

British Baptist newspaper to cease publication

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DIDCOT, England (ABP) – The *Baptist Times*, an award-winning newspaper published weekly for British Baptists for 156 years, will cease both print and digital editions at the end of the year.

Bill Johnston, chairman of the *Baptist Times* board of directors, said due to declining circulation and advertising sales, the newspaper has increasingly had to depend on subsidies from the Baptist Union of Great Britain to operate. In July the Baptist union's trustees voted to end financial support for the newspaper next spring.

"The directors have considered a number of business options for the paper but with profound regret now conclude that it must close," Johnston said. He expressed gratitude to the *Baptist Times* staff for their work and expertise to produce a weekly publication "greatly appreciated by its readership and widely respected in the Christian publishing world."

Jonathan Edwards, general secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, responded to the news with a tribute.

"The *Baptist Times* has occupied a huge place in the life of our union and its passing will be a matter of sadness to thousands of people," Edwards said. "It was not only valued by Baptists in this country but also by many of our ecumenical and international partners, who often tell me of how much they appreciate it."

Editor Mark Woods expressed gratitude for the "great privilege" of serving the *Baptist Times* and paid tribute to staff colleagues over the years.

“However, we have not been immune to the commercial pressures on newspapers in general or to the effect of wider issues in church life,” he said. “We accept our closure with sadness, but appreciate the care given to the decision and the pastoral care shown to the staff.”

Amanda Allchorn, head of communications at the Baptist Union of Great Britain, said the *Baptist Times* brand would continue in a new online service to be launched next spring. The resource, www.baptisttimes.co.uk, will be run by the communications department and offer news, commentary, features and a digest of weekly news for churches to download and print out.

A special edition in January 2012 will celebrate the *Baptist Times*’ history and the contribution to the Baptist denomination and the wider Christian world for more than 150 years.

The *Baptists Times* is independent but has had a close working relationship with the Baptist Union of Great Britain. The newspaper’s offices are in the Baptist House at Didcot in Oxfordshire.

-Bob Allen is managing editor of Associated Baptist Press.