reflecting with them on their practice, as they navigate the joys and challenges of ministry.

My proposed theme and hopes if elected President...

If elected President, my theme would be 'For such a time as this.' This is in response to the times we find ourselves living in, where significant numbers of adults and young people are identifying as spiritual, but not religious. At the same time many of them also have significant concerns about the way they perceive power and influence being used or mis-used by leaders in church and wider society.

I sense, that in these times, God is calling us as church members and leaders to go deeper in our understanding of how aspects of the Baptist way of being church might help more people come to, and grow in a committed Christian faith. This conviction in part stems from my own faith story.

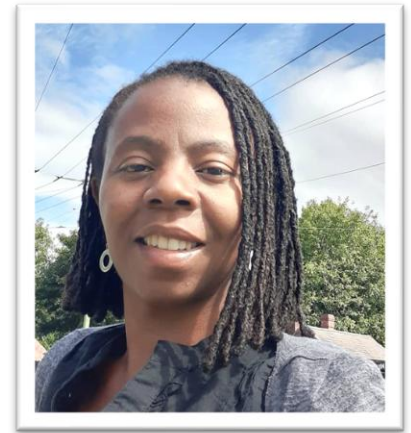
I came to faith as an adult in a Baptist church in London, in the year 2000, and I am certain that encountering the Baptist way of being church was a significant part of this. Back then, I was a young adult who identified as spiritual, but not religious. At the time, I too had major concerns about the use and abuse of power in everyday life. Then the concept of the Baptist way of being church that involved ordinary people in decision-making, got my attention, and so began my journey to and of faith as a committed Christian.

Twenty-six years on, I have served locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally in Baptist contexts and beyond, as a deacon and youth worker in a local Baptist church, as a Baptist chaplain at a university, as a local Baptist church minister, as a regional minister in a Baptist association, and today, as a Baptist college tutor and researcher.

I have found that in all of these different contexts, that as I have prayed, served, and journeyed with people from a range of backgrounds, that reflecting with them, on the significance of the founding Baptist figures being willing to be imprisoned and even die for the right to practice Baptist values – like believer's baptism, religious freedom, and congregations being able to search the scriptures for themselves, as they sought to discern the mind of Christ on matters – has impact.

This 400-plus years Baptist Christian faith story helps to communicate that Christian faith is about putting our hope in God, and God's ways, not pragmatically going along with the culture of the day.

Accordingly, if elected President, I would offer insights into how I sense God is calling us to recognise that in these times, it is important for us, to together focus on learning more about this 400-plus years Baptist faith story, sharing it with others in relevant and gracious ways, and seeking to live it out in 21st century-appropriate ways. I truly believe doing so will help us be more effective, in together living out our call to be united in engaging in God's mission, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.



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