

TRUSTEE REPORT 2020

Eastern Baptist Association

Member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain

Registered charity no. 1089795

Company limited by guarantee registered in England no. 4221429

Registered office: 46 Churchill Road, Thetford, IP24 2JZ

www.easternbaptist.org.uk

Objectives and Activities

The Trustees believe that advancement of the Christian faith, particularly as expressed through the Baptist movement, is of public benefit as it encourages social cohesion, provides an ethical framework for life and works itself out in the sacrificial giving of funds, time and effort by church members and attenders for the good of their own community and beyond.

As part of their work and witness, the Baptist Churches in membership with Eastern Baptist Association deliver a wide variety of activities which benefit the general public. These activities include: -

- promoting the study of religious teachings, practices and scriptures
- support of religious office holders e.g. ministers, deacons and elders of member churches;
- promoting prayer, praise and provision of training events;
- pastoral support to ministers and church congregations;
- contributing to the spiritual and moral education of children and young people and the provision of training to comply with the legal requirements regarding safeguarding.

The Vision Statement of the Eastern Baptist Association is

“Growing healthy churches in relationship for God’s mission in the East of England”

This vision statement is actively facilitated and fulfilled through eight areas of focus, we realise that each year we do not expect to fully succeed in implementing all seven areas but rather focus on two or three areas each year. The eight areas of our strategy are:

- Growing Godly leaders;
- Stewarding shared resources;
- Enabling relevant training;
- Encouraging healthy churches;
- Exploring fruitful partnerships;
- Sharing inspirational ideas;
- Offering apostolic leadership.
- Advocating transformational justice

Below are some specific examples of how some of these have been achieved in this last year, Recognising the challenges that 2020 brought to organisations, in some ways ours was no different, most of our work had to be moved to an electronic platform. The items listed below have been undertaken electronically both live, recorded. or over the phone.

In March following government announcements churches were told to close their buildings to help reduce the spread of Coronavirus - while the buildings were closed churches were exploring ways in which they could still host a service of teaching and worship for their congregations the association was able to connect those that had the technical ability to do this with some who didn't to be able to learn from each other.



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The Association was able to share stories from individual churches of ways that those churches were supporting members of their communities is inspire and encourage.

The regional team put high priority in pastorally supporting ministers from churches and made every effort to contact each individual minister to support and encourage them.

Achievements, Performance and Developments

In terms of staffing 2020, following the return of Nick from sabbatical in February, remained stable. Revd Beth Powney continued as Team Leader based in the northern part of the Association and Revd Nick Lear continued in the southern part of our region, Revd Graeme Ross continued in the central part of our region. Revd Barry Walton continued as Treasurer Mrs Julie Eady continues as Finance officer, and Mrs Hayley Beckett as Association Secretary. Early in the year the trustees considered the amount of work with regards to safeguarding that the Regional Ministers were carrying and in July the Association successfully appointed a part time safeguarding lead. Mrs Diane Forsyth has proved to be a valuable part of the Association team as well as a support to the churches in areas of safeguarding.

Mrs Jeniya Gwendu has continued as Moderator for 2020 with only a few changes. In April Miss Liz Moulton completed her term and Revd Andrew Openshaw was co-opted onto the trustee board. In September Mrs Laura Evans was co-opted onto the trustee board. In December Revd Mel Pike resigned as she moved out of the EBA's geographical area. The trustee board finished 2020 as below.

Mrs Jeniya Gwendu – Moderator

Revd Barry Walton - Treasurer

Revd Peter Thomas - Finance and Administration,

Revd John Goddard - Ministry,

Mr Andrew Wade - Communication,

Vacancy - Children and Families

Revd Sean Fountain – Healthy Churches

Revd Alan Brand – Justice Transformation

Revd Fiona Heddle, Revd Andrew Openshaw and Mrs Laura Evans as co-opted members.

Revd's Beth Powney, Nick Lear Graeme Ross as exofficio members of council.

The Association trustee board continued to meet during 2020 using a virtual platform as allowed by our Articles of Association. The Trustees met for an emergency meeting in March to consider the ways in which the staff were working and put things in place to ensure that staff were working within Covid guidelines in a safe way for themselves and others they may meet. These remained in place for the rest of 2020 and will continue into 2021.

The membership of the Association at the end of 2020 was 172 churches. This includes the transfer of Romford Baptist Church out of the EBA to the LBA.

Finance

The EBA have continued to provide three Regional Ministers for the Association despite the continued backdrop of falling income from the main income source. Resources expended on charitable activities was £348,784 (£469,440 :2019) including governance. £108,728 (£100,460: 2019) was awarded in Home Mission grants.

Principal Funding Sources

The charity's main source of income are the payments from the Baptist Union for both Operational Funding and Mission Payments which are calculated according to a funding formula which is applied to the total amount received by the BU for Home Mission from churches. Further income is received from investments, rental income and preaching fees.



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Principal Expenditure

The majority of expenditure is directly related to the provision of three Regional Ministers which Council consider the minimum needed to service the needs of all the EBA churches over such a vast area. This includes amounts to maintain the property portfolio to a good standard of repair. The RM team is supported by a Company Secretary for governance issues, and a Finance Officer. We have now additionally employed an EBA Safeguarding Officer for 8-12 hours per week.

Loans to churches have now been discontinued and the Loan Fund has been redesignated for supporting churches with Pension Liabilities if required. The year-end amount owed by four churches was £43,791 (£57,191: 2019).

The Ministers Training fund and Lay Ministry Training fund shared the cost of £2,520 for Mental Health Training by Transpire. This cost was partially offset by income of £1,040. One grant was awarded for £400, however due to Covid this was returned with the intent of using at a later date. The Training fund also supported £430 towards Conflict Training for NAMs and £150 for NAMs speaker fees.

Total funds at the year-end including unrestricted, restricted and designated funds were £2,237,488 (£2,234,439: 2019). EBA drew on reserves in 2020 to the extent of £4,352 (£22,245: 2019). Total cash held at the yearend is £801,520 (£790,131: 2019) for all funds.

Going forward we project a General fund budget for 2021 with a deficit of £46,214 which is to say £888 every week. We consider this necessary and appropriate to support the work of the Association and in funding particular three full time Regional Ministers. We project and support similar annual deficits rising to over £60,000 in subsequent years, but recognise that this use of reserves to cover ongoing shortfalls has the following implications. Reserves spent in this way cannot then be used to fund other activities and projects now or in the future. In the long term it can take many years to rebuild reserves, again reducing future possibilities and unless the funding structure for Associations is significantly revised, or other income streams can be developed, at that level of expenditure reserves available for ongoing deficits and not required for other purposes will be exhausted by the end of 2024.

Fund Raising

The Charity does not actively fundraise but does receive from time-to-time unsolicited gifts and donations from the general public. The Trustees do not employ professional or outside agencies to fundraise on its behalf and as such does not consider it necessary to be part of a voluntary scheme or standard. Following a change in BU guidelines, EBA is exploring ways to raise funds specifically for our own purposes.

Property matters

The Company Secretary and the Treasurer together with the Finance and Administration Task Group oversee the property portfolio for the EBA. The Thetford house continues as the RM manse for the northern sector. The Wickford property is the RM manse for the southern sector. In addition, under the terms of the Finance Arrangement for Associations with the BU, a property is owned in Bury St Edmunds, by the BU, and was used as the RM manse for the Central sector. Following the purchase of the EBA Manse in Earls Colne, the BU are giving the EBA a supporting manse allowance of £1,567 (£625 in 2019) per month. The supporting rent allowance is now at market rate.

Through 2020 the rental property in Wickford continued to be let to generate income to support ministry and governance costs. However, EBA Council are prepared to consider selling that property at some time in the future. Moving forward, all properties continue to be reviewed annually to maintain the five-year plan for routine maintenance and planned refurbishment of the three EBA properties.

The EBA received £18,879 from the closure of a Church which was allocated to the Home Mission fund. £500 was received from another Church closure and this money was directed to the General fund.

During the year the Regional Minister Team Leader did some Chaplaincy work for the local hospital and for her time the EBA received £2,221.

Governance

During the year, the Trustees have reviewed the Association Data Protection Policy and accepted an update following the review. The Charity Risk Assessment has also been removed and updated to be completed at the beginning of 2021.

Ministerial Support

The Ministers' Conference held in February at High Leigh Conference Centre was attended by just under 100 ministers both retired and active and some spouses. The speaker at the conference was Revd Lynn Green, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The Association arranged training days that included Mental Health Awareness, Safeguarding and Using presentation software. The Association also provided opportunities for retreat and listening days. The regional team also provided a number of pre recorded services on our You Tube channel for churches to use during their weekly broadcasts plus extra resources at Easter, Remembrance and Christmas.

Administration and Communication

The Association uses a variety methods of electronic communication methods including a weekly prayer focus sent out by email, a MailChimp monthly bulletin, a weekly thought for the week and quarterly newsheets and we find that all of these serve their purpose. We also have a presence on Facebook as a page and a community group which facilitates churches sharing events with other churches.

Church Support

The settlement of ministers and churches continues to be facilitated by the association through the National Settlement Team of the Baptist Union. More locally the recognition of people displaying skills and calling to take on the role of Minister is tested through our own recognition committee. During 2020 the committee met with 10 candidates seven of which were recommended onto training at college, one was commended as regionally recognised minister, one was affirmed as a Nationally recognised minister and was deferred for two years.

The Home Mission grants committee considered applications from 15 churches, seven special ministries and one chaplaincy partnerships. Each application is considered on its own merit and if successful grants are awarded for a three year period measured by an active mission action plan. The grants committee submitted its recommendations to the trustees and awarded grants to 14 Churches, seven special ministries and one chaplaincy partnerships and these recommendations were agreed. Currently year on year demand for grants outstrips available funds so careful consideration is having to be given to each application.

The Association recognises that churches look outside of their local area and often to other parts of the world to support organisations and individuals working with people or groups in other countries.

Ecumenical

The regional staff continue to relate to ecumenical structures in the region within the counties where they are based. Further Ecumenical work is supported by Denominational officers in the counties. This work is particularly important where Baptists are partners.

Risk Assessment

An annual risk assessment continues to take place in the areas required by the Charities Commission. This is completed at the beginning of each year.

Serious Incidents

There are no serious incidents that the Regional Ministers/Council are aware of that require reporting. There have been no significant events affecting the Association's financial position since the end of the year. The trustees are aware of the current financial position and are taking steps to discuss and implement ways forward. There are no commitments or guarantees requiring disclosure.

Approved at Trustee Meeting 13. 3 .2021