

SCBA Annual General Meeting 2024

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Basingstoke Baptist Church on 4th November 2024.

Present: 53 Delegates and 10 Visitors from SCBA churches and organisations
6 Staff and 2 Trustees from SCBA
12 apologies had been received

1. Chris Brockway opened the meeting in prayer.
2. Minutes – The minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting, held on 6th November 2023 had been previously circulated. These were accepted as a correct record.
3. Annual Report: Questions & Comments:
Clare and Hayley reflected on being a year in post and the different gifting and character traits that they bring to the role.

Looking at the Annual Report, we have included a lot of different voices in it and if you would be interested in joining one of the groups, do get in touch.

The Annual Report is available to view on the SCBA website [here](#).

4. From the Ground: Updates from Around the Association

Jacky Bone - Windrush:

Jim asked Jacky what it was like to be a Pioneer? Jacky explained that it can be quite lonely to start with but she has found partners to work with. Kidlington Baptist Church have taken her on as their Local Area Mission Partner who support her as a Baptist Partner, and the Anglican Church in Witney supports her locally.

Jacky then spoke about how she started the enterprise in Witney, with the activities over Covid (handing out activity packs at Christmas and Easter) and then launching Messy Church three years ago, where they meet in the local school.

They have now become a registered CIO and are applying for membership with SCBA to allow them to get a Home Mission grant to call another minister to work a day a week as an establisher in the church.

Shiloh Baptist Church, Guernsey

Hayley gave the background to Shiloh Baptist Church which is in a wealthy area of Guernsey but with some real areas of poverty. The church started a Foodbank and Clothing Bank, as well as a café held at the same time. This became so popular that people started asking questions about faith and the church leadership decided to do church differently on a Sunday.

Instead of a Sunday morning service, they have the café, Foodbank and Clothes Bank, as well as Youth & Children's work, with a regular church service at 6pm.

This morning session thrived and people didn't want to go home, so lunch is now provided and people stay all day, and people are coming to faith. It is about answering the call of your community.

Youth Work – Savannah Bell

Savannah described how a young person from the local secondary school contacted the church via the website to say they were doing GCSE photography with a project on church architecture and wanted to visit Wokingham Baptist Church to take some photos. Savannah saw this as a great opportunity to ask questions about their faith journey, as churches, we need to always be looking for these opportunities. Savannah also explained that a group of CYF workers from SCBA had met recently to look at how they can journey with the local churches on what their CYF work might look like and are looking for sample churches to take part in this. Please contact Clare or Sav if you are interested.

5. Proposal from BUEN

Simon Bartlett gave a background to the Baptist Union Environment Network, which can be found out [here](#) and the importance of it. Simon is the SCBA representative and holds online meetings in SCBA and at the last meeting came up with six proposals for the churches in OUR Association:

1. Pursue an A Rocha Eco Church Award.
2. Reduce CO2 emissions
3. Better understand scripture, science and the situation as far as they relate to the environment.
4. Take an initiative to stimulate interest in churches. This could be something like a 'Climate Sunday' or a 'Car-free Sunday' or similar.
5. Help people who are suffering the impact of climate change. This could be, for example, financial help for a land regeneration project in Africa or helping people who have become refugees as a result of climate change.
6. Give BUEN financial support to enable it to employ someone.

Simon explained that we should try to do as many of these as possible. It was discussed as to whether SCBA should use a Mission Support Grant to fund a paid role.

A straw poll of those gathered proved inconclusive about how to progress with the proposal. The Regional Team will consider the next steps in consultation with Simon.

6. Summary of Accounts

Simon Gray gave an overview of the accounts. In the income section, the grant from the BU is down due to a decrease in Home Mission giving. The Association received £640,000 in monies from closed churches.

In the expenditure section, there has been an increase in staffing costs, as well as the costs for Leaders' Days and the Conference. It was agreed to accept the accounts, which can be viewed [here](#).

7. Appointment of Trustees

Kay Boulton and Glyn Thomas were voted in as scrutineers.

Andy Perryman and Martin Hobgen left the room but no questions or comments were raised.

Ann Andrews, Martin Hobgen and Andy Perryman were voted in as trustees for SCBA.

8. Appointment of Treasurer: David Ford

No questions or comments were raised.

David Ford was voted in as Treasurer of SCBA.

9. Regional Team Updates and Priorities for 2025

Chris Brockway read out the statement (*Appendix 1*) previously circulated. Steve and Jim shared their statements. Questions and comments were invited.

Concern was raised for the churches in the north of the Association with the three remaining RMs living further south. It was explained that clusters are important to the teams and travelling is not a problem. It was explained that people had appreciated the Smaller Churches Network that Jim had set up and what would happen to that. Hayley explained that this will continue.

It was asked that surely there is a need for these people and cannot the Association sell one of the properties instead. It was explained the Home Mission giving is down and the trustees had made the decisions that it was no longer going to use the reserves for staff costs. It was also explained that the three properties owned by the Association house two RMs and a Pioneer that SCBA supports.

It was asked how the Association is going to protect the remaining team from burnout and stress? The trustees and team will be looking at how they work together and concentrate on the high workload.

10. Prayer led by Chris Brockway

Time was spent in prayer for the team, trustees and the Association.

Appendix 1

November 2024

Update on the Regional Team from the Trustees

SCBA has been running a deficit budget (of £200,000 or more) for at least 10 years, which regrettably has only been possible by the closure and subsequent sale of churches, building up our reserves.

In 2021 the Association began a strategic review. This highlighted a key emphasis on the Association needing to raise up trans-local gifting from within and to encourage and equip those in our Association to serve alongside the SCBA staff team in resourcing the local church and missional communities. At that time, whilst Colin Norris was still serving as Team Leader, a decision was taken to use reserves to continue supporting a deficit budget for staffing, after which, Simon, Steve and Jim were appointed to their respective roles. After Colin Norris stood down from his role earlier than expected in February 2023, Clare and Hayley were appointed as RMTL Co-Leaders in July 2023 and, at this time, a renewed commitment was expressed to continue with a significant deficit budget.

The Association Trustees have now reviewed this decision a little more than two years after the initial strategic review, concluding that whilst the aims of the review are still current, the staffing model adopted is no longer financially sustainable. This decision has also, in part, been made in light of the national Baptist financial review which is underway. We remain committed to the priority areas identified within the strategic review and have evaluated how these areas are supported, while working to reduce the unsustainable deficit budget of the SCBA in such a way that still releases money for local mission.

Given that the majority of our budget is spent on staffing and associated costs, and that the only income source the Association has (beyond closed churches) is Home Mission Giving, the only conceivable way of significantly reducing the deficit was to look for a cut in staff costs. The Trustees have discerned that the Association team needs to be restructured in order to ensure that we are being good stewards of the ever-decreasing financial resources at our disposal. Needless to say, this has been a difficult decision and not one we have taken lightly, not least because we hugely value the contribution all of our regional team make.

At the time of the Trustees reviewing our staffing model in May, the BU national Financial Model Review was scheduled to enter its 'transition phase' during 2025/26. As such, changes to our Regional Team were scheduled to align with the national timeline. In June, due to the complexities of fully understanding the national finances, BU Council decided to delay this 'transition phase' by 12 months until 2026/27. In September the SCBA Trustees discerned it was right to keep with the original timeline at an Association level, making the transition towards reduced expenditure during 2025. Given the necessary notice periods for Regional Ministers, our budgets would not reflect the full annual reduction in expenditure until the financial year beginning 2026.

After months of prayerful discernment and careful consideration of the team structure, the Trustees have concluded that the roles of Mission Development Lead and part-time General Regional Minister should no longer continue. We also re-evaluated the administration support of the SCBA and, in August, changed Amy's role to Association Administrator with a change of hours.

Although not what they would wish, Jim and Steve will be leaving their SCBA roles at the end of the year. Jim and Steve will be paid until May, as per the terms of their appointment. However, in order to give them space to plan for their futures, we have released them from all duties from the end of the year. Jim and Steve are still processing the news having been informed during the early part of October. We would underline and categorically state that this decision is financially motivated and not for reasons of competency or wrong-doing.

The Trustees spent some time deciding on the most appropriate process for what was likely to lead to difficult decisions. As part of the process, Jim and Steve were offered an individual meeting with Chris Brockway (as Moderator), Anthony Clarke (as Trustee) and Clare Hooper (as RMTL Co-Leader) to explain the reasons for the decision. This was a helpful, constructive and clarifying time. Both Jim and Steve expressed that they felt the way the news was communicated and the process itself lacked appropriate consultation and pastoral care; we (as Trustees) regret that

the process was hurtful to them; we are committed to taking the time to reflect on where we can learn and make improvements with this regard. Whilst not changing the outcome of the decisions made, we have apologised to Steve and Jim for the distress caused, noting that they felt the process was unnecessarily rushed, could have been consulted upon more widely and favoured those in full-time roles. Both, Steve and Jim have been very gracious in response.

We want to stress again that this decision is based purely on the SCBA and wider Union's financial situation; we are very grateful for the gifts and talents that Jim and Steve have brought to their roles. They, and we would value your continued prayers as we all seek to be faithful in our response to all that God has called us to.

From January 2025, the churches will be split between the team of three full time Regional Ministers. The other priorities of the strategic review will be supported by the team. The strategic areas of pivoting younger; Children's Youth & Families and pioneering will be supported by Clare. Hayley will be supporting Mission Development and Clusters. The whole team will be focusing on leadership development. More details about how we are investing in equipping the Association will follow in the coming months.