

WORKING TOGETHER, SEEKING THE FUTURE

THIRTEEN ASSOCIATIONS +BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN+FIVE COLLEGES+BMS WORLD MISSION

.....Listening to God and to one another

Welcome to the first update from the Baptist Futures group. The intention is for this to become a regular publication through which Baptist Christians can be kept updated and encouraged to participate in this important process.

The Futures Group was established by BU Council at its meeting in November 2011, in response to an increasingly likely, significant budget deficit. While it was something that could not be ignored, this was seen as an opportunity to seriously reflect on what our key priorities should be in the decades ahead. Baptist Christians in the UK have been responsible and generous in their giving to the work of God's Kingdom beyond their local church, and it is vital to be equally responsible in the way that those resources are used.

There are important decisions that need to be made, and some of these may well be difficult. That is why it is important to ensure that the consultation is as wide as possible and everyone is encouraged to think creatively as we seek to engage with the challenge before us. This will involve reviewing current expenditure, exploring potential new sources of funding and engaging with existing and potential partners, to consider whether there are tasks that might be undertaken more effectively together. This will certainly not preclude initiating new areas of work, if these are perceived as significant priorities by those that the Futures Group is called to serve.

Our world is in a state of unprecedented change at the moment; many accepted certainties and ways of doing things are becoming increasingly questioned. As Baptists we cannot expect to be immune from that, and it is vital to re-examine how we engage in mission and sustain our shared life in the light of this. Our prayer is that we might emerge better equipped to fulfil our common calling within the purposes and mission of our God.

The work of the Futures Group will be enabled by a small steering group, who have been appointed in recognition of the insight and experience that they will bring to the task. It is not for them to make decisions on behalf of others, nor to represent the interests of any party, but to ensure that those who do are properly informed and supported in their task.

One of their initial concerns is to ensure that as many people as possible are included and listened to in the consultation process. They will be using on-line resources, working with Associations, Union departments and committees and Special Interest groups to name but a few. The first full meeting of the Futures Group took place on Tuesday 13th December; the first phase of consultation is now being finalised and is expected to be released on-line on 20th December. Details of this and all future updates can be found on the BUGB website <http://www.baptist.org.uk>

All Baptist Christians are invited to share in this journey by praying for the Futures Group, the Steering Group and offering your reflections and insights when opportunities arise. Our desire is that together we might be led by the Spirit of God, and act in response to His leading.

BUGB Futures Group