THE LEARNING COLLECTIVE HANDBOOK

BAPTISTS TOGETHER

...in conjunction with the Associations

Regent's Park College
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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INTRODUCTION

The Learning Collective (TLC) is designed for anyone who wants to deepen their understanding of the Christian faith and put it into practice in everyday life. Through practical and reflective learning, participants are equipped to grow in their faith and serve God more effectively, both within the church and beyond.

TLC combines independent study with a monthly two-hour gathering, available both in person in geographical hubs, and online via Zoom. Participants are strongly encouraged to attend in person as this helps builds community. The sessions are interactive and provide an opportunity to engage with the course material, share insights, ask questions, and enjoy thoughtful discussion and debate alongside fellow participants and facilitators.

Overview
The course offers participants the opportunity to engage with a broad range of topics relevant to ministry in today's context, including reflective practice, spirituality, the Bible, Baptist history, mission, pastoral leadership, and more.

Teaching
Each month participants complete a variety of learning activities, such as watching videos, journalling, reading, reflecting, and undertaking practical exercises such as interviewing other church members or exploring different ways of praying. Participants are expected to attend all sessions, as active participation contributes to a rich learning environment in which leaders learn from one another, build meaningful relationships, and strengthen connections across churches and Associations.

Learning Outcomes

- Explore mission and ministry in today's context alongside leaders from across Baptists Together.
- Develop skills in reflection and reflective practice, enabling deeper engagement with churches, and communities.
- Deepen understanding of mission, pastoral leadership, the Bible, doctrine, Baptist history, spirituality, and reflective practice.
- Grow in faith, spiritual formation, and confidence for Christian leadership.

FORMAT

Venues
We strongly encourage the formation of learning 'hubs' that meet together to join the zoom sessions as a group. The list of current hubs and dates are on our website, and we will notify you if these should change for any reason.

www.cbs-oxford.com/tlc

A Typical Evening
We encourage early gathering from 6:30pm, different hubs may provide drinks and snacks on arrival.

The session formally starts promptly at 7pm with opening devotions before we hand over to the module facilitator. The presentation is usually broken up with regular opportunities for breakout discussions and a half-time comfort / refreshment break is provided. The session ends, again promptly, at 9pm.

We do not keep a formal attendance register and will expect you to attend every session. If you are unable to attend, please notify the administrator and venue host (both, separately) as soon as you know and definitely prior to the session commencing. In such cases of unavoidable absence a video of the session will be available for you to catch up on what you missed, but this will not include the all-important break-out discussions so this is ***not*** to be regarded as a substitute for regular attendance.

Online Attendance
If you are joining online please sign in to Zoom at least 10 minutes before the session starts (i.e. at 6:50pm), this gives the administrator a chance to set up breakout rooms for online participants according to region. Please also make sure that if necessary you have renamed your Zoom profile to show your full name (forename, surname) rather than showing 'ABC Baptist Church' or whatever.

Breakout Groups
Regular breakout discussions are a key part of TLC learning. If you are online you will be allocated to a group with others from your local area or association. Our intention is that this provides some continuity from one session to the next but this is not always possible.

COMMUNICATION

Emails
We send out regular emails from Mailchimp with reminders and pre-course work for each session. We also send a simple non-Mailchimp email to everyone on the course with the link to the full mailing as we know some email accounts reject Mailchimp as 'spam'. Please make sure you read these fully and let us know if you change your email address of have any other problems.

Website
Course content is updated prior to each session and can be accessed via the password-protected webpages on our website. There are different pages for different cohorts of learners. Again, please let us know if you cannot access the pages you need.

Videos
Each session is recorded and shared with ***registered course participants only*** as a useful Aide Memoire or for those who, in exceptional circumstances, cannot attend a particular session. They are ***not*** intended as an alternative to regular attendance and we would strictly ask that you ***do not share*** the link to the videos with anyone who hasn't registered for the course.

Yearbook
When you register for the course we ask for a short description of why you are undertaking the course, and for a head-and-shoulders photograph of yourself. These are compiled into a 'Yearbook', shared with the module facilitators, venue hosts and your fellow course participants. We hope to include everyone but if you have a particular reason for ***not*** consenting to share information in this way, please let us know. We also provide the YearBook in print form for each participant showing their year group when they complete the course.

Contact Us:

Tutor: Revd Dr Jane Day jane.day@regents.ox.ac.uk
Administrator: Dr Alan Kerry alan.kerry@regents.ox.ac.uk

OUTCOMES

Assignments and Skills Development Matrix

The Learning Collective contributes to the academic component of those seeking to become a Recognised Local Minister (RLM). Participants who are thinking about this path should talk to their church leadership team and their Regional Minister to find out what is involved, ideally before enrolling on the course.

The academic part of RLM training requires the completion of a written assignment for each module. These are not less than 1500 words each, and are assessed at roughly A-level standard.

In addition, RLM Participants are required to complete and submit an Evidence of Learning (EOL) exercise for ***three*** ministry tasks of their choosing, taken from different ministry areas in the **Skills Development Matrix**.

- Each EOL should be equivalent to 1500 words.
- Half of the word count may be ***equivalent*** i.e. the sermon or worship service planning or other task activity itself, but half should be a written reflection on the task and the feedback received (so 750 words total for each EOL).
- Feedback must be actively sought (see section 5 of the EOL sheet) either from those present, or (better) from an experienced practitioner who has observed the ministry
- task.

Participants who are not pursuing RLM status may also choose to complete these assignments and EOL for their own personal development. If you are someone who is thinking about RLM further down the line we strongly encourage early engagement with the assignments so that you don't have to complete the work in retrospect which may cause delay in any recognition of becoming an RLM.

Students who complete all modules satisfactorily will be invited to celebrate and awarded a certificate.

Overall, in these pieces of work (the assignments and the Evidence of Learning submissions) participants should demonstrate:

- your ability to use methods of theological reflection carefully.
- your ability to reflect on your own spirituality and its ongoing development.
- your ability to interpret the Bible appropriately.
- your ability to articulate themes in Christian theology and relate them to contemporary experience.
- your ability to connect themes in Baptist history and principles, and in wider Christian theology, to your own practice and context.
- your ability to understand cultural contexts appropriately.
- your ability to participate appropriately in God's mission and to reflect on that participation.
- your ability to engage in appropriate contextual practices in your ministry.

Time Commitment

Different people learn at different speeds but we are often asked how much time participants should set aside for the course. This is offered as a rough guide only.

For each session you should expect to complete about 4 hours of pre-reading or other preparatory work (each module is two sessions). Some of this will be set by the module facilitator and some of it should be self-directed learning, based on the suggested reading list or other work in preparation for that session.

Each 1500 word level 3 essay, or Evidence of Learning submission would normally take about 6-10 hours work in total:

- Research and Gathering Resources 2-3 hours
- Planning and Outlining 1-2 hours
- Drafting / Writing 3-4 hours
- Editing and Referencing 1-2 hours

Assignment Submission Guidelines

Assignments should be 1,500 words in length, with a tolerance of +/- 5%. They must be typed in a suitable font, using font size 12, to ensure readability. Your name and the module title must appear on the assignment. A simple bibliography must be included at the end of the assignment, listing any books and articles used in the preparation of your work.

All assignments and any EOLs should be submitted to:

jane.day@regents.ox.ac.uk

Assignment Assessment

Assignments are assessed on a ***Pass*** or ***Refer*** basis. To achieve a ***Pass***, the assignment should demonstrate that the learning outcomes for the module have been met. This includes showing an appropriate understanding of the topic, addressing the assignment question, presenting ideas in a clear and organised way, and making suitable use of relevant sources where appropriate.

If an assignment does not yet meet the required standard, it will be awarded a ***Refer***. Students will receive feedback identifying the areas that need further development and will be invited to revise and resubmit their work.

Use of AI

The Learning Collective recognises that generative AI tools are increasingly part of everyday learning and professional practice, and participants are encouraged to develop an informed and critical understanding of their appropriate use. AI may be used as a supporting tool, for example to help explore concepts, clarify an assessment question, generate ideas for further investigation, or provide limited feedback on spelling, grammar and clarity. However, the purpose of assessment for TLC is to demonstrate ***your own*** understanding, reflection and ability to engage with and apply the learning. Therefore AI must ***not*** be used to generate substantive written content for submission, rewrite your work, or substitute for your own analysis, judgement or reflection. Participants remain responsible for the accuracy, integrity and authorship of everything they submit and should be able to explain and discuss their submitted work.

RECOGNISED LOCAL MINISTRY (RLM)

About RLM

Baptists Together defines a Recognised Local Minister (RLM) as someone who:

- can articulate a sense of calling to their local setting where they minister;
- has gained an foundational introduction to theology and the practice of ministry;
- has undergone a measure of testing and formation of their character and calling so that they exhibit the **Marks of Ministry**;
- connects with the wider Baptist movement, mostly through their regional association.

The Learning Collective can satisfy the second part of these requirements if you complete all the assignments, so if you think there is any chance God may be calling you to this in the future then it may be a good idea to attempt one of the assignments early on in the course.

In addition your church will need to confirm your calling and you will need to have a conversation with your Regional Minister who will signpost you toward a formation group that you can join alongside The Learning Collective. Please read the following four documents for more infomation:

- **Baptists Together - Recognised Local Ministry webpage.**
- **An Introduction to Recognised Local Ministry.**
- **A more detailed 'Guide to Recognised Local Ministry' is here.**
- **Skills Development Matrix (includes information about 'Evidence of Learning' for ministry tasks).**

THE MODULES

The full course comprises 10 modules, of two sessions each:

1. Reflective Practice
2. Spirituality and Formation
3. Understanding The Bible
4. Doctrine
5. Mission
6. Baptist History and Principles
7. Pastoral Leadership
8. Practical Theology
9. Ministerial Practice
10. Away Days (optional seminar choices)

Read on for more details about each of the modules and how they relate to the Marks of Ministry...

Module 1
REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Facilitated by:
Jane Day and Mayowa Akinloye

This module explores a range of methods for reflecting on practice and experience. It will consider how reflective practice can support learning, growth and development, as well as ways of enabling others to reflect on their experiences, both individually and together within groups and communities.

Associated Marks of Ministry:

- Clear self-identity, reflective and open to constructive criticism.
- Good level of self-awareness and personal understanding.

Recommended Reading

- Bassot, B., 2023. *The reflective practice guide: an interdisciplinary approach to critical reflection.* Second edition ed. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge. **Also available on SCRIBD here**
- Bolton, G., 2005. ***Reflective practice: writing and professional development***. 2nd ed ed. London; Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Moon, J., 2006. ***Learning Journals: A Handbook for Reflective Practice and Professional Development***. 2nd ed. Routledge.
- Nash, S. (2012) ***Tools for Reflective Ministry***. London: SPCK.
- Thompson, S. and Thompson, N., 2008. ***The critically reflective practitioner***. Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan. **Also available on SCRIBD here**

Module 2

SPIRITUALITY AND FORMATION

Facilitated by:
Craig Gardiner

This module seeks to broaden understanding of the Christian spiritual tradition and how as individuals we can draw on this tradition and the practices embodied in it to sustain our own spirituality and ministry.

Associated Marks of Ministry:

- Deepening relationship with Christ and clear love for God
- Spiritual disciplines
- Living an authentic life
- A resilient faith which is able to cope with the reality of ministry
- Drawing others into an awareness of God's presence
- Humility
- Faithfulness
- Generous spirit

Recommended Reading

Module Text Book:

- Richard Foster, ***Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of the Christian Faith*** (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2017). Approx. purchase price £10 / Kindle / e-book £4.99. It is also available as an audio book

Other reading:

- Collins, Kenneth J., ***Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader***, 2000.
- Holder, Arthur, (ed) ***Christian Spirituality: The Classics, London***: Routledge, 2010
- McGrath, Alister E. ***Christian Spirituality, An Introduction***, Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.
- Rolheiser, Ronald. ***The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality***, Bantam /Image, 2014.
- Smith, Karen E., ***SCM Core Text: Christian Spirituality***, London, SCM, 2007.
- Thompson, Ross. ***Christian Spirituality: SCM Study Guide***, London: SCM, 2008.
- Thompson, Marjorie J., ***Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life***, Westminster, John Knox Press, 2014.
- Tyler, Peter and Woods, Richard. ***The Bloomsbury Guide to Christian Spirituality***, London: Bloomsbury, 2016.

Module 3

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

Facilitated by:
Anthony Clarke

An overview of the biblical narrative and its variety of genres. Explores both a variety of approaches to biblical interpretation and the way that others in context might be enabled to understand the Bible.

Associated Marks of Ministry:

- Rooted in scripture
- Heart for justice and prophetic voice

Recommended Reading

- Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, ***How to Read the Bible for All it's Worth*** (Zondervan, 2014)
- Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart: ***How to Read the Bible Book by Book*** (Zondervan, 2014)
- Gordon Fee & Mark Straus, ***How to Choose a Translation for All it's Worth*** (Zondervan, 2007)
- Tom Wright, ***Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today*** (SPCK, 2013)
- John Drane, ***Introducing the Old Testament*** (various editions) John Drane, Introducing the Old Testament (various editions)
- Pat Alexander & David Alexander, ***The Lion Handbook of the Bible*** (Lion Hudson, 2017) Nick Page, The Bible Book (Harper Collins, 2003)
- Nick Page, ***The Badly Behaved Bible: Thinking Again About the Story of Scripture*** (Hodder & Stoughton, 2019)

Module 4

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Facilitated by:
Jaimee van Gemerden

An examination of important themes in Christian theology and contemporary ethics, together with the ability to connect these themes to contemporary experience and practice, especially in the context of the individual.

Associated Marks of Ministry:

- Resident theologian or 'God thinker'
- Heart for justice and prophetic voice

Recommended Reading

- Daniel L. Migliore, ***Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*** (W.B. Eerdmans, 1991).
- Alister E. McGrath, ***Theology: The Basics***, Fifth edition (Wiley-Blackwell, 2025).

Module 5
MISSION

Facilitated by:
Steve Tinning

A foundational understanding of mission as *míssio Dei* together with an exploration of aspects of contemporary culture and an understanding of a variety of contextually appropriate ways to engage in mission.

Associated Marks of Ministry:

- Committed to engaging in the mission of God in a post Christian context
- Ability to read context to see opportunities, challenges and potential.
- Holy discontent with the status quo leading to action
- Heart for justice and prophetic voice
- Representing the church in wider society

Recommended Reading

- Ann Morisy, ***Journeying out: A New Approach to Christian Mission*** (Continuum, 2009).
- Stuart Murray, ***Church After Christendom***, (Authentic Media, 2013).

Module 6

BAPTIST HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES

Facilitated by:
Andy Goodliff

A foundational understanding of central themes in Baptist history and principles together with the ability to connect these themes to contemporary experience and practice, especially in the context of the individual.

Associated Marks of Ministry:

- Continuing sense of call to Baptist ministry
- Intentional accountability to develop as a disciple of Christ and as a Baptist minister
- Accountable to the local church and wider Baptist family as appropriate

Recommended Reading

- Roger Hayden, ***English Baptist History and Heritage***, 2nd ed (Baptist Union of Great Britain, 2005).
- Stephen R. Holmes, ***Baptist Theology*** (T & T Clark, 2012).

Module 7

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

Facilitated by:
Sally Nelson

The important aspects of understanding people, developing people skills, pastoral care and appropriate servant and collaborative leadership in a Baptist context. This includes elements of justice, especially around the themes of racial, gender and disability justice. Where appropriate this also includes an introduction to rites of passage.

Associated Marks of Ministry:

- Intentional accountability to develop as a disciple of Christ and as a Baptist minister
- Engaging in peer support, watching over and walking with one another
- Committed to ongoing ministerial development and training
- Accountable to the local church and wider Baptist family as appropriate
- Providing oversight and accountability for others
- Good level of self-awareness and personal understanding
- Collaborative approach
- Inspirer, encourager and enabler of others
- Good interpersonal skills
- Ability to bring about transition and change

Recommended Reading

- Margaret Whipp, ***SCM Studyguide Pastoral Theology*** (Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd, 2013).
- Fraser N. Watts et al., ***Psychology for Christian Ministry*** (Routledge, 2002).
- Kate Litchfield, ***Tend My Flock: Sustaining Good Practice in Pastoral Care*** (Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd, 2006).

Module 8

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Facilitated by:

Helen Cameron

The aim of the module is to introduce you to practical theology by getting you to do what practical theologians do:

- Describing 'practice' - what we actually do in ministry and mission.
- Asking questions about that practice
- Investigating those questions
- Reflecting on what we learn

Associated Marks of Ministry:

- Continuing sense of call to Baptist ministry
- Modelling Christ like godly leadership
- Humble
- Faithful
- Generous spirit
- Exhibiting grace in trying situations
- Drawing others into an awareness of God's presence
- Build/maintain authentic and diverse communities of faith

Recommended Reading

- Robert Beckford, ***God and the Gangs: An Urban Toolkit for Those Who Won't Be Sold out, Bought out or Scared Out*** (Darton Longman & Todd, 2004).
- Laurie Green, ***Let's Do Theology: Resources for Contextual Theology*** (Mowbray, 2009).

Module 9

MINISTERIAL PRACTICE

Facilitated by:
Lisa Kerry

A focus on the specific kind of ministry and context of the candidate that enables them to explore and develop appropriate practices. This might explore pioneering, chaplaincy, leading worship and preaching, working with children, young people and families etc.

It will also introduce the Skills Matrix for RLM's and introduce the Evidence of Learning Tool as a method for assessing your own ministerial practice.

Associated Marks of Ministry:

- Continuing sense of call to Baptist ministry
- Modelling Christ-like godly leadership
- Humble
- Faithful
- Generous spirit
- Exhibiting grace in trying situations
- Drawing others into an awareness of God's presence
- Build/maintain authentic and diverse communities of faith

Recommended Reading

- Barbara Brown Taylor ***The Preaching Life*** (Canterbury Press, 2013).
- Barbara Brown Taylor ***The Healing Word: Gospel medicine for the soul*** (SPCK 2013).
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, ***Life Together*** (SCM, 2002).
- Christopher J Ellis, ***Approaching God: A Guide for Worship Leaders and Worshippers*** (Canterbury Press, 2009).
- Christopher J Ellis, ***Gathering for Worship: Patterns and Prayers for the Community of Disciples*** (Canterbury Press, 2005).
- David Hansen, ***The Art of Pastoring: Ministry without All the Answers*** (InterVarsity Press, 1994).
- David Lyall, ***The Integrity of Pastoral Care*** (SPCK 2001).
- Eugene Peterson ***The Pastor: a memoir*** (Harper Collins 2012)

Module 10
AWAY DAYS

Facilitated by:
Jane Day and Alan Kerry

There is an away-day each year (so two for the course), held at Baptist House, Didcot. This comprises a range of optional seminars which allows participants to plug gaps that may be especially useful for their own context and learning needs.

Associated Marks of Ministry:

- The Away Days seek to contribute to a wide range of the marks of ministry but in particular, the act of coming together on these days seeks to foster a relational approach to leadership.

THE LEARNING COLLECTIVE

www.cbs-oxford.com/tlc

TLC is a community learning initiaitve of:

Regent's Park College
Pusey Street
Oxford
OX1 2LB

Tutor: Revd Dr Jane Day **jane.day@regents.ox.ac.uk**
Administrator: Dr Alan Kerry **alan.kerry@regents.ox.ac.uk**

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