

Annual Report 2025

Growing Healthy
Churches in
Relationship for
God's Mission



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Resource



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southern counties baptist association



From the Moderator

Following a year of significant change in 2024, including the restructuring of the Regional Team, 2025 has been a year of consolidation. During this time, we have continued to support 12 churches and missional initiatives through Home Mission Grants, as well as 10 individuals through grants enabling training and mission opportunities.

Under the excellent leadership of Clare Hooper and Hayley Young, the Regional Team has continued to deliver strong and faithful ministry. Their dedication, resilience and servant-hearted approach have been evident as they have responded to a wide range of regional and national challenges and opportunities.

As the Financial Model Review within our Baptist family rolls on, Trustees have continued to work diligently to address the implications of a significant and unsustainable deficit, taking important steps towards ensuring long-term financial stability. This has involved some difficult decisions, including changes within the team, all with the aim of keeping the support of churches and the development of new missional opportunities at the heart of our work. At the same time, they have contributed thoughtfully to the wider national conversation, drawing on the experience and priorities of the Association.

We also want to recognise and honour the Regional Team for the wisdom, patience and courage they consistently demonstrate in navigating the many complex and often sensitive issues that arise in church and ministry life. Much of this work happens out of sight and without recognition, yet it is vital to the health and well-being of our churches and leaders. It can, at times, be a demanding and thankless task, and we are deeply grateful for the grace, perseverance and quiet faithfulness with which the team continues to serve.

At the AGM in June, Martin Hardwidge stepped down as a Trustee after completing two terms of service. Emma Green, Andy Johnson and Jon Keyworth were each reappointed for a second term.

During 2026, we look forward to serving our Ministers, churches and ministries to be even more effective in fulfilling our shared sense of call.

Reverend Chris Brockway
Moderator of SCBA & Minister at ChristChurch BC in Bournemouth



From the Regional Team

Highlights of 2025 from Rev Clare Hooper & Revd Hayley Young, Regional Minister co-Team Leaders

This year has brought many opportunities to spend time with ministers, leaders and chaplains across the Association. It has been a privilege to visit people in their own contexts: listening, encouraging, and gaining a deeper appreciation for the breadth of ministry being carried out. From churches, schools, beaches, front rooms, tow paths, hospitals, prisons, cafes and toddler groups, we have been reminded again of God's faithfulness and the quiet, consistent ways in which His presence is being made known.

A significant area of focus has been the development of the Doing Church Differently material, alongside a complementary small group resource. These have been created to support churches as they reflect on how God may be calling them in this season: to nurture disciples and to share God's love in ways that are both faithful and contextually relevant. It has been encouraging to see churches engaging thoughtfully with these resources, prayerfully discerning next steps in their mission and ministry.

We have also been encouraged by those who attended the Paths of Peace training and by their willingness to serve the Association using the skills and knowledge they gained. Alongside the Creative Facilitation training, Paths of Peace reflects our commitment to resourcing and equipping the Association in ways that foster sustainable support for churches and leaders.

Throughout the year, we have also valued opportunities to preach in a number of churches across the Association. These occasions have offered space to share in worship, to encourage congregations, and to witness the diversity and commitment of our communities.

Towards the end of the year, Hayley was grateful for the opportunity to take a sabbatical. This provided much-needed space for rest, reflection, and renewal, and she is thankful to the trustees and the wider team for their support in enabling this time. It has been a gift that will continue to shape her ministry in the year ahead.

As we reflect on the year, we remain encouraged by the openness across the Association to listen for God's leading. There is a shared desire to respond faithfully to His call, and it is a privilege to serve alongside so many who are committed to that journey.



Highlights of 2025 from Rev Simon Gray, Regional Minister & Operations Lead



The year began for me with a three-month sabbatical. This gave me the opportunity to focus on my ongoing research project looking at the history of some of our Baptist associations, and from this, considering what we can learn for our practice of associating today. I am very grateful to the trustees for enabling me to carry out this project.

It has again been encouraging to see an increased number of people exploring and discerning a call to ministry. As a result, we held several Ministerial Recognition Committee days and were able to commend people to begin formation, for both National Accreditation and as Recognised Local Ministers.

One of the many privileges of my role is to be involved in ordinations and inductions, celebrating with ministers and churches as they enter a new season of life and ministry. Alongside this, it has been good to be able to support churches in pastoral vacancy, helping them reflect on who they are as a church and what the Lord is calling them to in a new phase of their life.

Overall, it has been encouraging to see the diversity of our churches and the way in which they are faithfully seeking to serve the Lord and engage with their local communities.

Highlights of 2025 from Rev Jane Day, Tutor in Community Learning



The Learning Collective (TLC) continues to support and equip local leaders, as well as those seeking recognition as Recognised Local Ministers. In September 2025, we welcomed approximately 50 new learners, reflecting a growing recognition among local leaders and churches of the importance of investing in training and development.

Two new cohorts were launched within the SCBA, with in-person hubs meeting at Kidlington Baptist Church and Wokingham Baptist Church. Additional participants join online, alongside five other hubs from partner Associations, making TLC a brilliant example of collaborative working across Associations. Looking ahead, we will continue to work collaboratively with colleges and Associations with some changes on the horizon for our September 2027 intake. Please do contact me for any information about TLC. I can be contacted at jane.day@regents.ox.ac.uk

Highlights of 2025 from the Safeguarding Lead

In the period 1st January 2025 to 31st December 2025, in addition to more general questions, SCBA's Safeguarding Lead, Mel Pike, supported several churches with safeguarding incidents. There continued to be a high number of contacts from churches, which is a result of a higher profile and understanding of safeguarding within churches. As is highlighted elsewhere in this report, churches continue to engage well with the training offered.

Highlights of 2025 from Amy Allen, Administrator

As I step into my fifteenth year at SCBA, I continue to feel both honoured and delighted to serve the churches, communities, chaplains, ministers, and leaders who make our Association so vibrant. Each day in the office brings new challenges and surprises, but I do enjoy the moments we gather together at our annual conference and Leaders' Days.



We continue to enjoy an excellent partnership with the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Cheltenham for the Ministers' and Leaders' Conference in February each year. Many will not have met her, but Nora does an amazing job as our Events Manager at the hotel, and it is a pleasure to work with her in the build-up to the Conference. Working with the same hotel for the past twelve years certainly helps in the smooth running of the event.

I want to extend heartfelt thanks to the wonderful team at Basingstoke Baptist Church, our generous hosts for both Leaders' Days in 2025. These gatherings are always a highlight, offering a fantastic opportunity to connect with our ministers and leaders. This year, the addition of a buffet lunch brought even more joy and fellowship to the occasion.

Another rewarding part of my year is supporting the Ministerial Recognition Panel, whether for Accreditation or the new Recognised Local Minister status. Watching candidates grow through their training, NAMs, and ultimately achieve full Accreditation is truly inspiring.

Working with the Regional Minister Team at SCBA has always been a pleasure, and I have genuinely valued their support and guidance over the past year.

Focus Groups in SCBA

Leaders, Ministers & Development Group

The LMDG were involved in a number of things in 2025. It updated its terms of reference and expanded its membership further.

For a number of years ministerial recognition interviews have been conducted as part of a wider partnership with three other Associations, but this came to an end in 2025 and so a new pattern of ministerial recognition interviews just within SCBA and based on the national pattern have been put in place. This will continue to be monitored. There was further development of Recognised Local Ministers, particularly how those who were already Recognised Local Leaders could transfer and the ongoing monitoring and support of RRLs and RLMs. There continues to be a very good number of people from the SCBA engaging with The Learning Collective, whether to become RLMs or for their general development, and this is very encouraging.

The LMDG has continued to monitor the implementation of the recommendations from Project Violet to ensure that the SCBA is engaged as possible with this.

A number of events were organised during the year. The Ministers and Leaders Conference in February had good numbers attending with Datha Blackwood and Jo Williams invited as the speakers. For the first time we invited someone to be chaplain for the conference, Craig Gardner in 2025, and this was a positive development we will repeat. The two Leaders' Days focused on mission in the Association with several speakers from within the Association and then on allyship with Bev Thomas as the main speaker. In addition courses on mentoring and facilitation were offered again, and a new partnership with the Blackley Centre has enabled the Association to offer training on restorative practices.

Anthony Clarke

Staff, Finance & Administration Group

The SFA group met 6 times during the year. A key area of these meetings is to ensure that the finances are well managed, and income and expenditure is monitored against the budget. Grant applications for Support and CMD grants are reviewed by this group, with 10 grants being awarded during the year. The group works in close coordination with SCBA's BUC representative, which enables information to be shared regarding the sale of church buildings following church closures. The group also oversees the Association loans, which have been given to churches, monitoring the repayments. A member of the group also gives advice to the Home Mission Grants Group in their discernment process.

Children, Youth & Families Group

Throughout 2025, we have been able to continue offering the Essentials training; we're really grateful to the several trainers who have made this possible. So far, more than 90 volunteers, ministers, and youth workers have taken part- a deeply encouraging sign of the commitment and heart for this ministry across our churches.



We now have 50 full- and part-time youth workers serving in our church communities, and many have generously come alongside others to offer wisdom, support, and encouragement for CYF ministry. Through Youth Alpha, toddler groups, school ministry, and after-school clubs, we are hearing wonderful stories of children, young people, and families responding to the Good News. This feels like a hopeful and exciting season, and as a core group, we remain prayerfully committed to helping SCBA follow the Spirit's leading.

Mission Grants Group

This year, we have moved to a new grant structure in which Home Mission grants are awarded for a period of three years rather than one. This gives churches and mission contexts greater stability and the ability to plan confidently for the medium term, rather than facing an annual reapplication cycle. Our hope is that this reduces pressure on ministers and leaders and releases them more fully into the work God has called them to do.

I continue to be encouraged by the creative, faithful and often sacrificial work taking place across our Association. It is inspiring to hear how God is at work in churches, ministries, pioneers and community settings. It is humbling to remember that Home Mission enables us to participate in God's mission together, and it remains a privilege and responsibility to allocate the funds entrusted to us.

Home Mission is the financial lifeblood of both the Association and the wider Union. This year, we were not able to say yes to every application, partly due to financial constraints. The more we give as churches, the more we are able to support ministries that are making a real difference in lives and communities across our region.

Let us continue to give generously, pray faithfully and work together so that we may glorify God and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul Burnish

Events in 2025

Conference

In February, 102 Ministers and Leaders attended our three-day conference in Cheltenham. This examined the theme of “The Goodness of God”, with input from Revd Jo Williams and Revd Doha Blackwood. The first day of the conference saw an opportunity for Children, Youth and Family workers, newly accredited ministers, pioneers and chaplains to meet together, reflecting on their own contexts and praying together.



Leaders' Days

During the year, we held two leaders' days. In June, our Leaders' Day and AGM was attended by 78 ministers and leaders, reflecting on the theme of “Doing Church Differently” with examples being shared from across the Association. In November, the Leaders' Day was attended by 73 leaders and ministers and was led by Bev Thomas, considering the theme of “Allyship” and what this means for our ministries and churches. In addition, the Children, Youth and Family workers continued to meet in person in four different locations for support.



Safeguarding Training Report

Across 2025, our 7 safeguarding trainers, to whom we are indebted and therefore extremely grateful, delivered 21 training sessions across the region. Although this may not sound like many, those days cover both levels 2 and 3 and are usually attended by people from multiple churches. This means that we are likely to have reached at least 42 church groups across our region and potentially more.

The level 2 training was updated at the beginning of the year, giving it a fresher feel. We have been promised by the national team that a fresh level 3 programme will be available soon.

Mel Pike took on the role of Safeguarding Advisor for SCBA and has been involved in the National Safeguarding Core Group as a result of her appointment. Our thanks to Keith, who remains the Safeguarding Advisor for CBA, but stepped back from that role with us.

In September, I stepped back from coordinating the training, which has been picked up by Mel as part of her role.

Please pray for our trainers that they will have wisdom in responding to some of the questions and situations that face them during training sessions and for their safety as they travel to and from venues.

If you would be interested in finding out about becoming a trainer, please do contact the SCBA administrator, Amy Allen, who can then direct you to the appropriate person for more information.

Finally, thank you to you, our churches, for pursuing excellence in safeguarding to ensure that our churches are safe places for all who enter them.

Ann Andrews



Mission Grants Given in 2025

Anderson Baptist Church, Reading: A joint English and Nepalese speaking fellowship seeking to be a community that shares the good news of God’s love for all.

Barton Community Church, Oxford: Seeking to be an authentic community bringing hope to the heart of Barton through making Jesus known.

Burmese Mission Church, Oxford: An international church, streaming across the world and evangelising on the streets of Cowley, Oxford.

Colwell Baptist Church, Isle of Wight: A family-friendly church joining in with the mission of God, in reaching out to make disciples and to make a difference in God’s world.

Freemantle Baptist Church, Southampton: A small community of Christian believers sharing the love of God with their community by working alongside the families living there.

Gosport Waterfront Baptist Church: Seeking to present the gospel message of love and peace through Jesus Christ to a new generation and in a new and fresh way for the 21st century.

Leigh Park Baptist Church: Learning how to love and serve their Community, how to support those in need, how to comfort those who are hurting, and provide a place to belong for those who feel lonely or lost.

Ocean Church: A pioneering venture that reimagines faith as an adventure. Situated along the Dorset coast, they are embracing the outdoors—paddleboarding on rivers, hiking the South West Coast Path, and swimming in the sea—to encounter the divine in nature.

Southampton University Free Church Chaplaincy: Offering a listening ear, one step removed from the University, to people of all faiths and none, serving the students, faculty, and staff.

Stow on the Wold Missional Listener: In partnership with Chipping Campden Baptist Church and Rural Ministries, “Finding ways to join with God in and around the community.”

The Meeting Place: Using an Old Baptist Chapel to reach out to the community and running community sessions, including an after-school club and Dangerous Dads.



Other Grants Given in 2025

The SCBA has various grants that support different aspects of mission, ministry, and CMD/Sabbatical Support.

We have given over £3,500 in total to support 10 people (including under-25s) to go on mission opportunities. We awarded a £500 Mission Grant to a church to enable them to put on an Interactive and Immersive Event for their 325th Anniversary. We awarded £2,774 in CMD/Sabbatical Grants to 9 ministers and leaders to further their learning and development.

We also have a pastoral fund that the Regional Team Leader uses to help ministers in times of need. We have given £2,000 of this fund out to ministers in 2025.

To find out more information about our grants, visit our website here: www.scba.org.uk/associationgrants

Lyndhurst Baptist Church 325th Anniversary

Last year, Lyndhurst Baptist Church marked 325 years of worship, witness, and service in the heart of the New Forest. To celebrate, we turned the entire church site into a living time machine for the community and local schools.

Children stepped through a “time tunnel” and landed in 1700, on a working farm, where they met our first minister, Revd George Jackman, and his daughter, Grace Carpenter. From there they wandered into the graveyard, discovering stories etched in stone including the grave of a man who lived in three different centuries.

The journey moved into the Victorian era as we transformed the back room into the original school for poor children, complete with slates, desks, and stern teachers. Inside the church, we rebuilt the old pulpit and pews, before stepping into the studio of Frederick Golden Short, New Forest artist, organist, and church secretary.

Finally, the children emerged into a recreated WW2 Canadian Army camp, complete with Jeep – a tribute to the 24 Canadian soldiers baptised here before D-Day.

Across the week, 150 schoolchildren and 300 adults encountered the story of God at work in this village. We are grateful to SCBA for their £500 grant, which helped make this remarkable project possible.



Finance Information for 2025

Summary Accounts (Full accounts are available on our website at www.scba.org.uk/reports)

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT		£'000's			
INCOME		2024		2025	
BU Home Mission Grant	253	54%	302	60%	
Donations, Legacies & Grants	13	3%	9	2%	
Events & Leaders Conference	21	5%	26	5%	
Investment	58	12%	42	8%	
Other Income	121	26%	129	25%	
TOTAL INCOME	466	100%	508	100%	
EXPENDITURE		2024		2025	
Mission (HM Grants, CYF & Pioneering)	132	23%	147	29%	
Staffing	359	63%	273	54%	
Leaders Conference and Events	29	5%	37	7%	
Support and Governance	42	7%	38	8%	
Other	8	1%	8	2%	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	570	100%	503	100%	
DEFICIT / Surplus	-104		5		

BALANCE SHEET		£'000's	
		2024	2025
Fixed Assets		1,423	1,415
Current Assets			
Loans		125	98
Cash in Bank		1,199	1,239
Total Assets		2,747	2,752
Liabilities		-66	-66
NET ASSETS		2,681	2,686

Funds

Restricted	399	397
Unrestricted		
Designated	19	17
General	2,263	2,272
TOTAL FUNDS	2,681	2,686

Charity Details

Charity Name: Southern Counties Baptist Association
Charity Registration No.: 1091066
Company Registration No.: 4279837

Registered Office: Baptist House, 129 Broadway, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 8XD

Trustees:

Revd Chris Brockway	Moderator of Trustees
Revd Dr Anthony Clarke	Regent's Park College Representative
Mrs Ann Andrews	
Mrs Emma Green	
Revd Martin Hardwidge	<i>(to June 2025)</i>
Revd Dr Martin Hobgen	
Revd Clare Hooper	Regional Minister co-Team Leader
Revd Matthew Huckle	
Mr Andrew Johnston	
Revd Jonathan Keyworth	
Revd Andrew Perryman	
Ms Janet Quarry	
Revd Christopher Walker	
Revd Hayley Young	Regional Minister co-Team Leader

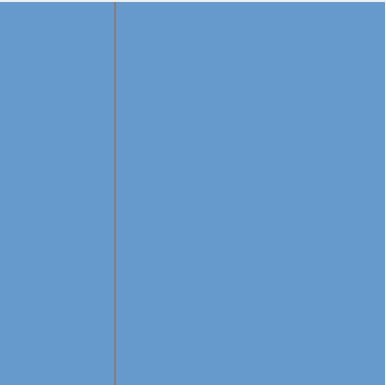
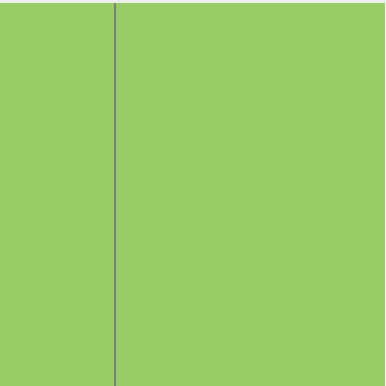
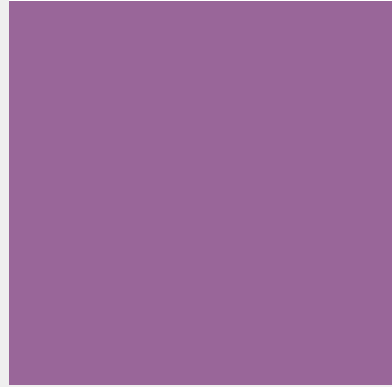
Regional Ministry Team:

Revd Clare Hooper	Regional Minister co-Team Leader & CYF Missional Developer
Revd Hayley Young	Regional Minister co-Team Leader & General RM
Revd Simon Gray	Regional Minister: Operations Lead & General RM

Regional Ministry Team:

Staff Team:

Mrs Amy Allen	Administrator
Ms Joanna Hayes	Interim Safeguarding Adviser <i>(to February 2025)</i>
Revd Melanie Pike	Safeguarding Lead <i>(from March 2025)</i>



Thank You



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www.scba.org.uk