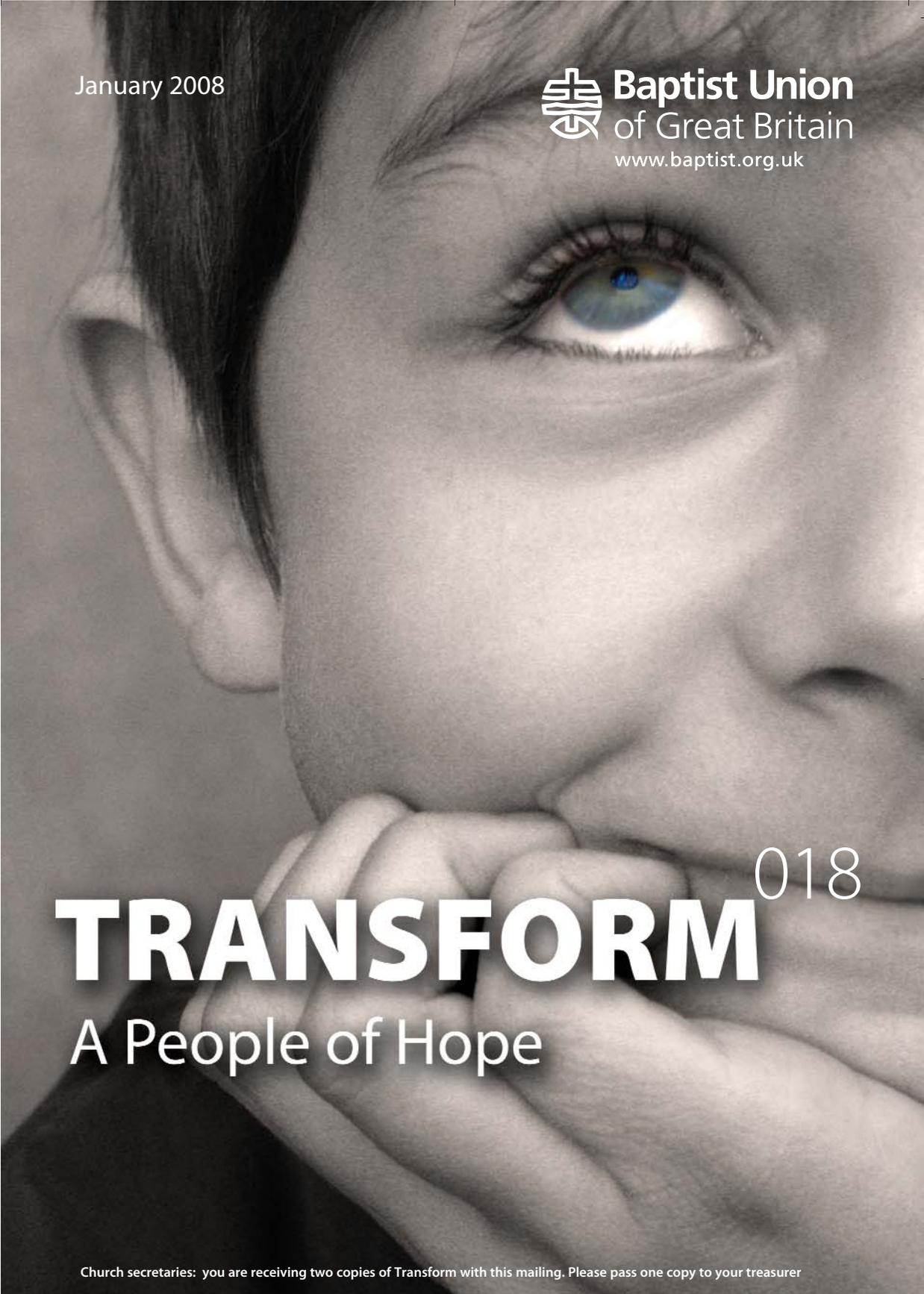


January 2008

 **Baptist Union**
of Great Britain
www.baptist.org.uk



018
TRANSFORM
A People of Hope

Church secretaries: you are receiving two copies of Transform with this mailing. Please pass one copy to your treasurer



Baptist Assembly
www.baptistassembly.org.uk

*a hope
& a future*

GOD'S PROMISE FOR AN UNCERTAIN WORLD

A HOPE AND A FUTURE
Baptist Assembly 2-5 May 2008
www.baptistassembly.org.uk

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Welcome to the winter/New Year edition of Transform. Many of you have commented on how valuable this publication is to you – whether you are in the local church or working for an Association. Do remember that you can access and even download (bearing in mind the environment!) all back copies of Transform. So passing a copy around long queues of patient Deacons is no longer necessary! Why not email them and give them the web link www.baptist.org.uk/transform as a late Christmas present? Much of the work/information/events presented in *Transform* is funded in some way through Home Mission, so thank you and do keep giving generously in 2008 – it really does make a difference.

Transform is also available online at www.baptist.org.uk/transform

Editorial



A People of Hope

Donald Coggan, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, once described the word hope, as we use it in everyday speech, as “a weak and flabby word”. We need to be clear that the word in the New Testament has no weakness or flab about it at all! Hope is rooted in the fact of Jesus’ death and resurrection and gives us the grounds for our confidence for time and for eternity.

I’m delighted that HOPE 08 (www.hope08.com) is being so strongly supported in our churches. Of course, hope is something which cannot be limited to one year, but I applaud the initiative to use this year to proclaim our message of hope in imaginative and practical ways to our nation.

As Christians we are a people of hope and that means that we have a clear sense of direction. We are not a people who are aimlessly rushing around doing good deeds but a people whose lives are defined by the hope that God has planted in our hearts through Christ.

At the Baptist Union Council in November 2007 agreement was given to a strategy for the work of the Baptist Union (see page 11). I find this an incredibly exciting development. We chose the strap line “ENCOURAGING MISSIONARY

DISCIPLES” and I hope those words will help to focus and encourage all aspects of our work in the coming years. You will find the main strategic objectives later in this issue.

The simple fact is that we cannot do everything. We don’t have the money, the time or the gifts to do everything. So we need to use the limited resources that we have as effectively as possible and I pray that the strategy will help us to do so.

At that same Baptist Union Council meeting we also had a historic debate about the transatlantic slave trade. We listened carefully to one another and to God and as a result we agreed, unanimously, a resolution which you will find later in this issue. It can be desperately difficult to live with our differences but as a people of hope we can have confidence that God will enable us to find a way of relating to one another with honesty, integrity and grace. I found that Council meeting one of the most moving experiences of my life and I look forward to the ways in which it will help us to move forward as we continue to reflect on the resolution that was agreed in Swanwick.

May the hope that is in Christ fill you to overflowing as you serve him in this New Year.

With warmest Christian greetings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'J'.

Jonathan Edwards
BUGB General Secretary

Finance



2008 Stipend

The Trustees have fixed the Home Mission Stipend for 2008 at £18,400. Treasurers should also note that the value of a manse for pension fund purposes is £5,540 per annum as from 1 January 2008. This increases the amounts that churches and ministers pay as pension scheme contributions, and significantly increases the benefits which will be received in due course from the fund.

2009 Stipend

The Trustees have fixed the Guideline Stipend for 2009 at £19,100. The provisional figure for the Manse Value for 2009 is £5,740, but this is also subject to confirmation later in 2008.



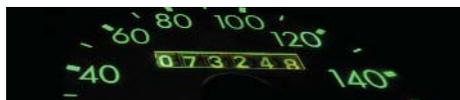
Deposit rates

The Baptist Union Corporation currently (from 1 August 2007) pays interest at 4.6% on money deposited by churches in the Baptist Union Loan Fund. This rate is subject to change in line with changes in national interest rates. The current rate is advertised each week in the *Baptist Times*. The deposits assist the provision of loans to churches, and are welcomed by the Corporation.

Loan rates

The Baptist Union Corporation is willing to lend at 7.3% (from 1 August 2007) to churches

buying, extending or renovating buildings or manses, subject to suitable repayment arrangements being in place. This rate is also subject to change in line with national interest rates. The current rate is advertised each week in the *Baptist Times*.



Mileage rates

The recommended mileage rates continue at 40p per mile for the first 10,000 miles within each tax year, and 25p for each mile thereafter, although HM Revenue and Customs is undertaking a Consultation exercise on significant changes to the process which will probably introduce measures taking account of carbon emissions.



Gift Aid

Treasurers should be aware that the basic rate of income tax is due to fall in April 2008 from 22% to 20%. This will reduce the amount of Gift Aid recoverable on donations. In 2007-08 a donation of £100 will attract a tax refund of £28-20p making a total receipt of £128-20p. A donation of £100 in 2008-09 will only attract a tax refund of £25 making a total receipt of £125. This is an overall reduction of 2.5%, and donors need to be asked to increase their giving by a further 2.5% just to keep the church's income the same, and by more if the church's income is to increase.



Compiled by Philip Cooke FCA., Honorary Taxation Adviser to the Baptist Union

Reduction in basic rate of tax and effect on Gift Aid relief:

The basic rate of tax is set to reduce to 20% with effect from 6 April 2008 which means that the value of Gift Aid relief will fall from just over 28p for every £1 given to 25p. The Revenue have confirmed that the lower rate of tax relief will apply to gifts received by churches and charities on or after 6 April 2008, regardless of the fact that the gift may have been dated or made before the end of the current tax year. This gives rise to something of a 'mismatch' since as far as donors are concerned they are required to state in their tax returns the amounts given during the tax year. However, the Revenue consider that the only practical way of dealing with donations received by charities is by reference to the date of receipt. It is significant that 6th April 2008 falls on a Sunday! The Revenue will be issuing further guidance on this matter in due course.

Expenses of Minister's spouse attending conferences etc:

A question has been asked as to whether a taxable benefit arises to a minister if he or she is accompanied by a spouse at a conference or assembly at the expense of the church. Provided the spouse is attending the event in the capacity of a member of the church fellowship, and at its specific request, there

should be no question of any taxable benefit arising, though the position in relation to any overseas visits might be more complicated.

Structural alterations and repairs to the church manse:

A situation has recently come to light where a church treasurer incorrectly thought that structural alterations and repairs gave rise to a taxable benefit and therefore included the expenditure on form P11d. Fortunately, it was possible to rectify the error and a tax liability was avoided. As stated in section 1.7 of the *Taxation Guidance Notes for Churches & Ministers (document F5 on the BU website)*, expenditure incurred by a church on structural repairs and alterations, exterior decoration or the maintenance and replacement of landlord's fixtures and fittings of a church-owned manse does not give rise to any taxable benefit and no entries are required on form P11d.

Hospitality expenses:

The question has been asked as to the kind of evidence required to support the reimbursement to a minister by a church of expenses incurred in providing hospitality at the manse. Tax relief is only available in respect of expenses incurred on 'official' (as opposed to 'social') entertaining of visiting ministers, church officials members of the fellowship. Because a church is required under the terms of any P11d dispensation to exercise proper control over such expenditure, it should obtain from the Minister details of the occasions and purposes for which hospitality was provided, together with reasonable details of the costs incurred. If a P11d dispensation does not extend to

Finance

hospitality expenses then it will be necessary for any such expenses to be shown on the form P11d. Round-sum annual allowances should be avoided since these would have to be treated as additional stipend for PAYE purposes.

Casual preaching and other fees:

A minister recently enquired whether, since he had not been supplied with a tax return form, it was necessary for him to account for tax on casual fees for conducting services, weddings and funerals etc. The answer is most definitely, 'yes!' If a tax return form has not been issued and an individual has reason to believe that he is in receipt of income which has not been taxed, it is his or her responsibility to advise the Revenue and request a tax return form accordingly. The question is also asked from time to time whether such 'casual' income has to be taken into account in connection with a claim for tax credits and the answer, again, is 'yes!' All taxable income, and this will include net rental income received from the leasing of a minister's property, enters into the calculation of qualifying income for tax credit purposes.

'Rented' manses:

Where a minister resides in rented property it is absolutely essential that the lease or tenancy agreement be in the name of the church, with the rent being paid directly to the landlord by the church, if the minister is to avoid being charged tax and national insurance as if the rent was a housing allowance. The exemption from tax on accommodation provided for a minister for the better performance of his or her duties only applies if the church has a legal interest in the property, ie as owner or lessee.

Annual value of a manse for pension purposes:

Having regard to the number of times that this has been referred to in these columns over the years it is perhaps surprising, if not alarming, to learn of new situations where a church treasurer believes that the *annual value of a manse for pension purposes* is a benefit which should be shown on form P11d or, would you believe, even as remuneration to be taken into account as part of the PAYE process! So, once again, it needs to be made clear that this *manse annual value* figure (which for the year 2007 is £5,360 and for the year 2008, £5,540) is simply a component part of determining **pensionable income** for contribution and benefit purposes and it has absolutely **no relevance** to income tax returns, forms P11d or PAYE. In the case of some leases of minister-owned property, the rental is related to this manse annual value figure though, strictly, such rentals should be determined on the basis of the 'market rental' of the particular property. However, if a rental is based on the manse annual value then it should, of course, as is the case with any rental, be included in the L pages of minister's (and, where appropriate, a spouse's) tax returns.

Reimbursed manse lighting and heating expenses:

A case has arisen where a church has treated the reimbursement of manse lighting and heating expenses as taxable pay for PAYE purposes. This, of course, defeats the object of dealing with these expenses by way of reimbursement (rather than being paid directly by the church as account holder), such purpose being the saving of national insurance

contributions, both to church and minister, on the amount involved. The reimbursement does give rise to a taxable benefit which **must** be included on form P11d (at section N) and also on the M pages of the minister's tax return, though the minister is able to claim (again on the M pages) a deduction of 25% of such expenses in respect of church-business use.

Property owned by a minister whilst living in church-provided accommodation:

A question which arises frequently is whether a minister who owns a property and lets it out whilst he or she lives in church provided accommodation, is entitled to treat that property as his 'main residence' for capital gains tax purposes (CGT) and therefore be exempt from any charge to CGT on its disposal. Provided there is an intention eventually to live in that or a successor property, then a minister who is required to live in 'job-related' accommodation for the purpose of carrying out the duties of his or her office may elect that such property be treated as his 'main residence' for CGT purposes. Notice of such election should be given to the Revenue within two years of its acquisition or decision to treat it as a 'main residence' but the Revenue will, in practice, accept later notice if it is shown that the taxpayer was unaware of the requirement. It is upon this premise that a minister who leases a property to a church for use as a manse would also expect to be entitled to the CGT exemption but it is advisable that notice be given to the Revenue of an election to treat the property as his or her main residence.

Motor mileage allowance:

In the event there was no mention of any proposed change in the motor mileage allowance when the Chancellor made his October Pre-Budget Statement and we therefore continue to await news of a long overdue revision to the rate of allowance.

And finally ...

A New Year's resolution, perhaps, to bury, once and for all, the terms '*leaseback*' and '*student minister*', which have been replaced respectively by '*lease of a minister-owned property*' and '*minister in training*'. As one correspondent put it recently: 'it's difficult to part with the old lingo' - but it's worth a try! The term '*leaseback*' is a misnomer and one which gave rise to some misunderstanding on the part of the Revenue who thought that the Baptist Union was involved in a nasty tax avoidance scheme, whilst the term '*student minister or pastor*' failed to emphasise the individual's role as the inducted minister of the church. Here's hoping that the old terms will soon pass out of circulation and with warmest good wishes for the year ahead.

The foregoing notes are issued for general guidance only. The author or publisher cannot accept responsibility for loss occasioned to any person acting or refraining from action as a result of material contained herein. If you are in any doubt about the correct treatment of any matter you should seek further advice. I am prepared to respond to enquiries of a general nature, but would appreciate a SAE if the enquiry is by mail. My address is Hollyoak, 1 White House Drive, Barnt Green, Birmingham B45 8HF. My e-mail address is: philipjcooke@aol.com and it would be helpful in distinguishing any such messages from the inevitable 'junk' mail if the subject heading could make clear that it is a church tax enquiry.

Legal



Charity Registration

The Charity Commission has announced that the registration of religious charities with an annual income over £100,000 is being delayed. It was originally intended that this would commence in April 2008 but it will now begin no earlier than October 2008.

The Baptist Union Approved Governing Document (model constitution) is ready for churches to use as the basis of their constitution for charity registration should they wish to do so and can be downloaded from the Baptist Union website.

New BUC Guideline leaflets are also available to explain how this document should be used and to provide information about constitutions in general.

Further guidance on the registration process will be provided by the Baptist Union Corporation, the Guideline leaflet *C16 Churches and Charity Registration* is updated as new information becomes available. There are three new leaflets about local church constitutions:

C24 Church Constitutions

C25 Using the (Almost) Approved Governing Document

C26 The (Almost) Approved Governing Document

If you are revising your church constitution in preparation for charity registration please read all three leaflets.

Staff at Baptist House have been running some

training days, and similar events have been organised by local Baptist associations. The 2008 dates for further days are:

14 February, 27 March, 21 May

The cost of the day is £15 per person but lunch and other refreshments are included. To book a place please contact Sally Spicer on 01235 517747 or sspicer@baptist.org.uk.

Prevention of Illegal Working

Churches are reminded that they must make document checks on every person they intend to employ to ensure that they are not employing an illegal worker. Further information is available in BUC Guideline leaflet *C12 Employment* or at www.employingmigrant-workers.org.uk. An employer helpline is offered on 0845 010 6677.

The checks should be made either at interview stage or once the church has decided who it wishes to appoint. At interview stage care should be taken to ensure that all candidates are treated in the same way when documents are requested.

Listed Buildings – Lead Times

Churches that have buildings that are Listed Buildings are reminded that apart from 'like for like' repairs using appropriate materials consent is needed for all alterations. Consent can be sought from the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Baptist Union of Wales but there is an application process.

Churches that need to apply to the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee for a Certificate to authorise alterations should note that the



committee meets on a quarterly basis. The meetings take place at the beginning of March, June, September and December. Applications need to be received at least two months before the meeting in order to allow sufficient time for the legally required consultation process before the application is considered at a committee meeting.



Construction (Design and Management) Regulations

The legal requirements relating to the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007, which came into force in April this year, apply to churches undertaking building work on their buildings. Please refer to BUC Guideline leaflet *C8 Construction (Design and Management) Regulations*.

The Health and Safety Executive also publish a helpful leaflet 'Want construction work done safely?'. This can be obtained from their web site at www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg411.pdf. There is also helpful advice from the construction industry at the Construction Skills Organisation in their leaflet 'Industry Guidance for Small, One-off and Infrequent Clients' which can be obtained from their website at: www.cskills.org/healthsafety/cdmregulations/guidance/clients.asp



Manse Mortgages

Following our advice in Transform 17 we have now received confirmation that the Kent Reliance Building Society is willing to look at applications from churches and/or ministers who wish to change their existing shared ownership mortgage provider or review their current arrangements. Any church or minister that wishes to consider a possible switch, or is hoping to enter into a new purchase involving a shared ownership should contact the Baptist Union Corporation who will be able to provide contact details. Borrowers are advised to take Independent Financial Advice before confirming any mortgage arrangements.

BUC Guideline Leaflets

The following new leaflets are now available:

- C24 Church Constitutions*
- C25 Using the Approved Governing Document*
- C26 Baptist Churches Approved Governing Document*

The following leaflets have been updated:

- A3 Selling a Manse*
- A8 Leasing a Property (owned in whole or in part by a Minister) to a Church for use as a Manse*
- B1 Church Trusts, Model Trusts and Property Trustees*
- B6 Loans to Churches*
- B9 Baptist Model Trusts for Churches 2003*



Safeguarding

Independent Safeguarding Authority

Over the past few editions of *Transform* we have started to alert you to the change brought about by the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. This Act introduced a new body that will bar certain people from working with children and vulnerable adults. Recently the Independent Safeguarding Authority who will oversee this work was launched. They and the Criminal Records Bureau have organised a number of half day seminars to introduce their work. Please look on their website for details – www.isa-gov.org. The factsheets and background information documents will be especially helpful (if you have problems accessing the Authority's website these documents can also be found at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

John O'Brien who is the senior civil servant on the implementation programme will lead a seminar at this year's Assembly; this will be very important for people to get up to speed with the latest information. Please make a note on your Assembly programme.

Everyone who works with children, young people or vulnerable adults will have to register with the new scheme. It will be an offence to employ someone to work with these groups if they are not registered. A timetable is being set to phase in people who currently hold CRB Disclosures. This timetable will have to be adhered to. People who do not hold a Disclosure at the starting date will be the first people to register. In the meantime continue as at present, making applications and refreshing them at the appropriate intervals.

Churches' Agency for Safeguarding



CAS has made various changes to its organisation and as a result there is not, at present, any backlog of work to be cleared for submission to the CRB. Please use this time to catch up with Disclosures before the new arrangements begin in the autumn.

As from September 2007, CAS began to establish itself as a separate body from the Methodist Church; this means that CAS has its own bank account. Please make sure all cheques are payable to CAS not the Methodist Church, as formerly.

The CAS Board have been told that the error rate – that perennial problem – is now rapidly receding. Congratulations! All the careful work of checking applications is starting to pay off.

Ministers and Disclosures

Many ministers still do not hold Disclosures – please contact your regional minister to help you make your application. Please do not use your church's system for making an application otherwise we have no record here, at Baptist House, of your Disclosure.

Refreshment of Disclosures

Baptist Union Council decided at the start of the CRB system that ministers should refresh their Disclosures every five years or upon entry to the settlement list. A similar timetable has been suggested to churches for non-ministers who hold Disclosures. The present fee for a Disclosure for a minister or other paid worker is £36.

Council

Mission department

Much of the mission department's 'report to Council' was to generate a debate with regard to the Baptist response to the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade. We were delighted with the outcome (below) and will be working over the next few months, together with the Racial Justice Working Group to make sure this statement is more than mere words that, but is followed up with action.

'As a Council we have listened to one another, we have heard the pain of hurting sisters and brothers, and we have heard God speaking to us.

In a spirit of weakness, humility and vulnerability, we acknowledge that we are only at the start of a journey, but we are agreed that this must not prevent us speaking and acting at a kairos moment.

Therefore, we acknowledge our share in and benefit from our nation's participation in the transatlantic slave trade.

We acknowledge that we speak as those who have shared in and suffered from the legacy of slavery, and its appalling consequences for God's world.

We offer our apology to God and to our brothers and sisters for all that has created and still perpetuates the hurt which originated from the horror of slavery

We repent of the hurt we have caused the divisions we have created, our reluctance to face up to the sin of the past, our unwillingness to listen to the

pain of our black sisters and brothers, and our silence in the face of racism and injustice today.

We commit ourselves, in a true spirit of repentance, to take what we have learned from God in the Council and to share it widely in our Baptist community and beyond, looking for gospel ways by which we can turn the words and feelings we have expressed today into concrete actions and contribute to the prophetic work of God's coming Kingdom.'

The mission department will be looking forward to the March Council, when we will be bringing forward a substantial programme of work entitled, 'Building a Culturally Inclusive Union.' Other major pieces of work we reported on included a second 'On our Knees' which took place on the 4 of November; the new mission files; the work we are doing to map the Baptist Union; the findings in the annual returns and the substantial work that we have done in relation to migrant workers; Hope08; and Fresh Horizons. Much of the working of the department can be found on the Baptist Union website.

BUGB Strategy

Encouraging Missionary Disciples

Encouraging Missionary Disciples in obedience to Jesus' Great Commission lies at the heart of the Baptist Union strategy. These key strategic objectives express our commitment to the encouraging of radical, life-long missionary discipleship in the belief that this needs to affect every aspect of our life together.

Council

Life-long Discipleship

Produce resources and training to encourage life long discipleship and to enrich the worship in Baptist churches. Produce resources that will help to enhance corporate prayer and to encourage a deeper engagement with the world.

Evangelism and Mission Initiatives

Refocus the Union on the challenge of evangelism by encouraging the appointment of evangelists, producing training resources, offering specialist support to those working in new and risky areas and organising an evangelism conference. Develop resources and tools which encourage and enable effective mission with particular emphasis on seniors' ministry, migrant workers, church planting and debt support. Continue to implement the Children's Strategy arising out of the On our Knees initiative.

Diversity

Develop and implement strategies which ensure that everyone has a respected and valued place within the life of the Baptist Union, irrespective of age, disability, gender or race. Promote an increase in the number of women candidates for ministry with a view to achieving parity between women and men. Implement the racial justice strategy in order to affirm the multiracial identity of the Baptist Union.

Interfaith

Develop and provide resources to churches and Ministers to encourage a deeper understanding of other religions within our

society and to find more effective ways of supporting ministry in multi-faith areas.

Creation Care

Develop clear theological principles to support ecological concern and advise and resource churches in responding practically.

Identity

Develop and provide resources on what it means to be a Baptist church and enable patterns of learning and sharing between small and large churches. Special attention to be given to the role of the Church Members' Meeting and the nature of leadership.

Discovering

To undertake a detailed mapping exercise of England and Wales identifying places of Baptist presence and the gaps. Linking the findings with population density and areas of deprivation, using the findings to inform our Home Mission response, and church planting priorities.

Faith & Unity

The Faith and Unity Department presented a report entitled, 'Speaking for the Baptist Union of Great Britain: finding our voice on public issues'. Following debate and discussion, this was adopted as offering guidance on procedures to be followed. It was recognised that this area of work needs to be kept under review, and the latest version of the report can be found on the BUGB website.

Budget

The Home Mission budget for 2008 was approved with an Appeal target of £4,000,000.

Around the Union



Central

Administrative contact: Stephen Copson
01462 442548
stephen.copson@dsl.pipex.co.uk

The CBA Assembly on 9 June at Loughton BC, Milton Keynes, welcomed the Revd Jonathan Edwards, who spoke with passion on prayer. Seminars in the afternoon included a conversation with Jonathan, and Amanda Allchorn (Head of Communications Department of the BUGB) led a very helpful session on communications.

A new CBA resource DVD produced by regional minister Colin Pye has been launched. This includes short cameos by the regional team featuring particular aspects of their work, as well as providing some resources for use in worship.

John Moysey has retired as Association Treasurer and Chris Winter-Goodwin, together with David Mead, have been appointed to take on the role.



East Midland

Administrative contact: Rebecca Nicholls
administrator@embaptists.co.uk
Exciting times ahead for the EMBA!

Gradually the EMBA team is taking shape and we very much appreciate your prayers during this time as we seek God's will and guidance for

the future.

'Let my people go – breaking the chains past and present' was the theme of our Association Day in October. The day provided opportunity to discuss various racial justice issues. The Revd Wale Hudson-Roberts gave a keynote address based on Micah 6:8. The day also included a formal farewell to the Revd Peter Grange in recognition of his thirteen year ministry with the Association.



Eastern

Administrative contact: Eleanor Reed
01371 831463
secretary@easternbaptist.org.uk



Heart of England

Administrative contact: Karen Martindale
0121 212 4842
mailbox@baptist-heartofengland.org

One of the most exciting developments has been the Migrant Workers Project in Herefordshire. Supported by HEBA, BMS, Home Mission and local churches, three drop-in centres have been set up for Eastern European migrants and seasonal workers.

A new website, built by Matt Corry of BUGB, was launched to coincide with the commissioning of the new Regional Ministry Team. (See Staff News.) We hope this will not

Around the Union

only be informative but also help to generate a renewed sense of identity as an association.

Admin. Asst. Sue Houghton has been forced to leave us for health-related family reasons. We're deeply grateful to Sue for many years of service – particularly in relation to Home Mission grants. Mary Potter has also left the Office and moved on to develop children's ministry in her home town of Redditch. Mary's enthusiasm and infectious laughter will be much missed!



London

Administrative contact: Paul Martin
020 7692 5592
paul@londonbaptist.org.uk



North Western

Administrative contact: Andrew Funnell
01942 221595
eafunnell@aol.com



Northern

Administrative contact: David Lennox
0191 413 2205
david.lennox@northern.org.uk

Back in June the evangelistic organisation Viz-a-Viz spent a week working with a number of our

churches supporting them in their mission and this culminated in an Association Mission Event. During the Autumn there have been:

- an ecumenical study day entitled 'One Baptism' which focussed on the report of conversations between the Baptist Union and the Church of England called 'Pushing at the Boundaries of Unity',
- 'The Big Sing' which is an Association worship event specifically arranged to record hymns and songs that can be used by our smaller churches who struggle to find musicians, and
- our Autumn Assembly which continued our present assembly focus on discipleship with local ministers Paul Newman and Mark Elder as our speakers.



South Eastern

Administrative contact: Steph Tidy
01444 233431
admin.sba@tiscali.net

Our new website can be found at www.seba-baptist.org.uk where churches can post stories of what is happening in their area and advertise events. Each week, one page features a different church with specific requests for prayer. Alongside the website, a suite of publicity materials is being produced comprising posters, brochures and bookmarks. The Administrator is also now sending out a bimonthly newsletter to the churches with information and news. Development of the nine networks continues and our Youth Officer, Mave Whitchurch, has produced a comprehensive pack for youth leaders. She is



also able to inform groups about the exciting youth events organised by the south east-based interdenominational group *n:vision*. The Kent Thameside Project, originally conceived by the Kent Baptist Association, is being re-launched by the SEBA in 2008. The Revd Penny Marsh has been appointed to head up this innovative mission opportunity supported by a Home Mission grant.



South Wales

Administrative contact: Mark Thomas
02920 491366

mark@southwalesbaptistassociation.org.uk

In October all our churches received an early Christmas present from the Association office – a free copy of the 'Hope '08 Great Ideas' book. A great idea would be to do one (or more than one) of the ideas in the book; a bad idea would be to file the book on the bookshelf.

In November those undertaking the challenges of bivocational ministry in the region aka Lay Pastors met together and those involved in small churches were blessed by an encouraging retreat day led by Richard and Doreen Harrison.

Collaborating with the Baptist Union of Wales is a growing and thrilling feature of much of what we are doing. The is true of the small churches network and of Mainstream Wales, which held its fourth meeting in November when Nick Cuthbert spoke on 'Emerging Church'

We also jointly hosted the All Wales Baptist

Ministers' Conference. This popular opportunity for personal refreshment and supportive networking reaches beyond the normal geographical, cultural and Union barriers peculiar to Wales. 'Of course we'll make room for you' was heard in the Association office even beyond the closing date for we know how important Saundersfoot in November is for ministers across Wales.



South West

Administrative contact: Chris Wooding
01392 433533

chris@swbaptists.org.uk

It has been a busy time, with lots of opportunities to come together and learn from one another. In May the Association Team toured the south west with a road show over six evenings entitled "Fit for Purpose? Living with a less than perfect church", opening up some of the issues that all churches face. In June we had our Annual Assembly at the Eden Project. The rain held off (well nearly) and we had a really wonderful day ending with a praise and worship celebration. Our churches in Plymouth came together in September for an evening consultation to share their work and vision. October saw our annual seminar for new deacons and elders fully booked, and it was great to have so many who are new to church leadership coming together to reflect on their roles. This was followed by an afternoon for new church secretaries, who had a great time getting their teeth into such nitty-gritty



Around the Union

subjects as "Meetings, Minutes and Agendas". In November we hosted a seminar on charity registration for our larger churches, with Linda Holder and Philip Putman; our thanks to them for a really helpful and informative session.



Southern Counties

Administrative contact: Keith Hawton
0238 047 4501
k.hawton@scba.org.uk

The Regional Team of Gill Crippen and Kathryn Morgan (with our Administrator Keith Hawton and other support staff) have implemented strategies to fulfil the Association mission objectives of :- Building strong relationships; Growing healthy churches; Resourcing effective mission and Enabling lifelong discipleship. This included convening a well attended Leaders Day in the autumn on political life; other creative initiatives with clusters and churches have also taken place. We have had an encouraging number coming through the Ministerial Recognition process and new and ongoing ministry through the Home Mission Grant programme has also been secured.

A new training initiative 'Footsteps' (reported in *Transform 17*), is well supported. The partnership with Regents Park College, Oxford is valued and we look forward to developing this further with the new Principal, Rob Ellis alongside the Baptist Ministerial team at Regent's.

At the 2007 AGM the Steering and Strategy

Group (Council) was strengthened through the election of seven members which will enable more people to serve on Association Task Groups. Please pray for the Regional Ministry Team, Officers and Task Groups as we seek together to serve the Association.



West of England

Administrative contact: Geoff Starling
0117 965 8828
office@webassoc.org.uk

"Imagine – the shapes of Church to come" is a new initiative among WEBA Churches. Basically this is designed to invite local leadership teams of elders or deacons into a two-year process. We intend to meet once a term for two years and the Regional Ministry Team will provide input and specific challenges for each church to focus on in-between 'Imagine' nights. It serves a variety of purposes – part training for local leaders, part envisioning and encouraging, part team building. Our first round of 'Imagine' nights has attracted over 200 local leaders and we would welcome prayer that this translates into steps forward for each Church represented.



Yorkshire

Administrative contact: Deborah Gamble
0113 278 4954
debbie.gamble@yba.org.uk

Staff News

1 East Midland – Steve Mantle

The Revd Steve Mantle has been appointed Regional Minister Team Leader by the East Midland Baptist Association. Steve joined the EMBA as a regional minister in 2001 following local pastorates in Nottingham and Derby and missionary service in Democratic Republic of Congo. The Revd Anthony Walker, Moderator of the EMBA Board of Directors, said that the board was delighted with the appointment. "Steve brings a long term commitment to the area and a wealth of knowledge about our churches and people. We look forward to the future of our Association as together we seek God's vision."

2 Heart of England – New Regional Ministry Team

HEBA begins 2008 with a full Regional Ministry Team following the appointment of Adrian Argile and Andrew Millns to work alongside Barrie Smith and Keith Judson. The new team were commissioned by BUGB General Secretary Jonathan Edwards at a special service on 20 October, hosted by Rising Brook Baptist Church in Stafford. As well as having responsibilities across the association, each RM will look after groups of churches and ministers in a geographical area. Please pray for the 'gang of four' and the Office staff – Karen Martindale (Administrator), Jill Phillips (Accountant) and

Lesley Hubball (Admin. Asst.) as they work together and with the wider team, helping churches reach out to the Heart of England with the Good News of Jesus.

3 Southern Counties – Grenville Overton

In January 2008 with Grenville Overton as Team Leader working with regional ministers Gill Crippen and Kathryn Morgan, Keith Hawton in the office and other support staff. Ee has been senior minister at Queen's Road Baptist Church in Coventry since 1999 and before that was minister at Newbury Baptist Church. He is married to Alison who has also been a minister at Queen's Road and Newbury Baptist. Grenville will be initially based in Oxford.

4 West of England – Gordon Hindmarch

Gordon is the most recent addition to the WEBA team, starting as regional minister in October. He has specific responsibility for the pastoral care and development of ministers and church leaders. He will also take a special interest in Newly Accredited Ministers and those considering a call to baptist ministry. Previously he was minister at Moortown Baptist Church, Leeds for nine years. Gordon serves on BU Council, Trustees, Against the Stream committee and Retired Baptist Ministers' Housing Society. He is married to Rachel and has 3 grown-up children.



Ministry

Ministry 'out there'

How many non-Christians does the average minister meet in a week? Probably far fewer than he or she would wish, since naturally they spend a lot of time serving the congregation.

But one group of ministers is regularly in touch with people who never attend church or any Christian event. These are chaplains, working in Christ's name out in the everyday world. Their work focusses on a particular part of society (hence the term often used, "Sector Ministry") such as education (in schools, Further Education Colleges and Universities), the world of work (shops, factories, offices and more), health care and prisons, as well as the armed services. Chaplains listen, offer care and when the opportunity arises the good news of God's love in Jesus – in action as well as word.

At any given time, around one in ten serving Baptist ministers are likely to be involved in chaplaincy – many on a part-time basis alongside a pastorate, but quite a few have been called to such work full-time. The occasional misconception that Chaplains have "left the ministry" couldn't be further from the truth – it's front-line mission, reaching out into the world.

A little while ago, a major report on sector ministry, particularly from a theological viewpoint, was warmly received by the Baptist Union Council. This can now be downloaded from the BU website, from the 'ministerial' section of the resources page – it's a good starting point to find out more about this important way in which our Union is reaching in mission.

'Feed the (ministers') minds'

The charity Feed the Minds has a long and honourable tradition of helping people in the developing world, bringing education to many communities who desperately need it.

But, as a quick 'Google' search reveals, the phrase is used far more widely – and it certainly applies to an important part of the Ministry Department's work. Ministers are constantly giving out and need to be nourished themselves, to be fed in both mind and spirit. With this in mind, we offer a number of opportunities and ways in which ministers can carry on learning, from the start of ministry and all through.

Newly Accredited Ministers

Every new minister has to undertake some study arranged in consultation with one of the Baptist colleges. Such learning contracts are designed to build on and add to the things learnt in College, and to encourage the development of good habits of study at a time when it might be all too easy to get so immersed in the work that the need to take in as well as giving out is forgotten. Churches calling such ministers are aware that they need to allow the time for this – but it would be good if every church recognised that it's a legitimate part of the minister's 'work time' to spend some time reading.

Newly Accredited Ministers are also required to attend a four-day conference, normally at the end of the second year in ministry, for a time of reflection and also input from carefully chosen speakers. This is another resource to nourish and encourage these ministers as they go

through the demanding process of getting established in their role. However, the need to learn doesn't end at the end of the Newly Accredited or 'probationary' period! Three years in College and three as a NAM isn't enough to sustain a lifetime of ministry. So various other provision is offered.

Refresher Conference

Many NAMs so appreciated the conference at the end of their second year that they asked "Can we do it again?" This was one of the reasons for the setting up of the Ministry Refresher Conference, now a regular fixture in the calendar, providing further opportunities throughout ministry for a short break for reflection, fellowship and teaching. A different group of ministers is invited each year on a five year cycle. For 2008 the invitation has been sent to all serving ministers enrolled on the Register of Ministers in years ending 3 or 8. We offer this as a gift because it's paid for by investment income arising from the sale of Baptist Church House in London – it's not a charge on the Home Mission appeal.

In-Service Training

Under the recommended Terms of Settlement, ministers can take a week of study leave for personal development each year. Where this involves cost (for example for a conference or a retreat) a small grant is available from the Department to help.

Sabbatical Study Leave

Ministers are also entitled to a sabbatical every seven years – a break from all church duties of one to three months to enable them to learn in a more focussed way than time normally

permits. The emphasis should be on developing knowledge or skills in an area that is relevant to ministry in general and/or the current situation of the minister's church. As with In-Service Training, a small grant is available.

Further Studies

Some ministers choose to enhance their knowledge and skills through undertaking a formal programme of advanced study – normally for a higher degree. The Further Studies Fund is available to assist in meeting University fees – and for those who undertake their study through one of the affiliated Baptist Colleges, some help with expenses is also available from this Fund. The closing date for applications to be considered by the Summer meeting of the Committee is 31 May.



Scholarship Fund

One or two people at a time can be supported in undertaking full-time doctoral research, either in a break from exercising ministry or between initial training and a first settlement. Currently there is only one scholarship holder, so applicants for a second award can be considered in the Summer – applications need to be submitted by the end of March.

For further information about all these ways in which the Department can help ministers develop please contact the Ministry Support Administrator, tel 01235 517705, e-mail imillgate@baptist.org.uk

Mission

Seniors Third-Age DVD

Between the year 2000 and 2050 the number of over 60's will rise from 600 million to a predicted 2 billion! For some that is a frightening statistic, for others it represents an enormous mission-challenge. Over the past year the Mission Department has been gathering testimonies from seniors who have discovered fresh horizons, with respect to mission and ministry opportunities, both at home and abroad. These, along with advocacy from Jonathan Edwards (General Secretary) and Kathryn Morgan (SCBA Regional Minister), are now available on a DVD from the Mission Department. This can be used as a basis for a day workshop, as separate 'stand-alone' slots for notices, or for use in a church service or house-group discussion starter. The DVD has sections on statistics, resources, theology and reasons why third age seniors need to be taken seriously.

Details from The Mission Dept (The Hub) Carole Alder calder@baptist.org.uk 01235 517713



Fresh Horizons National Tour 2008

Both the Mission File and DVD on seniors third-age mission and ministry have raised the profile and importance of galvanising this resource within our churches. The Mission Department is now actively promoting a national tour of associations during 2008. This 'facilitation-day' can take place over a weekend or a weekday

and will seek to explore the issues, scan the opportunities and reflect on the challenges. Similar 'Caleb-Challenge' days run in the Southern Counties Association have proved very successful and the Fresh Horizons Tour will draw on that model whilst offering other insights.

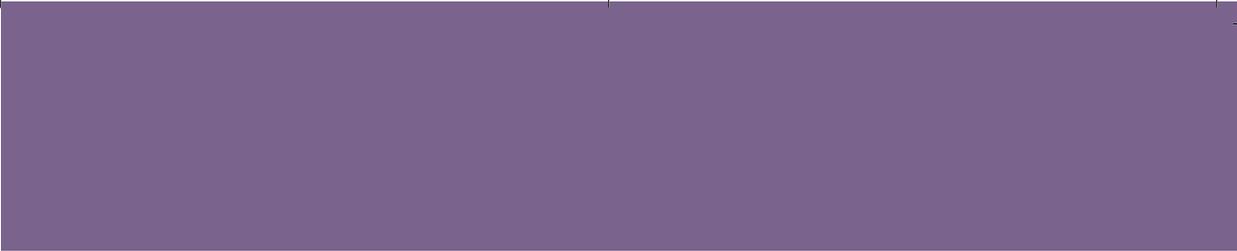
If your church or association is looking to host one or more of these days please contact Carole Alder for the list of dates already settled or to be confirmed. Carole Alder calder@baptist.org.uk 01235 517713



Debt Counselling Mission File

Have you ever thought what £1.36 trillion looks like? I am reliably informed that it is £1,36,000,000,000; however if the maths appears shaky, it is a lot! That is the frightening amount of total personal debt in the UK; a debt that increases by 10% yearly and often leads to depression, anxiety, stress, misery, violence, marriage breakdown and much more. Whilst many churches already offer a range of support services for those facing debt concerns, others are seeking guidance with respect to how a facility can be set up, administered and, in some cases, expand its capacity and effectiveness.

The Mission Department is presently working on a downloadable Mission File (available January 2008) which will outline the different possibilities for engaging with issues of debt.



Later in 2008, and in partnership with other debt-counselling agencies, facilitation days will be offered at Baptist House for churches seeking wishing to explore the options in greater depth.

Details from the Mission Dept (The Hub) Carole Alder calder@baptist.org.uk 01235 517713



Children's Strategy

Following the *On Our Knees Again* prayer day on 4 November, resources have been produced to enable churches to consider their children's work in a strategic way. The Strategic Resource can be downloaded from the BUGB website www.baptist.org.uk and covers the areas identified as those of greatest weakness for children's work in Baptist churches. The resource asks you plenty of questions, and while you may find some of the answers in the text, we have also provided you with links to outside resources and agencies that will help you find the answers that are appropriate for your church.

At the same address is a list of recent children's work resources that you may consider helpful, together with a brief description and publisher's details. If you come across useful resources that are not in this list, please inform Carole Alder in the Mission Department and she will add the details so that we can increase

the size of the database (calder@baptist.org.uk).

If you would like to be kept informed about innovations and news relating to children's work in the UK, join the Children Matter! Network. Their website is regularly updated with news and reviews, and if you join the website you can receive email updates. The Children Matter! consortium has been established to help churches re-engage with children in their communities and BUGB is part of this group. www.childrenmatter.net

Annual Returns 2006 – What we have discovered!

Thank you to all those churches who took the time to fill in the annual returns form last year. In this short article we wish to tell you what we have discovered through analysing these forms.

Number of churches that responded
1710 out of 2080 giving an 82.21% response.

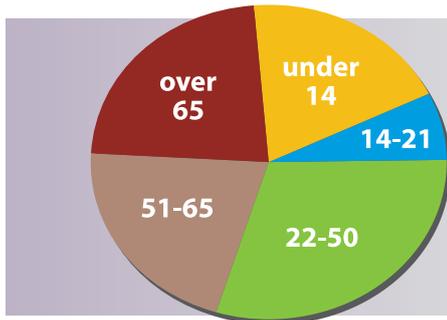
A further 104 provided information regarding baptisms, membership and attendance which enabled us to come up with the following facts. To make the statistics more meaningful we have compared figures with those collected in 2001.

Year (and returns)	2006 (1814)	2001 (1784)
No. of members reported	127,358	124,680
Number of baptisms	3710	3866
Average number of members per church	70.2	69.9
Average number of baptisms per church	2.04	2.16

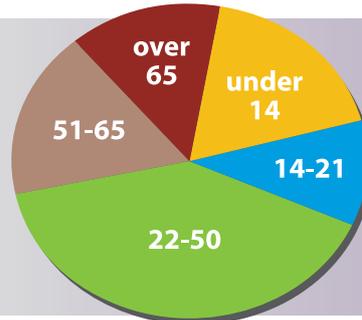


Mission

Church attendance age profile



National population age profile



Also recorded in the survey were details of the number of adults who attended worship at least once a month during 2006. For the 82% of churches who supplied this information we had a total of 126,286 attendees. On the first Sunday in December there were 131,304 people in Baptist churches (compared with 133,617 in 2001). It is interesting to note that there were far more female (59.31%) than male (40.69%) attendees. Nationally these figures are 51% female to 49% Male. These figures are illustrated on the charts shown above.

Children and young people

The following figures compare the number of young people in Baptist churches in 2006 and

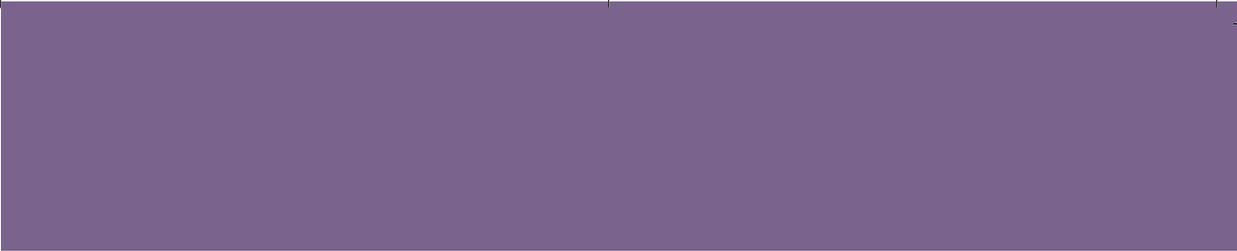
Year	2006	2001
Number of young people in Baptist churches	108,337	132,216
Children up to 12	71,395	91,799
Teenagers from 13 – 19	30,023	30767
Young People 20-25	6,919	9650

2001.

Although these figures are discouraging it should be noted that the past two years have seen a small increase in numbers particularly in relation to the number of children in our churches. We need to continue to find ways to both reach and keep in contact with these children as they become teenagers, and also help to young adults continue in their faith and be a part of the church. The Baptist Union Council has agreed a strategy for continuing work among children and young people and part of this response has been to build on the success of *On our Knees* 2006 with *On our Knees Again* held on 4 November this year. We hope churches will continue to make use of the mission files and resources available on the Baptist Union website.

Worship

The other part of the questionnaire contained in the 2006 form was a special emphasis on the subject of worship within our churches. The information gathered will prove invaluable for those looking at the way we worship and how it has changed since the last survey on this



subject in 2001. Those returns provided the basis of a substantial piece of research and writing and we will now be in a position to make comparisons.

Feedback from 2005 survey

The Mission Department has remained focused on the issues identified from the 2005 annual returns survey. Small churches and the difficulties and problems they face have been a key point of the department’s work this year culminating in an oversubscribed successful day for those leading small churches held in November 2007.

Thank You

We wish to again thank you for taking the trouble to fill in the annual returns. This year we have developed a more simple form of questionnaire, with far less questions and we hope that this will have been easier to complete. We hope again to receive a high percentage return that will enable us to continue to understand trends within the union and inform future reports.

BUild 25th Anniversary Celebrations

We do hope you have the date for the twenty-fifth Anniversary Celebrations for BUild in your diaries. Just in case you haven’t, here are a few details, which we hope will encourage you to make preparations to come and take part.

Date: Saturday 4th October 2008

Place: Highgate Baptist Church in Birmingham

Time: from 1030 until about 1700

Over the last twenty-five years many have been helped to faith through the support, advice and training, provided by those who had the concern and vision to start this work. We want to praise God for them.

We have already booked the Revd Jonathan Edwards, the General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, as our keynote speaker. We

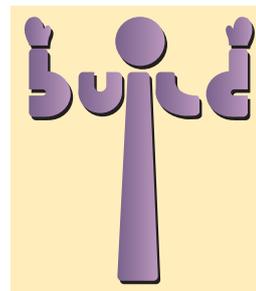
want this to be a celebration including people with learning disabilities, their parents and carers, together with churches who are seeking to include and involve people with learning disabilities more fully in

their life and witness. We shall worship God and enjoy activities together. We are hoping that there will be groups which can help us in these celebrations. We shall also enjoy a celebration meal together.

If you think you can help in any way, especially if there is a group for people with learning disabilities in your church, please let me know what you may be able to do. But above all, prepare to come!

For further details, please ring David Buckingham on 01782 618966 or email:

d.buckingham@northern.org.uk



Events



ASSEMBLY '08
A hope and a future'...Plans are already under way for 2008's Assembly at The Norbreck Castle Hotel in Blackpool. Look out for fresh information and speaker details at www.baptistassembly.org.uk

The Baptist Assembly 2008 (2-5 May 08) – all are welcome!

A hope and a future – God’s promise for an uncertain world

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”
 Jeremiah 29:11 NIV*

The Baptist Assembly returns to the north and to **The Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool** 2 - 5 May 2008. The theme and weekend will focus on the **hope we have in Christ**. What does this hope mean for you, those around you and God’s earth? Creation care, as one example, is more important than ever. What should a Christian response be to this political, social and theological hot potato? Experts from the worlds of science, development and Christian philosophy will be among those tackling the key issues at the Assembly. *It’s your chance to explore God’s love for the world and be inspired to be hope-filled people.*

Speakers already confirmed include ...

- Sir John Houghton (Co-chair of the Scientific Assessment Working Group of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, ex-Chief Executive the Met Office),

- Vinoth Ramachandra (from Colombo, Sri Lanka. Vinoth has served for many years on the International Council of A Rocha and is the Secretary for Dialogue and Social Engagement (Asia) for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.),
- Elaine Storkey (President of Tearfund, Vice President of the University of Gloucester, General Synod of the Church of England, Broadcaster)

Others speakers include:

- David Shosanya (Regional Minister Mission, London Baptist Association),
- John Weaver (2008/9 BUGB President elect, Principal of South Wales Baptist College),
- Alistair Brown (BMS World Mission, General Director) and
- Jonathan Edwards (BUGB General Secretary)

Find out more

Why not find out more about the theme, the speakers, programme, how to register and much, much more at www.baptistassembly.org.uk? You do not have to be a Church Delegate to attend!



Leading Edge 11-17 August 2008

Travelling light' - living in the light of eternity

Leading Edge returns to the popular location of **Warwick School, Warwick** in 2008. Leading Edge is a 'Baptist family holiday week', organised by the BUGB in partnership with Viz-a-Viz. It provides an opportunity for Baptists of all ages to gather together for worship, teaching and relaxation.

The theme *Travelling light' - living in the light of eternity'* will explore 'Journeying' – not living in this world but travelling towards the next, what it is to live in the light of eternity, reflecting on being a people/community on the move, living in the light of grace, mercy, judgement and change. Speakers this year include well known author Philip Yancey.

The week includes quality teaching and inspirational sessions as well as recreational opportunities for relaxation, entertainment and sport (including football tournaments, swimming and tennis). Apart from the opportunity to camp, there are many attractive local Hotels/B&B's to stay at, in and around historic Warwick. There are also a number of excellent local attractions to visit.

(www.warwick-uk.co.uk for more info)

Check out www.baptist.org.uk/leadingedge for details of how to register...book early to avoid disappointment!



Dive Deeper

The Baptist World Youth Conference in Leipzig (30 July – 3 August 2008) promises to be an amazing event where young people from around the world will gather to worship God, make new friends, grow in their faith and have a fantastic time. The conference will include worship experiences and teaching that are relevant to issues faced by young people and a wide-ranging seminar programme. There will also be a fringe programme and a global village where young people can share their experiences with others from different continents. The heartbeat of the conference will be family groups where young people of similar ages will be gathered with others from different countries to share in Bible study, pray and build friendships.

You can find out details on www.dive-deeper.org. Why not join with nearby churches in your cluster or Association and arrange to travel together? If you join the BUGB forums there is one dedicated to churches looking to share travelling arrangements – www.baptist.org.uk/forum. Limited bursaries are available from the Jonathan Graham Trust (application forms available from the Mission Department).

Events

Engaging Spirituality @theGathering Friday 30th May - Sunday 1st June 2008

Churches Together in England are organising another of their popular 'gathering' weekends, a time for sharing stories, expressions, hopes and experiences on the theme of Spirituality. For more information and a booking form, see the website www.churches-together.net or contact 0207 529 8133. Everyone is welcome to attend this event.

Toddler Group Training and Networking Opportunities

Care for the Family's annual Playtime conference is a fantastic opportunity for toddler group leaders to meet up for a day that inspires, encourages and equips toddler groups from across the UK.

Feedback from those who attend each year shows that this conference makes a huge positive impact to those groups who come. This year's seminars include:

- reaching into communities
- tips for craft sessions
- tricky issues facing toddler groups

South West

Milton Baptist Church, Weston-Super-Mare
Saturday 10th May 2008 1030 - 1600

North East

Bethany Christian Centre, Houghton-le-Spring
Saturday 7th June 2008 1030 - 1600

Comments from last year's conference:

"a much needed reminder of why I'm doing this crazy job!!"

"Excellent day. Really glad we attended, we have learnt a lot and have some lovely ideas to share with the rest of the team"

To book, call Care for the Family on (029) 2081 0800 or book online at www.careforthefamily.org.uk

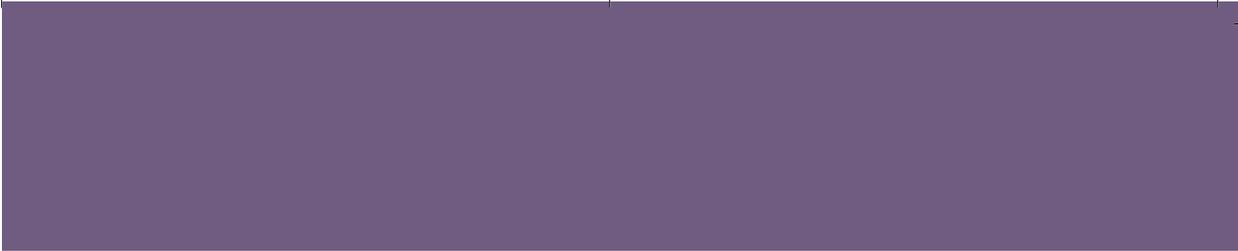
Contact Care for the Family to get your own regular copy of Playtime, a free newsletter full of useful ideas and advice for toddler group leaders.

Parent Toddler Groups Together

Parent Toddler Groups Together have their Annual Conference on Saturday 1st March 2008, at St Johns Church, Tunbridge Wells. The theme is 'Salt and Light' and the main speaker is Fiona Castle.

For details, go to www.ptgroupstogether.org.uk





ASSOCIATION EVENTS

Central

Introduction to 'Fit 4 Life' to be held in five parts of the Association developing healthy congregations.

- Wednesday 16 January - Broadway Baptist Church, Chesham
- Wednesday 30 January - Kingswood Baptist Church, Watford
- Monday 4 February - Loughton Baptist Church, Milton Keynes
- Monday 25 February - Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Northampton
- Wednesday 27 February - Central Baptist Church, Luton

Barnabas Weekend in Buckinghamshire – 1-2 March - a weekend of encouragement and support for the churches in this part of the CBA with the Regional Ministry Team.

East Midlands

Saturday 1 March 2008 is our next Association Day and AGM. This will be a morning event 1000 - 1300 with a keynote address from Rev Jonathan Edwards. The theme will be '21st Century Church'.

Eastern

January through to Easter the EBA are holding an evangelism training course in partnership with Viz a Viz Ministries on Monday evenings.

EBA Minister's Conference is at High Leigh from Monday 3 March to Wednesday 5 March.

Training for our Home Mission visitors is being provided by Rachel Tole on Saturday 8 March.

Monday 21 April to Thursday 24 April a series of EBA Forum evenings are being held to introduce the 'Ctrl Alt Del' material.

Heart of England

Ministers Conference, 25-27 February.

Our popular Ministers' Conference is at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick again this year. BUGB General Secretary Jonathan Edwards, former BUGB President Brian Haymes and counsellor Ruth Layzell are speaking on the theme - 'Creating communities of grace'.

Northern

11th – 13th February. NBA Ministers' Fellowship Conference led by the Revd Dr Alasdair Black of Stirling Baptist Church.

26 April. NBA Spring Assembly. Speaker: Steve Brady, Principal of Moorlands College.

South Wales

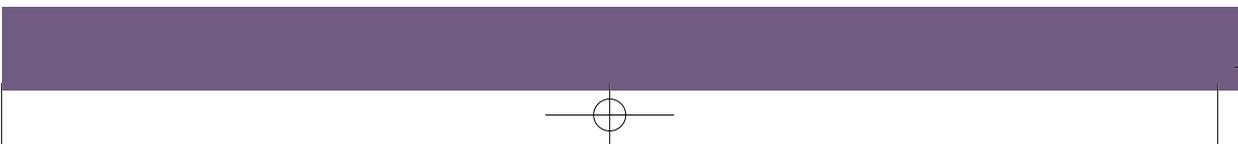
Association Council meetings in 2008 are: 6 March, 7 June, 25 November.

Please note these dates in your diary and arrange for a group of folk from your church to attend.

Saturday 7 June will be the 2008 Association Assembly, incorporating the AGM. 'Doing it in Hope' will gather people from across the whole region to celebrate what God is doing.

South West

Ministers' Conference 25-27 February 2008, Sidholme, Sidmouth.



Faith and Unity



European Baptist Federation Council

The European Baptist Federation (EBF) comprises 51 Baptist Unions and Conventions from countries in Europe and the Middle East, and its Council met from 26-29 September in Budapest, Hungary. The Council is the main decision-making body for the EBF and is also a time of worship, inspiration, informal sharing and renewing of friendship.

The major theme of the Council was **Religious Liberty**, with a keynote address given by Dr Denton Lotz, outgoing General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance. This was of particular relevance as the Council heard about the case of Pastor Zaur Balaev, who was arrested in Azerbaijan whilst leading worship in his Baptist church and sentenced to two years in prison on charges of resisting arrest, which many present testified to be false. A resolution was passed on Religious Freedom and Human Rights, the full text of which can be found on www.ebf.org.

The Council also received a report on the **Indigenous Mission Project**. The IMP provides funding for suitable gifted people to work as evangelists and church planters in their own countries. It was launched in Moldova in 2002, and in 2003 extended to include Armenia, Belarus, Latvia, Russia and the Ukraine. There are now sixty-five indigenous missionaries working in twenty-four different nations, including Iraq. Last spring a new church planting project for the Tajik people in

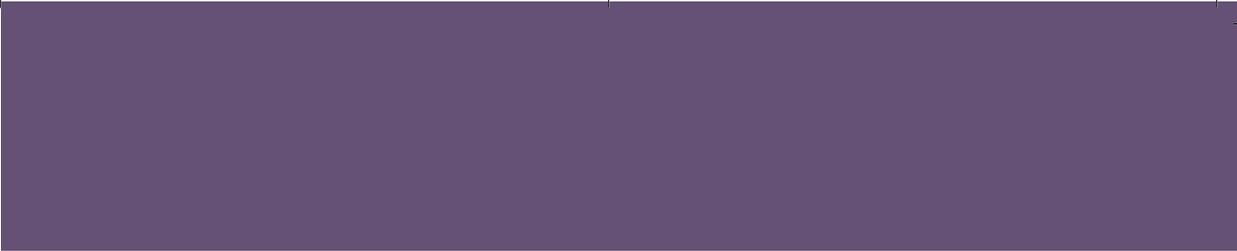
Tajikistan was launched (funded by the Baptist Union of Switzerland). In the 1990s there was tribal civil war and ethnic cleansing in the artificially created country which includes an uneasy mixture of a Russian based culture and an ethnic Tajik culture. We heard stories from the President and General Secretary of EBF about the openness to the gospel and the growing Baptist following in Tajikistan.

Toma Magda from Croatia was inducted as the new President of the EBF. Toma spoke at our last Baptist Assembly, so many will have seen him then.

Clive Jarvis, one of our delegates, writes: 'Even though a newcomer I enjoyed the clear sense of family felt by the delegates, and of that of a family who had over the years been through many trials and tribulations together. It was evident that, for some smaller Unions in particular, the EBF was a vital source of mutual support and encouragement. It was a great privilege to be there and meet and pray with so many brothers and sisters from across Europe and the Middle East, to meet old friends and to make new ones. The liturgy of greeting one another at Council invariably concluded with me being asked to 'please greet our brothers and sisters in the UK' which I am pleased to do from more people, churches and unions than I could possibly remember.'

EBF Anti-Trafficking Conference

The EBF anti trafficking group not only held a seminar at the EBF Council, but also arranged a significant gathering of representatives in Copenhagen at the end of October. Hilary Willmer is our representative...



'An informative and inspiring gathering of Baptists already engaged in anti-trafficking work or committed to becoming involved in some way took place from 25-28 October 2007 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Four Baptists attended from Britain – Marion Carson from Scotland, Hannah Wilson from BMS World Mission, Mark Wakeling from the National Christian Alliance on Prostitution (NCAP) and Hilary Willmer from BUGB – alongside Baptists from many other EBF countries. There were opportunities for networking, especially between representatives of 'sending' and 'receiving' countries, including the possibility of using national contact people to liaise over particular women. Often women sent back to their country are shunned by their family – and sometimes the church. Consequently they are re-trafficked or enter prostitution at home. In either case they endure the extreme violence and exploitation all over again. Surely we should use the Baptist family creatively to offer hope in seemingly irredeemable situations?'

A new EBF anti trafficking resource book is available for any churches wishing to be involved in this issue. To download a copy go to: www.ebf.org/resources.

jointpublicissteam
Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches working together

Joint Public Issues Team

A major piece of work has begun on the subject of **Human Embryology and Early Human Life**, with a working group set up by the Joint Public Issues Team that includes representatives of BUGB. The Group will consider the range of challenges arising from

aspects of human life before birth, including abortion, therapeutic cloning, and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, and it will identify current developments in scientific understanding and activity. It will suggest ethical and theological principles to guide responses to these and future developments and will commission a study guide for use across the churches. It is hoped that the work will be completed later this year.

The Joint Public Issues Team is involved in a wide range of other work on social and political affairs, including seeking to strengthen the Government's response on climate change, building deeper consultative links with Government, and preparing material for study groups on why Christians should be involved in politics.

See their website: www.jointpublicissues.org.uk

Christian Aid

We live in a connected world! From what we eat to how we work, our lives affect people a world away! And being so connected means that we have the opportunity to stand alongside those in our world who are the poorest, both with our prayers and our action.



Christian Aid helps us to do just that! It has served as our relief and development agency for over half a century, and as Baptists we can be proud of the work it does on our behalf. Supporting more than 700 partner organisations in nearly 50 countries, we are helping bring real change into people's lives.

People like Rabia from Sya Kamarak in



Faith and Unity

Afghanistan, who faced starvation due to drought until grants for relief work were provided. And Alex in Malawi who has been able to more than double the family's harvest due to the provision of a water pump. And Rosa from Peru who has received help with her community's campaign against hazardous pollution by a US mining company.

A crucial part of working to alleviate poverty is campaigning against the systems that keep people poor – whether it is slavery to international debt, or unjust trade rules, or the crippling effects of climate change. Christian Aid seeks to do this by inviting us all to join together in resisting the fundamental injustices that perpetuate poverty in our world.

One way in which a number of our churches are linked with Christian Aid is through Just Life – a programme that aims to resource and encourage us to in working for justice. It links us with partners in Sierra Leone and in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and helps with a range of worship and campaigning resources.

To find out more about *Just Life*, contact: gsparkes@baptist.org.uk To learn more about the work of Christian Aid, go to: www.christianaid.org.uk

New CTE General Secretary Appointed

The Revd Dr David Cornick has been appointed the new General Secretary of Churches Together in England. David has been General Secretary of the United Reformed Church since 2001. Prior to that he was Principal of Westminster College, Cambridge, one of the United Reformed Church's ministerial training

colleges, and this included a period as Vice-President of the Cambridge Theological Federation. He will take up the appointment in early 2008. David succeeds the Revd Bill Snelson, who has been in post for the past ten years.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: 18-25 January 2008 (Logo)

2008 is a special year. It marks the 100th anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. It was Father Paul Wattson, an Episcopalian priest and co-founder of the Society of the Atonement at Graymoor (Garrison, New York), who introduced the octave. It is therefore fitting that the material for this year originated in the USA.

The aims of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity are:

- To pray as Christ prayed 'That they may be one'.
- To pray for the unity of all Christian people as we share in Christ's ministry.

The Week of Prayer offers opportunities to meet and pray with fellow Christians of different denominations in your locality. Often new local initiatives emerge out of such meeting and praying together.

A National service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will take place on Friday 18th January 2008 at 5pm in Westminster Abbey. All will be welcome to attend, so if you are beginning to plan your own events you may wish to note this.

Resources for the Week of Prayer are available from Methodist Publishing House, sales@mph.org.uk, telephone 01733 325002

Communications

Home Mission Promotion – new items for a New Year!

Check out www.baptist.org.uk/resources/home_mission.html for fresh inspiration and resources to promote awareness and giving to Home Mission. Each month to save you time, new 'readymade' PowerPoint presentations will be available from the Resources area of the website/downloads. 'The Bit in the Middle' here in *Transform*, is also ideal to support your church and resource your Home Mission Rep/Minister.

Communications 'Top Tips Guides' – for busy church leaders

These guides are designed to be used by busy people (all of us!) in the local church who would like to know a little more about a specific area of Communications.

Check out www.baptist.org.uk/resources/communications.html for brand NEW Top Tips Guides including... 'Bloggng Your Church'

Communications 'Top Tips Guides' – for busy church leaders

IMAGE TO COME

BUGB Publications – staying in the loop

Baptist Basics and Who would be a Baptist

You may be curious to know that a small working group is redeveloping these popular BUGB resources. When they ran out in late 2007, it was decided this was a brilliant opportunity to refresh and update them.

BUGB Prayer Diary 2008 – more resources monthly!

The new prayer diary is now out with weekly situations and a church a day to pray for. Also

BUGB Prayer Diary 2008 – more resources monthly!

IMAGE TO COME

key dates are listed including BUGB meetings. The *Prayer Diary* is being sent out with *Transform* and *BUGB Magazine*. It is also available from Communications.

To help keep this guide up to date for you for the very first time in 2008 we will be adding up to date prayer resources/ points for you on the BUGB website.

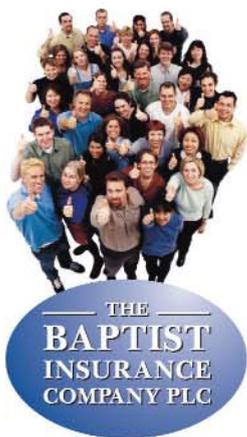
Check out www.baptist.org.uk/prayer monthly!

BUGB Local Church Web Awards!

The Baptist Union of Great Britain launched its new website in April 2007. We are very keen to encourage local churches to have their own websites and would also like to encourage better quality existing sites! To do this the Communications Department are launching a new local church websites award in 2008. For more information look out for details on the Baptist Union website and Webwatch in January.



Insurance cover especially for Baptists...



Consistency in a changing world

What many Baptists may not realise is that as well as being a leading insurer of Baptist churches, we also provide home and contents cover for the Baptist Community.

For more than 100 years the Baptist Insurance Company has enjoyed a special relationship with the Baptist community, and in the last 5 years alone, we've given £1.2 million in support of Baptist causes.

If you would like more information about the services we offer please call us on 0845 070 2223

The Baptist Insurance Company PLC, Beaufort House, Brunswick Road, Gloucester GL1 1JZ
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