

TRUSTEE REPORT 2021

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 Mission Statement of the Eastern Baptist Association is

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

This mission 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 eight 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

Recognising the continuing challenge of the Covid-19 global pandemic the association has offered a variety of ways to engage with activities that include, in person, via a virtual online platform, recorded and over the phone. Below are some specific examples of how some of our eight areas of focus have been achieved in this last year;

The Association has taken time to consider way to address diversity and equality and has been instrumental in developing a mentor programme called ‘Magnify You’. This is a programme working to develop female ministers into potential larger leadership roles in the future. The Trustees attended a racial awareness training session which was both humbling and informative and are looking at ways in which this can be implemented going forward into 2022.



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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 and alongside this facilitated Mental Health training days aimed at ministers themselves and how to help members of their churches of all ages. Towards the end of the year they ran three workshops entitled “Rest, Recharge Reconnect”; each with its own theme and focus on ways that promote, rest, recharging and reconnecting with God and others.

Achievements, Performance and Developments

In terms of staffing, 2021 started as 2020 ended. In May Revd Nick Lear moved on to another post which led to a round of interviews and appointments. In November Revd Claire Blatchford and Revd Gale Richards began working for the association as Regional Ministers. Claire in a full-time post and Gale part time. This has meant a move around of areas of responsibility and our member churches being split across 4 areas. As the year comes to a close, this new model is just starting to feel normal.

Revd Barry Walton continued as Treasurer, Mrs Julie Eady continues as Finance officer, Mrs Hayley Beckett as Association Secretary and Mrs Diane Forsyth as Safeguarding Lead. In September there were also changes in our Trustee board.

Mrs Jeniya Gwendu stepped down as Moderator due to geographical relocation, two trustees completed their terms of service, one of whom was re-elected and one retired, one vacancy was filled by election. Laura Evans a co-opted member resigned and two alternative co-options were made, Charlotte Dove (April) and Sandra Crawford (Sept) but due to personal circumstances Charlotte Dove resigned at the end of 2021.

The Association trustee board continued to meet for most of 2021 using a virtual platform as allowed by our Articles of Association, managing an in-person meeting in November. With the appointment of two new Regional Ministers and to comply with our governing document, going forward into 2022 the Trustees took the decision that only the Regional Minister Team Leader (RMTL) would be a Trustee of the association with all other Regional Ministers being invited to attend council to report on items that fall within their areas of responsibility as necessary.

The trustee board finished 2021 as below.

Revd Fiona Heddle – Moderator

Revd Barry Walton - Treasurer

Revd Andrew Openshaw - Finance and Administration,

Revd John Goddard - Ministry,

Mr Andrew Wade - Communication,

Mrs Vicky Baker - Children and Families

Revd Sean Fountain – Healthy Churches

Revd Alan Brand – Justice Transformation

Revd Sandra Crawford as a co-opted member.

Revd’s Beth Powney (RMTL) as an ex-officio member of council.

The membership of the Association at the end of 2021 was 171 churches. This includes the closure of Grace Fellowship, Little Stukeley in June.

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 were £407,783 (2020: £344,513) including governance. £140,319 (2020: £108,728) 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. In November 2021 this increased to 3.5 Regional Ministers. Provision includes amounts to maintain the property portfolio to a good standard of repair. The Regional Ministry 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 and also covering part of the General Fund shortfall. The year-end amount owed by four churches was £34,291 (2020: £43,791).

The Ministers Training fund and Lay Ministry Training fund support Bursary applications. In 2021 four Bursary grants were awarded worth £1,432.

Total funds at the year-end including unrestricted, restricted and designated funds were £2,099,897 (2020: £2,234,359). EBA drew on reserves in 2021 to the extent of £134,462 (2020: £80). Total cash held at the year-end is £669,269 (2020: £801,520) for all funds.

Going forward we project a General fund budget for 2022 with a deficit of £99,000, which is to say £1,904 every week. We consider this necessary and appropriate to support the work of the Association and in funding particular three and half Regional Ministers. We project and support similar annual deficits 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 2023.

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 £1,498 (2020: £1,567) per month. The supporting rent allowance is now at market rate.

A deposit of £48,000 has been put down for a new build property at Firethorn Court, Ely to accommodate the new part time RM. Cash reserves will support this purchase however it is likely that the Melville Drive property tenancy will cease in 2022 and this property will be sold to offset the Ely purchase. Through 2021 the rental property, Melville Drive, continued to be let to generate income to support ministry and governance costs. 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.

Governance

At the start of 2021 the Charity Risk Assessment was reviewed, and a section added that is solely focused on the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Trustees have also reviewed and adopted the Reserves Policy and Risk Assessments particularly those that relate to Covid-19.

Ministerial Support

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, the ministers' conference was held over two days in hybrid form, one day meeting in small groups of 6 with zoom content from our speakers, Revd Dr Kate Coleman and Revd Cham Kaur-Mann. This content focussed on leadership, the following day we met in High Lodge Forest Park for a day filled with social activities and a BBQ. The Regional Ministers have made it a priority to keep in contact with ministers from across the association via phone call, zoom calls and where possible in person. The regional team also provided a number of pre-recorded services on our YouTube channel for churches to use during their weekly broadcasts plus extra resources at Easter 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 and a weekly thought for the week. We also have a presence on Facebook as both a page and a community group which facilitates churches sharing events with other churches.

Church Support

The settlement of ministers and churches changed its process during 2021 to give ministers more opportunity to send their profiles to the churches that they feel best fit. The way in which we support both ministers and churches during this transition time has adapted to fit the new model. 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 2021 the committee met with 13 candidates, four of whom were recommended onto training at college, two were commended as regionally recognised ministers, five were affirmed as a Nationally Recognised ministers, one went forward to the national residential selection conference, and one was deferred for two years.

The Home Mission grants committee considered applications from 11 churches, eight special ministries and one chaplaincy partnership. 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 eight Churches, eight special ministries and one chaplaincy partnership 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
19.03.2022