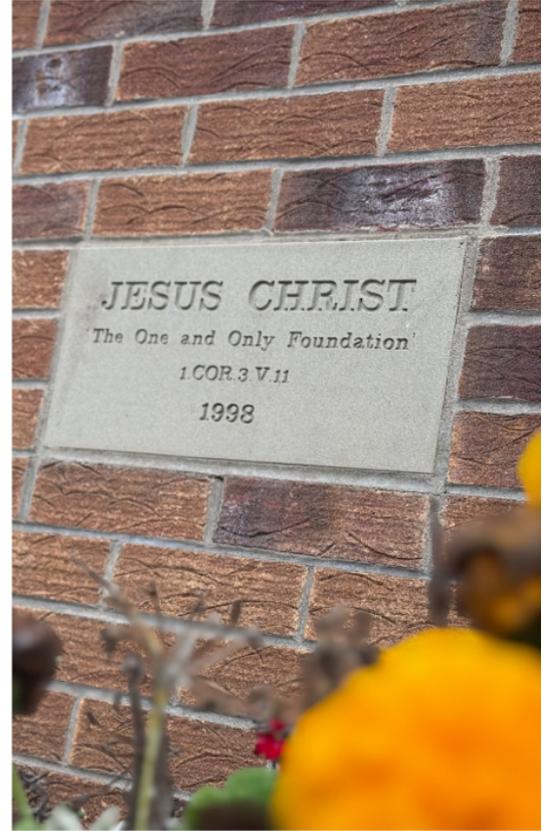




East Midland Baptist Association



# Review of 2024

## EMBA Staff Team *(to 31 December 2024)*



From Left to right:

Mrs Gill McNab, Administrative Assistant

Mrs Becky Nicholls – Admin Lead and PA to Regional Team Leader

Rev Pete Leveson – Regional Minister

Rev Mark Clay – Regional Team Leader (RTL)

Rev Dr Nick Ashton – Regional Minister

Mr Kenny Henry – Safeguarding Lead

Rev Sarah Fegredo – Comms Lead

## EMBA Board of Directors



From Left to right:

Mrs Becky Nicholls, Mrs Kay McManus, Rev Matt Jones, Rev David Harvey (Moderator), Rev Mark Clay, Mrs Ellie Cox, Rev Martin Hills, Rev Hannah Colk, Mr Andy Smallridge (Treasurer)

At the General Meeting as part of the 2025 EMBA Gathering there will be six vacancies on the EMBA board of Directors.

# Report of the EMBA Directors

The EMBA Directors continue to work closely with the Staff Team on a range of significant issues which impact on the whole Baptist family. Together we have developed an Action Plan to take forward the relevant recommendations for change emerging from the Project Violet Research and Report. As part of this, four women ministers of churches in the Association will be participating in the relaunched “Magnify You” programme which is designed to encourage and coach women ministers for more high-profile roles within the Baptist family.



Churches may or not be aware that the current financial model which supports both Associations and BU Specialist Teams is not sustainable unless there is a significant increase in Home Mission giving and other income streams. We are therefore heavily invested in the outcome of the Baptist Union Financial Review currently being undertaken. We invite our local churches to pray that those engaged in the review and considering its outcomes will have God’s wisdom as to the best way forward to grow healthy churches. We are extremely grateful for all the current giving to Home Mission which happens alongside many other financial pressures on churches. We invite you to consider whether you might be able to offer more.

The Regional Ministers continue to build relationships with churches and are available to offer support and encouragement to Ministers and Leadership Teams. Kenny Henry is our Safeguarding Lead and is organising a range of training courses as well as advising on specific issues. The Directors have approved a new “Resourcing Grant” aimed at churches that are growing quickly and need interim financial support to sustain and continue that growth.



Following its acceptance by the BU Council as a Baptist College in March 2024, Revd Dr Nick Allan has been appointed Director of the St Hild Centre for Baptist Ministry. We invite churches to discern whether there are people within their fellowships who God might be calling to ministry or leadership roles who could take advantage of the range of opportunities the college has to offer. Have a word with your Regional Minister.

Following a period of helping us on a freelance basis, Sarah Fegredo has been appointed to the permanent post of Communications Lead. We trust that churches are appreciating the significant improvements in our communications.

At the Annual Gathering in June 2024, Revd Hannah Colk, Mrs Ellie Cox, Revd Martin Hills, and Revd Matt Jones were re-elected for a second term of office. In

the current year they have served alongside Mrs Kay McManus (eligible for re-nomination this year), Revd Mark Clay, Andy Smallridge (Treasurer), and me. We ask God's blessings on Ellie Cox and Martin Hills who have resigned as Directors due to relocation to churches outside the EMBA region. Some of our work has been strategic, challenging and exciting. There has also been the trustee type background work of producing a document setting out Governance Principles, a Risk Register, and reviewing how we deal with Data Protection issues. My thanks to all the Directors serving faithfully and bringing wise counsel to our conversations.

The Directors express sincere thanks to the Staff Team. Becky, Gill, Kenny, Mark, Mike, Nick, Pete, and Sarah together with Andy our Treasurer and Irene our bookkeeper serve the Association and our churches so very well. The Directors and Staff Team continue to look for innovative ways to engage with and draw on the skills and experience of Regional Associates, ministers, church leaders, and the many retired ministers in our region. We are grateful for all the work done on a voluntary basis by so many.

This is my final report as Moderator of Directors. It has been a privilege to serve the Association for the best part of 10 years. I take this opportunity to express my thanks to all who have served as Directors and members of the Staff Team during this time.

I encourage you to pray for the Directors and Staff Team on a regular basis. We are always keen to hear from those who have a passion to see God's Kingdom grow and have some skills and time available. Please contact any of the Directors or Regional Ministers.



**Revd David Harvey**  
**Moderator of the EMBA board of Directors**



## **East Midland Baptist Trust Company (EMBTC)**

2024 has seen a number of changes related to the work of the EMBTC. We bid farewell to Mike Fegredo and Tim Jackson, the latter handing over the reins as treasurer to Andy Smallridge. We were delighted to welcome David Harvey to the Board. We thank all these friends for their service. We are grateful to our own Becky Nicholls and Sally Spicer and Tim Chowns of the Baptist Union Corporation (BUC) for their support in preparing the agenda.

We have continued to seek to simplify the work of the EMBTC. The transfer of funds held for EMBTC churches to the BUC was completed and some long

standing property and bank account matters were finally cleared off our agenda.

The Board has continued to support the churches of the Association with regard to property and legal matters related to Trust deeds and to applications for BUC loans, as well as assisting those churches which are closing to resolve legal and financial matters, a sad but necessary task. It would greatly facilitate our work if those churches considering closure would speak to their Regional Minister so that all the necessary legal work can be completed in a timely manner. We are grateful to the BUC staff at Didcot, in particular Tim Chowns for their support. The Support Services team have been through some difficult times but, under Chris Jones' able leadership, has achieved some stability. Listed church buildings present challenges from time to time and we have been well supported by the augmented BU Listed Buildings team.

As EMBTC Moderator, I sit on the BUC Board and continue as Moderator. I also participate in meetings with other Trust company secretaries. Both these activities are invaluable in providing early warning on changes in the law relevant to our churches.

Churches should be aware that there are a number of issues relating to the new Charities Law as well as Equality and Housing Acts. Churches that hire their premises to outside organisations are strongly advised to adopt an Ethos Statement. [Please see documents L09C on the BU website for details](#) where you can also find advice on these other matters. These leaflets are regularly reviewed and updated and church secretaries should ensure they are familiar with them.

The EMBTC remains on a firm financial foundation and we look forward to supporting the churches in 2025-6. Our prayer is that the resources we hold and the expertise available may be used by the churches of the East Midlands to grow the Kingdom in new and imaginative ways to God's glory.

***Dr Chris Hanning (EMBTC Moderator)***

# Rooted



Rooted is the EMBA's commitment to equip ministers and leaders for contemporary ministry and to help churches engage in mission and ministry in our ever-changing world.

Themed days (usually two or three) are held each year that provide an opportunity to reflect theologically and practically on a particular aspect of ministry. The day is broadly aimed at either Ministers and Pastors (Rooted for Ministers), wider church leadership teams, including ministers and pastors (Rooted for Leaders), or open to everyone (Rooted for Everyone). We aim to make the days as practical as possible with subjects covered that stimulate our thinking in mission and ministry.

In April 2024, Rev Dr Linda Hopkins helped us explore where and how the voices of children and young people are being heard in our Baptist communities today and how we can encourage their participation in church life together. In early June 2024, we were joined by the Rev Prof Philip McCormack, Principal of Spurgeon's College in London, who led a day for our ministers on resilience in ministry. Then in November, Rev Mark Clay, Regional Team Leader for the EMBA, led some sessions based on his experience of leading churches into growth.

All sessions are delivered free of charge to EMBA churches, and we are always happy to receive suggestions for topics or themes to be explored.

## Children, Young People and Families (CYF)

Key activities in 2024-25

- Delivering the Youthscape Essentials Course to 23 youth workers from 11 churches across the EMBA in two cohorts. We are planning to run at least two more cohorts in Autumn 2025 and Spring 2026.
- Organising the Rooted event featuring Linda Hopkins sharing her research on "Hearing the Voice of the Child"
- Organising the EMBA CYF workers Gathering (May 2025)
- Representing the EMBA on the National CYF Round table in March and October
- Conversations with church teams and individual workers and volunteers about their work.
- Producing occasional newsletters and social media



***Rev Sarah Fegredo, EMBA CYF Associate***

## Project Violet

On 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024 the Project Violet report was launched. This huge piece of work had sought to celebrate the centenary of ordained women minister by inviting women in ministry to share their experiences and the challenges they face.

All the reports and other information can be found here:

[https://www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/363245/Project\\_Violet.aspx](https://www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/363245/Project_Violet.aspx)

The key outcome of the report was a list of fifty seven Requests for Change, covering all aspects of women's ministry life. Some of these apply to the local church, some to Associations, and some to colleges and other national bodies.



The EMBA held a Women's Gathering hosted by Rev Dianne Tidball later in May to give an opportunity for women ministers to reflect together on the findings.

Various groups across Baptist life were invited to respond and the EMBA staff and directors considered those requests which were applicable. An action plan was drawn up and this is regularly reviewed and progress

monitored. The team were pleased to note that the EMBA was already ahead of the game on some of the requests. For example, Request 17 asked that trans-local funding be made available to women wishing to train for ministry. The EMBA offers grants to Ministers in Training and this is available to women and men. In 2024 one of the two grants was to a woman.

The staff team and directors will continue to monitor the action plan and to respond to further information and developments from colleges and the Ministries team.

## EMBA Ministry Recognition Committee (MRC)

The Ministerial Recognition Committee primarily works with those who are exploring a call to ministry across the EMBA.

In 2024 we had the privilege of meeting with four individuals who were exploring a call to accredited ministry in one form or another. One candidate was concluding the exploration of being called as an accredited lay pastor, and three were exploring a call to be a fully accredited minister with the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Of these three, one was commended and began their theological education at St Hild College in September of 2024, one was a reinstatement to the accredited list following a return to the United Kingdom after a number of years of ministering abroad, and one was commended to go to the Baptist Union's national Residential Selection Committee in March 2025. The EMBA's MRC were delighted to commend all four to the Baptist Union.

The Regional Team are in regular conversation with those who are exploring a possible call to ministry, and we have a number of people preparing to come to our regional MRC over the next 12 months.

The EMBA's MRC is comprised of representatives from the regional team, EMBA ministers, and others who have been appointed by our churches. We are grateful for the work and time that they give to this group. A number have stood back after serving on the MRC for a number of years and we are thankful for them, as a result we have recruited a number of new members to join the group.

## Grants Group

We are incredibly grateful to all our churches who, despite challenging times, continue to support the work of our Baptist Family through Home Mission. Your generosity has enabled the EMBA to fund four Mission Grants and one Pioneer Mission Grant to support church ministries during 2024. Two new EMBA ministers-in-training are being supported with Minister-in-Training Training Grants (MITTG) and a further three Equipping Grants were awarded to support theological training.

Having launched our new Mission Partnership Grants and the MAP process last year, many churches are now actively engaging in the process, seeking to become healthy, mission minded, growing churches, and the Team are being assisted in this work by Rev Karl Relton (Mission Accompanier Co-ordinator).

Our thanks go to all members of the EMBA Grants Group who have served in this role over the years. The Regional Team are appreciative of the time commitment given and for the insights and reflections of the wider group but the decision was taken at the end of the year to disband the group in its current format, grant decisions becoming an in-house process with independent oversight being sought as and where needed.

If as a church you are considering a new mission opportunity but finance is an issue, we would strongly encourage you to take a look at the different grants available on the EMBA website or have a conversation with your Regional Minister.

## Safeguarding

There remains a healthy demand for Safeguarding Training across the Region. In 2024 we delivered 15 Level 2 and 12 Level 3 training sessions. This

amounted to 466 delegates trained. We continue to be blessed with a good cadre of trainers which is reflected in the positive feedback we receive. Whilst other Regions are struggling to resource training we are fortunate in the EMBA



to have a healthy and committed cadre and we are extremely grateful for all their support.

After the positive feedback around the DPS training day delivered by the BU in 2023 we designed and delivered our own training day in 2024. A huge thanks to Revd Paul Muir for the time and effort he put into the this training day. The training package that we designed has now been shared with the BU in order that they can look to roll this out Nationally.

Our Safeguarding Lead, Kenny Henry, has been involved in a National working group designing and delivering a 'Guidance for Safeguarding Trustees' document and is also now working on a new online Level 2 training package.

Our DPS colleagues now have access to Kenny monthly via his 'Drop in Safeguarding Surgeries' on Zoom.

For help and support with safeguarding in your church please contact [Mr Kenny Henry](#) (EMBA Safeguarding Lead).

## EMBA Ministers' Conference



The Ministers Conference is held in February of each year and in February 2024 we were delighted to welcome Rev Dr Steve Holmes who explored how our Baptist heritage might equip us for the tasks of mission and ministry in the twenty-first century.

We were led in worship by a talented worship team consisting of some of our own ministers. There were opportunities to share with one another, to build friendships, to pray together and also to have fun together.

Those who attend really appreciate the opportunity to meet and share with Baptist ministers working in the same area and the team think that adds a richness to this gathering that blesses all those who attend. We would encourage ministers who haven't been to the conference before (or haven't been for a while) to give it a try. We would also like to ask churches to make sure that their minister is able to attend if they want to.

## Refresh Women's Conference

April 2024 saw the women's conference in two locations because of numbers. It was a delight to meet in Grantham Baptist and at Burton New Baptist. Our speaker was Helen Jarvis from the LBC network of churches which has grown from its first congregation to around 25 in just 8 years.



Helen spoke powerfully on seeing God's Kingdom come. She was witty, vulnerable and shared from the Word of God deep truths from her own experience and discipleship journey. She has faced tough times but always seen prayer and fasting as the door to encountering God in his grace and love.

November 2024 our venue was Whetstone, Leicestershire and Ronia Jamera from Gas Street Church Birmingham spoke about God's faithfulness from Hebrews 11:11. She challenged us all with a deep call to let God be Lord of our lives and follow only Him. To trust him in the dark places and to support each other.

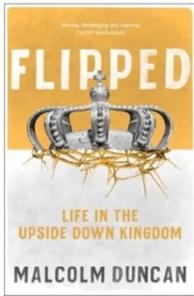


At all our events we have a blend of worship and testimonies, questions and answers, Bible study, laughter and tears, response, prayer and ministry. We are honoured that our loving God gives us the privilege of serving him in this way.

***Rev Dianne Tidball (Refresh Coordinator)***

## EMBA Retired Baptist Ministers' Network (RBMN)

Around 90 Baptist Ministers have "retired" in the East Midlands with many decades of ministry experience and service between us. In 2024 we continued a pattern of both Zoom and in-person gatherings, locally and regionally. Our Lent ZOOM Gathering was guided by incoming Baptists Together President Stephen Finamore who reflected with us on the connections between Jesus' baptism, wilderness testing and ordeal in Gethsemane. At this year's in person Summer Gathering, we welcomed back to the EMBA former General Secretary Jonathan Edwards who looked over his decades of leadership and ministry with refreshing candour and self-deprecating humour. Another fine buffet lunch added to the pleasure of the occasion.



For Advent a copy of a recently published book – this time Malcolm Duncan’s Flipped – was made available on request to around 40 of us. This refreshingly brief introduction to Matthew’s gospel was well received in plenary and small group discussions. Complementing these whole Network gatherings, a number of more local opt-in meetings were organised, often with a meal together.

In 2024 the RBMN also contributed to the Project Violet consultation. Those of us who ministered in, say, the 1960s-90s shared anecdotes and responses, recorded experiences of chauvinism or worse, and also acknowledged times when we had failed to be to be "allies in private and public". This Network would not be happening at all without the continuing affirmation and support of Mark Clay, his PA Becky Nicholls, and the EMBA Team. We remain grateful to them all for this.

***Revd Michael I Bochenski (EMBA – RBMN  
Coordinator)***

# Welcome to new EMBA ministers

Those in ministry who we have welcomed into the Association during 2024 are:

Elaine Blundell (Greenhill Community Church, Coalville, Leics)

Alexis Brooks (Prison Chaplain – HMP Stocken)

Elsie Fraser (Littleover BC, Derbys)

Neil Henson (Bretton BC, Peterborough – Minister in Training)

Gareth Hides (Pioneer minister)

Henry Ohakah (Mountsorrel BC, Leics)

Clare Stones (West Hucknall BC, Notts – Minister in Training)

## Ministerial Recognition

### Fully Accredited Baptist Minister (FAM)

Having successfully completed their Newly Accredited Minister (NAM) studies the following ministers transferred to the Fully Accredited Baptist Minister list in 2024 and will receive their handshake at the 2025 BU Assembly:



Tom Bowring (Oakham BC, Leics)

Sue Hensby (Retired Baptist Pioneer Minister)

Graham Hill (Ibstock BC, Leics)

Fiona Kirby-Smith (Crosby, Connect Church, Scunthorpe)

Paul Muir (New Life BC, West Bridgford, Notts)

Claire Roberts (Queensberry BC, Notts)

Joe Smith (Fleckney BC, Leics)

### National Recognition as a Pastor (NRPa)

Robert Holmes (Cross Hills BC, Bagworth, Leics)

## Finance review

We are really appreciative of those churches who give generously to Home Mission as this is the principal source of income from the Association. We know finances are tight in many churches, but many are contributing to the Baptist family through Home Mission at the 5% of income expectation.

Giving from churches in the Association to Home Mission was 14% above target and an increase of just over £39,000 on 2023. This is well above the national figure of 2% above target. Under the current funding formula, the Association received £215,380 in 2024.

However, this alone doesn't cover our operating costs, and we continue to be reliant on property sales. Despite this, the Directors have continued with their policy of investing in the work of the Association and using our reserves as necessary. We consider the reserves to be more than strong enough to support this approach for many years.

The work on the national Financial Review continues. Modelling suggests some Associations will gain and others lose under the proposed new Home Mission funding arrangements. The impact on the Association, however, appears neutral.



**To contact members of the EMBA team please see our website**