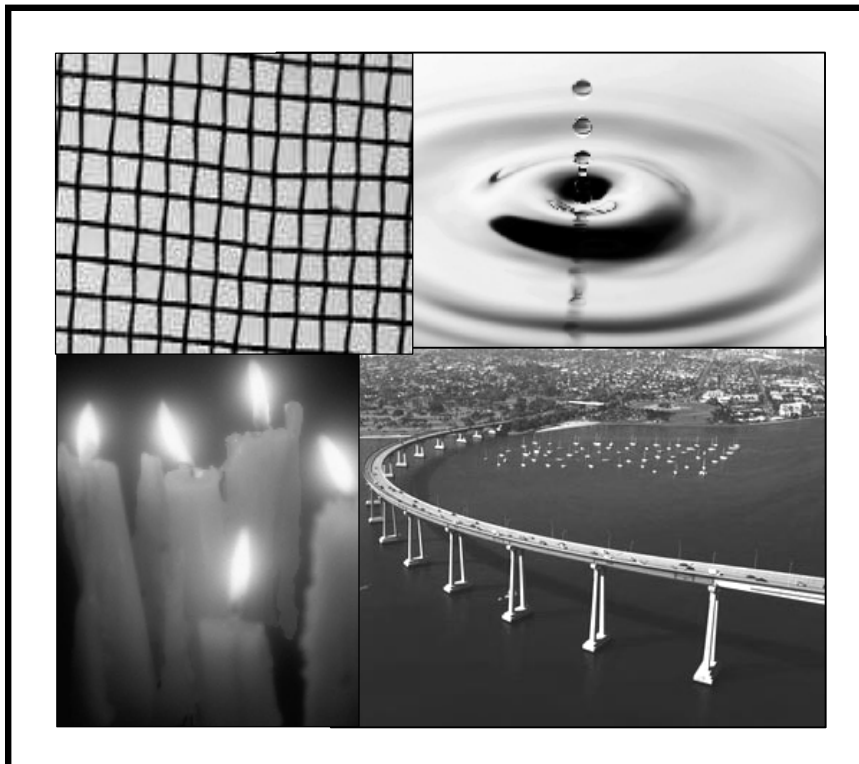


**LONDON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION**

***Making disciples -  
sharing the good news  
of Jesus***

**A STRATEGY FOR  
THE LONDON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION**

**Consultation Document**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The directors of the LBA have initiated a process to adopt a strategy for the Association for the next five years. The strategy will be adopted after a consultation process with the churches. This document outlines the proposals that are under consideration.

### 2. THE STRATEGY

#### 2.1 Purpose Statement

The directors have adopted the following purpose statement to guide the strategy:

**The LBA is an association of churches called to make disciples who share the good news of Jesus.**

This is accompanied by the strap-line:

***Making disciples – sharing the good news of Jesus***

Whilst the directors are committed to an holistic view of God's mission in the world, they have concluded that at this time there is an urgent need and opportunity for London's churches to find a new heart for the task of sharing the good news of Jesus.

The strategy will be worked out through specific objectives under 6 headings.

#### 2.2 Grounded in God

##### Objective 1

The directors and the team will seek to ensure that the life of the Association is grounded in God and will seek to deepen the prayer life of the Association.

#### 2.3 Strengthening the Net

##### Objective 1

The Association will map the significant links between member churches; identify and explore new patterns of networking that are emerging and disseminate good practice; and offer opportunities to churches that are currently isolated to discover meaningful connections with the wider family

##### Objective 2

The Association will seek to make available to all ministers meaningful supportive relationships in the exercise of their ministry.

##### Objective 3

The Association will develop ways to become more proactive in 'promoting itself' in order to encourage a strong sense of belonging among the churches.

## **2.4 Stirring up the pool**

### **Objective 1**

The Association will develop an improved structure of support and encouragement for lay leaders in our churches.

### **Objective 2**

The Association will seek to increase the finances available for its work and to raise finance to release additional resources to churches to resource their mission

## **2.5 Letting the Light Shine**

### **Objective 1**

The Association will develop initiatives to enable churches to become more proactive in the call to share the good news of Jesus.

### **Objective 2**

The Association will adopt a programme to encourage churches to become more truly inclusive communities, particularly with regard to race and gender.

### **Objective 3**

The Association will explore ways of helping churches to engage with the multi-faith context in which many of our churches are now set.

### **Objective 4**

The Association will seek to raise the standard of ministry in churches and support the development of new forms of ministry for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

## **2.6 Building bridges**

### **Objective 1**

The Association will develop its strategy in creative dialogue with the Union and other Associations.

### **Objective 2**

The Association will review its ecumenical commitment at all levels.

### **Objective 3**

The Association will develop opportunities to engage with leading thinkers and players in the area of public policy within London

### **Objective 4**

The Association will explore ways in which it can engage in meaningful contact with other faith communities at an Association level

## **2.7 Implementing the Strategy**

### **Objective 1**

The directors will seek to encourage wider participation in the life of the Association

### **Objective 2**

The directors will establish an external review of the structure and responsibilities of the team and of the office/support staff to best implement the adopted strategy.

### **Objective 3**

The directors will establish procedures to monitor the implementation of the strategy with a full review of the strategy commencing after four years

The LBA is an association of churches  
called to make disciples  
who share the good news of Jesus.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The London Baptist Association (LBA) in its present organizational form began life in 2002 as part of the reorganization of associations within the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BU). Five years on in 2007 the directors began a process of reviewing the strategy of the LBA with a view to establishing strategic objectives for the next five years.

The directors are now launching a consultation exercise with the churches with a view to finalizing the strategy in the spring of 2009. This document represents the thinking of the directors to date. It is now offered to the churches for their consideration.

- Ø The consultation will be launched at *'The London Event'* on 7 June 2008.
- Ø *'LBA Roadshows'* will be held in each of the Districts in the Autumn and Winter 2008 – 2009 at which churches will be able to feedback their views on the strategy. Having listened to the responses, the directors will finalise the strategy in Spring 2009.
- Ø There is also the opportunity for those interested to comment on the strategy through the LBA website. A discussion forum can be found at [www.londonbaptist.org.uk/groups](http://www.londonbaptist.org.uk/groups).

### 1.1 WHOSE STRATEGY IS IT?

In an organization such as the LBA it is important to have clarity when talking about strategy because the term 'the LBA' is fluid in its meanings.

The term 'the LBA' can mean any and all of the following:

- The LBA is the churches; the work of the LBA is the sum total of the work of the churches.
- The LBA is the mutual support and fellowship shared by churches; the LBA is operative in and through the interdependence between churches.
- The LBA is the organizational structure of committees, London Baptist Property Board etc; what the LBA does is the result of the decisions and actions of these committees.
- The LBA is the office and team\*; the LBA acts through the staff who serve the association.

[\* Throughout this document 'the team' refers to the Regional Ministers together with the Youth Work Co-ordinator and the BMS World Mission Area Representative.]

We are clear that the LBA cannot adopt a strategy *for* the churches. It is for each church to determine the vision for its own life as it is led by God.

However, as the LBA exists in order to serve its member churches, any strategy must be designed to have an impact on the life and mission of its churches.

The present strategy is offered on the following basis:

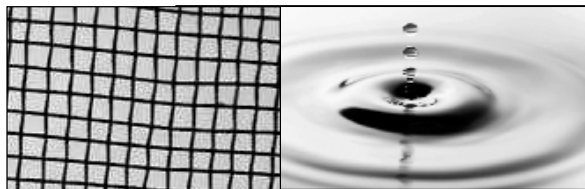
- The LBA has been formed by its member churches in order to enable Baptist churches in London to be more effective in fulfilling their mission.
- The member churches have established an organizational structure within which committees are appointed and staff appointments are made who assist the association in serving the churches.
- The body entrusted by the churches to give shape to the life of the association is the board of directors (including the calling of some to be Regional Ministers)
- The directors have a responsibility to use the resources of the association wisely and to channel those resources in such a way that the life of the association will be enriched and the churches will be best supported in their life and mission.
- This strategy is in effect a strategy of the board of directors in giving direction to the organizational structure of the LBA in the coming years. However, the board of directors is seeking to adopt a strategy which will be affirmed and owned by the member churches, for whom the association exists. The strategy also seeks to address the multi-faceted nature of association life.

## 1.2 FOUR IMAGES OF ASSOCIATION

The directors have found it helpful in looking at strategy for the future to consider the association under four different images. Each of these images picks up a different facet of what it can mean to be the LBA.

### **A net**

The association can be seen as a network of relationships through which the churches offer mutual support to each other in their life and mission.



### **A pool**

The association can be thought of as a pool of shared experience, knowledge and resources from which the churches draw to sustain and enhance their life.

### **Light**

Those called into leadership within the Association are called to be light to the churches, allowing the light of the gospel to shine where there is darkness, witnessing to the way of Jesus and helping churches to stay true to Jesus.

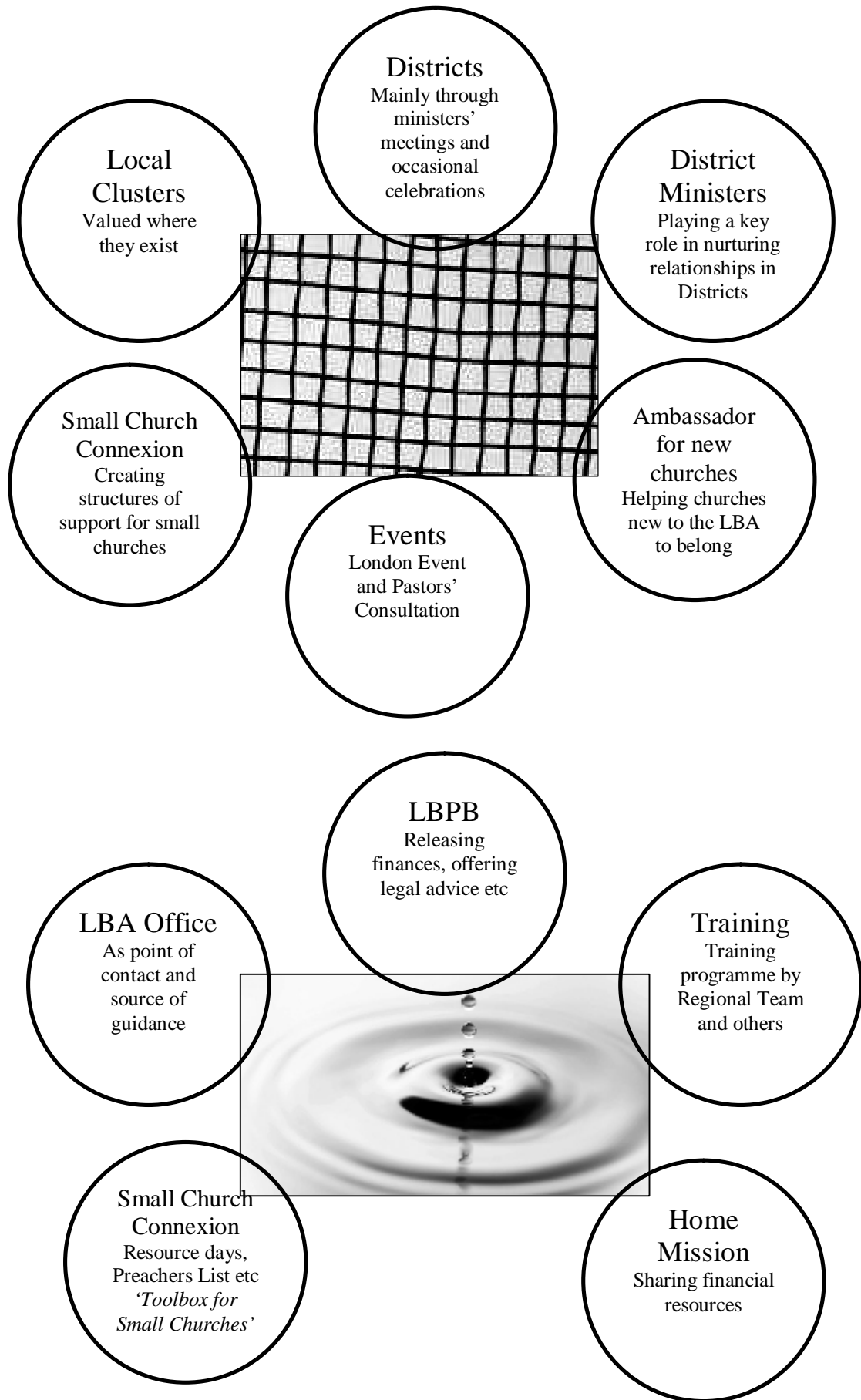


### **A bridge**

The Association through its committees and through the team forms something of a bridge between the local church, the wider church and the wider community.

*Making disciples - sharing the good news of Jesus*

The current life and work of the association can be illustrated through these four images.



**Conflict Resolution**  
As churches are helped to deal with conflict in gospel ways

**LBA Team Preaching Ministry**

**Pastoral Settlement**  
The settlement process is significant in seeking to enable churches to find missional leadership

**Racial Justice**  
The task of calling churches to live as inclusive communities and practise gospel justice



**Consultancy**  
Regional Ministers and others are offering consultancy to churches in a variety of forms

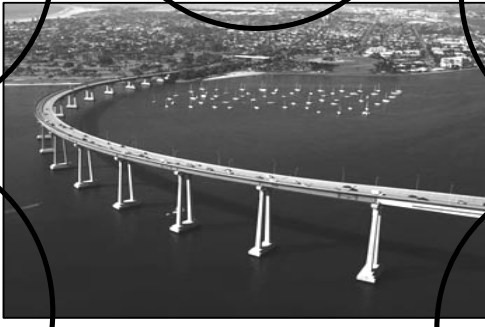
**Pastoral Care of Ministers & Churches**  
Helping to sustain ministers and churches in the demands of gospel ministry

**Enhancing Gospel Ministry**  
Ministerial recognition processes; pathways of accreditation; support for Newly Accredited Ministers

**BMS World Mission**

**BUGB**  
In representation; through MRC processes & HM applications etc

**Ecumenical relationships**



**Civic Participation**  
Through forums; borough deans; etc

**Appointments & partnerships**  
E.g. Pete James as student worker at King's Cross

**2.1 A PURPOSE STATEMENT FOR THE LBA**

“Go therefore to all nations and make them my disciples ...”  
(Matthew 28.19)

Accepting the complexity of what the LBA is, the directors believe that it is important to have a clear focus for a strategy expressed in the form of a purpose statement.

**The LBA is an association of churches called to make disciples who share the good news of Jesus.**

This is supported by a strap-line which is the title of this strategy consultation document:

***Making disciples - sharing the good news of Jesus***

The directors have adopted this purpose statement with the following factors in mind:

- It draws on the commission of Jesus to his disciples in Matthew 28.19 which has long been important in the self-understanding of Baptists in their mission in the world
- It takes up the theme of the Baptist Union Declaration of Principle with its conviction that it is the ‘duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelization of the world.’
- The call to make disciples and share the good news of Jesus is primarily a call to the local church – the role of the association is not normally to engage in this mission but to support, enable and encourage churches in this task
- While the directors are committed to an holistic view of God’s mission in the world, they have concluded that at this time there is an urgent need and opportunity for London’s churches to find a new heart for the task of sharing the good news of Jesus

This overall purpose needs to be worked out in specific objectives. The objectives are grouped under six headings:

- Grounded in God
- Strengthening the net
- Stirring up the pool
- Letting the light shine
- Building bridges
- Implementing the strategy



**2.2. GROUNDED IN GOD**

“Always be joyful; pray continually; give thanks whatever happens ... Do not stifle inspiration or despise prophetic utterances, but test them all.” (1 Thess 5.16-21)

This strategy document has emerged out of a process in which the team and the directors have sought to listen to God. It is offered to the churches as a continuation of that process, as together we seek to discern the mind of Christ for our life together.

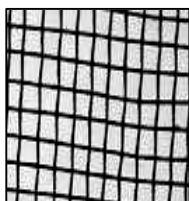
However, if we are serious about being disciples of the God of resurrection and of Pentecost any five year plan must be held lightly. The God of surprises who is at work in our ever-changing city may call us at any time to set these plans aside for the new thing that he is doing among us.



**GROUNDING IN GOD – OBJECTIVE 1**  
**The directors and the team will seek to ensure that the life of the Association is grounded in God and will seek to deepen the prayer life of the Association**

The following initiatives will help towards this objective:

- ∅ The team and the directors will give more space to listening to God in the pattern of their meetings
- ∅ All committees and working groups will be encouraged to reflect on the time given to prayer in the course of their work
- ∅ We will explore ways in which the association can become more meaningfully a community of prayer, praying in particular for one another and for our city
- ∅ We will explore ways of identifying those prophetic voices that will nourish and encourage the life and mission of our churches



**2.3 STRENGTHENING THE NET**

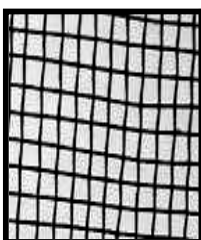
“How good and how pleasant it is to live together as brothers and sisters in unity! ... There the Lord bestows his blessing, life for evermore.” (Psalm 133.1, 3)

Healthy churches building healthy disciples are churches that connect into the wider life of the people of God, enabling their members to know that they are part of the wider family of God’s people.

Ministers and leaders in particular can be strengthened and enriched in their leadership by being part of wider networks in which they find support, encouragement and inspiration for their local ministries. Conversely, isolated leaders and isolated churches will be impoverished and will struggle in the task of making healthy disciples who make known the good news of Jesus.

The context in which we are working is characterized by the following factors:

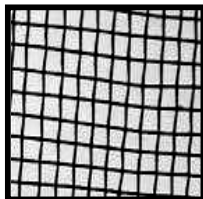
- People are more inclined to commit themselves to ‘movements’ than to ‘institutions’ – we can no longer depend on ‘institutional loyalty’ as the basis of belonging.
- The institutional structure of the districts is now largely a thing of the past – patterns of networking and belonging will need to be more organic and fluid
- The primary commitment of churches in networking with other churches is invariably focused on local ecumenical/evangelical networking often with an emphasis on cooperation for the sake of local mission. The Association will need to develop opportunities for networking which complement and support this commitment.



**STRENGTHENING THE NET – OBJECTIVE 1**  
**The Association will map the significant links between member churches; identify and explore new patterns of networking that are emerging, disseminating good practice; and offer opportunities to churches that are currently isolated to discover meaningful connections with the wider family**

In pursuing this objective it is anticipated that we will:

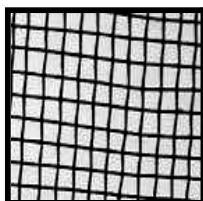
- Ø affirm and encourage patterns of networking that are based on common values or interests between churches and not only on geographical proximity
- Ø explore opportunities for developing community through the internet as well as in meetings
- Ø positively affirm formal and informal networking (e.g. Mainstream)
- Ø continue to support the work of the Small Churches Connexion and the Small Church Enabler
- Ø find ways to encourage innovative and ground-breaking churches to contribute their energy and insights to the wider life of the Association
- Ø continue to support the work of the Ambassador to New Churches in helping churches new to the Association to find their place within Association life



**STRENGTHENING THE NET – OBJECTIVE 2**  
**The Association will seek to make available to all ministers meaningful supportive relationships in the exercise of their ministry.**

In order to accomplish this objective we anticipate that we will

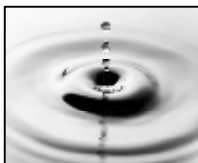
- Ø continue to review and develop the role of the District Ministers, including introducing an overnight retreat/awayday into the programme of meetings (recognizing the key role that District Ministers play in offering pastoral care/support to ministers)
- Ø work with district ministers and clusters to encourage ministers' meetings which provide an environment in which strong relationships can develop and in which ministers are enriched spiritually for their work
- Ø explore the possibility of developing additional patterns of pastoral care for ministers and their families, including the exploration of partnerships with other organizations that may be able to help
- Ø investigate the feasibility of making available mentors or 'professional coaches' for all ministers. (Should all ministers who have been in ministry for 10 years be expected to pass on their experience to others? Are there other organizations with whom we could enter into partnership?)



**STRENGTHENING THE NET – OBJECTIVE 3**  
**The Association will develop ways to become more proactive in 'promoting itself' in order to encourage a strong sense of belonging among the churches.**

This will include the following:

- Ø A series of Roadshows will be held in the Districts to consult on the strategy and to present the vision of the team and the directors for the future of the LBA
- Ø The team will seek to establish friendly contact with churches that sit loose to Association life
- Ø The directors will explore the viability of offering Home Mission style encouragement visits to all churches on a rolling programme
- Ø The directors will develop a communications strategy which makes space for church-church communication as well as Association-church communication
- Ø The LBA web-site will be made more contemporary and user-friendly



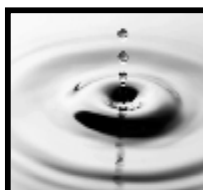
## **2.4 STIRRING UP THE POOL**

“He has given some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip God’s people for work in his service.” (Eph 4.11-12)

There is a wealth of experience, knowledge and resources among our churches that can potentially be shared and released to equip our churches better to fulfil their calling in Christ. At the same time, some churches are being hampered in their work, and unable to focus on their calling to be missional communities because their leaders need to be better equipped and resourced to fulfil their responsibilities.

The following factors shape the context in which we now find ourselves:

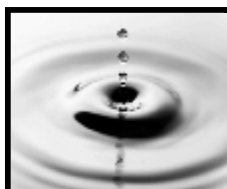
- the increasing complexity of church life, particularly in regard to the growing legislative burden impacting churches
- the difficulty faced by many churches in identifying leaders who are both competent and available
- the increasing diversity of church life (one model does not fit all)
- lack of financial resources for the LBA and for some of our churches



### **STIRRING UP THE POOL – OBJECTIVE 1 The Association will develop an improved structure of support and encouragement for lay leaders in our churches.**

The following will be explored:

- Ø regular training sessions for secretaries, treasurers and deacons
- Ø training for lay preachers and worship leaders
- Ø continuing to develop appropriate forms of training for youth and children’s workers
- Ø developing a network of people willing to offer help and advice with church finances
- Ø identifying the best way of making available to churches support for payroll
- Ø creating and making available in an accessible way a database of resources
- Ø providing a forum in which churches can mutually resource each other
- Ø developing the London Event as a focus for training/seminars



### **STIRRING UP THE POOL - OBJECTIVE 2 The Association will seek to increase the finances available for its work and to raise finance to release additional resources to churches to resource their mission**

This objective may include the following:

- Ø New ways will be explored to promote Home Mission to our churches, in particular seeking to reduce significantly the number of churches who regularly give nothing to Home Mission
- Ø A new source of funding to complement Home Mission will be explored to meet the challenge and opportunities of London churches
- Ø With the loss of the DfES funding stream for the Youth Work Co-ordinator, the Association will seek to identify other sources of funding to enhance the work of the team



## 2.5 LETTING THE LIGHT SHINE

“I have formed you and, destined you to be a light for peoples, a lamp for the nations.” (Isaiah 42.6)

If our churches are to be encouraged to become communities in which mature discipleship is nurtured and through which the good news of Jesus Christ is shared, the Association bears a responsibility to help churches to stay true to Jesus and focused on serving his Kingdom.

The following have been identified as key issues which need to be addressed in our present context:

- some churches are struggling to keep a focus on mission with all of the other demands to sustain the life of the church
- some churches need help to make a stronger connection between their social action and the task of sharing the good news of Jesus
- some churches have lost the heart for sharing the good news of Jesus, or are struggling to know how to do so in their particular context
- a generation is growing up in our society that is increasingly lost to the church
- by and large our churches have made little impact on the white working class
- the gospel places a demand on us to have a particular care for the poor, the excluded and the marginalized
- the challenge of giving full worth to the ministry of women in our churches remains, impoverishing the life and mission of churches
- the multi-cultural context in which we live presents both an opportunity and a challenge in living out the way of Jesus
- the multi-faith context presents further challenges – churches need support in knowing how to witness to the good news of Jesus to those of other faiths and in how to be agents of peace in their local communities
- some churches are hindered from engaging in effective mission because of internal conflict



### **LETTING THE LIGHT SHINE – OBJECTIVE 1** **The Association will develop initiatives to enable churches to become more proactive in the call to share the good news of Jesus.**

To achieve this the following will be explored:

- Ø identifying and/or developing training opportunities for churches in the task of sharing the good news of Jesus in the contemporary context
- Ø ensuring that consultancy offered to churches emphasizes the evangelistic dimension of mission
- Ø helping churches to enable their members to make firm connections between their faith and their employment
- Ø continuing to develop effective training opportunities for reaching out to children and young people
- Ø identifying and disseminating good practice in connecting with those sections of society that have sometimes been lost to our churches



**LETTING THE LIGHT SHINE – OBJECTIVE 2**  
**The Association will adopt a programme to encourage churches to become more truly inclusive communities, particularly with regard to race and gender**

This will include:

- Ø supporting and promoting 'the Journey' currently being developed by the Baptist Union to enable churches to become genuinely multi-cultural communities
- Ø continuing to promote racial justice training in our churches, including making available to all ministers in London the racial justice training currently offered to all accredited ministers by the Baptist Union
- Ø providing induction training to ministers newly settled in London with a focus on the multi-cultural context of the city
- Ø developing a programme to actively encourage the ministry of women in our churches
- Ø identifying the most appropriate ways to help churches to become inclusive gospel communities
- Ø adopting the theme '*Living Together in Love*' for the Association's main events in 2009 – i.e. the Pastors' Consultation and The London Event – addressing both the theme of inclusivity and the theme of building healthy community in the local church



**LETTING THE LIGHT SHINE – OBJECTIVE 3**  
**The Association will explore ways of helping churches to engage with the multi-faith context in which many of our churches are now set.**

The Association will seek ways to help churches to

- Ø share their faith both sensitively and effectively in a multi-faith context
- Ø disseminate stories of good practice
- Ø create networks and connections between churches set in similar contexts
- Ø learn how to be agents for peace in their local communities when there is the potential for tension or division



**LETTING THE LIGHT SHINE – OBJECTIVE 4**  
**The Association will seek to raise the standard of ministry in churches and support the development of new forms of ministry for the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

This may include the following:

- Ø continuing the development of the portfolio pattern of accreditation
- Ø creating opportunities for all ministers to reflect on their ministry and in particular to develop skills necessary to minister in the urban, multi-cultural context of London
- Ø reviewing patterns of ministry appropriate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century church in London



## 2.6 BUILDING BRIDGES

“May you in company with all God’s people, be strong to grasp what is the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ’s love.”  
(Ephesians 3.18-19)

The Association has opportunities to stand between the local church and wider church structures and also between the local church and the wider community. There will often be a two-way flow when the Association stands in this position. Effective connections between the local church and the wider church/wider society can be instrumental in enriching the life and witness of the local church, and can enhance the impact of the gospel on the wider society.

The following factors are important in the current context

- ecumenical relationships beyond the local level in London are complex and challenging
- the cutting edge of ecumenical involvement is local ecumenical cooperation for mission
- Baptists are probably not as well represented as we might be at all levels in ecumenical gatherings
- the ‘new ecumenism’ that is emerging (e.g. the Global Day of Prayer) is full of promise
- important discussions are taking place within the Baptist Union about strategy and the relationship between the Union and the Associations
- there is a work to be done in developing meaningful civic engagement and engagement with public policy issues at Association level and enabling churches to engage locally
- the Association has not developed any formal inter-faith contact



### **BUILDING BRIDGES – OBJECTIVE 1** **The Association will develop its strategy in creative dialogue with the Union and other Associations.**

In following through this commitment the Association will:

- Ø continue to ensure that the Association is appropriately represented on Baptist Union bodies
- Ø contribute insights from the unique context of London into the development of strategy within the Union
- Ø seek to listen to and learn from the experience of other Associations



### **BUILDING BRIDGES – OBJECTIVE 2** **The Association will review its ecumenical commitment at all levels.**

This review will include the following:

- Ø map our participation in ecumenical structures
- Ø review where best to put our energies in ecumenical participation in London-wide bodies
- Ø consider whether to concentrate on the new ecumenism



**BUILDING BRIDGES – OBJECTIVE 3**  
**The Association will develop opportunities to engage with leading thinkers and players in the area of public policy within London**

Among other measures:

- ∅ We will consider the development of an Association forum as part of the pattern of directors meetings to which civic leaders and significant thinkers are invited and where issues can be explored and debated in depth



**BUILDING BRIDGES – OBJECTIVE 4**  
**The Association will explore ways in which it can engage in meaningful contact with other faith communities at an Association level**

The Association will consider

- ∅ whether there are any inter-faith bodies on which it should be represented
- ∅ what other measures could be taken to enable the Association to have contact with other faith communities that would be consistent with our gospel calling



**2.7 IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY**

The directors are aware that if a strategy such as this is to be implemented successfully:

- the responsibility cannot rest with the team alone
- the way in which the team works will need to be reviewed in the light of the strategy
- the team needs to be given appropriate secretarial and administrative support so that the team is released for its ministry
- measures will need to be put into place to keep the implementation of the strategy under review



**IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY – OBJECTIVE 1**  
**The directors will seek to encourage wider participation in the life of the Association**

The measures may include:

- ∅ establishing working groups to implement defined areas of the strategy
- ∅ finding ways of identifying gifted people in the churches to contribute to the life and work of the Association



**IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY – OBJECTIVE 2**  
**The directors will establish an external review of the structure and responsibilities of the team and of the office/support staff to best implement the adopted strategy.**

An external consultant should be identified who could review the way in which the team functions, with a view to proposing ways of working that would best enable the strategy of the Association to be implemented. At the same time the consultant should review the structure of support/office staff that would best support the work of the team.

Any review should seek to address the following:

- Ø the present expectations placed upon the Regional Minister (Team Leader) in particular are unreasonable
- Ø the diversity of the team is one of its strengths and itself a prophetic witness to the churches – how do we make the most of this diversity?
- Ø if new responsibilities are to be taken on by the team because of the strategy, how will this fit with their present workload/responsibilities?
- Ø can the team be helped to find new ways of working individually and collectively to serve the purpose of the Association?
- Ø is there a need to offer training in any areas of their work?
- Ø the office and support staff structure was established to serve the old patterns of Association life. What structure of administrative support would best serve the team?



**IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY – OBJECTIVE 3**  
**The directors will establish procedures to monitor the implementation of the strategy with a full review of the strategy commencing after four years**