

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 Baptists 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 on the CTE website.

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 2020 enable a member of a church other than the Church of England to be entered on the electoral roll if she/he is baptised, sixteen years or upwards, is a member in good standing of a Church that subscribes to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and declares that she/he is also a member of the Church of England having habitually attended public worship in the parish for six months. Being entered on the electoral roll confers eligibility both to vote at parochial church meetings and to stand for election to the decision making bodies of the Church of England.

2.3 Canon B43 (2019) says

1. (1) A person who is a minister or lay member of a designated Church, and who is baptised, may be invited to perform any relevant duty in a parish church or other place of worship in a parish or in a cathedral church.

(2) Each of the following is a “relevant duty” —

(a) saying or singing Morning or Evening Prayer or the Litany or officiating at a Service of the Word;

(b) reading the Holy Scriptures;

(c) preaching at a service;

(d) leading the Intercessions at the Holy Communion or leading prayers;

(e) assisting at Baptism or the Solemnization of Matrimony or conducting a Funeral Service;

(f) assisting in the distribution of the holy sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to the people at the Holy Communion.