

***SCOTTISH BAPTIST LAY PREACHERS'
ASSOCIATION***



PREACHING STATISTICS 2017



SUMMARY REPORT

“Any true definition of preaching must say that man is there to deliver the message of God. He is there to deal with the whole person, and his preaching is meant to affect the whole person at the very centre of life. Preaching should make such a difference to a man who is listening that he is never the same again. Preaching does something for the soul of man ... it deals with him in a vital and radical manner”

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones

To be given such a dispensation from the doctor is a healthy medicine which when taken reminds us that we will, from a spiritual perspective, never know the countless lives which have been touched, the people who have been encouraged, the men, women, boys and girls who may have come to faith through the ministry of the Association and the proclamation of the truth of God's Word. Our call is to be faithful, for if we are faithful in sowing the seed of the Word, then who knows where the seed may fall.

From a statistical perspective though, we make and made in 2017, a hugely significant contribution to not only Baptist life and witness in Scotland, but in many other areas too. To measure it in pure statistical terms is to almost take away from the immeasurable spiritual aspect and eternal impact, but suffice to say in 2017, the Scottish Baptist Lay Preachers Association conducted 1,389 services in a wide range of settings.

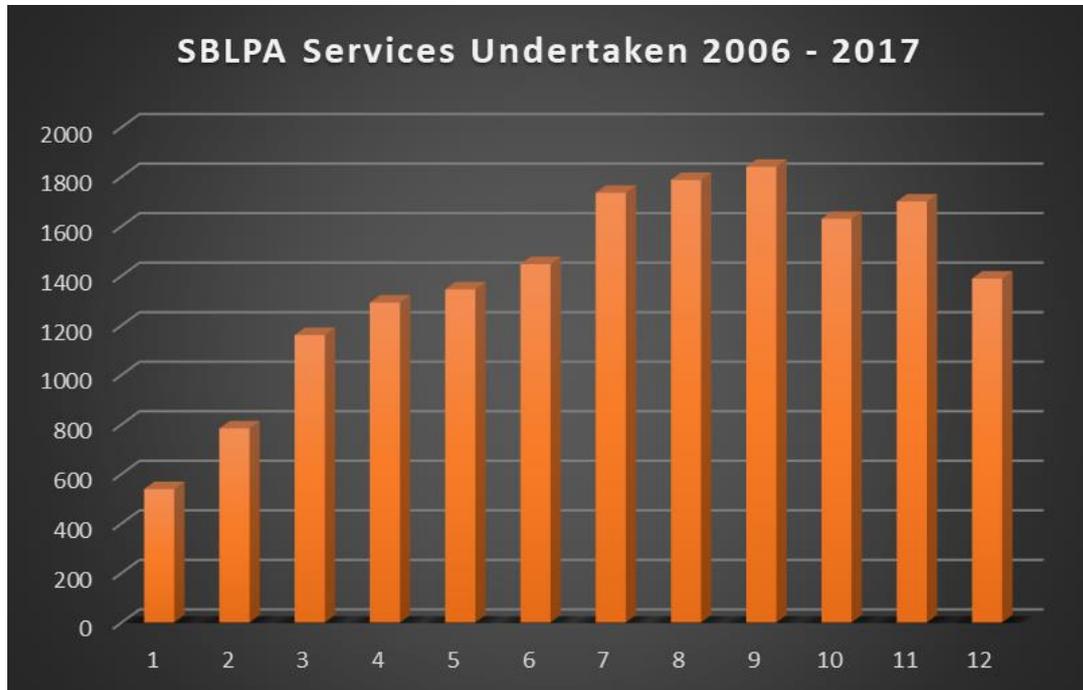
That said, we ought never to get hung up on or see numbers as the primary barometer, informative though they are and can be in and of themselves, but rather we ought to humbly reflect and give thanks to God for the immeasurable spiritual impact of 1,389 services in terms of kingdom work done!

Our spiritual impact is immeasurable, that is true, yet our statistical impact in our conducting of 1,389 services, albeit a little lower than in recent years, still remains the best part of 1,000 more than the number the Association conducted a decade ago and for many years before then, the comparative figures for previous years being:-

- For 2016, a total of 1,700 services
- For 2015, a total of 1,630 services
- For 2014, a total of 1,840 services
- For 2013, a total of 1,787 services;
- For 2012, a total of 1,735 services;
- For 2011, a total of 1,447 services;

- For 2010, a total of 1,345 services;
- For 2009, a total of 1,292 services;
- For 2008, a total of 1,161 services;
- For 2007, a total of 784 services;
- For 2006, a total of 539 services

The bar-chart shows the number of services taken by Association members over the last 12 years:-



The 1,389 figure is based on a 99% response rate, the figures for previous years being:-

- For 2016, a response rate of 100%
- For 2015, a response rate of 100%
- For 2014, a response rate of 99%
- For 2013, a response rate of 98%;
- For 2012, a response rate of 98%;
- For 2011, a response rate of 98%;
- For 2010, a response rate of 96%;
- For 2009, a response rate of 94%;
- For 2008, a response rate of 86%;
- For 2007, a response rate of 91%;
- For 2006, a response rate of 57%.

Of the 1,389 services undertaken:-

- 805 (or 58%) were in 92 Scottish Baptist churches;
- 240 (or 17%) were in 127 evangelical churches of varying denominations and types;
- 182 (or 13%) were in the environment of care homes;
- 62 (or 4%) were in the context of funerals!;
- 37 (or 3%) were in primary or high schools;

- 23 (or 2%) were international in nature;
- with the remaining 30 at conferences, camps, community centres and in prisons!

Of the 805 services undertaken in 92 Scottish Baptist churches:-

- 506 (or 63%) were on a Sunday morning;
- 5 (or 1%) were on a Sunday afternoon;
- 153 (or 19%) were on a Sunday evening;
- 122 (or 19%) were midweek meetings/events of various kinds
- 19 (or 2%) were at other times (Friday night, Saturday morning/afternoon, etc)

Were we to have the time to drill down and analyse every element of the 2017 preaching returns, we could probably find a myriad of reasons to explain away the reduction seen in 2017 and the various figures, but what have identified, and have seen a trend emerging in over the last 3-4 years, is:-

- a drop in the number of services taken by members of a Sunday evening or midweek, probably a reflection of the changing nature of Sunday evening services away from the 'traditional teaching' service and the ascendancy of 'life' or 'house' groups over the 'midweek meeting'.
- a rise in the variety of settings in which members have been and are now being invited to preach and share, which is so encouraging to see, thus highlighting the many 'touch points' we have and which God has granted to us.
- churches in which we have preached in frequently over the last couple of years calling a pastor, which although good for them, has for us meant there has no longer been a need to provide pulpit supply to the extent we did. Sadly, some churches where we preached (mission halls), have over the last couple of years closed - though not because of our preaching it would have to be said!

For previous years, the comparative figures were:-

- For 2016, 952 services in 100 Scottish Baptist churches
- For 2015, 950 services in 106 Scottish Baptist churches;
- For 2014, 1,227 services in 109 Scottish Baptist churches;
- For 2013, 1,051 services in 106 Scottish Baptist Churches
- For 2012, 1,099 services in 104 Scottish Baptist churches;
- For 2011, 896 services in 99 Scottish Baptist churches;
- For 2010, 743 services in 98 Scottish Baptist churches;
- For 2009, 813 services in 94 Scottish Baptist churches;
- For 2008, 775 services in 96 Scottish Baptist churches

With 160 churches forming the Baptist Union of Scotland, this means the Scottish Baptist Lay Preachers' Association was, in 2017, involved in preaching in 57% of them. Primarily, though not exclusively, the figures are higher where the church was/is vacant and/or where there is already a lay preacher presence/preaching team.

Insofar as the variety of other evangelical churches are concerned, we conducted in 2017, 17.2% (or 240 services) in them, as compared to the fact that:-

- In 2016, we conducted 14.9% of our services (or 254 services) in them;
- In 2015, we conducted 19.8% of our services (or 324 services) in them;
- In 2014, we conducted 18.4% of our services (or 339 services) in them;
- In 2013, we conducted 28.5% of our services (or 510 services) in them;
- In 2012, we conducted 18.7% of our services (or 326 services) in them;
- In 2011, we conducted 23.4% of our services (or 340 services) in them;
- In 2010, we conducted 18.8% of our services (or 253 services) in them;
- In 2009, we conducted 22.8% of our services (or 295 services) in them;
- In 2008, we conducted 26.1% of our services (or 303 services) in them;
- In 2007, we conducted 26.9% of our services (or 211 services) in them.

Our 2017 statistics serve as crystal-clear evidence of the extent to which lay preachers are being used, not just within a Scottish Baptist context, but across a wide spectrum of settings. Through our initiative of supporting resource-needy churches, we've been able to provide systematic pulpit supply and preaching to churches such as those at Campbeltown, Kelso, Rothesay and Stonehaven. Increasingly churches are turning to us as the 'first-stop-shop' when it comes to pulpit supply because of the credibility we have within our Union.

Our prayer for 2018 is that we will grow numerically so we can serve even more churches, secondary always to the prophetic preaching of God's Word in each and every setting under the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

GLEN P CARTWRIGHT
General Secretary

February 2017