



02 Welcome
‘Developing Leaders’ continued

03 Stories of being called into ministry

04 Meet Mags
Prayer Diary

SWBA NEWS!

South Wales
Baptist Association

Autumn/Winter 2026

Developing new leaders: What can we do?

How can our churches become places where new leaders are recognised, encouraged and given opportunities to grow?

This was the focus of a Church Leaders day, as we acknowledged the need for new healthy ministers across our Baptist family. Tim Fergusson, who until July was Co-Team Leader of the Ministries Team, was our keynote speaker.

He began by highlighting that Baptist leadership is distinctive. It is not simply about having influence or holding a position, but about servant-hearted, relational and collaborative leadership, exercised under the authority of Christ and the church. Developing leaders, therefore, is about much more than

teaching skills. It is about discipleship and the formation of people who are growing in Christ.

Participants were invited to reflect on their own journeys into leadership and the people and experiences that had shaped them. Many could identify moments when someone had noticed potential in them, offered encouragement, provided training or simply given them an opportunity to try something new.

Six key stages of leadership development were identified: **spotting, affirming, training, shadowing, practising and reflecting.**

(Continued on Page 2)



Tim Fergusson shares thoughts about what we can do

“You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.”

2 Timothy 2:2

Welcome!

"Are you going to follow in your father's footsteps?" As far as I was concerned, it was a completely unexpected question and not one that I was prepared for.



It was a Saturday night church youth group and amidst the playing of games such as badminton, table tennis and football, I was chatting to one of the leaders. My dad was the minister of the church in Waterloo on Merseyside, and I could categorically say that I had absolutely no thoughts about becoming a minister myself. I said as much and her simple reply was, "I think you would be a very good minister".

As I still remember the conversation more than thirty-five years later, it clearly had an impact on me. I wonder what she saw in me? It was certainly something I hadn't seen in myself. Was this the beginning of my call into ministry?

Some years later having completed university I took a gap year and went with Latin Link to Nicaragua. Whilst there I prayed about my future and how God might want me to serve Him in the future. I felt Him say, "I want you to become a minister – but not yet". For the next four years I tested this sense of call not just on my own but with others. I shared with the church I was in membership with; I served in different ways; I was given opportunities; I was disciplined and I was encouraged. Then, in 1999 I was commended for training by my church and the Association Ministerial Recognition Committee. My journey into ministry was taking shape.

Spotting, encouraging and training people in leadership is key for our Baptist family. A target has been set – we need 360 new ministers who are accredited or on the pathway to accreditation by the end of 2028. In Wales, this translates to around 30 more ministers needed over the next three years. It is a challenging number, and we need to join in prayer for this.

Additionally, perhaps we need to hone our abilities in seeing who the future leaders of our churches might be... and then asking them, "Have you thought about..." You never know – it might be the beginning of a new journey into ministry.

Mark

Developing Leaders

(continued from page 1)

CORE STAGES

spotting
affirming
training
shadowing
practising
reflecting

which words
of Jesus
reflect these



Tim identified six stages for developing leaders and invited us to reflect on ways in which Jesus did this

Churches can intentionally look for gifts and potential, speak encouragement into people's lives, provide appropriate training and allow people to observe experienced leaders. Crucially, people also need opportunities to practise leadership, make mistakes and reflect on what they have learned.

Tim also highlighted the importance of mentoring and of creating a safe culture in which emerging leaders are not seen as a threat. Rather than expecting people to be the finished product, churches can see those stepping into leadership as people who are still growing and developing.

A recurring theme was that leadership development cannot rest solely with the minister. It needs to become part of the life of the whole church, with leaders discerning together where God may be at work in people's lives.

As the seminar concluded, the challenge was clear: **who might God be calling within our churches, and are we creating the opportunities and encouragement they need to discover and develop that calling?**



The latest edition of 'Together' magazine further explores topics around leadership development.

You can read it online on the Baptist Together website:

www.baptist.org.uk

OUR VALUES

- Passionate for Mission
- Innovative and Visionary

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Introducing Melanie Millington...



"Greetings from Raglan Baptist Church. My name is Melanie and I have been a member of this lovely, rural chapel for almost twenty years.

That's two pastorates and an interregnum if you are counting in Baptist years! I was a teacher for thirty years but in 2024, while standing on the school yard on a

sunny day, I felt a certainty in my soul that I was 'living the wrong life'. After many tears, conversations with trusted friends and some amazing encounters with scripture, received a conviction that I should surrender myself to ministry training. I have been known to declare that that was never going to be for me; proving that God knows us better than we know ourselves. I have been very blessed by the trust the

church has put in me as I begin my Minister-in-Training placement at Raglan, where I am building on my previous volunteer roles as worship leader and a member of the Children and Family team.

Attending the Pathways course at Cardiff Baptist College in 2025-26 was an important part of my emerging sense that ministry could be for me. I found the preaching module particularly inspiring and it's a great way to pick up studying again if you've not done it for a while.

Standing on the precipice of this new adventure I do feel a bit daunted, but the knowledge that I am walking in the direction God has set me on is helping a lot, as is the support and encouragement from the regional team. Truthfully, I'm excited to see what the Lord has in store for myself and our little chapel over the next few years. Watch this space!"

Melanie started as a Minister in Training at Raglan Baptist Church in September 2026

Meet two new ministers who started training in September...

Ian Shelley has started as Minister at Lisvane Baptist Church whilst undertaking ministerial training at Cardiff Baptist College...

"For over 25 years, various church leaders, members and friends have encouraged me to prayerfully explore the possibility of full-time ministry, providing opportunities to serve, lead and grow along the way. Throughout this time, I've worked in education, teaching and leading in schools both in the UK and abroad. I've always loved worshipping God, encouraging others and learning together, but the possibility of becoming a minister remained quietly in the background.

Then, in early 2025, something changed. I repeatedly found myself waking around 2am with a strong sense that God was saying, 'Pray about becoming a Baptist minister.' Surprised, I began exploring Baptist ministry in Wales, talking with ministers, church leaders, friends and family. The more I discovered, the more excited I became!

People were wonderfully encouraging, but also refreshingly honest about the challenges. One thing particularly resonated: knowing God's call is like having an anchor in the storms. Church leadership won't always be easy, but remembering who called you, and trusting him to lead and provide, makes all the difference. Looking back, I sense God



Ian Shelley

was saying that previously neither I nor the church was quite ready. Through education, overseas mission and serving people from nursery age to over 100, God has been shaping and preparing me. None of those experiences has been wasted. They've helped form

who I am today, deepening my desire to encourage others, learn from one another and humbly listen and lead together, embracing the priesthood of all believers. My wife Katie has felt peaceful about this new chapter and we've stepped forward together as a family in faith.

I am now serving part-time at Lisvane Baptist Church while training at Cardiff Baptist College. I'm loving it! There's much to learn, particularly about balancing priorities, but I'm excited by the opportunities to serve God, the church and our wider community.

I don't know everything that lies ahead, but I do know who I'm following and to whom I belong. I'm grateful God has brought me here and excited to discover what he has planned for us together in the years to come.



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https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/631022/Making_a_donation.aspx

SCAN ME

Meet Mags Farrow – A trusted presence on the railways



Mags Farrow

If you are travelling by train across South Wales keep an eye out for Baptist Minister, Mags Farrow, who is a Railway Mission Chaplain. At times her 'office' is a train carriage, although she also spends time behind the scenes in areas that passengers don't see.

Covering South Wales and the Marches, Mag's patch runs from Pembrokeshire and the coast through to the Severn Tunnel Junction, Hereford and along the Heart of Wales Line to Llanelli. Having previously been a prison chaplain, Mags started this role with the Railway Mission in January 2026.

The Railway Mission is a Christian charity founded in 1881, established to support the spiritual and pastoral needs of railway workers. Today, around 20 chaplains work across Wales, England and Scotland, supporting people across the railway family, including Network Rail, train operating companies, British Transport Police, security and freight organisations, as well as retired railway staff.

Prayer Diary...

Each week we pray for an Association Church, asking for God's blessing on them and fruitfulness for the sake of the Kingdom. Any more specific prayers requests for their week, will be shared through the E-news.

4 th October	Elkington Road BC, Burry Port
11 th October	Ely BC, Cardiff
18 th October	English BC, Carmarthen
25 th October	Gaer BC, Newport
1 st November	Gaerllwyd BC
8 th November	Gendros BC, Swansea
15 th November	Gilgal BC, Porthcawl
22 nd November	Golau BC, Llanelli
29 th November	Grangetown BC, Cardiff
6 th December	Greenfield BC, Llanelli
13 th December	High Street BC, Merthyr
20 th December	Hope BC, Gelli

Much of the role involves simply being there – visiting stations, offices and maintenance depots, getting to know people and becoming a familiar and trusted face. "Should anyone be in a time of need, there's a trusted face and a trusted person that they can talk with," Mag's explains.

Chaplaincy also plays an important role following railway incidents. Chaplains can support those directly involved, as well as colleagues who may be affected indirectly through dealing with the aftermath. The Railway Mission has also provided



chaplaincy support at major incidents, including the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the Manchester Arena bombing.

But incident response is only part of the work. Much of the day-to-day support focuses on wellbeing, from helping people through workplace changes and restructuring, to offering a listening ear during illness, bereavement or difficult circumstances outside work.

That support can take many forms – a conversation over coffee, a phone call, text or email – depending on what the individual feels comfortable with.

Eight months into the role, there are still plenty of faces to learn and railway acronyms to decipher. But some of the most rewarding moments have already come when people recognise the chaplain and welcome their presence.

"One of the highlights is when someone says, 'Oh, the chaplain's here – that's perfect timing.' It's almost like a visible sigh of relief. There's someone here who can hear, care for us in this situation."

For more stories across South Wales Baptist Association, please do see our website and follow us on Facebook and YouTube.

www.swba.org.uk