

ENTERING NEW TERRITORY

**Why are retired Baptist ministers moving to
Anglican churches?**

What are the underlying theological issues?

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College of Baptist Ministers 2019

CBM
college of baptist ministers

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In the second place, I wish to express appreciation to friends whom I have consulted generally on the theme of why some retired Baptist ministers worship in Anglican churches. Some also gave advice in the design and analysis of the questionnaire. Again, because of the personal nature of some of their comments, I have felt it right to preserve their anonymity.

Finally, I wish to express appreciation to my colleagues on the Board of the College of Baptist Ministers who kindly agreed to publish this report. In particular I wish to acknowledge the help of Peter Thomas in preparing the manuscript for publication.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Nicholas Henshall, the Dean of Chelmsford, and to the Cathedral community as a whole who have welcomed so warmly Caroline and myself into their midst.

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this book comes from a line from *The Terminus*, a wonderful poem written by David Adam, the former Vicar of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, which sums up for me the experience of retirement: ¹

*“The Terminus is not where we stay,
It is the beginning of a new journey.
It is where we reach out beyond,
where we experience new adventures.
It is where we get off to enter new territory,
to explore new horizons, to extend our whole being.
It is a place touching the future.
It opens up new vistas.
It is the gateway to eternity.”*

Retirement involves adventure, and not least for retired Baptist ministers now worshipping in an Anglican church who have entered a ‘new territory’. Without exception, for all of us this has been a broadening and enriching experience. We are proud of our Baptist roots and almost all of us still regard ourselves as Baptist ministers, but we have moved on and have come to appreciate new ways of doing church

Nonetheless, for those who might feel we have ‘sold the pass’, I perhaps need to make clear that the fact that we are now all worshipping in Anglican churches does not mean that we all have become Anglicans. In this regard we have not ‘changed horses’. ²

¹ Written by David Adam for a greeting card published by Tim Tiley Ltd, Bristol BS6 5RR, and subsequently reproduced in *Prayers As You Explore Your Vocation* (St Albans: The Vocations Team of the Diocese of St Albans, 2015).

² By contrast, see ‘Changing Horses: A journey from Baptists to the Church of England’, *Ministry Today* 30 (Spring 2004) by Alun Brookfield, who after

This book has its origins in an earlier study into how retired Baptist ministers experience retirement. In my report, *Retirement Matters for Ministers*, I mentioned my finding that although most respondents were still members of a Baptist church, just over a quarter (26%) in that survey worshipped in a non-Baptist church: most attended Anglican churches, but some attended another Free or independent church.³ This finding fascinated me, not least because I too am in that category of retired Baptist ministers in Anglican churches. So, I decided to delve a little further and see how some of my peers had experienced life in an Anglican church.

being a Baptist minister for fifteen years, was ordained into the Church of England.

³ Paul Beasley-Murray, *Retirement Matters for Ministers: A report on a research project into how Baptist ministers experience retirement* (College of Baptist Ministers, Chelmsford 2018) 75.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

1. Devising the questionnaire

The first step in my research involved drawing up a lengthy questionnaire. I wanted to discover whether there were any general reasons causing Baptist ministers to worship in Anglican churches.

In this regard one former President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain wrote: “The reasons for Baptist ministerial moves to other denominations are rarely theological. Age, mobility, nearness, health, partners all feature.” He went on to instance seven men who trained for ministry with him. One has always attended a Baptist church in his retirement; one worships in an independent church; one has just begun to worship in an Anglican church; one worshipped in an Anglican church for a while but now is back in a Baptist church; one is with the Plymouth Brethren; another is linked with the Methodists; while one gave up on church a long time ago. Much as I respect this former President, I wondered whether there were indeed some theological reasons for Baptist ministers worshipping elsewhere, not least in Anglican churches.

A Baptist minister who teaches in a Baptist college and who worships in an Anglican church proposed a number of possibilities as to why “this shift towards the Church of England may have happened”:

*“In more general terms, I wonder whether faith and human development theories might be of some help: Fowler, Westerhoff and Erickson come to mind, although these are older writers on the subjects. It could be that as one grows older, new meaning making centres and stages of faith begin to emerge.”*⁴

⁴ Fraser Watts, ‘Psychology in Ministry’ 91 in *The Study of Ministry* (SPCK, London 2019) edited by Martyn Percy, dismisses the assumption of various stages of faith development, and believes that Fowler’s work may be better

The second thought is that there has been growth in the number of people attending cathedral worship, not least choral evensong.⁵ It could be that retired Baptist ministers along with many others find a sense of the numinous in such worship (as well as a different aesthetic) that they struggle to find elsewhere, perhaps dissatisfied with more energetic or freer styles of worship.

Thirdly, it may be that a generation that grew up valuing liturgical worship (e.g. Payne and Winward) now feel drawn back to where this is more readily found.⁶

Finally, my experience of freer and more open styles of modern worship in Baptist contexts in more recent years has suggested a shift away from the elements of worship I was trained to include in an order of service. It may therefore be that retired colleagues see within Common Worship a more balanced and biblio-centric liturgy, even if the language of Common Worship is rather 'clunky' and awkward at times.⁷

Additionally, my experience of Baptist worship in practice and discussion with others suggests an erosion of even those few landmark festivals of the Church calendar that were marked in the past and with it the range of theological and biblical themes this helps maintain, and so perhaps the keeping of the Church year is perceived to provide yet further balance.”

seen as pointing to different types of faith. On the other hand, there is little doubt that old age marks a period of significant growth and development: see Donald Capps, *Still Growing: the Creative Self in Older Adulthood* (Lutterworth, Cambridge 2015).

⁵ See Angela Tilby's column in the *Church Times* 2 November 2018 regarding an earlier statistical report.

⁶ See Ernest A. Payne and Stephen F. Winward, *Orders and Prayers for Christian Worship* (The Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, London, first published 1960; second edition 1962; third edition 1965; and fourth edition 1967).

⁷ See *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England* (Church House Publishing, London 2000).

An Anglican minister, learning of my interest in this subject, wondered “if some of the reasons ‘Baptists’ are comfortable ‘Anglicans’ in retirement are because ...

- *They can just become a church member without expectations of leadership and/or preaching.*
- *They are not seen as a threat to the existing minister in a Baptist church.*
- *Many Anglican vicars/rectors are very comfortable in their leadership position and welcome gifted church members.*
- *They ‘buy’ into the leader of the Anglican church they attend – a key factor, perhaps.*
- *There are some helpful structures in the Church of England which, if used well, can enhance mission and ministry.*
- *They don’t have to get involved in church politics – having, perhaps, been hurt by congregational leadership over the years.*
- *They appreciate the fact that the Church of England is a ‘broad’ Church.*

Some of these points of view are tested in the subsequent questionnaire used in the survey.

2. Finding retired Baptist ministers in Anglican churches

The second step was to draw up a list of retired Baptist ministers to whom I would send the questionnaire. This proved to be more difficult than I anticipated, for as I quickly discovered, there is no available database for discovering where Baptist ministers worship in their retirement. It does not help that, because of the 2016 General Data Protection Regulation rules, Baptists no longer publish an annual ‘Directory’ of

ministers. I wrote to the Ministries Team Leader of the Baptist Union of Great Britain as also to Principals of Baptist theological colleges, and as a result I was able to add just one name to my initial list of ministers based upon my own personal contacts. I wrote to other friends who I thought might be able to help, but for the most part drew a blank.

Another former President of the Baptist Union replied:

“I can’t think of a specific Baptist pastor who has retired and ended up in an Anglican setting. My experience is that once they are retired, Baptist ministers look to worship in the nearest local church, whatever its denominational allegiance. They feel a little more sensitive about joining a non-Baptist church if they are beneficiaries of a Baptist housing grant for their accommodation! Many seem to retain their membership in a Baptist church (to protect accreditation) but in practice worship in the local fellowship of whatever brand. I suspect that, sadly, some ministers drop out of church life altogether at retirement, burnt out by their pastoral experience. I don’t have any hard evidence for this (it’s not exactly something you announce to the world!) but it’s just an impression. I think it’s far too easy to retire and simply disappear below the radar of the Baptist Union’s care and attention.”

To which I wanted to ask: Where is the Baptist Union’s ‘care and attention’? In my report on how Baptist ministers in general experience retirement, there was a strong feeling among retired ministers that they had been “abandoned into retirement” by the Baptist Union and “ignored and neglected” by the Associations. Indeed 75% of those responding to my 2018 survey were not content with the care – or rather lack of care – shown by the Baptist Union to retired ministers. ⁸

I ended up with a list of thirty-two retired Baptist ministers worshipping in Anglican churches, almost all of whom were

⁸ *Retirement Matters for Ministers*, 99.

already known to me. Of these thirty-two, three are former principals of Baptist colleges, two are former presidents of the Baptist Union, two are former regional or association ministers, and several could be regarded as Baptist theologians. This is not to demean the others, whose faithfulness in ministry over many years I honour. However, it does illustrate that some of these thirty-two now worshipping in Anglican churches have exercised significant roles within the Baptist Union.

Of these thirty-two, twenty filled in a fourteen-page questionnaire. Ideally, I would have liked all thirty-two to have done so, but for the most part there were good reasons for this, which tended to relate to health issues either of the retired minister or of the retired minister's spouse.

Of those who did fill in the questionnaire, it needs to be noted that not every respondent answered every question. This explains why not every question has twenty responses!

All the questionnaires were sent out in February 2019. Replies were received in February and March 2019.

3. Adding significance to the research

Although I was disappointed only to receive twenty filled-in questionnaires, I initially I argued that proportionately I had received a greater response compared to my previous survey on how Baptist ministers experience retirement in general. My logic was as follows. If my earlier survey of retired Baptist ministers was representative of retired Baptist ministers in general, which discovered that 26% were worshipping elsewhere (two-thirds in Anglican churches; one third in other Free Churches), then this would mean that of the estimated one thousand Baptist retired ministers, 250 are worshipping in non-Baptist churches, of whom perhaps 170 are in Anglican churches. In other words, my current sample would perhaps account for 20% of retired Baptist ministers worshipping in Anglican churches, whereas the 53 respondents to my survey on

how Baptist ministers experience retirement accounted for just over 5% of retired Baptist ministers.

However, from a minister friend familiar with statistics I discovered that my apparent logic had little value. The brutal truth is that:

“Essentially, the smaller the total population (in this case 250, accepting your general assumptions) the larger the proportion you would need in your survey sample to give reliable results. This is why for the population of the UK (tens of millions) a sample of just 1000 is sufficient for reliable results but a smaller total population requires a greater proportion. So for an industry standard level of reliability you would actually need 70 responses out of 250.

So with only twenty responses the statistics are only reliable to within plus or minus 20%. This means you would need more than 70% saying something before you could reliably report ‘more than half’ and less than 30% before you could report that as ‘less than half’. Even if a particular response was unanimous the maths would suggest that up to 20% of the whole population might still disagree, and if nobody in the sample said yes to something it is still possible that some in the whole population would have done so.”

All I can therefore report on with certainty is the viewpoints of twenty retired ministers. However, it should be noted that the questionnaire used in this survey was more detailed than the questionnaire used in my earlier survey of retired Baptist ministers in general. It was fourteen sides in length and included many open-ended questions. It yielded a good deal of information. Although I had no face-to-face interviews as in my previous survey, I was able to gain a fairly full picture of the respondents, helped not least through my own personal knowledge of eighteen of the ministers concerned.

There is a further dimension to this report which adds greater significance to it. That is, that along with the ‘results’ I have

also added my own ‘commentary’. These commentaries seek to explain the significance of the data, and at the same time reflect not just my own personal views but also my not inconsiderable experience of Baptist ministry in general. As will be seen, at all times I have clearly separated the ‘commentary’ from the more objective results of the survey. In drawing up these commentaries, I have tried to ensure that they are meaningful both to Anglican and Baptist readers alike. Hopefully the commentaries not only elucidate, but also give extra value to the analysis of the findings.

4. Providing understanding to both Anglicans and Baptists

I began my research feeling that it would be primarily of interest to Baptists. On reflection, I now think this could be of interest to Anglicans too.

As far as Baptists are concerned, I hope that it will bring greater understanding of those of us retired ministers who are now worshipping in Anglican churches. Although most of us still are Baptists at heart, nonetheless it is not for reasons of mere convenience that we find ourselves where we are: theological reasons were a major contribution to our decision to worship with our Anglican brothers and sisters. What is more, as this report will make clear, we have been enriched by our experience.

As far as Anglicans are concerned, I hope that it will bring greater understanding of some of the theological challenges we have experienced in moving in our retirement from a Baptist church to an Anglican church. Although we want to express our gratitude for the ‘hospitality’ we have received from our new Anglican friends, there are still areas where we struggle.

More generally, for both Anglicans and Baptists, this report raises key theological issues relating to ‘baptism, eucharist, and ministry’, which require further study and consideration not

simply between denominations but also within denominations. From my perspective both Baptists and Anglicans still have much to do to 'put their house in order' if their way of being church is to reflect more closely the principles underlying the New Testament patterns of church.

THE EXPERIENCE OF RETIRED BAPTIST MINISTERS WORSHIPPING IN ANGLICAN CHURCHES

1. ABOUT YOU PRIOR TO YOUR ORDINATION

1.1 General Questions

Gender:

Female	1
Male	19

Marital Status

Married	16
Divorced & remarried	1
Never married	1
Divorced	1
Widowed	1

Age as at 1 March 2019

65-69 years	6
70-74 years	8
75-79 years	3
80-84 years	3

COMMENTARY

Some will be initially surprised to see that almost all the respondents were male. Indeed, if I were to have included the other twelve retired Baptist ministers known to me to be worshipping in Anglican churches, there still would have been no improvement, for all of them are male. This gender imbalance reflects the fact that although the Baptist Union of Great Britain has had women ministers for over eighty years, the proportion has remained relatively low. There has been an increase in recent years: currently some 13% of ministers are women, while of those students training for accredited ministry, some 30% are women. However, this increase has yet to reflect itself in the figures of the retired.

In terms of marital status, if I had included the other twelve Baptist ministers known to me to be worshipping in Anglican churches, the proportion of married retired ministers would have been the same. The same proportion of married respondents was also present in my earlier general survey of retired Baptist ministers.

I did not ask a question about ethnicity. Although today's ministers are increasingly coming from diverse ethnic backgrounds, all the respondents in this survey are White British.

As far as age is concerned, just under a third of respondents were under 70; two-fifths were 70-74; and just under a third were 75-84. In this limited survey, the over 75s are under-represented. If I had been able to include the other twelve retired Baptist ministers worshipping in Anglican churches, there would have been a better balance.

1.2 Early years

Were you brought up in a Baptist home?

Yes: 13

No: 7

The majority had been brought up in a Baptist home. That number included one whose parents joined a Baptist church when he was eleven; and another whose mother was an Anglo-Catholic, but who worshipped with the rest of the family in a Baptist church “in order to avoid confusion or division”.

How old were you when you were baptised as a believer?

12 years 1

13 years 1

14 years 1

15 years 4

16 years 3

17 years 3

18 years 3

20 years 2

21 years 1

26 years 1

The average age at the time of baptism was seventeen.⁹

⁹ The actual answer of 16.95 has been rounded up

COMMENTARY

What does baptism mean?

In a booklet I wrote for people preparing for baptism I said:

“Baptism is a dramatic way of declaring that we belong to Jesus. The only prop needed is a large quantity of water – a baptistery is often used, although in New Testament times baptisms took place in rivers and lakes. The spectators (in church terms, the congregation) are asked to imagine that this water is a watery grave. So when you go under the water, you will identify yourself with Jesus who died and was buried, as for one split second you will disappear, like Jesus, off the face of the earth (in most Baptist churches as you are baptised you will be taken backwards into the horizontal position of a coffin!). Then like Jesus, you will symbolically rise from death. In baptism then you will in effect be saying: ‘Yes, Lord, you died for me. Yes, Lord, you rose for me.’

Paul puts it this way: ‘Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life’ (Romans 6.3-4).

Baptism is more than a dramatic statement of belief. From Paul’s declaration of the newly baptised as rising to “live a new life” (Romans 6.4 GNB) it is clear that there are ethical implications too. As you go under the water you will be declaring your resolve to die to your old way of living and, as you rise from the water, you will be declaring your resolve to follow Jesus’ pattern for living. The implications for your attitude, for instance, to work, to money, to sex and to relationships are enormous. It is no exaggeration to describe baptism as a revolutionary act.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Paul Beasley-Murray, *Baptism, Belonging and Breaking Bread: Preparing for Baptism* (Baptist Union of Great Britain, Didcot 2010) 5. Baptism is, of

It is precisely because of this understanding of baptism that Baptist churches generally do not baptise young children, yet alone infants.¹¹ Baptism is much more than simply saying ‘I love Jesus’; rather it is the great moment when we nail our colours to the mast and declare that we belong to Jesus, for now and for eternity. Baptism goes way beyond the Gospel truth of John 3.16: rather it is our response to the call of Jesus to deny self, to take up our cross and to follow him (Mark 8.34). Baptism is not just for believers, it is for disciples. Baptism is not for children who have no understanding of the cost of discipleship, rather it is for those who have begun to feel the weight of the cross. Although Dietrich Bonhoeffer did not have baptism in mind, nonetheless for me his words sum up Christian baptism:

“The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man (sic) must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man (sic) which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with His death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise God-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ.

When Christ calls a man (sic), He bids him (sic) come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow Him, or it may be a death like Luther’s, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it

course, far more than this. Baptism is the place where God’s grace meets our faith – it is where the believer responds to the grace of God. In baptism God blesses us with his Spirit; through baptism we become members of Christ’s church. Baptism too is the moment when hands are laid on us and prayer is made that we may be filled afresh with God’s Spirit for witness and service.

¹¹ The great exception are some ‘Southern Baptists’ in the USA who baptise children as young as six or seven.

*is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man (sic) at his call.”*¹²

It is this understanding of baptism which underlies the fact that in this survey the average age for baptism was seventeen. Over the years I have baptised hundreds of people – only rarely did I baptise somebody under fourteen years of age. I wanted to ensure that my baptismal candidates appreciated that to be a Christian is to go against the stream (see Romans 12.2).

Of the twenty people in the survey, thirteen had been brought up in a Christian home. I would imagine that for most – if not all – of these thirteen people there had never been a time when they did not love Jesus. Nonetheless they had to wait until they were older before they were baptised. I am glad, for instance, that although I ‘opened my life to Christ’ when I was eight years old, I was not baptised until I was thirteen. At eight I was not ready for baptism, for I had yet to become clear about the demands of Christian discipleship. By the time I was thirteen, as a result of living in Switzerland for two years, I was well aware of the thousands of Anabaptists who had been burnt at the stake. Indeed, I was baptised in Zurich only a stone’s throw away from the River Limmat where Ulrich Zwingli, the great Swiss Reformer had drowned hundreds of Anabaptist women on so-called ‘ducking’ stools (the men were burnt). I had non-conformity etched on my soul!

Although in a Baptist context baptismal services can be exciting occasion, for people of my generation they could also be sobering occasions. For instance, at every baptismal service held at the church I attended as a student in Cambridge, as each candidate was baptised we sang the words of the Risen Christ to the church at Smyrna (Izmir): “Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev 2.10). Sung to a haunting

¹² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (English Translation, SCM, London 1948) 44.

tune from Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, this baptismal sentence became unforgettable for me. ¹³

It would be interesting to do a survey of the ages of people being baptised in Baptist churches today. I have a feeling that the average age for young people could be significantly lower. Could it be that even by the age of twelve children from Christian families are beginning to realise that following Jesus today is no soft option? Or could it be that many Baptists today have 'dumbed down' the significance of baptism?

1.3 Experience of Anglican worship prior to ordination

Were you baptised in the Church of England?

Yes:	3
Church of Scotland:	1
No to infant baptism:	14

As might be expected, the majority had not been baptized as infants.

As a child or a young person did you attend an Anglican church?

Yes:	5 (two of whom briefly)
No:	15

Other experiences included attending a Church of England primary school with regular worship in the parish church;

¹³ Number 305 in *The Baptist Hymn Book* (Psalms & Hymns Trust, London 1962).

attending a Church of England boarding school; and school assemblies based on a simple form of Anglican morning prayer.

Did you attend an Anglican church while at university?

Yes: 7

No: 5

Did not go to university 8

Two of those who attended an Anglican church at university also attended a Baptist church.

Were you at any stage confirmed prior to your ordination?

Yes: 2

No: 18

Other experiences

- I worshipped initially in Anglican churches after my conversion
- I attended an evangelical church as a teenager for three years
- In my early twenties I accompanied my mother to evensong at a traditional Anglo-Catholic church
- Shortly after our marriage my wife and I helped out with an Anglican youth club

- I worked with IVF (Inter Varsity Fellowship) ¹⁴ and was influenced by many Anglicans
- I only attended funerals at Anglican churches

COMMENTARY

Four of the twenty respondents had been baptised as infants. Bearing in mind that all Baptist ministers must themselves have been baptised as believers, it becomes clear that – from the perspective of Anglicans and other paedobaptists – four had been ‘re-baptised’. Understandably Christians in other denominations find the Baptist stance difficult.

In this regard let me quote from my book *Radical Believers: the Baptist way of being the church*, which for many years was the basic Baptist text on Baptist principles:

“If baptism is for believers only, then how are we to regard those who have been baptised as children? Baptists generally maintain that baptism without faith on the part of the individual being baptised - whether a child or an adult - is not baptism at all. Baptism without faith has as much validity as a bigamous marriage - in neither case have the necessary preconditions been fulfilled. There is only ‘one baptism’ - and that is baptism where ‘one Lord’ is confessed by ‘faith’ in the waters of baptism (Ephesians 4.4).

In today's ecumenical climate such an approach sounds hard-line, not to say intransigent. Some want Baptists to recognise infant baptism as an alternative rite to believers' baptism - pointing out that infant baptism is accompanied by the faith of the godparents and followed up with faith at the time of confirmation. Most Baptists, however, would still have difficulties. They are very willing to accept their paedo-baptist

¹⁴ The IVF subsequently became the UCCF (Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship).

*brothers' and sisters' standing in Christ - they cannot, however, accept their practice in this matter.”*¹⁵

As one who now worships in an Anglican church, I am sorry for the pain that such a statement no doubt causes my Anglican friends. The reality is that there is no easy way to solve the difference of opinion. My father, whose book *Baptism in the New Testament*, remains still the standard Baptist work on baptism,¹⁶ toward the end of his life sought to solve the ecumenical ‘dilemma’ in an essay entitled ‘The problem of infant baptism: an exercise in possibilities’.¹⁷ There he wrote

*“The question is whether Baptists can acknowledge infant baptism, performed within the fellowship of faith for members of households of faith, as a form of the one baptism of the Bible, with emphasis on its prospective aspect, and believers’ baptism as emphasising the experience of grace and confession of the believer’s faith, both forms of baptism looking to the completion of salvation in the final kingdom of God... For long I gave the answer ‘No’ to the question.... This was due to my conviction that Paedobaptist apologetic for infant baptism depended much on traditional interpretations, which appeared to me neither to face the realities of history (Europe’s millions of baptized pagans for example), or to relate adequately to the New Testament of theology.”*¹⁸

However, where paedo-Baptists view “infant baptism as attesting the commencement of the work of grace within the baptized with a view to its blossoming into fulness of life in

¹⁵ Paul Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers: the Baptist way of being the church* (Baptist Union of Great Britain, Didcot 2nd edition 2006) 24,25.

¹⁶ G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Macmillan, London 1962 – reprinted many times since)

¹⁷ G.R. Beasley-Murray, ‘The problem of infant baptism: an exercise in possibilities’ 1-14 in *Festschrift Günter Wagner* (Peter Lang, Bern 1994) edited by Faculty of Baptist Theological Seminary, Switzerland

¹⁸ ‘The problem of infant baptism’ 13.

Christ and his Body the Church as the individual's life progressively open to Christ", my father made the "plea" that churches which practise believers' baptism should consider acknowledging the legitimacy of infant baptism; and that this would carry with it the practical consequence of believer-baptist churches refraining from baptising on confession of faith those who have been baptized in infancy. Such a position, he said "is at least in harmony with variations in the experience of baptism among the earliest believers recorded in the New Testament (see Acts 2.37-38; 8.14-17; 10.44-48; 11.1-18; 18.24-19.6)".¹⁹

It needs to be acknowledged, however, that my father's views are far from representative of Baptists in general.

1.4 Education before training for the ministry

Did you train as an apprentice?

- No: 10
- An articled clerk in chartered accountancy
- I was an apprentice printer
- I was an apprentice in the motor industry

Did you gain a professional qualification?

- A college diploma in hairdressing
- A football referee
- Occupational therapy diploma
- Higher National Diploma
- Teaching qualification

¹⁹ 'The problem of infant baptism' 14.

Did you go to college or university?

Yes: 12 (four of whom went to Oxbridge)

No: 8

If so, what degree(s) did you gain:

A wide range of subjects were studied at undergraduate level, including:

Archaeology and Anthropology

Biology and Psychology

Geology

Geography 2

Law

Life Sciences

Modern Languages 2

Natural Sciences

The geologist went on to gain a PhD in geology

Were you in employment?

Yes: 14

Occupations included:

Insurance clerk

Motor industry

Occupational therapist

Shipping industry

Teaching

University lecturer

Works manager in a print company

COMMENTARY

Although not stated in the questionnaires, most did not have a lengthy career in secular employment. Ministers of my ‘vintage’ tended to begin their training for Baptist ministry in their early twenties. Anybody over twenty-five was regarded as old!

1.4 Ministerial training

What college did you attend?

Colleges in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain:

Spurgeon’s College, London	9
Regent’s Park College, Oxford	3
Northern Baptist College, Manchester	2
South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff	1
Others	
London Bible College ²⁰	2
Irish Baptist College	1
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	1
Trinity College, Bristol	1

²⁰ Now the London School of Theology

As part of initial ministerial formation, one did a year at the Scottish Baptist College, and another a year at the former International Baptist Theological Seminary in Rüsclikon-Zurich, Switzerland.

What academic qualification(s) did you gain?

Certificate in Biblical Knowledge/Theology	2
Diploma in Religious Studies/Theology	7
First degree in theology (undergraduate level)	11

Subsequently five went on to gain PhDs in theology.

COMMENTARY

I was surprised that as many as a quarter of respondents in this survey were not trained at a Baptist College in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain; and that nobody in the survey attended Bristol Baptist College (although one of the respondents was a tutor at Bristol). However, we are here dealing with a relatively small sample. Of the twelve other retired ministers who worship in an Anglican church, the figures are as follows: Bristol 1; Northern 2; Regent's Park 2; Scottish 1; and Spurgeon's 5. The reason for the high proportion of Spurgeon's graduates is that Spurgeon's has always been much larger than any other Baptist college.

Of greater interest is that a quarter of the respondents in this survey went on to gain PhDs - with a further respondent having gained a PhD in another discipline prior to training for ministry. Of the twelve retired Baptist ministers worshipping in Anglican churches who did not complete a questionnaire, a further four had PhDs in theology, with another having a DMin. Putting the two together, around a third of retired Baptist ministers known to me had doctorates of one kind or another. In a letter written to members of the College of Baptist Ministers I

reflected on whether there was any significance in these findings:

“As most of you will know, I too have a PhD. Perhaps as a result I tend to be fairly laidback on being able to call myself a ‘doctor’ – for me it was simply an exercise in learning how to think critically. What’s more, I am conscious that a PhD in this country is simply a ‘junior’ doctorate – I have not attained the dizzy heights of being a Doctor of Divinity.

I am also very mindful of the dangers of today’s ‘false worship’ of the PhD. In the ‘old’ days there were many great theologians who never bothered with a PhD. At Cambridge the professor I most respected, C.F.D. (‘Charlie’) Moule, the then Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, had only an MA in Classics. The same was true of my PhD supervisor at Manchester: F.F. (‘Fyvie’) Bruce, the John Ryland’s Professor in Theology, also only had an MA in Classics (albeit with a host of honorary DDs).

But with all these ‘caveats’, is it significant that some of our ‘brightest and best’ can no longer cope with being in a Baptist church? Is it true, as a minister wrote to me, “the beloved Baptists have largely dispensed with sermons and theological teaching and have opted for a trivial, repetitious and irrelevant service style”? I have little doubt that such comments would not be applicable to members of the College of Baptist Ministers, but I do wonder whether in many Baptist churches there has been considerable ‘dumbing down’ in terms of both worship and preaching.”²¹

²¹ ‘Have we “dumbed down” our worship and preaching?’, *College of Baptist Ministers newsletter*, March 2019.

2. ABOUT YOUR PAST MINISTRY

Ordination

Respondents were asked to give the date of their ordination into Christian ministry, but in so far as they also provided the number of years they served in stipendiary ministry, this question proved redundant.

COMMENTARY

If there is one issue which above all divides the Christian church today, it is ordination. This is to be seen, for instance in the World Council of Churches' classic document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, where there is a large measure of agreement on baptism, much less agreement on the eucharist, and even less agreement when it comes to ministry.²²

Surprisingly, it is neither the person of Christ nor the nature of the Trinity nor even the authority of the Scriptures which has proved the stumbling block to church unity. Indeed, in spite of much theological diversity, the World Council of Churches has defined itself as 'a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and therefore seeks to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. Church unity instead founders above all on the differing understandings of ministry, differences which find their focus in ordination.

In spite of all these differences, Baptists affirm that when they ordain their ministers, they ordain them to the Christian ministry – not just to Baptist ministry. So in large bold type on

²² *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (World Council of Churches, Geneva 1982).

the front cover of the order of service which was produced for my ordination on Saturday 10 October 1970 were the words: 'The Ordination to the Christian Ministry of Paul Beasley-Murray, MA PhD'.

Ordination for Baptists marks the culmination of a lengthy period of testing and training, and is the occasion when churches together publicly recognise the call of God to individuals to exercise leadership among them. Through the laying on of hands and prayer, the churches ask that God will fill afresh with his Spirit those who embark upon this new stage of their Christian service (see Acts 6.1-11; 13.1-3; 1 Timothy 4.14). Although in a British Baptist context such a service of ordination normally takes place in a local church, Baptists have never regarded ordination as just an act of the local church. Precisely because ordination involves national recognition, representatives of the wider church are usually present. Significantly, those who share in the act of ordination always include at least one 'lay' person to underline the fact that this is not a priestly rite, but rather an act of the church as a whole.²³

In my own case my ordination took place in my local church: South Norwood Baptist Church, Holmesdale Road, in South London. The members of that church had commended me to the London Baptist Association which in turn had commended me to the Northern Baptist College, Manchester, for training for the ministry. Six people took part in the act of ordination: the minister of the local church; the church secretary (the 'senior deacon') of the local church; the minister who had been my 'personal trainer' while I had been at the Northern Baptist College; my father who had preached the sermon; and instead of a representative of the local Baptist association, 'the Associate

²³ See *The Meaning and Practice of Ordination among Baptists: a report submitted to the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland* (Carey Kingsgate Press, London 1957). Also Paul Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers*, 'Serving One Another: a Baptist concept of ministry' 111-124.

Overseas Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, with special responsibility for Africa, the West Indies and Brazil' – for I was ordained not as a pastor, but as a missionary. Indeed, the service ended with the 'valediction' of my wife and myself, for within three days we were setting sail for the Congo.

How many years did you serve in stipendiary ministry?

Under 10 years	2
11-15 years	1
16-20 years	0
21-25 years	1
26-30 years	1
31-35 years	6
36-40 years	6
40+ years	3

In other words, four served under 30 years; and sixteen served over 30 years of ministry.

Experience of ministry

- With one exception all had served as ministers of local churches.
- One had been an association minister
- One had become a Christian journalist
- Two had occupied significant ecumenical posts
- Four had been overseas missionaries (Albania, Congo, and Hong Kong)
- Five had served as college tutors and principals

- Six had been part-time chaplains in industry, in hospitals, and with the police

What, if any, ecumenical experience did you have?

With one exception all the respondents had been engaged in a wide range of ecumenical experience, including:

- ecumenical ministers' groups
- secretary of a Churches Together group
- chairman of a Churches Together group
- local ecumenical projects
- developing a local ecumenical covenant
- engaging in mission with other churches
- teaching Anglican ordinands
- secretary for the Joint Liturgical Group
- general secretary of the Conference of European Churches
- staff member of Churches Together in England
- padre of submariners group
- member of the Churches' Funeral Group
- working with Catholic, Lutheran and Orthodox churches
- Baptist representative at a Lambeth Conference

COMMENTARY

Although the Baptist Union of Great Britain was a founder member of both the World Council of Churches and of the British Council of Churches, when I was training for ministry

there was a good deal of unease about the ecumenical movement among many Baptist churches. At the 1969 Baptist Union Assembly there was a major debate on 'Baptists and Unity' at the end of which seventy-five percent voted to affirm the Baptist Union's membership of the World Council of Churches and the British Council of Churches. The unease about ecumenical relationships surfaced again at the 1989 Baptist Union Assembly when seventy-four per cent of the delegates voted for participation in two new ecumenical bodies, Churches Together in England and the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland. However, by the time of the 1989 Assembly a much higher percentage voted in favour of continued Baptist involvement in the 'ecumenical instruments': 90.21% for Churches Together in England and 81.2% for the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland. Although today almost all Baptist churches are involved in 'Churches Together', nonetheless in this context I find the ecumenical involvement of my respondents very encouraging.

As far as my own ecumenical experience is concerned

- My first school was St Paul's, a church school in Cambridge. My secondary school was Trinity School of John Whitgift, founded by an Archbishop in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I who was appointed to establish religious conformity in the land and in consequence pursued non-conformists with a vengeance.
- My father for many years was involved in Faith and Order discussions and from an early age introduced me to a much wider world Christian world: Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Rudolf Bultmann, Joachim Jeremias, Adolf Schlatter, Eduard Schweizer, and Tom Torrance, were all household names.
- As an undergraduate at Cambridge I worshipped on Sunday mornings in Baptist churches, but like most Baptist students on Sunday evenings we vacillated between Great St Mary's, where Hugh Montefiore was

the vicar, and Holy Trinity, then the home of the CICCUC (Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union) 'sermon'. The Evangelical Anglican Michael Green, later Principal of St John's College, Nottingham, was the preacher at the CICCUC mission in 1964 and introduced me to Christian apologetics. Key figures at Cambridge were my Director of Studies, Peter Baelz, then Dean of Jesus College and later Dean of Durham; 'Charlie' (C.F.D.) Moule, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, an inspirational lecturer and a devout Anglican; John Sweet, Dean of Selwyn College, supervised me in New Testament for Part III of the Tripos; and Alec Vidler, Dean of King's College, taught me church history.

- As a missionary with the Baptist Missionary Society for two years in Congo/Zaire I taught New Testament and Greek in the country's only Protestant Theological Faculty. While in Africa Desmond Tutu, the future Archbishop of Cape Town, came and had lunch in our home.
- As a young minister my preaching style was heavily influenced by two one-day courses on preaching run by Dick Lucas, the legendary vicar of St Helen's Bishopsgate in the City of London.
- My first experience of an Anglican Eucharist was at a Bible Reading Fellowship conference at which I was a guest speaker. The minister presiding at communion as he offered me the bread and wine declared 'The body of Christ was broken for you, Paul', 'The blood of Christ was shed for you, Paul'. This personalizing of communion was like an electric shock for me!
- As Principal of Spurgeon's College, although I was a member of a local Baptist church, I found my main spiritual sustenance from All Souls, Langham Place, where the Rector Richard Bewes was the successor of

John Stott. With tongue in cheek I often said that All Souls was the best Baptist church in London.

- Over the years the Church of England supplied me with spiritual directors: Margaret Magdalen, Margaret Bowker, and the Society of Martha and Mary led by Carl Lee and Sarah Horsman.
- Good friends on the board of Ministry Today UK were Andrew Knowles, Canon-theologian at Chelmsford Cathedral; Julian Reindorp, Vicar of Richmond, Surrey; Christopher Skilton, Archdeacon first of Lambeth and then of Croydon; and Alun Brookfield, a Church of Wales Vicar in rural South Wales.
- For one week I had the privilege of being the Baptist representative of the Baptist World Alliance at the 2008 Lambeth Conference.
- We often joke that our ‘family priest’ has for many years been Nick Mercer, who at one stage was Vicar General to the Bishops of London. He has been a good friend to us all and conducted the weddings of our daughter and of our youngest son.

2.3 Your worship style as a Baptist minister

Did you often/sometimes use the lectionary in your preaching?

Yes: 7

No 13

Did you normally follow the church year, marking not only Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, but also Advent and Lent?

Yes 14

No 6

Did you ensure that every service contained at least two if not three Scripture readings?

Yes 16

No 4

Did you normally write out your public prayers?

Yes: 10

No 10

Did you often use 'set' prayers?

Yes 7

Occasionally 3

No 10

Did you always preside at the Lord's Supper?

Yes: 19

No 1

COMMENTARY

The responses to these questions relating to the respondents' worship style as a minister are of interest. Although I have no research data to confirm this, my experience of Baptist churches – bearing in mind that for six years as a college principal I was visiting a different church almost every Sunday – is that these responses are not typical of most British Baptist ministers; or at least not of the large number on the more theologically conservative wing of the denomination. This may say something about the kind of retired Baptist minister who is happy to worship in an Anglican church.

Most Baptist ministers tend to preach 'series' of sermons rather than use the lectionary (which, of course, belongs to the whole church and is not peculiarly Anglican). This would certainly be true of Spurgeon's trained ministers.

Many Baptist churches do not make much of the Christian year. It is true that Advent has become increasingly popular. However, I well remember being present at an Easter Sunday morning service in a large Baptist church where for the first twenty minutes there was no recognition that it was Easter Day, and the sermon focussed on the Cross rather than the Resurrection. As for Pentecost Sunday, in spite of the major influence of charismatic renewal in British Baptist churches, in my experience it is a non-event in most Baptist churches.

As a rule of thumb, I would say that the more evangelical a church is, the less Scripture is read! As I wrote many years ago:

“Where the constraints of a liturgical framework have been set aside, experience often shows that Scripture is downgraded. True, such churches would vigorously dispute that Scripture has been downgraded, for in theory they have the highest regard for Scripture. Their practice, however, denies all their fine-sounding words regarding the inspiration and authority of Scripture: for by and large in many non-liturgical evangelical churches there is only one Scripture reading, and normally short at that...”

*Strangely words in themselves abound – whether ‘prophetic’ words from the congregation or ‘preached’ words from the pulpit. But the word of God as found in Scripture is scarcely allowed to speak.”*²⁴

If anything, the situation has worsened in recent years, rather than improved.

In Baptist churches communion does not have to be led by an ordained minister: if there is no minister then a ‘deacon’ (a lay leader) or another recognised leader of the church is able to preside at the Lord’s Table. However, traditionally where a minister is present, then the minister will normally lead (although to my surprise I am now hearing of Baptist churches where the minister is delegating this role of president to one of the deacons).

In the past Baptist churches used to vary as to whether there was one prayer of thanksgiving for the bread and wine, or two – one for the bread and the other for the wine. Increasingly Baptist churches are patterning themselves on the observance of the more liturgical churches and tend to have only one prayer of thanksgiving. However, where most Baptist churches differ from Anglican churches and indeed other denominations too, is that normally this prayer is not taken by the minister but by one of deacons. This custom derives from their desire to emphasise that Christians need no priest to consecrate the elements. Historically, therefore, this has been a protest prayer!

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²⁴ Paul Beasley-Murray, *Faith and Festivity: A Guide for Today’s Worship Leaders* (MARC/Monarch, Eastbourne 1991) 47-48.

²⁵ See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers*, ‘Breaking Bread and Drinking Wine: Baptists celebrate the Lord’s Supper’ 29-43.

2.4 Retirement

How long have you been retired from stipendiary ministry?

Less than five years	6
5-10 years	7
11-15 years	4
16-20 years	3

COMMENTARY

I deliberately used the expression ‘stipendiary ministry’, conscious that most retired ministers believe that ‘ordination is for life, so God has still a call on my life’.²⁶ Precisely how we live out our calling will differ from person to person and will vary according to our health and strength. However, what retired ministers have in common is that they are free to serve God in new ways – without the expectations and pressures of church people.²⁷

²⁶ See *Retirement Matters for Ministers*, 81 which reports that 81% agreed with that statement.

²⁷ See the section on ‘Live out your call’ in Paul Beasley-Murray, *Make the Most of Ordination* (Bible Reading Fellowship, Abingdon 2020).

3. DECIDING TO WORSHIP IN AN ANGLICAN CHURCH

3.1 Churches

How near is the Anglican church in which you worship?

How near is your nearest Baptist church?

<i>Distance</i>	<i>Anglican</i>	<i>Baptist</i>
Under a mile	8	9
1-2 miles	9	4
3-5 miles	1	4
6 or more	2	3

On average how many attend the morning service?

<i>Attendance</i>	<i>Anglican</i>	<i>Baptist</i>
Up to 50 (small or 'family' church)	9	5
50-120 ('congregational' or 'pastoral')	3	10
120-300 ('celebration' or 'programme')	7	3
300+ (large or 'corporate')	1	2

COMMENTARY

Most ministers in the survey travelled over a mile, with three travelling more than three miles. Although for some nearness of the church was a factor in choosing to worship in an Anglican church, it was not the deciding factor for most. Furthermore, although some ended up in worshipping in the nearest Anglican

church, this was not the case for all: for some churchmanship was an issue; while for others size of church was an issue.

Different sized churches call for different styles of leadership. The terms depicting different-sized churches have their origins in American church growth thinking, but have been adapted for a British context. ²⁸

3.2 What is the churchmanship of the Anglican church in which you worship?

Evangelical (Low Church)	10
Middle-of-the-road	5
High	4
A mixture	1

COMMENTARY

I do not like 'labels', for they can be misleading. In my own case, for instance, I have always been an 'Evangelical': as a young minister I was on the Council of the Evangelical Alliance, and over the years have been involved in many Evangelical bodies. Nonetheless, I dislike the implication that 'Evangelicals' alone are 'Gospel-centred' people: that is patently not the case. Indeed, there have been occasions when I have experienced more of the love of God outside, rather than inside, the Evangelical fold!

Although I was a co-founder of 'Mainstream – Baptists for life and growth' and later became Principal of Spurgeon's College, which has a world-wide reputation for its passionate evangelical faith, I have developed a particular aversion to distinguishing

²⁸ See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Living out the Call: 2. Leading God's People* (Feed-a-Read, revised 2016) 48-53.

between Baptist ‘evangelicals’ and ‘non-evangelicals’. I do not deny that there have been Baptist ministers who have been true theological liberals, but the rite of believers’ baptism with its explicit call to repentance and faith ensures that the vast majority of men and women in Baptist ministry are ‘evangelically-minded’. What’s more, thanks to the influence of John Stott in particular, Evangelicals in the UK have not experienced the ‘Battle for the Bible’ which has been so unhelpfully divisive in the USA.

3.3 When did you first decide to worship in an Anglican church?

Before retirement:	5
After retirement	15

3.4 How soon after retirement did you begin to worship in an Anglican church?

Before	1
More or less immediately	7
Less than a year	5
2 years or more	7

COMMENTARY

Almost without exception the retired Baptist ministers in this survey are what some might call ‘accidental Anglicans’ – although that term is misleading for, as we shall see, most retain their Baptist principles and do not regard themselves as ‘Anglicans’ at all. What is true for most ministers in this survey is that they have found themselves worshipping in an Anglican church ‘by accident’. In this regard, I came across *The*

Accidental Anglican: The Surprising Appeal of the Liturgical Church, by Todd Hunter, now an American Episcopalian bishop, who for many years worked in the ‘Calvary Chapel – Vineyard’ network of independent churches. He writes:

“In my case accidental means blessed, luck, fortunate – kind of like a Little Leaguer who accidentally hits a pitch with his eyes closed. Accidental in this context is just a playful way of saying, “I didn’t see it coming”.²⁹

3.5 How did your spouse feel about the move?

Positive	13
Initially cautious	2
Not made the transition	3 (2 worship at a Baptist church; 1 with Quakers)
Not applicable	2 (1 divorced; 1 single)

3.6 The decision

On a scale of 1 – 5: To what extent did you struggle to make the decision?

Really tough	3
Tough	1
Neither tough nor easy	3
Easy	8
Very easy	5

²⁹ Todd D. Hunter, *The Accidental Anglican: The Surprising Appeal of the Liturgical Church* (IVP, Nottingham 2011) 15.

On a scale of 1 – 5, to what extent are you happy you made the decision?

Very happy	10
Happy	5
Neither happy nor sad	4
Sad	0
Very sad	1

COMMENTARY

I am not sure whether the respondent who answered “very sad” meant he was unhappy in having to make the decision, for otherwise the questionnaire indicates he is clearly very settled!

The sense of contentment contrasts with my more general survey on how Baptist ministers experience retirement, where just over half of the respondents were very happy (34%) or just happy (19%) in their present church. Over one tenth (11%) felt just ‘OK’; while a further fifth felt either “on the edge” (13%) or “very much on the edge” (6%) of their present church. ³⁰

3.7 Frequency of attendance

Do you normally worship every Sunday in an Anglican church?

Apart from preaching away, with one exception everybody normally worships every Sunday in an Anglican church

³⁰ *Retirement Matters for Ministers*, 77.

3.8 Why do you worship in an Anglican church?

Negatively, in order of the most responses given – and note that more than one response was received from most respondents:

1. I am unhappy with the Baptist Union's current 'direction of travel' 9
2. Baptist churches are no longer what I understood Baptist to mean 8
3. The worship at the local Baptist church has little order 8
4. The preaching at the local Baptist church lacks depth 7
5. I used to be the minister of the local Baptist church 6
6. There is no Baptist church nearby 6
7. The local Baptist church is too charismatic 5
8. The local Baptist church is unfriendly 3
9. The local Baptist church has no minister 1

More positively, in order of responses:

The breadth and depth of the Anglican church's worship
10

I appreciate the vicar/rector
10

The parish church serves the whole community
10

The variety of worship now possible in the Anglican church
6

The greater evangelistic potential of the Anglican church
5

Additional reasons given:

The welcome – marked by kindness and acceptance
5

The nearest church 3

The music & architecture 2

COMMENTARY

How did I start to worship in an Anglican church? In so far as I wrote a key text on Baptist identity, *Radical Believers: the Baptist way of being the church*, it may well seem a little strange. For there I wrote:

“In ideal terms the Baptist way of being the church is God's way for his people to live their life together. I say ‘in ideal terms’, because I fully recognise that Baptists never reach the ideal - through our own foolishness and sinfulness Baptists like their fellow Christians fail one another and fail their Lord. Nonetheless, this does not stop Baptists claiming that their study of God's Word has led them to believe that there is a pattern for their corporate life in Christ, and that the Baptist way of being the church is modelled on that pattern.....

The Baptist way of being the church is not just one of several options open to us. Our study of God's Word leads us to believe that this is God's way for living our life together. It is in this sense that Baptists are true radical believers. For Baptists believe in getting back to the roots of the Christian faith (note that the English word ‘radical’ is derived from the Latin word

‘radix’, which means ‘root’) - which in turn means that they seek to root their life together in the Word of God.”³¹

In particular, how did I, a former Principal of Spurgeon’s College, a bastion of evangelical orthodoxy, end up worshipping in an Anglican Cathedral where the clergy are all in a liberal catholic tradition?

What went wrong? Did I undergo some kind of spiritual crisis at the end of my working life?

It is a long and complex story which I have summarised in my autobiography, *This is My Story*.³² Suffice it to say, when at the age of seventy I retired from stipendiary ministry, we continued to live in Chelmsford where for twenty-one-years years I had been the senior pastor of Central Baptist Church. After a break of eight months I realized that I could not return to my old church, and after a good deal of heart-searching we eventually decided to make the Cathedral our spiritual home. There we were made extraordinarily welcome. It was the welcome which convinced me that Chelmsford Cathedral was to be our new spiritual home. In that regard I need to pay tribute to Nicholas Henshall, the Dean of Chelmsford, and his clergy colleagues. I need also to thank the Bishop of Chelmsford, Stephen Cottrell, who was part of that welcome. For the sake of some of my fellow Evangelicals, it needs to be said that I have discovered that you do not need to be an Evangelical to be Gospel-centered and rooted in Scripture!

In the words of David Adam’s poem, for me Chelmsford Cathedral has provided ‘a new vista’. I have come to appreciate the breadth of the liturgy – and I delight on a Sunday morning to sing the *Gloria* and the *Agnus Dei*! Yes, like other Baptist

³¹ *Radical Believers: the Baptist way of being the church* (Didcot 1996; 2nd edition 2005) vi.

³² Paul Beasley-Murray, *This is My Story: A Story of Life, Faith and Ministry* (Wipf & Stock, Eugene, Oregon 2018).

ministers worshipping in an Anglican church, I have theological issues, but ultimately what counts is our common faith in the crucified and risen Christ. Even baptism belongs to what the Reformers called the *adiaphora*, matters ‘indifferent’ - and that takes some saying for a ‘radical believer’! In the words of a famous epigram attributed to a certain Rupert Muldenius and quoted by Richard Baxter, the great ‘reformed’ pastor of Kidderminster:

*“In essentials unity,
In non-essentials liberty
In all things charity”.* ³³

³³ Interestingly John Stott, *Evangelical Truth: a personal plea for unity, integrity and faithfulness* (IVP, Nottingham, first edition 1999; second edition 2003; new reissue 2015) 138-139 listed the following twelve issues as belonging to the *adiaphora* which he framed as questions:

1. Baptism: should we baptize only adult believers or their infants as well? And by immersion or affusion?
2. The Lord’s Supper: how should we define our sharing in the body and blood of Christ?
3. Church government: should it be episcopal, Presbyterian or congregationalist?
4. Worship: is there a place for liturgy, or should all public prayer be extempore? Can we combine the formal and informal?
5. *Charismata*: are any not available today? And of those which are, which are the most important?
6. Women: are all ministries open to them or does Scripture preclude certain functions?
7. Ecumenism: what degree of involvement with non-evangelical churches is appropriate?
8. Old Testament prophecy: how are we to understand its fulfilment?
9. Sanctification: what degree of holiness is possible for the people of God on earth?
10. The State: what should be the relations between church and state?
11. Mission: are mission and evangelism synonymous? What is the place of the quest for social justice?
12. Eschatology: how do we understand the tribulation, the millennium, the Parousia, and our final destinies?

Please feel free to elaborate on why you have not stayed in a Baptist church

Baptist churches are no longer what I understood Baptists to be:

- I consider myself a Baptist refugee: I do not hide my deep dissatisfaction with charismatic theology and practice; and if Baptist churches are increasingly neo-presbyterian in order, I see no point in not being as happy as possible in a kind, accepting Anglican congregation

Baptist worship:

- I find Baptist worship – often led by untrained folk – to lack depth, reverence, musicality, substance, shape and awareness of what ‘worship’ is about..... too much ego, and too little sense of awe
- I feel distinctly uncomfortable in many Baptist churches. The form of worship is more like a performance or entertainment – not what I consider worship to be
- There is a lack of intercessions and Scripture reading. A pick and mix worship style without a theme. Repetitious preaching for 40+ minutes
- The music, architecture, sense of worship is stronger in my Anglican church, even if the preaching is at best variable

The welcome:

- I felt attracted to the Church of England after years of struggling with poorly thought through attitudes in Baptist churches to the whole ‘women in ministry’ issue – sorted out by Anglicans and largely resolved.
- Our local parish church is a welcoming congregation that has a strong missional emphasis within the village. The rector and vicar (who look after eight churches) are pleased to encourage my participation in preaching and leading worship within the benefice

- After a bruising experience in ministry I had no desire to open old wounds. The Anglican church provided a place of welcome, acceptance, and healing
- What sealed our decision was the welcome we received

A sense of call:

- This Anglican church is the only church nearby which is word-centred and balanced in theology and churchmanship. There is minimal liturgy and, with eyes shut, it could be a Baptist Church. There is no disaffection with the Baptists – just a clear sense of call to the Church of England while I live here

COMMENTARY

The comment *‘Baptist churches are no longer what I understood Baptist churches to be’* calls for further elaboration. For instance, worship styles in Baptist churches have radically changed – and not always for the better. In many churches worship has lost its sense of direction caused not least by the abdication of many ministers of their traditional role of leading worship and instead handing it over to enthusiastic bands of guitar-strumming musicians who often have no understanding of the art and science of worship. I am not against change and am grateful for the way in which charismatic renewal brought new life to Baptist worship. However, the ‘new wine’ of the Spirit needed ‘new wineskins’. Alas, unlike Anglican churches, Baptist churches mostly failed to create new patterns of worship with any theological depth and breadth. Much contemporary Baptist worship has effectively become ‘entertainment’ and ‘consumer-oriented’. Prayers of confession, prayers of intercession, and even the Lord’s Prayer have largely disappeared. The Lord’s Supper has often been ‘dumbed down’ to the point that the eating of bread and drinking of wine have lost their meaning: in some churches it has become more akin to

a ‘MacEucharist’; while I have even worshipped in a Baptist church where to accommodate the worship band the Lord’s Table was done away with and the bread and wine put on the floor! Leadership styles in Baptist churches have radically changed – and in the process some ministers have disempowered the church meeting to which they and their fellow leaders should be accountable. In some places the church meeting has become a place where just information is given rather than the mind of Christ discerned. Again, I accept the need for change – church meetings in many places had become an exercise in ‘democracy’ rather than “the occasion when, as individuals and as a community, we submit ourselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and stand under the judgments of God that we may know the mind of Christ”.³⁴ However, in some churches the leaders now operate as though they have a monopoly on the Spirit’s leading and make decisions on major issues without reference to the church meeting.

Similarly, the comment ‘*I am unhappy with the Baptist Union’s current direction of travel*’ calls for further elaboration. The Baptist Union of Great Britain has undergone radical change – and to older ministers is a pale shadow of what it used to be. To many it appears to have lost its Baptist distinctives and become just another small and somewhat monochrome evangelical tribe. The ‘deliberative’ nature of the old Baptist Union Annual Assembly has been replaced by a much shorter ‘inspirational’ Baptist Assembly. The old much respected and much loved ‘area superintendents’ have been replaced by almost three times as many regional ministers and regional officers, who seem to spend much of their time in administration and committee work rather in the traditional care of ministers and churches. It is significant that many of the newer regional ministers have

³⁴ The definition of the church meeting as found in *The Baptist Doctrine of the Church: A statement approved by the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland*, March 1948 (Carey Kingsgate Press, London 1948) 3.

limited pastoral experience of church life, and often what experience they have is limited to small churches. Furthermore, after what can only be described as a massive power struggle, resources have shifted from the ‘centre’ to the regions – with the result that much of Baptist House is now let out to other organisations. Money often seems to dominate key decisions: it was for financial reasons that the Baptist Union sold its old Baptist Church House in Central London and moved to Didcot, Oxfordshire, and in doing so marginalised itself from the mainstream of other church bodies. It was for financial reasons too that many of the things that bound us together have disappeared: we no longer have a Baptist hymnbook in print, we no longer have a Baptist Union *Directory*, and we no longer have the old paper *Baptist Times*. Sadly too, the final salary pension scheme for ministers was replaced by a much less generous defined benefit scheme. Baptists have also seen major decline in numbers, with the result that now over half the churches in membership with the Baptist Union of Great Britain have less than forty members. Indeed, without the ethnic presence in London and elsewhere Baptists would be a dying – and not just a declining – denomination.

3.9 Morning prayer v. Parish Eucharist

What is the balance of (morning) Eucharistic services:

Almost exclusively Eucharistic	10
50/50	6
Twice a month	1
Once a month	3

COMMENTARY

Paul's teaching on the Lord's Supper was given in a context where he was speaking of what took place when the Corinthians "come together as a church" (1 Corinthians 11.18). Likewise at Troas the Lord's Supper was celebrated once a week: "on the first day of the week we come together to break bread" (Acts 20.7). However, in spite of their claim to root their life together in the Scriptures, the Lord's Supper is not a central act in Baptist churches. When I was ordained fifty years ago Baptist churches normally 'observed the ordinance of the Lord's Supper' twice a month, once on a Sunday morning, and once on a Sunday evening. With the demise of the evening service in most churches, the Lord's Supper tends now to be celebrated just monthly.

Christopher Ellis has suggested that Baptist resistance to more frequent celebrations of the Lord's Supper "may partly be because the quietism of the service is at odds with the upbeat mood of much Sunday worship. Like many evangelicals, they are determinedly activist and the reflective and unvaried nature of the Supper may only be sustainable on a monthly basis." ³⁵

3.10 Lay participation

Do lay leaders share in the leadership of the services?

Yes:	10
Yes: lay readers	2
Yes, when there is no Anglican clergy present	1
Rarely	1

³⁵ Christopher Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Traditions* (SCM, London 2004) 29.

No:	2
No – the vicar is insecure	1

Do lay leaders read the main Scripture ‘lessons’?

Yes	17
Yes: usually	1

Do lay leaders lead the intercessory prayers?

Yes:	16
Mostly	1
Occasionally – it is usually those who have undergone some form of training	1

COMMENTARY

The extent to which the Church of England seeks to encourage lay participation in worship may surprise some Baptists. For instance, in *Common Worship’s* Order for the Celebration of Holy Communion the tasks of the ‘presiding’ minister are only fourfold:

1. To greet the people (traditionally by declaring ‘The Lord be with you’)
2. To assure the people of God’s forgiveness (the declaration of absolution)
3. To give thanks for bread and wine (the great Eucharistic prayer of thanksgiving)
4. To dismiss the people with a blessing (although even this is optional)

I have no statistics for ‘lay’ participation in Baptist churches. In many if not most Baptist churches worship is no longer led by the minister; in many Baptist churches ministers tend to take their own Scripture reading, and in many instances it is just one reading. In some Baptist churches intercessory prayers are no longer a regular feature of worship.

3.10 Your involvement in the Anglican church (please note if past or present)

I preach (at least every other month)	9
I help with pastoral care	8
I assist with communion	7
I lead a home group	6
I help to lead worship	4
I lead prayers of intercession	2
I often read a lesson	2
I am part of the leadership team supporting the vicar	3
Member of the PCC: several are or have been	3

Other individual ministries

- I lead quiet days/retreats for my church and other churches
- I live my missionary vocation among hard-wired atheists and other non- churched groups antagonistic to Christianity – “I am a presence of grace”.
- I lead a theological reading group with nine of the fifteen members from the parish church
- I mentor the staff on preaching and have done some staff training

- I helped with the counting of money
- I lead the evangelism team
- I lead a walking group of some thirty people: most single, lonely, some living with dementia. A second group is evolving out of this for those who cannot walk: we have a church centre with a café.
- I am involved in Bible teaching

COMMENTARY

For Baptist readers it is helpful to note that according to the Church of England's Canon B43 *Of relations with other churches*, "A minister or lay person who is a member of a Church to which this Canon applies and is a baptized person may, subject to the provisions of this Canon, be invited to perform all or any of the following duties -

(a) to say or sing Morning or Evening Prayer or the Litany;

(b) to read the Holy Scriptures at any service;

(c) to preach at any service;

(d) to lead the Intercessions at the Holy Communion and to lead prayers at other services;

(e) to assist at Baptism or the Solemnization of Matrimony or conduct a Funeral Service;

(f) to assist in the distribution of the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the people at the Holy Communion."

3.11 Official permission

Has the bishop given you specific permission to serve in the church where you worship?

Yes: 8

No: 11

Comments included

- He gave permission to preach
- He gave permission to serve at communion
- He denied permission for me to preside at Communion, although that was the wish of the vicar
- He gave 'permission to officiate' with limitation on administering the sacraments (Eucharist and Marriage), but allowed me to lead a 'Baptist style' communion on Maundy Thursday in the Church Hall
- I was approached by our bishop, who informed me that the congregation had asked him whether he would approve of me leading services. He told me that I could not refuse this request as it came from the congregation - as a Baptist I could not refuse. His first curacy had been in an Anglican/Baptist Local Ecumenical Project. Thus, at the request of the congregation and with the permission of the bishop, I operate under the ecumenical canon.
- He offered me the opportunity to transfer my ordination over to the Church of England. I was going to do this, but I would have lost my house that is owned by the Retired Baptist Ministers Housing Association

What ‘constraints’, either implicit or explicit, were laid on you?

- Not to add anything to the (simplified) liturgy
- That I and the congregation understand that when I preside at the Eucharist it becomes a Baptist rite in an Anglican church

COMMENTARY

It did not occur to me to meet the Bishop of Chelmsford with a view to gaining his blessing on my involvement in the Cathedral. On reflection, perhaps I should have done so out of courtesy, although in a Cathedral the Dean has ultimate authority, and not the bishop.

Although I have experienced no ‘constraints’, I feel it would be discourteous to abuse the church’s ‘hospitality’ by criticising practices with which I am not happy. I prefer to highlight the things which I appreciate.

4. **WHAT DO YOU APPRECIATE ABOUT ANGLICAN WORSHIP?**

The various facets of Anglican worship are listed in order of the number of positive comments received (the precise number is listed with each heading):

The liturgical framework:

15

Positive comments included

- Very much so
- I love the flow of the service
- I appreciate this more and more
- I have felt enriched by Anglican worship. I love the fact that even if the sermon misses the mark (rare!) the liturgy is always there

Other comments included

- This is often not apparent [a low Evangelical church]
- Not a great deal

COMMENTARY

First a note about the term ‘liturgical’. The root etymological meaning of our English word ‘liturgy’ is ‘the public worship of God’. Liturgy has nothing to do with a particular form of words – it simply denotes the worship which we offer to God. “Into the liturgy the people bring their entire existence so that it may be gathered up in praise. From the liturgy the people depart with a renewed vision of the value-patterns of God’s kingdom, by the more effective practice of which they intend to glorify God in

their whole life.”³⁶ Today the term ‘liturgical’ has come to be equated with formal worship, such as is to be found among Anglicans and Roman Catholics, where the worship is ordered by a prayer book, although since the introduction of *Common Worship* in 2000 Anglican worship has become much more flexible and diverse within the ‘common’ Anglican framework of worship.³⁷ By contrast in the ‘non-liturgical’ churches the worship is ‘free’, with no set orders to follow or set prayers to say. The truth, however, is that even the most free and independent of churches tend to follow the same ‘order’ or ‘framework’.

Over the years there have been massive changes to the way in which Baptist churches order their worship. There was a time when preaching was exalted above everything else, and worship belonged to the ‘preliminaries’, while the celebration of the Lord’s Supper was an addendum to the main service. For British Baptists things changed radically with the liturgical renewal of the 1950s: worship became more important, and the Lord’s Supper became an integral part of the service. At that stage ministers still did almost everything in the service: church members might be invited to read the Scriptures or lead the prayers of intercession, but the service itself was structured and led by the minister. Then in the mid-1960s came charismatic renewal and the new structures of worship were blown apart: informality and openness became the norm, and (as we have already noted) in the process of celebrating the faith some key aspects of public worship – like confessing our sin, praying for

³⁶ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: A Systematic Theology* (Epworth, London 1980) 8.

³⁷ A sign of this change is that instead of Anglican worship centring around a single book, the *Book of Common Prayer*, *Common Worship* is made up of twelve volumes, including material both ‘authorized’ and ‘commended’.

others, and hearing God's word – no longer have the importance they once did. ³⁸

Baptists need to realise worship involves more than celebrating the faith. In this regard the Church of England liturgy for morning and evening prayer has the right approach to worship, for the minister normally begins the service by saying:

*“We have come together in the name of Christ
to offer our praise and thanksgiving,
to hear and receive God's holy word,
to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins,
that by the power of the Holy Spirit,
we may give ourselves to the service of God”.* ³⁹

The centrality of the Eucharist

13

Positive comments included

- It is the goal of the liturgy rather than the centre!
- There is far less focus on the 'who' of leading worship, and more on Who we are worshipping
- Theologically right and helpful

Other comments from respondents attending low Evangelical churches included

- It is not central
- Preaching seems more important
- No more central than a Baptist church

³⁸ See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Living Out the Call: 4. Serving God's People* 'Principles underlying Christian worship', 11-17. For a positive account of charismatic renewal within Baptist churches, see Douglas McBain, *Fire Over The Waters* (DLT, London 1997)

³⁹ See *Common Worship*, 30, 38.

- We sit lightly to this, as communion is often done in a ‘Baptist’ style

COMMENTARY

For Baptists the sermon has taken precedence over the Lord’s Supper. This difference is often seen in the architecture. A traditional Baptist church has side aisles, with the congregation sitting before a central pulpit; whereas in Anglican churches there is a central aisle leading to the ‘altar’, while the pulpit (*ambo*) tends to be at one side.⁴⁰

The abundance of Scripture

12

- I very much appreciate this and find it helpful to see the ways in which passages are linked. Although I do sometimes wonder why the passages begin or end where chosen
- Sadly, we often revert to just one reading [a low Evangelical church]

COMMENTARY

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy urging him to ‘Give attention to the public reading of scripture’ (1 Timothy 4.13). Anglicans take this injunction seriously. In the Anglican lectionary there are always four set readings for the ‘principal’ service: one from the Old Testament, a Psalm, a reading from an Epistle or other non-Gospel part of the New Testament, and a Gospel reading.

By contrast many Baptist churches have allowed the Scriptures to be marginalised. We need to remember the words of John

⁴⁰ See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers*, ‘Celebrating the faith: the Baptist approach to worship’, 45-47.

Wesley: “Although there may be chaff in the pulpit, there is always good grain at the lectern!”⁴¹

The opportunity to confess your faith every week 11

- Yes, yes!!
- Three stated: “not every week”

COMMENTARY

Anglicans do not have a creed of their own. Instead, every Sunday they recite the Apostles Creed or the Nicene Creed.

At the first Baptist World Alliance Congress in 1905 the first President, Alexander Maclaren, asked the delegates to stand and say together the Apostles Creed, which they duly did. Today few Baptists could do the same. Strange as it may seem to Anglicans, Baptists rarely confess their faith by saying together the Apostles Creed, let alone the Nicene Creed. Indeed, although Baptists have produced their own confessions of faith, there has been a suspicion of creeds, perhaps in reaction to the way in which in the past subscription to the ancient creeds was required as a test for entry to many public offices.

With the general demise of the singing of old hymns, in which the congregation used to confess its faith, I think there is a lot to be said for saying the Apostles Creed in Baptist churches. Creeds have a real place in public worship, for through the saying of the creeds we are not just saying what we believe, but also committing ourselves afresh to the one in whom we believe. It would be good too to bring into Baptist worship the great

⁴¹ See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Faith and Festivity* 48: unfortunately I have failed to find the source of the original Wesley quotation.

credal acclamation found in the Anglican Eucharistic liturgy: 'Christ has died – Christ is risen – Christ will come again'.⁴²

The giving and receiving of the peace **11**

- Greatly – it means relationships between folk are being exercised
- In the context of a congregation where we all know each other well, this has great meaning

Less positively

- Just every couple of months
- We struggle with this, when so often it becomes an opportunity to have a chat with our friends
- Uncomfortable for me
- Not practiced (a very low Evangelical church]

COMMENTARY

With the publication of *The Alternative Service Book* (1980) Anglicans revived the ancient practice of 'The Peace' in which people are encouraged to greet one another with the words 'The peace of the Lord be always with you', to which the reply is made 'and also with you'. The Peace has its roots in the repeated New Testament injunction for Christians to greet one another with the 'kiss of love' (1 Peter 5.13; see also Romans 16.16; 2 Corinthians 13.12; 1 Thessalonians 5.26) – or as J.B. Phillips in his translation of 1 Corinthians 16.22 put it: "I should like you to shake hands all round as a sign of Christian love"! Whether we kiss, shake hands, or even hug, is immaterial. What is right is that Christians welcome one

⁴² See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers*, 'Christian Believing: Baptists are part of the wider church' 1-8.

another. Furthermore, this welcome should be verbalised – if not in the formal words of the Peace, then in a simple word of greeting or a more enthusiastic word of love.

In the Church of England the exchanging of Peace marks the move from ‘the liturgy of the Word’ to ‘the liturgy of the Sacrament’. The giving of the peace has not been a Baptist custom – although some Baptist churches have followed the Anglican practice. In my last twenty-one years of ministry in Chelmsford ‘The Peace’ was the normal bridge between the sermon and the Lord’s Supper.

Carefully crafted prayers

10

- This can be helpful, although both our rector and vicar and I will add to the set written prayers

COMMENTARY

In contrast with the set prayers of the Anglican church, Baptists have traditionally had free forms of prayer. Not for them the Prayer Book! Ever since the Great Ejection of 1661, Baptists along with other Free Churches have been proud of their freedom to address God in whatever manner they deem fit. In many Baptist churches extempore prayer is the norm. Extempore prayer is seen to express something of the believer’s relationship with God. As Stephen Winward put it: “Warm, direct, intimate, personal extempore prayer corresponds to the nature of prayer as conversation with God”.⁴³ However, while extempore prayer may be the order of the day in the home and in prayer meetings, there is much to be said for prepared prayer in public services of worship. For although in theory Baptists

⁴³ Stephen Winward, *Celebration and Order* (Baptist Union, London 1981) 28.

are free to produce the very best of prayers – they are also free to abuse their freedom and produce the third-rate. ⁴⁴

Personally I am enjoying allowing the ‘collects’ and other set Anglican prayers to be a medium for my own prayers. One prayer which I particularly enjoy is a post-communion prayer which is often present in the liturgy at Chelmsford Cathedral:

*“You have opened to us the Scriptures, O Christ,
And you have made yourself known in the breaking of the bread.
Abide with us, we pray, that blessed by your royal presence,
We may walk with you all the days of our life,
And at its end behold you in the glory of the eternal Trinity,
One God for ever and ever. Amen.”* ⁴⁵

As I wrote in one of my blogs: ⁴⁶

“Whenever I say this prayer I am always struck by the description of the Christian hope – ‘and at its end behold you in the glory of the eternal Trinity’. This contrasts with so much popular thought, where heaven is a place for self-indulgence – as Sydney Smith put it, ‘My idea of heaven is eating pâté de foie gras to the sound of trumpets’. It contrasts too with much popular piety, where heaven is above all a place where we are reunited with loved ones (and indeed many others!) who have gone before. But heaven is so much more. The true Christian hope is God-centred – it is seeing God face to face.

This understanding of heaven has its roots in the Old Testament. The Psalmist, for instance, said with longing: ‘I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness’ (Psalm 17.15). In another Psalm he wrote: ‘One thing I asked of the Lord, that I will seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to

⁴⁴ See Paul Beasley-Murray, *Radical Believers*, ‘Freedom in Prayer’ 52-54.

⁴⁵ See *Common Worship*, 297.

⁴⁶ Paul Beasley-Murray, ‘Seeing God face-to-face’, *Church Matters* 7 January 2016

behold the beauty of the Lord' (Psalm 27.4), or in the words of the GNB: "to marvel at his goodness".

In the New Testament we find Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount saying: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' (Matthew 5.8). Paul writes to the church at Corinth: 'Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we shall see face to face' (1 Corinthians 13.12). John in his description of the new Jerusalem says of the redeemed who are before the throne of God: 'they will see his face' (Revelation 22.4).

What does it mean to see God face to face? I consulted three commentators on the Book of Revelation. David Aune suggested that the phrase is a metaphor 'for a full awareness of the presence and power of God'.⁴⁷ Julius Schniewind believed that it is the 'freedom to look into the eyes of the Almighty Judge without shame, in contrast to those from whom God hides his face in wrath against their misdeeds'.⁴⁸ Stephen Smalley saw it as a description of 'the intimacy of the relationship' which we will share with God.⁴⁹

Augustine of Hippo in the City of God argued that it is this vision of God in heaven which sustains believers throughout their pilgrimage of faith:

'God himself, who is the Author of virtue, shall be our reward. As there is nothing greater or better than God himself, God has promised us himself. What else can be meant through the prophet, "I will be your God and you will be my people" that "I shall be their satisfaction. I shall be all that people honourably desire – life, health, nourishment, satisfaction, glory, honour, peace, and all good things?" This, too, is the right interpretation of the saying of the apostle "That God may be all in all". God

⁴⁷ David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22* (Word, Thomas Nelson, Nashville 1998) 1179.

⁴⁸ Quoted by George R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (Oliphants, London 1974) 332-333.

⁴⁹ Stephen S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John* (SPCK, London 2005) 565.

*shall be the end of all our desires, who will be seen without end, loved without cloy, and praised without weariness.’*⁵⁰

*Many centuries later Dante’s Divine Comedy reaches its climax when the poet, after his epic journeys through hell and purgatory, emerges to behold ‘The love that moves the sun and the other stars’.*⁵¹ *As John Donne put it: “No man ever saw God and lived. And yet, I shall not live till I see God”*⁵² *Or to quote O.A. Lambert’s popular song from the late 1950s:*

*“Heaven is a wonderful place
Filled with glory and grace.
I wanna see my Saviour’s face,
‘Cause Heaven is a wonderful place
I wanna go there!”*⁵³

I have quoted from this blog at length to illustrate how just one short prayer stimulated my thinking and imagining. That is one blessing which a carefully crafted set prayer can produce.

What else do you find helpful?

- The awful experience of Baptist fundamentalism makes me more accepting of the failings and compromised nature of the Church of England
- A greater freedom to be different
- The freedom to prepare and take services using the basic legal requirements, but in a more spontaneous and updated way

⁵⁰ Augustine, *City of God* XXX.510

⁵¹ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy Part III: Paradiso* XXIII,

⁵² John Donne, *Sermon XCV*.

⁵³ O.A. Lambert, *Sacred Records*, 1958.

- A very worshipful atmosphere with silence and the priest leading us quietly without distractions
- The reverence
- The structure and rhythm of the church year [2 respondents)
- In attending Anglican worship, you know what, essentially, you'll be getting and can look forward to. It doesn't all depend on the quality of the preaching. Nor is it overwhelmingly an educational exercise. Still less a jazzing-up of the emotions. The centrality of the Eucharist within the framework praise-confession-word-intercession-sacrament-dismissal gives a sense that in worship an *event* is taking place (not just talked about) in which God is encountered as present, and the worshippers individually and collectively are being remade and renewed as the body of Christ.
- I enjoy great music from choirs and organ – and fine architecture
- The stained glass windows
- The preaching (three respondents)
- Thoughtful, and not too lengthy, sermons
- The warm welcome
- The friendship of other members of the congregation
- The loving intimacy within the church: my wife has been seriously ill – the ministers and congregation have been most caring and sympathetic. The visits in hospital and home, the set prayers and anointing with oil for the sick and the bringing of communion.
- Being part of a church, which is central to the community it serves. It can rightly be said that the church is the village and the village the church. There

is a strong prayer life in the congregation, which holds the village before God in prayer. Church events celebrate the life of the village and vice versa.

COMMENTARY

For me Anglican worship has been a refreshing experience. I have enjoyed the challenge of adapting to worshipping in new ways. I have been surprised by the flexibility and variety offered by *Common Worship*, as also the degree to which the Cathedral is free to construct its own services and even write its own prayers. I have enjoyed singing hymns again (although some of them are urgently in need of revision) and have appreciated a decent organist. I appreciate too the outward-facing leadership of the Dean, and am always blessed by his preaching.

5. WHAT DO YOU SOMETIMES FIND DIFFICULT ABOUT THE ANGLICAN WAY OF BEING THE CHURCH?

5.1 How well do you cope with the practice of infant baptism?

Well

5

- Not a big problem
- Handled well at this church
- Never had a problem: the vicar has ‘dedication’ (services of thanksgiving)
- As an elderly congregation we have not had a service of infant baptism
- Initially I (Baptist minister ordained into the Anglican church) found it hard having known only the traditional Anglican form of baptism with the use of the word ‘regenerate’. However, with *Common Worship* that word does not appear, and I rejoice that I have the freedom to explain the ‘gospel promises’ in a clear evangelistic way. I say to parents and godparents, ‘You are saying these promises on behalf of your child to bring this child into the grace of God. But to know personal salvation, when they come to an age of understanding, they will have to make these promises on their own’. Confirmation to me is not an ecclesiastical ceremony but an experiential commitment and confession of faith. So my understanding of baptism has developed: I still prefer baptism as a testimony of personal faith in ‘cognisant/understanding’ people, but see infant baptism as an interim ‘covering’ by the parents and church that fruits in the faith of the baptised child.

- I think there's a need to embrace different understandings of baptism. I experienced believers' baptism by immersion in the Anglican church
- If undertaken in sincerity of faith by parents, it's better than no baptism
- Our church also has believers' baptism by immersion

- I find it difficult (3 respondents)
- Not well (2 respondents)
- Badly
- I don't attend (3 respondents)
- I often question this

COMMENTARY

I have no difficulty with the words of the baptismal liturgy in *Common Worship* where the candidates are old enough to “make serious promises and declare the faith”. In such a context I happily affirm that “in baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light” and that “to follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him”, but to apply this rite to children is, for me, a nonsense and beggars belief! I find this a great stumbling block and would much prefer infant baptisms to be relegated to a private afternoon service, even though I recognise that from a theological perspective baptism should always take place in public (see 1 Timothy 6.12).

I am concerned too by the indiscriminate practice of infant baptism, still present in many Anglican churches, which results in many non-church families treating an infant baptism as a

social occasion. They have the child ‘done’, because they deem it the ‘done’ thing to do. They are not people of faith. As many paedo-Baptists admit, there can be no theological justification for baptising children of non-believers. Indeed, to counter the effects of indiscriminate baptism, the Evangelical Anglican Michael Green even expressed his willingness to give up infant baptism for one generation, if that were possible! He wrote: “It would clear the ground, and enable us to have a fresh start, with the sign of the covenant marking out believers and their children. For this is the only sort of infant baptism which can be justified from Scripture, or, for that matter, from the formularies of the Church of England.”⁵⁴

However, changes are beginning to take place in the Church of England. To quote from a friend who worked for the Church of England while remaining a Baptist minister, and who in retirement worships in a Methodist church (he considered worshipping in an Anglican church, but felt he could not do so because “the Church of England does not accept my ordination”):

“I would suggest that today the Church of England is not something most people are born into but something some people join – and the younger an adult you are the more likely that is to be the case. One sign of that is that infant baptisms go down but what the Church of England calls ‘mature baptisms’ go up, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of all baptisms. Reform and Renewal is responding to that in a particular way – a congregationalist way, with an emphasis on getting more people to go to church. That changes so much in the Church of

⁵⁴ Michael Green, *Baptism: It’s Purpose, Practice and Power* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1987) 98-99. Some years earlier, the 1967 Keele Conference of the National Evangelical Anglican Council upheld the traditional Evangelical Anglican position that “Indiscriminate baptism as commonly practised in England, is a scandal... We must be welcoming to little children, as Jesus was. But we deny the propriety of baptizing the infants of parents who do not profess to be Christians themselves and who cannot promise to bring up their children at Christians.”

England. For example, whilst some vicars will try to maintain the traditional ‘cure of souls’ model, serving all in the parish, others are moving more towards seeing those who go to church as their focus along with a focus on attempts to get more to go. In some ways, the Church of England is becoming more like Baptist churches perhaps once were. And of course at the same time, Baptist churches have changed - many being a long way from what I understand being Baptist to mean.”

One final comment: instead of baptising children, Baptists in Britain have a ‘dedication’ service (more properly, a service of ‘thanksgiving, promise-making and blessing’), which is not dissimilar to the *Common Worship* service of ‘Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child’, which “provides an opportunity for parents and families to give thanks for the birth or adoption of a child and to pray for family life”. My understanding is that this Anglican service tends to be used by Evangelical Anglicans unhappy with the practice of infant baptism – or at least indiscriminate infant baptism.

How well do you cope with the emphasis on priesthood?

Well

7

- There is no emphasis (2)
- No problem (2)
- I have not noticed
- There is thankfully a high degree of lay involvement in our church
- I don’t find this difficult because I don’t tend to see the distinction between my ordination and that of Anglicans. I have a sacramental view of ordination – ontological rather than functional

I accept the situation

6

- OK (2)
- I disagree, but I just get on with it (3)
- This depends on what is being claimed

Not well

2

- Difficult – especially the pronouncing of absolution by a priest
- It is the one thing that has prevented me from seeking Anglican ordination in the last 10 years

COMMENTARY

In the Church of England the standard term for ‘minister’ is ‘priest’, yet the New Testament never uses the term ‘priest’ (*hiereus*) of any of its leaders. As Michael Green, a former Anglican college principal, pointed out many years ago, this is “simply amazing”,⁵⁵ for the New Testament writers were steeped in the Old Testament sacrificial system, and the cities in which they and the first Christians lived were surrounded by a plethora of temples and priests, and yet never once did they call a minister ‘priest’. In the words of David Bennett, “We must conclude that this was not a matter of oversight, but of conscious avoidance”.⁵⁶

In the New Testament the metaphor of priesthood is applied in only two ways. In the first instance, Jesus is described as our High Priest, for he is the mediator of the New Covenant: see Hebrews 7.24-27; 8.1-20; also 1 Timothy 2.5. In the second instance, the church in the sense of the whole people of God, are described as a priesthood: 1 Peter 2,5,9; Revelation 5.9; and

⁵⁵ Michael Green, *Freed to Serve* (Hodder & Stoughton, London 1983) 74

⁵⁶ David Bennett, *Metaphors of Ministry: Biblical images for leaders and followers* (Paternoster, Carlisle 1983)

perhaps Romans 12.1. To quote from the commentary on 'Ordained Ministry and Priesthood' in the standard ecumenical text *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*: "The New Testament never uses the term 'priesthood' or 'priest' (*hiereus*) to designate the ordained ministry or the ordained minister".

Yet in spite of this clear statement *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* goes on to argue that "ordained ministers may appropriately be called priests because they fulfil a particular priestly service by strengthening and building up the royal and prophetic priesthood of the faithful through words and sacraments, through their prayers of intercession, and through their pastoral guidance of the community".⁵⁷ As Derek Tidball rightly said, "This is an evasion of biblical truth and an unhelpful confusion of terminology, as the word 'priest', when applied to leaders in the church, carries so much baggage with it. It is a faulty foundation on which an unhelpful hierarchical superstructure is built."⁵⁸

It is not true that "to call the religious functionary of the Church of England 'a priest' is a theological definition grounded in the writings of the New Testament".⁵⁹ Nor is it true, as Steven Croft, now Bishop of Oxford, has argued that there are "hints" of this word (*hiereus*) used with reference to Christian ministers: the only Scripture reference he can find to back up this assertion are words used by Paul of his preaching the Gospel.⁶⁰ For Paul towards the end of Romans wrote "of the grace given to me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the

⁵⁷ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* 23.

⁵⁸ Derek Tidball, *Ministry by the Book: New Testament patterns for pastoral leadership* (Apollos, Nottingham 2008) 191.

⁵⁹ Anthony Russell, *The Clerical Profession* (SPCK, London 1980) 3.

⁶⁰ Steven Croft, *Ministry in Three Dimensions: Ordination and leadership in the local church* (DLT, London 2nd edition 2008) 101.

Holy Spirit” (Romans 15.16). Paul likens his preaching role to that of a priest presiding over offerings presented to God, the offering consisting of Gentile lives being surrendered to God. The Good News Bible therefore translates: “I serve like a priest preaching the Good News from God, in order that the Gentiles may be an offering acceptable to God, dedicated to him by Jesus Christ”. This has nothing to do with presiding in a worship service let alone celebrating the Eucharist at the ‘altar’.

The priesthood of ministers’ is not a concept found in Scripture: rather it is a later development. I find it significant that Graham Tomlin, now Bishop of Kensington, in his recent influential book on priesthood, accepts that “There is no mention of the word *hiereus* in relation to Christian ministers – a whole range of other words are used (*presbuteros*, *episkopos*, *diakonos*, *apostolos*, etc.) but not *hiereus*”.⁶¹

I find it significant too that Graham Tomlin states: “The primary ceremony in which commissioning for ministry is given to the Christian Church is not ordination but baptism... Every Christian has a ministry in and outside the Church, not just clergy... Ordination is not a commissioning for ministry, but a setting apart for a particular kind of ministry.”⁶² This understanding of what may be termed ‘the ministry of all believers’ arises directly out of the pages of the New Testament.

Yet even though it runs counter to the evidence of the New Testament, Graham Tomlin still wants to call today’s church leaders priests. This is all the more strange for he recognises that all the Scriptures he draws upon (for instance 1 Peter 5.1-4 and Titus 1.5-7) outline “a distinctly presbyterial ministry”.⁶³ As he rightly says, “The main word used in the New Testament for oversight, or leadership with in the Church is *presbuteros*,

⁶¹ Graham Tomlin, *The Widening Circle: Priesthood as God’s way of blessing the world* (SPCK, London 2014) 64.

⁶² *The Widening Circle*, 116.

⁶³ *The Widening Circle*, 117.

commonly translated elder”⁶⁴. In the light of this, to my mind his admittedly nuanced understanding of priesthood – in which he accepts that ordained priests do not leave the ranks of the laity” – is an unhelpful theological construct which creates confusion. For a priest, by definition, is a ‘mediator-between God and his world – not surprisingly the Latin word for ‘priest’ is *pontifex* which literally means ‘bridge-builder’. But as Paul writes to Timothy: “there is one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2.5). Admittedly Tomlin is at pains to emphasise that the priestly role of ‘mediating’ does not mean that clergy belong to some different race – “like the old Irish joke where there were three sets of public conveniences: one for men, one for women and a third for priests”⁶⁵. But why then choose to use the word ‘priest’ as the key term for describing the role of those engaged in the ministry of leadership in God’s church? It is a misleading and unhelpful term which only creates confusion if not error in the thinking of the ordinary man or woman ‘in the pew’.

How well do you cope with the form of church government?

Well

5

- No problem (2)
- There is a great relief to find churches where things can be decided without lengthy church meetings and where folk have the interests of both God and the local parish at heart
- I miss church meetings, but it is not a problem.
- I am never quite sure what it is in the Church of England

⁶⁴ *The Widening Circle*, 121

⁶⁵ *The Widening Circle*, 114.

- I disagree, but get on with it (3)
- To some extent
- Not much congregational involvement
- There is no much congregational involvement
- I do not accept hierarchical government as laid down by the Anglican Church, but my local Anglican church is very 'Baptist' in the way it governs itself

- I find it difficult
- I find I frustrating
- I struggle – we are amazed at just how unquestioning people are so often

COMMENTARY

While for Anglicans God rules through bishops, for Baptists God rules through church meetings made up of members of the church. Congregational government, however, is not to be confused with democratic church government. As the Congregational theologian P.T. Forsyth once observed, congregationalism “was the mother of political democracy, but not its child”.⁶⁶ Baptists gather together in church meeting to ‘discern the mind of Christ’ for their life together.

For Baptists the church meeting is paramount, in the sense that it is there that ultimate authority is to be found. The Baptist practice of church government puts all the emphasis on the

⁶⁶ Peter T. Forsyth, *Faith, Freedom and the Future* (Independent Press, London 1955) 193.

local church. So much so that Baptists do not speak of their denomination as a church, but rather as a ‘union’ (or ‘federation’ or ‘convention’) of churches.

Although ministers together with their deacons have a leadership role to play, ultimately they are accountable to the church meeting. The church is not subject to any human authority figure, whether within or without the church: rather the church is served by its ministers, and indeed by other church officials beyond the local church. This means that every Baptist church is a self-governing church: or as the Baptist Union of Great Britain states in its basis of union: “each church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer his [Jesus’] laws”.⁶⁷

How does this affect me personally now that I am worshipping at an Anglican church? The truth is that it is no longer an issue for me. I agree with the principle of congregational government, but at this stage in my life I am happy to ‘go with the flow’. For over fifty years I have participated in church meetings – and for the most part have a good experience. However, I do not miss having to attend them any more!

How well do you cope with the concept of hierarchy in the church?

Well

7

- At the local level it is much the same as in a Baptist church (3)
- No problem (2)
- Not noticed

⁶⁷ See the Constitution in *The Baptist Union of Great Britain 2013 Directory* (Baptist Union, Didcot), 325.

- I have observed and experienced much ‘servant leadership’ within the Church of England – it all depends on attitudes and personalities

I accept the situation 4

- I disagree, but get on with it (3)
- This is not my theological position

Not well 3

- I find it difficult
- We don’t cope well
- The trouble comes when ‘authority’ becomes wedded to secular forms of management, bringing centralisation and bureaucracy

One respondent questioned the implication that Baptists have no hierarchy. “Would that it was so!! Hierarchy is alive and well in many of our Baptist churches: ministers, elders, leadership teams; and many association teams [i.e. regional ministers and regional officers] operate in similar manner.”

COMMENTARY

Unlike Anglicans, traditionally Baptists have no hierarchy. Whereas other churches may be pyramidal in structure, with bishops and archbishops, in a Baptist church the pyramid is inverted. The church is not subject to any human authority figure, whether within or without the church: rather the church is served by its ministers and deacons. This concept of service applies to our regional ministers, who have the ‘care’ of the churches as part of their wider brief. However, they are not bishops. The ultimate oversight (*episcopate*) of a local church belongs to the local church as it gathers in church meeting. For Baptists, church is always local. To my mind there is no higher

office for a Baptist than to be a minister of a local Baptist church.

How well do you cope with the blurring of boundaries between church and state?

Well

- No problem
- On a local level not noticed
- I think there is strength in the tie between the Church of England and the state – especially to influence, and voice, opinions
- This can be helpful in addressing issues in the public square, but only in terms of mission

I accept the situation

- I have put my principles to one side
- I disagree, but get in with it

Not well

- I find it difficult (3)
- It makes me sad

COMMENTARY

Anglicans tend to have no clear boundaries between church and state. Indeed, it is sometimes difficult to know who a member of the Anglican church is. It doesn't appear to be somebody who has been baptised or confirmed. My understanding is that it probably is somebody who is on the electoral roll of the parish church, but even that is contested.

Baptists by contrast are very clear as to whether one is a church member or not. Their concept of a believers' church leads them to have a clear distinction between the church and the world. The idea of an 'established' church – even where Baptists are in the majority (as in the Southern states of the USA) - is unthinkable.

How well do you cope with the repetition of liturgical words and prayers each week?

Well

11

- I appreciate the rhythm of worship
- This I like
- I like reciting the creed and hearing the words of absolution
- I have adjusted to it
- I try to appreciate it
- No problem (4)
- Not a problem with our relatively free worship
- I am an ecumenical person so that I can 'live' with diversity reasonably comfortably

I accept the situation

4

- If Jesus could enter into 'synagogue' worship and the great liturgical 'feasts' as well as use spontaneous worship with his disciples, I guess it's OK for us.
- As with anything else we do, Baptist or Anglican, it depends on the way in which head and heart are engaged in the words we pray or *sing* or *read* or *hear* in the sermon
- If it was *just* repetition that would be difficult. On the other hand, the set forms can create space for

extemporaneous/creative input. Baptists can be even more tied to set formulae, without knowing it.

- If worship is led with conviction, sensitivity and meaning, these are preferable to an individual's ramblings

Not well

2

- I find it difficult
- I prefer more variation

COMMENTARY

The worship of most Baptist churches is not characterised by the repetition of set words and prayers. Even the saying of the Lord's Prayer together is optional. Perhaps the nearest Baptists come to the 'repetition of liturgical words' is at the Lord's Table, at which traditionally there has been a very simple pattern, which has included an invitation to the Table and the words of institution: viz.

*"Come to this sacred table, not because you must but because you may; come not to testify that you are righteous, but that you sincerely love our Lord Jesus Christ, and desire to be his true disciples; come, not because you are strong, but because you are weak; not because you have any claim on heaven's rewards, but because in your frailty and sin you stand in constant need of heaven's mercy and help."*⁶⁸

"For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that that the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me'. In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is

⁶⁸ Payne & Winward, *Prayers for Church Worship*, 14-15.

the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11.23-26).

Is there anything else you find difficult?

I find difficult

- The performance aspects of some services and the way the dress used distances services from the modern world
- Praying for the departed
- The occasional assumption that the Church of England is the Church in England
- Not being allowed to lead communion
- Some Baptists feel that I have let the side down (2)

I find little difficulty

- My local Anglican church is so low, and with a congregation whose church experience has often been non-conformist, that apart from the building and the liturgy, you would not be able to distinguish it from a Baptist congregation. In fact the warmth of welcome, the inclusiveness and the prayer life is stronger than I have experienced in many Baptist churches.
- We are in such a loving church that many concerns are not important
- I have found the past ten years to be a time of spiritual growth, affirmation and joy. I feel I have more integrity and am appreciated for my particular gifts and experience

COMMENTARY

With regard to the insensitive way in which some Anglicans speak of ‘the Church’ as though that term is synonymous with

‘the Church of England’, the fact is that there is a difference between being a ‘national’ church and an ‘established’ church. Mark Chapman, a former Vice-Principal of Ripon College Cuddesdon, in his introduction to Anglicanism makes the interesting point that the passing of the Act of Toleration in 1689 resulted in the Church of England becoming just “one denomination among others, albeit with many privileges”.⁶⁹

5.2 Do you – or would you – have difficulty if the theology of the local bishop (as distinct from the local ‘vicar’) is markedly different from yours?

No difficulty 13

- No problem (8)
- We rarely see the bishop
- Not with the present bishop
- The theology of the bishop does not reach down to me personally
- I sense a greater acceptance of views in the Anglican church
- I feel that it can be refreshing and stimulating to have an expansive theological understanding whilst holding to the basic tenets of the faith

Not a present issue 3

- I am happy that the local church is Evangelical

⁶⁹ Mark Chapman, *Anglicanism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2006) 56.

- The church is under the oversight of the Bishop of Maidstone who has been appointed to oversee evangelical churches who request this dispensation ⁷⁰
- Not really – our local bishop used to be the evangelism advisor for the diocese and is great

I don't know

1

A real challenge

2

- I am more in line with the local vicar – the bishop is in favour of women and gay priests!
- I wrote to the bishop over the issue of Holy Matrimony, and stood down from the local leadership team when the new rector did a service of blessing (contrary to the bishops' guidelines, though encouraged by this bishop) for a state - married couple of men... I consequently took up the option of being licensed with a 'permission to officiate' status that is given to retired priests... Initially I was cold-shouldered, but over the ensuing period have been drawn back into ministry and now take as many services as before

5.3 How do you come to terms with the fact that technically your ordination is not fully recognised?

In the questionnaire I quoted from the Canons of the Church of England:

In the context of Local Ecumenical Projects a bishop may “authorize the holding in a place of worship of the Church of England... of services of Holy Communion presided over by a minister of any other participating Church” - but

⁷⁰ The Bishop of Maidstone has been designated as a 'provincial episcopal visitor' (popularly known as a 'flying bishop') for conservative evangelical members of the Church of England.

“no such service, notwithstanding that the form of service used may follow a form authorized under Canon B 1 or a form substantially similar thereto, shall be held out or taken to be a celebration of the Holy Communion according to the use of the Church of England” [Canon 45].

This is not an issue for me

9

- It has not been a problem
- I respect the difference
- I have lived with this for a long time
- I have no issue with this since I have been recognised as an elder
- Our bishops accept my ordination and our local bishop is happy for me to conduct services, where the congregation are aware that they are being led in a Baptist rite within an Anglican place of worship. The bishops are aware that for over twenty years I trained both Anglicans and Baptists in worship and pastoral care
- Although it would be a wonderful privilege, this is not a big issue for me, I accept that I am no longer a pastor of a local church and am happy for others to be responsible for leading communion
- I am happy to serve in my retirement as part of the church without leading the church. I have just been asked to be a ‘chaplain’ of our present parish church, giving pastoral care – I find it liberating
- I retired; the issue is not a pressing one. I am not interested in status
- I have felt more ‘recognised’ than I did in some Baptist churches! I hope the day will come for con-celebration of Holy Communion, but I can live with genuinely held understandings that are being thought and prayed through

- I find it difficult – but the vicar is gracious about it, which helps
- I do find this difficult, but I feel fully accepted in the church and trust that this will continue to develop
- I find that hard. When I preach, I wear a clerical collar just the same as the vicar, curate and other retired Anglican clergy. This lets people know I see my ordination is just as important as theirs
- When preaching in the Anglican church I wear a clerical collar
- At one time I found it galling how my Baptist credentials were ignored and counted for nothing
- I find this something of an insult. Apparently I am good enough to preach, to conduct the occasional funeral, lead Bible studies and home groups, and even sort out their sex offenders, but not share in serving people with the Lord's supper.
- This is a source of real sadness to me. It makes a nonsense of ecumenical aspirations to unity

- I laugh it off: it's silly really
- When conducting services on cruise ships (in international waters!) I've cheerfully followed the contemporary Prayer Book Order of Holy Communion, but telling the people at the start that this is not meant to be an Anglican service but an ecumenical one that just happens to use the Anglican order with some Baptist tweaks. These have proved immensely popular on board, even Roman Catholics attending and even sometimes communicating. Fortunately, perhaps, there've been no bishops present!

COMMENTARY

This is a complicated matter. Ever since the adoption of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral in 1888, the official Anglican position of the Church of England is that the ‘historic episcopate’ with its claim to ‘apostolic succession’ is of the ‘essence’ of any true Christian church, and that therefore the ministries of those not ordained by bishops who are part of the ‘apostolic succession’ are ‘invalid’ or ‘deficient’. ⁷¹ By contrast Baptists, who see themselves to be part of the ‘one catholic and apostolic church’ interpret apostolic succession in terms of “the continuity of life in Christ brought into being by the proclamation of the Word and by steadfast continuance ‘in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers’ (Acts 2.41-42)”. ⁷² This is in line with Paul’s exhortation to Timothy: “What you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well” (2 Timothy 2.2). Significantly John Stott, perhaps the greatest Evangelical Anglican of the twentieth century, declared that “apostolic succession... is to be a succession of apostolic tradition rather than of the apostolic ministry, authority or order, a transmission of the apostles’

⁷¹ The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral outlined four necessary principles for church unity:

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as ‘containing all things necessary to salvation’, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
2. The Apostles’ Creed, as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
3. The two sacraments ordained by Christ himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him.
4. The historical episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration, to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church.

See further, Mark Chapman, *Anglicanism*, 120-122.

⁷² *Church relations in England*: Report approved by the Council of the Baptist Union, March 1953.

doctrine handed down unchanged from the apostles to subsequent generations, and passed from hand to hand like the Olympic torch”.⁷³ Similarly more recently Richard Turnbull, a former Principal of Wycliffe College, Oxford, wrote: “The real locus of apostolicity lies not in the succession of bishops but in the faithful handing on of the deposit of the faith. Bishops are a useful way of ensuring and providing for this continuity but do not guarantee it.”⁷⁴ Nonetheless, the current position of the Church of England is that the ordinations of Baptist ministers are “deficient” and that they therefore cannot preside at the Lord’s Table within an Anglican church.

Thankfully the Church of England has begun to shift its attitude toward Baptist ministers. To quote from section 3 of the *Conversations Around the World 2000-2005: The report of the International Conversations between the Anglican Communion and the Baptist World Alliance*:⁷⁵

“The Anglican church is in the process of a recognition of the ministry of those who have not been ordained through an episcopal succession... It is possible now to recognize the authenticity of the ministry in word and sacrament of those who have not been ordained, and who serve in churches where there are not (or not yet) bishops in the sense of the Anglican three-fold order... Recognition of genuineness does not, however, mean an ‘interchangeability’ of ministry, in which a minister of a non-episcopal church would simply be substituted for an Anglican priest. This awaits fuller communion. While episcopacy is a sign of apostolic succession, and is not of the essence of the church, interchangeability would require an agreement concerning oversight, and this would involve being in a canonical relationship to a bishop.”

⁷³ *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy* (IVP, London 1973) 51-52.

⁷⁴ *Anglican and Evangelical?* (Continuum, London 2007) 45.

⁷⁵ Anglican Consultative Council and the Baptist World Alliance, 2005

This change of attitude is to be seen in the Church of England's stance toward Local Ecumenical Projects in which Anglicans along with the Free Churches are involved. According to Canon 45 of the Church of England, in the context of Local Ecumenical Projects a bishop may "authorize the holding in a place of worship of the Church of England... of services of Holy Communion presided over by a minister of any other participating Church" - but "no such service, notwithstanding that the form of service used may follow a form authorized under Canon B 1 or a form substantially similar thereto, shall be held out or taken to be a celebration of the Holy Communion according to the use of the Church of England".

At the beginning of this year the 2018 Annual Report on the Church of England's Ecumenical Relationships was published in time for the Spring 2019 meeting of General Synod.

Reflecting on 2018, the report states:

"Maybe there is a realistic possibility for the interchangeability of ministries between Anglicans and Methodists...Our unity in Christ will remain incomplete and be obscured in the eyes of the world unless a way is found to reconcile the ministries of different churches."

The authors of the report believe that "something new is happening".

Thank God, although the official position of the Church of England may mean that my ordination to the Christian ministry is not 'fully recognised', within the Cathedral where I worship, I feel I am recognised as a minister, not least by the clergy, and indeed by the Bishop of Chelmsford. So, for instance, in the Cathedral's Sunday news sheet I am normally billed as the 'Rev Dr'. Next year the Cathedral will allow me to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of my ordination with a special Sunday afternoon Evensong! I have been amazed and moved by the willingness of ministers of a very different churchmanship to accept me. It remains true, of course, that I am not allowed to

preside at communion. However, I refuse to allow this to cloud the hospitality that I enjoy at Chelmsford Cathedral.

5.4 Do you find that **sacramental worship** can be a **deterrent to outsiders**?

It is a deterrent

5

- Yes
- I fear it can be
- We are considering more user-friendly worship for those on the fringe
- I am waiting for the right opportunity to speak on this matter
- Strange clothing and actions with no explanation

It is not a deterrent

13

- No (4)
- It is minimal in my church and does not seem to be a deterrent
- No! It is one of the best ways to demonstrate Gospel truth
- No more than any form of worship can be
- No – there are many other reasons why people do not attend worship
- No – there are plenty of deterrents anyway
- It can do, if not explained clearly and contemporaneously – like ‘charismatic worship’ can put people off if not adequately explained

- Not if it is led with sensitivity. Any worship can deter outsiders if it is thoughtless, and full of words that someone from outside cannot understand or relate to
- I think it is less threatening - the flow of the service on the order of worship sheets means that they know what is happening and are not lost
- I have seen no evidence of this. We do have people who are not on the parish roll who, in a Eucharistic service will go forward for prayer and not receive the bread and wine. Some older congregation members do not take communion because they have not been confirmed (in one case) and are a Catholic (in another case). Children usually go forward for a blessing. This seems to be far more inclusive and meaningful than the practice in many a Baptist congregation

COMMENTARY

John Wesley is often quoted to the effect that the Lord's Supper is 'a converting ordinance', and that therefore unbelievers should be welcome to the Table. To back up the argument that the Lord's Supper is a means of Gospel proclamation some point to the words of the Apostle Paul: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11.26). However, it is not the eating and drinking which proclaim Jesus, but the telling of the story of our salvation. We need to remember that the Last Supper was a Passover meal, when there would have been recitation of the events which led to God freeing his people from slavery in Egypt (the Passover *haggadah*). In turn when the first Christians gathered to break bread and to drink wine, they too would have recited the story of how God in Christ had set his people free. So today every communion service needs to say something about the grace of God and our need to respond to it.

In my experience as a minister of a Baptist church I know that there were always some uncommitted members of our

congregation who would stay away when it was a communion Sunday. What parallels one can draw with an Anglican church where every Sunday morning service is eucharistic, I do not know. Whatever, I find it difficult to believe that a communion service is the most effective context for Gospel proclamation to those who have yet to believe.

6. WHAT DO YOU SOMETIMES MISS ABOUT THE BAPTIST WAY OF BEING THE CHURCH?

6.1 What do you sometimes miss in a positive way?

I listed a number of Baptist ‘strengths’ which I thought retired ministers in Anglican churches might miss. Although all of them were missed by some respondents, it was interesting to note the extent to which so many, after a life-time in Baptist ministry, had adjusted to doing church in a differing way.

The things most missed, in a descending order, were the following:

1. The opportunity to discern the mind of Christ together in church meetings: 12
2. The spiritual high of a service of believers’ baptism 12
3. The evangelistic challenge of believers’ baptism 9
4. The fellowship of former peers in Baptist ministry 8
5. The Baptist way of doing communion 7
6. The fellowship of believers 3

The majority missed **the opportunity to discern the mind of Christ together in church meetings**. In the words of one respondent: “I have always appreciated this as the central strength of Baptist church life, when the congregation participates and understands their part in discerning the mind of Christ”. Yet even so, this respondent acknowledged that “too often in Baptist churches today it tends to be the minister or elders or leaders who set the agenda and interpret the mind of Christ “. Or as another wrote: “You must be joking! Church meetings have become information sessions – important decisions are remitted to the leadership.”

The majority too missed **the spiritual high of believers' baptism**. "This is the single thing I miss most", said one. Another: "These are truly meaningful services both to witness and to lead". But not all felt this way: "There are other highs" wrote one. Two even felt that a spiritual high could also be experienced at an infant baptism.

Around half missed **the evangelistic challenge of believers' baptism**. However, again there were those who felt otherwise. "Not really", wrote one, "genuine conversion happens in a variety of ways". One respondent felt that the challenge could be "probably greater in an Anglican context". Certainly this was the approach of the only retired minister who had become an Anglican: "I make baptism a challenge to personal faith".

Under half of respondents missed **the Baptist way of communion**. One respondent even said: "I find Anglican communion somewhat meaningless, and will often forego it – at my own cost". However, around another third much preferred the Anglican way: "I value the going forward", said one. The practice in larger Baptist churches of passing trays along the rows was certainly not missed by another.

A minority missed **the fellowship of former peers in Baptist ministry**. By contrast, a few said they did not miss their former peers – "I have found new friends: we have a clergy team of which I feel a part".

A few respondents said they missed **the fellowship of believers**. Several said "We still have this in parish life". A number said they were experiencing a deeper fellowship in the Anglican church than in the local Baptist church.

COMMENTARY

One of the things to which I found most difficult to adjust was going forward to receive communion. In a well-attended Cathedral morning service with several hundred worshippers,

the moment of receiving bread and wine is very limited – there is no time to stay at the front and meditate. In the first year or so I longed to be able to receive communion where I was sitting and then quietly to meditate on God’s amazing love in Jesus. However, one Sunday as a post-communion hymn the congregation sang Charlotte Elliot’s great hymn *Just as I am* with its constant refrain ‘*O Lamb of God I come*’. Suddenly I realised how appropriate this hymn is for communion. I had always associated it with Billy Graham and with his altar call – but then I discovered that it had been written as a hymn of ‘consecration’ or rededication. Now as I go forward to receive the bread and wine, I often allow the words of this hymn to go through my mind, with the result that the very act of going forward has become a spiritual exercise.

*Just as I am – of that free love
The breadth, length, depth and height to prove,
Here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come.* ⁷⁶

What do you sometimes miss in a negative way?

Somewhat tongue in cheek, I listed three examples: deacons’ meetings, church meetings, and collective decision making.

A number of respondents identified with this question:

- I don’t miss the stress and pressure of church and deacons’ meetings
- I do not miss the plethora of meetings (especially evenings!), the constant pressure to be meeting ‘aims and goals’, and management targets, and the apparent need to be producing ‘growth’

⁷⁶ See, for instance, *Baptist Praise and Worship* (OUP, Oxford 1991) no 346.

- I do not miss the pettiness and parochialism, the lack of love and tolerance
- I frequently recall a Baptist deacon saying ‘the majority are rarely right’. I ask: do Baptists often miss the lonely prophetic voice?

Others, however, wanted to be a little more positive:

- No form of church government is without difficulties
- I enjoyed all the above – but do not miss them
- I have no negative feelings – I always enjoyed deacons’ and church meetings as a minister
- They were usually good
- My experience wasn’t wholly negative: only when malicious people flexed their muscles

COMMENTARY

I identify with those who had a positive experience of collective decision-making. As a result, when I came to write *Radical Leaders: A guide for elders and deacons in Baptist churches*, I wrote as a dedication: “In appreciation of all those deacons who have served with me in my churches in Altrincham and in Chelmsford. To a large degree I am what I am because of them.”⁷⁷ I enjoyed the clash of ideas and opinions, for there I discovered the truth of Proverbs 27.17: “Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens the wits of another”.

⁷⁷ Paul Beasley-Murray, *Radical Leaders: A guide for elders and deacons in Baptist churches* (Baptist Union of Great Britain, Didcot 1997; 2nd edition 2005).

7. YOUR PRESENT CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

1 Baptist identity

Have you retained your membership in a Baptist church?

Yes:	7
No	13

COMMENTARY

From the perspective of Baptist theology it makes no theological sense for retired ministers to retain their membership of a church they no longer attend. For in a Baptist church membership involves an active covenant relationship in which members commit themselves not only to work together for Christ's kingdom, but also to love one another and to stand by one another whatever the cost.

Is your view of ordination and ministry ontological or functional?

Ontological	6
Functional	5
Both	3
Not sure	1
Not answered	5

COMMENTARY

In recent years Baptists have adopted an increasingly 'sacramental' as distinct from a 'functional' approach to

ministry. Paul Goodliff, a former Head of the Department of Ministry for the Baptist Union of Great Britain, who among others has been a ‘champion’ of the sacramental understanding of ministry, has written:

“The ontological concentration is variously conceived, from a lifestyle appropriate to the minister added to an essentially functional approach (the weak case) to a thoroughgoing emphasis on the ontological change wrought in ordination and which sets the minister apart from other members of the church, not in a sacerdotal sense, but in terms of a way of being that is the proper response to the call of God and church to be a minister....

*If the Holy Spirit acts in response to the invocation ‘come, Holy Spirit’ in the context of prayer ministry, why not in response to prayer in the context of ordination? The understanding of the presence of God is more immanent in the charismatic than the utterly mediated presence in a sacramental understanding of ordination, but the emphasis upon what God does, as opposed to what humans do in the ‘real absence’ alternative (witness and promise making) is significant.”*⁷⁸

However, at the risk of being seen as an ‘old-fashioned’ Baptist, I have concerns about this approach, and all the more so when Paul Goodliff says that “we cannot ‘just read the Bible’ and ignore the intervening years”.⁷⁹ Much as I accept that there is a place for tradition, for Baptists tradition must always be subservient to Scripture. From my reading of the New Testament church leaders were not perceived as possessing a special ‘status’ – as distinct from function – in the church.⁸⁰ In

⁷⁸ See Paul Goodliff, *Ministry, Sacrament and Representation: Ministry and Ordination in Contemporary Baptist Theology and the Rise of Sacramentalism* (Regent’s Park College, Oxford 2010) 152.

⁷⁹ Paul Goodliff, *Ministry, Sacrament and Representation*, 153.

⁸⁰ Paul Beasley-Murray, ‘Ordination in the New Testament’ 1-13 and ‘The Ministry of All and the Leadership of Some’ 157-174 in *Anyone For*

Acts 13.2, for instance, although Luke speaks of Paul and Barnabas being ‘set apart’, it is very much a functional being ‘set apart’: i.e. it was first and foremost with a view to being ‘sent off’ on a missionary journey that Paul and Barnabas were ‘appointed’. It cannot be used as a ‘proof text’ to imply that those being ordained belong to a separate ‘order’. As Eduard Schweizer, a great Swiss New Testament scholar, wrote: “It is not a matter of ordination ...It is an ‘installation’ to a particular task”.⁸¹ Nor does the ceremony of ‘laying on of hands’ (see Acts 6.6; 13.3; 14.23; 1 Timothy 4.14; 2 Timothy 1.6) have any ‘ontological’ implications. As David Daube, a distinguished Jewish scholar, shows on the basis of rabbinic evidence, this practice had a twofold purpose: on the one hand it imparted blessing, and on the other hand it delegated authority to leaders in the church discharge the duties of preaching and teaching.⁸²

After careful study of the New Testament understanding of ministry, in a section somewhat provocatively headed ‘Ordination does not involve metamorphosis’, I concluded:

“Through the laying-on-of-hands the ordinand does not become another person, as if another step within the evolutionary process has been reached. Pastors are not brought nearer to God as a consequence of the rite of ordination. There are no first or second class citizens within the kingdom of God. All God’s people are called to be men and women of God.

On the other hand, in order to fulfil their role as leaders of the people of God, pastors do have a special responsibility to develop their relationship with their Lord (see Acts 20.28). Neglect of this relationship negates their ministry. For very practical reasons,

Ordination (Marc/Monarch, Tunbridge Wells 1993) edited by Paul Beasley-Murray

⁸¹ Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament* (English Translation SCM, London 1961) 24c.

⁸² David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (Athlone Press, London 1956).

pastors need to practise what they preach, for otherwise their pastoral authority will be totally undermined. Hence in many ordination rituals ordinands are asked to commit themselves afresh to daily prayer and a daily reading of the Scriptures. However, the living of a holy life is not dependent upon ordination, nor is it an inevitable consequence of ordination. Those who have been ordained still belong to the human race.

Ordination is primarily about recognition and trust. It is not a means of special grace, conferring upon the ordinand some new status. At the most ordination is a special means of grace, in the sense that it is the occasion when prayer is made that God may bless his servants with the infilling and empowering of his Holy Spirit (see 1 Timothy 4.1). This blessing, however, is not to be confined to the day of ordination – for the blessing that is sought is the blessing on all the years of service ahead.”⁸³

Unfortunately, the Baptist scholars who tend to promote an ontological understanding of ordination tend to be theologians – and not New Testament scholars. If Baptists are to be true to their heritage and be ‘radical believers’ who root their theology in the Scriptures, then I believe that they have no other option than to have a functional approach to ministry!

Do you still see yourself as a Baptist minister?

Yes 15

No 5

- No: just a minister
- No: I’m a minister of Christ

⁸³ Paul Beasley-Murray, ‘The Ministry of All and the Leadership of Some’ 166-167.

- Not really: a Christian minister with baptist (NB the small ‘b’) convictions
- No: I follow Jesus Christ, not a denomination
- No: I am retired

Are you still on the Baptist Union accredited list of ministers?

Yes:	18
No:	2

COMMENTARY

The Baptist Union of Great Britain has a Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers, which includes retired ministers. In recent years British Baptists have adopted a covenant understanding of the relationship between ministers (including retired ministers) and the Baptist Union of Great Britain: those who are accredited by the Baptist Union “have entered into a covenant with the Baptist Union to live in conformity with the way of life which this high calling demands and to receive from the Union such support, recognition and trust as befit those who serve Christ in this way”.⁸⁴ Unfortunately, retired ministers believe that the Baptist Union has signally failed in its duty of support for them.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Preface to the *Ministerial Recognition Rules relating to the Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers*, adopted by the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain on 13 October 2016.

⁸⁵ See *Retirement Matters for Ministers*, 102-107.

Do you retain contact with retired Baptist ministers?

Yes:	10
Occasionally or a few	7
No:	3

COMMENTARY

In my previous survey of how Baptist ministers in general experience retirement, 62% belonged to a retired ministers' group – but 38% did not.⁸⁶

Is a regional minister still in touch with you?

Yes:	2
Rarely:	3
No:	15

COMMENTARY

This is in line with my previous survey of how Baptist ministers in general experience retirement: almost four fifths (79%) had experienced no contact with a regional minister since their retirement

⁸⁶ *Retirement Matters for Ministers*, 84.

Do you regularly read the electronic version of the *Baptist Times/Baptists Together*?

Yes: 8
Occasionally: 3
No: 9

- “It makes me tired and dispirited and glad not to be part of it any more)

COMMENTARY

This is in line with my previous survey of retired Baptist ministers: there 36% read the electronic version of the *Baptist Times*.⁸⁷

7.2 Your current identity

Subsequent to your retirement have you been confirmed into the Anglican church?

No 17
Yes: 2
Already confirmed: 1

Do you sometimes ‘feel’ like an Anglican?

No 9

- I am just a Christian
- I feel a member of the broken body of Christ – but his broken body is what Christ gives to the world

⁸⁷ *Retirement Matters for Ministers*, 86.

- I believe that I am a Christian who worships and leads worship in a variety of Christian churches

Yes: 9

- Yes, but mainly I feel like a present-day Christian
- Yes, because I am, and No because I feel more of an interdenominational servant of Christ.
- Yes, sometimes
- Yes, but only when worshipping in my church
- I feel like an Anglo-Baptist

One respondent replied: “I haven’t a clue!”

When you take communion in an Anglican church, do you see yourself technically as a communicant member of another church?

Yes: 4

No: 13

- No: just an accepted Christian ‘with a past’!
- No. I genuinely see myself as a disciple of Christ seeking forgiveness, finding acceptance, and encountering the love of God through the Holy Spirit. I might add that the drama of walking forward and kneeling to receive is particularly meaningful.
- No: simply a member of a local Anglican church
- No: I believe that I am a Christian who worships and leads worship in a variety of Christian churches

7.3 Your sense of belonging

Have you had a pastoral visit from the vicar or lead-minister of the church?

Yes: 15

No: 3

COMMENTARY

Visiting people in their homes is surely a key part of pastoral ministry. It is the best way of building pastoral relationships with others. Unfortunately, pastoral visiting is going out of fashion. In the very week I was writing up this session I received an email from a retired minister with a seriously sick wife who said that the ‘new’ Baptist minister who had been in post for seventeen months had yet to visit them!

Do you feel spiritually ‘accountable’ to the ‘vicar’ or lead-minister?

Yes: 12

- Yes – as far as parish matters are concerned
- Yes only through respect and common decency
- In some ways

No: 4

- Not particularly
- No more than I feel accountable to any other member of Christ’s church.

COMMENTARY

On reflection, perhaps the word ‘accountable’ is a little strong. The point I was seeking to explore was the extent to which retired Baptist ministers in Anglican churches accepted that

the ‘vicar’ or ‘lead minister’ was their ‘pastor’ and as such responsible for their pastoral care, which ideally is not just about helping the hurting but also about encouraging growth and development even in later years.

Do you regard the minister as a friend?

Yes: 16

No: 4

COMMENTARY

Four out of five (80%) of retired Baptist ministers in this survey had a positive relationship with their local Anglican minister. This contrasts with my earlier larger and more general survey on how Baptist ministers experience retirement: there under half (43%) of the respondents said they would “count the minister as a friend”.⁸⁸

On a scale 1-5: To what extent do you feel you belong to your new church?

1 I feel I very much belong: 8

2. I feel I belong: 7

3. Neither one thing or another: 5

Other comments

- I have found my spiritual home
- I feel I very much belong except when there is an infant baptism

⁸⁸ *Retirement Matters for Ministers*, 76.

COMMENTARY

This contrasts with my earlier more general survey on how Baptist ministers experience retirement: there just under two-thirds of respondents felt “very much” (35%) or “quite” (28%) part of the church. Of the remaining respondents, just over one tenth (11%) felt “OK”, while a further fifth felt either “on the edge” (13%) or “very much on the edge” (6%) of their present church.⁸⁹

Inevitably, it is not easy to settle into a new church once we are retired. We are different from those who have grown up in the church, married in the church, had their children grow up – they have many years of experience together. But in spite of this lack of shared experience, I feel very much at home in Chelmsford Cathedral. Initially I wrestled with whether or not I would want my funeral to take place in the Cathedral – ‘nobody really knows me’, I said to myself; ‘few if any would mourn my loss’ – and yet I am now happy at the thought.

⁸⁹ *Retirement Matters for Ministers*, 77.

8. WHAT CAN ANGLICANS AND BAPTISTS LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER?

8.1 In your local context what do you think Anglicans could learn from Baptists?

As one respondent noted, the problem with this question is that no two Anglican ministers (nor Baptist ministers for that matter) are the same, so that generalisations are almost impossible to make. Nonetheless the following matters were mentioned

Corporate decision-making ('discerning the mind of Christ together') 6

The responsibilities of church membership. 5
For example:

- Commitment to one another ('covenanting together')
- Commitment to giving to the church
- Commitment to service (I am amazed at how the vicar has to do everything)

The importance of preaching 4
For example,

- The power of preaching
- Structure in preaching
- Allow more time for preaching (I find our rector and vicar to be thoughtful and well-prepared, but often we don't get *much!* – typical Anglican length although the content is OK)

Baptism is for believers 3

The development of a counter culture identity 3

- Baptism into the lordship of Christ.
- To become disestablished

A little more evangelistic fervour 2

The practice of meaningful pastoral care 2

- Our rector and vicar could spend more time chatting with the congregation after services. They are good with newcomers and with those seeking baptism for children, but not with our congregation.

Learning to pray without prayers written by someone else 1

8.2 In your local context what do you think Baptists could learn from Anglicans?

How to worship God

- Excellence in worship
- Many Baptist churches could learn from the form and standard of worship in Anglican churches
- Richer language in prayer and worship. Music is not the only way to ‘worship’. We can also use ‘said-words’
- Baptists can learn to accept more liturgy
- A stronger sense of awe in worship (2)
- Reverence in worship
- The use of Scripture

- The value of the lectionary
- The importance of intercessory prayer
- The regular confession of sin (including some form of absolution – I prefer words of scripture to that of a mediator priest)
- The declaration of what we believe through a creed or other.
- The centrality of the Lord's Supper
- I believe that Baptists might learn a great deal from the central celebration of the Eucharist, including the practice

An acceptance of difference

6

- The advantages and authenticity of diversity in community rather than a monochrome identity
- A greater freedom and a greater acceptance
- I have found my understanding of the church expanded and liberated – labels are not important to me now – although I am deeply grateful for having received so much from the Baptist family, and I still feel linked with the Baptist family and its heritage
- A little less arrogance at times and a bit more generosity
- To accept each other, and not look down on the other
- Respect one another, listen to one another, and not be defensive about their traditions and emphases without really understanding that God is rather bigger than our own ideas, history and particular practices and beliefs!
- Evangelicals have not a monopoly on truth

Other

- The focus on the community
- Thinking things through more theologically, and not just respond to the pressure of events, inclinations and passing culture

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Beginning a new journey

Anglican churches, like Baptist churches, are very varied. A cathedral, for instance, is very different from a village parish church. Likewise, the retired Baptist ministers responding to this survey are very varied too – not least in their reasons for deciding not to worship in a Baptist church, but rather in an Anglican church.

For some there were practical reasons for moving to an Anglican church: “there is no Baptist church nearby”; or “I used to be the minister of the local Baptist church”. Yet, although for a few these may have been the principal reasons, they were never the only reasons.

The move to worshipping in an Anglican church was for most, if not all, motivated by two key theological factors: negatively, a deep dissatisfaction with present Baptist church life; positively, a great attraction to the breadth and depth of the Anglican church’s worship. It is important to emphasise that none of the respondents began to worship in an Anglican church because they had changed their theological convictions concerning the Baptist way of being church: rather many felt that it was the Baptist churches themselves which had changed. It is significant that most of the respondents still regard themselves as Baptist ministers.

Entering new territory

Interestingly, almost all the retired ministers in this survey are ‘accidental’ worshippers in Anglican churches. For most the decision to attend an Anglican church was taken after retirement. Although making the decision to leave the Baptist ‘family’ proved understandably tough for a few, to my surprise

for almost two-thirds of ministers in this survey the decision proved relatively easy.

Once the decision had been made, there seem to have been no regrets. Three quarters of ministers in this survey said they were either “very happy” or “happy” that they decided to worship in an Anglican church; and the same proportion felt they “belong” or indeed they belong “very much” to their new church. This contrasts with my earlier research of how Baptist ministers experience retirement, where the sense of happiness and of belonging was significantly lower.

The warm welcome the respondents received was a major factor in feeling at home. A number highlighted the kindness and friendship they had experienced from other members of the congregation. In almost all cases the vicar or rector played a key role in the welcome, seeing the retired minister not as a threat, but as a resource; and happily offering opportunities for service in the life of the church. Again, this contrasts with my earlier research of how Baptist ministers experience retirement, where significantly fewer respondents regarded the minister as their friend.

Others highlighted the acceptance of theological difference that they had experienced in the Anglican church. Whereas some Baptist churches are becoming increasingly monochrome in their identity, Anglican churches tend to be more inclusive.

This survey therefore confirms the suggestion of the Anglican minister to whom I referred in the introduction

“Some of the reasons ‘Baptists’ are comfortable ‘Anglicans’ in retirement are because ...

- *They are not seen as a threat to the existing minister in a Baptist church.*
- *Many Anglican vicars/rectors are very comfortable in their leadership position and welcome gifted church members.*

- *They appreciate the fact that the Church of England is a 'broad' Church."*

Exploring new horizons

The experience of a new way of being church with the opportunity to 'reach out beyond' past patterns and practices and 'explore new horizons' has also been appreciated. In the words of one respondent, "I have found my understanding of the church expanded and liberated".

I was surprised to discover the extent to which so many, after a life-time in Baptist ministry, had adjusted to doing church in a new and different way. Although there are major theological differences between Anglican and Baptist ways of being church, relating not least to infant baptism, congregational church government, and priestly concepts of ministry, in one way or another all of the respondents were able to resolve theological challenges involved – even if in some cases it meant just putting the differences to one side.

Around half of the ministers in this survey now find themselves in Anglican churches which are not Evangelical. This experience has offered opportunities for growth and development. As one minister wrote: "I find it an enriching and stretching experience to listen to clergy seeking to expound Scripture with different perspectives from my own".

Then, of course, all the ministers in this survey have had to adjust to new ways of worshipping. Almost without exception they have developed an appreciation for the Anglican liturgy – in the words of one respondent, "I have been surprised at the variety present within the common liturgical framework". Many have come to love the weekly opportunity to 'feed' on Christ within the context of the Eucharist, even although initially they may have found it strange to have so little time to meditate at the 'altar' as they receive the bread and wine.

Extending our whole being

Above all the respondents have delighted in the opportunity that liturgical worship has given them to ‘extend their whole being’. Repeatedly appreciation was expressed for the breadth and depth of Anglican worship over against some of the present patterns of worship in many Baptist churches. In this regard some words of Bishop Todd Hunger are pertinent:

*“There is something in the air today, something in the spirit of our age, something in the Spirit that is leading thousands, maybe millions, of people to reconsider liturgical forms of worship. Liturgical seekers cherish the confidence that comes from historical connectedness, from theology that is not tied to the whims of contemporary culture but to apostolic-era understandings of Christian faith and practice. Our frantic lives make us yearn for rhythms and routines that build the spiritual health we seek. For many of us the architecture, theatre seating and structure of our former churches said to us, ‘Sit back, relax and receive what comes to you from the stage’. While having no need to criticise that, there is a hunger in many churchgoers today for a Sunday ethos that says, ‘Sit up, be alert and participate’.”*⁹⁰

So-called ‘contemporary’ worship as experienced in many Baptist churches is not always as people-friendly as its proponents make out. It does not satisfy. What is more, for many – and not just for the retired – worship in Baptist and other independent churches has lost its sense of the numinous. In some churches worship is more about producing ‘ecstasy’ than about encountering God himself. Andrew Walker and Robin Parry in their powerful critique of such worship wrote:

“If we position worship as a form of Christian entertainment we will shape Christians who consume worship as a product; Christians that move from one worship ‘high’ to the next,

⁹⁰ Todd Hunter, *The Accidental Anglican*, 14.

*chasing one stimulating event after another; Christians that assess how good the worship was by how fuzzy it made them feel; and Christians that will leave one congregation for another with little hesitation if a more entertaining gathering springs up in another church. But this kind of worship is, at rock bottom, all about me, and God is approached as if he were under some obligation to keep me happy. He is my drug of choice, but if he gets boring, I'll move one.”*⁹¹

If worship is to be truly satisfying, if worship is to lead into the presence of God, if worship is to provide the norms and inspiration for living, then there must be structure and direction. Freedom without form all too often means that worship becomes an emotional experience, which does not actually meet the needs of the heart.

Opening up new vistas

As my wife and I said in an interview for Chelmsford Cathedral:

*“After some hesitation not least on Paul’s part, we decided to try the Cathedral and to our delight were made very welcome. People sometimes speak of the anonymity of a cathedral, but our experience has been different: when Caroline was unwell, people have showed real interest and concern, and for that we have been grateful. Although the Cathedral’s way of doing church is very different from what we have been used to, we have developed an appreciation for the Anglican liturgy with its focus on the Eucharist – and have enjoyed the preaching too! We have enjoyed the declaring of our common faith through the saying of the Nicene Creed, although with we feel a little embarrassed that at our stage in life we have yet to know the words by heart.”*⁹²

⁹¹ Andrew G. Walker & Robin A. Parry, *Deep Church Rising: Recovering the Roots of Christian Orthodoxy* (SPCK, London 2014) 98.

⁹² ‘Face to Face with Paul and Caroline Beasley-Murray’, *Chelmsford Cathedral News*, Summer 2015

To our amazement, the Cathedral has become our spiritual home. And what is true of us appears to be true of almost all the respondents in this survey. The overwhelming impression from the survey is that worshipping in an Anglican church has opened up ‘new vistas’ for retired Baptist ministers. To their surprise and delight most of them have discovered that they have enjoyed ‘entering into new territory’ at this stage of life. In the words of David Adam’s poem with which I began this report:

*“The Terminus is not where we stay,
It is the beginning of a new journey.
It is where we reach out beyond,
where we experience new adventures.
It is where we get off to enter new territory,
to explore new horizons, to extend our whole being.
It is a place touching the future.
It opens up new vistas.
It is the gateway to eternity.”*

APPENDIX 1:

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE EXPERIENCE OF RETIRED BAPTIST MINISTERS WORSHIPPING IN ANGLICAN CHURCHES: FEBRUARY 2018

1. ABOUT YOU PRIOR TO ORDINATION

1.1 Name and age

Name (this will be kept confidential)

Year of birth

Age as at 1st March 2019

1.2 Early years

Were you brought up in a Baptist home?

How old were you when you were baptised as a believer?

1.3 Experience of Anglican worship prior to ordination

Were you baptised in the Church of England?

As a child or a young person did you attend an Anglican church?

Did you attend an Anglican church while at university?

Were you at any stage confirmed prior to your ordination?

Other experience (please state)

1.4 Education before training for the ministry

Did you train as an apprentice?

Did you gain a professional qualification?

Did you go to college or university? If so, what degree(s) did you gain:

Were you in employment?

1.5 Ministerial training

What college(s) did you attend

What academic qualification(s) did you gain?

2. ABOUT YOUR PAST MINISTRY

2.1 Date of ordination

2.2 Experience of ministry

What churches did you serve?

What appointments did you hold?

What, if any, ecumenical experience did you have?

How many years did you serve in stipendiary ministry?

2.3 Your worship style as a Baptist minister

Did you often/sometimes use the lectionary in your preaching?

Did you normally follow the church year, marking not only Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, but also Advent and Lent?

Did you ensure that every service contained at least two if not three Scripture readings (OT/NT/Psalm/Gospel)?

Did you normally write out your public prayers?

Did you often use 'set' prayers?

Did you always preside at the Lord's Supper?

2.4 Retirement

Date of retirement

How long have you been retired from stipendiary ministry?

3. DECIDING TO WORSHIP IN AN ANGLICAN CHURCH

3.1 Churches

How near is the Anglican church in which you worship?

On average, how many attend the morning service(s)?

How near is your nearest Baptist church?

On average, how many attend the morning service(s)?

3.2 What is the churchmanship of the Anglican church in which you worship

Evangelical (Low Church)

Middle of the road

High Church

Charismatic

Other (please specify)

3.3 When did you first decide to worship in an Anglican church?

Before retirement

After retirement

3.4 How soon after retirement did you begin to worship in an Anglican church?

More or less immediately

Less than a year

More than a year: if so, how many years after retirement

3.5 Your spouse

How did your spouse feel about the move?

3.6 The decision

On a scale of 1 – 5: To what extent did you struggle to make the decision?

1 (really tough); 2 (tough); 3 (neither tough nor easy); 4 (easy); 5 (very easy)

On a scale of 1 – 5, to what extent are you happy you made the decision?

1 (very happy); 2 (happy); 3 (neither happy nor sad); 4 (sad); 5 (very sad)

3.7 Frequency of attendance

Do you normally worship every Sunday in an Anglican church?

If not, then how often do you attend Sunday worship

3.8 Why do you worship in an Anglican church?

There is no Baptist church nearby

The local Baptist church is too 'charismatic'

The worship at the local Baptist church has little order

The local Baptist church has no minister

The lack of depth of the preaching in the Baptist church

The local Baptist church is unfriendly

I used to be the minister of the local Baptist church

Baptist churches are no longer what I understood Baptist to mean

I am unhappy with the Baptist Union's current 'direction of travel'

I am attracted by the breadth and depth of the Anglican church's worship

I am attracted by the Anglican church's evangelical teaching

I am attracted by the variety of worship now possible in the Anglican church

I am attracted by the greater evangelistic potential of the Anglican church

I appreciate the vicar/rector

The parish church serves the whole community

Please feel free to elaborate on why you have not stayed in a Baptist church

3.9 Morning prayer v. Parish Eucharist

What is the balance of (morning) Eucharistic services?

Almost exclusively Eucharistic

50/50

Other (please specific)

3.10 Lay participation

Do lay leaders share in the leadership of the services?

Do lay-leaders read the main Scripture 'lessons'?

Do lay leaders lead the intercessory prayers?

Do lay leaders of the congregation take these roles?

3.10 Your involvement in the Anglican church (please note if past or present)

I preach (how often?)

I preside at communion

I assist with communion

I help to lead worship

I serve as a welcomer

I lead funerals

I lead a home group

I help with pastoral care

I am a member of the PCC

Other:

3.11 Official permission

Has the bishop given you specific permission to serve in the church where you worship?

Did you have to have an informal 'interview'?

What 'constraints', either implicit or explicit, were laid on you?

Please elaborate

4. WHAT DO YOU APPRECIATE ABOUT ANGLICAN WORSHIP?

To what extent do you appreciate

- the liturgical framework
- carefully crafted prayers
- the abundance of Scripture
- the opportunity to confess your faith every week
- the giving and receiving of the peace
- the centrality of the Eucharist?

What else do you find helpful?

5. WHAT DO YOU SOMETIMES FIND DIFFICULT ABOUT THE ANGLICAN WAY OF BEING THE CHURCH?

5.1 How well do you cope with

- the practice of infant baptism
- the emphasis on priesthood
- the form of church government
- the concept of hierarchy in the church
- the blurring of boundaries between church and state
- the repetition of liturgical words and prayers each week

Is there anything else you find difficult?

5.2 Do you – or would you – have difficulty if the theology of **the local bishop** (as distinct from the local ‘vicar’) is markedly different from yours?

5.3 **How do you come to terms with the fact that technically your ordination is not fully recognised?** [In the context of Local Ecumenical Projects a bishop may “authorize the holding in a place of worship of the Church of England... of services of Holy Communion presided over by a minister of any other participating Church” - but “no such service, notwithstanding that the form of service used may follow a form authorized under Canon B 1 or a form substantially similar thereto, shall be held out or taken to be a celebration of the Holy Communion according to the use of the Church of England” [Canon 45].

5.4 Do you find that **sacramental worship** can be a **deterrent to outsiders**?

6. WHAT DO YOU SOMETIMES MISS ABOUT THE BAPTIST WAY OF BEING THE CHURCH?

6.1 What do you sometimes miss in a positive way?

The Baptist way of doing communion (e.g. the serving of one another, the intensity of receiving bread and wine)

The opportunity to discern the mind of Christ together in church meetings

The 'spiritual high' of a service of believers' baptism

The evangelistic challenge of believers' baptism

The fellowship of believers

The fellowship of former peers in Baptist ministry

Please elaborate

What do you sometimes miss in a negative way?

Deacons meetings

Church meetings

Collective decision making

Please elaborate

7. YOUR PRESENT CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

7.1 Baptist identity

Have you retained your membership in a Baptist church?

Is your view of ordination and ministry ontological or functional?

Do you still see yourself as a Baptist minister?

Are you still on the Baptist Union list of accredited ministers?

Do you retain contact with retired Baptist ministers?

Is a regional minister still in touch with you?

Do you regularly read the electronic version of the *Baptist Times/Baptists Together*?

7.2 Your current identity

Subsequent to your retirement have you been confirmed into the Anglican church?

Do you sometimes 'feel' like an Anglican?

When you take communion in an Anglican church, do you see yourself technically as a communicant member of another church?

7.3 Your sense of belonging

Have you had a pastoral visit from the vicar or lead-minister of the church?

Do you feel spiritually 'accountable' to the 'vicar' or lead-minister?

Do you regard the minister as a friend?

On a scale 1-5: To what extent do you feel you belong to your new church?

1 I feel I very much belong; 2. I feel I belong; 3. Neither one thing or another; 3. I don't feel I belong; 5. I very much feel I don't belong

8. WHAT CAN ANGLICANS AND BAPTISTS LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER?

8.1 In your local context what do you think Anglicans could learn from Baptists?

8.2 In your local context what do you think Baptists could learn from Anglicans?

APPENDIX TWO: PUBLICATIONS BY PAUL BEASLEY-MURRAY SINCE HIS RETIREMENT

Living Out the Call – Book One: Living for God’s Glory; Book Two: Leading God’s People; Book Three: Reaching out to God’s World; Book Four: Serving God’s People (Feed-a-read, revised edition, 2016: available on Amazon). “This is the most comprehensive practical introduction to ministry currently available” – Derek Tidball.

Happy Ever After? A workbook for couples preparing for marriage (College of Baptist Ministers, Chelmsford 2017). Biblically-based and solidly practical, it covers everything from money to matrimonial disagreement, from coming to terms with the past to sharing jobs in the house.

A Loved One Dies: help in the first few weeks (College of Baptist Ministers, Chelmsford 2017). It gives down-to earth advice on how to arrange the funeral service, and the many other practical matters that arise after a death. It also provides clear thoughts on the Christian understanding of death to help the bereaved discover hope where at first there is only sadness.

This Is My Story: a story of life, faith, and ministry (Wipf and Stock, Eugene, Oregon 2018). “This is a book for pastors – and for any Christian – who want the “inside story” of the pains and triumphs of a Christian leader”.

Retirement Matters for Ministers: A report into how into how Baptist ministers experience retirement (College of Baptist Ministers, Chelmsford 2018). Issues explored include the transition to retirement; housing and finance; health; friendships; family; and ministry in retirement.

Making the Most of Retirement: A guide for ministers (Bible Reading Fellowship, Abingdon 2020). This is the first book on retirement written from a distinctively British perspective.

Paul Beasley-Murray also writes a weekly blog, *Church Matters*, which has a world-wide following: see www.paulbeasleymurray.com

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