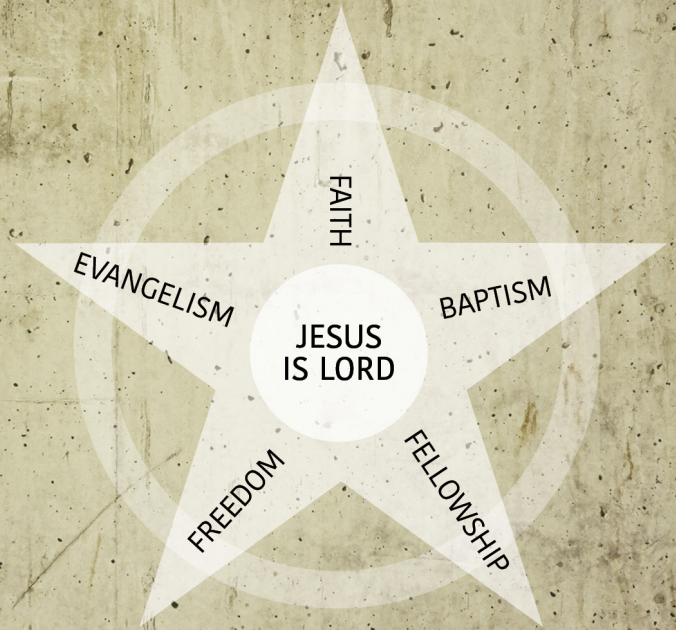


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Women and the Institution: The Struggle for Women to be Involved in the Baptist Union at the End of the Twentieth Century

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Abstract: While there have been studies of women and ministry in Baptist life, this article focuses on women's relationship to the various institutional structures of the Baptist Union and in particular the discussions in the 1990s.

In a study of English Baptist institutional life during the 1980s and 1990s,¹ it became clear that women were largely absent from the key places of power and influence.² It was only by the ends of the 1990s that there is some evidence of real change beginning. This meant that during the major reforms of the life and structures of the Baptist Union that took place in the 1990s, the leadership of the Union and the subsequent decision-making were largely carried out by men (and it should be added white men). In what follows I set out to describe in some detail the story of the struggle to see women have a more significant place in Union life. Previous studies of women in Baptist life have focused on the issue of women and ministry;³ the focus in this article is on their inclusion within institutional life.⁴

¹ Andrew Goodliff, *Renewing a Denomination* (PhD Thesis, University of St. Andrews, 2018). By institutional life I refer to the three key Baptist Union Institutions: the Council, the national team (including the Superintendents) and the staff of the five Colleges in covenant with the Union.

² For one discussion of the dynamics of power in the context of the church see Roy Kearsley, *Church, Community and Power* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

³ In particular, Simon Woodman, *The Story of Women in Ministry in the Baptist Union of Great Britain* (Didcot: Baptist Union, 2011).

⁴ For wider history of women in the UK in the twentieth century, see Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.), *Women in Twentieth-Century Britain: Social, Cultural and Political Change* (London: Routledge, 2014).

A Brief (20th Century) History of Women and the Baptist Union

The Baptist Woman's League (BWL) was found in 1908,⁵ partly initiated by John Howard Shakespeare, who was supportive of women having an active role in the life and work of churches. It was a lay-led organisation⁶ and would largely remain that way. The purpose of the BWL was to fundraise for the Home Work Fund, to promote evangelism and to be a support for women. In 1911 ten women were co-opted onto the Baptist Union Council, above any who might be appointed as association representatives. It had become part of the Union's constitution that at least ten women must be included on its body. In 1938 the BWL developed a more formal link to the Union with the establishment of the Women's Department within the denominational structures. This new Women's Department oversaw the work of the BWL and the Order of Baptist Deaconesses. From 1970 onwards, the Women's Department would become a Desk within the newly created Department for Mission. This recognises that its purpose remained largely prayer, fellowship and evangelism and not representation. It was Margaret Jarman's view (writing in 1986) that 'the very strength of the former Baptist Women's League implied that a woman's place was there rather than in the general affairs of the Union.'⁷ The good intention to see women play a more active role in church life was separated from the male-dominated world of the Union's Council. In this the BWL operated like a para-church organisation.

In 1981 the BWL became the National Council for Baptist Women. Here the purpose was to move the focus of the work from a national level to an association level, like other mission areas (e.g. youth work, education, etc.). Ian Randall claims that it was 'declining involvement' in the BWL that led to the change,⁸ although John Briggs' view was that the change was 'not in any sense of resignation but rather as a sign

⁵ The Baptist Women's League (BWL) was founded in 1908. It was known initially as the Baptist Women's Home Work Auxiliary, changing its name to the BWL in 1910. For an account of its early history see *Fifty Years' Achievement 1908-1958*.

⁶ Although a good number of its leaders were wives of Baptist ministers.

⁷ Jarman, 'Attitudes to Women in Baptist Churches', 327.

⁸ Ian Randall, *The English Baptists in the Twentieth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 2005), 455.

of the new confidence of Baptist women.⁹ In 1993 there was another change when the National Council was disbanded and in its place was the creation of the Baptist Women's Mission Network, which reflected the new emphasis on mission within the Union.¹⁰ This Network retained an emphasis on prayer and fellowship for women within the denomination.¹¹ In the minutes of the March 1993 Baptist Union Council where this was agreed, it was recorded that there was 'some disquiet' that in the creation of this network this 'may delay the full integration of women into the corporate life and witness of the church.'¹² A new voice within the Union was emerging that felt the existence of women only networks was a means of hindering the full inclusion and equality of women at all levels within the structures of the Union. While the BWL had not been set up perhaps consciously to exclude women from the structures, it had inadvertently given women a space within the Union, but not an equal one. A more ardent desire from women and men within the Union was beginning to be heard who believed that the Council, the Superintendency and the Officers of the Union should be better balanced in terms of gender.

A further development of the place of 'women's work' in the Union came in 1997 when the Women's Issues Working Group was created; this would in the mid-2000s be re-named (again) as the Women's Justice Group. (In 1998 the Women's Mission Network ceased functioning.) The Women's Issues Working Group was one in which ministers were much more involved.¹³ Its tasks were also much more focused on the place of women within the Union, including 'investigating and discovering the names and skills of women ... who might assist the Assembly, Council and Committees of the Union' and that which might relate to 'the positive affirmation, life and place of women within our Baptist family.'¹⁴

⁹ John Briggs, 'She-Preachers, Widows and Other Women: The Feminine Dimension in Baptist Life since 1600', *Baptist Quarterly* (July 1986), 349.

¹⁰ The 'Women's Desk' within the Mission Department had been removed in September 1992.

¹¹ National Council of Baptist Women: Proposed Restructuring'

¹² Minutes, Baptist Union Council, March 1993.

¹³ The Convenors were all ministers: Jenny Few, Shelia Martin, Jo Harding, Rachel Haig.

¹⁴ Women's Issues Working Group Report to Council November 1997.

Re-Structuring Council (1992-1996)

The issue of the representation of women had been recognised by the Listening Day Process (1991-1992), which had been initiated by David Coffey and Keith Jones at the beginning of their tenure as General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary.¹⁵ The subsequent document *Towards 2000* with its fourfold Statement of Intent was agreed by Baptist Union Council in March 1992. One of the four commitments the Statement made was 'to promote the greater sharing of people, money and other resource' and under this heading is the specific objective:

We affirm the equality of men and women in the sight of God and recognise the ministry of women as a gift of God on an equal basis. We hope to challenge Baptist Christians to examine in a radical way their attitude to the full partnership of women and men at all levels of leadership.¹⁶

This recognised that there was a problem at a local, associational and national level and set out with the intent to make change. This objective was to be met by setting 'up an enquiry into the equality of ministry of women and men (non-ordained and ordained) at all levels of leadership within the Baptist Union.'¹⁷ It is not clear that this enquiry ever took place.

The Listening Process was part of a longer attempt to see women more represented on the Council. Back in 1975 the November Baptist Union Council had passed a recommendation that said:

- (i) that through education, local churches and associations be encouraged to nominate those women who are able to make a contribution to the deliberations of the Council
- (ii) that women be encouraged to allow their names to be put forward for co-option

¹⁵ Margaret Jarman had named the issues in a *Baptist Quarterly* article written in 1986: 'Attitudes to Women in Baptist Churches in the Mid 1980s', *Baptist Quarterly* 31.7 (July 1986), 236-30.

¹⁶ *A Ten Year Plan Towards 2000* (Didcot: Baptist Union, 1992), 10.

¹⁷ *A Ten Year Plan*, 11.

(iii) that this matter be treated with the utmost urgency.¹⁸

Between 1900 and 1975 the number of women members on Council had increased by four and in 1977 stood at 22 out of 200. In 1987 this had increased to 30 out of 189. In 1987 a paper was circulated to member churches of the British Council of Churches that expressed concern that women were 'not equally represented in the decision-making structures of the church.'¹⁹ Don Black²⁰ wrote a paper at the request of the General Secretary Bernard Green. Black argued that there was 'systematic exclusion of women from the structures.'²¹ This he accounts to an interpretation of Scripture that saw 'women as subservient to men.' A second observation he makes is that women had been directed to use their time and energy into the Baptist Women's League. As a result Black argues that 'the gifts which women had were sifted off into BWL projects and exercises and did not take their place in the denominational structures.'

The issue of representation was picked up in the 1992 *Structures Report* and the 1994 *'Green Paper on Council Restructuring'*. The 1992 *Structures Report* recommended that Associations were expected to have 'at least 30% female representation by 1995'²² on Council. Another proposed resolution was that the language of chairman should be replaced by 'chairperson.' This reflected that a few women were now chairing Council Committees. The *'Green Paper' on Council Restructuring* says that the proposal to use more inclusive language had not been accepted and as a result 'some Council members and Committees are in open

¹⁸ Minutes, Baptist Union Council, March 1975. In 1976 Roger Nunn wrote in the *Baptist Times* arguing for more women in Council, a woman for president and a woman superintendent, 'Move Over, Men', *Baptist Times* 13 May 1976.

¹⁹ This paper had been written by Jean Mayland who was a consultant to the Women's Interchurch Consultative Committee within the World Council of Churches. In the background was the report from a conference held in Sheffield in 1981 on women and men in the churches, on this see Constance F. Parvey (ed.), *The Community of Women and Men in the Church* (Geneva: WCC, 1983).

²⁰ At the time, Black was BU Secretary for Social Affairs.

²¹ Don Black, 'The Position of Baptist Women in the Decision-Making Structures of the Baptist Church', 23rd April 1987. Baptist Union Archive.

²² *Structures Report* (Didcot: Baptist Union, 1992), 3.

rebellion.²³ The same report again raised the issue of gender balance and suggested that more important than a balance between lay/ordained would be a more equal balance between male and female.²⁴ The 'Green Paper' was followed by another *Report on Council Restructuring* in 1996, which again sought to find ways to make Council more representative in terms of gender.²⁵ Despite the responses from churches saying that their 'should be no attempt at balance of any sort', the Task Group proposed that Associations should limit the number of male ordained ministers to a third.²⁶ At the March 1996 Council this was defeated. The issue of language also returned with the proposal to use the terms 'Moderator' and 'Convenor' and this time the resolution was passed.²⁷ The same report argued for the creation of 'Women's Issues Working Group' to report to Council through the Mission Executive.²⁸ This was carried and with it the removal of the Bye-Law within the BU Constitution that there be a National Council of Baptist Women.²⁹ What these different reports demonstrate is both the problem and the difficulty in getting the make-up of Council changed. In 1995-96, which was in the middle of the discussions around the future of the Union, 42 out of 225 members of Council were women,³⁰ and the 1996 Denominational Consultation saw 64 women present out of 294 delegates (22%).³¹

Ahead of that Denominational Consultation Keith Jones, then Deputy General Secretary, wrote in the *Baptist Times* that 'we are impoverished, I believe, by not having the insights of some of our very gifted women

²³ *A 'Green Paper' on Council Restructuring* (Didcot: Baptist Union, 1994), 13.

²⁴ *A 'Green Paper' on Council Restructuring*, 9.

²⁵ The membership of the task Group were John Briggs (Convenor), Ruth Bottoms, Philip Cooke, Arthur Jennings, Shirley Miller, David Roberts and Barrie Smith.

²⁶ *Report on Council Restructuring* (Didcot: Baptist Union, 1996), 7-8.

²⁷ *Report on Council Restructuring*, 10.

²⁸ *Report on Council Restructuring*, 15.

²⁹ The argument here was that the National Council of Baptist Women and also the Federation of Lay Ministries received special treatment that other groups like the Baptist Men's Movement and the Alliance of Baptist Youth which were not mentioned in the constitution.

³⁰ Ruth Gouldbourne, *Reinventing the Wheel: Women and Ministry in English Baptist Life. 1997 Whitley Lecture* (Oxford: Whitley, 1997), 29.

³¹ *List of Delegates Attending the Denominational Consultation, September 6-8, 1996.*

ministers on the Board of General Superintendents, more frequent women Presidents and more women in senior staff position within [sic] our associations and Union.³² He went on to lay the blame at Council's door: 'we have suffered from an unwillingness in Council and elsewhere to see that we draw on the gifts, skills and insights of women who make up more than 60 per cent of our churches.'³³ There was an evident refusal by Council to both recognise and initiate change.

Although Baptists have had women pastors from the 1920s, the numbers were very small for most of the twentieth century.³⁴ This is partly because an alternative ministry stream had been created for women in the office of deaconess.³⁵ It was not until the 1960s that a group of about 8 women went through ministerial training and became ordained.³⁶ Then from the 1970s the number began to slowly grow, at least in comparison to the previous fifty years. In 1975 the Order for Baptist Deaconess was suspended and all active deaconesses were transferred to the ministerial list.³⁷ In the 1980s among those ordained for ministry were Ruth Bottoms, Ruth Gouldbourne, Carol Murray, Pat Took and Hazel Sherman, all who would later in the 1990s hold roles within the institutions of Baptist Union. These women and others built on the generation before and continued slowly to see the place and role of women grow in number and significance.³⁸

³² Keith Jones, 'What shape the Union?', *Baptist Times* 4 July, 1996, 12.

³³ Jones makes a similar point in Keith G. Jones, *A Believing Church* (Didcot: Baptist Union, 1998), 43.

³⁴ For an account of the story see *The Story of Women in Ministry in the Baptist Union of Great Britain* (Didcot: Baptist Union, 2011).

³⁵ See Gouldbourne, *Reinventing the Wheel*, 24-26.

³⁶ See Faith Bowers, 'Liberating Women for Ministry', *Baptist Quarterly* 45.8 (2014), 456-64.

³⁷ Gouldbourne, *Reinventing the Wheel*, 26.

³⁸ See Gouldbourne, *Reinventing the Wheel*; *The Story of Women in Ministry in the Baptist Union of Great Britain* (Didcot: Baptist Union, 2011) and Paul Goodliff, 'Women's Ministry: An Exploration at a Historic Moment', *Baptist Quarterly* 48.8 (2014), 485-99.

Woman with Particular Roles in Baptist Life During 1980s-1990s

During the 1980s there was one woman President of the Baptist Union, Margaret Jarman.³⁹ She held the office in 1987 and she was only the second woman to hold this position⁴⁰ and the first woman ordained minister.⁴¹ There would be another gap of nearly twenty years before the next woman President, when Kate Coleman was elected to serve in 2006.⁴² Since then there have been three more women Presidents: Pat Took, Jenni Entrican, and Dianne Tidball.

Within Baptist House, there was no woman appointed beyond an administrative role until Anne Wilkinson-Hayes in 1992 as Social Action Advisor in the Mission Department.⁴³ In 1994 Jacqui Shepherd became Communications Manager, in 1997 Viv O'Brien (formerly Lassetter) became Ministries Advisor in the Ministry Department and then in 1999 Myra Blyth⁴⁴ became Deputy General Secretary. Hilary Treavis (née Bradshaw) was Ecumenical Administrator from the mid-1990s, and later became Ecumenical Co-Ordinator and is currently now National Ecumenical Officer. Post-2000 other women would

³⁹ Margaret Jarman was originally a Deaconess, who was ordained as a minister in 1967. She was the first woman to go to Spurgeon's. See Patricia Raven, 'Margaret Jarman', *Baptist Times* 9 April 1987, 14-15. She would later help found the Baptist Union Retreat Group.

⁴⁰ The first woman BU President was Mrs A. (Nell) Alexander in 1978. She had been Chairman of the BU Woman's Work from 1971-76 and a longstanding member of Council. See Patricia Raven, 'First Lady', *Baptist Times* 27 April 1978.

⁴¹ Following her election, the July 1986 edition of the *Baptist Quarterly* was devoted to the question of women's participation in Baptist life. Articles were written by Shirley Dix, Ruth Matthews, Carol McCarthy and Jarman herself. In September to October 1987 the *Baptist Times* published a series of articles about Baptist women in ministry.

⁴² That is six in a two hundred year history of the Baptist Union.

⁴³ Anne Wilkinson-Hayes returned to local ministry in Oxford in 1997 and then in 2002 took up a regional ministry position in the Baptist Union of Victoria, Australia.

⁴⁴ Myra Blyth had been ordained in 1978, having trained at Regent's Park, and in 1982 became Youth Secretary of the British Council of Churches, and then held several roles at the World Council of Churches between 1988-1999. She was nominated for the Presidency in 1985, but lost to David Coffey. See 'Myra Blyth: New Role in Geneva', *Baptist Times*, 15 April 1993, 7.

follow – Kathryn Morgan (Mission Department), Amanda Allchorn (Communications), Rosemary Kidd (Faith & Unity), and most recently Beth Allison-Glenny.⁴⁵ No woman has ever been appointed as Head or Team Leader of the three key departments of the Union – Ministry, Mission or Faith & Unity.⁴⁶

In terms of the Committees of the Baptist Union Council, from 1980-82, Nell Alexander was chairman [sic] of the General Purposes and Finance Committee and from 1982-87, Margaret Jarman was chairman [sic] of the Ministerial Recognition (MR) Committee and she was followed, ten years later in 1994 by Ruth Matthews as chairman [sic] of the same MR committee. In the 1970s Nell Alexander had been chairman [sic] of the General Purposes and Finance Committee. In 1994 Ruth Bottoms became chairman [sic] of the Church Relations committee and Anne Phillips (formerly Dunkley) was the chairman [sic] of the Children's Working Group. By 1995 Ruth Bottoms was Moderator of the Faith and Unity Executive and Lynn Green⁴⁷ of the Mission Executive.⁴⁸ In the following decade Ruth Bottoms became the Moderator of Council (2002-2007) and then the first Moderator of the Baptist Union Trustee Board.⁴⁹ Sarah Parry was Moderator of the

⁴⁵ Allison-Glenny was appointed Public Issues Enabler in the Faith & Society team in 2018.

⁴⁶ Ministry is the oldest of these departments. The Mission department was created in 1970 and then disappeared in the structural changes in 2013. The Faith & Unity department was created in 2005. In 2013 it was renamed the Faith & Society Team.

⁴⁷ Lynn Green was one of the few women on the Mainstream Executive (joining in 1994) and the only woman to give a plenary address at the Baptist Leader's Day at Wembley in 1999. She would become a Regional Minister in 2011 and then in 2013 she became the first woman to be appointed General Secretary.

⁴⁸ Kathryn Morgan followed Green as Moderator of Mission Executive in 2000. Jenny Few was convener of the Women's Issues Working Group and later Chair of the Baptist Minister's Fellowship. See Jenny Few, 'Hats and WI(w)Gs: Personal Reflections on the Baptist Union Women's Issues Working Group' in Steve Holmes (ed.), *Theology in Context* (Oxford: Whitley, 2000), 33-46. Later moderators of the Women's Issues Working Group would be Sheila Martin, Jo Harding and Rachel Haig.

⁴⁹ Bottoms was also a Baptist Union representative in the World Council of Churches from 1991 and from 1998 a member of the WCC Central Committee as well as Moderator of the Commission on World Mission and

Ministry Executive (2009-2013) and Sian Murray-Williams of the Faith & Unity Executive (2006-2012).⁵⁰

In 1998 Pat Took⁵¹ was appointed the first General Superintendent of the Metropolitan Area.⁵² In 2009 Dianne Tidball would become the second woman to be appointed to the equivalent role (in the East Midlands Baptist Association), now known as Regional Minister Team Leader. From 2002 and the implementation of the changes to the Denomination,⁵³ there have been more women appointed as Regional Ministers. In 2002 it was four out of thirty-three (12%).⁵⁴ The number of Regional Ministers who were women increased to eight by 2011,⁵⁵ but had fallen again by 2014 to five.⁵⁶ It stands in 2019 at nine out of forty (22.5%), with Beth Powney (in the Eastern Baptist Association) as the only Regional Minister Team Leader.⁵⁷

Evangelism. Bottoms was followed by another woman, Jenny Royal, as Moderator of Trustees.

⁵⁰ Murray-Williams was also Tutor in Worship Studies at Bristol Baptist College, 2006-2016. She is currently Moderator of the MR Committee.

⁵¹ Pat Took was General Superintendent and then Regional Minister Team Leader in London between 1998-2012. She was Baptist Union President in 2010. She has a PhD in reformation history (awarded in 1979). Her appointment at the November BU Council was only a few weeks after a vote of the Assembly of the Baptist Union of Scotland which decided not to accept women ministers. For her journey into ministry see 'Serving!', *Baptist Times* 29 October 1987, 6.

⁵² 'First Woman Superintendent', *Baptist Times* 20 November 1997, 1.

⁵³ The twenty-nine County Associations became thirteen Regional Associations. General Superintendents became Regional Ministers and nearly every Association had more than one.

⁵⁴ With Pat Took they were Helen Wordsworth (Central), Kathryn Morgan (Southern Counties) and Gill Crippen (South Counties).

⁵⁵ Helen Wordsworth (Central), Dianne Tidball (East Midlands), Sheila Martin (Eastern), Pat Took (London), Sandra Crawford (North Western), Jane Day (Yorkshire), Lynn Green (Southern Counties) and Jackie Storey (Southern Counties).

⁵⁶ http://andygoodliff.typepad.com/my_weblog/2014/06/a-drop-in-the-number-of-women-regional-ministers-2010-2014.html. The five were Dianne Tidball, Sheila Martin, Sandra Crawford, Jackie Storey and Alison MacKay.

⁵⁷ Beth Powney was appointed in 2017 and Susan Stevenson in 2019.

In terms of the key reports presented to Council during the 1990s, women were present on the working groups or committees, although again few in number. Faith Bowers⁵⁸ was Secretary of the Doctrine and Worship Committee and so was part of the Committee that published *The Nature of Assembly and the Council of Great Britain* (1994), *Forms of Ministry* (1994) and *Believing and Being Baptised* (1996). Ruth Gouldbourne⁵⁹ was part of the Task Group that wrote *Transforming Superintendency* and also the Task Group that produced *Covenant 21*. Carolyn Green⁶⁰ and Jacqui Keenan were members of the Task Group that wrote *Relating and Resourcing*. Anne Wilkinson-Hayes and Hilary Wilmer were part of the Task Group on Core Values that produced the influential *Five Core Values for a Gospel People*.⁶¹ The Denominational Consultation Reference Group (which existed between 1996-1999) was better represented with four of the group being women alongside three men: Rosemarie Davidson-Gotobed,⁶² Rachel Haig,⁶³ Jane Thorington-Hassell and Gillian Wood.⁶⁴ In 2000 Ruth Gouldbourne was appointed Convenor of the Roundtable on Membership, which in 2004 published *Joined Up Thinking on Membership* and in 2001 Hilary Wilmer was appointed Convenor of the Review Group for the

⁵⁸ Faith Bowers, non-ordained, has played important roles in the life of the Union. She was a member the BU council from 1988-2002. She was a member of the conversations between the Baptist Union and the Church of England, 1992-2006. She was sub-editor of the *Baptist Quarterly* 1985-2014. She was a founder member of the Baptist Union's Working Group on Mental Handicap and the Church, which was renamed in 1991 as BUiLD.

⁵⁹ Ruth Gouldbourne taught at Bristol Baptist College from 1995-2006, before becoming one of the ministers at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London. She gave the 1997 Whitley Lecture, *Reinventing the Wheel: Women and Ministry in English Baptist Life* and has written on ministry, the Lord's Supper and other topics. She became the pastor of Grove Lane Baptist Church in 2018.

⁶⁰ Carolyn Green was President of BMS in 1996.

⁶¹ *Five Core Values for a Gospel People* (Didcot: Baptist Union, 1998).

⁶² From 1998 to 2001 Rosemarie Davidson-Gotobed was Racial Justice Coordinator for the London Baptist Association.

⁶³ Whilst she was a minister-in-training at Bristol, Rachel Haig was invited to attend the 1996 Denominational Consultation. She was ordained in 1998. She would later become Moderator of the Women's Justice Group.

⁶⁴ Gillian Wood was Education Officer for the Free Churches Council.

Presidency of the Union. Of those mentioned, Faith Bowers, Hilary Wilmer, Rosemarie Gotobed and Gillian Wood were all non-ministers.

The first woman tutor in a college was appointed in 1985 – Heather Walton at Northern Baptist College,⁶⁵ and this was followed by Debra Reid at Spurgeon’s in 1987,⁶⁶ Hazel Sherman at Bristol in 1990,⁶⁷ Karen Smith at South Wales in 1991⁶⁸ and Carol Murray at Regent’s Park College in 1993.⁶⁹ By 2002 there were six women as Tutors in the colleges.⁷⁰ It was not until 2009 that there was a woman College Principal, when Anne Phillips (formerly Dunkley) was appointed Co-Principal with Richard Kidd at Northern Baptist College.⁷¹ Currently all the Colleges have at least one woman on staff, although still in a minority.⁷² This may reflect that less women have been less likely to do

⁶⁵ Heather Walton is a Methodist, see her book *Writing Methods in Theological Education* (London: SCM, 2014), 24.

⁶⁶ Debra Reid has taught Old Testament, but the majority of her time has been with regard to part-time and Distant Learning and more recently as Director of On-Line Learning.

⁶⁷ Hazel Sherman was Tutor in Christian Doctrine at Bristol between 1990-93, and lecturer in theology at the University of Birmingham, 1993-95. She was a contributor to the collection of essays on baptism edited by Paul Fiddes, *Reflections on the Water* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 1996) and she edited the *Baptist Ministers’ Journal*, 2003-2009. She was followed as Editor by Sally Nelson.

⁶⁸ Karen Smith completed a DPhil under Barrie White at Regent’s Park College and was Tutor in Church History at South Wales, 1992-2018. She is currently co-editor of the *Baptist Quarterly*.

⁶⁹ Carol Murray was Tutor in Pastoral Studies, a position she held until 2011. In 2002 she was President of BMS. More recently, in retirement, Murray is Moderator of the Central Baptist Association. Jane Shaw, an Anglican, taught Church History at the College between 1993-2001 and the Mennonite Ellie Kreider taught liturgy between 1995-2000. Myra Blyth joined the staff in 2004 as Tutor in Liturgy and Ecumenism.

⁷⁰ Ruth Gouldbourne (Doctrine and Church History) at Bristol, Carol Murray at Regent’s Park College, Karen Smith at South Wales, Anne Dunkley at Northern, Joy Osgood (Old Testament) and Rachel Dutton (Mission and Evangelism) at Spurgeon’s. Debra Reid was still at Spurgeon’s but responsible for Open Learning and Trisha Mcllory taught Counselling.

⁷¹ On the retirement of Philips and Kidd in 2013/14, Northern would again appoint two co-Principals, Clare McBeath and Glen Marshall.

⁷² Datha Blackwood, Debra Reid and Linda Campbell at Spurgeon’s. Myra Blyth at Regent’s. Helen Paynter and Lis Pearce at Bristol Baptist College.

a doctoral degree. Out of the 114 PhDs in theology completed by British Baptists since 1980, 22 have been completed by women (19%).⁷³ Although since 2010, of the 34 completed PhDs by British Baptists, 9 were by women (26%), so the number has been increasing.

Mainstream, the largest Baptist network within the Union during the 1980s and 90s, also had a poor record of women within its leadership structures.⁷⁴ From its beginning in 1979 until the late 1980s its Executive were all men. Jane Hassell (later Thorington-Hassell)⁷⁵ and Anne Wilkinson(-Hayes) had joined the Executive by 1989.⁷⁶ In 1994, Lynn Green also joined the Executive.⁷⁷ In May 1995, in reference to Lynn Green becoming Mainstream Secretary, there was expressed, by the Executive, a desire 'to try and increase the number of women serving in leadership among us.'⁷⁸ Surveying the *Mainstream Magazine* up to 2000, it is apparent the Executive were not very successful in this goal. In summer 2007 the magazine, now called *Talk* was dedicated to the issue of gender. The issue was supportive of women in leadership,

Rosa Hunt will join South Wales Baptist College in September 2019 as a new co-Principal. Clare McBeath remains as Co-Principal at Northern Baptist College. Mention should also be made of Sally Nelson, who teaches at St Hild (in partnership with Northern Baptist College).

⁷³ See https://andygoodliff.typepad.com/my_weblog/british-baptist-phds.html. This is not a definitive list and is one I have compiled through research of Baptist college libraries.

⁷⁴ In 1986, the *Baptist Times* would write, 'it is surprising that a movement dedicated to reform and renewal should have so little place in its leadership for either women or non-ministerial Baptists', 'Comment: Mainstream comes of age', *Baptist Times* 16 January 1986, 2.

⁷⁵ Thorington-Hassell had trained for ministry at Trinity College, Bristol and was ordained in 1985. She moved off the Mainstream Executive in 1996 and became a member of its Council of Reference.

⁷⁶ Raymond Brown writing in 1986, when he had decided to step down as President of the Mainstream Executive, said to David Slater that: 'I hope, when you do meet, that you will be able to give some thought to our male-dominated committee and if you are to consider the name of a young, able and suitable woman, might I suggest Jane Hassell.' Letter to David Slater from Raymond Brown, dated 5th March, 1986. Barrie White Papers, Angus Library D/WHB/MNS.

⁷⁷ *Mainstream Magazine* 51 (1994), 20. Green stepped down from the Executive in 1998, although she rejoined the new Mainstream Leadership Team in 2000.

⁷⁸ *Mainstream Magazine* 53 (May 1995), 34.

but tellingly the contacts for its Network round the country we all men. This demonstrates that the role of women was not just an institutional problem in the Union, but a problem in wider Baptist life. When Mainstream was relaunched as Fresh Streams in 2011, it included women in its leadership and in 2019 it has three men and three women.⁷⁹

Outside of simply male patriarchy, one of the biggest reasons it took so long for women to be appointed to institutional roles was the still very small number of woman being trained for ministry. There were around 8 in the 1960s, another 8 in the 1970s, 11 in the 1980s and then around 27 in the 1990s, which is the most telling explanation to why it is not until the 2000s that things begin to change, as many of these woman became experienced pastors, trusted leaders and an increasing part of the structures.⁸⁰ However, writing in 2004, after she had stepped down as Deputy General Secretary Myra Blyth wrote that ‘female leaders in the decision-making structures of the Baptist Union are still simply too few to be able to bring an alternative influence to bear on ways of working and relating.’⁸¹

In 1998 *Five Core Values of a Gospel People* had been agreed by Council and was presented as something that should undergird the whole of Baptist life.⁸² One of the values was being ‘inclusive communities’⁸³ and so by 2000 the reform of the Council was on the agenda once again. A report from September 2000 claimed that attempts to achieve

⁷⁹ The women are Ruth Rice, Ali Summers and Amy Wearing.

⁸⁰ See Ruth Gouldbourne, ‘Identity and Pain: Women’s Consultations, 1987–92’, *Baptist Ministers’ Journal* 243 (July 1993): 8–10 for an account of some of the story of how through several meetings changes began to take place at Association Ministerial Recognition Committees and in the Baptist Colleges. The first meeting in 1987 had been called by Jane Hassell.

⁸¹ Myra Blyth, ‘Women in Leadership: A British Baptist Perspective’ in Harriet Harris and Jane Shaw (eds.), *The Call for Women Bishops* (London: SPCK, 2004), 136.

⁸² Twenty years on it is largely a forgotten report, although its initial impact is arguably still felt.

⁸³ This included two relevant ‘obligations’ – ‘to address the continued undervaluing of the ministry of women in Baptist life; to challenge continually all racist, ageist and sexist attitudes and structures’, *Five Core Values for a Gospel People*, 8.

greater representation on the Council had been ‘insufficiently radical’ and as such the Council needed to ‘face up squarely to the question of quotas.’⁸⁴ After no success in 1992 or 1996, by 2002 the work of the Council Reform Task Group saw the Bye-laws of the Constitution of the Baptist Union changed. This now required Association representatives to be more balanced. Those Associations with nine representatives on Council had to ensure at least three were female, and those Associations with twelve representatives on Council had to ensure at least four were female.⁸⁵ In 2005, at least 51 were women on Council (out of 212, 24%) and in 2011 it was at least 53 were women (out of 200, 26.5%).⁸⁶

In 1996 David Coffey and Keith Jones asked the question, what kind of Union for the twenty-first century? It is apparent that the journey of reform was as much about issues of gender (and race) as it was about superintendency, associating and ecumenism. The reform of the Union did not end in 2002, but a second process (known as The Futures Process) began in 2012. This came just as the Women’s Justice Group were beginning to make further proposals to the Council with regards to how the Union operated. The Futures Process side-lined these plans, as the outcome that followed saw a smaller Council, a shorter Assembly and a Union largely pre-occupied with other concerns, although now led by a woman in Lynn Green as General Secretary. It is only in 2019, as the Union marks a 100 years of women’s ministry,⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Report from the National Strategy Group Sub-Group on Reform of Council and Role of Presidency, Baptist Union Council Minutes November 2000, Appendix 1, 43-44. On the sub-group were Ruth Bottoms, Sally Nelson and Myra Blyth as Deputy General Secretary.

⁸⁵ Constitution of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, *Baptist Union Directory 2002-2003* (Didcot: Baptist Union, 2002), 9.

⁸⁶ Numbers might have been slightly higher. Members of Council in the Baptist directory are indicated by initial rather than names, then detective work is required to determine whether they are male and female. It should also be said that ex-Presidents (nearly almost all men!) were by default members of Council, but many did not attend, so the gender balance would have been slightly better at meetings, although still under a third.

⁸⁷ See January 2019 edition of the *Baptists Together* magazine. It was in 1919 that Violet Hedger began training at Regent’s Park College, the first women to formally do so.

that it appears new attempts at challenge and change are beginning.⁸⁸ In 2019 currently 31% (26 out of 83) women are members of Council and 15% (2 out of 13) are members of the influential Baptist Steering Group.⁸⁹ A more gender-balanced Baptist Union remains a work in progress.

Notes on the Contributor:

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⁸⁸ In the summer of 2019 Jane Day was appointed to a newly created post of Centenary Enabler. This post is designed to help encourage a new generation of women in Baptist life and minister, recognizing there still remains significant challenges.

⁸⁹ 'The key location of organisational leadership and coordination sits with the Baptist Steering Group', https://www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/220600/Baptist_Steering_Group.aspx. It is made up of representatives of the Association Partnerships, the Colleges and the Specialist Team, in addition to the General Secretary, a member of Council, and the Moderator of the Trustee Board.