

The magazine for the Baptist Union of Great Britain

Autumn 2026

TOGETHER

HERE AM I SEND ME

**A BAPTIST MINISTRY &
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
EDITION**



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A partnership that gives back.

01.

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Individual charities have little leverage when negotiating with energy suppliers. But when hundreds of organisations come together, everything changes. Suppliers compete harder, offer better terms and provide service levels they wouldn't extend to a single customer.

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02.

Where the savings go

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03.

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churches**



**£95,000 recovered
by checking Baptist
energy bills**



**That works out as
£300 per church on
average**



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CONTENTS

5 Editorial

9 The ministers God calls us to form

By Lee Johnson

13 A call for all & for some

By Ed Kaneen and
Craig Gardiner

16 What if God is calling me to ministry?

By Tim Fergusson and
Lee Johnson

18 Steps to Baptist ministry

20 Baptist Colleges

22 Nurturing a formation ecosystem

By Tim Fergusson

24 What is ministerial formation?

By Nike Adebajo

33 The value of a Baptist internship

36 What does it mean to be a healthy minister?

By Hayley Young

39 Growing leaders, migration & women in ministry

By Gale Richards

41 Young, bright & bold

By Wale Hudson-Roberts

44 Update from Project Violet

By Samantha Bowring

48 Baptist Regional Association contacts

49 Other training opportunities

51 Prayers



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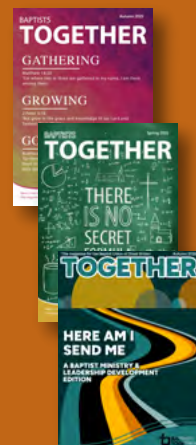
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God is on the move across our churches, but joining in with what He is doing requires workers who are ready for the harvest. As General Secretary Lynn Green highlights on p6, and Lee Johnson, Team Leader of the Ministries Team on p9, our Baptist movement is facing a crucial moment. Increased spiritual openness leading to more baptisms, growing opportunities for renewed discipleship, and a wave of upcoming ministerial retirements mean we need more women and men to respond to God's call to lead.

This edition of *Together* magazine highlights that reality. We explore what it means not only to step into accredited Baptist ministry, but to sustain a healthy, flourishing calling over the long haul: from navigating the practical pathways towards accreditation, to understanding the holistic nature of ministerial formation.

A recurring theme is how raising up leaders is a shared responsibility. Several pieces remind us that discerning calling is not an isolated task; it belongs to us all. What might happen if we each took personal responsibility to actively spot, name, and nurture the nascent gifts we see in those sitting in our pews and serving in our local communities?

Recognising potential is only the first step. It's important to back this up by creating

intentional opportunities for people to serve – giving emerging leaders space to practise, hone their skills, and receive gracious coaching along the way. For the full potential of God's church to be realised, every single member needs to play their part.

So whether you are quietly sensing a call to accredited ministry, reflecting on your own ongoing spiritual growth, or being challenged to encourage the gifts in someone else, may this edition enrich your discernment.

In response to God asking, "Whom shall I send?", the prophet Isaiah declared, "*Here am I, send me!*" What path lies before you today? How and where are you sensing God's call – and are you ready to follow it?

As Lynn reminds us, stepping out in faith and saying 'yes' to God is the adventure of a lifetime.

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WE SEE IN YOU...

Our movement needs more women and men who are ready to respond to God's call to be ministers and leaders - and this needs all of us to see and develop the gifts in others, writes General Secretary Lynn Green

I am praising the Lord that we continue to see people coming to faith right across the UK. God is building His church, and Baptists are part of that. People are finding faith in Jesus and being baptised; 3407 believers baptised in 2025! God is on the move and I want the whole of Baptists Together to be joining in with what He is doing because God's heart is, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord..." (Philippians 2:10&11)

In this season of greater spiritual openness there are huge opportunities for seeing renewed discipleship in our churches, for planting new Christian communities,

for holding out the word of life through chaplaincy and community ministry and for sharing the Gospel with children, young people and 18-35s. But the truth is that we are limited in our ability to join in with what God is doing. For a whole host of reasons our movement needs more women and men who are ready to respond to God's call to become ministers and leaders. Saying yes to God and stepping out in faith is the adventure of a lifetime. It is costly in so many ways and yet it is also such an awesome privilege to be able to be part of God's Kingdom purposes. There is eternal worth in Christian ministry and leadership!

In the face of such opportunity, we need to respond. But a response is required from not just a few of us; we all have a part to play.



"IN THOSE DAYS... THE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES WAS INCREASING..."

When I think about how we can respond, I am inspired by the passage from Acts 6.

As for us today, the passage opens with the opportunity that prompted a response.

'In those days... the number of disciples was increasing...'
(Acts 6:1)

The church was growing and the capacity of the current leadership in the early church was being challenged. The discipleship and care of the needy was distracting the Twelve from being able to give attention to prayer and the ministry of the word [vs.2]. It was not that certain tasks were more important than the others, but that the right gifts of leadership were needed in all areas so the church could grow.

You will notice that the Twelve gathered all the disciples together to respond to this situation [vs.2] and it was the task of the whole church to choose new leaders. As a result of their shared discernment the disciples identified those with exemplary Christian character. These leaders were full of faith, the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Leadership responsibility was then given to them and recognised among the church community.

The fruit of appointing more leaders was that the word of God spread and the number of disciples increased rapidly!

"ASK THE LORD OF THE HARVEST..."

So how can we all be involved in identifying and raising up new leaders?

First and foremost, we can all be praying about this. As Scripture encourages us, *'When [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*
(Matthew 9:36-38)



Let's ask God to stir hearts so more people step forward, to reveal the gifts hidden within our communities, and to give us the wisdom to nurture them.

SEEING THE CHARACTER AND CALLING IN OTHERS

Secondly, it is the role of us all to see and encourage Christian character and spiritual gifts in others. This is not just about leadership. For the full potential of God's church to be realised, everyone needs to play their

part. Our role is to encourage what we see now and trust God to grow and develop their gifting in the way he wishes. This starts by naming what we see in others. What might it mean if we each took responsibility to spot and name the giftings or potential we see in our fellow church members? Imagine a church in which it is common for people to say, 'We see in you... a minister; or an evangelist; a pioneer; a worship leader; a chaplain; a pastoral carer; a children's and youth worker...'

We have to back this up by creating opportunities to serve, so that those with nascent gifting have a chance to practise, grow in their skill, and receive constructive feedback and coaching. Perhaps even running an internship scheme may be possible? These can be very formative times for a person's broader sense of calling.

If I reflect back on my own story I can see how others encouraged me and gave me opportunities to discover more about my spiritual gifts. It all started by being involved in a peer group that led the Sunday evening youth fellowship. Later my husband and I were asked to be part of a small team leading the teenage Bible group on a Sunday morning. We learnt so much in those early days from our wonderful Scottish team leader and our faith was nurtured along the way.

It was that Scottish Christian lady and her husband who encouraged us to attend the Baptist World Youth Congress in Glasgow in 1988.

That Congress was completely eye opening and had a profound effect on us both. Along the way I started to do a little bit of preaching; my first sermon, aged 17, was nerve wracking to say the least! Then I was appointed as Outreach Deacon and subsequently, after quite a period of trying to make sense of God's call to me, I was commended for ministry by the church.

Equally, my husband has always seen his calling as being worked out through his employment and by serving the local church, as well as supporting me to be faithful to God's call. He has had so many opportunities for personal witness over the years with those he works with, together with being able to shape corporate social responsibility of the company where he can. Additionally, he has served as a small group leader, Alpha host and church secretary.

However it works out by God's grace, the important thing is we all have a role in seeing and encouraging Christian character and spiritual gifts in others.

ENCOURAGING MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP

Thirdly, I believe we need to be intentional about seeing and encouraging ministry and leadership. That is true for us personally, but also for leadership teams. Just imagine what the impact would be if every church leadership team had developing gifts and leadership regularly on their agenda and developed a plan to focus on this for at least the next three years.

In particular, our Associations and Colleges have a range of opportunities for developing ministry and leadership. Most of us are aware our Colleges provide programmes that prepare men and women for accredited ministry. But the Colleges and Associations together also offer a range of local leader training to help those seeking to be better preachers, pastors, community chaplains, children and youth workers, or even better leadership teams.

So, the question is this: Who might benefit from training? You? Someone in your church? Your whole leadership team? How can you 'fan into flame the gift of God' that is within you and those around you? (2 Timothy 1:6)

How, for that matter, might you support those who choose to train – in prayer, in finance, in encouragement?

If you want to explore the options for training and spiritual formation offered by Baptists Together, please speak to your Regional Minister.

'THE FIELDS ARE RIPE'

In conclusion, we need to make room for God to speak and move among us, calling new leaders to commit their lives to following Him in ministry. We all need to nurture and

make room for Christlike leadership to grow and develop.

As we do this right across Baptists Together I am praying, like the Early Church, that we will see the number of disciples increase rapidly, to the glory of God.

'My food,' said Jesus, 'is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying, "It's still four months until harvest"? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest... Thus the saying "One sows and another reaps" is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labour.'
(John 4:34-3)



Lynn Green is the General Secretary of Baptists Together

THIS STARTS BY
NAMING WHAT WE
SEE IN OTHERS

The ministers GOD calls us to form

We are approaching a significant shift in our ministerial landscape due to impending retirements and increased demands, writes Lee Johnson.

In response, here is an introduction to a renewed vision for ministerial formation and leadership development across Baptists Together

If you speak to our Colleges or Associations, you'll hear a mixture of hope and concern. Hope, because God is still calling people into ministry, still transforming communities, still drawing people to Jesus – realities born out in the stats Lynn Green shared at Baptist Assembly in 2026. Concern, because we are in a time of transition. Many of our ministers are approaching

retirement; and the demands placed on leaders today are heavier, more complex, and more emotionally costly than perhaps they once were.

We need a renewed vision. Over the past year, the Ministries Team has been working on a fresh vision for ministerial formation and leadership development across Baptists Together. It's a vision shaped by prayer, by listening to others, and by the reality that around 250 ministers will retire or leave the accredited list for other reasons by the end of 2028. That's a significant shift in our ministerial landscape and if we do nothing, the impact on our churches will be felt for years to come.

Yet it also feels like we have reached a moment where recruiting more ministers, even if that is possible, is not enough. We need, dare I say it — more healthy ministers — women

and men who can lead from a place of emotional, spiritual, relational and even physical wellbeing. The introduction of Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) has gone some way towards fostering this. But it is time to go further. My recent vision document shared at Core Leadership Team suggests we need healthy leaders who 'exercise influence with integrity, resilience, and wisdom'. These values must be at the heart of those ministers we are seeking to form.

At the centre of the renewed vision is our shared identity. We are a people shaped by the Declaration of Principle, by congregational discernment under Christ, and by the belief that every person bears the image of God. At its best our identity should be lived out in covenantal relationships, mutual accountability, and a commitment to safeguarding and justice that reaches across

our whole family. In a broken world, this shared identity is not a luxury: it needs to be the anchor we all hold to.

The vision is shaped around four pillars: Formation, Identity, Mission and Justice. These aren't separate objectives; they need to be interwoven commitments that shape the kind of ministers God is calling us to form.

“”

BY THE END OF 2028, WE AIM TO SEE
360 NEW MINISTERS ACCREDITED,
RECOGNISED, OR ON THE PATHWAY

1

FORMATION

Formation is not about a three-year college programme; it is a lifelong journey. From the first sensing of a call to the final day of ministry, leaders need spaces to grow in wisdom, character and Christlikeness. The vision document describes this as 'an ecosystem of lifelong formation that cultivates healthy rhythms of discipleship, theological reflection, emotional resilience, spiritual maturity, and a deep commitment to justice, mercy, and humility.'

This vision for formation strengthens wellbeing and equips leaders to serve with integrity and joy.

2

IDENTITY

Identity flows from formation. As leaders grow and learn, they will be rooted more deeply in who we are as Baptists — a people committed to discernment, accountability, equity and the just treatment of all people.

This pillar reminds us that leadership is never a solo endeavour. It is always held within community.

3

MISSION

Mission is the outward expression of our identity. We seek to form leaders who can guide communities into gospel transformation. Our Declaration of Principle reminds us that we are all called 'to take part in the evangelisation of the world'.

We need leaders who can proclaim the good news of Jesus with clarity and compassion.

4

JUSTICE

Justice can never be seen as an optional extra. Justice is the mark of Christlike leadership. The vision document reminds us that we must be committed to forming 'just leaders who guide others toward Jesus through Christlike character, ethical practice, and a commitment to justice'. Justice is not established simply when a person is appointed to lead in this area, regionally or nationally. Nor will it grow through projects or statements initiated by the Specialist Teams. It will only emerge when all our leaders embed justice in their practice. Justice needs to be our culture.

We have sought to set measurable, aspirational goals for every pillar. These goals will stretch us, but I believe they reflect the scale of the moment we are in.

“ ” WE NEED MORE HEALTHY MINISTERS - WOMEN AND MEN WHO CAN LEAD FROM A PLACE OF EMOTIONAL, SPIRITUAL, RELATIONAL AND EVEN PHYSICAL WELLBEING

BY THE END OF 2028...

1 FORMATION GOALS

We aim to see 360 new ministers accredited, recognised, or on the pathway. With around 100 currently in training for either Accredited Ministry or Recognised Local Ministry, this means an average intake of 90 per year over the next three years.

We want to see 75 per cent of our accredited and recognised ministers engaging with Continued Ministerial Development.

2 IDENTITY GOAL

We want 75 per cent of accredited and recognised ministers to have engaged with at least one aspect of the wider life of Baptists Together in the previous year.

3 MISSION GOAL

We will have gathered and shared more than 100 new stories of gospel transformation — stories of baptisms, mission, justice initiatives, pioneering work and community impact. Stories that will help us to see where God is at work and inspire others to join in.

4 JUSTICE GOAL

100 per cent of accredited and recognised ministers would have completed 'Just Leadership' training, which we have begun to create. This is essential for building a culture where equity, safeguarding and integrity are non negotiable.

This vision matters because the health of our churches is inseparable from the health of our ministers and leaders. If we want communities that are safe, vibrant, mission shaped and rooted in Christ, then we need ministers and leaders who are safe, vibrant, mission shaped and rooted in Christ.

This vision matters because God is still calling people. The Spirit has not stopped stirring hearts. Our task is to create the kind of ecosystem where those who are called today can be heard, tested, nurtured and sustained.

This vision matters because the next few years will, in my view, shape the future of Baptist life in Britain. We can either drift into decline or step forward with courage, clarity and hope.

This vision is not the work of one person, team or office. It is a shared calling across our whole family — churches, Associations, Colleges, ministers, chaplains, pioneers, CYF (children, youth and families) workers, and all who serve in leadership.

If we commit to this together, we can grow not just more ministers, but healthier ministers. Leaders who are rooted in Christ, shaped by Scripture, accountable in community, courageous in mission, and committed to justice.

Leaders who can guide others toward Jesus.

Leaders who can help bring gospel transformation with integrity, wisdom and joy.



**Lee Johnson is
Ministries Team Leader
at Baptists Together**



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ABOUT HOW WE CAN EQUIP YOU
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A CALL FOR ALL & FOR SOME

As Baptists we believe in the theology of 'the priesthood of all believers'. But what exactly does that phrase mean - and where should the minister sit?

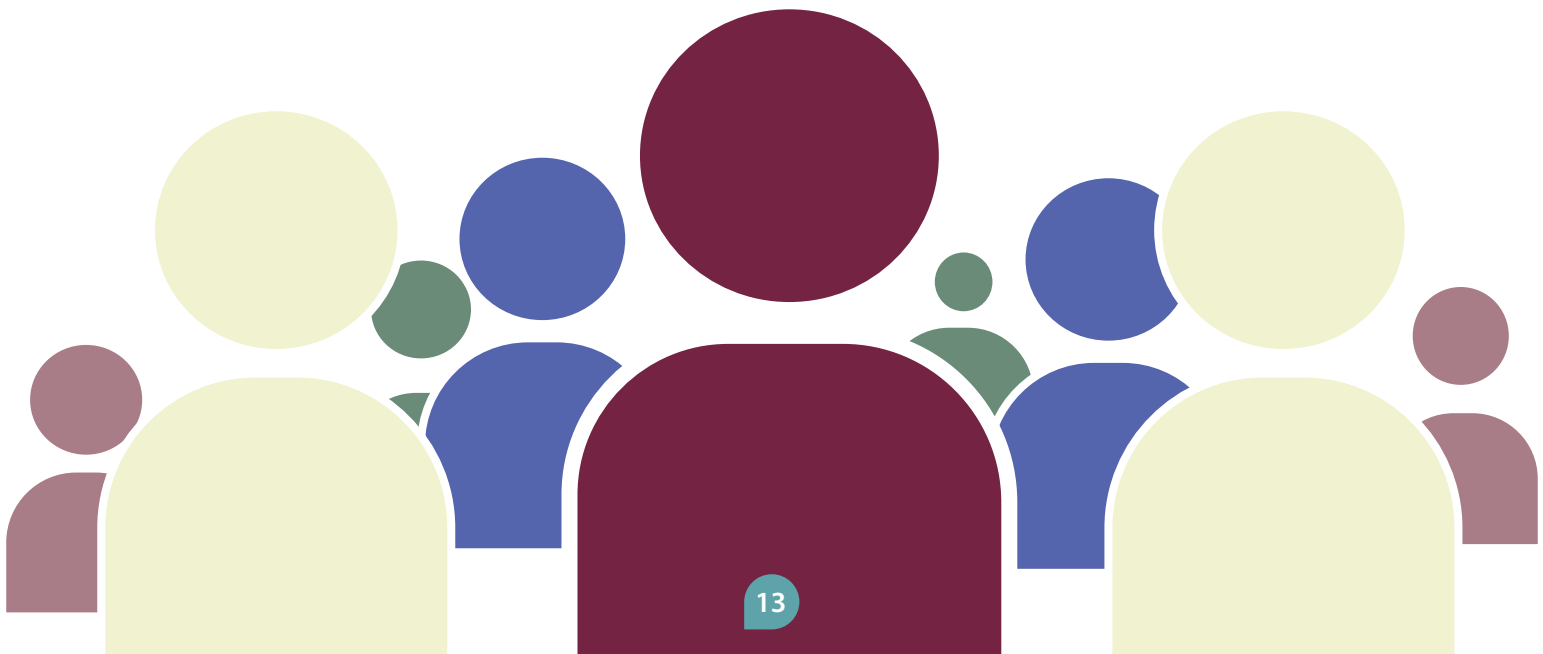
By Ed Kaneen & Craig Gardiner

I was recently speaking to a friend who recalled his childhood in a Baptist church in a very well-to-do area of town. He remembered asking why some worshippers sat in the balcony while others sat on the ground floor. The answer came back that those in the balcony were in service or domestics in the large houses nearby. Even as a small child, he felt the injustice of this 'two tier congregation'.

We might recoil at this today. But is there not something like it in the enduring distance between clergy and congregation? So, does God really intend a two-tier church? Is the 'call for all' the same as the 'call for some'? Baptists have traditionally said 'no', and have offered instead a theology of 'the priesthood of all believers'. But what exactly does that phrase mean? And where, we might ask, should the minister sit?

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

The 'priesthood of all believers' is one of our most cherished doctrines. One recent writer says that, 'There is no more basic belief to Baptists than the idea of the priesthood of the believers'. A dramatic overstatement, or an illustration of how important this doctrine has been to us?



Reformer Martin Luther was concerned to break down the distinction between a class of clergy (ordained as priests and popes in apostolic succession) and a class of laity (the rest of us). This distinction was anathema to Luther, 'all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office.' The argument was taken up by others, including the English Separatist and early Baptist leader John Smyth (c.1554–1612), and Baptists have been among its most committed custodians ever since.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD

The doctrine emerged chiefly from two New Testament books: 1 Peter (2:5, 9) and Revelation (1:6; 5:10), though we might also draw on Hebrews 10:19–25. Both borrow themes and images from the Old Testament, here alluding to a key text in Exodus 19:6. After the people have been rescued from slavery in Egypt, and as they are receiving the covenant on Mount Sinai, God declares, "*you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation*". Notice that God's word is spoken to a collective group of people. It is together that they bear the testimony of God's saving acts, and together they will witness to God's faithful love as they live out the Law. They are distinctive, in the sense that, like priests, they have a particular role of representation — to God and to the nations.

Yet clearly they are not all priests in the sense of serving

in the Tabernacle or Temple. They have not all been anointed, they do not all wear the vestments, and they are not all Aaron's sons (Exodus 28:1). Therefore, this 'priesthood of the nation' is a characteristic of their witness and worship, rather than a particular liturgical role. Joel Green makes the same point about the oft-quoted verses in 1 Peter, *'[the] emphasis is not on the priestly role of each believer but on the priestly identity of God's people. ... not ... within the community of believers, but ... in the world-at-large.'*

Therefore, like Old Testament Israel, it is God's new covenant people — The Church — that performs a priestly function in the world. But the New Testament takes this idea a step further. As Koester says about the texts in Revelation, 'What changes is that this priesthood is extended to the redeemed from every people and nation.' There is no longer an ethnic exclusivity to this priesthood, but it is extended to all through the work and gospel of Christ. If we may mix biblical metaphors, the church has a priestly identity precisely because it is the 'body of Christ', representing the presence and purpose of our 'Great High Priest' (Hebrews 4:14) in God's world.

All this may seem to have taken us a long way from what we typically mean by 'the priesthood of all believers', but it brings us closer to our Baptist Declaration of Principle (DoP): that Christ is the absolute authority ('Great High Priest'), and that every disciple is to bear witness ('a royal priesthood'). Martin Luther, following Augustine,

even spoke of the 'ordination' to this priesthood as baptism, 'whoever comes out of the water of baptism can boast that he [sic] is already consecrated priest, bishop, and pope'. This baptismal conviction sits at the heart of the DoP too.

THE MINISTRY OF SOME BELIEVERS

Embedded in the basis of our Union, then, is the 'priesthood of all believers'. Which raises the obvious question: what, then, is a 'minister'? If together we are 'priests', with a priestly 'ministry', what is the role for the 'minister' or 'pastor' or 'elder' or whatever term we prefer?

For Baptists there is no functional difference between a 'minister' and any other church member. In principle, any Christian could preach, preside at communion, baptise, visit the sick, or share their faith. Nor is there a status difference. A 'minister' is no more important among God's people than others, nor has a privileged access to God.

And yet the churches of the New Testament and the Baptist tradition have always set apart or appointed 'leaders' to provide oversight to a congregation and particular 'ministries'. Ephesians 4:11 is just one example. Early Baptists disagreed about whether such 'oversight' belonged to one church or extended across multiple churches — much as we distinguish Recognised Local Ministers and Accredited Ministers today.

But that we need such leadership is not in doubt. The word 'leader' is another matter.

THE SERVICE OF ALL MINISTERS

For some Baptists 'leader' can be a loaded term, and one that is generally avoided in the New Testament. Left unexamined it too readily conjures the authoritative man (often) who leads from the front. There is wisdom to be gained from modern thinking about leadership, but we are ill-advised to 'baptise' uncritically ideas that operate by a very different grammar than the way of Christ. Tellingly, the first Christians reached for a word drawn from Jesus' own teaching: *diakonia*, service rendered on behalf of another. 'Minister' is simply a translation of *diakonos*, a servant or go-between.

The question then, is not so much whether we have leaders, rather how they lead. In Mark 10:35–45 (and Luke 22) and John 13:2–17, Jesus turns leadership upside down compared to the existing 'models': it is to be marked by service, self-giving and sacrifice, on behalf of God. That does not mean ministers will never guide, teach or give focus to a church's life — but that they will do so in the likeness of the church's true leader, Christ the Lord.

THE MINISTRY OF SOME FOR THE MINISTRY OF ALL

It would be arrogant to think the church today no longer needs leaders, and ungrateful to reject the gift of ministers Christ gives to his church (see Ephesians 4:8, 11). We badly need those whom Christ calls

to serve as 'ministers', to train them in skills and form them in character, equip them, respect them, and enable them to serve to the fullness of their calling. But this ministry is derived from the ministry of Christ and the ministry of his Church. The 'priestly' witness of Christ's body is to be lived-out in schools, garages, care homes, shops, families, delivery vans, hairdressers, day centres, pubs, choirs and football clubs as well as in churches. Those called as 'ministers' enable this wider ministry of the church — teaching, encouraging, caring, praying and inspiring God's people who together share in Christ's gospel ministry of love to the world.

An imperfect parallel may help. I can apply a plaster to a graze. But I would be ill-advised to attempt open heart surgery. Someone trained for years in such operations is a different matter — and it's not just about technical skill. When a student becomes a doctor, they change identity. They don't become a different person, nor can they do anything with a greater ability than on the day before. But they are now authorised and recognised as a doctor — by others, and by themselves — and that, in time, will change who they are. The concerns of doctors become their concerns; the commitments of doctors, their commitments. Anyone can attend to a medical need, but not everyone is a doctor.

So it is with ministers. Those who are called, formed, trained and appointed (whether we name it 'ordination' or something else), grow into an identity as bearers of Christ's word and example. This takes nothing away from the ministry

of the whole body; it simply gives particular attention to ministry within the body.

THE WITNESS OF ALL BELIEVERS

In our present age of deepening division, the priesthood of all believers offers a powerful witness to a different way of being. In a two-tiered world, the church can offer a coming together of diversity: diverse classes, ethnicities, genders, nationalities, languages and whatever else divides — for we are all one in Christ Jesus. But this shared priesthood also needs the living testimony of those called to lead by Christ's example and teaching.

Jesus, it seems, would have been sitting in the balcony, and invites others to join him. Do you hear Christ's voice calling you? How will you respond?



Craig Gardiner is a Tutor in Christian Doctrine and College Chaplain at Cardiff Baptist College; and Ed Kaneen is the Principal of Cardiff Baptist College



WHAT IF GOD IS CALLING ME TO MINISTRY?

By Lee Johnson & Tim Fergusson

It often starts with a question. Not writing in the sky or an angelic visitation. Well, probably not, as for most it is just a question that will not quite leave them alone: 'Could God be calling me to ministry?'

Sometimes the question rises during prayer. Sometimes it comes while leading a Bible study, visiting someone in hospital, preaching for the first time, serving in a toddler group, listening to a neighbour, sharing faith with a group of unchurched friends. Sometimes it comes through someone else: 'Have you ever thought about Baptist ministry?'

Across Baptists Together, we believe every Christian is called to follow Jesus, serve his church and share in his mission. But some people sense a further call: to give time, energy and attention to the task of Christian ministry so that it becomes a way of being. That call needs to be listened to carefully, tested wisely and formed patiently.

Baptist churches are of course free to call whomever they believe God is calling to serve among them. And you can read elsewhere in this magazine that we would like to see a broad ecosystem of training for Baptist leaders

of all types. Yet we want churches and communities to have confidence that the women and men entrusted with spiritual oversight have been carefully tested and well prepared.

This is why Baptists Together offers two formal pathways to prepare those who sense the call to ministry. One leads to Accredited Ministry and the other to Recognised Local Ministry. Both are about formation, not simply training. They attend not only to skills and knowledge, but also to character, accountability, spiritual maturity and calling.

ACCREDITED MINISTERS

Accredited Baptist Ministers are commended for ministry across the whole of Baptists Together and to society at large. They may serve as church ministers, chaplains, pioneers, children's or youth ministers, or in other specialist roles.

Because they are commended for leadership and spiritual oversight across the wider Baptist family, their formation is rigorous. It normally takes three years full-time, or longer part-time, at one of our Baptist colleges.

This formation is offered in Manchester, Sheffield, Bristol, Cardiff, Oxford, Exeter or London. In some cases, aspects are delivered online. Students study for a diploma or degree in theology that is integrated into a programme of skill, character and spiritual development. They also gain practical ministry experience through a church, chaplaincy or pioneer placement. More than this, our colleges provide a nurturing and worshipping community in which to learn and grow.

- Three years formation
- Full-time or part-time
- Theological diploma or degree
- Extensive practice placement
- Formation in community
- Tutor support
- COMMENDED across BUGB

RECOGNISED LOCAL MINISTERS

Recognised Local Ministers are recognised for their ministry in a particular local setting. Their calling is rooted in one church, neighbourhood, chaplaincy, pioneering project or community context. They are 'ministers' because they are entrusted with spiritual oversight; 'local' because their calling is connected to a specific place; and 'recognised' because they have completed an established programme of preparation and testing.

The 'RLM' programme is accessed through the Regional Associations, who work in partnership with our colleges. It is lighter than for Accredited Ministry, though still serious and formative. It takes two years and is based around weekend or evening learning. It includes a foundational course of theology, participation in a spiritual formation group, mentoring, and hands on experience.

- Two years formation
- Weekend or evening
- Introduction to theology
- Learn in role
- Spiritual formation group
- Mentor support
- RECOGNISED for the local setting

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

If you wish to explore your sense of calling more:

1. Ask yourself which pathway is right? If your calling is towards a life of Baptist ministry, open to wherever God may send you within the wider Baptist family, Accredited Ministry may be the right route. If your calling is focused on the ministry you already exercise in a particular local setting, Recognised Local Ministry may fit better.
2. Speak about your thinking to people you trust. What do they see in you? What encouragement, or caution do they offer? Consider what they say prayerfully.
3. Contact your Regional Association. A Regional Minister (RM) will help you talk through your sense of calling and answer your questions. If you hope to be an Accredited Minister, it is well worth also having an early conversation with one or more of our colleges.
4. Apply! Your RM will guide you through the process. You will need a commendation from the church in which you are a member, and attend a regional Ministerial Recognition Committee, or MRC. Once commended, you either start training if aiming for RLM, or proceed to a formal conversation with a Baptist College for Accredited Ministry.

God is still calling people to Baptist ministry. Perhaps he is calling you – if so, may God give you courage to follow his call.

STEPS TO BAPTIST MINISTRY

EXPLORATION

Investigate more by:

- Praying • Reading Baptist guidance
- Seeking more experience • Working with a mentor
- Talking to friends • Considering practicalities
- Speaking to ministers and leaders • Visiting Baptist colleges
- Contacting your regional ministry team •

INKLING

Pay attention to:

- Your internal sense of calling
- Your existing roles in church
- Encouragement from others
- Prophetic words and scripture



DECISION

Choose between:

Accredited Ministry or Recognised Local Ministry

& indicate a preference for:

- Church Pastor
- Chaplain
- Pioneer
- Children's/Youth/Families' Minister
- Evangelist

**START
HERE**

MINISTRY

Receive recognition as:

- **Accredited Minister**
Commended to serve nationally and practising Continuing Ministerial Development

APPLICATION

Follow these stages in order:

1. Ministry application form
2. Commendation from home church
3. Ministerial Recognition Committee
4. College interview (Candidates for Accredited Ministry only)

PREPARATION

Start formation for either:

- Recognised Local Ministry: 2 year weekend or evening programme
- Accredited Ministry: 3 year immersive experience

MINISTRY

Receive recognition as:

- **Recognised Local Minister**
Equipped to serve locally and practising Continuing Ministerial Development

BAPTIST COLLEGES

Baptist Colleges prepare women and men for pastoral and missional leadership: they train the next generation of accredited Baptist ministers; they enable those wishing to specialise in chaplaincy, pioneering, evangelism and children, youth and families; they provide a broad range of courses to enhance the skills of local church leaders; they facilitate theological learning at every level from beginners' studies to doctorates; they offer day events, short courses and personal tutoring to support Continuing Ministerial Development.

Although the Colleges have their home in five cities – Manchester, Oxford, Bristol, Cardiff and Sheffield – training can also be accessed through college hubs in London and Exeter.

If you have any training requirement or question, the Colleges would love to hear from you. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with them directly. They will do all they can to make your learning possible.

BRISTOL BAPTIST COLLEGE

Principal: Revd Dr Peter Morden
The Promenade, Clifton Down,
Bristol, BS8 3NJ
Tel: 0117 946 7050
Website: bristol-baptist.ac.uk

CARDIFF BAPTIST COLLEGE

Principal: Revd Dr Ed Kaneen
54 Richmond Road, Cardiff,
CF2 3UR
Tel: 029 2025 6066
Website: cbc.cymru

LUTHER KING THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

Baptist Principal: Revd Dr Clara Rushbrook
Luther King House, Brighton Grove, Manchester, M14 5JP
Tel: 0161 224 6404
Website: lutherking.ac.uk

REGENT'S PARK COLLEGE

Vice-Principal: Revd Dr Anthony Clarke
Pusey Street, OXFORD, Oxfordshire, OX1 2LB
Tel: 01865 288120
Website: rpc.ox.ac.uk

ST HILD CENTRE FOR BAPTIST MINISTRY

Director: Revd Dr Nick Allan
Based at STC, Nairn Street, Sheffield, S10 1UL
Tel: 01924 481925
Website: sthild.org/baptist

LUTHER KING THEOLOGY COLLEGE MANCHESTER

CARDIFF BAPTIST COLLEGE

BRISTOL BAPTIST COLLEGE

EXETER HUB (BRISTOL)



WE HAVE FIVE
BAPTIST COLLEGES

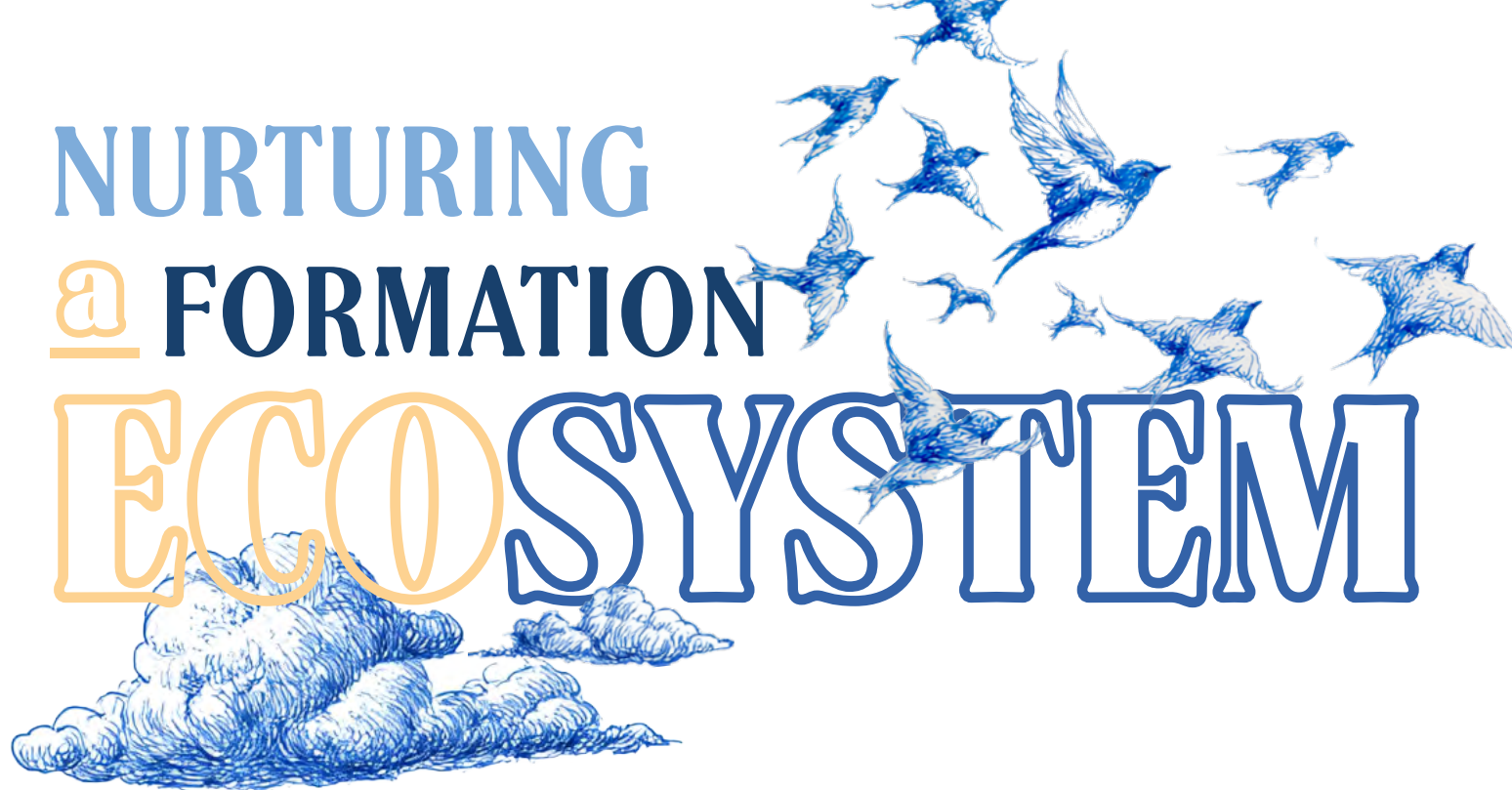
BRISTOL BAPTIST COLLEGE HAS
HUBS IN EXETER & LONDON

ST HILD CENTRE FOR
BAPTIST MINISTRY
SHEFFIELD

REGENT'S PARK
COLLEGE OXFORD

LONDON HUB
(BRISTOL)

For an overview of
Baptist training, visit
baptist.org.uk/trainingoverview



NURTURING @ FORMATION ECOSYSTEM

When it comes to Baptist church leadership and ministry, we need a whole landscape of opportunities for learning and development.

By Tim Fergusson

I enjoy bicycles. Building them. Riding them. Even cleaning them. (One or two people may have described me as a bit of a bore on the subject – I couldn't possibly say.) But when it comes to maintenance, YouTube is my friend. Watch a video, grab the allen keys and give it a go. I'm no expert, obviously. I haven't trained as a professional mechanic. But if I get stuck, there are cycling friends to ask, online manuals to read, short courses to join, advice to be gleaned from the local bike shop. Today, if you are a cyclist – or a gardener, baker, or photographer – there are so many ways to learn.

When it comes to church leadership and ministry, **we need many ways to learn.** Actually,

we need a whole landscape of opportunities for learning and development - **a formation ecosystem.**

If ministry and church leadership are changing – as they surely are – then our approach to learning must change too. We need more than a single route, a single institution, or a single stage of training. We need a whole landscape of formation with many ways to learn, many people to learn from, and many opportunities for leaders to grow in calling, character and competence.

Elsewhere in this magazine you can read about the vision for **360 more women and men** starting or completing formation for accredited and recognised ministry by the end of 2028.

To realise this, we should firstly continue to commend training and formation for accredited ministry – we need our pro mechanics. Churches benefit from ministers who have

been deeply shaped through theological study, spiritual formation and the rigour of college-based training – expert practitioners for whom ministry has become second nature. To this end, churches can help by identifying those with a calling and, if means allow, by financial support to ministers-in-training during their immersive formation at a Baptist College.

But we cannot depend on accredited ministers alone. And in any case, many churches cannot at present find or afford an accredited minister. Not only this, but we are Baptists, so leadership *ought* to be shared. Deacons, elders, worship leaders, children's workers, evangelism leaders, community chaplains, small group leaders and many others carry real spiritual responsibility. If they are helping to shape the life, mission and discipleship of the church, then they too need opportunities to grow. This is why the idea of an ecosystem is so compelling.

An ecosystem is not built around one plant, one stream or one source of nourishment. It is a living environment in which many parts contribute to the health of the whole. In the same way, Baptist formation should be a shared environment in which churches, colleges, associations, national structures and experienced practitioners (not least our ministers) all play their part.

The point is not that every leader takes the same path, but that every leader has a path – one that is identifiable and accessible. Some formation will happen through formal study. Some will happen through mentoring, supervision, spiritual direction, local training, peer learning, short courses, learning communities, reading, conversation and on-the-job reflective practice.

This variety of means of formation is important because formation is not simply the acquisition of information or techniques. Ministry is not a skill learned once and then possessed forever. It is a way of being that must be continually inhabited and grown into. It is why we expect our accredited and recognised ministers to practise Continuing Ministerial Development. Ministers and indeed all leaders need to keep asking: *Who is shaping me? From whom am I learning? Where am I being stretched? How am I becoming more faithful, more Christlike?*

Likewise, our churches and Baptist organisations need to ask: *How are we helping this culture of formation to flourish? Are we collaborating or competing? Are we sharing or reinventing resources? Are we equipping the whole people of God for works of service?*

And our existing ministers can ask about others: *Who am I noticing has gifts and calling? How can I give emerging leaders opportunities to practise? What is my role in the training, coaching and mentoring of those at an earlier stage of development?*

A formation ecosystem may help us move beyond anxiety about what we lack and towards shared responsibility for what we can become.

We can bemoan the shortage of ministers, or we can nurture and equip many more people for local leadership. We can assume that development is mainly for those who are formally trained and accredited,

or we can affirm that every type of church leader deserves intentional formation. We can treat training as occasional and optional, or we can make lifelong learning part of the culture of discipleship.

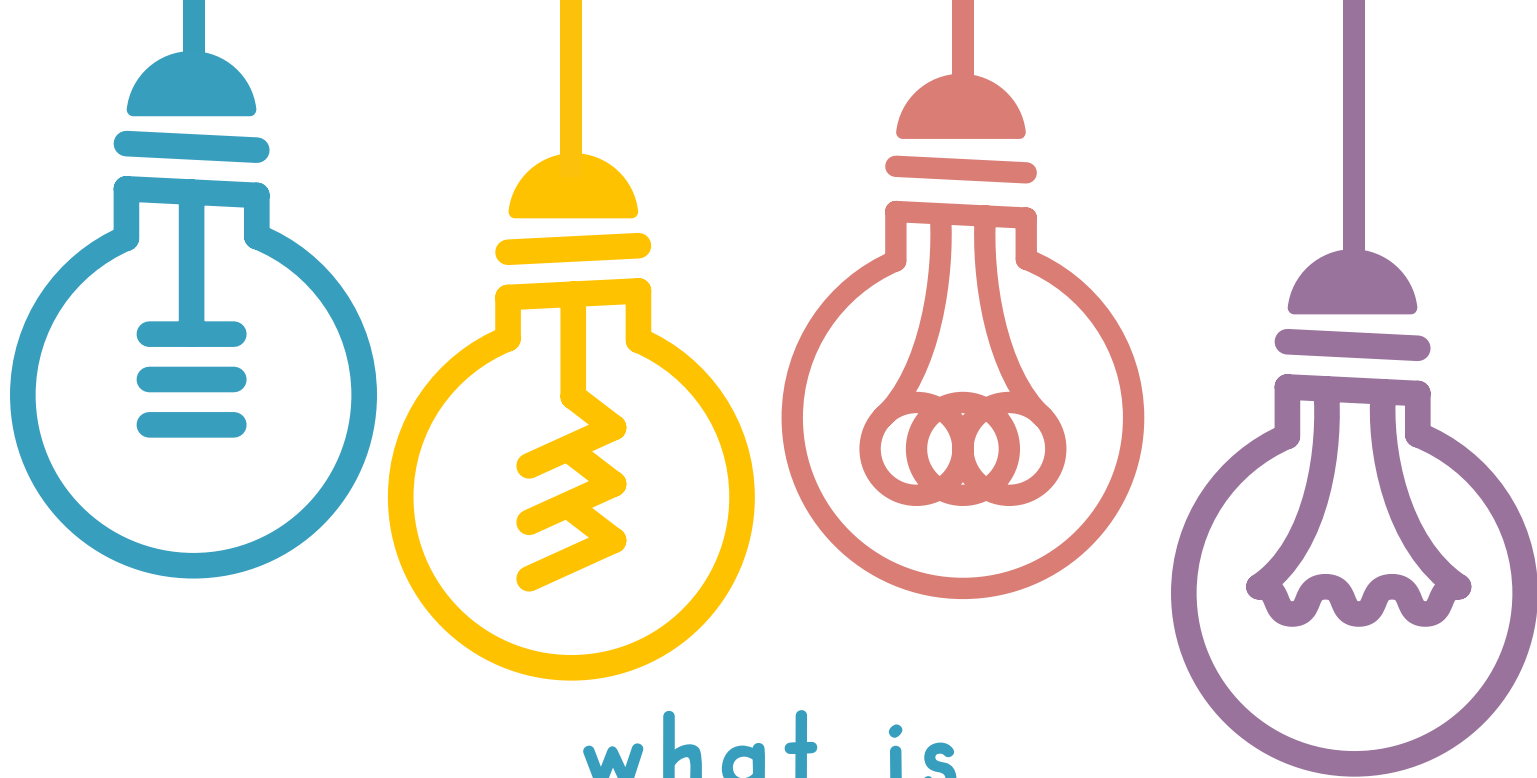
Such an ecosystem would not diminish accredited ministry; it would strengthen it by placing it within a broader culture of growth. Nor would it flatten the differences between roles; it would recognise that different callings need different depths of formation. But it would insist that no leader should be left unsupported, unformed or isolated. The health of our churches and the vitality of our mission depend on leaders who are continually learning, continually being shaped, and continually open to the renewing work of God. That is why a formation ecosystem is not merely a useful idea. It is a hopeful, practical and deeply Baptist vision for the future.



Tim Fergusson was Ministries Team Co-Leader until August 2026.

During his sabbatical he researched in more detail the decline in the number of accredited Baptist ministers.

A Baptist-specific 'formation ecosystem' was one of the ideas developed during this study.



what is MINISTERIAL FORMATION?

Nike Adebajo shares how our colleges create an environment for student formation, how ministerial formation is mutual - and how for all of us, our Christian faith is continually being shaped

I imagine a couple who have been married for four decades or more. You may notice something intriguing over time: gestures, mannerisms, small habits and even ways of speaking have grown increasingly alike. Psychologists describe this as convergence or assimilation. After decades of shared life,

they have been steadily shaping one another. Their relationship has formed them.

The same is true of all of us. Our outlook, habits, responses and values are continually being shaped by the experiences, relationships, cultures and subcultures we inhabit, the media we consume, books we read, the voices we choose to follow online, and the communities (virtual included) in which we participate. Formation is not optional. Whether we recognise it or not, intentionally or unintentionally, consciously or unconsciously, we are always being formed. We are, if you like, being shaped, fashioned or moulded.

Scripture recognises this reality, *'Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm'* (Proverbs 13:20). The company we keep influences the people we become.

Our Christian faith is continually being shaped. Personal Bible study and prayer matter deeply, but they are not our only Christian formative influences. The company we keep, the sermons we hear, the content we access online, the books we read, and the festivals and conferences we attend all form us. The question is not whether our faith is being formed, but what or who is forming us and into what or whom we are being formed.

For some, Christian formation takes place largely within the familiar context of one local church or tradition, for example, those who, all their lives, have been in the same church where the demography has remained unchanged. For others, it is enriched by their welcome of and interaction with the diverse expressions of our Baptist movement, including those who bring perspectives from our global Baptist family, as well as encounters with other Christian traditions.

Ministerial formation takes place against this wider backdrop. For the women and men called to accredited ministry and who join a Baptist college community for three years or more, college provides a place of intentional formation. They are not simply places where Ministers-in-Training (MiTs) are educated, they are communities in which future ministers are shaped for faithful service. This intentionally holistic formation includes:

KNOWLEDGE:

Students gain biblical and theological understanding, study ethics and the contemporary context in which they will serve.

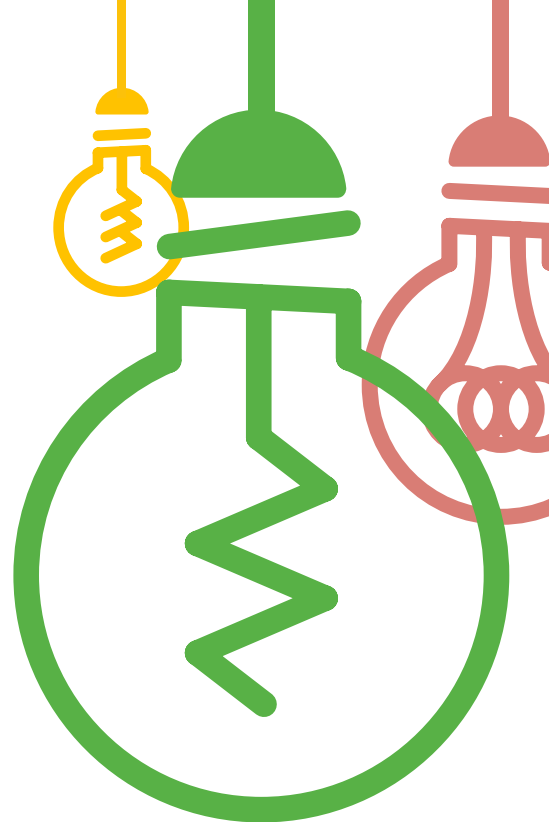
PRACTICAL SKILLS FOR MINISTRY:

Students learn to preach, lead worship, provide pastoral care, conduct baptisms and funerals, lead churches through change, engage in mission and evangelism, and exercise wise leadership, and so on. These skills are developed through both the overt curriculum and the hidden curriculum of shared life within college and placement communities, where theory and practice continually inform one another.

Colleges also attend to Baptist distinctives because ministerial formation prepares students to serve within the Baptist tradition. This includes believers' baptism, congregational discernment, covenantal relationships and shared participation in the mission of God. This is why all students study Baptist History and Principles as a vital part of formation.

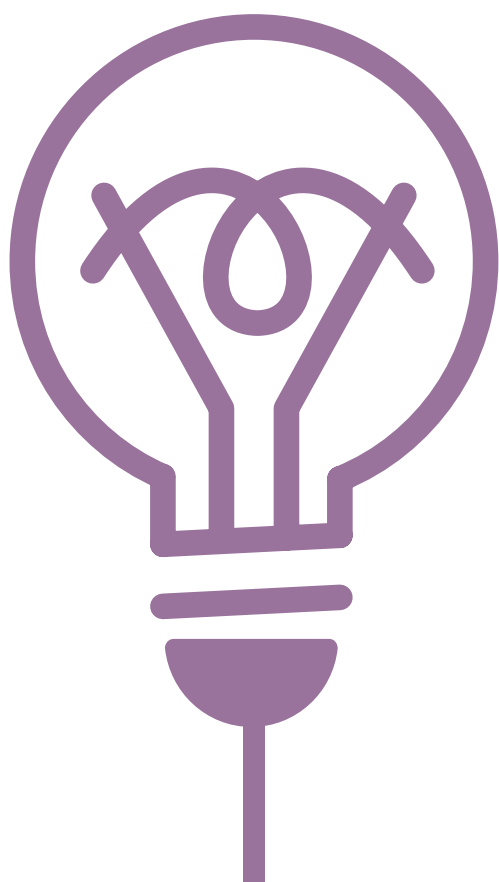
CHARACTER:

There is a third essential element: the development of Christ-like character and Christ-centred spirituality. Jesus says in Luke 6:40: "Everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher." Paul expresses a similar longing to the Galatians, *'My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you'* (Galatians 4:19).



Baptist Colleges therefore place significant emphasis on the formation of character and spirituality by attending to our Baptists Together MARKS of ministry: Mature as a disciple of Christ, Accountable to others, Relational in approach to leadership, Kingdom-focused and Servant-hearted and sacrificial. These are cultivated through worship, prayer, mentoring, shared life, honest feedback, and faithful service.

Knowledge, skills and character are not discrete boxes, they are constantly interacting with one another. What students learn in theological study may strengthen their preaching, deepen pastoral care, or sharpen their engagement with justice and mission. The interplay of knowledge and skills can lead to competence in ministry. Skills exercised with Christlike character build credibility and authenticity. Character deepened by knowledge nurtures quiet, godly confidence.



All of this takes place in community: within college and placement contexts. Formation is always contextual and might even appear ordinary: in a difficult conversation, a sermon that doesn't quite land well or a pastoral visit that stays with us. There are places where theology meets practice and where relationships reveal the kind of people we are becoming.

Underpinning this whole process is reflective practice. Colleges seek to cultivate in ministers the discipline and habit of reflecting on life and work, learning from experience with theological insight and biblical understanding. Not only asking the question 'What happened?' but also, 'What was revealed?' 'Where was God at work?' When asked honestly and regularly, such questions enable experience to become genuinely formative, helping ministers attend not only to what they do, but to who they are becoming.

Ministerial formation is also mutual. Contexts do not

simply receive ministry from ministers; they also shape them in return. The people among whom we serve influence the people we become. Colleges create an environment for student formation, but all those involved in this formation – tutors and other staff – have the delight of being formed by our students.

Formation does not end at accreditation, ordination or settlement. Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) recognises that ministers remain lifelong learners of Christ. They are called to grow in wisdom, emotional resilience, spiritual maturity, covenantal relationship, critical reflection and faithful practice throughout (thankfully not all at once) the whole of ministry. Like the couple who have spent decades growing together, it is about becoming the kind of people whose instincts, desires, reflexes and character are increasingly shaped into Christ. It is an invitation into a significant journey of lifelong discovery, and, by grace, lifelong transformation.

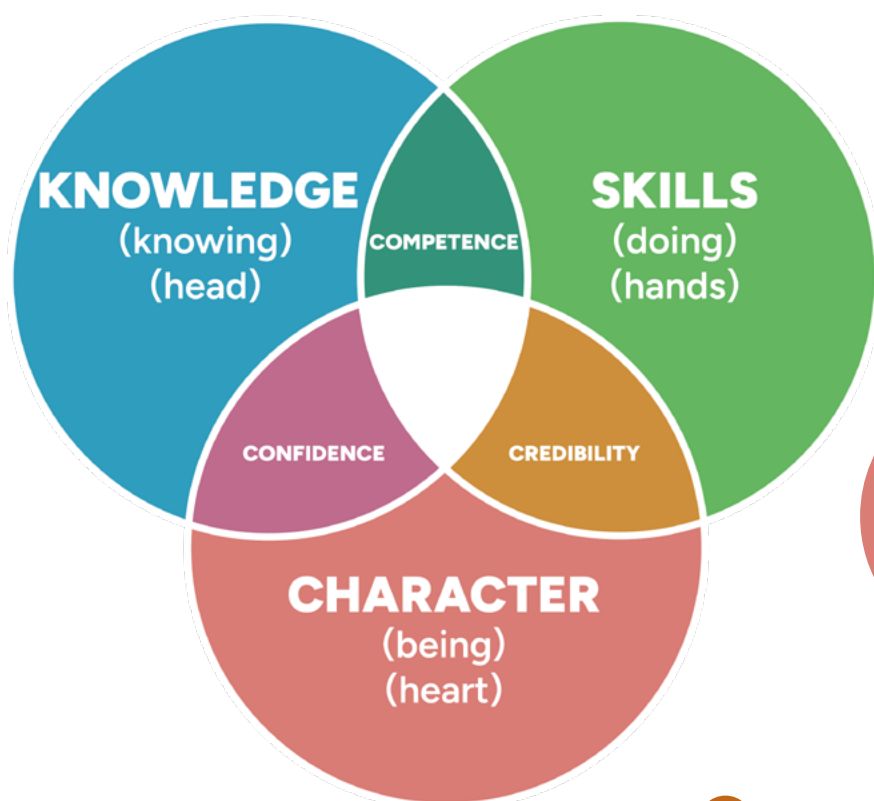
What does formation mean to you?

Nike reminds us that 'formation is not optional' — our habits, media, relationships, and routines are constantly shaping us.

Looking at your typical week, what influences are having the biggest impact on your Christian character and outlook?



Nike Adebajo is the Formation Lead at St Hild Centre for Baptist Ministry



JOURNEYS INTO BAPTIST MINISTRY

How did our ministers first discern God's call?
What happened next? What excites them
about their ministry now?

The Ministries Team is collecting stories from
those called into Baptist leadership - and here
are just a few...



Nathan Gordon, minister Sittingbourne Baptist Church, Kent

I was raised in a Christian home and always believed in God, but during my teenage years my faith depended largely on my parents. At 16, everything changed - I realised Jesus was calling me personally to live for Him, to use my gifts to serve others, and to follow His purpose for my life. My faith became my own, and I discovered a new passion to share His love.

At 17, I stepped out of my comfort zone to preach for the first time - something I never imagined as an introvert. From then on, God continued to open doors. In 2016, I left my home church in London to become youth pastor at Sittingbourne Baptist Church.

After three years, I trained for Baptist ministry and was inducted as minister at Sittingbourne Baptist Church in 2022.

The journey hasn't been easy, but God has remained faithful throughout.

Mayowa Akinloye, minister-In-training, Kings Cross Baptist Church, London

For years God's call on my life unfolded quietly and if I'm honest, I tried to avoid it. I was leading as a deputy head, advocating for children with special needs, while serving across church life. I told myself my leadership belonged in education only, but the overlap kept growing. Mentors and church leaders began to see what I was hesitant to name, affirming pastoral gifts in me. A prophetic word told me to 'stop running' from God's call and it stayed with me.



The journey for me required courage. I stepped away from full-time school leadership, gradually giving more of myself to God, but still wanting to do things on my own terms. Eventually at a leaders' gathering, I sensed God clearly and couldn't push back.

My yes opened so much. I'm now a minister-In-training, studying at Regent's Park College. Bi-vocationally, I serve at Kings Cross Baptist Church, London and continue my secular work. My heart is to see people grow through preaching, teaching, and discipleship, becoming all God has called them to be.



**Hazel Hunting, minister
Rushmere Baptist Church,
Ipswich**

My call to ministry came because of other people recognising God's call in me. It wasn't something I considered, I had a career I enjoyed in the NHS. But my family and I tested God's call and I found myself in part time training, combining training, college and ministry alongside my continuing role as a nurse.

It was a challenge, it was tiring and it developed my faith and confidence. Now in full time ministry I use skills learnt and developed in the past alongside those more recently gained; nothing is wasted.

I love so much of ministry, being with people, identifying their giftings and talents, sharing God's love, building community, helping people meet Jesus, growing God's Kingdom in lots of different ways and with lots of different people. And I haven't stopped developing either, I am still a work in progress.

(Hazel begins at Holland-on-Sea Baptist Church in September)

**Rhiannon Francis, minister Mount
Carmel Baptist Church, Caerphilly**

All I wanted to be growing up was a bank manager or a rugby player

At 14 on work experience, the bank manager I was shadowing, said by the time I was old enough to be a bank manager, the banking world would be automated. So I needed to rethink my career.

At 19, I was told I wouldn't be able to play rugby anymore due to some pretty dramatic injuries. While in hospital, I met a nurse who told me about Jesus. Before I could believe anything she told me, I set out on a quest to disprove Christianity. I failed. And gave my life to the Lord on 5 October, 1997.

No career plans, no rugby. No idea what to do.

I got a degree in business and marketing, and started my walk up the marketing ladder. My evenings and weekends aside from work mainly consisted of youth ministry in the local church. Quickly I realised making money for others didn't matter. But people did.

Sensing the call to ministry, I moved to Swansea to be a children's and youth worker. After three years, I felt the call to ordained ministry, so tested the call and applied to South Wales Baptist College, as it was then. Three years of formation later, I was called to minister in an LEP (Local Ecumenical Partnership) with all its joys and challenges. After a number of years, I was called to be part of the chaplaincy teams in University Hospitals Bristol initially, and then the University Hospital of Wales Cardiff, with a specialist interest in pediatrics, trauma and teenage oncology.

Following a shock arrival of my daughter in 2017, I took some time out to be with her, and then she and I were called to Caerphilly in 2021 to minister to the community there.

If God can use someone with no career plan, no rugby, and no idea, He really can use anyone.



Neil Jones, minister Barrow Baptist Church, Leicestershire

I first sensed a call to ministry in my mid-20s while attending a leadership course at my home church. Both my mentor and the minister shared their conviction that I was called to this path. Around the same time, even my boss at Boots predicted I'd become a vicar one day.

From then on, my focus was on discerning the right time and place to grow. By the time I reached my college interviews, I felt certain of God's calling.

Today I am serving a village church in the Midlands. I truly love the community and the people here; it's a place of immense blessing. While the journey has had its challenges, the training and development have been incredibly rewarding. It's been an exciting path, and every step has been worth it.



Archie Catchpole, minister-in-training at Victoria Park Baptist Church, London E3



I love seeing people grow as followers of Jesus. As my youth leaders took risks letting me lead, I realised I could even occasionally help people as they explored discipleship. Initially I thought I wouldn't do this until I was middle-aged (because when you're 16, every pastor seems middle-aged). I studied a BA and MA in Theology, with time spent interning with the London Baptists and working for a church in Edinburgh in between degrees.

When I was studying, I wished I could spend more time with people. When I was with people, I wished I could spend more time with books. Through the encouragement of church leaders and mentors, I realised it is possible to be a pastor who does both – even as a young(ish) person.

Now I am a minister-in-training, enjoying the complexity of leading a church in the way of Jesus.

Eunjig Yang, minister York Place Baptist Church, Swansea

God's calling came near to the end of my military service (in South Korea) on a freezing winter morning during a dawn prayer meeting. As I prayed about my future, I had already been offered a secure position at a reputable insurance company ready to begin after my service ended.

Everything seemed settled.

Yet that morning God placed a clear and powerful conviction in my heart, calling me to the pastoral ministry. In obedience, I gave up the job opportunity and began preparing for seminary.

Though the journey was not easy, by God's grace I completed theological studies and later came to the UK to pursue a master's degree in theology, which I was able to complete by the Lord's grace.

After completing my master's studies, I undertook an accredited course at Cardiff Baptist College. During this time, I was called to serve as a pastor at York Place Baptist Church, ministering to a diverse multinational congregation. Studying at Cardiff greatly deepened my understanding of the Baptist tradition and pastoral ministry in the UK context.

Looking back, I can only confess that the Lord has faithfully guided every step of my journey.



Catherine Tate, associate minister, Skipton Baptist Church, Yorkshire



I never thought I'd be a Baptist minister — it wasn't part of my plan for my life, but God had other ideas. My faith had always been very intellectual and full of questions and doubts, then God met me through his Holy Spirit, and to my surprise a growing call to ministry began slowly to emerge, despite my self-doubts and sense of inadequacy.

I did some theological study, talked to others and spent time alone wrestling with myself and God on retreats. Eventually, the sense of call to ministry became so strong I had to say 'Yes' — with that 'Yes' came an amazing sense of peace alongside ongoing fears and doubts, but God has equipped me one step at a time.

I'm now loving being a minister and serving God and his people as we seek to apprentice to Jesus together.



Ed and Emma Jones, ministers at Battle Baptist Church, Sussex

We often get asked the question 'What's it like to serve together?' I think what's key for us, is we both came into ministry, because we felt God calling us each personally. For me (Ed) it was something that I first felt as a teenager. For me (Emma) it was something much later in life.

But getting to work together – yes it has its moments. It means we need to put more effort in, particularly at home for example with our kids

- ensuring that it doesn't consume us or is all we talk about. It's about recognising that we're followers of Jesus first, then husband and wife, then parents and being ministers comes after that.

That said, in spite of all the challenges, it is a joy and a privilege. We bring different gifts, different perspectives, we can support each and share in the wonder that is adventure of ministry together.

Simon Cragg, minister of St Andrew's Street Baptist Church, Cambridge

I was 15 years old, sat on my bed, and listening to a sermon. I have no idea what the preacher said – all I remember was being overwhelmed with a sense that God was calling me to do the same. I wept tears of joy – a moment of pure clarity from God.

The rest of the story of ministry has been much more subtle - like realising



how much I enjoyed studying theology. About the encouragement of the college principal to go into ministry young and make mistakes and learn wisdom through it. About slowly growing confidence in leadership, preaching, and pastoral care, as well as increasingly learning to love God and people more.

I sometimes tell people it's the best job in the world. In reality it may also be one of the hardest. But God is good and I'm grateful to be doing what I do.

Sharon Cross, minister of Rockingham Road Baptist Church, Kettering

I was 40 when I became a Christian. In the early days, I was either at the back of church on the computer or out the back with the children. God started to change me, giving me a confidence I didn't recognise, enabling, equipping and empowering me. With every service I led, or sermon I delivered, people told me I should train for ministry.

For seven years I laughed it off but the Lord was preparing me, giving me the opportunities and experience I needed. It was a sermon on Mary's response to the angel that led me to say 'Lord, whatever you have for me I say, yes.' Ordained ministry came through my mind. 'Oh surely not Lord!'

My three years at Spurgeon's were transforming. I used to think my role was building up the saints to send them out. However, during my training I developed a passion for outreach. I have a heart for the mission in the local community and I'm currently seeking God's wisdom on what that looks like.





Hilary Brown, chaplaincy student at Waverley Abbey College and The Learning Collective, and chaplain with Kent Workplace Mission at Bluewater shopping centre

My journey into chaplaincy started on the tube. I saw an advertisement for Gamesmaker volunteers for the London Olympics and knew I HAD to apply. I discovered they had a chaplaincy team and during the training by London City Mission they emphasised we were not there to hit people with the gospel but to come alongside people in a supportive way. I immediately knew this is my calling.

I became a Street Pastor, then when I retired I had the opportunity to go to Spurgeon's College and start a BA in Theology with Chaplaincy. When Spurgeon's closed I went to Waverley Abbey College and I am currently doing a Certificate in Contemporary Chaplaincy there, plus additional modules with The Learning Collective.

I have discovered I have a passion for prison ministry. An accredited diploma level 5 is required to be a prison chaplain, so I am looking into a diploma course.

My top tips if you are considering chaplaincy are:

- Spend time in different chaplaincy settings to find out where God is calling you
- Talk to your Regional Minister
- Research various courses and, if there is a possibility you may want to do prison chaplaincy, make sure you can study to an accredited diploma level 5 or above



Catriona Gillies, minister-in-training at Limbury Baptist Church, Luton

Surely, I can't be a minister – I'm too old and not clever enough... I first felt God prompting me to explore the call to ministry in 2016. Due to personal circumstances, in 2017 I decided to lay the idea to one side.

In 2024 that prompting returned and I decided that probably God wasn't calling me to be a minister because I was too old, I wasn't clever enough and I couldn't afford it. I found The Learning Collective a fantastic course and not too scary.

I settled in contently, but God had other plans. I am now a minister-in-training – of Limbury Baptist Church and studying at Regents Park College. It is amazing.

The wonderful and supportive staff welcome us every Tuesday. I have made great friendships and now have a church family whom I have the privilege of serving.

It's never too late to join the journey.



Dave Tubby, minister Heaton Baptist Church, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

I came into pastoral ministry reluctantly and to be honest, with a bit of a fight. I had known God was calling me to something for a while but I fought with Him because I was happy in my career. But over a period of time, weighing it up with those I trusted, I recognised and accepted that it was pastoral ministry God was calling me into.

My time training at a Baptist College whilst serving in a church setting was formative in so many ways, and helped God develop gifts in me that I never knew I had. I'm now minister of Heaton Baptist Church (Newcastle-upon-Tyne) and what I love about my role is the opportunity it provides to help bring Jesus in real-life ways to the community we're in, and to champion Jesus-shaped justice where God leads us day-to-day.

OUR JOURNIES INTO BAPTIST MINISTRY



Andy Twilley,
regional
minister South
Eastern Baptist
Association

What an amazing journey it's been! I was just 11 years old when I sensed God calling me into ministry and when I was 20, I knew the time was right to pursue this path.

Ordained in 1986, this has been the most amazing journey imaginable. Sure there have been struggles, frustrations and challenges yet fulfilling my God given purpose has been an awesome responsibility, privilege and joy as God has faithfully inspired me every step of the way.

Sometimes folk have asked me when I anticipate retiring! Retire? Why would I want to retire when God is still doing immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine through His power at work. His plans and purposes continue to energise me, and now as a Regional Minister in SEBA since 2024... I know God's not done with me yet.

Would you be willing to encourage and inspire the next generation of ministers by sharing your own journey into Baptist ministry?

We are gathering more stories and would be delighted if you felt able to share yours.
Please contact ministries@baptist.org.uk

We also encourage you to pray for all those who are journeying into Baptist ministry.



Alfred Bassah, minister-in-training Eltham Park Baptist Church, London

My spiritual journey began in Ghana, seeing God's call at seminary school and serving at First Baptist.

This calling deepened as I became a pastor and later continued my ministry in the UK at Trinity Baptist and Clapham Baptist.

Training has been both enriching and challenging, involving leading Bible studies, supporting churches without ministers, and relying on key Bible passages like Jeremiah chapter 29, verse 11, and Matthew chapter 9 for guidance.

My family offer unwavering support, especially my wife. Along with encouragement from leaders such as Reverend Lucy (Wright, former minister Eltham Park and now Regional Minister at London Baptists) has helped me persevere.

It has required sacrifice and adaptation, but I see these challenges as essential to my growth in Christ.

I'm most passionate about nurturing others through Bible study and witnessing the transformative power of faith and community.

THE VALUE OF A

BAPTIST

INTERNSHIP

Internships within Baptist churches and contexts offer a valuable opportunity for 18-35s to explore God's calling on their lives.

In recent years Baptists Together has aimed to intentionally encourage, promote and facilitate internships – and here we share the experiences of three.

HOW AN INTERNSHIP DEEPENED FAITH – & LED TO A CALL TO ACCREDITED MINISTRY



Jess Marchant had pictured a career as a geneticist – but life intervened. A serious illness forced her to drop out of college. While her health recovered, without college she was lacking direction.

Her youth minister at Eastleigh Baptist Church suggested an internship at the church – and Jess has never looked back. She worked mainly with children and young people (primarily 11-14 year olds), building up from planning Sunday meetings to midweek Bible studies, social events and even a trip to Satellites youth festival.

The internship challenged Jess in many ways. "I'm quite a quiet introvert, so being put into a situation of running groups, talking to 15 - 20 people at a time - this was massively out of my comfort zone. And just as I was getting used to that, I was asked to talk at a church meeting, which threw me out of my comfort zone again. It's been really challenging, but fun to learn to communicate with

people well, and I've definitely become better at holding conversations."

As well as growth in communication and confidence, the internship has impressed on Jess the importance of time alone with God. This in turn has deepened her own faith.

"My line manager was big on this. He made it possible to go on retreat and attend conferences. He encouraged me to take time out of my day to go and sit and just be with God, and make sure I focused on that relationship as much as I had encouraged my young people to do the same."

"I'm in a very different spiritual place to when I started all of this," Jess adds. "With my

illness I had been struggling – it was a bad situation in my life, and I remember being angry about it. I was at the point I was ready to just give up on God, and then suddenly I was seeing God everywhere and finding these small pieces and moments of joy and happiness. My whole mentality to life and to my faith shifted.”

Jess would go onto study children, youth, and families work at Bristol Baptist College. Through that course she discovered her call to ministry, and is starting as a minister-in-training this autumn. It’s clear the internship has played a key role.

“That first year was a chance

to try anything, and I loved the exposure of all the different aspects of ministry. Every time I discovered a new role, I wanted to try it. And the internship was just the perfect year to do that and discover everything about church life.

“It turned my life around. I’d 100 per cent recommend it.”

IT GIVES YOU SPACE TO GROW, DISCERN & PREPARE FOR YOUR GOD-GIVEN ASSIGNMENT



Abraham Nafah Zimpah began a two-year internship at Seer Green Baptist Church, Buckinghamshire in December 2024 after arriving from Ghana. He was encouraged to explore the different missional projects and activities the church was involved in: including groups for children, youth and families, men’s ministry, and wider community engagement.

He was also given opportunities for personal development. This included Foundational Apologetics with

The Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics (OCCA), Baptist local leader training with The Learning Collective run by Regent’s Park College, as well as various conferences and retreats.

Over time he was especially drawn to the youth and men’s groups, as well as supporting general church activities such as Sunday services and small group meetings.

One conference which had a significant impact on Abraham was the annual Fresh Streams gathering, as it inspired him to start a games evening for young adults aged 18 to 35, which he called Play and Ponder.

This is a space where participants gather to discuss topics like faith, God, science, technology, movies, and sport. “It creates a missional environment where people can explore faith in a safe and relaxed setting,” Abraham says.

There were many highlights, including connecting with the wider Baptist community

(Abraham served on the media team at the 2025 Baptist Assembly); and organising a World Cup watch party, which involved managing the kitchen, food, logistics, and programme for a large crowd.

The internship has deepened his walk with and understanding of God. Coming from a charismatic Ghanaian background with lively worship, drumming, and dancing, Abraham explains he learned ‘how ministry is expressed differently in this context’. In addition, he has seen ‘God place me in the right situations with the right people’.

“Reflecting on conversations with young people and adults, I can see God’s hand guiding those moments,” Abraham says. “Several of those discussions felt God-inspired, and at least five people are now actively exploring faith with me.”

There has been much personal development too, “I grew in clear communication and confidence, and many people have noticed this.

"I highly recommend an internship, especially for anyone wanting to explore their calling and identify their strengths. It gives you space to grow, discern, and prepare for your God-given assignment."

"It creates a missional environment where people can explore faith in a safe and relaxed setting"

IT'S PRACTICAL, & IT GIVES YOU SPACE TO GROW



Alkistis Stogianni had already been working as a community worker at her local church (Mill Hill East Church) for a year when she realised she wanted to deepen her leadership skills and biblical understanding without committing to a full-time theology degree. Looking for a flexible pathway that included mission, discipleship, and church life, she enrolled in the London Baptists (LB) Leadership Year.

Alongside weekly study days with her LB cohort, Alkistis continued in her church. She co-led community programs for toddlers, children, and

youth, served in the church café, headed up the prayer team, and stepped into preaching, worship, and general church leadership.

The internship brought significant practical growth, helping her refine how she communicates publicly and organises prayer spaces.

"I became even better at preparing a sermon without needing to block out two weeks to brainstorm," Alkistis reflects. "I got a better grip not necessarily on what I do, but how to do it more effectively." Beyond practical skills, the year prompted a profound shift in her personal mindset and faith. Exposure to a range of perspectives on Christian ethics and life stretched her from a 'black and white, fixed mindset' to a more 'freeing' place led by the Spirit and the Word of God.

The supportive environment of her church and cohort also offered space for lessons in healthy spiritual leadership. She learned that taking time-out to heal is just as crucial as pouring one's heart into a project. "You cannot take spiritual leadership lightly," she says, "and you shouldn't expect to be perfect."

Looking ahead, Alkistis is stepping into expanded responsibilities at her church. Having stepped back from outside employment, she is choosing to focus fully on leadership, youth and children's work, prayer, worship, and preaching.

Alkistis enthusiastically recommends a Baptist internship, highlighting the invaluable practical experience, connection to the wider Baptist family, and accessible learning without the pressure of long essays.

"You have opportunities, you have conferences, and you get to meet the rest of the Baptist family," she says. "It's practical, and gives you space to grow."

Are you considering taking a year out to explore ministry, or are interested in hosting an intern at your church?

To see current internship opportunities and to access the Internship Best Practice Handbook, visit baptist.org.uk/internship

What does it mean to be a **HEALTHY** **MINISTER?**

BY HAYLEY YOUNG

One of the questions I have been reflecting on as I begin my new role as Ethics and Integrity Manager is this: What does it mean to be a healthy minister?

It's an important question because healthy ministry doesn't happen by accident. We entered ministry because we sensed God's call. We wanted to serve the Church, proclaim the gospel and help others encounter Jesus. Yet somewhere along the way it can become easy to focus so much on caring for everyone else that we neglect our own spiritual, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

The reality is that ministry is both a privilege and a challenge. We hold people's joys and griefs. We navigate conflict, lead change, make difficult decisions, respond to crises, and often carry responsibilities that few people fully see. None of us were designed to do that alone.

One of the encouraging things about our Baptist family is we

don't expect ministers simply to 'keep going'. We recognise that lifelong ministry requires lifelong formation.

Formation isn't something that finishes at college or accreditation. It continues throughout our ministry as God shapes our character, deepens our discipleship and equips us for changing contexts. Healthy ministers are not those who have all the answers or never struggle. They are those who remain open to learning, growing and allowing others to walk alongside them.

That's why Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) matters.

Sometimes CMD can be seen as another requirement to complete or another course to attend. But at its best, CMD is much more than that. It is an intentional commitment to becoming the minister God is continually calling us to be. Sometimes that may involve developing new leadership skills, learning about safeguarding or conflict

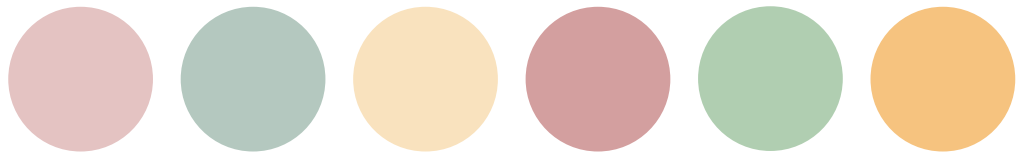
transformation. At other times it may mean investing in our spiritual life, reflecting on our practice or simply creating space to think and pray. Healthy ministry is sustained not simply by what we know but by who we are becoming.

ACCOMPANIMENT

One of the greatest gifts available to ministers, as part of our CMD, is accompaniment.

Ministry can be surprisingly lonely. Even when surrounded by people, there are conversations we cannot always have within our own church. There are decisions that carry weight, disappointments that need processing and questions that require honest reflection without fear of judgement.

An accompanier offers something different from management or appraisal. They provide intentional space to listen well, ask thoughtful questions and help ministers notice where God might be at work.



They don't seek to solve every problem but to walk alongside someone as they discern their next steps.

There is something deeply biblical about that image of walking together. Throughout Scripture we see God working through relationships that encourage, challenge and strengthen one another. Ministry has never been intended as a solo endeavour.

PASTORAL SUPERVISION

Pastoral supervision is one form of accompaniment that offers a valuable opportunity for reflection.

The language may be unfamiliar to some, but the principle is not. Good pastoral supervision creates protected space to reflect on ministry, relationships, decision-making, boundaries and wellbeing. It enables ministers to step back from the constant demands of ministry and ask important questions.

- *How am I really doing?*
- *What is giving me life?*
- *What is draining me?*
- *Where is God at work?*
- *Where might I need support?*

Far from being a sign that something is wrong, pastoral supervision is increasingly recognised as a hallmark of healthy professional practice across many caring professions. It helps ministers remain reflective practitioners, attentive both to those they serve and to their own wellbeing.

UNDERSTANDING HEALTHY MINISTRY

Of course, none of these things: learning new skills, theological reflection, study, accompaniment or pastoral supervision, exist in isolation. They are all part of a wider culture of CMD that values healthy ministry.

Healthy ministry includes taking annual leave and days off. It means nurturing friendships

beyond church. It means paying attention to our physical and mental wellbeing. It means knowing our limits, recognising when we need help, and giving ourselves permission to receive the same grace that we so readily offer others.

It also means remembering that our identity is not found in our role. Before we are ministers, leaders or pastors, we are disciples of Jesus Christ.

Our value does not depend on the size of our church, the success of our programmes or the number of hours we work. Our calling flows first from being loved by God, not from constantly proving ourselves useful to God.

As I begin serving as Ethics and Integrity Manager, I hope this understanding shapes the way we work together.

When people hear the words 'ethics' or 'integrity', they can sometimes assume the role is primarily about responding when things have gone wrong. There will inevitably be times when difficult situations need careful handling, and those responsibilities are an important part of the role.

But I hope we can also think about ethics and integrity much more positively.

Healthy churches are led by healthy ministers. Healthy ministers are supported by healthy systems.

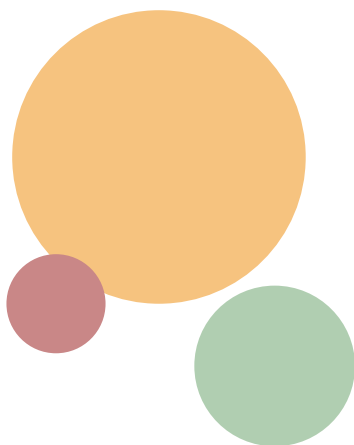
It can become easy to focus so much on caring for everyone else that we neglect our own spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing

Creating cultures where ministers flourish is just as important as responding well when challenges arise.

That is why I want to champion lifelong formation, reflective practice and supportive relationships. I want to encourage ministers to make the most of the resources available, whether in learning new things, being attentive to their well-being, seeking accompaniment for the journey, or simply connecting with others by reaching out for a conversation before challenges become crises.

None of us minister alone.

We belong to a Baptist family that seeks to encourage one another, pray for one another and help one another flourish in God's calling.



THE ROLE OF CHURCHES IN SUPPORTING THEIR MINISTER

Healthy ministry is never just the responsibility of the minister. Churches have a vital role to play in creating a culture where lifelong formation is valued, encouraged and protected. Through our Terms of Appointment, we encourage churches to make time available for CMD and to provide financial support wherever possible. Those commitments are not simply 'contractual' obligations; they are an investment in the future health of both the minister and the church.

One of my hopes in this new role is not only to champion lifelong formation among ministers, but also to encourage churches to see releasing their minister for CMD as an act of discipleship rather than a cost to ministry. When ministers are given the time, space and encouragement to keep learning, reflecting and growing, they can be refreshed, better equipped and more able to lead wisely. Healthy leaders help cultivate healthy churches, and healthy churches are better able to join in God's mission within their communities.

Lifelong formation is therefore not a luxury to be squeezed in when time allows; it is an essential part of sustaining faithful, fruitful ministry for the long term.

My hope is that this role contributes to that shared vision, not simply by helping us respond well when difficulties arise, but by helping create the conditions in which ministers, churches and communities can thrive for the long term.

Healthy ministry isn't about perfection.

It's about remaining rooted in Christ, committed to continual growth, and willing to walk alongside one another with honesty, humility and hope.



Hayley Young is
the Baptists Together
Ethics and
Integrity Manager

**Our identity is not found in our role...
before we are ministers, leaders or
pastors, we are disciples of
Jesus Christ**



GROWING LEADERS, MIGRATION, & WOMEN IN MINISTRY

Our Baptist Union's broadly established position of calling women to hold pastoral charge of a church may be at odds with what is taught and practised in some of the contexts from which new arrivals have come.

How can we help identify or nurture leadership potential of the women we are blessed with from all ethnic backgrounds?
By Gale Richards

At the 2026 Baptist Assembly our General Secretary Lynn Green, highlighted the growing numbers of baptisms and people coming into church membership as a great source of encouragement. As we reflect on how to grow more leaders, it is important to acknowledge that some of this growth is due to the latest

wave of migration from the Global South. In light of this, we should ask (and seek to answer) this question: What might we need to do differently, to help identify or nurture leadership potential (particularly among women) in our churches? Are there any insights from the past that might help us?

The 1950s and 1960s were significant periods in the life of our Baptist Union. During these years, thousands of people from the Caribbean, and other Commonwealth countries, took up the invitation to rebuild post-Second World War Britain. As a number of them joined churches in our Union, a challenge that emerged was the recognition that doctrine – what a church believes and teaches – is often influenced by context. Accordingly, when a church includes people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds it potentially has to navigate a wider range of perspectives on what the church should teach and practise.

In the 1960s it became apparent that convictions held by some British Baptists were not shared by Baptists from other contexts. For example, many British Baptists believed that parents had to be church members for their infant to be dedicated in a church. Yet, this was not necessarily the case in parts of the Caribbean. This was observed by Revd Clement Gayle, whom the West Midland Baptist Association – today known as the Heart of England Baptist Association – had invited over from Jamaica, to spend a year working amongst Birmingham churches. Gayle's remit was to help churches respond to the needs and aspirations of these new arrivals from Commonwealth countries like Jamaica. A Baptist Times article captured the differences observed by Gayle: "*Jamaicans, whether they are members of churches or not, regard it as their duty to have their babies dedicated*"¹.

1. W. W. Bottoms 'Immigrants need pastoral care' Baptist Times, 11 March 1965

Sixty years on from Revd Gayle's observations, we face a different challenge, as we seek to identify and nurture leadership potential amongst women and men who have newly arrived in our churches. Our Baptist Union's broadly established position of calling women to hold pastoral charge of a church, may be at odds with what is taught and practised in some of the contexts from which new arrivals have come. Between 2014-2020, as the coordinator of the Baptist Union's BME Women Ministers' Network, I was involved in navigating precisely this kind of terrain.

The Network was designed to help more women from UK minority-ethnic heritage backgrounds, emerge, survive, and thrive as ministers. The cultural heritage of some of these women had been shaped by the teaching of churches, including Baptist churches, in other parts of the world, that precluded the ordination of women. When they later sensed a call from God to ordained ministry, the Network became a place where they could find books, role models, and mentors, to help them respond to this sense of call.

My 2024 doctoral thesis, *Ain't I a Deborah?* is in part a study of the life of the Network. Its title is inspired by Sojourner Truth, the African-American women's and civil rights activist, and her 1851 speech, 'Ain't I a woman?' – also known as 'Arn't I a woman?'. In the thesis I highlight how some of the women supported by the Network, who responded to God's call to ministry, had to overcome not just gendered assumptions about who could be a minister, but also racialised

assumptions encountered in Britain, that suggested they were not worthy to be ministers.

The findings of my doctoral research, lead me to suggest that our Baptist Union can better nurture the leadership potential of the women and men it is blessed with from all ethnic backgrounds, by committing to at least three things:

1. Telling our Baptist history in ways that include Black and Brown people's experiences and contributions.

This helps challenge racialised stereotyping present in some churches that prevents the capabilities of Black and Brown people being recognised.

Suggested resources:
Gale Richards (2023) [2014] *Text and Story, Prophets for their time and ours*, Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Studies, Occasional Papers, Volume 9

Anthony Reddie, Wale Hudson-Roberts, and Gale Richards (eds.) (2017) *Journeying to Justice -Contributions to the Baptist Tradition across the Black Atlantic*, Bletchley: Paternoster.

2. Drawing on resources such as Bible commentaries that reflect on women's experiences and acknowledge ethnic and cultural diversity.

Suggested resource:
Carol A. Newsom et al (eds.) (2014) *The Women's Bible Commentary 3rd Edition*, London: SPCK

3. Telling the stories of women in the Bible (especially Deborah's) in ways that affirm women as leaders.

My study revealed that Deborah's story can be an early and important resource for girls and women as they articulate why they feel God calls women to ministry.



Gale Richards is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow for the Centre for Baptist Studies, and a Placement Tutor for Ministerial Formation, with Regent's Park College, University of Oxford. She is currently leading the 'Birmingham Baptist Churches Exploring their Black History Project'.



Wale Hudson Roberts introduces Young Bright and Bold (YBB), a residential initiative designed to nurture and develop young Black and Brown leaders within our Baptist family.

Young Bright and Bold (YBB) exists to identify, encourage, and invest in young people who are sensing a call to leadership and ministry. By supporting them early,

local churches play a vital role in strengthening the future leadership and sustainability of Baptist churches across the country. What is it – and why does it matter?

WHAT IS YBB?

YBB was established in 2006 in partnership with Canon Street Baptist Church, Birmingham. For four years it brought together 40-50 young Black

and Brown Baptists for a residential weekend of worship, learning, and community. These weekends created a safe and affirming space to explore faith, culture, theology, and identity, while forming lasting friendships and confidence in leadership.

Many participants described the experience as deeply formative – some even life-changing. It re-emerged in 2023.

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WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Young Black and Brown people continue to face significant challenges within wider society and, at times, within church spaces. Despite living in the 21st century, young Black people continue to experience the profound impacts of racism.

Its consequences – such as the invalidation of Black culture, tradition, and thought – remain significant hurdles. Experiences of racism and exclusion can undermine confidence, calling, and belonging. Research into young adults in the UK church shows that ethnicity is a crucial part of identity for many Black and Minority Ethnic young people.

YBB offers something simple but powerful: togetherness. A space where young people can share stories, faith, and theology, and be affirmed in who God has made them to be. This kind of support helps young people grow in resilience, faith, and leadership – and reminds them there is room for them within our Baptist movement.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YBB ARE TOGETHER?

Many Black and Brown young people are natural leaders. Sadly, the predominantly white environments they inhabit often tell them otherwise. Whiteness tends to validate talents in sports,

music, or preaching, but rarely encourages aspirations such as becoming astronauts, architects, engineers, or even Baptist ministers.

Young Bright and Bold challenges these limiting narratives. By using resources that resonate with Black and Brown young people, and by empowering them to co-create their own programme, YBB instils a powerful message: 'Yes, We Can.'

The last two YBB events (2023 and 2024) were one-day workshops hosted at Regent's Park College, focusing on leadership and character formation.

YBB RESIDENTIAL 2026

This year a YBB residential and mentoring programme will take place at Whitemoor Lakes, Action Centre in Lichfield, for young people aged 13-19 from 30 October to 1 November. The weekend will focus on discipleship, building relationships and leadership development.

The cost per young person, including accommodation and food, is normally around £200. Though for this year, I am delighted Baptists Together Home Mission is generously covering all accommodation expenses. Do please prayerfully consider if there is someone in your congregation who would benefit from participating in the YBB residential.

At a time when there are a paucity of Black and Brown leaders serving across Baptists Together, initiatives like YBB are an important way for local churches to invest in the next generation of leadership.



Wale Hudson-Roberts is the Justice Enabler at Baptists Together





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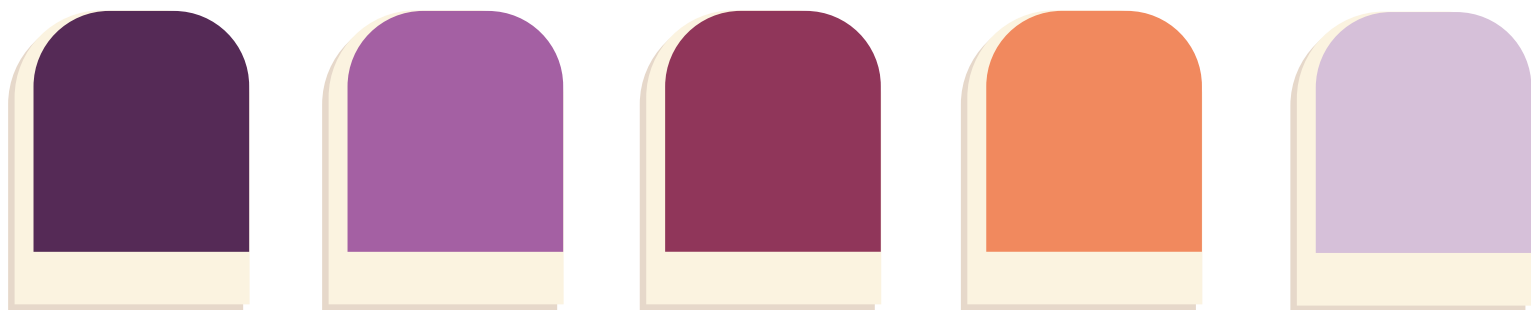
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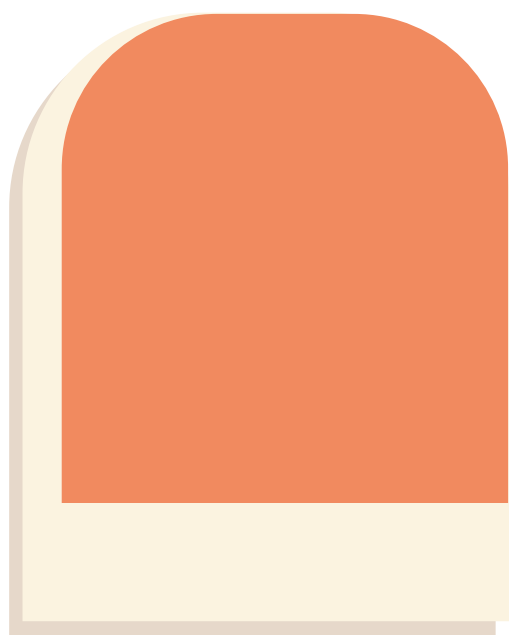


UPDATE FROM *Project Violet*

Project Violet undertook research on women's experience of Baptist ministry.

Led by Baptist minister Jane Day and fellow co-leader Helen Cameron, the findings were released in May 2024 and included 57 requests for change.

Samantha Bowring reports on some of the developments relating to ministry and leadership development.



ALLYSHIP

Making room for others to flourish

Think about the last church meeting you attended. Who spoke most? Whose ideas were listened to? Whose contributions were overlooked?

Or what about the last time someone sensed God might be calling them into leadership. Who encouraged them? Who noticed their gifts? Who helped them take the next step? Who was their ally?

Allyship is the intentional practice of standing alongside others so that they are seen, heard, encouraged, and able to flourish. In the life of the Church, it means noticing whose gifts are being recognised, whose voices are

shaping our common life, and who may need encouragement, advocacy, or space to respond freely to God's call.

Although the language of allyship can sound unfamiliar, even confrontational, it describes something deeply Christian: standing with one another, making room for others to flourish, and using whatever influence we have so that people are valued and encouraged. Think of Elizabeth affirming and encouraging Mary in Luke 1, Naomi walking alongside Ruth and helping her see the future God had for her, or Priscilla and Aquila investing in Apollos and helping him grow in his ministry.

Whether we are a church minister or church member, we are all called to encourage those who are otherwise unseen or undervalued.

Whether we are a church minister or church member, we are all called to be allies of those who are otherwise unseen or undervalued.

As new leaders emerge within our churches, we want every person to feel empowered to explore their God-given potential. Yet opportunities are not always experienced equally. Some people find their contribution, voice, gifts, and even their presence overlooked or diminished, simply because of who they are. This can happen in our churches, for example when the moderator of a church meeting notices only the raised hands of men and calls on them alone to speak. It can also happen in our structures, for example how Black and Brown ministers could feel discouraged from applying for translocal roles because they see the vast majority of people already in these roles are white.

The Church flourishes when people are enabled to serve, and it is diminished when someone with gifts and potential remains on the sidelines because they lack

confidence, feel unwelcome, or have been dismissed too quickly. Allyship helps us resist that loss by creating the conditions in which more people can belong, contribute, lead, and grow. It starts with noticing when a person is overlooked or excluded and then finding ways to enable their voice or contribution to be heard.

Project Violet, which explored the experiences of women in Baptist ministry in the UK, highlighted the need for male ministers to act as allies to women in ministry, and for White ministers to be allies to Black and Brown ministers. Many have already made formal commitments to this. As we seek to embed the findings of Project Violet, the challenge is to help the whole Church, all ministers and members, understand what allyship means and how it can be practised.

So over the coming months, we will share resources that explore allyship and the Christian principles that underpin it. These will invite churches to ask simple but

searching questions:

- **Who is taking part?**
- **Who is absent?**
- **Whose voice is not being heard?**
- **What gifts might we be overlooking?**

Every person is made in the image of God and entrusted with gifts that can enrich the Church. When someone is excluded, overlooked, or unable to participate fully, we lose something of what God intends us to be together. Allyship begins with noticing and grows through listening, encouragement, advocacy, and action. When people are able to bring their whole selves, contribute their gifts, and respond confidently to God's call, the whole body of Christ is strengthened.

Is there someone for whom you are being called to be an ally?

Together we can build churches where everyone has the opportunity to belong, contribute, lead, and flourish.



The second cohort of Magnify You at Baptist House. See p.47

MOVING BEYOND ANECDOTES...

Why we are improving our data to move towards a more faithful account of people's realities - helping our ministers and churches to flourish.

Just leadership' is a phrase we have started to use in the Ministries Team. Firstly, it describes our desire that ministers and leaders across Baptists Together embody justice in their own practice and advocate for it in their churches and communities.

It also points to the need for justice among ministers and leaders themselves, that each person should have equitable opportunities to pursue God's call on their life.

Just leadership begins with the Church's calling to reflect God's justice, wisdom, and mercy in its everyday life. To be truly just, it must be grounded in truth about people's experiences and attentive to whether opportunity, support, and recognition are shared fairly across the body of Christ.

A key challenge is testing what we think we know. For example, we may assume that women ministers are less likely to lead larger churches, or more likely to move into chaplaincy, but without reliable information we cannot know whether these patterns are real, how significant they are, or what lies behind them. Similar questions arise around ethnicity, age at entry into ministry, and training pathways. Without this understanding, injustice can remain hidden, sustained by assumption rather than brought into faithful discernment.

Project Violet called for better monitoring of data about ministers. The Ministries Team is responding by reviewing what we collect and keep, and how it can help ministers and churches to flourish. This will give us a clearer picture of how leadership can better reflect the diversity of Baptist life and the fullness of God's glory.

Over the coming months, the Ministries Team will contact ministers to request some information. We are beginning by recording ethnicity for each minister and will then progress to periodic anonymised surveys to understand other factors that may affect the ability to progress in God's calling, including caring responsibilities, disability, illness, and remuneration. This will help us identify patterns such as the gender pay gap, understand whether church leadership reflects the diversity of society,

and make better strategic decisions where needed. The information will be used to see the wider picture, not to focus on individual records.

This is more than an administrative task. It helps us see more clearly. It enables Baptists Together to recognise where inequalities may exist, name them honestly, and respond wisely where change is needed. It will also help us understand whether factors such as sex or ethnicity shape the forms of ministry people enter and the opportunities available to them. This matters because just leadership requires accountability, humility, and a commitment to receiving and nurturing the gifts of all God's people.

Some experiences, such as health, disability, or caring responsibilities, are complex and may change over time. They cannot always be captured in fixed records, so regular surveys and ongoing listening will be essential. Such listening is part of our Christian witness as we attend to one another and seek the flourishing of all.

By building this fuller picture over time, we can move beyond anecdotes towards a more faithful account of people's realities. Evidence is not an end in itself, but a tool for discernment, helping shape leadership that is more just and reflects the whole body of Christ.

MAGNIFY YOU

Intentional leadership for women in ministry

The second cohort is nearing the end of their programme and spent a day at Baptist House in Didcot in July.

They were asked, 'How has Magnify You challenged or impacted your leadership so far?' These were some of their responses:

It's brought encouragement, affirmation, challenge. Magnify You has challenged me to think and pray, 'What next, Lord? What might you be calling me to do for your Kingdom?'

Being invited to join Magnify You has been very edifying. It has given me greater confidence in my role and sharing what I believe God has laid on my heart, both in my own ministry journey and also across the wider Baptist family.

Magnify You has made me more confident in my ministry.

The variety of leadership roles and skills in the women we have heard have illustrated the diversity of our callings and affirmed and encouraged my different roles.

It has exposed me to wider Baptist life - there's more that goes on than just in my church! It's encouraged me in my call to ministry – inspiring and challenging me to pursue courageously all God has called me to. Also, it's made me think about how I might empower others in leadership.

It's giving me greater permission for me to lead as 'me', not trying to lead like someone else.

It has inspired and encouraged me in my life and ministry. It has reminded me to take care of my wellbeing.

It has made me look for and be aware of regional opportunities.

I've been encouraged in ministry by the speakers and others on Magnify You.



Samantha Bowring is the Project Violet Outcome Coordinator and is based in the Ministries Team.

The focus of her two-year role, which began in June 2025, is on the policies and practices of the Specialist Teams, and to coordinate and inform people about good practice across Baptists Together.

For more on Project Violet visit projectviolet.org.uk

Magnify You is an intentional leadership programme for women in ministry, created to encourage, coach, and equip accredited women ministers to flourish in regional and national leadership roles.

It was originally launched by Jane Day and Beth Powney in March 2020 with 15 women, supported by the Central, Eastern, and London Baptist Associations. Research into that first cohort showed just how much of an impact the programme had. It helped build confidence, and several participants went on to pursue, and step into new national or regional ministry roles they had not previously imagined for themselves.

Building on that early success, Magnify You was relaunched in late 2024 across the regional associations, with regional ministers Lisa Kerry, Claire Blatchford, and Mary Moody helping to lead the way. The renewed programme continues to champion women in leadership and create space for their gifts, calling, and confidence to grow.

REGIONAL ASSOCIATION CONTACTS

If you want to explore the options for training and spiritual formation offered by Baptists Together, please speak to your Regional Minister.



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Also, please visit:
yba.org.uk/becoming-a-baptist-minister

OTHER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

As well as through our colleges and Associations, there are a host of training and development opportunities across Baptists Together. Here are just a sample:

SMALL CHURCH HUBS

The Small Church Connexion has planted more than 20 hubs to bring smaller churches together for training, events, celebrations and resourcing.

The hubs provide opportunities to meet, talk, pray, listen and dream about how God wants his church to reach out to those who are lost. To ask 'What is in your hand? Who have you got? How are they gifted? What are they passionate about? and Who is outside your door?' Training is offered, including on gifting, making disciples and governance.

The churches forming the hub are within a 30 minutes' drive of the host church, where there is a welcome, car parking and good facilities.

To find out more, and for links to hub stories, visit baptist.org.uk/hubs

FRESH STREAMS CONFERENCE

The annual Fresh Streams conference takes place 11-13 January 2027 at Yarnfield Park Conference Centre, Staffordshire

Its theme is Amplify: Raising Voices for Kingdom Impact.

Keynote speakers for 2027 include Dr Kandiah OBE, the founder of The Sanctuary Foundation, a charity supporting refugees to find welcome, work and worthwhile housing in the UK; Karen Sethuraman, the first female Baptist minister in Ireland, who has been involved in peace and reconciliation work for over twenty years, both within and outside the church walls; and Rachel Gardner, who has more than 20 years of experience in youth ministry and is passionate about equipping young people and those who serve them.

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EVERYONE EVERYWHERE: WOMEN'S DAY

Exciting plans are taking shape for Everyone Everywhere Women's Days, a new initiative from Everyone Everywhere designed to encourage, equip and connect women across the Baptist family.

Originally planned as a single weekday event in Northampton in March 2026, the organising team took time for prayerful reflection and recognised that the format would be difficult for many women to access. Work commitments, childcare responsibilities, travel distances and clashes with other events meant that some women would struggle to attend.

Rather than allow the vision to lose momentum, the team has reimagined the event into a series of Women's Days taking place in different locations.

The first gathering will be held on Saturday 7 November, 10am – 2pm at Sundon Park Baptist Church, Luton, creating opportunities for women to participate closer to home and within their own local contexts.

For more information and booking go to bit.ly/EE26WOMEN

ENCOUNTERING THE ANABAPTISTS - THROUGHOUT OCTOBER

Encountering the Anabaptists is a short online module that introduces their history, beliefs, practices and contemporary relevance, organised by The Anabaptist Mennonite Network.

The course is running on the first four Thursdays in October (1, 8, 15 and 22) from 7pm to 9pm. It will cost only £20 and will include a copy of *The Naked Anabaptist* by Stuart Murray.

scottishnetwork.churchsuite.com/events/jft1wazo

MULTIPLY IN 2026

Baptists via Everyone Everywhere have teamed up with the Gregory Centre for Church Multiplication and other ecumenical partners to offer a series of events in 2026 to help churches reach new people with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

On Saturday 17 October, Multiply Pioneer Mission will gathering those who feel called to pioneer new worshipping communities in creative ways, hosted at St Barnabas Church, Kensington. Shaped by voices from the Baptist and Anglican church, its programme will look to celebrate stories of hope, explore theology that sustains, and share practical wisdom for mission at the edges.

Then on Tuesday 10 November, Multiply: Midlands will call together leaders and church teams to share wisdom across traditions and contexts, exploring how to grow a truly mixed ecology of Church across the Midlands. Hosted at Gas Street Church, its programme will feature leaders from a range of denominations and expressions of church.

For more information, visit ccx.org.uk/multiply

THE 2026 ANNUAL SAM SHARPE LECTURE

The Sam Sharpe Lecture is an annual event established during Black History Month by the Sam Sharpe Project to explore themes of mission, race, class, and social injustice inspired by the legacy of the Jamaican national hero and Baptist deacon Sam Sharpe.

This year's speaker is the Revd Merlyn Hyde Riley, General Secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union, and her lecture title is 'Subverting Empire: Lessons from Sam Sharpe on Institutional Injustice and Church Responsibility.'

Tuesday 27 October at the House of Commons,
London, and
Wednesday 28 October City Hall, Bristol

For more, visit: bit.ly/samsharpe26

POLITICS, POWER AND PROTEST - IONA COMMUNITY - 17-23 OCTOBER

Ever been tempted to visit the beautiful, historic island of Iona? If so, perhaps there's no better time than 17-23 October, when Baptist Union Public Issues Enabler Steve Tinning and his Joint Public Issues Team colleague Simeon Mitchell will be leading a week exploring Politics, Power and Protest. Those attending will reflect together on faith, justice and public life, all in one of the most inspiring places in the British Isles. They'd love to see you there!

To find out more and book your place, visit:
iona.org.uk/event/politics-power-protest/

Prayers

This covenant prayer was offered to Baptists Together and shared at the 2026 Baptist Assembly by the North Western Baptist Association.

Covenant God

You have called us to be Baptists Together
Together with each other
Together with all your people
Together with you.
Together with all whose lives are marred by this
world's brokenness,
And for whose salvation you came.

Help us we pray,
To walk together well
Through a world of challenge and growing despair,
Yet daring to believe that your presence and
purpose can be found
Even in those things that disturb and disrupt our
settled lives.

You have called us to be a people
Defined by your immeasurable love
Watching over each other
As we walk in ways known
And ways yet unknown

Forgive us for when we have pursued our own
interests
At the expense of seeking your ways
When we have found it easier to compound our
divisions
Rather than draw on the riches of your grace.

Amidst all this world's confusion,
Empower us by your Spirit,
To hold fast to the timeless truths that define and
sustain us
With hearts that seek your heart
In the face of new realities that we encounter.

We pray for one another
As we pursue our shared calling
To be communities of hope in this troubled world.
A hope that is founded
Not on our power to change or even understand
But through faith in your unfailing goodness
Your heavenly reign and immeasurable love
And through knowing that your Kingdom will
remain
When earthly schemes have run their course.

Help us to be a true sign of hope to this world
Help us to share your love together
Discern your paths together
To follow your purposes,
Display your likeness
Embody your Gospel
And truly live together
As the people you have called us to be.

Through Christ our Lord and Saviour

Amen

I Will...

Leave a lasting legacy



Could you help future generations see the goodness of the Lord?

BMS World Mission and the Baptist Union of Great Britain ask whether you could help ensure our Kingdom work could continue, by choosing to leave gifts to both organisations in your Will.

By leaving legacies, you will transform more lives at home and across the world, enabling future generations to experience the never-ending love of Jesus.



Find out more by scanning the QR code or going to:
www.baptistswill.org.uk