

## **Baptist Northern Association**

Executive: Parmesh Venkatasami (Chairman, East Rand Representative), Obakeng Moreo (Vice-Chairman, North-West Representative), Shayne de Lange (Secretary), Brian Viljoen (Treasurer), Lance Laughton (Area Co-Ordinator), Peggy Burger (Office Finance), Dan Riddell (Youth Representative), Marcus Mphapuli (Limpopo North Representative), Steve Mojalefa (Limpopo North Representative), Themba Ndlovu (Mpumalanga Representative), Jacques Louw (Pretoria Representative), Andrew Peters (Far West Rand Representative).

There is no doubt that Covid and the national lockdown has had a tremendous impact on life as we know it. It would not be too contentious to suggest that lockdown has amplified many of our problems. As one local pastor has pointed out, if there were marital problems before, lockdown has made it worse; if there were work tensions, lockdown has made it worse; or if there were secret sins, lockdown again has made it worse.

Our union has not been unaffected by this trend. In 2019 the BU experienced an explosive Assembly that undoubtedly brought division to our Union, divisions that the lockdown has made worse. Whether it is our understanding regarding statements of faith, our views about associational structures, or our expectation of leadership integrity, our differences have inevitably become amplified. To overcome these differences, we cannot carry on as normal, pretending that these divisions are unsubstantial.

Despite these challenges, we remain committed to our calling to serve the local churches to whom we are accountable. Our objectives are very clearly set out in our constitution; the BNA exists

1. to promote and to provide opportunities for Christian fellowship, and to promote unity and brotherly love among the churches, the pastors and all the Baptists in the area (Fellowship in Christ).
2. to provide the opportunity and possibility for the churches, pastors and people to perform together ministries and services which they would not easily be able to do alone (Fellowship in ministry).
3. to seek to provide resources to assist the churches, the pastors and the members to serve the Lord more effectively (Fellowship in material possessions).
4. to provide care, guidance, challenge and vision to the churches, pastors and members (Fellowship in care and vision).
5. to seek to establish, assist and nurture Baptist churches and fellowships in the area (Fellowship in church planting).
6. to encourage evangelistic outreach and missionary activity among churches, fellowships and individual Baptists and thus to advance the Kingdom of God in the Association area and further afield (Fellowship in missions and evangelism).
7. to assume such functions and responsibilities on behalf of the Union as may be *mutually agreed upon* (Fellowship with other Baptists).
8. to disseminate Baptist Principles and to advocate religious liberty for all.

To accomplish our calling, we recognise that we need much grace, and therefore we need to be a people of fervent prayer. We need to pray for greater love among us, love that is longsuffering. We need to pray for greater faith, faith that stands on the truth. And we need

to pray for greater hope, hope that longs for Christ to build His church. May we as an Association and Union of churches be found to be pleasing to the Lord.