

## **Trustee Annual Report**

*For the Year Ended December 31, 2024*

Eastern Baptist Association

Registered charity no. 1089795

Company limited by guarantee registered in England no. 4221429

Registered office: 2 Buchanan Gardens, Wickford Essex, SS12 9QB

[www.easternbaptist.org.uk](http://www.easternbaptist.org.uk)

### **Introduction**

As trustees of Eastern Baptist Association, we are pleased to present the annual report for the year ended December 31, 2024. This report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the activities, financial performance, governance, and future outlook. We remain committed to ensuring that Eastern Baptist Association fulfils its mission and objectives, while adhering to the highest standards of transparency, accountability, and stewardship.

### **Mission and Purpose of the Charity**

Eastern Baptist Association was established with the goal of the advancement of the Christian religion especially by the means of and in accordance with the principles of the Baptist denomination as set out for the time being in the Declaration of Principle of The Baptist Union of Great Britain. With a particular focus on Growing healthy churches in relationship for God's mission in the East of England.

Over the past year, we have continued to work towards achieving the charity's objectives through strategic initiatives, careful resource management, and effective governance.

### **Governance and Trustee Activities**

In 2024, the charity continued to be governed by a dedicated group of trustees, each bringing diverse expertise and experience to our work. Regular board meetings were held throughout the year to review the trust's operations, financial health, and alignment with its goals. Trustees remain responsible for:

- Overseeing the trust's activities and ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.
- Monitoring financial performance and approving the annual budget and expenditures.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of strategic priorities and initiatives.
- Evaluating and addressing risks to the charity's assets and operations.

We are committed to transparency and have adhered to all relevant regulations governing the management of charitable trusts. Each trustee has acted with due diligence, care, and loyalty to the beneficiaries and objectives of the trust.

At the 2024 AGM the members elected a new moderator for a term of 3 years. At the conclusion of 2024 the trustee board was made up of the following individuals.

**Revd Lou Webber – Moderator**  
**Mr Richard Lewis - Treasurer**  
**Revd Adrian Ward**  
**Revd John Goddard**  
**Revd Sean Fountain**  
**Revd Alan Brand**  
**Revd Sandra Crawford as a co-opted member (until January 2026)**  
**Mr Binny Jaichander as a co-opted member (until May 2025)**  
**Revd Paul Smith as a co-opted member (until September 2025)**  
**Revd David Mayne (RMTL) as an ex-officio member of council and Interim Safeguarding Trustee**

## **Financial Performance**

The charity's financial position remains fragile, with a total income of £317,886 for the year, which is an increase of 14.7% compared to the previous year. The underlying trend is a reduced grant from the Baptist Union due to decreased giving and decreased number of church members. However, the timing of grant clawbacks from Baptist Union and return of clawbacks resulted in an artificial increase in income for 2024. Income from property rental, investments and preaching fees remained as expected.

The charity's total assets as of December 31, 2024, stand at £1,667,204, reflecting a deficit budget which is expected. We project and support similar annual deficits in subsequent years but recognise that this use of reserves to cover ongoing shortfalls in this way has significant 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 current levels of expenditure, non-capital asset reserves available for ongoing deficits and not required for other purposes will be exhausted by the end of 2025

### **Key Financial Metrics:**

- **Income:** £317,886
- **Expenditures:** £397,948
- **Total Assets:** £1,667,204
- **Operational Spending:** £279,919 (60.3% of total expenditures)
- **Grant Spending £117,029** (29.7% of total expenditures)

## **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. During 2024 this saw a large changes. The trustees reviewed the property stock required to be used as manses by the regional ministers and took the decision to sell properties that were surplus to requirements in part to fund the purchase of a suitable house for the new Team leader and partly to increase the general available funds of the association.

In May the Earls Colne property was sold with an income of £505,000 (net income £497,794)

In August a property was purchased in Southend at a cost of £550,000

In November the Thetford property was sold with an income of £380,000 (net income £369,061.03)

The association ends 2024 with the following properties

Southend Manse – occupied by Rev David Mayne

Wickford Manse- occupied by Rev Claire Blatchford

Ely Manse- occupied by Rev Gale Richards

Wickford Rental Property tenancy until January 2026 with a monthly income of £1,232

All properties continue to be reviewed annually to maintain the five-year plan for routine maintenance and planned refurbishment of the EBA properties.

Lastly, the association is expected to receive a part share in a former church manse in Harold Hill, pending completion of the legal processes.

## Trustee Engagement and Activities

In addition to regular meetings, trustees participated in the following activities over the past year:

- **Strategy and Planning:** Trustees engaged in strategic planning to set priorities for the coming year.
- **Training:** Trustees engaged with training on the Importance of Strategy

## Programs and Initiatives

Throughout 2024, the charity facilitated and hosted training and activities aimed at advancing its mission. Some of the highlights include:

1. **Minister's Conference:** A 3-day residential conference focused on worship, learning and networking. The teaching was provided by Revd Helen Dare who based her sessions on the book of Ruth. This initiative benefited directly 81 individuals who then return to their churches and the benefit could be multiplied across the churches.
2. **Pioneer and Chaplains Gathering:** We launched a new program aimed at engaging, supporting and networking minister's whose main ministry is either within a pioneering ministry or a chaplaincy. In total 24 individuals gathered to network and learn from each other which has resulted in further network meetings and a repeat of the day conference in 2025.

3. **Delivery of the “I am because you are training”:** This training has been developed to raise the issues around diversity and equality, the training was mandatory for ministers to engage with, and the association used the opportunity to gather in small groups to learn from each other around this topic. The association believe this training to be of benefit to new ministers coming through the ministerial recognition pathways that during 2025 will continue to run sessions for individuals to engage with the material.
4. **Engagement in Project Violet:** Project Violet is a research project that investigated women’s experiences in ministry with the results being published during 2024. The research provided us with some stark realities and recommendations for change. The association highlighted this research to all its members churches and encouraged them all to engage with the findings as well engaging in the recommendations for change that were specifically aimed at associations. During 2025 and beyond the association made commitments to change and will be working on making these happen. Part of this will see the repeat of the “Magnify you” programme which will begin during the following year.
5. **Appointment of short-term role specific individuals:** The trustees took the decision to actively use some restricted funds to appoint individuals that had specific roles to enhance mission activities across the association. Joining the team in October was a Pioneer Networker whose role is to network, engage with and support those working in pioneer ministry. A Children’s Youth and Families (CYF) networker whose role is to network with those individuals within member churches working in a CYF role and an Eco Church enabler – this role is job shared between two, their role is to highlight the eco church programme and encourage and help churches consider their role in creation care.

### Risk Management and Compliance

We continue to uphold robust risk management practices to safeguard the charity’s assets. Key risks identified in 2024 included

	Key Risk	Response and mitigation
Critical Risk	Churches response to MR rules consultation outcome (Finance) Membership and giving decreases.	The association prepared different income forecasts to assess its viability if different circumstances occurred.
Critical Risk	Churches response to MR rules consultation outcome (Membership)  Breakaway Baptist union is formed.	Maintain a good relationship with the National Resource and support mechanisms.  Regional ministers remained visible and approachable to churches wishing to talk through issues
Critical Risk	Churches response to MR rules consultation outcome (Reputation) Indirect risk of Baptist reputation	Maintain a good relationship with the National Resource and support mechanisms.

		Regional ministers remained visible and approachable to churches wishing to talk through issues
Finance (including systems and controls)	Changes to financial model with impacts our income	The association prepared different income forecasts to assess its viability if different circumstances occurred  Assess our expenditure and use current funds wisely

## Looking Ahead

As we move into 2025, the trust will focus on the following priorities:

1. **Furthering kingdom justice:** Continuing to implement the agreed outcomes of Project Violet, working to have our justice hub integrated into the life of the association and growing its impact, helping as many churches as possible to become Eco-Church award holders and ensuring that the EBA has a good environmental policy
2. **Supporting mission through grants:** Continuing to implement the grants report 2021 and moving our focus to mission start up grants and reviewing the overall economy of our grants so that they support mission and ministry across the association.
3. **Association Reform:** There is a realisation that the association cannot continue to offer the same as it has always done with a picture of decreasing income. We will be actively exploring ways to network and associate differently. Whilst ensuring the trustee board is fit for purpose and contains the requisite skills and experience needed for an effective and balanced board.
4. **Collaborating with our Baptist Movement:** We are only a part of the Baptist family during the next year we will be active and constructive in collaboration with other parts of the family. Ensuring that the association is well represented in all areas of Baptist life.

## Conclusion

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our team, volunteers, and member churches for their unwavering support throughout the year. The association is not without its challenges during the next year. We are confident that with your continued support, we can achieve great things in the coming year.

Thank you for your trust and commitment to our shared goals.



Rev Lou Webber 27/01/2025