

REFLECTIONS and THOUGHTS on the FUTURE of BAPTIST MINISTRY

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INTRODUCTION

Prediction is very difficult, especially if it's about the future. Nils Bohr, Nobel laureate in Physics.

It was during Lent that I was invited to do some work, contemplating the future of Baptist ministry over the next decade. Lent is a season of preparation, a period of intentionally seeking God, examining our hearts, repenting and re-orientating our lives in ways that deepen faith and lead to a greater obedience to God's Word and a greater awareness of his Spirit's leading. It's a time of walking humbly, reflecting on the past, participating in the present and pondering the future. I have concluded on the fourth Sunday after Trinity, in what is described as ordinary time in the church calendar. The Old Testament reading for today is from the book of Lamentations, reminding us that; *the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies are new every morning and his faithfulness is great.* A timely reminder and a wonderful encouragement as we face the challenges and opportunities of ministry in a changing world.

It was Bob Dylan who wrote, *The times they are a changing.* We know this to be a reality in our lives, ministries, church and the wider world today.

My favourite definition of leadership states *that the first task of leadership is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant.*

No attempt to *define reality* for those of us in Baptist ministry could pretend that we are not in a challenging and complex season, affecting leaders, churches, Associations and our Union.

Whilst we might be longing to hear the words, *Peace, peace*, the reality for so many is that there is little or no peace.

The considerable turmoil and uncertainty created by the financial pressures that many of our colleagues face, has triggered many challenges and some significant changes. Allied to exercising ministry within an increasingly post-Christendom context, in a dominant consumer culture, together with all the consequences of busyness, the disorientating effects of globalisation, people's reluctance to take responsibility and the complex and conflicting demands upon our time, energies and resources, is no easy calling.

As we address the challenges before us, alone and together, there is great value in reflection and imagination. In Alan Smith and Peter Shaw's book, *The Reflective Leader*, they point out that the popular caricature of a great leader is an activist who leads from the front, often through force of personality and charisma, driving a company, organisation or church forward. But **there is another side to leadership** that is now being regarded in both faith and secular contexts; the intuitive ability to reflect on our own strengths and weaknesses, as well as the communities, fellowships or organisations that we lead. An approach to leadership that draws on wisdom, reflection, the ability to identify key issues, weighing up risks, nurturing

understanding, building trust, listening and facilitating a common purpose built on shared values.

The purpose of my research has been to reflect, imagine and envisage some of the things that the future might hold for Baptist ministry.

My methodology could be described as the weaving together of several strands: prayerful reflection, reading, some empirical research, conversations and correspondence with individuals, groups, at ministers meetings, fellowships, colleges and Association gatherings. It is not a comprehensive study but the prayerfully considered thoughts of someone who is a Baptist minister committed to Baptists Together and passionate about leadership and ministry in a changing church and culture of the 21st Century. I do believe that I am able to offer a privileged and, in some ways a unique perspective as someone who, whilst living and embracing my vocation with the Northumbria Community, on the margins, travels extensively and roams across our denominational life serving ministers, churches, Associations, Colleges and the Union in addition to my work in other denominational settings and some secular contexts. The privilege that I've enjoyed for over 20 years, with my wider, trans-local ministry has enabled me to meet with people right across the denomination which, I believe, has enabled me to offer a cross fertilisation of perspectives and ideas.

I hope that my contribution will help in the Ministry Review process being conducted this year. No-one can definitively map the future but we can explore possibilities and in recognising the issues, raise the right questions and begin to address some of the challenges and be awakened to the opportunities that inevitably change brings.

I hope that what I offer will help us in our explorations of how we see and understand some of the things that are happening within **our life together as a missional movement**. I hope to help us think about those issues that we most worry about as well as revealing some aspects of ministry with which we need to be concerned and provide a rough guide to explore the ways in which we might address these things.

In addressing these issues and facing decisions that will need to be taken, we might discover turning points in our lives, ministries and life as a Union. My prayer is that these turning points, by the grace of God, may prove to be gifts of renewal and transformation for our life, alone and together.

When people use the phrase 'road map', it often conjures the notion of clarity. We like to think of maps as objective sources of information but the history of cartography would challenge this view as maps continually need updating as well as revealing the different intentions and emphasis of the map-maker. For example, the European maps of the exploration of America represented and renamed the land as it appeared to those who were colonising the continent. By excluding the place names of the native Americans, these maps

were ignored, erased and denied the legitimacy of their claims to the territory. Inevitably when we think about the future, 'mapping it out' or creating any 'road maps' these constructions are based on and shaped by our own culture, background, life experiences and desires. Any such map making has its limitations but can nevertheless provide some waymarks to guide our paths.

I have gleaned information and insights from my conversations with people involved in Baptist ministry over many years. I have drawn extensively from these many conversations. I had intended to construct a questionnaire and conduct some 'interviews' with a whole range of people for this report but quickly realised that by proposing such a prescriptive set of questions that I was likely to obtain answers that were limited. So I have conducted conversations that were much more open and enabled me to 'go with the flow' and trace the dominant issues, concerns, understanding and insights that others have on the subject. I realise of course that my reflections raise more questions than provide answers and some of my thoughts will provoke different responses and reactions. I offer them humbly and with the prayerful desire that there may be something in this 'offering' that might help serve the union on God's purposes in the coming days.

I am of the firm belief that our strength is found in our diversity and the riches of our life together as a Union is found both in our unity in Christ, an embracing of core values and our commitment to living out his gospel in the myriad expressions of our Baptist life.

I have found the whole experience stimulating as well as challenging and enlightening. Several times throughout the process I have had to review and redraw my 'maps' as I have faced emerging issues, had my assumptions and perceptions challenged and discovered new insights.

The experience has reinforced my belief that research and reflection, as in this review, is a really necessary component for the wellbeing of any aspect of our life and ministry, whether locally, regionally or nationally.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have served the Union in this task and am indebted to my Companions and colleagues in the Northumbria Community who released me and blessed me in being able to conduct this piece of work.

I pray that the fruit of my own and others involved in the Ministry Review will help in the renewing and reimagining of our life together and serve the purpose of God's kingdom coming *'here on earth as it is in heaven'*.

A. THE WIDER CONTEXT and ITS INFLUENCES

We should not consider a Ministry Review in isolation from some of the wider cultural contexts. We need to note some of the trends and happenings within society from which we get both an insight into what's happening in the heart and to the human psyche but also we get little glimpses of what such things might say that will inform our future.

Hallmarks of Contemporary Culture

1. Financial constraints...

The global, financial recession of 2008 is considered by many economists to have been the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930's. Its consequences swept like a financial tsunami through the Baptist Union and many local churches, Associations and national resource are living through the aftermath of such an economic disaster. Ministries have come under pressure, some churches are struggling to afford paid ministry, redundancies have been made and the scarcity of financial resources has put considerable pressure on those who have retained their positions. We have had to adapt and change fairly rapidly to the new financial climate, and like many other organisations across the public, private and charitable sector, measures are required to cut costs. These financial constraints have led to some major changes and with them has come the dangers of fear, protectionism and fragmentation borne of insecurity. We face the reality of considerably fewer resources to do the same amount of work, with ministers and other staff feeling at times overwhelmed and under stress.

2. Consumerism...

Arguably the dominant world view impacting the lives of those in Western society is that of consumerism. As the philosopher Baudrillard says, *Consumerism is a system of meaning*. Consequently people assign value to themselves and others based on the accumulation of goods and experiences. One's identity is constructed by what we own, wear, drive, listen to, etc. In short, we are what we consume. It explains why shopping is the number one cultural pursuit of people in Britain today.

Consumerism represents an alternative source of meaning to Christianity. It is the world view through which people interpret everything else, including God, the gospel and church. When Christianity is approached from a consumerist perspective, it becomes just one more brand to consume along with Starbucks, Apple, Gap, etc.

The demotion of Jesus Christ from *Lord to label* leads to living as a Christian that no longer carries the idea of obedience and good works but rather the consumption of Christian things or experiences. Faith and the church get absorbed as another consumer activity and does not lead to transformation. Worse, Jesus becomes a name on a car sticker or the cross, a piece of

jewellery that is worn not out of allegiance to following the crucified One but as a fashion accessory or, more subtly, an endorsing symbol of a consumerist lifestyle. Consequently, Christians no longer live differently from the surrounding consumer culture.

The pressure upon ministers and churches is to attract, relate and entertain consumers. Consequently and unintentionally, a consumer-driven model of church and ministry permeates so much of Christendom. Faith becomes like the buying of material goods, a matter of individual choice and self expression. Corporate models, marketing strategies and secular, consumerist business values are evidenced within ministers and church ministries. In order to appeal to a consumer culture, the danger is that we commodify ministry and church life. e.g. church logos, advertising campaigns and choosing a church for many isn't so much about finding a place to learn and live out the Christian faith. It's more about "church shopping" to find a fellowship that we feel most comfortable in and which best expresses our lifestyle choices. The challenge to minister and reach out with the gospel is immense, for in consumer culture, the customer, not Christ, is king.

3. Litigation Culture

The shocking, horrendous and wicked cases of abuse are a salutary reminder of the sin and deprivation that scars society and sadly it is something the church and some of its ministers have not been immune from. There are issues about accountability and supervision that will be addressed later in this report.

However, the growth in litigation cases and *compensation culture* carries some dangerous consequences. The social costs of litigation threaten relationships and undermine the confidence of anyone who relates and cares for others. The corrosive impact of the fear of litigation upon those in the caring professions is immense. It seriously undermines people's ability to take risks, reach out and relate to people on the basis of trust rather than contract and what has been described as a "cotton wool culture" is in some ways damaging children's and young peoples development.

The decline of an ethos of care, either directly or indirectly, is being increasingly linked to concerns about litigation. The fear of litigation can impede people in ministry and other healthcare workers from doing what those who they care for really need. It discourages ministers from acting according to their 'professional' judgement, when faced with the risk of a potential claim against them.

4. The technological revolution...

Alvin Toffler, the American writer and futurist, described three types of societies based on the concept of 'waves'; each wave pushing the older societies and cultures aside. The first wave was the settled Agricultural Society, which replaced the Hunter Gatherer cultures. The second

wave was the Industrial Age Society, beginning in Western Europe with the Industrial Revolution and subsequently spreading across the world. This wave is based on mass production, distribution, consumption, education, media, entertainment and also weapons of mass destruction. He said these things, combined with standardisation and centralisation end up with overwhelming bureaucracy.

The third wave he described as the Post Industrial Society and the primary characteristic of this wave is that of information and technology. In this society, things like the world wide web, social media and other means of communication revolutionise the way the world both works and people interact with one another. Psychotherapists talk about 'infobesity' or 'information overload' where we are deluged with information and it becomes increasingly difficult to extract ourselves from the immediacy of communications. The challenge to allow technology to serve society and in turn ministry rather than dominating and determining such things is complex.

5. Short termism...

We live in a culture where the pressure is to perform and produce immediate results, to achieve in the short term. Rapid responses and immediate goals are paramount. The pressure upon ministers to "deliver the goods" and quickly is immense.

6. An unwillingness to be sacrificial...

The call of Jesus to take up a cross, deny oneself and follow him runs contrary to a "me" culture, where satisfying self and ones personal needs is prevalent.

In contrast, the call to ministry, reminds us of the imperative to serve, to lay down our lives for the sake of others, to "decrease that He might increase", all counter cultural traits. This plays itself out in some church and ministry circles by an unwillingness of people to move into some of the challenging, unfashionable places and situations. In a different denominational context I know how very difficult, sometimes almost impossible it is to get people to move into some northern parishes, particularly if they are urban, estate cultures or in rural environments. I suspect that sadly, we too, as a denomination, are not immune from such a charge.

7. Busyness...

Ghandi said, *there is more to life than increasing its speed*, but life has got faster. The pace and pressure is intensifying. Decisions and policies are made and implemented more quickly. For many people under fifty, if they are working and if they are in a relationship, their partner or spouse will also be working, so home and family life becomes more frenetic.

In the workplace, businesses and organisations have to respond more rapidly to the needs and expectations of their clients.

The addiction to the pace of life is damaging to body, mind and spirit. However, the idea of a minister modelling a different pace leaves them victims of others feeling that they are being short changed or their leader is lazy or unproductive.

8. Pluralism, Many World Views and a Plethora of Minority Groups...

In Garrison Keillor's tales of Lake Wobegon, Val Tollefson complains that Pastor Ingqvist of the Lutheran church mumbles and murmurs a lot. *He never comes straight out, Tollefson says. He never puts the hay down where the goats can get it."*

Putting the hay down where the goats can get it is a challenge for the church in every era. But the goats seem to be moving more rapidly these days! They are more mobile, more consumer-oriented, and busier than they once were. They have more options for amusement, more claims on their allegiance, less loyalty to a denomination, and higher expectations for fulfillment.

I wonder if, in our preoccupation with reaching the goats, we have not *forgotten the hay?*. Meanwhile, church-growth consultants insist that those who reckon themselves guardians of the hay do not understand the goats. The sociologist Nancy Ammerman focuses on the interaction between congregations and their surrounding communities. Like any ecology, as the environment changes, new life forms emerge and old ones fade. Although such change involves pain, Ammerman sees it as a good thing. The ability to adapt to the environment becomes key to survival.

For most of the 2,000-year existence of the church, the ecological system has changed relatively slowly. **But today, everything is changing rapidly.** Musical tastes, ethnic composition, economic conditions, geographic mobility, and educational background shift like plates along the San Andreas fault, and churches that fail to respond to these changes are likely to fall through the cracks.

Society is becoming increasingly diverse and many world views are evidenced within Britain today. Christianity finds itself as just one and sometimes a minority voice within a multi-cultural, diverse society.

9. Post-Christendom... Secularism...

The Judeo Christian tradition that has shaped so much of Western culture is no longer the meta narrative that it once was. As Alan Hirsch has said *put simply the church finds itself in a Post Christendom era, and it had better do some serious reflection or face increasing decline and eventual irrelevance.* Or as Callum Brown in his book, 'The Death of Christian Britain – Understanding Secularisation 1800 to 2000' wrote; *What is taking place is not merely the continued decline or organised Christianity but the death of the culture which formally conferred Christian*

identity upon the British people as a whole. If a core identity survives for Britain's it is certainly no longer Christian. The culture of Christianity has gone in the Britain of the new millennium.

All the statistics point to a decline of the Western church, where regular attendance or affiliation to any church shows a downward trend. Interestingly, numbers among the unchurched believers and dechurched believers rises. Profiles of churches reveal aging congregations, relatively few children and young people and the missing generations of those between 18 and 45. Less than 3% of people in their 20s and 30s go to church.

In the last two decades of the 20th century the number of young people up to 18 involved in church life has halved.

Over a third of the population of Britain have never had any meaningful contact with any church of any denomination. Almost another third who used to be involved, often as children, but have no affiliation to church any longer.

Almost 10% of the population belong to other world faiths. To two thirds of the adult population of Britain, church is an alien world.

I don't think that we have the statistics of regular worshippers in our Baptist churches but I'm sure that there will be parallels between ourselves and the Church of England, where worshippers, are on average, 15 years older than the average age of the population.

On an average Sunday, 7% of the population go to church, (this figure is significantly buoyed up by the black and minority ethnic churches, predominantly in London). The figures are stark and a salutary reminder to us of the missional challenge, to re-evangelise our nation.

The gap between ourselves as Christians and those who do not share faith in Christ, is widening. We face as many challenges as those cross-cultural missionaries in other parts of the world. Once we pass into the third generation of people who have no real awareness of the Christian story, **we have entered a new, challenging missional territory.**

There are no simple answers or prepackaged programmes for the re-evangelisation of Britain.

One of the phrases that has become popular in missional circles is that of, *seeing what God is doing in the neighbourhood and joining in*. It is based on the assumption that the Holy Spirit is at work, ahead of us, and when we go to a new group or context, we are joining with God in giving expression to his love and compassion for the world.

The Church of Scotland report, *Church Without Walls*, expressed a very important theological conviction which is foundational to what it means to be a missional church or missional movement; *People with Jesus at the centre, travelling wherever Jesus takes us*. Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, reminds us that 'church' is what happens when

people encounter the risen Christ and commit themselves to sustaining and deepening that encounter in their encounter with each other. There is plenty of theological room for diversity of rhythm and style, so long as we have ways of identifying the same living Christ at the heart of every expression of Christian life in common. For him, 'church' is an event and experience around the risen Christ before it is an institution or anything else.

Without any shadow of doubt, the pervasive influence of secularism, the lure and addiction to consumerism, the growth of pluralism and the menacing threat of religious fundamentalism reminds and provides us as Baptists of the Post Christendom missional challenges and opportunities we must engage with.

10. Post-Christendom... Secularism...

Don't it always seem to go, That you don't know what you've got Till it's gone, They paved paradise and put up a parking lot, Joni Mitchell.

We are living through a period of history that carries with it a great sense of dislocation. The upheaval is such that as the poet *Yeats* said: *the centre cannot hold*. There is a good deal of anxiety felt in global society at present, as the things which seemed fixed are beginning to change, if not fall apart.

As *Mike Riddell*, a radical Kiwi, former Baptist and now Catholic has said:

The great ship of Western culture has been listing, terminally holed below the waterline.... The church, as one cultural vessel among many, finds itself in troubled waters. On the one hand, the shape of the church is itself floundering in the crosscurrents of cultural transition. And on the other, it has become a sort of hospital ship, attracting refugees from a former era who find in it hope of a return to more familiar waters. To employ a much-overworked analogy; there is a good deal of rearranging of the deckchairs, not to mention angry arguments on the bridge. Meanwhile, some distressed passengers are leaping overboard, preferring their chances in the open sea.

11. The Big Issue ~ What do we mean by 'the Gospel'?

I believe that one of the biggest tasks anyone in ministry must ask, given the changing cultural and missiological context we find ourselves in, is what do we mean by *the gospel*?

Many of our assumed and inherited understandings of the gospel have been challenged by the changing context we find ourselves in. It's not so much that the core values of the gospel change but rather our understanding of them. Hermeneutics is enlightened and challenged by an increasing awareness of the impact of culture on our 'interpretive maps'. How we communicate the faith is radically challenged and needs reassessing in our changing world. What was Good News to former generations may not be considered such by our contemporaries.

I fear that as ministers we are caught between a number of contrasting polarities:

The pressure to compromise and create a gospel that is more easily digestible like some fast food that has no fibre, protein or carbohydrates. In ministry we are under pressure to deliver, make the faith more palatable so that consumers will partake in what we have on offer.

Bombarded by the prevailing cultural waves that crash in on our thinking, feeling and practising of ministry, to protect ourselves from the onslaught, we can resort to a fundamentalism that appears to give stability and security but ultimately is rooted in fear not faith and avoids the questions and issues that we have to address as disciples of Christ, believers, ministers, asking, *how can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land*.

The idea of acknowledging that our understandings of the 'gospel' may be limited by the context in which it was first thought of is quite disturbing. It challenges our assumptions, our beliefs and practices of ministry.

An 'ostrich, bury our heads in the sand' approach to ministry is not being faithful to the gospel but is rather, lamentable and irresponsible. From issues of human sexuality, the environment, consumerism, racism, sexism, sectarianism, etc we have to question and re-evaluate our understanding of what the gospel is within these and other contextual issues.

I believe that ministry demands that we ask these fundamental questions about what the gospel is in contemporary society because it fundamentally will inform what ministry is and what the characteristics of a missional movement are.

On the ground and at the 'local' level there is the emergence of missional movements who are re-evaluating and re-imagining the content of the gospel for our changing world. They are regarded by some with suspicion, by others as 'progressives'. I believe that within some of these movements there is a prophetic voice that we need to listen to. These movements are **asking deep philosophical and theological questions about what the gospel is and what our calling as Christians is to the world**. My fear, and to some extent frustration is that we are not creating sufficient space in our ministries and in our colleges where we train people for ministry, to re-evaluate and to reimagine what the gospel means for a changing world. There is **a very real need of a new generation of theologians**, who with prophetic insight, a nonconformist, subversive freshness awaken our understanding of the gospel but is life-giving, Jesus centred and which resonates with culture. A theology that is politically engaged, speaks light, hope and truth into the public domain and is seen to serve the coming of God's kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. We will see later in this paper the need for us to recognise pioneer ministers but we also need pioneering theologians, proactive and prophetic, rooted in Christ bringing a freshness in theological insights and understanding and not simply using doctrine and other inherited interpretations to defend the status quo.

More than ever I am convinced that **to be a Baptist minister requires an embracing of a radically different way for living**; a nonconformist way of living out the gospel that far from endorsing and validating the values of consumer society, actually challenges them with a positive alternative lifestyle. I am aware from my own ministry and commitment to respond to Jesus command to, "*Go into all the world and make disciples....*" that I can do this without radically altering my life. But the challenge to be a minister of the gospel that includes also the formative announcement by Jesus as he begins his ministry: "*the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and at the time of the Lord's favour has come.*" Similarly, the foundational teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, (Matthew 5~8) on what it means to be his disciples, calls for a radically different way of life and ministry.

These are disturbing and challenging matters which increasingly I believe we will have to address as ministers, colleges, the Union, our associations and with the local church.

B. A VIEW FROM THE MARGINS

These are very challenging days for our life together as Baptists. A whole host of complex needs and issues demand time and attention, often on limited resources. As I have the opportunity through my many travels, to 'feel the pulse' of our life together, I am aware of a number of encouraging factors: e.g. experimentation and the emergence of some genuine missional initiatives; a moving from an attractional mode of evangelism to **a more incarnational, engaging missional presence in our communities**, beyond the walls of the church; some good missional leaders, including some fine **emerging younger leaders**; the slow but **greater recognition of women who are called to leadership** within the local church, associations and wider union; and the seriousness with which groups, including some of our colleges, are grappling with the issues we face.

I'm also aware of areas of confusion, of lack of awareness or knowledge and connectivity across the Union. There are big issues of economic sustainability that many face at all levels of our denominational life and **perhaps my greatest fear is that of fragmentation**, where everybody "*does what is right in their own eyes*" and we lose that much needed sense of covenant and partnership in the gospel which recognises an inter-dependency.

I should note too that I am concerned that, like many other areas of life and work, several, too many people, are living under the threat of burnout and operating under a lot of constant stress and almost overwhelming pressure.

C. CONSTANT CHANGE IS HERE TO STAY.

If the first task of leadership is to define reality, we must accept that change is a healthy and good thing. For an organism to show signs of life, it must show it can respond to its

environment and likewise for the church to retain vibrancy about its faith it must, 'adapt, survive and thrive'. From the worlds of biology to economics, science tells us that **to stop changing is to die**.

Change is part of life and transformation is vital for growth and development. This is true for the church and our life together as a denomination.

D. COMPLEXITY THEORY

Change, in the human psyche, engenders both excitement and fear. It produces some degree of uncertainty and one of the responses to uncertainty is to look for something that is secure.

In our own growth and development within the Northumbria Community, we have gained insight and considerable help from looking at Complexity Theory. The theory has emerged across a number of disciplines in the last quarter of the 20th century; mathematics, biology and meteorology.

Some of the key concepts, such as tipping points, butterfly moments and edge of chaos have passed into popular language.

Complexity theory is being increasingly taught in business schools and is applied to a range of applications from healthcare to town planning. The reason why I am sharing this is because I believe it has much to say to us as Baptists Together. Its insights I believe help us to understand and provide some inspiration for how organisationally we work as Baptists. We are not hierarchical in our structures, nor are we centrist. We are different from other denominations in the way in which we do things. As our Declaration of Principle states:

We follow Jesus, who is revealed in the Bible as God in human form and is the absolute authority in all matters related to faith and practice. Our churches, guided by His Holy Spirit, have the freedom to interpret what He says, and put this into practice in their own contexts. It seems to me that complexity theory provides a way of understanding that helps us relate, respond and work, alone and together.

1. Key Terms:

- *Non-linearity.* From ant colonies to infections, we see growth that seems to be steady. Then something happens, a tipping point is passed and growth then may become explosive or tail off.
- *Emergence:* The swooping flocks of birds, like starlings producing fantastic patterns. The overall picture is more than the sum of the parts. Individual birds follow rules of thumb, but the overall pattern is more complicated and may not be predictable.

- *Self organisation:* Termites are able to produce huge mounds with perfect air-conditioning and waste disposal systems. Yet who is in charge? Self organisation occurs without apparent leaders.
- *Boundary Conditions:* One of the early discoveries in Complexity theory was sensitivity to initial conditions. Small changes can have large effects later on. This has become known as the 'butterfly effect' after a pioneering paper asked if the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil could set off a tornado in Texas. It can!
- *Fractals:* Study a coastline from space, from a cliff and from a picnic on the beach. Different vantage points and perspectives yet each one reveals repeating patterns.
- *Attractors:* Both computer stimulations and observing natural phenomena show that features are not always distributed evenly. The task is to spot, discern and recognise when movement occurs, when something significant appears to be emerging and to be prepared to change ways and systems in response to these new developments. An example of this can be seen in the diocese of North Wales, where the Bishop of Bangor, recognising that the old parish system is breaking down has encouraged the emergence of new missional communities as a way forward to help the church relocate itself in a changing culture and in a way that communicates the gospel. In effect this is about observing 'attractors', recognising the fact that the church is no longer evenly spread across a locality; services are not evenly spread across the day, or in fact any day. Rather, particular places, people, times attract different folks to come and be part whatever they are doing...
- *Edge of Chaos:* The phrase was coined by mathematician Doyne Farmer who challenged our traditional understanding of order and chaos. *The idea is, you want to get as close as possible to chaos, but you don't want to go into the chaos. You've got randomness, and you've got order. And right between them, you've got the transition phase.* Scientific research has revealed that **creative opportunities abound in the place between order and chaos.** eg. The experience of a surfer riding a wave....
- *Liminality:* Comes from anthropology and the Latin word *limen* meaning a threshold. It's like border territory, the space between what was and what is to become....

2. Some Implications for Leadership of Complexity Theory:

So much leadership, for so long reveals an implicit Newtonian worldview of *cause-and-effect*; if we apply enough cause, (strategy, vision, technique,) the desired effect, (growth, change, outcome) will happen.

Yet the many of changes and initiatives fail to operate like this and fail to deliver the desired benefits.

I live in North Northumberland and recently a new Co-op store opened on a high street. The management had taken on-board customer surveys from the old shop that said one of the problems was narrow aisles. Go into the new store today and you will find wide aisles, nice and neat shelving. Many of the foods are behind glass sliding doors. It looks wonderful. The problem is, the greater percentage of the population in our area are elderly people, over 60 years of age and they find it really difficult to carry a basket or to control a shopping trolley, slide a door open and get the goods out. The top down Newtonian approach delivered what on paper was a remarkably good system, aisles and a bright and attractive store but it has failed to deliver its desired outcome, which is improved customer satisfaction and increased food sales.

On a larger scale, so many of the initiatives and reforms within healthcare, welfare, education fail to deliver. Their **operating on cause and effect thinking fails to take into account the complexity of life** and work, people and organisations. Any parent knows that each child they care for requires different approaches for the child's well-being and upbringing.

Change Management has to be one of the great oxymorons of our time. Can change be managed? Chaos and complexity theory suggest that the idea of managing change is inherently contradictory and the implications for those of us who lead or manage are huge: in particular, **many of our inherited ideas about power and control are severely challenged.**

Cisco, a leading IT company, which seeks to help people seize the opportunities of tomorrow by proving that amazing things can be done today, set up a few years ago, what they called *cross functional councils* to improve business processes across their global operations. A spokesman for the company, describing the experience said: *For a company used to making things happen, it has been very hard to convert to letting them happen.* But Cisco recognised that, having provided the opportunity for people to meet, they had to resist attempts of then telling them what to do. There was a high level of trust engendered and people's intelligence, skills and ingenuity were recognised and in the process they helped the company to flourish. There was for directors and senior managers a great fear about loss of control.

Now for us, I want to suggest that **good leadership is about getting used to being comfortably out of control.** Rather than exercising power through control leadership is about creating an environment where people can flourish and develop. Creating the environments within which things may thrive. Of course this is vulnerable and scary territory.

Margaret Wheatley, a great writer on leadership, says that we can never dictate direct, or determine a living system. We can only disturb, discern or serve it.

Good leadership is expressed in building adaptive systems that recognise complexity. **Leadership recognises chaos and uses discernment to respond accordingly**, spotting the trends, aware of the places of energy and guiding people through the chaos and complexity to a semblance of the order from which appropriate structures are then built around the movements that are happening within an organisation, be it church, association, union whatever.

Good leadership and ministry practice learns to improvise; creating new responses, using imagination, drawing on resources and creativity to find solutions and deliver appropriate outcomes.

Good leadership is also more often than not expressed in the context of working with others. A beguiling and unhelpful trait that some Baptist ministers have is that they work independently. Many operate in isolation and some lack the motivation, training or the skills to work in collaboration with others.

Baptist ministers faced with the challenges of complexity need to learn the art of learning and unlearning.

Given the context that we find ourselves in, we need to encourage more creative and inventive approaches to leadership and ministry.

My best friend is a senior figure within the Scottish NHS and is very involved in the development of the integrated health and social care partnerships that Scotland is pioneering. The early years of experimentation in such partnerships have produced some really good working practices. Writing about such experiences, *Trust arose from the conversations and deepening relationships... Those patterns we developed over time created the systems that encouraged self organisation which grew out of the cross-dependencies, encouraged by the monthly meetings and regular updates. From this perspective, trust became an emergent property of the system. In turn, the trust fed back, positively and relationally and delivered better welfare and health care.*

E. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In *Seizing The Future* Peter Shaw and Robin Hindle-Fisher suggest that leaders who couple optimism with realism, humility and the confidence to lead and who are prepared to problem solve and think about possibilities, make a great difference to any organisation in transition.

These qualities allied to the following characteristics they say, will contribute to good leadership amidst periods of change and transition:

1. Accept The New Reality.

There is an acceptance that the situations have changed and there has to be a letting go of the past in order to make room for future opportunities.

2. Managing The Gap Between The Old And The New.

Defining reality about present realities and the challenges that have to be faced also involves directing appropriate but not disproportionate energies to those that are in trouble. It involves recognising that things will need to change and during transition holding the tension between what is and what is possibly to come. **Managing people's expectations, fears and insecurities when there is little clarity is a complex but essential task for ministers leading God's people.**

3. Embracing The Possibilities Of The New.

Whilst daunting and enormously challenging, there is, with every crisis and change, the opportunity for some new and good opportunities.

4. Promote Fresh Thinking.

Being open, discerning, reflective and creative. Valuing what has gone before, building on the foundational values and learning from the experiences of the past and combining them with new insights for the future.

5. Ensuring Effective Engagement with Others.

Individuals, teams, departments, associations, churches etc. The building of relationships of trust, where listening and learning, common purpose, shared endeavour and self-awareness is crucial.

6. Embrace Radical Approaches.

Cultivate possibility thinking and the courage to embrace new and radical approaches about the way things are done.

7. Pacing and Using Our Energies and Resources Well.

Realising that the pressures and challenges of change can be overwhelming, good leadership draws on wisdom and the appropriate allocation of time and resources that includes building patterns and rhythms that give life, and understanding of what drains and demotivates and valuing the necessary periods of stillness and reflection.

8. Celebrate Successes and Achievements

It's really important to be able to recognise and celebrate the good things, the successes and achievements. In highlighting them, weight is placed on that which is positive and it creates an environment of what is possible, a *can do* attitude which engenders inspiration and satisfaction and a hunger and thirst to do more. Such celebrations help to counter the pessimism and negativity that can prevail when it appears as though nothing much is happening. It is also a means of commending, affirming and blessing people.

9. Creating Resilience Rooted In Hope and Possibilities Rather than Fear and Protectionism.

Recognising that uncertainty and change creates a sense of insecurity, threat and fears and knowing how to handle such emotions.

Martin Seligmann, pioneer of Positive Psychology propounded the theory about how and why people are happy. Using scientific methodology, Seligman observed that most satisfied, upbeat, positive people are those who had discovered and deployed their unique combination of *signature strengths*, such as humanity, temperance, patience and perseverance.

Many of Seligmann's studies revealed that positive emotions are frequently accompanied by 'fortunate circumstances', e.g. longer life, health, more meaningful social networks, meaningful relationships etc In effect he was suggesting that positive emotions are frequently paired with happy circumstances. And while we might be tempted to assume that happiness causes positive emotions, Seligman wonders, instead, whether positive emotions cause happiness. If there is any truth in this theory it has implications for how we view and practice ministry. Positivity should characterise those whose task it is to lead and serve; in local churches, associations and the wider union. Pessimism and negativity are very debilitating forces that do little to serve the process of transition or the implementation of fresh thinking and new ideas.

10. Act Justly, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly

The character of ministers, churches, associations and the wider Union, should also determine what we do; our conduct, attitudes and behaviour. A missional movement must reflect the nature of God and be a living example of a people, who act justly, love mercy and who walk humbly with God.

F. ETHOS AND EXPRESSIONS

I believe it is essential that whatever we are currently doing and propose to do in the light of this review needs to be **rooted in the values of who we are** as a missional Baptist family. I

have confidence that we will face the challenges and make the changes and be able to not only survive but, in time, thrive if we retain our essential DNA.

Retaining our core values and convictions will enable us to keep our identity and our *raison d'être* as Baptists. We should not be driven simply by need, opportunity or expectations that undermine or diminish our core values.

As I understand it, the way we are expressing our core values in the contemporary climate is along these lines:

- *Seeking To Be A Movement Of Spirit Led Communities*
- *Belonging Together – As One*
- *Embracing Adventure*
- *Inspiring Others*
- *Sharing A Hunger For God's Coming Kingdom*

These expressions of our core values must inform and inspire whatever changes in ministry and mission we propose. In the same way that our organisational structures and the way we operate at local, regional and association level needs to reflect these values.

G. DISCOVERING OR REAFFIRMING COVENANT

We are a covenanted people. We should be celebrating our partnership in the gospel and finding ways of deepening relationships across our Union. **We journey both alone and together as a movement.** I hope that we will be able to recognise and celebrate our diversity, acknowledging the fact that we are a 'broader church' than perhaps has previously been understood. This is not a time for spiritual apartheid, tribalism or sectarianism to segregate from one another on our different ways of seeing things. Our *Declaration of Principle* and core values provide a basis for our unity in Christ and a means to journey together as a missional movement.

H. SCENARIO PLANNING

Imagination, creative thinking and innovation are key to our preparing and anticipating the future.

I have been fascinated in my own studies on leadership about the whole sphere of what is called scenario planning. My studies of the subject led me to looking into one of the leading economists of the late 1960s and 70s, Pierre Wack. He predicted the oil crisis in the early 1970s,

the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of China and India as economic superpowers, among other things.

What intrigued and encouraged me was that he drew inspiration from a 16th Century Spanish Jesuit theologian and scholar, Luis de Molina, who was credited with introducing the concept of 'conditional future contingents' or what became known as scenario planning.

Wack, together with Nelson Mandela and others anticipated the scenarios that would face South Africa post-apartheid. Their meetings were known as the *Mont Fleur Scenarios*.

Scenario Planning is a way of approaching the future; a tool for thinking about and envisaging what life will be or can be. The Mont Fleur scenario exercise, was undertaken in South Africa during 1991-92 and it was an effective and important initiative because in the midst of deep conflict, massive uncertainty, great fear and suspicion, it brought people together from across tribes, organisations, business folk and politicians, to think creatively about the future of their country.

So they came up with four narratives, stories:

- *Ostrich* – in which a negotiated settlement to the crisis in South Africa is not achieved and the country's government continues to be non-representative.
- *Lame Duck* – in which a settlement is achieved but the transition to a new dispensation is slow and indecisive.
- *Icarus* – in which transition is rapid but the new government unwisely pursues unsustainable, populist economic policies.
- *Flight of the Flamingos* – in which the government's policies are sustainable and the country takes a path of inclusive growth and democracy.

The group developed each of these stories into a brief narrative. A 14 page report was distributed as an insert in the two primary national newspapers, *The Weekly Mail and the Guardian Weekly* and a 30 minute video was produced which combined cartoons with presentations by team members. The team then presented and discussed the scenarios with many groups, including political parties, companies, academics, trade unions, civil and community organisations. Community forums, Village, Township, city and other housing complexes held meetings to discuss and debate the four narratives. At the end of 1992, the project was wrapped up and the team dissolved but the story went into the consciousness of the nation.

Mont Fleur did not resolve the crisis in South Africa; the participants didn't agree upon concrete solutions to the country's problems. The process wasn't a formal, mandated

negotiation; rather it was an informal open conversation. Like a miracle, it got people, former enemies talking. They talked and talked until they found areas of shared understanding and agreement. They didn't deal with the differences among the different parties or at that point about finding a way to reconcile those differences, to deal with the hurts and injustices of the past. Its focus was primarily upon envisaging the future, painting different scenarios.

What the Mont Fleur project did was create a new narrative for South Africa, a story that went into the consciousness of the nation.

The simple message of *Flight of the Flamingos* was about the potential of a positive outcome. In a country in the midst of turbulence of uncertainty, a credible and optimistic story makes a strong impact.

The other consequence of Mont Fleur was the creation of informal networks and understandings among people, across the political spectrum, through the time they spent together. Alone and together, they talked and thought, felt and imagined what the future might be.

It seems to me that our task is to do something akin to scenario planning. To envisage what the future might look like and under God's leading walk into His future with renewed confidence.

Hope filled stories, new narratives that speak of life, transformation and possibilities should be formed, communicated and translated across the union; stories that serve the missional movement that characterises what it means to be Baptists together.

I. THE TASKS BEFORE US

So, as we look towards the future of Baptist ministry over the next 10 years and envisage what it might look like in 2025, we do so with a provisionality about everything and a trust and dependency upon God who has called us and who by his grace and spirit at work among us is able to do far more than we can even ask or imagine.

We have a number of tasks before us:

1. Maintain Stability and Encourage Experimentation.

We are on a missional journey that has few maps and as such we are exploring, innovating and inevitably, experimenting. Rooted in Christ and building on the foundations of our core values, we must recognise, encourage, affirm and resource the new expressions and missional initiatives that must inform and shape the future of Baptist ministry. We need to recognise the grassroots movement of the Holy Spirit that is leading to fresh expressions and new ways of being church in a post Christendom, missional context.

As new expressions of ministry emerge, we need sufficient but not cumbersome criteria, that recognises the differing ministries and acknowledges their significance in shaping the future.

I believe at regional and national levels **we need to cultivate a new era of permission and resourcing for missional leaders**. Rather than, the Union or the Ministry Department, whether real or imagined perceptions, *'would never allow it'*, missional leaders and churches should discover that Regional ministers, Ministry heads, BSG, etc would be very disappointed if they did not try. A *can-do*, possibility thinking attitude needs to be a primary characteristic of a Baptist missional movement.

I believe this requires a strong bias towards whatever happens nationally and regionally to serve that which is happening locally.

This will play out in the national and association teams providing resources to help local churches and pioneering missional initiatives. These resources, together with inspirational encouragement, must be done by listening to, liaising and being with individuals and local churches. It cannot be done by a committee, geographically removed from the missional contexts.

A combination of imagination, innovation, permission giving and resourcing should allow for many new expressions of church and ministry to develop.

I'm sure that history will record the remarkable contribution and influence Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury had, in championing and affirming *Fresh Expressions* and other missional initiatives. His successor, Justin Welby has continued to put evangelism and missional church as one of his top priorities, alongside prayer and the religious life and reconciliation.

Both, along with some other denominational leaders grasped the significance of the Mission Shaped Church initiative. The signs of growth that are being seen for example in the Church of England have been explained by way of a formula:

MSC ~ *Mission Shaped Church*, + ABC ~ *Archbishop of Canterbury* = FE ~ *Fresh Expressions*.

That formulae has shaped ministry, training, the appointment of missional bishops and other leaders and created the context where evangelism and mission are seen as central to the very nature of the church itself.

Williams talked often about the concept of a *'mixed economy church'*. Often it was understood in terms of, on the one hand, the historic and inherited approach and on the other, the new developments relating to fresh expressions of church. The concept was intended not as a device to enable the two to operate in parallel, let alone in competition, but rather it was intended to be a partnership, where each is enriched by the other. Fresh expressions are not

intended to replace more traditional church approaches but to complement them, recognising the respectful and valued work being done by both.

I believe that we can learn from this model within our own Baptist denomination. We have our own inherited approaches to church and ministry and in the context of being a missional movement, many of our churches operate on an attraction model, '*come and see*', reaching out and serving but predominantly from a church and building-based context. The future however, has to see and encourage more missional initiatives and our own *fresh expressions*. Initiatives that are very much, '*Go into*' operating outside and beyond the walls of the church, engaging in the public domain. These missional initiatives and fresh expressions of church are fundamentally contextual; listening to people, serving them and entering their culture. They are **formational in that discipleship is a priority** and they are **ecclesial in forming a church or Christian community**.

I took part in the ordination of priests at Durham Cathedral the other year, (it's a long but interesting story!). At one point during the ordination service, the bishop declares that: *The Church of England is part of the one, holy catholic and apostolic church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation.*

In response, each priest affirms their *loyalty to this inheritance of faith as their inspiration and guidance under God in bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation*. In other words, *bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation* requires a *proclaiming afresh* of the gospel. The *Mission Shaped Church* report showed that this *proclaiming afresh* would require innovation, pioneering and new initiatives. Graham Cray, one of the compilers of the report wrote in the forward that; *One of the central features of this report is the recognition that the changing nature of our missionary context requires a new inculturation of the gospel within our society.*

Consequently, we need to **be open to the emergence of new ministries and the reconfiguration of existing ministries**. There is much to be learnt from those who are on the margins of our denominational life; from pioneers, entrepreneurs, those who are thinking outside of the box, who are experimenting and exploring new ways of living out the gospel and being church. Their experiences may well shed light to illumine our future.

2. Kingdom shaping mission, mission shaping church, church shaping ministry.

We don't start a discussion on the future of Baptist ministry in isolation from the wider context. The kingdom, God's rule and reign should govern and inform the nature and ways of the church and this should shape and inform ministry. To quote the missional strapline; *It is not the church of God that has a mission in the world, but the God of mission that has a church in the world.*

A missional movement expresses the *mission Dei*, the mission of God. God is missional by nature and his heart of love and compassion is active in the world. The church is both the fruit and the agent of his divine mission that we participate in Christ. Consequently mission is of the essence of the church, rather than an activity of some Christians. The implications for ministry demands that any criteria that discerns a calling, trains, recognise and resources a person should do so in the light of the *mission Dei*.

3. Recognising, Honouring and Deploying Varying Ministries

There clearly needs to be a more overt recognition of the fivefold ministry, outlined in Ephesians 4. Riddled with the hesitancy to talk about apostles and prophets, given some of the misunderstandings and excesses that have sadly been evidenced in some church circles, there is nevertheless an obvious need to recognise these different callings and ministries.

Our understandable emphasis upon the local church has contributed, I believe to a bias towards the pastor/teacher ministry. And there are good and justifiable reasons for extolling the virtues of such a calling. In a Christendom context, the ministry of a pastor teacher can work incredibly well but it has its limitations in a missional context.

I am not alone in feeling called to Baptist ministry but who has at times in the past struggled to find acceptance, simply because my calling has mainly been exercised in a trans-local context. One of the reasons why I did not go to a Baptist College to train for the ministry was because I felt that it's curriculum was too narrowly channelled into local church ministry, for the pastor/teacher. Whilst it had its limitations, I believe that my Bible college training equipped me incredibly well for the long haul of ministry, with its emphasis upon spiritual formation along with that of mission.

We must recognise the fivefold ministry, encourage and educate our churches, associations and the wider Union, as well as our colleges and training processes around these areas. Gifted people have been lost to our denomination because of the failure to recognise their calling to ministry. On two occasions I have spoken at the annual CEO gatherings for those who are heading up Christian charities and other agencies. Many of the delegates started their ministries in local Baptist churches but became frustrated or had to leave, including having to come off the accredited list, because they no longer were local church ministers. Gifted men and women, who could and should be speaking into the life of our denomination; people with great leadership gifts and qualities that would serve our Baptist missional movement well. It is a tragedy and is something that we must regret and address, given the loss and wounding of too many people who feel as though they have been rejected or "dismissed" and abandoned by what many of them regarded to be their family, their Baptist family.

I have meet several former Baptist ministers who are now exercising really good, and in some places very significant ministries but outside of our Baptist contexts. Some have found their

place within other church networks and I'm not sure if it's encouraging, or disturbing that several leaders within the Church of England, began exploring a call to ministry in Baptist churches!

I believe we need to recognise and honour those among us who can bring apostolic leadership and prophetic insight to serve the movement.

My own experience of the Presidency of the Baptist Union might help to illustrate this. I do regard it as having been a remarkable privilege and opportunity to have served the Union. I was able, because of the generosity of the Northumbria Community, to give a considerable amount of my time and energies to the role, during my vice presidency, presidency and post presidential year. It felt, *the right seat and the fitting task* and matched my own sense of apostolic calling. I humbly believe I was able, by God's grace to speak into, serve, contribute and encourage many individuals, churches, associations and bring something of relevance to the Union. I saw it as a great opportunity to give expression to the commitment that I have to our Baptist family and I'm thankful to God for all that it afforded me. However, a minor but not insignificant incident at the assembly where I stepped down and handed the presidency on to Kate Coleman, was quite illuminating. I am not one for accolades, or platform parties but because I needed to be located in a specific area, I was given a seat with my name on it. After being thanked and handing over and praying for Kate, there was a coffee break. When I returned to sit where I had left my bag, on the designated seat, my name had been removed and I was told that I had to sit elsewhere. Now, I was very happy to do so but the incident caused me to feel "dismissed" and that my gifts and leadership were no longer to be considered. Nobody sat down with me to reflect on the experience of the presidency, to hear my thoughts, reflections and observations. The presidency, affords whoever does it, a unique insight into the life of our denomination and enables the president to *feel the pulse* of our life together, in ways that others, who are in designated offices and roles, simply can't. With the encouragement of one person on the Baptist Council, I wrote a lengthy report, reflecting my experience. Where it went, I do not know. My suggestion that it might be useful to bring together past presidents in order to share with the senior management team went unheeded. I have been able to form many friendships with people right across the Union and feel still incredibly privileged to serve our denomination in so many ways but I am mindful, having met lots of people, who have similar ministries to my own, who have felt rejection and discarded, let down and abandoned by the denomination they felt they were once a part of.

If we cannot recognise and continue to validate these ministers in the differing contexts in which their calling is exercised, we must find ways that honour them in their leaving and keep the door open for their return.

We need to look again at this area because it majorly impacts leadership and whilst there are good leaders who are pastors, teachers and evangelists, we do damage to ourselves and others by failing to recognise the apostles and prophets among us.

Of course any recognition of these ministries and of leadership generally must address the issues of power, privilege and position and status from the perspective of Jesus's teaching and his example.

a. **Recognising the Fivefold Ministry of Ephesians 4:**

God raises up and calls leaders to His church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. They are given, *to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ*. Ephesians 4:12.

We need to recognise the spread and diversity of the different ministries that God has given to his church; to train, equip, release and resource them.

Whilst much of the focus of this paper is addressing issues relating to ordained Baptist ministry, I believe that **we need to recapture and re-emphasise the concept of *Body ministry***, every member being gifted and called of God.

I have found myself, in recent years, questioning certain aspects or how, in some circles, we have come to understand ordained ministry. I do so from the perspective of someone who has a fairly 'high' view of ministry but not when it creates an almost two tier hierarchy of clergy and laity. We should be wary of 'sacramentalising' ministry in such a way as it devalues or denigrates the ministry of the whole community of faith.

In reasserting the five fold ministry as described above, it is good to have some definition as to what is meant by those leadership roles:

Pastors: those who shepherd, guide and guard God's people as they serve. Shepherds know their sheep, they are available and accessible to people. They exercise care and compassion and every church and cell group needs pastors. Other denominations, through lack of resources have tried to make a priest, minister or pastor an appointment that looks after several churches. This has an inherent weakness, in that the strength of pastoral ministry is its immediacy and accessibility to people in the local contexts. You cannot do pastoral ministry to any great effect from a distance or by simply coming into an area and taking services. There is no substitute for the value of resident pastoral ministers. However, they don't all need to be full-time, ordained or formally trained at college.

The challenge of diminishing resources also creates the opportunity to recognise and more fully realise the involvement of other members of the church who have pastoral gifts. Appropriate training and a recognition of lay pastors or pastoral teams could provide a way

forward for the future.

Ministers, who are appointed to serve more than one church, should be less pastoral and more apostolic, helping to shape, guide and where necessary to oversee the training of pastors and other leaders. The local church pastors become the 'local' leaders. They may or may not be gifted in preaching and leading services. That does not matter, for their primary calling is to pastor, to care for the flock.

I think we could deploy some necessary resources and some gifted people to develop and train lay and bi-vocational pastoral ministries. These ministries could be locally, regionally or nationally recognised.

Teachers: those whom God has called to teach. Men and women who can rightly handle scripture and be communicators of God's word, building up the body of Christ, forming people in Christ and resourcing disciples on their faith journey, alone and together. We need to celebrate and give thanks for those among us who as teachers love the Word of God and who can impart that love of God and his Word to others. People who inspire and whet the appetite of others for Scripture. If teachers love the Word, preachers are persuaders of the Word.

I would suggest that the value of expository preaching and teaching should not be seen as any method greater than narrative or other form of preaching and would encourage the rediscovery and renaissance for example of biblical storytelling.

In a Post-Christendom missional context, the place and power of story becomes of paramount importance. As Helmut Thielicke critically observed, *Most preachers wouldn't draw a dog out from a warm stove!* We need to train and equip people to handle Scripture well and to communicate its truths in relevant, inspiring and imaginative ways that connects with people and the changing contexts in which we live. People who will build bridges, communicating how the Bible relates to every aspect of life; people who can communicate the greater metanarrative of God's love for the world.

Evangelists: the spiritual midwives who are able to discern where people are at on their spiritual journey. Those gifted in leading people to new birth and life in Christ. Men and women who help others to know the love of God and what it means to experience his presence. Evangelists are able to look and discern, the men and women of peace in a community. God uses them to open the doors of people's hearts to his love and light or who happen to be in that place where they can step over the threshold of people's lives and lead them to faith. They are able to get the message across in attractive and appropriate ways, often deploying faith-sharing teams. They operate mostly outside of the church building contexts and encourage others to go out and share the Good News.

Given the enormous challenge of reaching out to children and young people, for whom church is either unknown or perceived of as irrelevant, schools, colleges, clubs, pubs and street work should be the arenas in which our evangelists are working.

As the Lambeth conference stated, *Concern for children is an authenticating mark of the church*. We should consider carefully a strategy that reaches out to young people with the good news and ways of welcoming and integrating children and young people into our church communities or forming expressions of church that relate to these age groups.

Apostles: those who are gifted in pioneering, establishing new works, building relationships and networks. They are the big picture people, the architects of change, the engineers of transformation and the surveyors of church and culture. At heart, their pioneering, creative and innovative spirit characterises their ministries. As Alan Hirsch says of the apostle; *In the power of the Holy Spirit, apostles are given to provide the catalytic, adaptive, movemental, trans-local, pioneering, entrepreneurial, architectural and custodial ministry needed to spark, mobilise and sustain apostolic movements*. Apostles are bishop figures, overseeing and encouraging mission, people who can see beyond the challenges to the opportunities, who have the courage to face the realities and think about possibilities. They are builders, formation and foundational people.

Prophets: those who speak and bring God's Word to inspire, motivate, correct or illuminate. They are gifted with insight, discernment and wisdom and bring a glimpse of revelation into situations and people's lives. People who bring revelation from God, but who so offering humbly, wisely and compassionately. They are restless, uncompromising, radical people, whose ministry is often best exercised outside of a settled local church. It is difficult for a local church leader to be prophetic, as often their ministries are more itinerant. They can be uncomfortable and at times difficult people to live and work with but their prophetic edge can bring life, truth and hope into many situations across our denomination. They need to be listened to.

We need all of these ministries; welcomed, recognised and honoured right across our Union. They exist but some are having to operate, often feeling constrained by the existing ministry recognition rules and structures.

It is sad that some good men and a few good women have been lost to our denomination through our inability to recognise their giftings, particularly in the apostolic and prophetic realms.

4. Pioneers

The challenges we face, together with some opportunities, calls for leaders who are able to pioneer and navigate through the turbulence of these new missional contexts.

The huge decline of Christianity in Britain should provoke a missional response if we are serious about the Great Commandment. Pioneers are those who, with creativity and innovation, are able to face the future and explore its possibilities, realise its potential and find new ways of living out the faith and communicating the gospel in a post-Christendom context. People who do not fall back on old ways but who are entrepreneurial, breaking new ground with faith and hope for a new and different future that God's Spirit is calling us to.

This has to be a time of the dawning of a new era of pioneering leaders. Pioneers establishing missional initiatives, church planting, engaging in the public domain, bringing light and hope and speaking truth in the arenas of the workplace, the arts, education, politics and the media.

Pioneering is however, by its very nature, unpredictable. What we know is that it will not look like that of the model of pastoral ministry where the primary concern is for the wellbeing of those already within the church community.

The fact that we are not sure what pioneering leadership might mean must not however deter us from exploring its possibilities. **If we don't change the criteria for recognising valid pioneering leaders we will end up simply repackaging the old paradigms of pastoral leadership.**

An example from our own Northumbria Community of two Baptist ministers who are exercising pastoral and missional leadership in situations that are effectively outside of the local church contexts: Duncan Maclean and his wife Lesley run House of Azar, a Northumbria Community house in Herefordshire. They minister to many Baptist ministers who come for spiritual direction, on retreat and they provide a 'safe space' and a listening ear to many people. They also run a missional initiative reaching out to the unchurched and dechurched believers who gather for Sunday brunches. Duncan and Lesley also travel extensively, speaking and serving many of our Baptist churches and Duncan has been involved at Association level as a trustee and member of various groups and committees. Similarly Philip Mader-Grayson and his wife Rosemary run another of our Community houses, Bridge House in Oxfordshire. The ministry they exercise is fairly unconventional, reaching out to all kinds of people, many of them broken and wounded by life, including those who carry the scars of ministry. They have a particular pastoral ministry among families who have experienced the death of the children. I'm really pleased and encourage that as a Baptist Union these two ministers are recognised and able to stay on the accredited list and feel part of our Baptists Together. There will, I believe, be many more such initiatives taken by our ministers in the coming years. Missional communities, houses of prayer and hospitality, running cafe churches, pioneering initiatives, etc. All of which will technically be outside the remit of a local church but nevertheless, I believe a valid and effective expression of Baptist ministry. It is important that we are able to not only recognise but encourage, and where possible, resource these people.

We also need to recognise that with diminishing resources, to fulfil the Great Commission, we are going to require pioneers, some of whom may be released to work full time, whilst others will be part-time; from those who were able to receive a salary, to others who are 'tent making' and others who are doing so voluntarily.

George Lings, a Companion of our Northumbria Community and a member of the Church Army's Research Unit, together with Dave Male, the former director of the Centre for Pioneer learning and tutor in pioneer ministry training at Ridley Hall and Westcott House, Cambridge have developed a spectrum for all those involved in church ministry to show how they relate to pioneering. They have helpfully moved away from the language of mission or maintenance, or Pioneer or Settler to a model that demonstrates that the reality is more complex than simply an either/or.

Pioneer /Starter ~~~ Pioneer-Sustainer ~~~ Sustainer-Pioneer ~~~Sustainer-Developer

Pioneer-Starters are the 'classic' pioneering types who are proactive, entrepreneurial and great at starting new things but not the best at staying around in developing what they have begun. They love to innovate, create, break new ground, relish the challenge of the new and easily become bored and restless.

Pioneer-Sustainers are those who have the ability to start something from scratch but are also able to develop it, for as long as it takes. They would tend to have more pastoral and nurturing gifts than the Pioneer Starter.

Sustainer Pioneers may possess more pastoral abilities but they would also recognise and understand the need for pioneering alongside this. These leaders might feel more at home in traditional church settings but could well be involved in developing something pioneering alongside that context.

Sustainer-Developers are those whose gifting is primarily about sustaining, nurturing and pastoring a church but who have the ability to encourage and move the church to become more missional.

The future of Baptist ministry should, I believe, be able to trace elements of one or more of these characteristics, in everyone whom we recognise as ministers. Churches should be encouraged to recognise where on this spectrum members of their leadership team and wider fellowship are.

Dave Male offers a very helpful definition of a Pioneer: *A person called by God who has the character and gifting to respond first to the Holy Spirit's initiatives within a particular context and to create, with others, something in response to these promptings that opens up new horizons.*

He goes on to identified a 10 common traits in Pioneers that could be very helpful in our discerning and recognising such people in our movement:

- People who are 'first' and they love 'firsts'. Anyone who purports to be a pioneer should be asked to share about the things that they have started. Pioneers are always the first people to ever do something.
- People who are on the edge. They're unlikely to be involved in committees, boards and councils. They're more at home on the margins, enjoying the freedom to operate, outside the box.
- People who are risk takers. They would rather try something, fail and after learning from experience, start something new or again. They recognise that taking risks is essential and making mistakes is inevitable. Failure is simply one step along the way to success.
- People who like people. They enjoy creating and developing healthy relationships with a range of people.
- People of robust character and nature, which is required to enable them to respond to their calling in a particular context even when it seems crazy to do it. They tend to think, 'why not?' Rather than 'why?'.
- People who know when to stay or go. They have the ability to understand when they need to remain and provide stability and when it's time to hand over leadership to others so that it can develop.
- People who know when to bring order or chaos. They often operate intuitively and understand when to bring order when a new venture or community feels threatened but they also are willing to introduce some chaos, often simply by introducing change or further change, when things seem too comfortable.
- People who are nearly always thinking about moving out. They're people who understand the missional impulses of gathering and scattering. They understand the needs to gather people together for worship, fellowship but more often than not with a sense of the being prepared to be sent out, to be scattered for the sake of the gospel.
- People who are dissenters, nonconformists. As Gerald Arbuckle says, *There can be no constructive change at all, even in church, unless there is some form of dissent. By dissent, I mean simply the proposing of alternatives... A system that is not continuously examining alternatives is not likely to evolve creatively.* Pioneers are those who embrace the *heretical imperative*, ask the awkward questions and challenge the status quo.

- People who were able to reflect, make connections and live with uncertainty. They will be good at discerning and reflecting on what's happening in their pioneering work and make connections with the ideas and thinking of other groups, people and writings. But they are also secure enough in the knowledge that they don't know all the answers. There are more likely to understand the essential task of asking the right questions than knowing the answers or coming up with solutions.

Pioneers come in all shapes and sizes and there is a whole range of people with different emphases who are exercising pioneering ministry.

I have recently completed the Creative Leadership course in the rural church programme, run by Germinate, the Arthur Rank Centre training programme. It was an incredibly inspiring and informative course, which I would commend to anyone, particularly those engaged in rural ministry to consider doing. One of the things that we looked at was the whole notion of entrepreneurship. It was suggested to us that releasing the entrepreneurial talent among God's people is one of the greatest tasks facing the church today. Entrepreneurs, by nature, tend to think and act differently. Entrepreneurs are innovative people who think outside the box. Pioneering ministry is in large measure entrepreneurial. Pioneers inevitably bring about change through innovation, experimentation, creativity and courage.

As we wrestle with what it means to recognise such pioneering ministries, train, deploy and resource them, inevitably we will have to address the following issues:

- The Management Of Expectations.

Not only will the Pioneer have expectations but so will many other people engaged in any pioneering initiative. It will be important to speak out and to clarify the differing views and expectations of all the groups concerned, at local, regional and at times national level.

- Measuring Success or Quality Control

Some criteria should be put in place to measure the success or otherwise of a particular initiative. There can be no *one size fits all* criteria but nevertheless there should be some mechanism for measuring the growth and development of an initiative or church plant. Some pioneering projects can take little or no time to create, others have a much longer gestation period, for a whole variety of good and valid reasons.

- The Danger Of Isolation

The most commonly expressed feeling among pioneers is that of being isolated, and at times misunderstood. One leading entrepreneur states: *One of the great myths of entrepreneurship has been the notion of the leader as a lone hero. The reality is that successful entrepreneurs either built teams about them or were part of a team throughout.*

I believe that we should think in terms of pioneering teams, rather than simply a pioneering leader on their own. In terms of financial and practical support, it may be to an individual but we should see that they are operating in the context of, 'team' rather than completely isolated and alone.

I think we could be doing much more in the early stages of a pioneers training and development and later when they are engaged in their missional work, of facilitating and bringing such pioneers together on a regular basis, for mutual support, encouragement and resourcing. On the Arthur Rank *Germinate* programme that I've just completed, I benefited enormously from being in a peer support group and though geographically distant from one another, we meet for a Skype conversation for a couple of hours every two months and with others on the course we have covenanted to pray for one another on the first day of each quarter, using information that we all supply in advance. We also have agreed to meet together once a year at the Arthur Rank Centre for 24 hours to share, encourage and support one another.

Simple measures, developed regionally and occasionally nationally, would do much to counter the sense of isolation that is felt by our pioneers.

- Determining Priorities For Resourcing

With finite resources and financial pressures all around, difficult decisions are going to have to be taken if we are to resource some pioneers. I do believe that the missional challenges we face demands the need of more pioneers than currently exist or are recognised. I think we will need to shift the balance more towards pioneering and missional initiatives, rather than established pastoral ministries.

Discerning where resources should be allocated should, in the main, be taken at a more local and regional level, where awareness and understanding of the given and potential ministries are known. This said, there does need to be a missional mindset among Association teams and their varying committees.

I also believe that we can do a lot more work in challenging, encouraging and partnering with some of our larger churches, some of whom are well blessed with resources, both in terms of finance and people. We need to be cultivating the missional agenda that invites and encourages all of us to be involved in spreading the good news of the gospel throughout the land. Some churches, not just larger churches, need to be inspired, encouraged and challenged to release people and other resources to engage in or support pioneering ministries.

- The Dangers Of Domestication And Institutionalism.

There is a tendency, when someone is seen to be successful, to make them specialists, who instead of getting on with their pioneering work, go around advocating its need or sitting on committees or speaking at conferences, when they would be best continuing the work to which they are primarily called.

There is also, often unintentionally, the tendency to curb the excesses of pioneers, to make them fit more easily into our systems. Churches, associations and the wider union can tend to domesticate pioneers, to mute or dampen their enthusiasm, eccentricities and entrepreneurship.

Missional contexts require risky pioneers! They need appropriate support and accountability structures but they must not be chained or suppressed by such mechanisms.

One of the most creative people I've ever known, was my school friend Chris Brain. He was to become infamous because of the sad and wrong actions he took when leader of the '9 o'clock service' in Sheffield. I had the privilege of leading Chris to faith and seeing Christ utterly transform his life. He was a prophetic pioneer, who embraced the radical call of Jesus upon his life and was used by God in the early years to serve an incredible movement of the Holy Spirit that saw hundreds of young people between the ages of 16 and 35 coming to faith and many more reached through the remarkably creative, alternative worship and all the radical community living and addressing issues of social justice that they were involved with. In the early pioneering years, Chris was under the supervision and accountability of the vicar of St Thomas's. They were great friends, it worked remarkably well and Robert, the vicar was able to look after and care for Chris and members of his core team, watching over their hearts and guarding their backs. The folly, or to put it more kindly, mistake, was made when the Church of England released Chris and created something akin to a separate parish, whereby he became 'Priest-in-Charge' of the 9 o'clock service and its allied community. Unsupervised, unaccountable, he became the "guru" and was captured by power. His demise, the closure of the 9 o'clock service, the loss of his marriage and his excommunication and lonely exile from the church put back the cause of alternative worship, and more significantly, a missional movement that reached the generations that we struggle to reach, for over 20 years. A salutary lesson and one that reminds us of the need both for pioneers and for appropriate systems of support and accountability that are affirming and protective.

We have some gifted, creative, inspiring pioneers within our denomination. We need to identify, train, encourage and recognise many more of them in order to help us in becoming more fully a missional movement and enabling us to break new ground for the kingdom of God in our day and generation.

5. Missional Communities

I believe that the next 10 years will see some considerable growth in missional communities across Britain and the rest of Europe. The rediscovery or renaissance of Christians seeking to embrace community in its various forms, following the example and pattern laid down by Jesus with his disciples. In an increasingly violent and fragmented world, the presence of Christians covenanting together and giving expression to relational, grace filled and reconciled communities is a powerful witness to the gospel. The growth of these missional communities with an outward focus, often working outside the confines of the established church services, buildings and programmes will feature increasingly in our post-Christendom society. Often these communities are small and as such are able to encourage the participation of all their members. **Community as opposed to a congregational way of being church, will I believe become much more a pattern of life and faith for many people, particularly younger generations.** We should, as a Baptist family be at the forefront of this movement and as such recognise those who are called to ministry both in pioneering and planting or pastoring and discipling these new expressions of church. Consequently, again, we have to think about reconfiguring what we mean by ministry and how we respond and train people who are being called to these ventures.

6. Chaplains

As part of imagining what Baptist ministry might look like in the years to come, I came across the excellent research work conducted by Ben Ryan at Theos. His booklet, *'A Very Modern Ministry: Chaplaincy in the UK'* points to the significance of chaplaincy as a form of faith engagement in the public domain.

Whilst the gap between church attendance and the British public widens, the opportunities, missionally, for chaplains to be involved in and to speak into all kinds of areas of society is increasingly welcomed and valued.

I believe we would do well to understand, recognise, train and resource people within our denomination, who are called to this ministry. Much though there is to learn from experience in local church ministry, I do not believe it should be a necessary requirement for everyone to be recognised as chaplain. As chaplaincy develops and grows across lots of sectors, I would hope that we might be able to recognise the diversity value of such ministries, in education, healthcare, commerce, the arts, sport, media and entertainment. Why not consider a specific course for the training of chaplains?

7. Transitional Ministries

With many of the challenges and opportunities before us, there is great need of ministries that can help churches during periods of change and transition. Several positive ministries

currently exist and we should formally recognise them and think about specifically training people in such areas of ministry. Older ministers, coming to the end of their full-time ministries should be encouraged and challenged to offer themselves for a few years to situations that would benefit from their experience and help in bringing about changes that would open up opportunities for others to come and build on the work of a transitional minister.

These transitional ministries can be used to great effect in situations where there has been church split, a period of wounding, disillusionment or distress. Equally they can be used to help the church prepare for a new phase or expression of their ministry and mission. We can think of the remarkable work done by Ian McFarlane at Oban Baptist Church in Scotland and the work and the ministry that Keith Jones is exercising in Bradford.

We need to avoid where possible sending newly trained or inexperienced leaders into situations where the wisdom and experience of a more mature minister would be best suited.

8. Closure Ministries

It was said of Rowan Williams, when he was Bishop of Monmouth, that when leading a preordination retreat for about to be appointed deacons and priests, that he said that he would be ordaining some of them the following day to the ministry of the last rites. In effect he was validating a palliative care ministry that was to close churches with dignity. He reminded them however that after death comes resurrection.

Some of the most heartening and significant stories of such measures have been where the closure of a church or chapel in an honouring way has paved the way and released resources for new missional initiatives. Williams foresaw the decline and demise of the parish system and gave permission, as Archbishop of Canterbury for new 'parishes' / church plants and missional communities to be established within deaneries and dioceses.

It would seem appropriate, given the changing missional context, for some of our churches to close gracefully and either to begin again in another form or expression or to close and release resources for others to plant or pioneer.

9. Nonconformists

An essential characteristic aspect of our spirituality and therefore of a Baptist minister is the commitment to nonconformity. If we are to see the re-emergence and recognition of apostles and prophets, then there surely has to be a corresponding growth and development of those who are prepared, for the sake of Christ and his gospel, to speak out for truth, to defend the poor and marginalised, to make a stand and either, reactively or proactively, work for justice. The voice of the nonconformist should be heard again, speaking the Word of God into the

public domain, challenging, with humility, those things that are alien to the ways of God and his kingdom.

10. Bi, Tri and Other Part Time Ministries

With finite resources and the missional needs, we're simply not going to be in a position to fund all the existing churches, new plants and initiatives in the future. At the beginning of their time at Spurgeon's College I say to all the ministerial students that there is no guarantee that they will enter full-time paid stipendiary ministry when they leave college.

I believe that we have to find new ways of sustaining ministries. There has to be a serious exploration, (and here we could do with some entrepreneurial insights and the wisdom of people who have run businesses to advise) on different models of economic sustainability.

Some churches have embarked upon social enterprises, from which some income is being generated to fund aspects of ministry. Some ministers have chosen intentionally, not always of necessity, to find work to support them in their ministries. Good leaders, Baptist ministers, have a number of transferable skills and these can be employed to good effect in the secular workplace. Certainly it appears that increasing numbers of Baptist ministers and churches will have to find alternative or supplementary means of income other than that of congregation's offering.

This is the experience of many Baptist leaders throughout other parts of the world and it is a reality that we have to embrace and see in it more opportunities, than problems.

11. Leadership

To state the obvious, we need to encourage and see more good leaders throughout our denomination.

There is a great poverty of leadership in society generally and we need to reverse that trend. Jesus personified good leadership. Good leaders reflect Christ in who they are, how they live their lives and lead others. They impart life simply because of who they are, they influence, inspire, shape and develop, encourage and serve people and make a difference, bringing transformation through their ministries. Their character, calling and conduct should reveal Christ-like, godly leadership.

We have an ambivalence and hesitancy in some quarters within our denomination to recognise leadership. Our commitment to the good principles and practices of the 'church meeting' where we together, discern the mind of Christ, sometimes excludes or is unable to receive and respond to good leadership that brings direction and purpose, vision and transformation to a church and community. Not in an autocratic, dictatorial way that demands

obedience but leadership that builds trust, confidence, collegiality, transparency and where a right and appropriate sense of submission and mutual accountability is evidenced.

I long that we might place far more emphasis on leadership when we train people for ministry. The process of discerning a person's call, should give more time and effort to discovering and discerning whether a person has leadership gifts and qualities or not. They may be able to preach, lead worship and facilitate a house group but have they the ability to lead people?

I do believe that we have too many people in positions of leadership who do not possess the ability to lead! This is a serious problem.

The debate about the difference between management and leadership is ever present within wider society and I believe it's an issue we face within the context of Baptist ministry. If management, to quote John Kotter, Professor of leadership at Harvard University is, *a set of processes that keeps an organisation functioning.... The processes are about planning, budgeting, staffing, clarifying jobs, measuring performance, and problem-solving when results do not go to plan.*

Leadership is very different. It is about inspiring, influencing, shaping and transforming. A leader is someone who has, *"a magnet in their heart and a compass in their head"*. They bring something by their very presence into situations. Good leaders lead and followers follow.

Bill Hybels, the founding and senior pastor of Willow Creek community Church says: *The local church is the hope of the world, and its future rests primarily in the hands of its leaders.*

There is an inextricable link between good leadership and a good church, organisation, business, community, council or whatever.

Regrettably we have some ministers who do not possess leadership gifts, who other people simply do not follow. We have some who have ended up becoming 'project managers'; running churches, delivering programmes, *'trying to keep the customer satisfied'*. Inevitably, with ministering in a consumer society, the pressures and expectations upon a minister are great but good leadership is able to rise above simply, keeping people happy, delivering attractive programmes and keeping 'the show on the road'.

Allied to this much-needed good leadership is the rightful emphasis upon self-awareness and emotional intelligence. I am disheartened by the number of ministers who appear to be lacking in both these essential aspects of leadership. A lack of self-awareness creates all kinds of problems and difficulties, for the minister and those they serve. It should be incumbent upon anybody serving as a Baptist minister to have cultivated the disciplines and have in place accountability and appropriate structures to enhance their self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

So many problems, conflicts and in some cases pastoral 'disasters' with their consequential casualties would be avoided if there was more self-awareness and emotional intelligence on behalf of those who lead.

Leadership training, the deployment and development of leaders should be very high on the priorities of those who are in ministry.

If this is true, then **the question has to be asked why we don't develop more leaders, good leaders.** My conversations with Baptist ministers and church leaders over many years has led me to conclude that it is not seen as a priority; too many churches and Baptist ministers simply don't know how to develop their own leadership, let alone others. Many say they just don't have the time. These are serious impediments to our growth and development.

Every church needs leaders but new leaders don't just magically appear. They must be identified and developed. We must do more to train at every level; within local churches, associations, in our colleges and nationally.

Paul, in mentoring Timothy wanted to ensure future followers of Jesus would be vibrant and faithful. We should have a similar desire. There are many principles for building up the kind of leaders that will champion the faith well into the future.

Regardless of the size of a church, a considerable amount of our time should be spent focusing on this critical area of developing leaders. Jesus spent the bulk of his time with his disciples who would go on to impact the world. The Apostle Paul modelled and taught leadership development as well. We see this both in his investment in men such as Timothy and in the words he wrote:

"...and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to others who will be able to teach / impart also." 2 Timothy 2:2.

When I teach the leadership module Cranmer Hall with my friend and colleague, the warden, Mark Tanner, I offer a very simple model for developing leaders, which I have adapted and used with leadership teams over many years. It's simple yet produces good results, good leaders. It is not the remit of this report to go into detail on this particular model, but I outline it, briefly, as an example and illustration of what I believe we must be placing more emphasis on within the context of Baptist ministry.

NB A MODEL FOR DEVELOPING LEADERS

1. Model...

- Live, Inspire, Impart and Train... Leaders should be men and women who live a life that not only reflects Christ, but live in such a way that naturally endorses, advocates,

shares and reveals what they are about as disciples. Good leadership inspires people. It imparts 'life'; it doesn't merely give information, proclaim truth, but rather people 'catch' and are impacted and influenced by the life that they see lived by the leader.

Good leaders also continue to develop and deepen their calling, character and the skills that enable them to serve better.

- Always on the Look Out... Good leadership should always be on the lookout for other potential leaders. They should have a honing device that detects, observes and discerns whether those whom they meet and serve with have the seedlings or traces of leadership potential within them. They should be aware and provide opportunities for such people to be in some leadership context, that might give clues as to their potential or not.
- Intentionality about developing leaders... We need to be intentional and commit time and energy to developing other leaders.

2. Design...

Each leadership context is different but there are some common core elements to designing a leadership 'curriculum'.

- Great Commandment and Great Commission... Put simply, Jesus commands us, to

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself and his Commission to, Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you should form the basis of any leadership training.

- Spiritual Formation.... Our primary calling as Baptist ministers is to love God. If we do not love God then how on earth can we impart his love to others? The very basis of ministry has to be rooted in a person's relationship with God, an ongoing, seeking, deepening, developing relationship of faith, out of which ministry and mission flows.

The biggest examination question that any ministry student we'll ever be asked, is not some academic proposition but that which Jesus asked Peter, *Do you love me?* **It is absolutely essential for anyone exercising Baptist ministry to be able to pass this examination with honours!** It should be the very litmus test in discerning anyone who feels a call to Christian leadership and Baptist ministry ~do they love Christ? Does the love of God exude from their character and personality? Are others going to encounter the presence of Christ through their lives and ministries?

- Character.... With so much emphasis upon conduct and performance, both within the

church and wider society it is important to stress that foundational to ministry is that of good and virtuous character. Someone may be able to learn skills, pick up the tools of ministry but if their character is not being formed in the ways of Christ, then no amount of skill and acumen in other areas will compensate for lack of godly character and they will not be good ministers.

3. Discernment...

We can learn much from some of the other historic denominations, particularly Anglicans and Catholics, who give considerable time and attention to listening and discerning as to whether a person is being called to ministry. I believe we should be encouraging more people to think about a call to ministry and providing opportunities; for example, day or weekend workshops that might help people in their explorations and discerning whether they are being called or not. Whether people are called to Baptist ministry or not, such experiences will help to heighten peoples sense of vocation and ask important questions about life choices and directions, but every disciple of Christ should be asking, young and old. Time and effort put in at this stage of a person's vocation will reap rich dividends in terms of the future. Conversely, where the discernment process is weak it can result in very adverse experiences both for the individual and those whom they serve. Sadly, I have met people in Baptist ministry for whom their stories of God's leading have been poor or become diluted over time.

The appointment of wise, 'discerners' could be deployed both regionally and nationally. In the Church of England, a rigorous discernment process is deployed for those who are applying for ordained ministry within the Church of England, covering areas of; vocation, ministry within the church, spirituality, personality and character, relationships, leadership, collaborative skills, faith, mission and evangelism and the quality of mind and heart. Candidates for ministry must evidence and in a sense of call, confirmed by others, together with a knowledge and understanding of what ministry means within that particular denomination. Each diocese has a person designated to work on the discernment process, who meets with candidates and oversees the various meetings and requirements that are needed for any potential person putting themselves forward for ministry. I wonder if it might be possible for us to think of having suitably gifted people, appointed within our associations, who would work with the wider ministry team, regional ministers, colleges etc.

- o Vocation... *right seat, fitting task, willing heart...*

Tim Keller offers three "tests" to discern a call from God. These tests involve *passion*, *people*, and *place*. What are you passionate about? What credible people have confirmed this calling? And what place do you have to exercise this passion? Keller suggests that all three need to be in place to confirm a calling.

- o *Humility to take responsibility.*

True, biblical leadership is saturated in humility. Jesus was explicit about the way his disciples were to lead: "*You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you.*" ([Matt. 20:25-28](#)).

Developing future leaders demands humility. Often and hopefully, our protégés will possess greater skill and more potential than we do. But if we see our role in parental terms we will joyfully serve and take joy and encouragement in seeing our spiritual offspring surpass us in every way.

Of course Jesus was the greatest at developing leaders. He spent the vast majority of his time with a handful of people. He taught them to be disciple-makers and trusted that future generations would hear the Good News because of their witness.

4. Deployment and Development.

- Focus on Their Potential.

Jesus took a risk on all of his disciples, including the leader, Peter. When Barnabas chose Paul, a former persecutor of the church, it was a huge risk. In both cases, the risk was based on the transforming power of the gospel.

Charles Pike, the Baptist minister in Harrogate in the 1970's took a risk on me. I had only come to faith a few months earlier, had no history or association with a church, arrived as a trainee Outward Bound instructor and was just 18 years old, when he let me preach my first sermon. He later told me that he received a lot of criticism for allowing me to preach at the midweek Bible study and prayer meeting. I still have a copy of that sermon. It was an exegetical disaster and I am embarrassed now by its content! But he didn't focus on my current skills, or lack of them. He saw in me a leader, a communicator, someone who with training could *rightly handle the Word of God*. He saw what I could become. As a good pastor and discipler, he listened to my life story and help me to see that from an early age, I had often found myself in positions of leadership, whether I liked it or not! We helped in the discerning process of recognising my call to ministry and leadership.

We need the same attitude that he possessed that looks out for and allows people, young and old to lead and to be prepared to stand with them when they fail. People who will help potential leaders to learn from their mistakes and failures and go on to encourage them to lead again. Of course, I wasn't catapulted to preach before I had been asked to do a reading in church, lead the prayers, share my testimony etc. In all of these things, I see now that my pastor was observing and discerning and out of that experience he took the risk and allowed me to preach my first sermon.

Jesus, at Caesarea Philippi rebukes Peter in the strongest terms and then later rightly predicted

Peter would deny him three times. Yet after these failures, Jesus still commissioned him to lead again by feeding and tending his sheep. The rest, as they say, is history. e.g. After the ascension of Jesus, Peter preached at Pentecost and 3,000 people were saved.

The grace of God toward failed leaders is obvious in Scripture. It's easy to write people off because of early mishaps. But those who train up leaders have eyes to see past a potential or new leader's flaws and foibles.

Any leadership development must include aspects of apprenticeship and mentoring. I shall say more later about these areas but they are imperatives for Baptist ministry. My own leadership ministry was hugely shaped and influenced by some great mentors. My Bible College principal, was like a father in Christ to my wife and I. My heart for mission, in large measure, comes from who he was and the compassion that just oozed out from him and found expression in his longing to see people come to know, love and serve Christ. His faith and ability to trust God, when he and the college were backs to the wall financially, taught us a great deal about what it meant to be dependent upon God, to reach out and do things that other people say can't be done. Simple trust, the willingness to work hard, the essentials of prayer and saturating ourselves in Scripture, came from his influence. He exposed me to all kinds of different situations that called for me to lead. From organising a gardening rota during the college summer holidays, to leading a mission team, preaching, visiting and getting alongside two students with diametrically opposing theological perspectives, all of these experiences, he designed, to test and train my leadership skills. T.J. Russell Jones, a remarkable, godly Baptist minister, was my mentor, during my year at South Wales Baptist College. I accompanied him, observed him, talked at length with him about life and ministry and he too, provided opportunities, sometimes throwing me in at the 'deep end' which developed my leadership calling and skills.

There are good people who are well able to mentor other emerging and established ministers and we should be deploying them more to serve these purposes. Regional minister Jez Brown in deploying David Coffey to look after all the NAMS within the South West Association is a fine example of mentoring that is working extremely well. We may not have the resources to operate a 'curacy' system but we can learn the principles of such a system and develop practices within our own denominational contexts.

5. Mentoring...

One of the great challenges and needs within the contemporary church is that of discipleship. To fulfil the Great Commission, *"to go into all the world and make disciples..."* demands that those going are themselves disciples of Jesus. It is of paramount importance that anybody who is a Baptist minister clearly evidences the characteristics of a disciple. Men and women who embrace intentionally in their own lives that commitment to be a disciple themselves. Without

the marks of a disciple evidenced in a minister then there is no hope or ability to disciple others. Discipleship is not simply about acquiring knowledge and information; it is about relationship with the living God; a growing, deepening, living relationship. **Discipleship is about imparting life not just conveying information about the faith.**

One key aspect of discipleship, which I believe has great relevance for Baptist ministers, is the whole notion of mentoring.

In Homer's *Odyssey*, Mentor was the valued and esteemed servant of Ulysses. He was charged by the king to care and train his son Telemachus. This entailed not only teaching key skills and honing abilities but also addressing issues of character, attitudes, behaviour, courage, relating to others etc.

This comprehensive approach to development was exercised by the Guild Masters in the Middle Ages who were responsible for the social, spiritual and personal growth as well as the technical skills of their apprentices. The simple definition of a mentor is that of an experienced and trusted advisor. Mentoring of Baptist ministers should focus on character building, attitudes, values, ethos and envisioning. The process of mentoring can take years and needs to be based on a relationship of trust and exercised in a way that is affirming and supportive. Its objectives and outcomes are harder to define and measure but it is nevertheless an important discipline in the process of caring for and developing ministers both in relation to who they are and their practice and exercising ministry.

A great deal is taught about sustainability these days: from sustainable energy, agriculture, developments and ecosystems. I think **the issue of sustainability is a critical one for Baptist ministry.** How can we build healthy, enriching, life-giving ministries with all the demands and pressures that a minister faces? The value of a mentoring system should be embedded into the life experience of every Baptist minister as it addresses this need of long-term ministry sustainability.

It may be more challenging to instigate a system with already established ministers but we can certainly strengthen and develop a mentoring system for every new person who enters Baptist ministry.

6. Coaching

A growing appreciation of coaching is evident within lots of other areas of life and work and there are gifted men and women within our denomination who are able to offer these services to others.

I believe it would be good for us to consider creating a directory of Life Coaches who would be prepared to offer their skills to help people in appropriate times in their ministry. I was

talking to a young Baptist minister who had greatly benefited from being coached by a hospital chaplain in the areas of breaking bad news to people and caring and ministering to people who were the recipients of such news. Similarly, I have been greatly helped by talking with and spending time with a psychotherapist and life coach. They have coached me in the areas of stress management, conflict transformation and emotional intelligence and given me a greater understanding of group dynamics and organisational management processes in the secular workplace. Together with a business mentor my understanding of how to relate as a Christian leader and minister with leaders and business people in secular context has significantly helped me.

I see in the future Baptist ministers all required to be part of a recognised mentoring scheme, which would tie into a Lifelong Learning Programme.

7. Spiritual Direction

Thomas Keating likens spiritual direction to the guidance systems that were used to keep aeroplanes on course during flights. When the pilot was on course he wouldn't hear anything on his headphones but if he veered off course to the right, he would hear a beep. If he veered the other way he would pick up a different signal. By correcting his course, his headphones would return to silence. In the midst of ordinary life and ministry, similar indications of being on or off course should be accessed. So much of contemporary life and ministry focuses on external matters of practice, behaviour and conduct. The 'interior life' is, often through busyness and activism, neglected. The value of spiritual direction is that it provides the discipline of listening to those 'signals' and at the same time helps a minister to *pay attention to their hearts*.

Increasing numbers of people are being trained in spiritual direction and can offer invaluable help to ministers navigate through the landscape of their hearts and help them to be aware of the signals and sounds that can keep them true to God and their calling. The value of spiritual direction is that it enables people to be aware of and able to face their blind spots, dumb spots and deaf spots; those areas where they are failing to see, reluctant to talk about or address or when they are not listening to God.

A minister who submits himself or herself to the discipline of spiritual direction is helped to conquer sin and those destructive habits that crave for things like happiness, affection, affirmation, freedom, and other things that, whilst not being necessarily wrong in themselves, can nevertheless sometimes be sought after through unhelpful or ungodly means. A deadly poison that damages and undermines any minister is when they are insecure and an insecure leader is a danger to themselves and others. Insecurity can manifest itself in fearful attitudes, controlling mechanisms and bullying and abusive behaviour. Spiritual direction directs the heart towards God and encourages a rootedness in Christ that addresses the problem of

insecurity.

True happiness, love, freedom etc. comes from being rooted in God and relating well to him, to ourselves and to others. Spiritual direction helps us to be aware of the obstacles to God's Spirit at work within our lives and cultivates a non-possessive attitude towards ourselves and other people. A fundamental requirement for the spiritual formation of any Baptist minister is that they learn that their true security is found in God, who in his grace and mercy, truly loves them and with his compassion and care and enabling, they can fulfil their calling.

The growing number of Baptist ministers who are appreciating having a spiritual director is a very healthy development and one which could, I would suggest, be made mandatory for every newly ordained person.

8. **Accountability**

Avoiding the secular mindset of key performance indicators, and excessive scrutiny in order to achieve maximum output and productivity, there is nevertheless a real need, I believe, to advocate and implement a more rigid system of accountability for Baptist ministers. The tendency and ability for many Baptist ministers, "to do their own thing" must be challenged and dismantled. Working without any appropriate form of accountability is neither good for one's personal development and provides a loophole for inappropriate, poor or bad behaviour and practices. Accountability to others provides a supportive and protective mechanism, which enables people to flourish and grow. Good models and existing examples where accountability is working well should act as templates for accountability structures within the training of ministers and in their ongoing, continuing development of ministry.

• Peer Group...

Peer support groups can be a very helpful means to aid and encourage people in ministry. They are an essential component within some other denominations and independent church networks and have been deployed very effectively within the Scottish Baptist Union in recent years. Deep and trusted friendships often emerge through these groups and counter both independency, and isolationism and combat those attitudes and actions that can often lead to problems and casualties in ministry. Bill, the Baptist minister, whom I work quite closely with in Glendale Crossing Places, formed a peer group with other fellow students in training at Spurgeon's College back in the 1970s. Forty years on, that same peer group remains an incredibly supportive and deep friendship group, who pray, meet, encourage and every few years form a mission team that goes out to India to serve for a couple of weeks.

Of all the casualties and people I have met over many years who have run into trouble or had to resign from their ministry, a common thread in their lives has been the lack of meaningful friendships, accountable relationships and appropriate support structures.

- Review Process...

It was quite enlightening, in the process of this review, to discover that so many ministers and churches have no organised review process in place. Some individuals and a couple of associations have some simple, basic guidelines or questions to ask but I do feel that some work could be done on this area to provide better templates for ministers and indeed churches to conduct a review process. These should not be seen as threatening or undermining but providing opportunities for reflection, which hopefully recognises, affirms and celebrates achievements as well as highlighting any areas of concern that need to be addressed.

- Life Long Learning...

Another essential component that Baptist ministers should possess is a commitment to lifelong learning. The provision of both formal and informal learning opportunities throughout a person's ministry which enables them to foster the continuous development and improvement of their knowledge and skills, together with looking at aspects of their character and reflecting on their calling.

- Nurturing of the Inner Life...

Our Baptist forefathers and mothers would ask the searching question, *How is it with your soul?* A more contemporary expression might be, *What are you and God working on at present?*... However it is phrased it is an incredibly important question to ask.

A helpful way of looking at the nurturing of a Baptist minister would be to ask questions that relate to the, '*head, heart and hands*':

- o Knowledge, (Head) *What kinds of things does a leader need to know? These things could be addressed through such things as reading, being mentored, teaching, etc.*
- o Character (Heart) *What heart issues need to be addressed? No amount of knowledge can shape issues of the heart. You can have a lot of theological knowledge and still be greedy, a gossip, have hidden sin etc.*
- o Skills / Competence (Hands) *What things does a leader need to learn to do? e.g, I see a minister knowing how to communicate, influence, impart, know how to share their faith in a variety of circumstances, etc*

- Wellbeing.

The final piece in the leadership development model would be to ask questions and address issues about the minister's, physical, mental, emotional, psychological and social well-being.

J. SOME WAYMARKS FOR THE JOURNEY AHEAD

The challenges and changes we face in a growing post-Christendom society provide the mandate and the opportunity for us to reaffirm, rediscover and reimagine what being a nonconformist, missional movement might mean.

If we're thinking about Baptist ministry, where the Kingdom of God determines the purpose of the church and shapes our thinking about ministry and mission, then I see great potential for us as Baptists Together.

For this potential to be realised it will require a great deal of imagination and re-figuring, both strategically and operationally, in terms of how we organise ourselves at local church, association and national levels. It will require much courage and cooperation, wise leadership and a willingness to change. My focus has been upon Baptist ministry in the future, although I am acutely aware that it is difficult to see one aspect of our life in isolation from other areas. However, I want to suggest some Waymarks for the Journey ahead that might guide our paths.

They are in no order of priority.

- 1. Recognise the diversity of ministries among us and utilise their leadership, particularly those with apostolic, prophetic and pioneering ministries.**

Review and revisit areas of accreditation to encompass the various ministries among us. This would require a broadening of the definition of a Baptist minister, enabling people who are, for example, pioneers, to exercise their ministries outside of the local church context, to stay on our accredited lists and still be part of the Baptist family.

- 2. A recognition/accreditation/validating system that operates locally, regionally and nationally.**

A reconfiguring that recognises bi-vocational and part-time ministries.

I believe that there should be some recognition and accreditation of ministry at Association level. There could be common agreement, across the associations and Union about the criteria for discerning the recognition of ministers. When a minister moves from one Association to another, they would be commended by their 'sending' Association and would probably need to go through some form of accreditation/validation process with their new association. If they were being called to a national appointment or to some other sphere ministry, I would expect a similar procedure; i.e. their sending Association, commending them and in some cases, where ministers are moving out of church-based or pioneering ministry into say, taking on a role within a para-church or other charitable organisation, that they can still remain as Baptist ministers, playing an active part in Association and Union life.

The potential dangers of such a scheme would be countered by a more rigorous accreditation process. It would also, hopefully remove those situations where 'problematic' ministers are free to move around and cause chaos elsewhere, refusing or ignoring any need to address issues in their own lives and ministries.

In Northern Ireland, where I was licensed to exercise ministry within the Church of Ireland, the Bishop designated an audit team to review the minister and the church they were leaving, in order to acknowledge closure, celebrate blessings and create awareness of any issues that would need to be addressed, by the individual minister and also the church. It was not a heavy-handed thing but a very useful review procedure which informed all concerned and provided valuable information for future ministries. Where there were clearly issues to be addressed, failure to do so meant that, if it were the minister, they would not be commended / licensed by the Bishop for a future recognised appointment until they had worked through what was required or suggested of them. Likewise, if a church had issues, they would not receive the Bishop's blessing and he would not licence a successor until those issues had been addressed. We do not carry the same authority to act in the local church but we can draw helpful lessons from this policy that might help in the settlement process and also protect both ministers and churches from 'rogues'. We would also protect ministers, who enthusiastically go into situations, often unaware of the true history of a church, only to be disillusioned and in some cases damaged by the abuse they and their predecessors have received in such contexts. This has got to stop!

3. Placing more emphasis and responsibility upon local and associations for safeguarding and disciplinary issues.

This might necessitate further resourcing but the pressures upon a small ministry department to handle, sadly, increasing numbers of issues relating to safeguarding and has, in my opinion to be devolved.

Disciplinary Issues: being a disciple requires discipline which should be evidenced in the lives of all ministers and those whom they serve. Ministers should model and impart what being a disciple of Jesus entails.

However, we are not perfect and the consequences of bad attitudes, speech and actions, together with wrong and sinful behaviour brings damage to individuals, families, friendships and churches. Various guidelines have been proposed and advocated through the years and perhaps it is time to revisit and provide resources for ministers and also churches about addressing issues of discipline, not just the ones that usually attract most attention, e.g. *conduct unbecoming* which often refers to some active sexual impropriety or adultery. There are other areas that would also need to be considered; for example, abusive power-playing behaviour, lying, manipulation and bullying, gossip and slander, etc.

Given the limited resources that we have both within nationally and in our associations, inevitably those tasked with exercising discipline are essentially addressing those issues of *conduct unbecoming*. I would suggest that with the complexity and growth of issues that we need to strengthen the ministry team who are handling these sad and unseemly cases and particularly bring alongside them, specialists and experts, who can advise and help both in the processes, decisions and aftermath.

We do also need to continue to find ways of helping to restore and rehabilitate those ministers who have shown genuine repentance and who are wanting to move on from the mistakes and sin of their past. Failure, as has often been said, is not meant to be our undertaker but our teacher and if we are as a Baptist movement, a people of grace, then there should be the space, opportunity and encouragement to see repentant, reconciled and restored ministers, back in ministry.

4. Training for Ministry and the Place of Colleges.

Our Baptist colleges play a very significant role in shaping Baptist ministers and serving the church. They face innumerable challenges in the coming years and intuitively I do not believe that they will all be able to exist in their present forms. We should be in conversation and working with them to discern and explore, not just the implications of a lack of finances but how best we can be involved in the training for the next generations of our Baptist ministers.

I have had a concern for years, which I now know is shared by other ministers, that there are elements of training for ministry that, if not missing, do not form necessarily the foundational basis of the college training.

Prior to the growth of universities across Europe in the Middle Ages, those who felt the call to ministry, the priesthood, were trained in the monasteries. There they were spiritually formed, rooted in Christ, they learnt to pray, read and study Scripture and live in community. The monastery provided the context and environment to train for ministry. With the advent of universities and particularly following the Reformation, training for ministry took place within an academic environment. Because of the close relationship between the evolution of universities and theological seminaries, ministers and theologians have historically been among the, "knowledge professionals". As a consequence the purpose of many theological colleges and seminaries is increasingly buying into the 'professional credentialing' for ministry. If we're not careful, this can lead to a 'professionalisation' of ministry, something I have huge reservations about. It can also take theology into a cul-de-sac within the academic world and removes theological reflection from the church.

Patterns of preparing people for ministry are still needing to change. I believe that we need more theological reflection and biblical imagination to inform our ministries but I have a concern that in aligning ourselves with established universities and, at times, the

overwhelming need to satisfy their criteria for validation, we may not be giving ourselves sufficient time and attention to the foundational issues of spiritual formation. Our colleges, forced to comply by the standards and criteria set by university authorities, are in danger of moving away from their relationship and accountability to the church. Ministers in training have to conform to curriculums set by academic boards, which do not necessarily comply to the needs of the church and the missional imperative.

Eddie Gibbs, in his book *Leadership Next*, says: *the ministry training I received over 40 years ago was for a world that no longer exists*. Many Baptist ministers in recent years, some of whom have been trained in our Baptist colleges in recent times, are echoing the same sentiments and we need to have a conversation that involves colleges, ministers, churches and those engaged in missional, 'on the streets' ministries.

The loss many years ago, of the opportunity for most people to train for ministry in a residential college community context. This is understandable, primarily for economic reasons, but I believe it is regrettable that we have had to take such measures. Living in community, studying for ministry, the sharing of one's life with people of different backgrounds, temperaments, opinions and convictions is a remarkable component in spiritual formation and the shaping of future Baptist ministers. I have spoken to many ministers, some of my contemporaries, who so valued the experience of living in community during their college training. This was my experience and it was echoed in later years through my involvement with IBTS in Prague. A community that lived together, prayed each day, shared meals and conversations, listened and learned from staff and one another, within and outside the classroom. Another factor that impressed me about IBTS and the Bible college that my wife and I went to was that we were very involved with people beyond the seminary, e.g. running the local drop-in centre, youth club and hospital radio station, or in Prague joining students in their work among the homeless of the city. Some remarkable young leaders were formed at the seminary and who are now serving God, some in incredibly challenging situations. The grounding they received through living in community resources and serves them well.

My concerns about an over emphasis on academic achievement is that it excludes or deters many able people who simply would not fit in or cope with such academic environments. I know that great efforts have been made to welcome and accommodate students from non-academic or non-book culture backgrounds but I do know that there are leaders and potential leaders within our churches for whom academic college training as it currently offered, is out of the question.

I do believe that we need to value an appropriate emphasis on good, sound theological education but I am not convinced that it is for everyone who is called to Baptist ministry. **Some good leaders are potentially excluded because of their inability to meet the academic requirements we currently require of them.** When I think of the many young Baptist leaders,

across Eastern Europe, whose training at IBTS was less than a year in seminary, the majority only able to do a Certificate in Applied Theology yet through their experience of living in community, learning and growing spiritually, they have gone on to do great things. Some of them have continued their studies, albeit from a distance. Their learning continues but they were given a foundation, a remarkable foundation upon which they have been able to build and develop their ministries.

I have taught at a couple of Bible colleges in the Midlands over the last year, both of whom have students, that I am pretty sure, would not have successfully got through our selection processes from an academic point of view. However, most of them are called by God, gifted and will go on to become good missional leaders. They may not all come out, with even a degree or a diploma but they will have been well prepared and given sufficient grounding, possibly at certificate level to set them up for effective ministries.

If we are to train people for Baptist ministry in our colleges, the primary concern should be on spiritual formation, equipping and encouraging people to love God, to lead and to have a sufficient theological grounding for their future ministries.

For those who are gifted academically, I think that we should create the opportunities and recognise those within our Baptist family for whom a rigorous and exacting academic calling should be able to find expression within one of our Baptist colleges. Not exclusively so, because I believe that we need Baptist theologians and other academics in the secular academic world. We will be the poorer as a denomination if we do not encourage the next generation of Baptist theologians.

This said, I do not believe that everybody is best prepared for Baptist ministry by pursuing a rigorous academic route for accreditation.

Whilst airing concerns about a possible overemphasis on academic achievement I want to note the dangers in the ideology of professionalism that can seep in and characterise institutional theological education.

In a significant study, *The Rise of Professionalism* by the sociologist Magali Lawson, she points out the dangers of conferring forms of special status and an *occupational hierarchy, that is, a differential system of competencies and rewards; the central principle of legitimacy is founded on the achievement of a recognised expertise, or more simply, on a system of education and credentialing*. The production of knowledge has become a *standardised commodity* in the modern university, steadily replacing the older ethos of apprenticeships and guilds.

Concerns have been expressed about how modern Western education is moving further away from traditional liberal notions of a community of critical scholarship towards an economic rationalism that sees the institution as a degree factory for the managerial, technocratic and

academic classes. Theology should not be used to contribute to a mechanistic view of the world, that reduces values to issues of productivity and achievement. Theology should be at the forefront of critiquing society, of offering reflection, insight and inspiration as to how we might live.

Positing theology only in academic environments can unintentionally take it away from the arena of the church and the public domain. If theology is only seen to be that which ministers engage with in their academic studies then we create a divide between the 'professionals' and the rest of the body of Christ.

We can also create unhelpful perceptions about theology. By making it an academic discipline, many ordinary Christians, who don't go to college, simply don't engage in theological reflection. As Ched Myers puts it, *the worlds of the seminary, the sanctuary and the streets generally spin in very different orbits, with little engaged conversation between them ~much less mutual accountability.*

When what we need is more theological integrity and biblical imagination in our churches, associations, Union, in evangelism, social action, youth work, etc we are in danger of removing them from these areas through making them the domain of the academic classroom.

The theological poverty within our churches is a cause for real concern and a call to action. A lack of theological integrity, biblical understanding and spiritual formation is lamentable across the whole spectrum of church life and ministries. I believe that **only an enriching and deepening theological outlook on life and ministry will guard us from the superficiality, consumerism and insularity of so much church life.**

As we move forward exploring the future, I appeal to those three spheres that Myers describes; our colleges, our churches and our engagement 'on the streets', in the world, to connect and communicate with one another. They must not work in isolation from one another but work to reintegrate these three spheres.

I believe there should be a discussion with our colleges on the future of Baptist ministry and training of the next generations. If we are able to lay aside vested interests and personal and college needs and do some scenario planning and imagining what the future might hold, it might help in determining how best we may use the limited resources we have more effectively for the Kingdom.

Recognising the growing diversity of our movement and the different ministries required to serve might it be possible to think about some colleges specialising in some areas of ministry? A residential community focusing on spiritual formation, peace and reconciliation, etc. I know that to some extent this happens now but how about a college dedicated to 'Pioneering' ministry. The Centre for Pioneering ministry at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, could be a model for

our own denomination. Or a college where young Baptists could come and study a number of subjects at undergraduate level, including theology, but in the context of living in a Christian community. Or is it too radical to think of establishing one college with different hubs across the country, serving associations, embracing a missional strategy to reach the nation, with possibly different emphases in the different contexts.

We should be talking to BMS about how we might work together in the misional context we face here in Britain. How would a collaborative mission strategy work in order to reach the nation?

I think we could develop further links with other denominational colleges, leadership schools and training agencies in equipping people for these differing and diverse ministries. There are good things to be learnt from others; e.g. Fresh Expressions, some of the independent networks leadership programmes, Urban Expression, Rural Ministries, Crucible, St Miletus, Holy Trinity, etc.

I have personally benefitted from the opportunity in the last couple of years to complete the Arthur Rank centre course on creative and entrepreneurial leadership in the rural church. Ten Input days over 18 months, a mentor and someone who I was able to shadow in their work, together with excellent reading materials, a critical commentary and personal portfolio, all contributed to a remarkably good course for anyone involved in rural ministry. Working with somebody like the Arthur Rank Centre or Rural Ministries could create something of enormous benefit in training people for ministry or those already in ministry.

5. Collaborative Ministry...

A recent conversation with a URC Moderator confirmed my experience of recent years that the opportunity to work in partnership with other denominations and groups is now considerably easier than for previous generations. The tedious, and at times tiresome bureaucracy, that blighted some earlier ecumenical initiatives have largely been removed. There are now much more missional and experimental ways and the doors have opened for us to work with others for the sake of the gospel.

We have much to learn and much to give in these contexts and our 'default' position to act independently should not get in the way of us from entering into some significant partnerships with others.

6. Associations....

We, by our very nature, are not a centrist people. The bias towards the local has to take precedence over what we do nationally and regionally. This does not mean that we are unable to work collaboratively and work well at all levels but what happens nationally and regionally must serve what is happening locally.

It seems to me that the future, organisationally, needs to be worked out with more emphasis and resourcing of our Associations. However, Associations must step up to the mark and assume some of the responsibilities that those at national level are carrying on their behalf. It should not be the responsibility of those who work at Didcot or elsewhere, nationally, to carry those responsibilities that others are not prepared to fulfil. It is also not to say there is not an important and significant place for some 'national' teams to play, but initiatives, should in the main, emerge from local churches and associations, supported by our life together as a Union.

We should consider the potential and impact of devolving resources more to the local and associations, rather than seeking to do more than is necessary centrally.

I would suggest that working more closely and in partnership with BMS could trigger and establish some helpful missional strategies, in reaching parts of Britain that many of our churches and established ministries simply do not touch.

Much grace and tolerance will be required to allow experimentation of strategies within our associations and partnerships. I do believe that there is scope to work across some regions in the partnerships that have been created but I am not convinced that it works necessarily in every given area. Certainly, if we can find the mechanisms that keep us working both independently and yet collaboratively, and relationships between Regional Ministers and those who serve on our behalf nationally are good, then we can learn from the various experimentations and discern what is good practice, even if it is expressed differently in different areas throughout the country.

Whilst it is smaller in number than the Baptist Union south of the border, there are invaluable lessons and some inspiration to be gleaned from the Baptist Union of Scotland in the way in which they have handled change and effected a positive missional movement, with a strong emphasis on covenanted relationships, peer groups, the role of mentors and a more integrated approach to training and resourcing.

7. Become More Organisationally Light

Notwithstanding legal and financial obligations and responsibilities I hope we are able to remove some of the burdens and pressures from those who work at Didcot and within our Associations. If we weigh ourselves down institutionally and organisationally, we are undermining one of the strengths we possess as Baptists.

The Anglicans and Methodists here in Northumberland still can't get their heads around and remain suspicious because we were able to not only start Crossing Places in Glendale, but get it up and running and also call a Community Pastor, all within five months. The fact that we were not weighed down by superfluous bureaucracy and controlling systems, freed us to get

on with planting the gospel, forming friendships and community and engaging in serving the area and its people.

We need to remove all unnecessary bureaucracy, giving more power to those whom we've recognised as leaders among us to exercise that leadership. We need to encourage greater trust in one another and a deeper sense of honouring and valuing of the ministries of leadership that God has released among us.

We should explore what the idea of 'low control and high accountability' means in relation to ministry and how we operate as a Union.

8. Reconfigure Teams not Departments and Build further 'us' and not 'them'

It may seem trivial and semantic but there is power in the naming of things. The word, 'Department' may be a very helpful descriptive term to describe what a particular group do and the responsibilities they handle on our behalf. However it is the language of business and institutions and I feel that we might be better served by speaking about 'teams' or the 'team'. Again the phrase, 'Head' can convey an image that is less than helpful.

We do need to work at the threat of fragmentation and counter such by dismantling any "us and them" mentality. The language of "we" should permeate all our communications.

I believe we should talk more about, "our national team" or our "Association team" rather than "a national leadership team".

We should, whilst occupying different roles and handling different responsibilities, avoid any elements of territorialism and protectionism.

And **everything, literally everything, should have a high relational emphasis and bias.** From emails, telephone calls, assemblies, interviews, etc. people should feel as though they are relating to other members of the 'family'. Relationships should be built on developing friendships, covenant relationships and not on contractual or legalistic frames of reference.

9. Cultivate a *Can-Do* attitude and Build on Positive Momentum.

Leadership at national, association and local level should foster an attitude of possibility thinking and build on the stories of success and achievements. This is not to deny inevitable disappointments and some failures but by telling and sharing and celebrating good news stories, they become powerful tools in building up momentum and serving the missional movement of the denomination. So much is learnt and 'caught' from good practice, inspirational leaders and great stories that emphasise hope, transformation, what's possible etc. and all of them should illustrate and remind people of our core values.

10. Build Association and National Teams of Inspirational Leaders.

We need people who can lead, inspire, motivate and envision. We need leaders who are natural builders of relationships, natural networkers. We need to recognise people with apostolic and prophetic giftings and ministries in these areas. Leaders who can speak into the local church, associations and our wider life as Baptists Together.

We must avoid what is known in business as the 'Peter Principle' that is, promoting or appointing people beyond the levels of their competency. It is wrong to assume that because somebody has exercised good leadership within a local church that they will make good regional, trans-local or national leaders. Similarly it is wrong to assume that people who have been recognised ordained ministers are able to run departments, manage the business side of our associations and unions. I have met too many ministers in such positions who are having to do things that they are neither gifted for or called to. Consequently their enthusiasm, energies and commitment is continually being drained.

I think I've come to the conclusion that Regional and National team ministers, in caring for ministers and the churches in their associations, (therefore having some obvious pastoral abilities), should nevertheless be primarily apostolic or possibly prophetic leaders.

I've seen evidence of good practice in the Union and in some of our associations, where ministers and churches feel that they are being served, inspired and led by their Regional ministers or national team members. Men and women who have a heart for the local church and its leaders but who also carry a vision for their regions, or area of responsibility and beyond.

Where there is good apostolic leadership, a missional difference is being made and the good news is bringing transformation to people's lives and their communities. Ministers within those associations feel they have a real friend in their Regional Minister, have someone who will stand with them and by them and will not simply be seen as an institutional person, whose primary concern is for the reputation of the Union, association or whatever. Apostolic figures who as Regional ministers and national team members who will encourage and facilitate risk-taking, breaking new ground for the Kingdom, will be prepared to grasp the nettle on issues that need it, who are not afraid to address issues of discipline and to inspire and encourage possibility thinking and a positive outlook on life and ministry. Regional and national leaders who inspire confidence, with whom others regard with respect and trust, leaders who use their influence to serve others. Leaders who, by the authenticity of their faith, integrity and love of Christ and his world impact and make a difference for the Kingdom.

11. Intentionally encourage the recognition and appointment of Younger leaders and Women leaders to leadership at all levels.

One of the most exciting periods of growth and development within the NBA, was during the 1980s. Many churches had testimonies of people coming to faith, there were regular baptisms, evidence of some form of children's and youth ministry in most fellowships and several churches were sending people into ministry or missionary work. A strong, supportive network of ministers met each month to encourage, build up, pray and learn from others. A sense of being together and enjoying each other's company triggered some deep and long lasting friendships. A key element, I believe, to these things was the fact that many ministers within the association at that time were in their 20s and 30s. Notably, there were three or four older ministers who took it upon themselves to meet with, encourage and nurture those of us who were young and in our first pastorates. So we had an association that had many young ministers and a few older ones with wisdom and experience; a great combination. There was nothing complicated or cumbersome about our relating together. In simple ways, over meals and at meetings, sharing and ministering in one another's churches, a great sense of togetherness pervaded.

Some of us were courted by various independent house church networks and what they promised was supportive relationships, apostolic input and prophetic insights, regional gatherings and peer support groups and inspirational annual Bible weeks or conferences. All really good stuff and things that certainly enticed many Baptist ministers away from our churches to join these networks in the 1980s and early 90s. It was less of a temptation or need for us, because we were enjoying such things within our Association. Sadly, it did not gain momentum and in some ways what we experienced in our earlier years diminished as a result of many people moving on out of the area. The perils of having what is regarded as a 'successful ministry' tend to lead to moving on and for those of us in the North, an almost inevitable drift away to the South. The next generation of ministers in the Association were generally older and more independent and not used to such relational networking.

It confirms to me that **we need to instil within the next generation of Baptist ministers those strong, covenantal relationships, those encouraging and supportive networks and by doing so we will provide more working models and good practices of how we can relate together in ministry.**

12. Women in Ministry....

It is not the purpose of this paper to address the subject of women in ministry, sufficient to say that the issue of women in ministry and leadership is not an issue. It is only an issue for me in that we do not recognise sufficiently an honouring of some truly gifted women whom God has called to lead in local, association and national ministries.

The future has to be paved with ever-increasing changes in attitudes, policies and action that releases and recognises more women in ministry.

13. Black and Minority Ethnic leaders...

It is a source of great encouragement to see the growth and development of the black and minority ethnic led churches. We must endeavour to embrace the challenges and changes that they will bring to us as a Union. They need to be themselves involved in the integration and shaping of the diversity of ministries, training, recognition and resourcing of Baptist ministers. Any traits of sectarian attitudes that hint at prejudice, ignorance and lack of understanding need to be eradicated and the mutual honouring of one another as members together within the body of Christ should be realised.

14. Reaffirm and Deepen Covenant relationships.

We need to put into place systems that require ministers to be recognised by the Baptist Union, at local, regional or national level to enter into covenant by means of:

- a commitment to being mentored or a willingness to serve as a mentor,
- being part of a peer support group,
- partake of a continuing ministry lifelong learning programme,
- engage with a regular review process,
- attendance and participation in association gatherings and national 'assemblies', and be available to serve in some capacity the Association or 'Union etc

Not just for ministers but for the future of our Baptists together, I believe that we need to reaffirm our covenant with God and one another. This is the glue that binds us together

15. First Pastorates and Church Placements

I am deeply grateful to God and indebted to Portrack, my first church for the opportunity that I had to grow and develop as a young leader in my first pastorate. However, my positive experience is not echoed by all Baptist ministers. I believe we need to give considerably more time and attention to the settlement process, particularly for those who are coming out of college or who are entering church ministry for the first time. Too many, (and I know several personally) have experienced very difficult first pastorates and carry the scars as a consequence. Some had such poor experiences that they have left Baptist ministry altogether.

I think we can, with a greater emphasis on covenant relationships, and creating deeper supported networks, look after and intentionally care more for such ministers.

Equally, I believe we should think imaginatively about how we can place people who are considering ministry and those on church placements connected with their college training in good, healthy, constructive settings.

My church placement, whilst at South Wales Baptist College, was abysmal! Were it not for the compensating gift of having a brilliant mentor T.J. Russell Jones, along the road at the church he was pastoring I would have been utterly disillusioned and would seriously have reconsidered even entering Baptist ministry. I was placed there because there was the offer of a free house, (a freezing, hardly fit to live in home for me, my wife and young baby son. Three weeks after we left the kitchen and bathroom ceiling caved in, it was that bad!). The house was offered in return for my preaching and leading the two services twice a month and conducting pastoral visits, a Bible study and leading a children's club every week. I witnessed the worst traits of church politics, abusive and ungodly behaviours, manipulation and attitudes that were sinful. I do not believe that any student or young or inexperienced minister should ever be placed in such a context. If I'd had the courage and the experience that they have now I would have closed the church down. It should have been called 'Ichabod church' because the Lord had left it a long time before I arrived on the scene.

In contrast, when I talk to students, and fresh in my memory is the cohort of students that I've been teaching at Cranmer Hall, Durham this year, the majority of whom were influenced to consider ministry by being in good, lively churches, of varying expressions and sizes. They have also, before even beginning their formal training, been exposed to good ministry practice.

For the few who didn't come from such contexts, their college placements gave them that positive experience. It's true that you can learn from any situation you find yourself in but ministers in training learned far more from good ministry practices than from situations that they need to avoid like the plague.

Several of our larger Baptist churches run intern programmes and are producing good leaders, many of whom will not enter ministry through our official Baptist channels. We need to be talking to these churches and others who have the potential to provide opportunities for those thinking about ministry and others who are in college looking for good placements.

We would, I believe, as I know some of the team leaders in these larger Baptist churches, find sympathetic supporters of people training for ministry.

There needs to be a greater sense of partnership and involvement of church leaders with those who are in our colleges in the training of people for ministry.

We have the opportunity in rethinking ministry and its training to draw on the rich resources that are available within other organisations who would significantly inform and impact the lives of people training for ministry. Examples of such organisations would be; Germinate,

Arthur Rank Centre, Crucible, Fresh Streams, Bridge builders, the Free Church Missional Leadership course at Durham, entrepreneurs and people from the business and charitable sectors.

16. Housing / Manses.....

Something that would be easy to ignore as seemingly irrelevant to the discussion of ministry in future but has come up in conversation consistently over many years has been the matter of housing for ministers. I meet very few ministers now who would not, given the opportunity, prefer to own their own houses. The social housing contexts have changed and I have listened to so many ministers, their spouses and sometimes their families, who struggle with the notion of being in 'tied' accommodation. A common feature in such conversations is the vulnerability that a minister and their family feels, knowing that if things go wrong for any reason, they effectively become homeless. This fear breeds insecurity and uncertainty which inevitably plays out in a person's ministry. It is an unenviable task but one I believe we should be addressing, namely that churches consider offering their minister the opportunity to buy or rent their own home. A number of churches are now considering this option and where they are reluctant to let go of their manses, are renting them out thus releasing capital to increase their ministers stipend and providing the opportunity for the Minister to choose and take responsibility for their own housing needs.

CONCLUSION

I have recently been appointed as a Visiting Fellow of St John's College, Durham.

A few years ago Cranmer Hall, the Anglican training wing of St John's was in difficulty, facing huge challenges, redundancies among its staff and an arena of despondency pervaded. A brave and courageous decision was made to appoint a dynamic young missional leader who was in parish ministry. Under his leadership, Cranmer has become one of the major centres of missional leadership training within the Church of England. Today, it is buzzing with life, its ministerial students are predominantly young people, and the college sits within the context of St John's, which has over 300 students, mostly undergraduates, the vast majority of whom are not believers. Cranmer puts considerable weight of emphasis upon spiritual formation, being a community of prayer and worship and training for the leadership.

Innovation, creativity, imagination and the drawing together of key missional leaders on the staff, visiting tutors, practitioners all contribute to make it a very dynamic place. We can learn from places like Cranmer in our needs to reconfigure and help shape the future of Baptist ministry.

One of its former students Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, succeeded Tom Wright as the Bishop of Durham. Prior to Tom Wright's appointment, Durham diocese would not been

regarded as evangelical or missional. Often Bishop Wright was away from the diocese, expressing his primary calling, less to episcopal ministry than to theological education. However through his leadership he broke up some of the 'old ground' and ways of doing things. He was succeeded by Justin Welby who was only in post for a short period before being appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. He was however within that short space of time able to impart the values, ethos and support to enable the diocese and the college to embrace the necessary changes and challenges and grasp the opportunity to shape things missionally for the future

In taking up the appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin was very clear as to where his three priorities lay; Prayer and The Religious Life, Reconciliation and Evangelism and Witness.

Remaining consistent to these three priorities and making small but significant changes and giving expression to each one of them have been really transformative within Anglicanism. At Lambeth Palace, he invited Chemin Neuf, a religious community, of mostly young people, to come and live as community, praying and giving expression to their monastic way for living.

His commitment to reconciliation has heightened the awareness and understanding that as believers we need to live together in the midst of often deeply divided differences. The commitment to evangelism and witness is simply reminding every church and every Christian of their responsibility and their potential to share their life-transforming faith in Jesus with those who are around them.

I believe that as we look to the future of Baptist ministry, not in isolation from the wider issues and challenges that we face as a Union, that we do so by reaffirming our commitment to our Baptist DNA, our Baptist principles. Not merely citing them as important but living them out, so that we might be people, as Bede the historian said of the Celts, who *lived what they taught*. In complexity theory, the notion of the butterfly effect can have great consequences. Small things, exercised with faith and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, can effect great and lasting change and transformation.

My hope and prayer is that by doing some of the small yet significant, radical and imaginative changes that need to be made in relation to Baptist ministry, we will see God, in his grace and mercy, using them to move us and inspire us as missional movement.

I pray for those, all of us, whose task it is to lead at this challenging yet opportune moment in our history. Faced with two competing demands, **we have to adapt what is and how things can be achieved in the present and at the same time imagine and develop new ways of ministry**. We must, in the words of Julie Gilbert of Harvard business school, "develop 'next practices' while excelling at today's best practices."

The present is extremely demanding and the future is daunting. However, I remain relatively positive about the coming years and the opportunity that change brings, to release the potential that God has invested within us as Baptists Together.

As one minister helpfully pointed out to me recently, "the Union in its many churches and ministers already has been supplied by God with every resource we need to prepare for and face the future. Glass ceilings need to be broken, different voices heard, gifts recognised and ministries encouraged."

We are blessed by having some really good ministers serving in local churches, associations, in our colleges and at a national level. If we can find the ways and means to work collaboratively together, we might see the reconfiguration of a missional movement, be able to respond well to the challenges and opportunities of serving God in the post-Christendom culture. We have good people and there are a number of significant happenings within our life together, all of which contributes to a growing sense of a good future by God's grace.

I know it feels that we are in the process of building a plane whilst flying it! But that's the way it is as we move toward an uncertain and unknowable future. The J-curve graph reminds us of the danger that, when things are bad, there is a risk of taking shortcuts to avoid the challenge of changing our ways. Change however is necessary and during this major transitional season we should not lose sight of hope. Trusting in God and enacting hope consists of tiny micro-actions and incremental changes that will lead us from where we are to where God wants us to be.

A WARNING, a STORY and a CLOSING PRAYER

- *It is far better to foresee even without certainty than not to foresee it at all* Henri Poincare
- Brennan Manning in his book, *Ruthless Trust*, tells the story about the ethicist John Kavanaugh who went to work for three months at Mother Teresa's "house of the dying" in Calcutta. He was seeking an answer as to how best to spend the rest of his life. On the first morning there he met Mother Teresa. She asked, "And what can I do for you?" Kavanaugh asked her to pray for him. "What do you want me to pray for?" she asked. "Pray that I have clarity." She said firmly, "No, I will not do that." When he asked her why, she said, "Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and must let go of." When Kavanaugh commented that she always seemed to have the clarity she longed for, she laughed and said, "I have never had clarity; what I have always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust God."
- I pray that we too might trust God and know that as we explore and journey into an unknown future, we may do so with the confidence from trusting a known God.

Prayer from Brendan liturgy~ Northumbria Community.

*Lord, I will trust You,
help me to journey beyond the familiar
and into the unknown.*

*Give me the faith to leave old ways
and break fresh ground with You.*

*Christ of the mysteries, can I trust You
to be stronger than each storm in me?*

Do I still yearn for Your glory to lighten on me?

I will show others the care You've given me.

*I determine amidst all uncertainty
always to trust.*

*I choose to live beyond regret,
and let You recreate my life.*

*I believe You will make a way for me
and provide for me,
if only I trust You
and obey.*

*I will trust in the darkness and know
that my times are still in Your hand.*

I will believe You for my future,

*chapter by chapter,
written.*

*Focus my mind and
my attention always
alteration.*

*Strengthen me with
and appoint to me the*

Teach me to live with

Tune my spirit to the

*Feed me,
and, somehow,
make my obedience*



until all the story is

*my heart upon You,
on You without*

*Your blessing
task.*

eternity in view.

music of heaven.

count for You.