

# Overview of Baptist pastoral and missional training

## Introduction

There are many ways our Baptist colleges can equip you to fulfil God's calling on your life. Whether you wish to enhance your leadership in a local church or feel called to become an accredited Baptist minister, this guide outlines the types of training the colleges offer. It is useful only as a means of orientation. Once you have thought through the options, the best thing to do is to contact or visit a college directly to discuss your training needs. All the colleges can tailor programmes where necessary. They would welcome a conversation about how they may best prepare you for the mission, ministry and leadership role God is calling you to pursue.

The five Baptist colleges in England and Wales are:

**Bristol Baptist College**

**Northern Baptist College** in Manchester with hubs in Sheffield and Durham

**Regent's Park College** in Oxford

**South Wales Baptist College** in Cardiff

**Spurgeon's Baptist College** in South London with a hub in Birmingham

There are two further colleges that are in membership of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. **Scottish Baptist College** helps prepare people seeking accreditation with the Baptist Union of Scotland. Similarly, **Y Coleg Gwyn** or **North Wales Baptist College** trains those seeking accreditation with the Baptist Union of Wales. All Y Coleg Gwyn's courses are available in both English and Welsh. Qualifications gained at either college also meet the requirements of BUGB accreditation. Theological training for Baptists is also available on the Continent through the **International Baptist Theological Study Centre** (IBTS Centre) in Amsterdam.

Please find below some guidance if you are seeking:

1. To make a start in Christian theology
2. To improve your ability to lead within your own church
3. To expand your preaching skills
4. To be recognised for the leadership you already offer to a church
5. To train to become an accredited Baptist minister
6. To train as a pioneer or evangelist
7. To train in children's, youth and families ministry

8. To train as a chaplain
9. To train in counselling or pastoral supervision
10. To undertake post-graduate study
11. To get some help with sabbatical studies

## 1. To make a start in Christian theology

Though our colleges are focussed on training ministers, you can also attend college simply to study theology. This might be just for your own interest, or it can help you think about a possible call to Christian ministry.

If you have few academic qualifications, Spurgeon's College offer the Spurgeon's College Award in Theology. This will prepare you for going on to join an undergraduate programme. You can access it in London and Birmingham or by distance learning. It will introduce you to biblical studies, Christian doctrine, a contemporary understanding of mission, and much more.

All the colleges offer theological study that leads to a certificate (level 4), diploma (level 5) or degree (level 6) in theology. Each of these building blocks will take you a year if you study full-time and two years if you study part-time.

## 2. To improve your ability to lead within your own church

### **The Baptist Training Partnership (BTP)**

If you are a deacon, elder, preacher or other church leader, the BTP will help you serve your local church better. It is a collaboration between the colleges and the regional associations to provide a common, high-quality syllabus for local church leaders. Topics covered include reading and using the bible, evangelism and mission, leading worship, preaching, Baptist history and principles, pastoral care. The level of teaching is roughly equivalent to 'A' level, though you do not need any prior qualifications. With most colleges, BTP training is delivered in a modular fashion so you may choose to study as few or as many of the twelve modules as you wish. Each module has two days of taught content and an optional assessed assignment. Successful completion of eight assessed modules fulfils the learning component required by the Baptist Union to become a nationally recognised preacher. All twelve assessed modules are required should you wish to become a nationally recognised pastor.

With Bristol Baptist College, the twelve BTP modules are delivered in either Bristol or Exeter through their **Prepare, Feed and Sustain** programme. Each module is delivered over two Saturdays, with up to four modules and hence eight Saturdays per year, on a three-year rolling programme. You can dip in and out and study only those topics you fancy, or you can sign up for a year at a time. Completion of all twelve modules over three years will gain a certificate from the college.

With South Wales Baptist College, the BTP modules are delivered through their **Pathways** programme in either Cardiff or a church in the region. Teaching takes place on one Saturday per month except for in August. Each module spans two Saturdays. If all twelve modules are taken, you can complete the entire programme in just over two years. You can join the rolling programme at any point or sign up for just those modules of interest to you.

With Spurgeon's College, the BTP modules can be studied in London, Cambridge or Birmingham, under their **Equipped to Minister** programme. In London especially you will mix with learners from other denominations. Teaching takes place on the same Saturday each month throughout the year, with each module taking two Saturdays. The entire programme can be completed in two years. You can join the rolling programme at any point or sign up for just those modules of interest to you.

With Regent's Park College, the BTP is run rather differently. You cannot pick out individual modules, but instead sign up for **Footsteps**, a one-year programme of ten Saturdays. If you go on to complete a further year of ten Saturdays, you will cover all the BTP modules. What this format loses in flexibility it gains in community and participants have a strong sense of journeying together throughout the year. Training takes place in church venues in either the Central Baptist Association or the Southern Counties Baptist Association. The Footsteps programme also includes a couple of optional modules aimed specifically at equipping those working with children, youth and families.

### **Further opportunities for learning**

Northern Baptist College no longer offer the BTP programme. Instead, they are developing **Edifi**, a blend of online, virtual class room and face-to-face learning which is ideally taken by church leadership teams rather than by individuals. The first module, on how to discern Jesus' will, is being piloted at present and if successful, further modules will follow. Alternatively, church leaders can join the **Latchford Learning Centre** in Warrington, a project run in partnership with the North West Baptist Association. This gathers a community of learners together on one Monday each month in order to learn from each other and from visiting tutors.

If you wish to explore more deeply a calling to Christian service and are a theology student or an intern, say, then Bristol Baptist College offer **Disciple-Makers**. This is a year-long training course in which you join the college's ministers-in-training for their Wednesday formation programme. You will be part of a pastoral tutor group, share in theological reflection and worship, have access to the college library and receive personal supervision.

If you wish to develop practical skills and insights rather than academic learning, Spurgeon's College offer over twenty **Christian Training Initiative** resource packs. They cover topics from essential Christian beliefs right through to mission in rural communities or prison ministry. You can work through the packs in your own order and time, or you can join with others at your church and learn together. Each pack has an optional, short assessment and the college offers three levels of commendation depending on how many pack assignments you complete.

In all cases, for more information, please contact the college nearest you to discuss the training options.

### 3. To expand your preaching skills

You can enhance your preaching skills by taking some of the modules provided by the colleges through the common syllabus of the Baptist Training Partnership or BTP (please see above). In addition to the biblical study and preaching modules, you can take modules on the basics of Christian belief, spirituality, and leading worship. The module on Baptist history and principles will enable your preaching to reflect our common story and values. The taught content of each module is followed by assignments. These are optional, but if you successfully complete eight BTP modules and their assignments, you will have fulfilled the academic requirement for recognition by the Baptist Union as a nationally recognised preacher. However, if you are seeking this recognition, you will also need a commendation from your church and an interview with your regional association at both the beginning and end of your training. Please contact your regional minister if you wish to pursue this further.

### 4. To be recognised for the leadership you already offer to a church

You may already exercise pastoral oversight within a church but not have the theological diploma or degree necessary to become an accredited Baptist minister. However, you can still work towards becoming a nationally recognised Baptist pastor. The academic requirement is to complete the assignments for all twelve modules of the Baptist Training Partnership (BTP) programmes run by the colleges. (Please see local church leadership for more details.) These will give you a basic grounding in biblical studies and preaching, spirituality and leading worship, pastoral care, evangelism, church history and especially Baptist church history, and church leadership. Training is usually offered on selected Saturdays over a two or three-year period. Please note that recognition is dependent not only on completion of the BTP modules. You will also need the commendation of your church and be interviewed by your regional association at both the beginning and end of your training. Please contact your regional minister if you wish to pursue this further.

### 5. To become an accredited Baptist minister

The training of ministers lies at the heart of all the Baptist colleges. Accredited Baptist ministers might have pastoral oversight of a church; they might be chaplains in health, education, prisons, the armed forces, business or industry; they might be pioneers seeking to establish a kingdom presence in a new setting; they might be specialists in evangelism or children's or youth ministry. But in every case, their training is made up of two elements – theological education and ministerial formation. If you wish to become an accredited minister, the colleges will

provide the theological teaching necessary for you to gain a diploma or degree. This teaching will be integrated into a programme that will train you in the skills of ministry and encourage the necessary character which we call the Marks of Ministry. You will also gain experience of ministry practice through a training placement.

Please be aware that the colleges can only accept you for ministerial training once your calling has been confirmed by your own Baptist church and by your regional association. If you think God may be calling you to ministry, you should contact your regional minister, ideally having talked it through with your own church minister or leadership team.

The options for ministerial training are broad. They vary from college to college and can be tailored to suit your circumstances and level of experience. We strongly recommend that after reading this and browsing some college websites, you speak directly to a college to talk about your journey.

Geographically, our colleges are based in Bristol, Cardiff, Manchester, Oxford and South London. However, Spurgeon's College will offer a full ministerial formation programme at their Midlands hub in Birmingham from September 2020. And Northern Baptist College works in partnership with **St. Hild's College** in Sheffield and **Cranmer Hall** in Durham. In these partnerships, the partner college works with Northern Baptist College to ensure you gain both the necessary theological learning and ministerial formation. Northern Baptist College also has a partnership with the **Light College** beginning in September 2020. This is for those training for evangelism and pioneering ministry. Please see section 6 below for more details.

### **If you have no prior theological qualifications**

Ministerial formation generally takes place over three years if you are a full-time student. In this time, a college will guide you towards either a diploma or a degree in theology.

It is still possible to be **college-based**, for which you will live in or near college in order to study for a degree. Alongside this study, you will spend a number of hours each week in a church, chaplaincy or mission placement alongside an existing minister.

However, most ministers-in-training these days opt for a **congregation-based or mission context-based** training route. In this case, you will spend around half of your time as the minister of a church or in another ministry setting. You will spend the remainder of your week in study and learning, coming into college for one or two days a week, or for a number of weekends throughout the year. If you are placed in a church, that church will usually pay you a half-stipend and provide you with housing.

A third, **bi-vocational** option is offered by some of the colleges and is the only model offered by South Wales Baptist College. You study at college and gain experience in a church alongside continuing in your current profession or vocation on a part-time basis. This route is challenging but opens up an increasing number of ministry and pioneer opportunities where a full stipend cannot be provided. Bi-vocational training may well extend beyond three years due to its part-time nature.

## **If you already have a diploma or degree in theology**

If you already have a theological qualification to at least diploma level, you will still need to complete the ministerial formation programme at one of the colleges. Generally, this will still take three years and during this time you are likely to be encouraged to enhance your theological qualification to degree or master's level. However, if your prior theological education included an element of formation, then our Baptist colleges may be able to offer a reduced training programme that fills the gaps in your learning or experience. Regent's Park College offers a two-year 'formation pathway' for exactly this purpose, for example.

If you have a diploma or degree in theology and have considerable experience of leading a church or mission already, it is possible to circumvent college training altogether. In this instance, BUGB accreditation can be gained through the annual three-day Residential Selection Conference. If you think this option may apply to you, you should speak to your regional minister.

Whatever your prior learning or experience, you will be expected to complete a learning module called Baptist History and Principles. This can be studied as a standalone programme at any college.

## **6. To train as a pioneer or evangelist**

The shape of mission is changing. A large proportion of today's generation has at best only a sketchy understanding of the story of Jesus. And many communities find that an established congregation meeting in a church building on Sundays no longer strikes a chord. You may be among the increasing numbers who feel called to a missional ministry which falls outside traditional understandings of what a church minister does. If you wish to grow in your evangelistic skills or want to establish a pioneering project, the colleges offer a variety of ways to equip you.

### **Accredited pioneer or evangelist ministers**

Pioneers and evangelists can of course also be accredited ministers. As for anyone hoping to train for accredited ministry, you will have to gain the commendation of your church and association before you begin your time at college. Beyond this step, you will find that four of our colleges offer versions of their ministerial formation programmes tailored towards pioneering. The core elements of your theological learning and ministerial formation will be the same as for any minister-in-training. But academic options, reflection groups and an appropriate placement will enable you to focus especially on how to share and act out the gospel in society. These courses are often delivered in partnership with a pioneer organisation.

**Regent's Park College** work with **CMS Pioneer Mission Leadership Training**, also based in Oxford. CMS provides the academic element that leads to either a diploma or degree

in theology, ministry and mission. Alongside this, you will join the ministerial formation programme at Regent's and spend time in a pioneering placement.

At **Northern Baptist College**, you can join the other ministers-in-training for their theological study and formation programme, whilst your study will be tailored to reflect on pioneer mission. You will also have a pioneer placement. Alternatively, you can attend the **Light College** who specialise in training evangelists and pioneers. You will study for a foundation degree or full BA using a mixture of online learning and residentials in Birmingham. Alongside this, you will take part in Northern Baptist College's ministerial formation including their Baptist Leadership Programme that is mostly taught over a number of weekends in Leeds. Again, you will also have a pioneer placement.

**Bristol Baptist College** offer a mission-based track to their ministerial formation programme that will help you focus on creative mission and church planting. They work with their local regional association and with **Urban Expression** to place and support you in a mission team in an urban area of Bristol. This training is bi-vocational, so you will also be working two days a week in another job alongside your mission placement and college programme.

**Spurgeon's College** are launching a new pioneer ministerial formation track in 2020. It is hoped this will be available at both their south London campus and their Midlands Hub. Please look out for more information on their website.

### **Pioneer training for all**

If you are looking for training in pioneering but are not seeking accreditation as a Baptist minister, you can join the **Crucible** programme run by Urban Expression. They offer six modules that explore the place of Christianity and church in contemporary society, and how the gospel can be modelled and shared in marginal communities. Each module is taught over two Saturdays on a rolling programme. You can access Crucible in London, Southampton, Exeter and Manchester. You will be supported in finding a suitable pioneering placement. These six modules can be combined with a selection of the Baptist Training Partnership modules. (Please see local church leadership for more details.) Completion of the six Crucible modules together with five BTP modules and a placement can lead to becoming a BUGB nationally recognised pioneer. If you wish to pursue this recognition, you should speak to your regional minister and make it clear to both Crucible and the college when you begin training with them.

## **7. To train as a children's, youth and families worker**

You may feel called to minister especially to the younger generation. Or you may already have a role in your local setting as a children's, youth, or families' worker, or a combination of these. Two of our colleges have courses explicitly aimed at helping you.

Spurgeon's College offer a college award in youth ministry. This is a one year long, one day a week programme aimed at developing your youth work skills and your Christian character and understanding. It is suitable for those with few educational qualifications and all assessments are done by coursework. Alongside your study, you will be placed in a youth work context to practice what you learn.

Bristol Baptist College offer a certificate of higher education in theology, ministry and mission that integrates vocational training in children, youth and family ministry. You will be taught in six block weeks spread over one or two years and have a placement to root your learning in actual practice. Much of your time at college will be alongside ministers-in-training which will help you gain a broader understanding of contemporary ministry and mission. The certificate can be used as the basis for going on to study at diploma or degree level.

## 8. To train as a chaplain

If you feel called to chaplaincy, whether in the area of health, prisons, education, the military, industry or business, the colleges can provide you with the necessary ministerial formation and qualifications. Your training will be by and large the same as for any minister-in-training (Please see accredited Baptist ministry), except that your placement will be in a chaplaincy rather than church setting. However, please note that it can be hard to find paid chaplaincy placements during training and that receiving establishments are sometimes reluctant to permit access for those not already qualified. This is why many move into chaplaincy only after they have trained for general church ministry. Nevertheless, you should speak to your regional minister if you feel this is your calling as well as speak to one of the colleges about a possible placement.

## 9. To train in counselling or pastoral supervision

The demand for pastoral supervision is increasing as more ministers seek help in reflecting well on their work. If you would like to be trained so that you can give pastoral supervision to others, Spurgeon's College offers The Professional Certificate in Pastoral Supervision. You will be taught over a series of six two-day midweek workshops. The combination of theological and psychological learning will enable you to supervise others involved in pastoral practice. Successful completion of the course fulfils the training requirements for accreditation with the **Association for Pastoral Supervision and Education (APSE.)**

If you wish to train in counselling, Spurgeon's College offers certificates and a diploma in counselling that are validated by the Counselling and Psychotherapy Central Awarding Body. They also meet the requirements for accreditation with the **British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy**. These are taught over one whole day each week. There is a non-validated ten-week evening class as an introduction to counselling for those who are wholly new to the field.



## 10. To undertake post-graduate study

If you want to study theology beyond degree level, whether as part of ministerial formation or for your own sake, please get in touch with one of the colleges to discuss your options. Master's degrees can usually be completed in one year if you are full time, or over a longer period if you study part time. The MA or MTh degree titles vary for each college, with some examples being: Contextual Theology; Christian Thought and Practice; Biblical and Theological Studies; or Applied Theology and Preaching. Bristol Baptist College can connect their postgraduate students with their study centres in Urban Life; The Bible and Violence; and Anabaptism.

All colleges will welcome enquiries from those wishing to undertake a research degree.

## 11. To get some help with sabbatical studies

If there is a particular topic you want to explore in more detail, perhaps as part of a sabbatical research project, please do speak to your nearest college. Or you can get in contact with a college that you know specialises in the topic you are interested in. They may be able to suggest a reading list, give you access to their library and even provide some time with a tutor to comment on your study as it develops.

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Finally, as repeated throughout this document, if you have any training requirement or question, please do not hesitate to get in touch with one of the colleges directly. They will do all they can to make your learning possible.

Ministries Team  
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