

**SURVEY & REPORT OF
LONDON BAPTIST
ASSOCIATION MINISTERS'
RESPONSE TO BU COUNCIL'S
APOLOGY FOR THE
TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE
TRADE**

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Report of Ministers Response to Apology

Introduction

To gauge London Baptist ministers' response to the apology issued by the Baptist Union Council for the transatlantic slave trade a short survey was conducted at the LBA Pastor's Consultation held at High Leigh from 4th to 6th February 2008.

120 questionnaire's were distributed and 50 returned, 42% return.

- The data for questions 1 to 5 are presented graphically as bar charts. (Pages 5-7)
- For questions 6 and 7 the number of responses is stated. (page 7 and 8)
- For questions 8 to 10, where appropriate similar responses have been grouped together. (Pages 8-13)
- Question 11 has been analysed using %ages and where appropriate the number of responses is stated.(Page 14)
- Additional remarks have been summarised and included at the end. (Pages 15-16)

Comment on Results of Survey

QUESTION 11

Of the 9 Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) respondents 8 were strongly convinced and 1 was convinced about the appropriateness of the apology. This is not surprising.

That 61% of whites fall into the convinced/strongly convinced category is very encouraging. With respect to the other 39% when I have engaged in one to one conversations with those who have a negative viewpoint, there is willingness to engage and move forward.

That 45% of those 55 and over are either unconvinced or strongly unconvinced is not surprising, yet it is also encouraging that 37% of those aged 55 or over are convinced or strongly convinced.

QUESTIONS 8 to 10

There is a great need for resources to help people understand the issues. This is also borne out by the additional remarks on pages 15-16. The comments also betray a lack of knowledge about the nature of transatlantic chattel slavery when compared to other forms of slavery. However this is not surprising as the Mori poll conducted for Set All Free in 2007 revealed a huge level of ignorance about the transatlantic slave trade.

Issues concerning the lack of black lay leaders and excessive deference to the white community can only be addressed when the underlying racism that gives rise to these issues have been exposed and overcome. The fear that blacks have in taking up leadership positions is a symptom of institutional racism that is present within the local church, at district, regional and union level.

Report of Ministers Response to Apology

While one can draw other conclusion from the data, I think that it would be preferable to suggest a few concrete proposals arising out of this survey.

Proposals Arising from Survey

Slavery & Racism

There is a need to understand...

- The history of the transatlantic slave trade and how it affected London.
- How today different communities are being influenced and shaped by the past.

An understanding of these two factors may help people to begin a journey that helps them to understand why an apology is a necessary stepping stone towards healing, restoration and new life.

Therefore on 3rd June LBA ministers will visit and receive a guided tour of the exhibition called "London Sugar and Slavery" housed at the Docklands Museum. Numerous individuals including those who were at November Council make presentations and there will opportunities for discussion.

The event will be recorded so that a DVD can be produced for churches and colleges to explore the apology and related issues using worksheets included on the DVD.

Building Multi-cultural Churches

30 indicated that they would value practical help on how to do this.

Therefore I hope to hold a one day training event drawing on the skills of those ministers who are successfully engaging with this issue. This will raise issues of black deference to the white community and various forms of institutional racism that prevent the building of multi-cultural churches.

This will probably take place in the Autumn.

Other Projects

- On line bible study to be revised in the light of the apology and findings of survey.
- Need to explore new ways in which people's awareness and understanding of these issues can be raised.

Preliminary Conclusion

The apology has been received with grace and warmth by the BME community. It provides an excellent platform from which to move forward together, particularly in light of the favourable response among 61% of the white community.

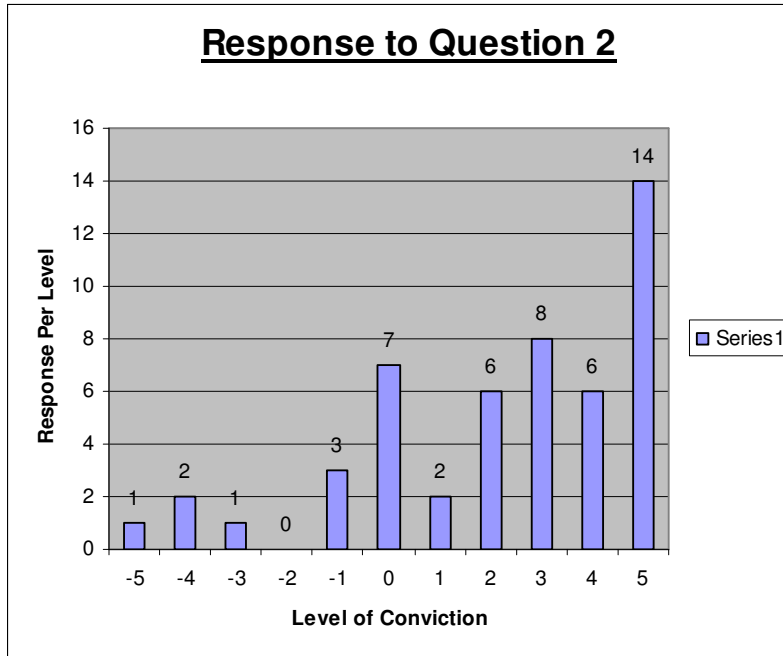
Report of Ministers Response to Apology

Yet, one cannot be naïve, particularly in light of the additional remarks on pages 15-16. Since such comments are being made by ministers, it is likely that church members may also hold similar opinions. This necessitates significant work to educate both ministers and church members about the relevance of the apology within the LBA context, even when there are few from the BME community *currently* within specific churches and communities. People also need to be educated on how issues raised by the apology impinges on issues such as multiculturalism, migration, asylum, clash of cultures etc.

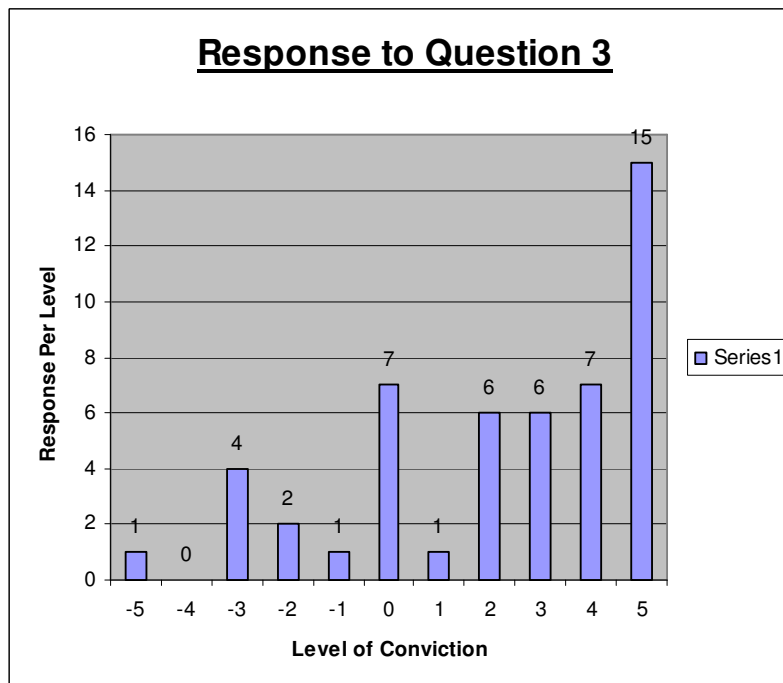
While there is still a lot to be done, the apology is an excellent starting point to explore the issues that the Baptist family needs to grapple with. The apology and its outworking have a pivotal part to play in the Baptist Union's call to "Encourage Missionary Disciples" and the LBA's vision "Making disciples - sharing the good news of Jesus." The apology provides a means through which we can work to build an inclusive Baptist family that testifies to the gospel of reconciliation and peace. Such communities will be able to articulate the gospel of reconciliation with conviction and credibility because they will be preaching what they practice. Surely, that can only be a good thing in the life of the church ?

Report of Ministers Response to Apology

2. What is your level of conviction for the apology now that BU Council have made an apology ?

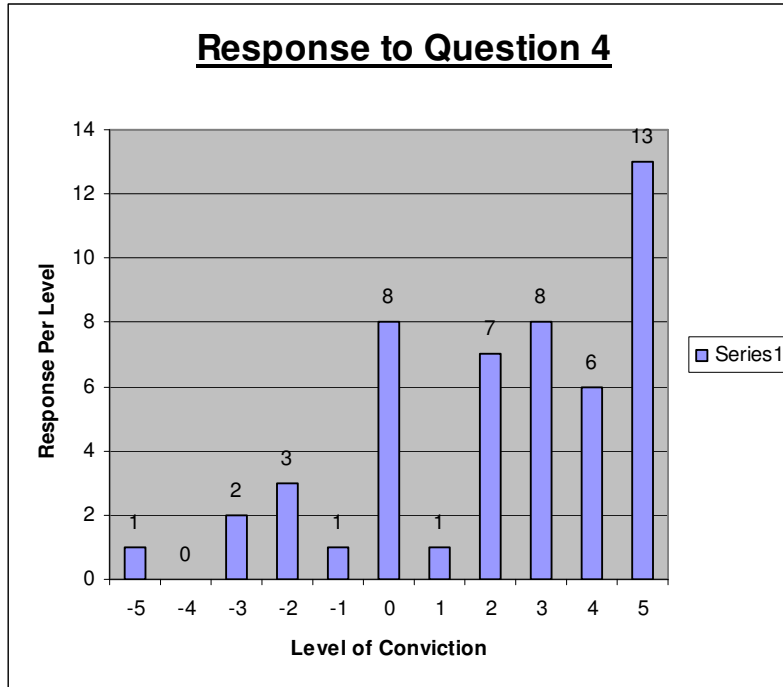


3. How convinced are you that the apology is biblically appropriate ?

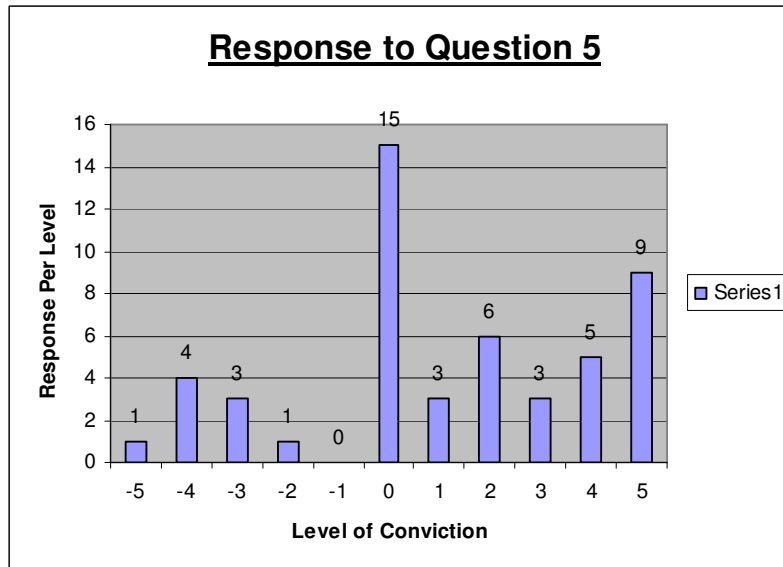


Report of Ministers Response to Apology

4. How convinced are you that the apology is theologically appropriate ?



5. How convinced are you that the word apology is the correct term ?



6. Has the apology been communicated to your congregation ? Yes/No (Delete as appropriate) If yes, please list their responses.

18 have communicated it, though a number state that it has been done in a 'low key way.' **31 have not communicated it to the church.**

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7. Which of the following may be a constructive use of the apology in seeking to build inclusive multi-cultural churches ? (Please tick as many as appropriate)

- An opportunity to hear from those present at Council - **13**
- An opportunity to dialogue on how to make sense of the apology - **23**
- Resources to help churches work through the issues with practical suggestions on how to build multi-cultural churches - **30**

- Your suggestions...

- Look critically at issues which still remind us of such practices.
- Dealing with potential conflict areas with grace and understanding.
- Facilitation and permission to move on!
- Question of apology should be discussed.
- Would be good to see connection made with trade injustice today.
- Earth every discussion in the current reality of dispersal/Diaspora and not just past history.

8. The apology recognises the continuing negative effects of the transatlantic slave trade. What are the signs of this...

In your church ? - I have grouped together similar responses:

LEADERSHIP

- Lack of ethnic minorities in leadership.
- White leaders/ministers.
- Whites are not staying in the church or not prepared to be led by a minority pastor/leader.
- Minorities are not given or trusted with positions of responsibility.
- Many black people don't see themselves as leaders.
- White people still undermine the authority or guidance of minority groups.
- Unwillingness to take responsibility amongst black members.
- Black inferior, white superior; black passive, white confident/active; black lack confidence to lead.
- Seeking to create a balanced inclusive leadership in which all are confident to speak, knowing contributions will be heard.

ATTITUDE OF BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC (BME) COMMUNITY TO WHITE PEOPLE

- Deference to white folk
- Deference to white pastors.
- Older West Indians still defer to the whites.
- Older black members do not rock the boat, they act with deference to more vocal white people.
- People still seem to trust white people.

Report of Ministers Response to Apology

Question 8 Continued.

What are the negative effects of the transatlantic slave trade in your local community ? - I have grouped together similar responses:

ATTITUDE OF BME COMMUNITY TO BME PEOPLE

- Reticence of black members to value their own ministers.

ATTITUDE OF WHITE COMMUNITY TO BME PEOPLE

- White people have a superior attitude without being aware of it.
- Inappropriate language, entrenched political views.
- Patronising attitude
- Resentful distrust
- Racism
- Residue of racism among different groups, e.g. African time.
- Us/them from some older members.

LACK OF DIALOGUE

- Not talking about it.
- Never been mentioned as a problem
- When the congregation were asked no-one seemed interested. When asked about race and difference, people say they belong. However feel a need to bring this on to our agenda.

OTHER ISSUES

- Unspoken segregation.
- Racial tensions about disempowerment/empowerment.
Black people put up with stuff.
- Rejection
- Fear of upsetting one another.
- Concerned that people have been deprived of their own history, e.g. Sam Sharpe not known by Caribbean community.
- Many have a feeling that they wish to do things in an 'English' way, e.g. worship
- There is still a 'memory' in the mind and heart of many.

SLAVE TRADE LEGACY

- In church and community there continues to be prejudice and discrimination, but how much is as a result of slave trade and how much is racism?
- Bridging cultures is a huge issue, but with people from all over the world on our doorstep, I find it difficult to identify issues exclusive to the legacy of the slave trade.

Report of Ministers Response to Apology

Question 8 Continued.

What are the negative effects of the transatlantic slave trade in your local community ? - I have grouped together similar responses:

OTHER

- Not much tension in the church.
- We're an inclusive church with representation from 5 continents 4 of which are on the diaconate.
- I hope and pray that these are not present.
- None obvious, although maybe because we have not addressed the issue.
- No black people in our church.

BME COMMUNITY

- Disadvantaged position of black community.
- Ongoing effects in terms of poorer housing and opportunities, less self-confidence in Afro-Caribbean community.

BME YOUTH

- Black underachievement.
- Local Afro-Caribbean students are markedly less likely to outperform south Asian and white students.
- Disorientated young black people.
- Black on black violence.
- There is tension especially between the white and black youth.

ATTITUDES OF THE HOST COMMUNITY

- Stigma/prejudice, "Every black person in a shop is a potential thief."
- Racism
- Inappropriate language, entrenched political views.
- Arrogance in white community. Bad attitudes to refugees etc.
- Discrimination
- Racism is still alive and flourishing.
- Cultural division. Suppressed anger.
- White community suspicious of mixing with minorities, sometimes not even taking flyers off the hands of minorities.
- Some resentment and angry people.
- Very few ethnic people in our community.

GLOBAL ISSUES

- Continuing need for fair trade. Legacy of racist attitudes.
- Global economy has brought riches to the West. Materialism. Black people have to work harder to achieve.

Report of Ministers Response to Apology

Question 8 Continued.

What are the negative effects of the transatlantic slave trade in your local community ? - I have grouped together similar responses:

OTHER

- Indian, Sri Lankan and Jewish communities face different issues.
- Help to talk about the issue. As a white co-leader require help to answer difficult questions and not make matters worse.
- West Indian who've lived in the UK for a long time returning 'home' when they retire.

9. What resources would help you to address the above issues...

In your church ?

LEADERSHIP & ROLE MODELS

- Role models for black youth.
- Good black role models holding leadership.
- Give key leadership roles to non-Europeans. Talk though how to hand over power.

CHANGING HEARTS & MINDS

- Help individuals overcome their insecurity.
- Recognition and appreciation of multiculturalism.
- To valorise the people.
- Expression of love that comes from the heart
- People of all colour being accepted, appreciated and honoured for who they are.

RESOURCES

- A clear 5 minute DVD presentation on the apology.
- More illustrated historical resources e.g. cartoon histories for youth.
- Resources on how to do multi-cultural worship, not just include multi-ethnics in 'English worship.
- A fuller account of what went on at BU Council, so we can journey with council. Need more than the apology.
- Some history in a simple visual form.
- Faith news and other black publications.
- Outline of a reconciliation service and sermon.
- Forward looking discussion material.
- A better explanation of slavery.
- Background information. May be questions/study.
- Online bible studies/sermons. Stories of where issues have been addressed successfully and unsuccessfully.
- A 'toolbox.'

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9. What resources would help you to address the above issues...

In Your local community? (Difficult to group)

- Good black role model from all minority groups.
- Good communication
- Tower Hamlets produce material during Black History month, but not from a Christian perspective.
- The community being aware of the equality of all people.
- Factual information on slave trade effects on London.
- Encourage integration
- Provide level playing field for all
- Dialogue and socio-economic activities.
- Police training.
- Does my church really care ? Black Christians run away from the issue and whites and Asians are embarrassed.
- To bring these people to Jesus,

10. How can the LBA team help you to address these and related issues ?

MEETINGS OR CONFERENCES

- Training to lead multicultural congregation.
- Facilitate gatherings to deal with white anger and confusion. (Stated by a Caribbean)
- At some point need to do more work on inclusion.
- Organising other meetings.

ATTITUDE & APPROACH

- By being more positive and forward looking – less backward looking and 'blaming.'
- I'd be more convinced about the apology if there was a greater commitment to end modern forms of slavery, e.g. prostitution and work against hidden racism in churches.
- Campaigning re contemporary expression of a historical phenomenon.
- Provide strong public leadership, using all opportunities to address issue.
- Give more opportunities for ethnic minority groups to be seen and heard. Not just on racial issues or problems. There are other good stories that can be shared.

RESOURCES

- Resources or highlighting good resources from elsewhere.
- Related resources for use in small groups in order to open up the subject.
- Unless you were at BU Council, it is difficult to convey the 'God moment' to the congregation from the apology. Any idea on this would be welcome or perhaps a fuller account of what went on so it can be transmitted to the wider family.

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10. How can the LBA team help you to address these and related issues ? **Continued**

OTHER

- Continued interaction with brotherly and sisterly love and respect.
- The composition of the LBA leadership is a good beginning.
- Fear of overloading of LBA staff makes me reluctant to ask for help as church is doing 'okay.'

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11. Please complete the following, which will help in the analysis of the data.

Number of surveys returned from districts were as follows:

Western 5 North Western 4 Northern 4 North Eastern 5

Eastern 3 South East Thames 5 South East 7

South Western 3 Thames Valley 3 East Surrey 8 Unspecified 3

For the preliminary report I am simply reporting in terms of White, Black, Asian and Chinese.

48 respondents completed this section. 39 were White and 9 were Black

Age 49 completed this section

18-30 1 31-44 13 45-55 23 56-65 11 66+ 1

Gender 48 completed this section. Male 40 Female 8

Response analysed by age, ethnicity and gender. Figures in brackets followed by F indicate female response.

Combined level of conviction for questions 1 to 5.

Age	Totally Unconvinced	Unconvinced	Uncertain	Convinced	Totally Convinced
18-30					1
31-44	2 (1F) (15%)	2 (15%)		2 (15%)	7 (55%)
45-55	1 (4%)	2 (8%)		9 (2F) (39%)	11 (4F) (49%)
56-65	2 (18%)	3 (27%)	2 (18%)	3 (27%)	1 (1F) (10%)
66+	1				
TOTAL	6	7	2	14	20
Ethnicity	White	White	White	1 Black & 13 White	8 Black, 11 White 1 & not stated
White %age response	16 %	18%	5%	33%	28%
Black %age response				11%	89%

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Other suggestions made by the respondents:

Perhaps the apology could be more specific. Perhaps reference to not welcoming people from different cultures in our churches.

Additional Remarks

While the apology was necessary, now we've gone too far. If we've wronged someone we should apologise and then make practical changes. It is unnecessary to continue to apologise. Half way through last year we'd done this apology to death.

Not everyone who is black identifies with the slave trade. Need to be aware of other areas of world history for which regret and apology are appropriate.

Is the transatlantic slave trade a genuine reason or a chip on the shoulder? Will the BU apology make any difference to those who see themselves as victims ?

Have issues with an apology made on my behalf for something I didn't do. I struggle to see in practical terms what difference it makes to the lives of those affected. Perhaps showing the difference it makes would help.

Happy to apologise for being part of a nation that benefited from slavery. Struggle with the suggestion that British Baptist supported slavery when the likes of William Knibb led the fight against it.

I struggle to see the relevance of the 'apology' in my context. Though grotesque, the slave trade is only one aspect of countless injustices. Should celebrate Christian role in abolition and recognise British complicity. Rather than just reacting to the 200th anniversary I hope that this will drive us on to call our members to DO JUSTICE and recognise and repent of our complicity in local, national and global injustice.

At this time it is not appropriate for my church context.

I'm personally ashamed by what my ancestors perpetrated directly or indirectly during the slave trade era. I remain uncertain about the place of the 'Apology' in my response and the response of my church. We have encouraged people to make connections between slave trade of 18th century and modern day human trafficking in order to address this massive injustice.

Addressing slavery and racism has angered and hurt white members. I don't know that they could cope with addressing the 'apology.' Black members have been affirmed and encouraged, but older members do not want to address it for fear of division in the church.

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Perhaps the BU should apologise if we gained financially from the slave trade, but not for individuals for whom the slave trade was not part of our personal history. Should the Romans or Vikings apologise to us? Or anyone who has invaded Britain over the years? Where does it all end? Or start? What of the black members of our churches from areas not affected?

How do we disconnect any apology from restitution? And how can we possibly take this latter forward in justice ? Why apologise for just this one crime ? There are so many others. Why focus on other people's failings, rather than on my own ? Shallow escapism ?