Minutes of SWBA AGM held on Wed 9th July 2026
SWBA Offices, 36 – 38 Wonford Street, Exeter. EX2 5DL and online

Welcome

Nigel Manges welcomed 52 participants, from more than 30 SWBA churches and pioneer communities to the meeting.

Opening worship

Mig Partridge led sung worship and Michelle Parkman spoke on "Partnering Together".

SWBA Updates

Members of the SWBA staff team gave updates on their areas of work as follows:

- Glenda Chadwich-Down — Children, Youth and Families
- James Henley — Learning Community
- Kath Needham — Safeguarding
- Ministry — Nigel Manges
- Mission — Carl Smethurst

(Details of this work can be found in the Annual Report 2025)

AGM business

1. Chair of Trustees Report – Chris Fry
   A short video of the year in pictures was shown, allowing a glimpse of the many things going on across the Association. Thanks were given to Charlie Clayton for putting the video together and to the rest of the staff team who have travelled around the South West, giving a sense of cohesion to what we are doing. Special thanks given to Kathy Browne who is retiring in September after many years' service. Sarah Bird has been appointed as Operational Administrator and will join the team later this year.
   For further detail on the work of the Association, people were directed to the Annual Report, available on the SWBA website.
   Thanks were also given to the Trustee team at SWBA who give their time, energy and commitment for free to serve the Association and bear the legal responsibility for what is done. The Association does not currently have a Treasurer in post.

2. Finance Update – Chris Fry
   Further thanks are also due to Phil Hindle, our bookkeeper, who has worked with the Finance Group to produce the accounts, which have been checked by our independent examiner.
   Key points of note:
   - Lower income in 2024, compared to 2023, largely due to one-off payments that were received in 2023 (a legacy and proceeds from church closures).
   - Home Mission giving was increased in 2024.
   - Largest area of expenditure continues to be staff costs, followed by grants to churches and mission projects.
   - Ended the year with a planned deficit of £111,089

- This deficit is covered by reserves and is part of a planned reduction of Association reserves.
- At the end of 2024 we hold just over £2.5m in reserves largely held in property, investments and cash.

Questions from the floor were answered by Chris, Nigel and Phil Hindle.

3. National Finances – Chris Fry
   It is clear that the finances of the Baptist Union are not sustainable in their current form and discussions have been underway for some time to discern how the members of the Union will address this. We are involved in these discussions at several points. There is a key meeting planned for November 2025, after which, it is hoped, a way forward can be agreed. All we can do at the present time is continue to discern, engage and prepare ourselves where we can for change.

Cluster Updates
Nigel Manges gave an update on each of the Clusters and the work of the Cluster Ministers.

Prayers
Prayers were said for the Association and for one another.

Closing
The meeting was brought to a close by Chris Fry and those in the room were invited to share in a buffet lunch.