

Theology of Sector Ministry

A document outlining the theology and ecclesiology of those serving in Sector Ministry.



REPORT OF THE TASK GROUP ON THE THEOLOGY OF SECTOR MINISTRY

The remit:

Council requests the Sector Ministries Committee in co-operation with the Doctrine & Worship Committee to bring together a group to examine the theology and ecclesiology of Sector Ministry, bearing in mind that at the recent Sector Ministries Consultation it became clear that enormous mission opportunities are presented.

Group members:

From Sector Ministries

Michael Cleaves JP, convenor of the Prison Ministry Working Group. He has also been a part-time hospital chaplain

Stephen Heap, Chaplain to Universities and Colleges, Central London, 1992-2001; City Centre Chaplain, Milton Keynes, 2001-4; Co-ordinating Chaplain at De Montfort University (Bedford), 2004- and Free Church Chaplain at Yarl's Wood Immigration Detention Centre, 2005 -

Ian Tutton, Industrial Chaplain, Glamorgan Industrial Mission, 1999-2005

From the former Doctrine & Worship Committee, representing Faith and Unity

Stephen Holmes, Lecturer, King's College London, 1998-2004; Lecturer, St Andrew's University, 2005- Faith Bowers, a member of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church with a long interest in sector ministry

Serviced by

Ian Millgate of Ministry Department, who was a University Chaplain, Bristol, 1977-80

Eight meetings have been held (on 21 January, 24 June, 25 August, 21 October, 10 December 2004, 21 February, 23 May and 4 August 2005).

Two main issues were quickly identified.

- *Is sector ministry a valid form of Baptist ministry?*
- *Is sector ministry a useful response to the mission opportunities presented today?*

The Task Group worked more on the first. The second is part of wider mission concerns but some starting reflection is offered here.

This report summarizes the discussions and the attached study papers, which follow. The Study Group made a number of recommendations, which will form the basis of recommendations by the Sector Ministries Committee and the Ministry Executive Committee to a future meeting of Council.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The first issue for the group was to set parameters for the task. Whilst local church pastorate has been normative for Baptist understanding of ministry, various other spheres of service need to be recognized as proper roles for BUGB-covenanted ministers.

This issue of the proper sphere of work for ministers will be the main concern for many Baptists, but those called to sector ministry will necessarily have addressed that already, so their theological concerns range widely across contemporary mission. Some of these concerns may provide an argument for sector ministry - others highlight concerns shared by ministers in more traditional roles, going beyond the brief of this task group but touched on here as subjects deserving further attention within the denomination.

The detailed studies cover

- Baptists and Sector Ministry - Past and Present: a survey (Ian Millgate)
- Spheres of Ministry: an historical survey (Faith Bowers)
- Baptist Understandings of Ministry: The Place of Sector Ministries, exploring questions of ecclesiology, including a survey of recent writings (Steve Holmes)
- The Ministry of the People of God (Ian Tutton)
- The Context of Sector Ministry (Stephen Heap)

In addition, Michael Cleaves published some case studies, 'Outside the Box', in the *Baptist Ministers' Journal*, January 2005, as a reflection starter.

2 BAPTIST SECTOR MINISTRIES

At present, BUGB has covenanted Baptist ministers working in five sectors:

- ARMED FORCES - defined according to the requirements of the United Navy, Army and Air Force Board.
- EDUCATION - traditionally defined in terms of Higher (University) Education, but now extending into Further Education Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, Secondary Schools and Primary Schools. The role is also expanding to include not only pupils/students but also staff and the institutions themselves.
- HEALTH CARE - including acute hospitals, smaller community hospitals, specialist care hospitals, hospices, long-term residential/nursing care establishments, primary care trusts and establishments, private hospitals and clinics.
- SECURE ESTABLISHMENTS - including all types of custodial care establishments. This may extend into liaison with the Probation Service, post-release care programmes, and community service order supervision. It could also involve engaging with the judicial system through magistracy, and also the wider context of criminal justice, prison policy, sentencing and access to legal services.
There is also the need to engage with detention centres holding asylum seekers and refugees.
- WORK and ECONOMY - traditionally centred around workplace visiting, historically focused on the factory environment, but now extended to any appropriate workplace. It is also moving beyond the particular work environment to include retail complexes, sports clubs and organizations, the hotel and leisure industry, airports, police, fire and rescue services, local and regional government. There is also involvement with local and regional economic regeneration/management forums.

3. SOME OTHER REFLECTIONS

Given the role of the local church in Baptist ecclesiology, it is easy to assume that our attitudes to sector ministry are likely to be sterner than those of some other denominations. Chaplains from other denominations, however, tell a similar story of marginalization, and of their ministry now coming to be held in more esteem.

BUGB has made significant recent improvements in the status of sector ministers. There is evidence that the institutions in which they work value their ministry, with encouragement and even funding for professional development. Sadly, however, when churches are forced to economize, sector ministries remain an easy target.

It is clear that some in sector ministry have had bad experience of marginalization. Sad in itself, this is serious in work where good support structures are needed. This applies at Union level, at Association level which sometimes seems more difficult, and at local church level where experience is varied. Where the local church takes a supportive interest in the sector minister's work, that can be a bonus of belonging to a tradition that requires membership of a local church.

An area we have given little attention to, though it came up in the Sector Ministries Consultation, is 'God of the margins'. We have looked at God and church/ordained ministry, and at mobile modern society, but less at whether God works at the edge rather than the centre.

We have only just touched on questions of 'who employs?', funding and grants issues, an appraisal scheme geared to local church ministry, ministry in a multi-faith context, and an understanding of mission that goes beyond church growth.

There are questions about the role of sector ministers in relation to the lay Christians who are themselves representatives of Christ within the workforce. Part of a chaplain's role is to be a resource person for those exercising the 'ministry of the baptized'. In some areas of sector ministry, lay people also function as chaplains. Their standing also needs to be addressed.

In the nature of sector ministry, good ecumenical relations are essential. Sector ministers also work alongside representatives of other faiths. At times of crisis the presence of a man or woman of God is often welcome, even when from a different faith.

Compassionate listening, an important feature of ministry across the various sectors, is a God-given gift of considerable power.

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We urge that this report should not be read as merely asking for equal recognition for sector ministers, although that is certainly important.

We invite the Union, the Associations and local churches to see their sector ministers as a significant and cutting-edge mission resource, able to help meet the missional and pastoral demands of hyper-modernity and its liquid cultures.

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4. INTRODUCING THE ATTACHED STUDIES

- (A) The paper by Ian Millgate, 'Baptists and Sector Ministry - past and present' (p.4-6), provides a brief overview of the development of sector ministry, first in the forces, and then extending into certain areas of civilian life. Baptists always honoured their forces' chaplains but did not immediately accord similar respect to those in civilian spheres. Some saw chaplaincy, unfairly, as a soft option. Others followed the 'Dakin doctrine' and considered that a person could only be a Baptist minister while in pastoral charge of a Baptist church. Funding sector ministries was a further problem. As a result chaplains felt marginalized and isolated from their denomination.

Opportunities for ministry in the various sectors have increased in recent years, especially in prisons and healthcare, where NHS Trusts have proved unexpectedly sympathetic to hospital chaplaincy. Nearly 10% of all serving Baptist ministers now have some role in chaplaincy or sector ministry. The general attitude towards sector ministers has improved considerably and a number of helpful initiatives have taken place in the last four years. These are detailed in the study paper.

- (B) In 'Spheres of Ministry: an historical survey' (p.7-10), Faith Bowers traces the location of Baptist ministry as recorded in the main histories of the denomination. Although this has normally been in local pastorate, that seems to be matter of practice and understanding, rather than declared policy. Baptists early found that they sometimes required certain people to exercise a wider ministry, especially in mission contexts. By 1969 the Union was recognizing the value of sector ministries, although not feeling able to have more than a token involvement at that time.
- (C) In 'Baptist understandings of ministry: the place of sector ministries' (p.11-14), Stephen Holmes explores questions of ecclesiology through a survey of the writings of English Baptist theologians. Arthur Dakin was the most determined and influential exponent of the view that the Baptist minister only exists while presiding over a Baptist church. Recent theological studies are increasingly open to other spheres of ministry. Holmes recognizes the two different understandings of ordained ministry that are current among Baptists today, but finds that both approaches can accept sector ministries as a valid way of exercising the vocation to ordained ministry.
- (D) 'The ministry of the people of God' is the focus for Ian Tutton (p.15-18). He considers the ordained minister's relation to the 'local congregation' and compares this with other gatherings of people to which sector ministers relate. Identifying the work of God as 'saving through serving', he finds a matching potential for creating community, putting people before place, in local church and in the workplace. Common criteria for community, as in Five Core Values, and for ordained ministry could help in recognizing equivalent features in different spheres of ministry.
- (E) Stephen Heap's paper (p.19-23) is concerned with the missiological context, in particular with the changing nature of community and the place of religion within a 'postmodern' culture. He suggests sector ministry is one creative missiological response to such a situation, but also that the changes taking place around us need to be taken into account by local churches and the denomination as a whole as it engages in mission.

5 THE STUDY PAPERS

A BAPTISTS AND SECTOR MINISTRY - PAST AND PRESENT: A SURVEY

Chaplaincy in any recognisable modern sense involving Baptists traces its beginnings to the First World War, when in 1914 the Secretary of the Baptist Union, J.H. Shakespeare, in conjunction with the Secretary of the Congregational Union, persuaded the War Office to accept non-conformist chaplains to the Forces. Shakespeare became the first chairman of the United Board. This prepared the way for the creation of the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches after the war, and for the expansion of Free Church chaplaincy into hospitals and other spheres.¹

The Second World War brought many changes to the world. As well as the obvious devastation caused in so many places, and the dramatic changes to the political map of Europe in particular, scientific advance was driven forward, social expectations were very different at the end (for example, over the role of women in the workplace), and attitudes to faith changed. Another change which Giles LeGood traces to this time is the more rapid expansion of chaplaincy as a form of ministry.² Those in the forces had experienced chaplaincy, as clergy had been alongside the men and women living and working in a particular context and had ministered in a way relevant to that context, and the idea was then transferred with relative ease to ministry in a focused part or sector of civilian society, such as in industry.

For some time, however, Baptists were slow to become involved in such roles, especially on a full-time basis. There were many reasons for this, often practical. In the first three or four decades of the NHS, full-time healthcare chaplaincy roles were rare for Free Church ministers, because funding was based on the number of patients declaring that they belonged to a given denomination, and in all but the largest hospitals there were insufficient numbers of non-Anglicans for any other denomination but the Church of England to have a minister fully funded in chaplaincy. Free Church Prison Chaplaincy posts were almost exclusively held by Methodists, due to a common understanding that this would be the lead denomination in this role. Industrial and Educational chaplaincy posts depended on funding from the churches – for Baptists this meant funding by way of Home Mission grants, and there was always a relatively small pot and the claims of churches were paramount.

There were, nevertheless, some outstanding examples of pioneering ministry. Ray Taylor showed how effective ministry could be in industry in his ground-breaking work in the steel industry in South Wales. Thornton Elwyn's work in South London was also notable. In health care, Lloyd Ozanne was considerably ahead of his time, becoming the only Baptist to hold a full-time hospital chaplaincy when he went to Sheffield Hospital in 1976. But such ministries were rare, and this was not helped by negative and suspicious attitudes to sector ministries.

The Service Chaplains have long been given a place of special honour, as demonstrated by the practice until recent years of giving them a special welcome at the annual Baptist Assembly. One of their number would respond to this. Other chaplains, however, have not been equally regarded and, until recently, they have been looked down on rather than looked up to. This can be traced to at least two causes.

One is the 'Dakin doctrine', referred to in the historical reviews appended to this report, which declared that a person was only a Baptist minister while in pastoral charge of a Baptist church. For those who were taught and accepted this view, by moving into a chaplaincy role, a minister would cease to be a minister.

The second is the widespread myth that chaplaincy is a soft option for those who cannot cope with the pressures of ministry in a local church. There may well have been some for whom Sector Ministry seemed to offer an escape route, but there are also stresses and demands in sector ministry. Healthcare and prison chaplains, in particular, deal in far greater intensity with tragedy and pain than would a local church minister. There are also demands on all types of chaplain in working in large institutions, in multi-disciplinary teams and with different moral and professional value bases. Also, compared with the average pastor, the work of a sector minister brings him or her into contact with a wide variety of people of many faiths and none, and this provides great mission opportunities.

¹ This story is explained in more detail in *The Making of a Modern Denomination*, by Peter Shepherd, to whom I am grateful for the information included in this first paragraph. He believes that the development of chaplaincy through the United Board was particularly significant for Baptist understanding of ministry, and that Shakespeare's influence should not be underestimated.

² *Chaplaincy – The Church's Sector Ministry*, ed. Giles LeGood, Cassell 1999, page x

Yet still the myth has persisted for many years, and these negative attitudes have resulted in those who have felt called to such ministry feeling marginalized. One chaplain, asked to take part in a denominational event, expressed pleasure at being remembered “by the denomination I thought had forgotten me”. This sense of marginalization found expression in many ways:

- the comment - still reported by newly appointed chaplains – “Sorry to hear you’re leaving the ministry”.
- the loss of the right automatically to be a member of the Assembly.
- the language used by the Union’s Ministerial Recognition Committee until recently, that a person was ‘seconded to other Christian work’. To many this carried the (unintended) implication that ‘this isn’t the real work, but we’ll lend you to it for a while before you come back to the proper job’.
- the rhetoric often heard, not least in the local church, which suggests that real ministry is that of the local pastorate. This may be indicative of a culture not always as valuing of sector ministry as it might be.
- many chaplains were not listed in Association handbooks, or were included simply in a list headed ‘not in pastoral charge’, which they felt did not do justice to their being in a full-time ministerial role.
- many chaplains found that they were not invited to Association events or to ministers’ meetings.

This scene has, however, been changing over recent years. Within several of the sectors there has been a significant increase in the number of Baptists involved on a full-time basis and, when part-time chaplains are also taken into account, at the time of writing approaching 10% of all serving Baptist ministers have some sort of chaplaincy or sector ministry role.

The largest expansion has been in healthcare. When the NHS was reorganized in the early 1990s and ‘Trusts’ were established, many suspected that the finance-driven business approach would spell the end of paid chaplaincy. Quite the opposite has been the case, as an understanding of the value of holistic care that includes the spiritual has gained the ascendancy, so that Trusts see chaplaincy as a valuable contribution to their provision. At the same time, posts have become more ecumenical and a good number of Baptists have been appointed. It is said that they are frequently the best candidates because of our strong tradition of pastoral care and the consequent high quality of training provided by our colleges.

There has also been a great increase in the number involved in prison chaplaincy since this opened up to Baptists within the last decade or so, as the last two Methodist/Free Church Superintendent Chaplains have accepted that in these more ecumenical days this role should no longer be the sole prerogative of one denomination and so have sought to recruit more widely. And in the last year or so the grip of the Church of England on the role of co-ordinating or lead chaplain has been loosened. The statutory requirement that every prison should have an Anglican chaplain, which led to this, remains, but some teams have been free to select any of their members as the senior chaplain. However, recent reports suggest that the brake has been put on this development.

In education and industrial mission numbers are holding steady, although in Higher Education several Baptists have recently been appointed as Free Church or Ecumenical chaplains. Within the industrial sector generally there are less full-time chaplaincy posts, but there remain several Baptists in such roles, as well as in part-time workplace ministry.

Alongside this growth, the Union has taken a more positive approach, affirming those in Sector Ministry in various ways.

- In the 1990s it was agreed that all sector ministries should come under the care of the Ministry Department (some had previously been under the oversight of the Mission Department). This makes a more coherent approach possible.
- This paved the way for establishing in 2000 the Sector Ministries Committee, with the specific tasks of raising the profile of such ministry and providing a means for feeding its concerns and issues into the wider deliberations of the denomination.
- In early 2002 a 24-hour consultation was held, bringing together people from various sectors and a number of members of the Union staff and Council, to explore the needs of this type of ministry and its relationship with the denomination.
- In November 2002 the Sector Ministries Committee was able to make a presentation to the BU Council, and an affirming resolution was passed, which recognized the value of Sector Ministry in the mission strategy of the Union.

- The General Secretary has taken many opportunities to visit chaplains, to tell their stories, and in 2003 called together a 'Round Table' for representatives from the Sectors to meet with the Union's Senior Management Team.
- The Ministerial Recognition Committee has agreed to dispense with the term 'secondment' in connection with chaplaincy, and also with the previous requirement that permission to serve in such a role needed to be reviewed every five years.
- A number of Associations have become more supportive, and several have arranged day conferences for the sector ministers within their regions.
- The Task Group responsible for this report was set up and has been working.
- During the life of the Task Group, the distinction between ministers in pastorate and others in connection with Assembly membership was addressed. Previously those in Sector Ministry roles had been required to apply annually for Associate Membership of the Assembly. In 2005 the General Purposes and Finance Executive granted this en bloc to Sector Ministers. This anticipated Council's March 2005 decision to recommend a constitutional change to the 2006 Assembly which would result in all serving accredited ministers, on the basis of the covenant relationship between ministers and Union, being full ('representative') members of the Assembly.

It is widely accepted now that within the Union there is a quite different atmosphere and far greater acceptance of the worth of Sector Ministry. There is still progress to be made, and doubtless old prejudices are still around, but the journey is moving on towards the understanding that those serving the Lord and the world in this calling are truly engaged in front-line service. They are sent out in the name of Christ and his church to bring God's love to whoever is in need, and worthy of honour and prayerful support. We believe that there is a work to be done to help Associations and local churches to see the true value of sector ministry.

B SPHERES OF MINISTRY: AN HISTORICAL SURVEY

(i) HOW EARLY BAPTISTS DEFINED THE ROLE OF THOSE THEY SET APART AS MINISTERS

General (Arminian) Baptists recognized a three-fold ministry of messengers or apostles, bishops or elders/pastors, and deacons. They believed that ministers should try to earn their own living so that they could 'make the Gospel without charge', but churches should also freely provide maintenance for ministers. Elders were appointed by the local church to oversee the congregation, with responsibility for pastoral care, teaching sound doctrine, expositing Scripture and exemplifying the Christian life. They also had a disciplinary role, to exhort, reprove and rebuke. It was quite common for a church to have two elders sharing the role, which doubtless helped when they were also plying their secular trades. Deacons, again appointed by the local church, had a primary duty to care for the needy, which widened to a general responsibility for finance, but they might also preach if they had that gift. Some churches authorized lay teachers without ordination.

The role of the General Baptist messenger or apostle went beyond the local church, originally as itinerant evangelists, but commissioned by a church or group of churches. In 1659 William Jeffery defined the messengers' task as to preach 'for the gathering of the church and establishing of the same' and to be a successor to the apostles. Thomas Grantham described it as 'to plant churches and to settle those in order who are as sheep without a shepherd'.

Particular (Calvinistic) Baptists laid less stress on ministry than earlier Separatists and more on the immediate authority of the covenanted community. The 1644 Confession identified the roles of pastor, teacher, elder and deacon, though in 1646 they only specified elders and deacons. Appointed ministers were not considered essential to the existence of a church, but were needed for the 'better well-being of the Church' ('better' was dropped in 1646). Although the 'typical' early Baptist pastor was attached to a particular local congregation, it does not appear to have been spelled out as the only 'right' role for a minister.

The Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales and Ireland to 16603 show the churches consulting together on many a vexed issue as they built up their denominational identity. A number of questions relate to ministry. A question to the Welsh Association in 1653 was 'Whether such as are aproved by the church to prophesey among them before the world may alsoe prophesey among prophessors in the world. The answer was firm: 'that they may not goe abroad to appoint meetings before the world'. But similar questions in the Midland Association in 1655 suggest that this was more about being paid by other bodies: the split with the Church of England was not complete until 1662, although that affected other dissenting Calvinists more than Baptists. If a church had a superfluity of preaching gifts, the gifted were encouraged to serve other churches in need of ministry.

The West Country Association in 1655 was equally clear. Asked 'Whether it be according to the minde of the Lord for the church to send forth an elder to preach the Gospel to the world or to assist the churches', the Association concluded this was proper, provided that the church was in the meantime suitably provided with ministry, and that the person sent out returned again to the church. An elder might honour God where there was most need. The church had the right to send out preachers - but the secular authorities had no right to require and pay for their services.

Particular Baptists' national Assemblies between 1689 and 1692 were preoccupied with questions about ministers. They were conscious of having a less educated ministry than their Presbyterian and Independent brethren and began to think about rectifying that. Benjamin Stinton and Thomas Crosby found it necessary to defend 'tent-making' biblically, revealing how sensitive the subject was.⁴ In 1717 the Particular Baptist Fund was founded to help poor ministers and students.

(ii) THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

With more ministers educated, many augmented their income by teaching. Schooling children was appropriate when they were discouraging their people from sending children to parish schools. Teaching was a respectable and appropriate side-line for a minister.

Benjamin Keach, who had moved from General to Particular, published in 1688 *The Gospel Minister's Maintenance Vindicated*. This treatise had the backing of several prominent Particular Baptist ministers in London, including Hanserd Knollys and William Kiffin. It urged the need for churches to face up to

³ Three volumes, ed. B.R. White, London, 1971-74.

⁴ Raymond Brown, *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century*, p.38.

financing full-time, well equipped ministers⁵ - men of quality who could earn an adequate salary in other employment - so why should they live in poverty because 'devoted to a better service'? Some apparently argued that ministers should not need financial support just to deliver a couple of Sunday sermons - Keach knew that sermon preparation took time, quite apart from pastoral work. As churches grew, the 'tent-making' period had passed. Keach recognized that small churches might not provide a full week's work - but ministers could then look at the evangelistic opportunities in neighbouring villages.

General Baptists also felt the need for an educated and financially supported, full-time ministry 'to arrest decay' of the churches. In 1702 the General Association was planning for an academy to train ministers. In 1704 Assembly asked ministers to preach on full-time paid ministry as *not unscriptural*: at that time their churches were used to raising funds to pay messengers but not for elders. In 1709 their London ministers still included a hatter, a butcher, a ribbon-weaver, a tallow-chandler, and two tailors. Pastors who earned their living in a secular trade would necessarily understand the lives and temptations of the people. In 1733 General Baptists agreed to use the fund set up by the Paul's Alley church to support ministry and theological education. Nevertheless, the revival around Barton Fabis, Leicestershire, that fed into the New Connexion, was led by preachers who all had secular occupations but met together monthly for encouragement.

(iii) THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

From the 18th century to 1910 only about 5% of Baptist ministers came from professional classes, the majority being drawn from small craftsmen until about 1860, when more came from a 'white-collar' background. The 'white-collareds' only outnumbered the artisans after 1880, with Spurgeon's College keeping working-class numbers up. Although ministers were increasingly seen as professional men, few were remunerated as such.⁶ Almost all were ministers in pastoral charge or those sent out with itinerant roles as evangelists and church planters. As these were often experienced men with much to contribute, existing churches often benefited from their advice.

In 1817 John Dyer was recruited from the pastorate to become the first full-time, paid secretary of the growing BMS. According to the 1961 report on *The Doctrine of Ministry*,

It does not seem that any one suggested that when ministers served in this capacity they ceased to be ministers. The situation, of course, was just not foreseen by the early Baptists in their Confessions when they laid down ministerial functions. Similarly, a minister who heard the call to go abroad in the service of the Missionary Society remained a minister. As the growth of the wider Baptist fellowship developed so, along with it, went wider interpretations of the function of the minister. It was quite natural and not contrary to the classic Baptist definitions... In short, whilst a minister remained in the service of the Baptist fellowship whether in a local church or in a wider group he remained a minister.

Bi-vocational ministries continued well into the nineteenth century, but by then there were more opportunities for college training. William Brock, formerly a journeyman watchmaker, trained at Stepney Academy and was minister of St Mary's Baptist Church, Norwich, 1833-48, and of Bloomsbury Chapel, 1848-72; he must have been one of the few who earned considerably more in pastorate than at his secular trade. Throughout his ministry, he had notable success in attracting to his churches young men, many of them apprentices. The circumstances of his own apprenticeship had been particularly difficult and left him with a keen understanding of their position, reflected in his ability to win and hold them for Christ. He insisted that young men called to ministry, including his own son and F.B. Meyer, should first experience the working life of their peers.

Brock's friend, Morton Peto, was one of the first to employ 'industrial chaplains' - he sent lay Christian missionaries to work among his navvies engaged in railway building. Their civilising influence included educational and moral welfare work as well as Gospel proclamation. Peto preferred laymen because he found them better at getting alongside the workmen. At Bloomsbury Brock and Peto made an inspired appointment of a 'domestic missionary', George M'Cree, to undertake similar work in the local slums.

⁵ Brown, p.50.

⁶ John Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century*, pp.89ff.

(iv) THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The Baptist Union statement on the Ministry and Ordination, agreed by Assembly in 1923, defined the terms thus:

Affirming the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and the obligation resting upon them to fulfil their vocation according to the gift bestowed upon them:

By the *Ministry* we mean an office within the Church of Christ (not a sacerdotal order) conferred through the call of the Holy Spirit and attested by a particular or local Church.

By *Ordination* we mean the act of the Church by which it delegates to a person ministerial functions which no man can properly take upon himself.

The same statement includes the clause,

In regard to anyone called to the exercise of the ministry in spheres other than that of the pastorate of a Church, ordination should take place in the presence of those by whom the person has been called.⁷

The Baptist Union Council in 1930, responding to a Faith & Order statement on six marks of an authentic church demurred on the fifth, 'a ministry for the pastoral office, the preaching of the Word, and administration of the Sacraments'.⁸ Council stated, 'We cannot agree that the ministry, as commonly understood, is essential to the existence of a true Christian Church, though we believe a ministry is necessary for its highest effectiveness. We think of the function of ministry in terms of leadership rather than of government and discipline.'⁹ Payne saw this as an 'aberrant position', not the fruit of the whole Baptist heritage which had a high view of ministry until the 19th-century reaction against Anglo-Catholic stress on sacerdotalism and sacramentalism, but it is not unlike the 1644 statement - having someone set apart as minister is not essential but very good for the church. Given the number of Baptist churches at any one time that have depended on lay leadership, it seems a valid statement.

The nature of Baptist ministry became a hot topic in 1944.¹⁰ Arthur Dakin's *The Baptist View of the Church and Ministry*, was published with a commendation by his fellow college principals, 'though not necessarily with their concurrence at all points'. Dakin was principal of Bristol College and Vice President of the Baptist Union that year. The most controversial aspect was Dakin's conviction that Baptists had no order of ministry and that if a minister was not presiding over a Baptist church he ceased to be a Baptist minister.

Ernest Payne was dismayed by Dakin's stance and responded with *The Fellowship of Believers*, arguing for a 'higher' view of ministry as consonant with older Baptist tradition. In *The Gathered Community* (1946) R.C. Walton followed Payne in maintaining that 'a Baptist church is a local manifestation of the universal Church, and, therefore, Baptist ministers are ministers of Christ's Church'. *The Baptist Doctrine of the Church* (BUGBI 1948) supported Payne and Walton's views: 'Many among us hold that since the ministry is the gift of God to the Church, and the call to exercise the function of the minister comes from Him, a man who is called is not only a minister of a local Baptist church but also a minister of the whole Church of Christ.'

In the 1950s the Baptist Union was troubled by the shortage of ministers. The Committee on Ministry set up in 1951 reported 329 less on the lists of ministers and probationers than in 1910. They also noted that 'Many ministers were claimed by administrative posts within or outside the denomination, and new opportunities presented themselves in the teaching profession.' This was troubling since it meant that 'In spite of the postponement of retirement and the grouping of churches, many spheres remained without

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Frustratingly none of the references found spell out the context that prompted the inclusion of this clause. It is set in the context of encouragement to college training and tightening requirements for non-collegiate accreditation; Baptist writers move then to discussion of women ministers (e.g. Douglas Sparkes, *An Accredited Ministry*, p.31). The armed forces' chaplains could have been among the other spheres they had in mind.

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Briggs p.70.

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Report of BU Council, 1930, pp.38-9

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Ian M. Randall, *The English Baptists of the Twentieth Century*, 2005, pp.217ff.

pastoral oversight'.¹¹ Again I have not found any reflection on the appropriateness of such posts for ordained ministers.

The 1969 BU report, *Ministry Tomorrow*, shows more awareness of ministers working outside the traditional roles. Under 'Accreditation' it states:

We have already affirmed our conviction that ministry ... must still be understood essentially as the ministry of Word, sacraments, and pastoral oversight, exercised in the context of the local church. This is not to deny the validity, usefulness and necessity of specialist ministries. It does, however, mean that if service is justifiably to be regarded as 'ministerial' in other than a wholly general sense, it should, if not directly and specifically related to the local church, be service undertaken at the request of or with the consent of the Union with a view to the building up of the wider life of the churches.

Such a definition would include theological college tutors, superintendents, the General Secretary of the Union, and certain ecumenical and interdenominational appointments. It would also include men engaged in pioneering work within the denomination, and those participating in ecumenical experiments.

And under 'Specialist Ministries':

We recognise that the changing situation will present to the Church demands for certain types of specialist ministries... [They then assert that the denomination is too small to do much here] Nevertheless, we believe there is a place for the specialist in pastoral counselling, industrial evangelism, etc., and that opportunity should be given for training in these disciplines.

In the wider context of full time industrial and university chaplaincies our contribution can often only be a token one, but if there has to be a choice, then we would hope that special thought would be given to student chaplaincies and that at the local level, ministers might share in Industrial work.

The changing situation demands flexibility so far as specialisation is concerned...

The story beyond that is detailed in Steve Holmes' paper.

* * * * *

Given what seems to be tacitly understood as the traditional Baptist position on ministry grounded in local pastorate, it seems surprising not to find more statements making this clear. Other kinds of ministry seem to have crept in without much attempt to offer a theological rationale. The 1961 *Doctrine of the Church* report points to Christ as the model for ministry - one might question how that model leads to the narrow understanding of the minister as local pastor. How far do we blame our theology and ecclesiology for something we have been reluctant to think through - perhaps because it could have awkward consequences, not least financial?

¹¹

Payne, *The Baptist Union*, p.243.

C BAPTIST UNDERSTANDINGS OF MINISTRY: THE PLACE OF SECTOR MINISTRIES

At the present time it is clear that it is not possible to identify one understanding of ministry that could carry broad assent amongst Baptists. Some of us, seeing our heritage as part of the Reformed tradition of Christianity, would have a 'high' doctrine of ordination and a stress on the ministry of Word and Sacrament as central and non-negotiable. Others, drawing on a more Anabaptist tradition, would be uncomfortable with any notion of ordination, and would rather undergo a service of commissioning for a particular role, with no notion of a separated ministry implied. Some others, influenced by charismatic renewal, would stress the many ministries of the body, and would see the core role of the minister as leading and enabling this corporate service. Yet others, looking to the heritage of radical Christian groups, such as the Society of Friends or the Christian Brethren, would not call a minister but only a 'teaching elder', who would nonetheless occupy a central position in the life of the fellowship. In view of this, we do not propose in this report to try to impose any one idea. Rather, we will look at a series of understandings of ministry that have been advanced by British Baptists in recent years, and explore how hospitable each one is to sector ministry as a valid expression of the ministry there described.

Alongside all these considered accounts of ministry, however, is another, more pervasive and probably more influential. The 'implicit theology' that is assumed in Baptist conversations about ministry, and which shapes our perceptions and discourse, needs to be made explicit and critiqued. In our conversations about the role of sector ministries, we quickly and repeatedly identified a factor which, we believed, contributed significantly to the marginalization sensed and experienced by Baptist sector ministers: *the primary focus on the local church* within Baptist understanding of church and ministry. Implicitly, it seems, we accept and perpetuate an account which insists that real ministry is ministry within the local congregation; anything else is in some sense *ersatz*. Baptist sector ministers sense and experience the exclusion and belittling that this implicit account leads to. It is, however, not a coherent theology in that it seems clear that the implicit account goes on to assert that such non-local ministries as college teaching or regional ministry, inasmuch as they represent 'success', are not to be looked down on, even though they are just as much a departure from the model of the local pastorate as are sector ministries. The practice of exposing and challenging such unconscious discriminatory discourses is familiar to us now, within both culture and denomination; we would recommend that the denomination be vigilant in its official pronouncements and documents not to perpetuate an indefensible set of assumptions that demean and disparage the work done by sector ministers.

There is within the Baptist story a tradition of insisting that only the local pastorate is appropriate Christian ministry. The most obvious and extreme example is probably the 'anti-mission' movement amongst American Baptists, which insisted that no organization or sphere of service that was not a local church was acceptable.¹² Within British Baptist history, the high Calvinist John Gill, one of our most able divines, gives an account, saturated with Biblical exegesis, of pastors as shepherds of a particular flock, who have no role and no competence beyond their flock.¹³ He allows for peripatetic ministry by evangelists, but sees such as 'extraordinary' officers of the church, alongside the prophets and apostles, whose ministry therefore has come to an end with the ending of the apostolic age.¹⁴ More recently, Arthur Dakin, writing in the middle of the last century, similarly saw ministry as intrinsically so tied to a particular local fellowship that 'if that relationship were entirely to cease, leaving him with no church over which to preside, he would for the time being cease to be a Baptist minister ... There is no sense in which a man can claim to be a Baptist minister when he is not the head of a Baptist church.'¹⁵

Were BUGB to embrace such a theology, it should at least be consistent: regional, national and college roles would exclude their holders from the ministry just as much as industrial or educational chaplaincies. It would seem, however, that the mind of the Union is not here: the concept of a 'qualifying office' on the

¹² Larry Davis, "A Malignant Warfare": The anti-mission controversy in Missouri 1818-1840 and beyond', paper to Missouri Baptist Historical Society, 16 November 2002.

¹³ Gill will not allow a pastor to preside at communion in a church not his own. See *A Body of Practical Divinity*, Book 2, ch.3, §2a.

¹⁴ *A Body of Practical Divinity*, Book 2, ch.3, §2a.

¹⁵ A. Dakin, *The Baptist View of the Church and Ministry*, quoted in Nigel G. Wright, *New Baptists, New Agenda*, Carlisle: Paternoster 2002, p.113. Members of the group know of ministers today who are uncomfortable about remaining on the list of covenanted persons because their role within a charity or mission agency has taken them away from the local pastorate.

list of covenanted persons (and, prior to that, the accredited list) points necessarily to a group of vocations which are regarded as proper ways of fulfilling the ordination vows of a Baptist minister, but which are not straightforwardly ministries of Word and Sacrament within a local fellowship. It would seem, then, that we have an implicit theology at work within the Union which, in contrast to Gill's strictures, invites extension of the office of pastor into other spheres of service. While we see shepherding the local flock as normative for our understanding of ministry, it is a norm that is capable of extension in various directions.

We wish to acknowledge and affirm the 'normative status' of the local church ministry: within all the variety of explicit and implicit understandings of ministry which we have, this seems to be a constant - and rightly so. As Baptists, we will insist on the local church as the primary instantiation of Christ's Church, and on the dependence of ministry on the church. These two positions already force us to give normative status to the local pastorate.

(i) UNION DOCUMENTS ON MINISTRY

There was a brief flurry of reports from BUGB on ministry around 1960 (*The Meaning and Practice of Ordination among Baptists* (1957); *The Doctrine of the Ministry* (1961); and *Ministry Tomorrow* (1969). In recent years there has been much less material. Perhaps the most significant recent document offering an account of Baptist ministry is *Forms of Ministry among Baptists: Towards an Understanding of Spiritual Leadership*, a discussion document produced by the Doctrine and Worship Committee in 1994. This distinguishes two types of service: *diakonia* and *episkope*. All are called to *diakonia*, but only some to *episkope* or oversight. In each case, however, particular individuals are set aside with a particular ministry, whether deacons or pastors. The report recognized a variety of other forms of ministry ('for example, ... youth specialists, evangelists and church planters, musicians and preachers'), noting also that some of these ministries were translocal. Significantly, however, it lists them all as varieties of *diakonia* rather than oversight ('ministries other than that of "ministers" should be recognized and accredited by the Baptist Union'). Alongside this, however, it also noted the variety of ways in which accredited ministers were serving ('officers of the Union or Association, as Superintendents, as missionaries..., as Chaplains, or as tutors...', p.32), and accepted the possibilities of oversight happening in translocal settings. The question it poses is 'whether the service proposed does indeed enable the person to fulfill the functions and responsibilities of a minister - whether, it might be said, it is truly a focus of *episkope*.' (p.32)

The model of ministry developed here appears to be a version of the classical Free Church two-fold ordering of ministry into pastor and deacon, with each open to extension in various ways. The report, however, seems to struggle in dealing with non-local expressions of ministry, suggesting that (in at least some cases) the roles themselves are diaconal, but that they are being fulfilled by those called to oversight, and enable those people to fulfill validly the episcopal ministry to which they have been called. There are other instances in this report of a sense that it is pulling in more than one direction, which may illustrate the variety of understandings with which we began. If this is the case, then an examination of single-authored pieces on ministry might be more helpful, in terms of less widely agreed but more coherent, accounts of the nature and proper functioning of ordained ministry.

(ii) INDIVIDUAL BAPTIST AUTHORS ON MINISTRY

Several significant pieces by individual theologians have been published in recent years. Nigel Wright's *New Baptists, New Agenda* contains a republication of an article earlier published in the *Baptist Quarterly*¹⁶ entitled 'Inclusive Representation: Towards a Doctrine of Christian Ministry'.¹⁷ Wright sees the calling of the minister as a representative calling (he does not spell this out in the classic two faces of priesthood, representing the people before God, and God before the people, but the thought seems to be there), but, crucially, the representation is 'inclusive'. That is, the minister's particular role in representing Christ (say, at the Table) does not exclude any other member of the church from presiding at communion. Wright lists three forms of representation: representing Christ to his people, representing the wider Church to the local church, and representing the local fellowship to itself.¹⁸

¹⁶ 'Inclusive Representation: Towards a Doctrine of Christian Ministry', *Baptist Quarterly* 39.4 (2001), pp.159-74.

¹⁷ Wright, *New Baptists*, pp.112-30.

¹⁸ Wright, *New Baptists*, pp.127-9.

Wright assumes throughout the normative status of local-church-based ministry, and does not discuss the validity of alternative patterns or expressions at any point. Given that the book was written when he was a theological college principal and Vice-President of the Union, he presumably saw educational and translocal ministries, at least, as valid.¹⁹ The one point where he indicates a possible extension beyond the local is in reflecting on Ephesians 4:11-13, and the five-fold pattern there. Unlike Gill, he will not see apostles, prophets and evangelists as extraordinary offices that have ceased, but he offers no indication of what he wants to do with them. ('I remain persuaded that more reflection on these patterns would be of value ... [t]hat there are pastor/teachers and evangelists is not the last word about the shape of ministry as we exercise it.'²⁰)

Wright's model invites extension in a way that is hospitable to sector ministries: if the essence of pastoral ministry is the representing of Christ, Church and church to the church, then might the essence of chaplaincy be the representing of Christ, Church and church to the world in some fashion? Again, as Baptists we would want to stress that this is an inclusive representation, that every Christian shares this calling, but (as Wright argues) this does not mean that we cannot set aside certain particular representatives as called by Christ to speak his Word, and called by the churches to speak their words, into a particular context of life or work.

Paul Fiddes has a paper entitled 'Authority in Relations between Pastor and People: A Baptist Doctrine of Ministry' in his recent *Tracks and Traces*.²¹ In this he develops an account of the essence of the ordained ministry being the representing of the Church universal. The minister's study and calling is to know 'the faith of the people of God in all the length and breadth of time and space through which God has led it [*sic*, them]... From that perspective the minister can proclaim the word of God into the particular local situation.'²² Alongside this account is a discussion of the nature of authority that is appropriate for a minister to exercise. It is an authority that is personal, in the sense that it stems from qualities of life, and not merely of office or action ('there is a kind of authority that comes from *being* as well as *doing*', p.96); an authority which is patterned after Christ's ministry ('the power to win hearts and minds...', p.96). This is the proper authority of the *episkopos*.

Fiddes does draw examples from chaplaincy (p.100), and discusses translocal ministry (p.91). He also issues a call for imagination in discerning where the open-ended call of Christ might lead:

Oversight in the Christian community, involving the ministry of word and sacrament, and being a faithful guardian and interpreter of the apostolic tradition in the modern world, can take many other forms than pastoral charge of a local congregation... The question is this: can and should the church of Christ commission this person to express his or her way of being as *episkopos* within this new context? (p.102)

In this context (within the ellipsis, indeed) he cites RE teaching, social work, ecumenical roles, industrial counselling and charitable administration as possibly appropriate roles. Chaplaincy would fit very naturally here. It would be understood by extending the representative role above, the chaplain interpreting the apostolic tradition to the world of work, healthcare or study. The resonances between chaplains' self-understanding of the nature of their role and Fiddes's description of the authority proper to the *episkopos* is clear, and adds further weight to the argument.

Two papers in the recent collection, *Baptist Sacramentalism*,²³ discuss the nature of ordination. The first, John E. Colwell's 'The Sacramental Nature of Ordination'²⁴ argues a distinctively Reformed account of ministry as 'the ministry of the Word and sacrament, to the proclaiming of the "unsearchable riches of Christ" ..., to the tending of God's flock ...' (p.242). Colwell works himself to extend this to include sector ministries (p.244), noting the incoherence of current BUGB practice of counting various sector and

¹⁹ Wright has in fact extended his understanding to include sector ministries in an unpublished paper given at the Higher Education Chaplains Consultation, September 2002.

²⁰ Wright, *New Baptists*, p.129.

²¹ Carlisle: Paternoster 2003. The chapter is pp.83-106; the paper dates from 1991 but the version in *Tracks and Traces* is substantially edited - see pp.xiii-xiv.

²² Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, p.90.

²³ Eds., Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson, Carlisle: Paternoster 2003.

²⁴ *Baptist Sacramentalism*, pp.228-46.

educational roles as qualifying offices but continuing to insist that the only calling tested in the initial exploration of a call to ministry is a calling to the local pastorate.

The second paper, 'Towards a Baptist Theology of Ordained Ministry' by Stephen R. Holmes,²⁵ begins by arguing that the fundamental nature of the church's ministry is corporate, belonging collectively to the whole body (rather than to individual members of the body, or even every member of the body individually). This corporate ministry is properly focused in particular people, including ministers of Word and sacrament, but also evangelists, prophets, &c. (p.257). This notion of a person being the focus of particular aspects of the work of the church is clearly hospitable to sector ministry, although the paper does not discuss whether such ministries should be seen in terms of a particular way of exercising the ministry of Word and sacrament, or as a different order of ministry linked to prophetic, evangelistic or apostolic roles.

* * *

It is clear from all of this that every account of ministry given in recent years by particular Baptist theologians is hospitable to sector ministry, by design or by accident. This result should not be underestimated. If our scholars, even when setting out to discuss the local church ministry, cannot talk about it in ways that do not invite extension to include sector ministries, then surely we must insist that sector ministry is a theologically valid way of living out the call to ordained ministry within the various understandings current in BUGB. We therefore call upon the Union to be proactive in promoting the equal recognition of sector ministers across the denomination at all levels so that those vestiges of discrimination that do still exist are noted and removed.

Alongside this, we note that there is however a clear divide in the way recent Baptist authors have understood sector ministry. On the one hand, Colwell and Fiddes stress a single order of ministry, with the local pastorate as the normative form, which nonetheless can be faithfully discharged in other roles, including sector ministries. Wright and Holmes, whilst not opposing this position, invite an alternative account based on the pluriform nature of New Testament ministry, under which sector ministry would be seen as a different calling from the local pastorate, but equally a part of the variegated ministry God has been pleased to give to his Church. *Forms of Ministry among Baptists* offers something like a middle way, promoting a twofold ordering of ministry, but the document seems unsure as to where sector ministry fits within this scheme, whilst still wanting to affirm it.

We see no need to decide between these positions within this report. We have already noted the variety of understandings of ordained ministry amongst Baptists today, and the existence of these varied positions is merely one more piece of evidence of that. Indeed, chaplains and other sector ministers would tend towards one or another of the currently common ways of understanding ministry and so would differ amongst themselves as to the best way of understanding sector ministry. We note that the recent changes to the accredited list, introducing named specialist ministries for the first time, suggest that the mood of the Union is moving from being more hospitable to a 'single order of ministry' approach to being more hospitable to an account that stresses the variety of ministerial callings. What is important for this report is that on either account, sector ministry must be accepted as an equally valid way of exercising a vocation to ordained ministry.

²⁵

Baptist Sacramentalism, pp.247-62.

D THE MINISTRY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

(i) INTRODUCTION

Baptist ecclesiology understands the Church to be 'instantiated' in the local congregation. Accordingly it will be assumed that for Baptists [the ordained] ministry is exercised 'to, and/or within, and/or on behalf of the local congregation'.²⁶

How then can so-called 'Sector Ministry' be accepted by Baptists as a valid expression of [the ordained] ministry? This paper addresses this issue from the perspective of what is meant by 'the local congregation'. It does not attempt to address directly the equally significant issue concerning how Baptists might describe the purpose, nature, and function of 'the ordained ministry'.

(ii) BAPTISM, ORDINATION & INDUCTION: MINISTERING TO AND/OR WITHIN AND/OR ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The vocation, the general calling of humankind is to work - i.e. to use energy productively. Work is a creation ordinance (Gen. 2, 15). However, as a consequence of the fall, work is described as 'toil' (Gen. 3. 17b). In the context of a fallen world, the work of God is redemption: salvation through service. God works to save the world by serving the world. This work finds human expression in Jesus of Nazareth. His vocation, his particular calling, his work, was to do the will of the one who sent him (John 6.38, John 6.27-29).

Throughout human history, pre and post Christ, God has been realising this intended work of redemption by gathering a covenant people in and through whom this work of redemption might proceed (Rom. 8. 28-30, Eph. 1. 11-12). The covenant responsibility of each and all within the people of God is to co-operate in this work of redemption, saving through serving. The particular calling of the people of God might be termed *diakonia* - service. It is acknowledged by the persons concerned through an act of baptism.

From among the *gathered*, God calls certain specific individuals to the specific work of *episkope* - oversight. It is this specific calling that is usually affirmed by an act, the rite of *Ordination*. Though such a specific calling is discerned and confirmed by, within, and on behalf of the church, it is to be understood as having been initiated solely by an act of divine grace. Anyone affirmed in such a calling is usually called upon in the context of the ordination vows, *inter alia*, to pledge themselves to 'prepare the people of God for works of service'. Here is established the essential link between *episkope* and *diakonia*, oversight and service.

The particular and the specific, service and oversight, *diakonia* and *episkope*, are each expressions of the call of God upon the covenant people of God. Together they constitute 'the Ministry of the People of God', 'the Christian Ministry', the essential components of which can be described as

- Worship of God
- Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- Serving the needs of one's neighbour.²⁷

For Baptists, the veracity of a person's sense of having been called to the specific 'ministry' of *episkope*, or oversight, is properly tested within the local congregation to which that person belongs. But, because it is assumed that the working out of such a calling, the exercising of oversight, will be within a wider context than that of the immediate local congregation, it is further tested by representatives of the Baptist family as a whole. Believing that 'calling' requires 'equipping', the wider Baptist family, the denomination, will require the ordinand to undergo a period of formation. On successful completion, she/he will be commended (*valedicted*) to the denomination as a person both called and equipped for the exercising of the ministry of oversight. When this commendation is reciprocated by an invitation to exercise such a ministry of oversight and that invitation is accepted, the ordinand is *ordained* to the specific ministry of oversight, and *inducted* into the actual situation within which that ministry will be exercised. *Ordination* and *Induction* are thereby inextricably linked. If the actual situation is recognised by the denomination as

²⁶ In this text 'within the local congregation' should be understood as carrying all these meanings: 'to and/or within and/or on behalf of the local congregation'.

²⁷ Edward J Kilmartin, 'Ministry', in *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology*, Richardson & Bowden (eds.), SCM, 1983, p369.

one that is appropriate for the exercising of the particular ministry of oversight, then the newly ordained minister will be admitted to the *register of covenanted persons* maintained by the denomination.

Subsequently that person may move to other actual situations, at the beginning of which there ought to/will be an act of induction (or commissioning). Within that act of induction (or commissioning), opportunity will be given for the reaffirmation of both ordination vows and baptismal vows. Hence there is a degree of consistency - general, particular, specific, actual - created, baptised, ordained, inducted - gifting, choosing, calling, inviting.

As far as 'sector ministry' is concerned, the outstanding issue therefore is this: is sector ministry an appropriate situation for the exercise of *episkope*?

(iii) MINISTERING TO AND/OR WITHIN AND/OR ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD: THE NATURE OF THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

The locally gathered congregation, the visible expression of the chosen people of God, is required individually and corporately to work, in particular to collaborate in the divine work of redemption, *saving through serving*. This is the ministry of the baptised.

Why then should some need to be called to the specific ministry of oversight? Given the Baptist understanding of the church, it is invariably assumed that such oversight has to be exercised in some way or another in relation to a local congregation: to, and/or within, and/or on behalf of the local congregation. What 'oversight' might entail is not so easy to describe. There is the commissioning of the eleven by the Risen Christ (Matt. 28. 18-20a, Luke 24. 46-49, John 20.21-23). The New Testament also records 'patterns' of ministry that emerged from among the earliest Christian communities (congregations), (Acts 2. 42-47a, 1Cor. 12. 27-28, Eph. 4. 7-8, 11-13, 1Tim. 3. 1-4, 6-7). Notice should also be taken of Jesus' self-identification with Isaiah 61. 1-2 (Luke 4. 18- 19). His sending out of the twelve (Matt. 10. 1-42), the sending out of the seventy/seventy two (Luke 10. 1-24), and the implicit commissioning contained in the so-called 'Parable of the sheep and the goats' (Matt. 25. 31-46). Over time, for Baptists these otherwise disparate elements have been allowed to coalesce around the concept of *congregational-based ministry*, and are distilled out according to the content of the ordination vows as deemed acceptable by the denomination.

Therefore, as far as 'sector ministry' is concerned, can the New Testament basis for the ministry of oversight as described in the above passages be interpreted in such a way as to justify the claim that 'sector' ministry is as legitimate an expression of the ministry of oversight as is 'congregation-based' ministry? Can this be done although historically such passages have been assumed to relate exclusively to 'congregation-based' ministry? (This debate is not limited to sector 'ministry', it also applies to trans-local ministry, the ministry of theological education, the ministry/ministries of denominational and/or ecumenical administration etc.).

(iv) MINISTERING TO AND/OR WITHIN AND/OR ON BEHALF OF A 'LOCAL CONGREGATION': WHAT IS A CONGREGATION?

The reality is that the register of covenanted persons maintained by the denomination includes ministers who presently exercise oversight of local congregations, and also ministers who exercise ministry in other situations, including 'sector' ministries. The recent decision by the BUGB GP&F Committee to recommend parity of recognition between congregation-based serving ministers and non-congregation-based serving ministers in respect of individual membership of the Baptist Assembly is to be welcomed. However, it was based upon such recognition already existing in the register of covenanted persons without enquiring into the basis for such parity of recognition.

The question remains: is it possible to identify a theological basis for such parity of recognition?

'Sector' ministers, historically, have been described as 'chaplains' - "Members of the clergy attached to a private chapel, institution, ship, regiment &c" (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*). *Chambers* refers to "...institution, organisation, establishment, or family".

Such situations are obviously not congregations in the traditional sense, but what they have in common is *the sense of having been gathered*. A congregation is 'gathered' by God; other institutions - family, ship, regiment, hospital, prison, school, college, university, workplace etc. - are all places either where people gather or are gathered, where they congregate. Where people gather for whatever reason, there is the potential for community. Indeed, every gathering together of people has the potential to either be a community - or to become an institution.

Might it not be argued that an essential component of any exercise of the 'ministry of oversight' ought to be the fostering of community over against the threat of institutionalism, be it within the church or beyond it? This might be done by transforming existing institutions into communities, or by ensuring that wherever otherwise amorphous gatherings of people occur, opportunity is provided for community to be created. The key component in all of this is the prioritising of people over place.

(v) CONGREGATION AND COMMUNITY

It is appropriate to accept that ministry within the local congregation is reckoned as normative by Baptists. However, that does not mean that it is necessarily foundational. In some parts of the country, e.g. the South Wales valleys, there was once a time when the chapel was acknowledged to be at the heart of the local community, itself an extension of the community that was the chapel. Every member of the chapel was involved in the community, and every member of the community belonged to the chapel. The congregation consistently formed and reformed itself in terms of family, school, workplace, hospital, prison, and chapel. The minister, inducted explicitly to exercise oversight of the chapel-based congregation, was implicitly assumed to exercise oversight of the whole community. In other parts of the country, where communities became identified with particular industries, it would have been difficult to ignore their presence or their people. The recently established Social Inclusion Unit within the BUGB Department for Research and Training in Mission appears to encourage a rediscovering of such an inclusive approach to ministry. If this is the intention, then it is to be commended.

Society has changed. It is less integrated. Mobility has made it possible for individuals to be part of different gatherings dependent on their reason for coming together. The 'local' chapel is just one example among many. Indeed, the demographic profile of many so-called 'local' congregations reveals them to be anything but local. Consequently shared experiences, even between members of the same congregation, will be few and far between.

It is to such congregations that those exercising oversight are called to minister. Their first priority will be to foster community and not retreat into institutionalised patterns of being church. Those exercising oversight in sectors beyond the congregation are there to facilitate a sense of community in the midst of externally imposed institutional structures. The congregation is called upon to witness to the world beyond it in terms of what it means for an erstwhile institution to function as community. On the other hand, those attempting to foster community within institutions can warn congregations against the peril of becoming nothing more than an institution that retains its own private chaplain. Chaplains, meanwhile, need to be wary of the pressures that can be exerted by the power of the institution. Tensions do exist within chaplaincy: e.g. in terms of job description/content, line management, levels of remuneration, corporate loyalty etc. It may be that chaplaincy has to become more indicative of ministry, appreciating that there is a need to engage creatively with the institution for the sake of the community, prioritising people over place, in spite of the tensions that necessarily exist.

This analysis points the way to establish some underlying theological principle that might justify parity of recognition between those exercising oversight within the local congregation and those who believe themselves to be exercising oversight in 'sectors' beyond the local congregation.

So for instance, the specific ministry of oversight can be legitimately exercised wherever the potential for community exists, either in terms of planting a local congregation or establishing a chaplaincy in a workplace, hospital, college, prison etc. It can legitimise involvement in the planning and development of new institutions in order to maximise the potential for community on behalf of its users - e.g. in the plethora of industrial, commercial, educational, health related, social regeneration and reconfiguration projects currently being undertaken.

Prioritising people over place and overseeing such prioritisation is vital to the concept of community: hence the need to empower people, to enable them, to equip them, to encourage them - to prepare the 'people of God' for works of service.

(vi) MINISTRY TO AND/OR WITHIN AND/OR ON BEHALF OF COMMUNITY

If oversight is about creating, fostering and maintaining community, then every ordained 'minister' is called to be both a congregation-based minister, and a 'sector'-based minister. The congregation is configured as a worshipping community, living alongside communities of healing, of justice and peace, of learning, of working, of growing, nurturing and developing. What integrates the exercise of oversight across the various communities is a shared methodology that is symptomatic of a commonality of function. The published synopsis of the *Reports submitted by Baptist Chaplains in Higher Education, 2003-2004* drew attention to the fact that they sought to reflect in their work the priorities identified in the

BUGB document *Five Core Values for a Gospel People* - prophetic, inclusive, sacrificial, missionary, and worshipping.

These categories ought to reflect the aspirations cherished on behalf of any community where the ministry of oversight is exercised. Both congregation-based ministers and sector-based ministers ought to conform to a pattern of ministry that includes the following elements: pastoral, prophetic, hermeneutic, evangelical, and sacrificial. These are surely foundational to any exercise in creating community in the name of Christ, and hence in pursuing God's work of redemption, saving through serving.

(vii) BUILDING COMMUNITY: AN EXERCISE IN DIAKONIA AND EPISKOPE

Both *diakonia* and *episkope* are crucial. Everybody is, potentially and actually, a member of various communities. Some have functional roles within the institutions established to support communities; others 'merely' belong. Each of us is likely to function in some communities whilst merely belonging to others. Whatever part each person plays in the life of each community, she/he has the opportunity to share in the creating, forming, shaping and maintaining of that community. The exercise of oversight - *episkope* - although historically grounded in the local congregation is not necessarily limited to it. The concept of oversight - *episkope* - has to extend to overseeing the service, the *diakonia*, of all. In addition, she/he has the responsibility of exercising her/his particular calling to the ministry of *diakonia*, of service.

Understanding every example of creating, forming, shaping and maintaining community to be an expression of God's work of redemption, saving through serving, cannot be limited to the local or immediate context. Every local community/ congregation/institution exhibits a global dimension. The exercising of oversight must extend beyond the local and embrace the global. The local and the global are inextricably linked, and any local demonstration of *episkope* is believed to be done on behalf of and in the name of the whole of the people of God. Localised ministry, whether within a local congregation or an individual institution or location, must embrace elements of the trans-local, regional, national and global.

(viii) CONCLUSION

If the above argument is accepted, then any perceived disparity between those who exercise oversight in local congregations and those who exercise oversight in sectors is illogical. More than that, it provides a basis for a shared theological understanding of what it means to exercise *episkope* - oversight - without abandoning traditional Baptist ecclesiology. *Episkope* in terms of being exercised within the local congregation, can still be regarded as normative. For this to be accepted as paradigmatic, however, a creative understanding of congregation is needed in terms of creating, forming, shaping and maintaining community without being restricted to any strictly ecclesiastical context.

E SECTOR MINISTRY: SETTING THE CONTEXT

Council asked for a group 'to examine the theology and ecclesiology of Sector Ministry, bearing in mind... that enormous mission opportunities are presented'. In thinking about that task, the group realised that two inter-related areas needed tackling. One is to do with how far sector ministry is a valid expression of ordained Baptist ministry. The second has to do with the particular context in which we work out our mission and how far sector ministry is a useful response to that context.

This paper is a contribution to the second task. It is one which, we realised, we did not have the resources of time and expertise to deal with adequately in the group. We do believe, however, that there are important issues here which need to be faced by the whole denomination. The suggestion we make is that sector ministry is one appropriate and creative response to the contemporary situation, but that there are implications here for the way we are church. They need to be faced by local church ministers and the denomination as a whole.²⁸

To 'set the context' in a paper as brief as this inevitably means some shallowness and partiality. The author feels a certain reluctance to launch it upon Council. However, it is important to remind ourselves of some relevant features of contemporary British society, and even to push at the boundaries of our understanding of what exactly is happening 'out there'.

(i) MIND THE GAP: A DECLINING CHURCH IN A CHANGING WORLD

Council has been reminded of the cultural gap between 'Church' and 'World', especially younger people, by the Young Leaders Forum in their presentations to Council in November 2003, November 2004 and March 2005. Sermons, hymns, pews and word- and leader-dominated services came in for particular criticism.²⁹ Inevitably, there is a degree of subjectivity in the comments made to us. Statistics may not always be totally objective, but those about the participation of the young in church life are stark. They show that most young people in Britain today have little, or nothing, to do with the church.³⁰

What the young leaders said to Council resonated with some of us who may no longer be classified as young. We too notice the cultural gap between church and the rest of life; a gap we do not find helpful. We continue to go to church, but sometimes wonder why we do so. Of course, most people do not go; that is part of our context. Different surveys give different figures, but it seems likely that well under 10% of the people of Britain go to church at all regularly.³¹

It is not surprising that in such a situation, less and less people know the basic stories of the Christian faith. A 1998 Gallop Poll found that 50% of those asked did not know what Calvary was, 56% did not know what Palm Sunday commemorates, 34% did not know what Easter Sunday is about. Similarly, less and less people turn to the church for the 'occasional offices'. For example, more people are now married in civil ceremonies than in church.

Of course, that is not the full story. Not all denominations are declining, and Baptists are not doing too badly. During the 1990s, the Decade of Evangelism, across the whole church in Britain there was a drop in church membership and regular attendance of about a million. Ours, however, went up - by 2%. We seem to be at least holding our own and maybe doing a bit better than that. We are not alone. The Black-led churches, Orthodox and various New Churches are also increasing in numbers. In practice, there may be some connection between our own increases and the rise of Black-led and other ethnic-based churches joining our Union. My own involvement in the Black Pentecostal Churches suggests to me that we need to do some listening and learning.

²⁸ It is not only our own denomination which is recognising the need to face some of the issues here. For example, the Church of England report *Mission-shaped Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004) does so and there are signs that its Commission on Urban Life and Faith, due to report in the autumn, may also wrestle with these matters.

²⁹ John Drane, *The McDonaldisation of the Church* (London: DLT, 2000) explores the question of the cultural gap from the perspective of the modern/postmodern paradigm.

³⁰ According to Christian Research, in 1905, 56% of the child population went to Sunday School but in 1998 only 4% of children were attending Church or Sunday School. The 2001 Church Life Survey showed clearly that church membership and attendance is heavily weighted towards older people, with only 6% of church-goers aged between 15 and 24.

³¹ See 'Introduction' in Phil Richter and Leslie J. Francis *Gone but not forgotten* (London: DLT, 1998) for a brief overview of the situation.

Despite those bright spots, the overall context is one of serious church decline and loss of Christian influence. Sector ministry is one response to such a situation. It puts ministers where people are, rather than where they are not, and it puts them there to do, amongst other things, the traditional work of ministry; offer pastoral care, tell the Jesus story and lead worship, including the occasional offices.

(ii) A MULTI-FAITH CONTEXT

There have long been other faith communities within Britain, especially around ports and in the inner cities. The 2001 Census was the first for 150 years to ask a question on religious affiliation outside Northern Ireland. It was a voluntary question, and the answers must be handled with care as a smaller proportion of the population answered the question in materially poorer areas. These are the areas where there tend to be concentrations of people of other faiths, Muslims in particular, and so the census figures probably understate the number of members of other religions. Just under 3% of the population declared itself to be Muslim and 1% Hindu. They are the two largest groups after Christianity. The next are the Jedi (!), followed by the Sikhs at 0.6% of the population and the Jews at 0.5%.³²

The numbers are relatively small. They are also growing, and, in some parts of the country, people of other faiths exercise a significant influence. Clearly, questions of how faiths relate are of increasing significance. It would, therefore, be foolish to ignore this part of our context. It is also mentioned here because sector ministers have wide experience of working with people of different faiths, as, of course, do some local church ministers and our BMS colleagues (who have considerable experience in this area and have done so for generations). In the sectors, and maybe in other areas, this includes working in multi-faith teams and being asked to minister to people of different faiths. Relating in such teams and building bridges with 'the other' who is also the neighbour can be rewarding. It also brings its challenges and raises difficult questions about, for example, such things as what constitutes authentic witness and the particularity of Christ. They are questions which, quite simply, are not going to go away.

(iii) FEEL A SPIRIT!

Another important feature of the contemporary context is the seemingly inexorable rise in interest in 'the spiritual'. Research shows increasing numbers of people sensing the presence of the divine in nature, feeling that life has a pattern which cannot be explained only in human terms, experiencing the presence of evil spirits, communing with the dead, and having their prayers answered.³³ We are moving to a post secular society in which there is a growing sense of 'the beyond', a sense of the spirit world or the divine, of life being more than what is reasonable or what science can explain, certainly more than making money. It is the world which appears in the Matrix, Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings. It is the world in which people go to sacred spaces to light candles or place flowers or to dance to a god or goddess, maybe even to God.

Ours is not a country where people believe nothing. It is far more one in which they believe anything. They may do so whilst calling themselves Christians, and maybe even assuming that what they believe is Christianity. In the 2001 Census, 71.6% of the population said they were Christians. That is 40.6 million people. They are presumably making some claim to believe. The figures on church decline would suggest that most of them never go near church, probably know little or nothing of the stories of Jesus ... and yet they call themselves Christians.

These things together are a reminder that believing is happening at a distance from the institutional church. Believing but not belonging is a typical post-modern idea. It may be that part of what that phrase expresses, and part of our contemporary context, is a rejection of institutions, hierarchies, indeed of anyone or anything which would seek to prescribe what the individual should or should not believe. In the period in which we are living we are reaching for a new settlement between the individual and all sorts of institutions, including the church. That settlement we have not yet arrived at, including in religion.

David Blunkett is a good example of a contemporary, postmodern believer. In his autobiography he tells of how he used to be part of the institutional church; he was a Methodist lay preacher. He goes on to say that 'In later years formal religion ceased to seem relevant to me. Whilst I have never rejected faith, I

³² Figures from Daniel Dorling and Bethan Thomas *People and Places, A 2001 Census Atlas of the UK* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2004), pp.37ff.

³³ See, for example, David Hay and Kate Hunt *Understanding the Spirituality of People Who Don't Go to Church* (Nottingham: Nottingham University, 2000) and Grace Davie *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing Without Belonging* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

believe in a Life Force, a force for good or evil, not a tangible being.³⁴ He still believes, but he has left the church, and traditional Christianity, behind. He is a typical representative of the religious scene in Britain today.

Sector ministry is one response to such a situation. It allows ministers to be at a distance from the institutional church and invites them to relate to the faith of the native people, to build bridges between that faith and our faith, to challenge and to offer rootedness to a generation unrooted in any great, classic faith tradition.

(iv) YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU!

Interestingly, as Home Secretary, David Blunkett was enthusiastic to get faith communities involved in partnership with government; another feature of the contemporary scene. Blunkett has been keen to have the declining institution he says he has left behind as a partner in building the new Britain, the young country, of which New Labour dreams.

There are dangers in working too closely with the powers; we dissenters will be aware of that. However, there are also opportunities, including for the development of Christian influence on regeneration issues, the Sustainable Communities Plan, on New Deal and on a whole host of government initiatives. It is quite proper to respond to such opportunities to influence the development of our national life. Sector ministry is clearly one way of doing so. Here is a classic example of ministry to the structures and institutions of society. Ian Millgate's paper shows that increasing numbers of congregational-based ministers are involved in sector ministry and this is one area where that is the case.³⁵

It is not only government which seeks and values partnership with the churches. NHS Trusts, universities, prisons and detention centres, to name just a few, are keen to have chaplaincy; so keen they will even pay for it! If I may refer to my own ministry, I was involved in setting up two higher education chaplaincies in London. One was church-based and one university-based. The church-based one no longer exists. The university continued with the university-based chaplaincy, appointing and paying its own chaplain; it valued the service the chaplaincy brought.

It is part of our context that institutions of various sorts want the church to be involved in their work. Sector ministry is one response to that.

(v) THE CHANGING NATURE OF COMMUNITY

Part of our context is the changing nature of community. The 2001 Census showed that increasing numbers are commuting ever longer distances from home to work and the compartmentalisation of life, with work, home and leisure happening in different geographical places, continues apace. The church needs to have a voice in each compartment; sector ministry is one way of ensuring that. The Census shows that this compartmentalisation, and what some perceive as a growing North-South divide (an idea not universally accepted), are also changing the nature of the places in which we live by, for example, 'creating places which more specifically cater for different ages than was the case in the past'.³⁶

To develop the point about community, for some, perhaps especially the poor, the infirm and the prisoner, it is still tied to geography. For many others, it is not. Post-modern person lives in a variety of communities, some transient, some coming together for longer periods or for short periods from time to time. They are based on common interests or beliefs or needs. They may be 'real' in the sense that they involve people being in the same geographical space, or 'virtual', via email and internet chat rooms whose very existence breaks any necessary link between community and place - a phenomena which has moved beyond a simple compartmentalisation of life with different activities happening in different geographical areas to a more radical change in the nature of community and how we relate.

³⁴ David Blunkett *On a Clear Day* (London: Michael O'Mara Books Limited, 1995), p.76.

³⁵ For a then congregational minister's account of involvement in such issues see Phil Jump *Community Regeneration and Neighbourhood Renewal - Towards a Baptist Response* (Didcot: The Baptist Union of Great Britain, undated).

³⁶ Daniel Dorling and Bethan Thomas *People and Places, A 2001 Census Atlas of the UK*, p.19.

Chris Baker of the William Temple Foundation has made a doctoral study of the nature of community in the English New Towns.³⁷ He draws on the work of the Spanish economic sociologist Manuel Castells, who describes contemporary urban living (which the vast majority of us are part of in one way or another) in terms of 'space based on flows' rather than 'space based on place'. Within 'space based on flows' people are hyper-mobile, their lives revolve around different focal points (and the 'virtual' may be as important as the 'real'), they may spend different parts of the week in different geographical locations (which may not even be in the same nation - indeed one of the characteristics of the situation we are in is that the basic geographical community unit of the nation state is losing power to other, more mobile, forms of relating e.g. the international market which can move money at the press of a button and without reference to any government). They will tend to meet people from similar classes, with similar interests. Whilst this may be a more accurate description of the at least middling rich than of millions of others, it indicates the way some suggest we are heading.

The example of a gated housing estate in the south-east of England, built in what is still a 'brown field' waste-land not far from the nearly completed international station on the Eurostar line is exceptional but makes the point. The inhabitants of the estate tend to work in either London or Paris, or both, and may spend week-ends on the north French coast. Similarly, it was not unusual to find people in Milton Keynes with houses in MK and property in London or some other city, perhaps with a partner living in that other place or the two of them commuting between the two places. The primary identity of such people is not geographical, indeed they may have difficulty in answering the question 'where do you live?' or, in the first example, 'which nation are you from?' or 'who are your neighbours?'. We thus come to deal with questions of identity; with who we are and who we relate to.

That impacts in various ways and in varying degrees on many of our churches, however much they may still think of themselves as geographically-based units. It will impact on some more than others. Part of the missiological challenge is discerning the way community is going and responding to it. That may mean entering the world of the virtual - virtual church, chat room church, web-based church etc. It also means working with people as they flow, as well as when they stop. I suspect that both sector and church-based ministers are beginning to respond to this in various ways. Is the changing nature of community one reason why increasing numbers of our ministers are sector ministers in one way and another?

(vi) REMEMBER SUNDAY?

The nature of Sunday has also changed. The church may want to mount a rearguard action to keep Sunday special and there are good reasons for fighting for a return to a day of rest. At the same time, the reality is that church is one option amongst many when it comes to Sunday morning, and the pressures are there to go do something else. So when the junior football league meets on Sunday and the children of faithful church members want to go and play, or when there is the 'opportunity' to go to work on Sunday, then choices have to be made which are not always easy. For some, it makes a lot more sense if church happens mid-week. or at work. Again, sector ministry is a response to that. I have anecdotal evidence that some of our churches are responding to that and putting more of a focus on midweek worship. It would be interesting to know how many and with what success.

(vii) WHERE NOW?

These are some of the characteristics of contemporary British society which are we have identified as relevant as we contemplate mission in our changing context. If this is the society in which we now live, then traditional Baptist patterns of ministry, mission and even church need re-examination. It cannot be assumed that a 'local' church, defined its localness in terms of place, can be an effective agent for reaching hyper-mobile people or for influencing all parts of the lives of those who actually do live nearby.

The centrality of the local congregation for Baptist ecclesiology could make us more vulnerable to failure in the face of these challenges than many other denominations; perhaps our emphasis on mission will save us from that failure. One way Baptists do respond, and could respond far more, is through sector ministry. That is not the only response; clearly there are local churches seeking to respond to the changed circumstances in which we find ourselves. Yet when, writing in the winter 1999/2000 edition of *Baptist Leader*, David Coffey paid tribute to the fact of growth amongst Baptists, he also

³⁷ Some of his work is published by him in a William Temple Foundation pamphlet, *Religious Faith in the Exurban Community. Crisis or Opportunity for the UK Churches?* (Manchester: William Temple Foundation 2003).

commented: 'Many local churches have lost touch with unchurched people. Many local churches have lost touch with whole districts of their community'.

In developing strategies for mission and ministry we need to take note of the changing nature of community, the distance of so many people from the church, the calls made upon us by government and others, the believing which is happening and which is far removed from orthodox Christianity. We need people who will live self-consciously as Christians in the 'flows', relating to the faith of the people who pass by and to whom perhaps we will relate, if but for a moment. We need people who will take the risk of going out of the institution, knowing that whatever the rhetoric about mission they are not the ones whose work will automatically be valued. We need a church prepared to support those who take that risk and to fund work with those who may never, ever, sign up for any institutional expression of anything but who need the saving story of the one who took the biggest risk of all. We recognise that is a major problem for the institution.

We need people who will care and who will do theology with the people, where the people are, working with the faith the people have, and bringing that, and them, into dialogue with the faith which springs from Jesus, bringing them also into dialogue with each other and creating communities and plausibility structures, real or virtual, which help in the maintenance of faith and the ongoing work of mission, but which may never turn into anything like church as most of us know it.

Sector ministry should be seen against this background and supported as a response to this situation.

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