

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR BAPTISTS WHO MOVE TO AN AREA WHERE THERE IS NO BAPTIST CHURCH

PURPOSE

The purpose of these guidelines is to offer help to those people who move to an area where there is no Baptist Church who are both concerned to be involved as a Christian locally, and who wish to retain their Baptist identity and links.

GUIDELINES

In many places it is likely that, along with the pub, the church will be at the heart of the community – the natural gathering place and first point of contact with local Christians and their perception of Christian witness and service.

Through prayer we need to ask what God wants us to do in this place; how we may be used in God's service here; what potential may be released and what possibilities opened up if we identify ourselves with the local church, worshipping and working with the members.

The Christian presence in the community may be weak, in which case our gifts, insights and experience might be an invaluable resource.

If the church is thriving, we might equally want to add our strength and enthusiasm to theirs.

The potential needs to be there for fruitful interchange and reciprocity, so the attitude of the local minister is crucial.

As Baptist we have our own riches to share, and we may be enriched through other traditions. This two-way process may be source of mutual blessing.

If, after a period of time we felt unable to settle, then we might need to try somewhere else.

Some questions to ask:

- ◆ **Does it seem right to identify myself with the local worshipping community and to become actively involved?**
- ◆ **What would I gain/lose if I continued to worship in a Baptist church some miles away?**
- ◆ **What would the community and God's mission in it gain/lose if I did so?**
- ◆ **Is a dual allegiance to a Baptist church some miles away and the local worshipping community a possibility? How would this work out in practice?**

NOTES

1 The following denominations have agreed policies for local churches to use whereby a person may be involved in the local church whilst retaining their links to another denomination:-

The Church of England
The Methodist Church
The United Reformed Church
The Roman Catholic Church

Copies of these are available from the Ecumenical Administrator at Baptist House.

2 In most cases, the Church of England will be present in an area where there is no Baptist church. The following are extracts from relevant Church of England Canons which you may find useful. They explain what, as a Baptist, you are entitled to in any Church of England church.

2.1 Canon B15A (1972) enables the admission to Holy Communion of "baptised persons who are communicant members of other Churches which subscribe to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and who are in good standing in their own Church..."

If anyone by virtue of this provision "regularly receives the Holy Communion over a long period which appears likely to continue indefinitely, the minister shall set before him the normal requirements of the Church of England for communicant status of that Church."

2.2 The Church Representation Rules 1995 enable a person to be enrolled if she/he is baptised, sixteen years or upwards and declares themselves to be a member in good standing of a Church which subscribes to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity ... and also prepared to declare himself to be a member of the Church of England having habitually attended public worship in the parish during a period of six months prior to enrolment. Making this declaration also confers eligibility to stand for election to the decision making bodies of the Church of England.

2.3 Canon B43 (1989) says

1.-(1) A minister or lay person who is a member in good standing of a Church to which this Canon applies and is a baptised 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
- b) to read the Holy Scripture 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 Solemnisation 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 if the minister or lay person is authorised to perform a similar duty in his or her own Church."