



28 March, 2018

News:

'Investing in Godly leaders'

A report of Baptist Union Council, March 2018

Progress on how we train, equip and encourage our future leaders was a key focus at the March 2018 Baptist Union Council. The gathering, which took place at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick, Derbyshire (14-15 March), had a focus on "Investing in Godly Leaders" as updates on the implementation of the Ignite report were shared.

The role of Council is to discern the broad strategic direction of our Union, and a key chunk of time was devoted to reviewing the progress made on our 2015-2020 priorities and projects, as well as exploring what might be included in our priorities going forward.

Worship was led by Jo Williams, co-minister of Blackley Baptist Church in Yorkshire. Opening the gathering by taking 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 as her text, she said that Paul's picture of the body not only helps us recognise our interdependence on each other, it goes further - it 'glorifies' in our difference.

'1 Corinthians 12 reminds us we are all different,' Jo said. 'And we need to work with that difference, to celebrate the diversity. This is about unity not uniformity.'

Referring to the Council theme, she continued, 'What does it mean to be Godly leaders? How do we encourage and invest in upcoming leaders?'

Investing in Godly Leaders

On Wednesday morning Andy Hughes, Ministries Team Leader, gave an introduction to Investing in Godly leaders, a key theme of this Council.

He began by quoting Matthew 9:38, saying that everything begins with God: 'It's ultimately the Lord's work to raise up workers. Our job is to pray that He will be doing that, and as the Ministries Team and regional teams, to recognise and not get in the way.'

'Without God raising up workers, everything else in the Ignite report is worthless. Everything begins with this premise.'

He highlighted a number of challenges our Union is facing. We are seeing 'significantly' more people coming up to retirement than in training. There were 29 ministerial students entered Baptist colleges last year, a figure which is normally more than 40. Is this a blip or a more general trend?

There are also still 'far too few' women in ministry, 100 years after the first female Baptist minister. Just 12 per cent of our fully accredited ministers are women. Although the figure is improving (33 per cent of newly accredited ministers and 37 per cent ministers-in-training are women), 'we are still a long way from equality and need to be praying about it,' said Andy. The aspiration is 50:50.

There are problems in supply through settlement: ministers are not moving around the country as much as previously, for a variety of reasons; new ministers are remaining in their student churches and not entering the settlement process.

Andy then gave an update on the Ignite report and how it is being implemented. The Ignite review, received in 2016, explored where ministry is going and what sort of ministers we need. It recommended a new benchmark for affirming an individual's call to ministry that focuses more on character, than particular skills: Marks of Ministry. There are three stages to the Marks - Calling, Formation and Ongoing Development, the first two of which have now been adopted.

Andy explained that our past processes have meant we have rejected some people because they do not fit our structures. Ignite will result in both a 'raising and lowering of the bar,' allowing for greater flexibility in the people we can call.

'There are places we need to raise the bar; but other places where we need to abolish the bar,' he said. 'The bar needs to be really high on areas like safeguarding - we need to be trust worthy, people of integrity and godliness.

'But we need to make it more accessible to people being called.'

Other progress included changes to the register of Accredited ministers, to allow for greater flexibility in recognising people's calling; and a move from paper files to electronic (a scanning project is almost complete). In addition, a working group has been set up to review the national settlement process.

'The foundations have been laid,' Andy said, 'but there is a long way to go.'

Council moderator David Mayne noted that the Ignite implementation had taken place alongside the Historic Case Review. 'The amount of progress made is remarkable,' he said.

Covenant and code of practice

One of the proposals of the Ignite Report was the introduction of a Ministry Covenant as the foundation of ongoing accreditation, expressing a mutual commitment to walk together and watch over each other.

Another Ignite recommendation was the introduction of a local church 'code of practice', offered to all churches appointing ministers. The code is not to be a requirement, but 'ministers would be clearly aware of the degree to which a church has engaged with and adopted the code.' It would reflect the mutual expectations of church and minister in their ongoing covenant relationship.

John Claydon, regional minister team leader at Northern Baptist Association, and Dan Pratt, leader of 57 West, Southend and author of a book on covenant, have worked on developing these proposals. They led two sessions at Council to explain them and receive feedback. 'It's about relationship,' noted Dan (pictured), 'with God and with each other.'

In the first covenant session, they presented their paper and encouraged council members to respond more generally. What were their initial reactions to the paper? What were their major hopes and concerns?

In the second covenant session they were invited to give feedback on the proposed covenant, and how it might be affirmed and implemented. The second session also explored the code.

Council also heard from Alan Donaldson, General Director of the Baptist Union of Scotland, which implemented 'agreements' for ministers a decade ago (they didn't use the word covenant). It was born out of a desire 'that being part of a professional body should mean something,' he said. 'Ministers should be bound together in a fruitful way that would bless them and others.' After some initial reluctance, there had been a momentum shift, with only five out of 170 ministers not signing up. Every minister is required to mentor, and be mentored. There is a growing sense of ministers 'as a guild, committed to learning the craft of ministry,' Alan said.

There was broad welcome from Council members for both the covenant and the code, with some reservations about how the word 'covenant' will be understood and received.

Further work is now required to incorporate the feedback and develop the papers into documents that can be wholeheartedly endorsed.

Vision refresh - our priorities

Council members spent time reviewing the progress we have made on our 2015-2020 priorities and projects.

Lynn Green, introducing the session, explained that a Council gathering in 2014 had established these shared priorities. This had happened following the Futures Process, out of which our common vision "Growing healthy churches in relationship for God's mission" had been established.

Baptists Together, she reminded Council, are the members of our Union; churches, Associations and colleges, supported by three specialist teams.

Referring to the 2015-2020 priorities, she said, 'Today is about looking back. What has been achieved in each area? Is this still an active priority for us now?'

Members were invited to gather at tables and discuss specific areas, before providing feedback. There was a general sense that while much had been achieved, work was still needed to implement projects fully.

With regards to safeguarding, outgoing trustee Barbara Carpenter praised the progress made, but stressed that it 'must always be an active priority.'

On communications, Stephen Keyworth, Faith and Society Team Leader, said much had been lost after the decision to close the communications department, but there had been lots achieved in terms of the development of the Baptists Together website, magazine, email channels and social media. At the same time, Associations have developed their own regional strategies, and the F&S Team has assisted training in six of them. Nevertheless, there was a 'tremendous amount' to go. Adrian Argile commented that a huge amount had been passed to Associations, and that more work could be done on a cohesive communications strategy across Baptists Together.

On the Loaves and Fishes Project to identify new income streams, Mike Mortimer (SCBA) had doubts over what had been achieved. He said that people give to a vision, especially a local vision. Treasurer John Levick noted that a number of its recommendations had been implemented, that the Subscriptions Working Group were currently working on possible financial models for the future which would be brought back to Council in November, and that this remained a key priority.

In terms of the health of our churches, Mark Hirst (SEBA) said we have achieved 'a greater realism', and from that there is a need for a 'pioneering spirit'.

The following day council members were invited to think about what might be included in our priorities going forward. David Mayne, council moderator introduced this session. He explained that in conversations at Council and in other groups, our

thinking and action has begun to coalesce around four key themes that could form the basis of our shared priorities going forward. David stressed that whilst these were shared priorities, different teams across Baptists Together would contribute to their implementation in differing ways:

They are:

- * Pioneering & Planting - investing in opportunities and pioneers.
- * Equipping the local church for mission - including CYF, millennials, transitioning churches.
- * Investing in Godly Leaders - including younger leaders, evaluating discipleship for ministers.
- * Enabling Baptist Voices in the public square - including issues of justice.

Council members were invited discuss whether these areas resonated, and whether anything was missing. There was a clear sense that all areas resonated, said Tim Fergusson, of HEBA. He commented, 'Investing in Godly leaders is important because others will follow from that.' Molly Boot (co-opted, 2018) highlighted Ignite's emphasis on character, which 'opens up possibility of raising up leaders from unexpected places'. She added pioneering is 'for all of us'.

Glen Graham, who moderates the Disability Justice Group, said that in order to be just in the public square, we need to be just in our churches. We are not there at the moment. However, work is ongoing, and he highlighted two projects the justice groups are working on at the moment. Regional Justice Hubs, and the training resource Just Aware. Several council members also emphasised the need for discipleship and it was agreed that this was relevant to each of the key themes.

One group suggested there should be an extra theme: one that emphasises building a sense of connectedness as Baptists, and encouraging and reclaiming a sense of Baptist identity, and Council considered together whether this was a key theme rather than a given of our dna and culture values. A couple of members suggested that a sense of identity and belonging would flow out of doing the other four areas well. It was therefore decided that a sentence emphasising the sense of connectedness would provide the context for each of the four points.

Our current priorities and priorities (2015-2020) are:

- * Our vision for Baptists Together is clearly embraced and understood and our renewed culture has become the norm.
- * We have established structures for relating that reflect our governance report and enable relationships of trust to flourish and mission to be enabled as easily as possible.
- * We have a clear grasp of the health of our churches and a clear understanding of what needs to be done to enable mission across Baptists Together.
- * To have implemented the Ministries Project recommendations.
- * To navigate well the issues of human sexuality and find a settled place.
- * To implement the Loaves and Fishes project to identify new income streams.

- * To ensure that a strategy is developed and implemented to stabilise the Pension Schemes.
- * To complete and implement the review of our Safeguarding.
- * To develop the database to incorporate the needs of Associations and our Union as a whole.
- * To develop a communications strategy.

Baptist to lead Churches Together in England

The Revd Dr Paul Goodliff has been appointed as the new General Secretary of Churches Together in England

Paul is presently co-minister of Abingdon Baptist Church, having served previously as General Superintendent of the Baptist Union's Central Area, and then as the Baptist Union's Head of Ministry. He is well known as a lecturer and is the author of books on pastoral care, the theology and psychology of shame, and most recently, a study of ministerial formation and virtue ethics, *Shaped for Service* (2017).

Widely experienced ecumenically, Paul has been a member of the WCC-Pentecostal Joint Consultative Group since 2000.

Paul will take up his appointment in September, following the retirement of the present General Secretary, the Revd Dr David Cornick.

The Convenor of CTE's Board of Trustees, the Revd Ruth Bottoms, said, 'I am delighted that we have been able to appoint someone who has a breadth of ecumenical experience. Paul is an able communicator and has a passion for enabling the churches to engage together as they seek to bear witness to Christ in our nation. I look forward to working alongside him.'

David added, 'It is very good news indeed that the leadership of CTE will be in such capable hands as the churches of England build on their excellent relationships and reflect on ways in which they can collaborate in mission together.'

Speaking of his appointment, Paul said, 'At a time of renewed commitment to the ecumenical process, with a more missional focus to the work as Churches Together in England, I am looking forward immensely to participating in this new chapter of the ecumenical life in England.'

'It is a privilege to be able to offer some leadership to this process, as together CTE serves the churches of this land. I hope to prayerfully encourage the whole church of Jesus Christ to 'move in the Spirit as we are called to transformative discipleship', to

echo the theme of the very recent WCC Commission for World Mission and Evangelism Conference held in Arusha, Tanzania, and which I attended as a delegate.'

He continued, 'As the ecumenical movement in England embraces the mission of God to make Christ known in word and deed, I am certain we discover more of what that transformative discipleship means together than when we do so alone, always trusting in the gracious enabling of the Holy Spirit.'

Challenging prejudice through dialogue

Residents were offered the opportunity to step into another person's shoes and understand life from a different perspective when Windsor Baptist Church hosts a human library

Just like in a real library, a visitor to the human library can choose from a range of titles: the difference is that books are people and reading is a conversation.

The event organiser was Baptist minister the Revd Kat Bracewell, who said it provided 'a unique opportunity to challenge stereotypes and prejudice, and to build a sense of community in Windsor.'

'When people understand one another better, problems and barriers between people begin to fall away.'

Members of the public were invited to call in between 11am and 2pm on Saturday 24 March to have a 10 minute conversation with a 'human book' of their choice, and broaden their understanding of human life.

The titles of the 'human books' on offer ranged from the traumatic to the life changing. There 18 in total, including:

"Living with Autism: A mother's story"

"I was addicted for 12 years"

"Living to the full with a terminal diagnosis"

"I gave it all up to teach in Nepal and gained so much more"

"5 friends, £50, a guitar and the open road"

"85 Years Living In Windsor"

The participants were drawn from the connections the church has made through its community café. 'Everyone knows someone with an interesting story,' said Kat. 'We've made contact and many quickly grasped the vision.'

Kat has been involved with two human libraries in Oxford, where she was part of a Restorative Justice project during her time as minister of New Road Baptist Church. She was one of the books, speaking on her experiences as an adoptive parent.

'I couldn't believe how much it was buzzing. Lots of people wanted to talk me about adoption. I found it really affirming and encouraging.

'People live in different ways, and it just gives an insight into someone else's life. It helps you appreciate human life. We hope it will be helpful for Windsor, where there are issues around homelessness and how we value people.

'We are delighted to be hosting a human library.'

Calais volunteers highlighted in film

The dedication of Baptists volunteers at a safe house in Calais has been profiled in a film by the Bishop of Europe.

Jenny Baldwin and husband Eric, of Brentwood Baptist Church, Essex, are among those supporting unaccompanied minors and vulnerable young adults at a safe house in Calais.

The house, run by Brother Johannes, attempts to provide a community for the young refugees and unaccompanied minors in Calais, for whom conditions have worsened since the closure of the Jungle camp 18 months ago. There are showers and hot food, internet and clothes washing facilities, and general and prayerful support. The workers do not just try to 'help' refugees, but prefer to be there with them, supporting when possible, but also making friends.

The house is the focus of a fundraising Lent appeal by the Bishop of Europe, and Jenny has been a regular volunteer there since last summer. She met Brother Johannes when she visited the Calais 'Jungle' in August 2016, and put her sewing skills to good use.

The Jungle was dismantled later that year, but she still felt God saying that she had to do something. She heard that Brother Johannes was continuing to run the house taking in new arrivals and unaccompanied minors, and that he was looking for volunteers.

'I felt it was right to volunteer and go back to Calais,' Jenny explained, 'The job description said 'house mother'. At the time there were about 20 boys living in the house with more coming in during the afternoon on five days a week to have a shower (at that time there were no showers available for refugees in Calais). Two washing machines went nearly all the time and sunny days were a bonus to get it all dried before they had to leave.

'Aside from caring for the physical needs of the refugees the volunteers are part of the prayerful presence in the house. On a 'quiet' day there can be four periods of prayer on busy days the prayer sometimes has to be less formalised.

‘It was fairly exhausting but very rewarding.’

After she got home Jenny felt her involvement should not stop there. She went through her diary to block out short periods to go over to help again. The recent trip was her fourth, where she was accompanied by Eric, a Baptist minister.

She hopes to return at the end of June. ‘While I feel I can make a useful contribution to running the house and supporting Johannes in his work I will continue to go.

‘The house is important because it provides a home and a safe space for some very vulnerable young people, who’ve had a horrendous journey and are now faced with life on the streets. It’s chaotic, but great fun. No two days are the same.

‘You have to go with the flow, accept the boys as they are. They’re lovely.

‘If you can make a small difference to one person, it’s going to build up and make a big difference to lots of people.’

The safe house is also supported by Peaceful Borders, the grass-roots collaboration of peacemakers accompanying those who seek peace at the borders of our lives and the borders of our nations. Peaceful Borders is co-ordinated by Baptist minister Juliet Kilpin, with support from fellow minister Simon Jones and other Peaceful Borders voluntary team members.

This film is part of the Bishop of Europe's Lent appeal. For more about the Lent appeal, [click here](#)

For more about the safe house, visit mariaskobtsova.org.

To support the house and its work you can make a bank transfer to:

Ass. Maria Skobtsova

IBAN: FR7615629026250002172700193

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