



## ***Update: January 2024***

Dear Friends

Happy New Year!

We pray you have managed to recover a little from the busyness of Christmas and are walking into 2024 hopeful to see God's blessing in unexpected places.

As a team we have been reflecting together on the well-known passage from Jeremiah 6:16

*Thus says the Lord:*

*Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths,  
where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.*

It's a great challenge to stop and ponder together, asking God to lead us forward into 2024. We hope we might help each other to discover the good path, the way of Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Of course, this verse comes in the midst of many warnings and judgements from God. So as we seek the good way, we hope to be attentive to the injustices around us and within us and we are challenging one another not to say

*'Peace, peace', when there is no peace.*

In offering you this update we seek the good way and we hope you will be encouraged by what we share. In particular, at the start of 2024, we draw your attention to this season of prayer in the life of our Baptist Union. May we keep helping each other to discover the ancient paths that lead to life as we commit ourselves to pray together.

And may you know the blessing of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as together we follow the Good Shepherd down the good way that leads to life.

Every blessing

Diane, Hilary, Jane, Mary, Mat, Mike, Paul, Sharon, Steve and Wale  
*Faith and Society Team*

*Feel free to forward this email to others in your church, or encourage them to sign up to receive our regular emails by completing the form at the bottom of every page of [our website](#).*

## This month's featured stories:



**Review of the year:**  
Highlighting the 30 most clicked stories in *The Baptist Times* over the last year



**Grant from the National Churches' Trust will restore Welsh Baptist chapel and enable community outreach**



**New book with new questions about Baptist identity - what it means to be Baptist people today**

## News:



### Praying Together

As part of our call to prayer, our first **Praying Together day of prayer** will be on **Wednesday 10 January**. The theme for the day will be 'Fixing our eyes on Jesus'.

*Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.* 1 Peter 1:13

There will be a live virtual prayer gathering at 10:30 -11:00 when Lynn will be joined by three of our Regional Team Leaders: Linda Donaldson (NBA), Joth Hunt (SEBA) and Nigel Manges (SWBA). This will also be shared again at 19:30.

In this season of prayerful stillness and waiting, let's join together in prayer however we can, especially on 10 January. Please share this and encourage others to pray too - using the link:

[www.baptist.org.uk/prayingtogether](http://www.baptist.org.uk/prayingtogether)



### Youth Justice Survey

Our Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) wants to know what young people care about. From now until the end of January, short surveys are available for:

- 11-to-14-year-olds
- 15-to-25-year-olds
- Youth/Church leaders and parents.

Could you invite your young people, youth leaders and parents to contribute to this?

JPIT will use the information gathered to help prepare resources that address justice and peace issues that young people care about, to support local churches and youth groups. It will also help discern areas of justice that aren't currently high priorities for young people.

Click here to [access the survey and links to resources](#) to help youth groups think about justice and changing the world.

## This month's featured resources:



### January Prayer Diary

The [January Prayer Diary](#) is now available to download from our website. The particular themes this month are:

- Our Baptists Together family and all this year will hold for us
- Fresh Streams as they meet at their leadership conference
- The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- The Central Baptist Association

Please print out a copy for those unable to access it.



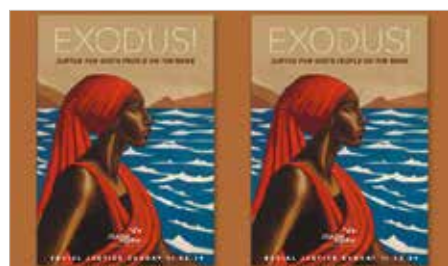
### Politics in the Pulpit?

Politics in the Pulpit, is JPIT's weekly podcast and video packed with ideas for preachers and worship leaders. It begins its new season with new host Jacky Embrey on 9 January, exploring the Revised Common Lectionary readings for 14 January. Jacky is a newly retired URC minister who brings a wealth of experience from a range of church contexts. Click here [for more information and to access the podcast](#).



### Everyday Evangelism

'Reach outside of your comfort zone and start with one' - London City Mission (LCM) has launched a new evangelism resource hub and podcast, as revealing research highlights key opportunities for Christians to bridge gaps and share the gospel. The resource hub features a growing collection of practical tools, how to guides, inspiring stories and blogs to help all share the hope of Jesus. [Click here to find out more](#).



### Racial Justice Sunday 2024

This year's Racial Justice Sunday will be on 11 February. The theme is '*Exodus: God's people on the Move*', and focuses on those who have been forced to leave homes and livelihoods for a variety of reasons, and the welcome they receive when they arrive in a new place. Click here to [download the resource booklet](#) from CTBI.



### Act on Poverty - Lent course for 2024

The Act on Poverty course is a brand new resource for small groups. It is being put together by JPIT, Christian Aid, Church Action on Poverty, the Trussell Trust and others. The aim is to enable your church to gain a deeper understanding of diverse experiences of poverty and enable you to act in the run up to the General Election. The six-week course is currently in production, including questions and prompts for small group discussion plus a pack of inspiring videos and recordings featuring conversations with activists and people experiencing poverty. [Sign up to find out when the course becomes available](#).



### Warm Welcome

Is your congregation or community space offering a warm welcome to people in your neighbourhood this winter? There is still time to register with Warm Welcome, to be added to their map to make your event easier to discover. Warm Welcome offers lots of great ideas, suggestions for potential funding and important things to know to help provide a safe and welcoming space for anyone who seeks company or warmth in the darkest months of the year. [Click here for more information](#).



### The Bereavement Journey

This seven-session series of films and facilitated discussion helps people bereaved in any way and at any time to process their loss. The final optional session also gives them a chance to explore faith questions arising in their bereavement from a Christian perspective. 'It creates space to understand the powerful emotions we all feel when someone close dies'. Oakes Baptist Church in Huddersfield has run the *The Bereavement Journey* five times - [click here to read more about it](#) from Trustee Richard Waller.



### Revisiting Baptist thinking for today

A new monthly online reading group focusing on past Whitley Lectures is set to run throughout 2024, via Zoom, from the Centre for Baptist Studies. It will be an opportunity to read and reflect together. The Whitley Lecture is an annual lecture by a Baptist offered through the Colleges and in other ways. It was first established in 1949 in honour of WT Whitley (1861–1947) - Baptist minister and historian. The lecture is designed as an encouragement to research and writing by Baptist scholars, and to enable the results of this work to be published. [Click here to find out more.](#)



### Baptist Artists Together

Faith and art have a long history together; they have been companions through the ages. Yet for reformed traditions like Baptists, the missional, Kingdom, pastoral and theological avenues this partnership opens has rarely been explored in depth by our churches. Introducing 'Pilgrimage' - a gathering of Baptist Artists keen to develop a community where art and faith can explore and express the Gospel and the Spirit of God in new and revealing ways. Baptist Artists Together hopes to meet several times through 2024. [Click here for more information.](#)

## This month's featured events:



### Praying Together Day of Prayer - Wednesday 10 January

There will be a live virtual prayer gathering at 10:30 -11:00 when General Secretary Lynn Green will be joined by three of our Regional Team Leaders: Linda Donaldson (NBA), Joth Hunt (SEBA) and Nigel Manges (SWBA). This will also be shared again at 19:30.

In this season of prayerful stillness and waiting, let's join together in prayer - please share this and encourage others to pray too, using the link: [www.baptist.org.uk/prayingtogether](http://www.baptist.org.uk/prayingtogether)



### It is Well with my Soul musical - Saturday 13 January

Premiered in June 2023, this new evangelistic musical written by a Baptist minister tells the story behind the enduring hymn 'It is Well with My Soul'. It explores 'the enduring message of true and steadfast faith in the midst of tragedy and suffering' and invites listeners to explore the Gospel message of hope for themselves. [Click here for more details about the musical](#) and the performance in London in January.



## Fresh Streams National Leadership Conference - 15-17 January

Each January ministers, leaders, elders, deacons, worship leaders, youth leaders – whole church leadership teams – come to The Hayes and are inspired and invigorated. You are invited to join them!

Five keynote speakers will be speaking into the theme of conference - ***Together: Discipleship in a Divergent World*** - and there is a great line up of seminar speakers including Ken Benjamin, Rachel Heffer. Martin Young, Simon Harris, Simon Goddard, Kate Irvin, Sue Glover and Isabella Senior. Worship leaders are Josh and Florrie Bishop Hall. Click here [for more information and online booking](#).



## Week of Prayer for Christian Unity - 18-25 January

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a special week providing an opportunity to focus our prayers on Christian unity, as well as speak about and experience Christian unity personally, in our village, town or county and engage with what happens at a national level. This year the theme has come from an ecumenical team from Burkina Faso, facilitated by the local Chemin Neuf Community (CCN). They have reflected on the familiar story of the Good Samaritan, and all are encouraged to Go and do likewise. It is a story about crossing boundaries that calls our attention to the bonds that unite the whole human family. [Click here for more information and resources](#).



## Theology Live - Friday 19 January

Theology Live has been running for six years. A day conference for Baptists to explore theology together, with specialist input and time for discussion, it's been a fantastic mix of papers by Baptists engaged in theological research and study. Theology Live in 2024 will be a little different, and will take the time to reflect on how we discern, so central to our being Baptist, and the theology that gives it meaning and weight. Read more about [plans for the event and a link to book your place](#).



## Intercultural Church and City Transformation - Saturday 20 January

This gathering in Leeds will bring together Christians from diverse cultures and streams to foster unity and empower the Church to make a lasting impact on cities for Christ. Click here to [find out more](#) about this opportunity to be part of a movement that seeks to build bridges, break barriers, and create lasting change - and to register.



## Evangelism and Ecumenism: Conflict or Complementarity? - Wednesday 24 January

The connection between evangelism/evangelisation and ecumenism was key to the origins of the ecumenical movement but seems to be rarely spoken about today. This webinar from the Society for Ecumenical Studies includes three speakers - Dr Viorel Coman, Sr Dr Gemma Simmonds CJ and Revd Dr Ben Aldous - who will examine the historical and theological links between these important areas of Church life as well as the current practical outworking. Forefront to our thinking will be the question, what does it mean to do this kind of mission ecumenically? [Click here to book your place](#).



## Book Launch - *Voicing New Questions for Baptist Identity* - Thursday 8 February

Join an online lunchtime seminar from the Centre for Baptist Studies to launch this new publication, edited by Eleasah P Louis and Andy Goodliff - with responses from Anthony Clarke and Lisa Kerry.

[Click here to register.](#)



## Exploring 'why' and 'how' we use film as a catalyst for social change as mission in your local community - Sat 17 February

Register now to join the [ChangeMakers Team](#) at Baptist House in Didcot for an inspiring and informative day looking at the options for communicating via film and social media. Click here [to find out more and book your place](#) - £15 per person including lunch.



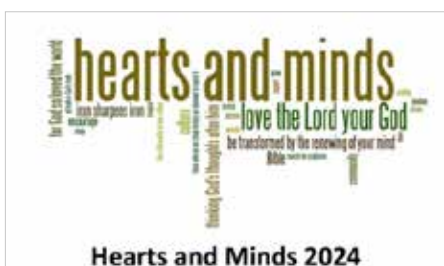
## Book Panel - *The Sam Sharpe Lectures: History, Rebellion and Reform* - Thursday 22 February

Join an online lunchtime seminar from the Centre for Baptist Studies to launch this new publication, edited by E P Louis and Rosemarie Davidson - with responses from Gale Richards, Tim Judson and Anthony Reddie. [Click here to register.](#)



## Baptist Assembly - 17-19 May

Why not plan to join us at our Assembly in Telford this year, with a group from your church? To get a feel of what Assembly is like, we have a selection of videos from last year's event available to view on our website. Please [see the Assembly website to access them](#). More details about Assembly 2024 to follow next month.



## Hearts and Minds Conference - Thursday 13 June

This theological conference mainly for Baptist ministers will be taking place at Bristol Baptist College and will be an opportunity to present and listen to papers within a friendly, supportive environment. The Keynote speaker will be the Revd Dr Peter Morden. Hearts and Minds is an annual day conference sponsored by Bristol Baptist College, Cardiff Baptist College, and Regent's Park College. It is designed to create a hospitable space for Baptists to think and talk about theology together. To offer a paper, contact Helen Paynter [paynterh@bristol-baptist.ac.uk](mailto:paynterh@bristol-baptist.ac.uk) by 1 May and to register, email [reception@bristol-baptist.ac.uk](mailto:reception@bristol-baptist.ac.uk) by 1 June.