

All Things Baptist

History

In the early 16th century the Reformation started. At a similar time the 'Radical Reformation' came into being because it was felt that the Reformation hadn't been radical enough. One of the earliest groups were called 'Anabaptists' (means 're-baptiser') with a focus on believers' baptism rather than baptising children.

- 1609 First English speaking Baptist Church is started in Holland by John Smyth
As a result of persecutions Separatists had fled to Amsterdam.

- 1612 The first Baptist church met in Spitalfields, London. Thomas Helwys, a founder of the Baptist denomination, published 'A short declaration of the mystery of iniquity', one of the first books to call for religious liberty. In the 17th century Baptists refused to conform and be members of the Church of England, arguing that Christ, and not the King (or Queen) was head of the church and were persecuted for their beliefs.
English Civil War led to planting of Baptist Churches.

- 1689 Act of Toleration passed allowing freedom of worship.

- 1792 Baptist Missionary Society founded by William Carey and he went to India.
It is now known as BMS World Mission.

- 1812 A group meet in Dr Rippon's Vestry, London to discuss the forming of a Baptist Union.

- 1813 The first Baptist Assembly is held in London.

- 1832 The formation of the Baptist Union was completed.

- 1837 The Revd George Cousens was the first reported West Indian minister to hold a pastorate in Britain, becoming pastor of Four Ways Baptist Church in Cradley Heath.

- 1854 CH Spurgeon, one of the most famous Baptist preachers, began his ministry. He started children's homes and a college to train people for ministry.

- 1855 'The Freeman', now 'The Baptist Times', first appeared.

- 1891 General Baptists (who believed that when Christ died on the cross he died for everyone in general) and Particular Baptists (who believed that Christ died for the elect, i.e. a particular group of people) came together to form the present Baptist Union of Great Britain.

- 1905 The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) was formed and held its first Baptist World Congress in London.

- 1912 The Sustentation Fund started. It is currently known as Home Mission.

- 1922 Violet Hedger became the first woman to qualify as a probationer minister.

- 1949 European Baptist Federation is formed.

- 1955 The BWA celebrated its fiftieth anniversary Congress in London.

- 1987 Revd Margaret Jarman becomes first woman Baptist Union President.
- 1989 The BUGB moves its offices to Didcot and commits to participation in national ecumenical life.
- 1997 Revd Fred George becomes first Asian Baptist Union President.
- 1998 A Denominational Consultation in 1996 led to the BUGB adopting Five Core Values.
- 2001 New Regional Association structure for BUGB inaugurated.
- 2005 The Baptist World Centenary Congress celebrated in Birmingham, England. BUGB General Secretary, the Revd David Coffey, became President of the Baptist World Alliance.
- 2006 Revd Dr Kate Coleman becomes first black woman Baptist Union President. She was the first black woman accredited minister in 2000.
- 2013 The Revd Lynn Green was voted in as the first woman General Secretary.

Who are Baptists?

Baptist churches are found in almost every country in the world. As part of the world-wide Christian church, Baptists form one of the largest families of faith, alongside other Trinitarian Christian traditions such as Anglicans, Methodists, Reformed, etc.

For Baptists the concept of a family is important. The church is not so much a particular place or building, but rather a family of believers, committed to Christ, to one another and to the service of God in the world. In this Baptist family everybody is equal, for everybody has a part to play in the service of God. There is no hierarchy of bishops or priests exercising authority over their members. Equality of status, however, does not mean that all have the same role.

Each local Baptist church appoints its own leaders - or ministers - to have particular responsibility for preaching, teaching and pastoral care. Working alongside these ministers are also deacons, who together with the minister(s) form the leadership team of the local Baptist church. Sometimes called elders or deacons.

Baptists are grass-roots people, with a particular emphasis on the local church as a gathering of disciples committed to one another under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Under Christ's Lordship these local churches are self-governing and self-supporting, ranging in size from twenty (or less) or so members to many hundreds. Although each Baptist church is autonomous, Baptists nonetheless have always believed in associating with one another, and so the churches come together in regional, national and international spheres to promote and support the fellowship of Baptists everywhere.

What makes a Baptist?

There is no one distinctive Baptist belief. Although probably most people think of believer's baptism as the distinguishing feature of Baptists, they are not the only Christians to practice it. Nor are they the only Christians to believe in congregational government, the priesthood of all believers, or the separation of church and state. It is the combination of these beliefs which make Baptists distinctive. The following, some of which are shared with other Christians, combined indicate the distinctiveness of Baptists.

- **Lordship of Christ**

Jesus is Lord is the distinctive confession of faith. As individuals and as churches, Baptists seek to make Jesus Lord of every aspect of their lives.

- **The authority of the Bible**

Baptists believe that the Bible is the Word of God through which Christ is revealed to us and that the Holy Spirit through the Bible shows us God's way for living. As radical believers, Baptists seek to root their lives in the revelation of God's truth.

- **Baptism for Believers**

On the basis of the New Testament, Baptists claim that baptism is for believers only. Baptism is only for those who are able to declare Jesus is Lord. As a symbol of Jesus' claim on their lives, Baptists practise baptism by immersion, in which candidates symbolise their desire to die to self and to live for Christ.

- **A Believers' Church**

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

- **The Priesthood of all Believers**

Through Christ we all have direct access to God and share in a priestly ministry of representing other to God and God to others. In the Baptist model of a believer's church every member has a role to play, whether in teaching, faith sharing, evangelism, social action, pastoring, guiding, serving, prophetic insight, praying, healing, administration or hospitality.

- **The Church Meeting**

In a Baptist church, an illustration of the priesthood of all believers is the church meeting. This is the occasion when members come together to prayerfully discern God's will for their life together. In Baptist churches the final authority rests not with ministers or deacons but with the members gathered together in church meetings seeking and submitting to the will of Christ. It is the church meeting which, for instance, appoints ministers, elders, deacons, and others who exercise various forms of leadership within a local congregation, agrees financial policy and determines mission strategy. Church meetings tend to take place mid-week, normally on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.

Local churches will usually call a minister to serve among them. The minister functions as a church member with special responsibilities in caring for the members and leading in the church's mission. Their authority is in the affirmation of the congregation acting under God's guidance. They are almost invariably recognised by the wider family of churches.

- **Inter-dependence**

Baptist churches have always come together in regional, national and international associations for support and fellowship. On the basis of the New Testament, Baptists believe that churches should not live in isolation from one another but rather be inter-dependent.

- **Sharing the Faith**

Baptists believe that each Christian has a duty to share their faith with others. William Carey was a Baptist who is known as the father of the modern missionary movement. Along with this emphasis on evangelism, however, Baptists recognise that mission includes social action and involves promoting justice, social welfare, healing, education and peace in the world.

- **Religious Freedom**

Religious freedom for all has always been a keystone of the Baptist way. Within Baptist churches, tolerance for differences of outlook and diversity of practice is encouraged along with a call for the liberty of conscience for all.

Declaration of Principle

The Basis of the Baptist Union is:

1. That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His laws.
2. That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who 'died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, and rose again the third day'.
3. That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.

Baptist Union Vision and Culture

As we focus on making vision reality, Baptists Together are committed to intentionally developing a culture where we...

Seek to be a movement of Spirit led communities:

As those who have encountered the living Christ, to intentionally seek his will and purpose for our local churches and every expression of our shared life (Gal. 5:22-25)

Feel like one team:

Celebrating diversity; valuing, respecting and trusting each other as we work together in partnerships – making sure everyone feels included and listened to (I Cor. 12:24b-27)

Embrace adventure:

Being serious about discipleship, willing to take risks, pioneer and move out of the comfort zone of familiar ways of doing things (Matt. 28:18-20)

Inspire others:

With a generosity of spirit, energise & motivate people to be all that God created them to be (Eph. 5:1-2)

Share a hunger for God's coming Kingdom:

Nurturing a "holy discontent" that arises from our desire to give practical expression to our vision of God's purpose for creation – confronting evil, injustice and hypocrisy and challenging worldly attitudes to power, wealth, status and security both within and beyond our Union (Matt. 6:9-10)

Structure of the Baptist Union

'Baptists Together'

The Baptist Union of Great Britain has around 2000 churches supported by staff in thirteen regional associations and three specialist teams based in Didcot, Oxfordshire. Five Baptist Colleges prepare men and women for ministry and offer ongoing development and training.

Specialist Teams

Ministries Team

The Ministries Team supports all forms of recognised and accredited ministry amongst our churches, as well as providing guidance and advice on ministry-related matters. The team:

- Enables and oversees the recognition and accreditation processes for ministers, whether they serve in church, chaplaincy or pioneer contexts.
- Supports all forms of sector ministry, including chaplaincy to industry, prisons, education, health-care and the military
- Administers the work of the national Ministerial Recognition Committee
- Relates to patterns and processes of ministerial training at the Baptist Colleges and elsewhere, and participates in the ecumenical quality assurance programmes
- Assists the settlement of ministers and ministerial students through the Baptist Together Settlement Process.
- Facilitates Continuing Ministerial Development and other conferences to support all stages of ministry.
- Administers some financial support for Bursaries and Further Study awards

Support Services Team

The work of this team is divided into three main areas:

- Finance – with information for churches on general finance and accounting as well as guidance on taxation
- Pensions – please visit the Pensions website for more information
- Legal and Operations – providing information on a wide range of issues affecting Baptist churches, and offers guidance for charity trustees. Their work incorporates the work of the Baptist Union Corporation (BUC) who act as Property Trustees for many of our churches and also administer the Baptist Union Loan Fund. The Team is also responsible for keeping the Union's database updated with current contact information for churches, ministers, treasurers and secretaries and for managing the Annual Return process.

Faith and Society

Aims:

- to enable our Union to reflect theologically on areas of shared belief and concern.
- to communicate and enable churches to consider relevant contemporary issues and the mission opportunities these bring.
- to enable all parts of our Union to communicate well and be aware of areas of need and mission opportunity.
- to represent our Union in public life, with other Christian denominations, networks and faith communities.

General Secretary

Lynn Green was appointed General Secretary in 2013. She says, 'My role is to provide guidance, support and leadership to the Baptist Steering Group, ensuring that we are listening to God, working collegially and are drawing together views from within the whole Baptist family so that we can be faithful to our vision of being a mission movement.'

Baptist Union Trustees

The Baptist Union has a Trustee Board made up of twelve members elected by the Council. The role of the trustees is to provide strategic direction for the Union, ensure appropriate policies are in place and operated effectively, to oversee the Union's structure and to ensure compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

Core Leadership Team

The Baptist Core Leadership Team brings together leaders from Associations, Specialist Teams, Project Co-ordinators and Colleges in order to realise the vision for effective interdependent and collaborative working. The Group is led by Rev Lynn Green, the General Secretary of the Baptist Union.

Baptist Union Council

The Baptist Union Council meets twice a year. It consists of around 80 members and mostly drawn from churches, colleges and co-opted delegates along with Association and Special Teams and helps to set the broad strategic direction of the Union. Enabling the implementation of this direction is subsequently the task of the Baptist Core Leadership Team.

Baptist Assembly

The Assembly includes celebration, inspiration, reflection and deliberation and is open to all. It is the place where churches are directly represented through their delegates, alongside ministers and members of Council. The Assembly is usually convened once a year and is run together jointly by the Baptist Union of Great Britain and BMS World Mission.

Baptist Colleges

Baptist Colleges prepare men and women for ministry and offer ongoing ministerial development once they are accredited. They also provide training for youth ministry, lay pastors and preachers, and courses on a range of topics including Baptist history and principles, counselling, mission and pastoral care.

Bristol Baptist College
Northern Baptist College, Manchester
Regent's Park Baptist College, Oxford
South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff
Spurgeon's College, London
St Hild's, based in Sheffield

Regional Baptist Associations

Each regional association has a team of regional ministers and administration staff that support the local church pastorally, advise on mission and practical matters, and organise beneficial training events. Representatives of each association are part of the Baptist Together Settlement Process Team which meets three or four times a year to review the progress of churches looking for ministers.

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|------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| Central | East Midland | Eastern |
| Heart of England | London | North Western |
| Northern | South Eastern | South Wales |
| South West | Southern Counties | WEBNET |
| Yorkshire | | |

Home Mission

Home Mission is all about helping Baptist churches and individuals to reach their mission potential and bring the love of God to their communities. It is the Baptist family purse, and each year our Union has an appeal to raise money for Home Mission. The money raised is used in three ways:

1) Grants to local churches

These 200+ grants include church planting, renewing local churches and mission project grants. Through Home Mission hundreds of lives have been affected and many have found faith in Jesus. The Regional Associations facilitate this.

2) Support for Regional Associations

The Associations are engaged in missional development in their area, supporting new initiatives and churches and supporting the on-going work of churches and their ministers and families

3) Support for the National Specialist Teams

The three specialist teams seek to resource churches in their work through legal, ministries and missional support. In addition, representing the mission of God in national ways such as engaging with Government, speaking out on matters of faith and developing national mission initiatives.

Website

www.baptist.org.uk

The Heart of England Baptist Association

The Heart of England Baptist Association (HEBA) brings together 153 churches in:

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Herefordshire | Shropshire | Worcestershire |
| Staffordshire | The Black Country | Birmingham |
| Coventry | Warwickshire | |

HEBA's Purpose

Growing healthy churches: HEBA's purpose is to stimulate and assist the region's Baptist churches for their God-given task of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ

HEBA's Values

HEBA is committed to:

- Companionship – walking with ministers and churches.
- Generosity – wanting to say 'yes' when asked for assistance.
- Diversity – embracing the region's mix of people.
- Learning – nurturing spiritual and theological development.
- Innovation – God is doing a new thing.

In 2007 the Association re-organised itself and amongst its strengths are:-

- Support of ministers and congregations
- Financial resourcing
- Advice on trust, legal and other governance matters
- Safeguarding – DBS checks for ministers, training, advice and support
- Responding to crisis
- Supporting churches in the settlement of ministers

The Staff Team

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|--|-----------------|
| Karen Martindale (Association Administrator) | Full time |
| Sharon Jones (Administration and Communications Officer) | 4 days a week |
| Tom Russell (Finance Manager) | 3 days a week |
| Divine Kekozukunia (Book-Keeper) | 3 days a week |
| Keith Baldwin (Safeguarding Officer) | 25 hours a week |

Karen, Sharon, Tom, Divine and Keith work from the HEBA Office at 480 Chester Road, Sutton Coldfield and from home. The Office Team ably support our churches in a variety of ways, including help with finances, property, and communications.

Rev Adrian Argile (Regional Minister – Team Leader)
– Black Country, Worcestershire
Rev Neil Le-Tissier (Regional Minister)
– South Birmingham, Coventry, Warwickshire, Herefordshire
Rev Dave Ellis (Regional Minister)
– Staffordshire, North Birmingham, Shropshire

The Regional Ministers travel widely to develop strong links with local churches and ministers. As well as offering pastoral support, advice, preaching, teaching and training, they also encourage fresh vision and networking. They offer too spiritual leadership, inspiration and prophetic insights.

Chris Knight (Treasurer)
Judith Miller (Moderator of Board of Trustees)

Although the treasurer and the moderator aren't officially staff members, they give a huge amount to the Association, and we like to include them in our staff.

Contact Details

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www.baptist-heartofengland.org