

BAPTISTS

Spring 2019

# TOGETHER

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***Celebrating,  
Surviving,  
Thriving***

**A focus on women in Baptist ministry**

News / Interviews / Prayer / Comment / Events  
The magazine for the Baptist Union of Great Britain

 **BAPTISTS  
TOGETHER**



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## Violet Hedger (1900 - 1992)

In 1919 Violet Hedger arrived at Regent's Park College to become the first Baptist woman to be college trained for ordination. To mark this key anniversary, the college commissioned a new portrait of Violet which they will unveil later in 2019.

The portrait also graces the cover of this edition of *Baptists Together* magazine.

Violet was both a remarkable minister and a trailblazer who, as you'll read in many of the testimonies in these pages, continues to inspire today's generation of ministers. It seems only fitting that in an edition celebrating Baptist women in ministry, hers is the first face you see.

Turn to p9 to discover more about Violet.





THE  
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# Celebrating, surviving, thriving

## Why are we here?

As I have got older I have realised just how important it is to push the boat out, so to speak, and really celebrate the wonderful milestones of life! Whether it is significant birthdays, weddings, wedding anniversaries or other special events, taking the time to savour the goodness and the blessing adds to the preciousness of these times. For similar reasons we are taking the opportunity to really make a big thing of celebrating 100 years of ordained women's ministry across Baptists Together! Though there are several dates we could have chosen, the year in which the first woman, Violet Hedger, began training for ministry at Regent's Park College has become our celebratory anchor point.

Looking back over the last hundred years it seems that the affirmation of women's ordination has been a slow and painful unfolding. The fact that the basis of our Union is clearly understood to be that the discernment of Christ's will through Scripture lies firmly with the local church maybe helps us to see why this has been the case. Our deeply held conviction that we want to be faithful to the Jesus revealed to us through the Bible leans us towards



a suspicion of anything that seems to be a mere reaction to the fickle whims of contemporary society. Years of diligent and prayerful searching of Scripture have been part of our journey. In time, what was being discerned by local churches was reflected upon by Baptist Union Council in 1965-67 and more recently in 2010 and, together, we were able to offer to each other a thoroughly biblical basis for the ordination of women.

As more and more women found the space and affirmation to explore a sense of call to ministry, our churches have begun to experience its blessing and also to grasp a Kingdom vision of the wholeness of both women and men exercising their gifts as part of a reflection of the nature of God. For these reasons, I am glad to say that the role of women serving our churches through leading has been gaining momentum over the last 20 years or so.

Therefore, we celebrate the gift of women's ministry and honour the journey that has been made thus far. We celebrate so that we can continue to inspire women to respond to God's call and we continue to say loudly and clearly that women's ministry, as well as the ministry of men, is valued and

welcomed and encouraged across Baptists Together.

I am also aware that in celebrating 100 years of ordained women's ministry, we might be tempted to feel that we have arrived. As Siân Murray-Williams points out, there is progress still to be made. Further afield, as General Secretary I have the privilege of representing you amongst European and global Baptists and, as I have begun to listen to the stories of sisters from around the world, I have become acutely aware of the challenges many of them face. I pray that our journey and celebrations might be a sign of hope for many others, giving them courage to remain true to God's call on their lives.

In celebrating we also want to look forward to the future, praying that God will raise up a new generation of women leaders. As you read this edition, please can you be praying and thinking about inspiring young women to hear and respond to God's call? A simple step would be to pass on this magazine to one of them so that more young women might be inspired to be part of writing our history for the next 100 years.

**Lynn Green**

General Secretary of our Baptist Union

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The Revd Violet Hedger's ordination

## A short history of Baptist women in ministry

**Women have long exercised leadership in Baptist churches, writes Ruth Gouldbourne. And while our story is not straight-forward and there remains a distance to go, there have been important developments**

'Anecdotal history' matters; those stories which amuse, amaze and inspire us, from which we draw identity and strength because they tell of people 'like us'. I treasure the story of the woman who served faithfully in one of our London churches for many years. One day, she was faced with a man (whom she described as standing too close) who said to her "I don't believe in women ministers". She responded calmly "Well, now you are confronted with reality". Her story was one I drew on only the other week, when I faced the same situation, some 40 years later. (Though I cannot claim to have her self-possession, or aplomb).

Another of our foremothers delighted in telling the story of how, since only male students were allowed to live in college, she would, after working in the evening in the library, sneak out through the toilet window, aided and abetted by her male colleagues. A story I held on to when I went to college, and discovered that, despite the college having accepted women for many years, there was still no ladies' loo.

There's the grace with which another dealt with the question at a ministerial recognition interview; "What will happen if you become pregnant?" She gently replied "I'll have a baby..."

I was privileged to work with another woman who served for nearly 50 years in one church. I was with her at a meeting in the church we both served. A minister attending assumed she was there to provide tea, and put in his request accordingly. She made the tea, handed it over (with a beaming smile) and then took her place as chair. She said to me later: "You've got to laugh – it's more productive than crying".

Stories to treasure, to tell, to hang on to... but not enough.

Because though these stories inspire, encourage, make those of us who follow in their footsteps thankful for them, it still keeps women in ministry as an anecdote, an oddity, a side issue to 'real history'.

Therefore, it is important that we tell the 'formal' history of women's ministry among Baptists. As Karen Smith pointed out nearly 30 years ago, too much of our historiography has the shape of 'history of men by men for men'.<sup>1</sup>

This centenary is a good opportunity. But Violet Hedger was not the first woman whom Baptists recognised. One of our older churches, Broadmead in Bristol, was begun in the 1640s when the wife of the minister of one of the parish churches, Dorothy Hazzard, drew around her several like-minded friends who were convinced that the establishment of the church (its political control), and the use of a prayer book (set words, rather than those inspired by the Spirit) were contrary to scripture. They started to meet separately, they eventually called a minister and organised themselves as a Baptist congregation. And to this day, Dorothy Hazzard is honoured among that congregation as a pioneer church planter.

There was also Mrs Attaway, who was cited by Thomas Edwards in his denunciation of the sectaries in his book *Gangraena* (published in 1646). Attaway held a Tuesday afternoon lecture, at which she taught scripture and exhorted the company – and to which she drew up to a thousand people.<sup>2</sup>

And time will fail us to tell of women who witnessed, who taught, who wrote hymns – who played their part not just as members of the congregation, but also as those who communicated the faith in a variety of ways, with pen, voice and life. They may not have been recognised as ministers, but they exercised ministry.

- 1 *Beyond Public and Private Spheres: Another Look at Women in Baptist History and Historiography in Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. XXXIV, April, 1991, pp 79-87
- 2 For more on Mrs Attaway and other women doing interesting things, see Curtis W Freeman (2010) *Visionary Women among early Baptists in Baptist Quarterly*, 43:5, pp 260-283



A recognised form of ministry emerged, even before Violet Hedger went to college. 1890 saw the beginning of the Deaconess Order, women who served as missionaries, social workers, church planters, community developers. Their story is told elsewhere in this publication, and it is an important one that is not well-enough known. The history of women in ministry without their history is partial, not the least because of the confusion that emerged about different forms of ministry. The presence of the Order meant that, for too long, the denomination could ignore wider issues.

One of the reasons why the Order ended was because, by the mid-70s, women were now recognised as ministers, and so it looked like a more proper (and indeed, Baptist) path for women with a call to pursue. That some were called to diaconal service and lost that sphere is one of the ironies that emerges – and which requires reflection.

But even with the story of the deaconesses noted, Violet Hedger is not the first woman minister. The first formally recognised woman that we know was Edith Gates, called as pastor of Little Tew and Cleveley, Oxfordshire in 1918. She served, over a growing work there, until 1950. She did not go to college, but sat the exams for non-collegiate candidates, and was duly enrolled onto the probationers' list in 1922.

Another woman enrolled at the same time, Maria Living Taylor, served as joint pastor with her husband in various churches.

As we explore their history, it is important to place it in the context. As well as celebrating a hundred years since Violet Hedger went to college, we celebrate a hundred years of (some) women having the vote in the UK. WWI had a significant impact on the perceived place of women in society – and their capacity to take on new roles.



The first group of Deaconesses training at Havelock Hall - 1920

Photos from the Angus Library and Archive, Regent's Park College, Oxford (<http://theangus.rpc.ox.ac.uk>)

But it is worth noting too, as Timothy Larsen has recently written in *Reformed Journal*, there is a long history of women taking public roles in evangelicalism; among Methodists, the Salvation Army and, in the early 20th century, the early Pentecostal denominations. And we should not forget that the beginnings of suffragism are in evangelicalism; the Pankhursts, for example, were very clear that their call for women to have the vote had a theological basis.

But as we explore the history of Baptists, there are questions we need to ask. Who were these women, how did they discern a call, what did they face as they explored it and what did people think of them? There is work to be done here, including exploring the place of local churches in discerning and affirming calls; both these women were recognised by the Union because they had already been recognised by their local congregation. The Union then recognised them, first as probationers and then, not as ministers but, 'women pastors'. This was a separate list in the handbook until 1956, when it was changed to 'women ministers'. From 1966, there has been one ministerial list. In 1967, our Union received a report *Women in the Service of the Denomination* which stated: 'The Committee believes that witness-bearing and ministry are the continuing responsibility of the whole Church; ... and that there are no grounds of principle or doctrine for debarring women duly qualified from any of the special forms of ministry.'

Which is to say, women and men are recognised in the Union for ministry on the same basis.

Of course, saying it and living it are not the same and this report did not mean that immediately women's ministry was accepted. The numbers didn't dramatically increase. After Edith Gates, Maria Living Taylor and Violet Hedger, the next woman to be recognised was Gwyneth Hubble, in 1938. She did not serve in a church, but trained deaconesses. A gap, then the 1960s saw a little flurry – the women mentioned at the beginning of this article were all ordained in the early 60s, and knew themselves as a group, meeting regularly (when they could). These women, joined by some who had become deaconesses in those years, and then were ordained at the end



of the Order, consciously built a firm foundation, and encouraged younger women to consider and to pursue a call – and I was one of them. Much of their story was told in a 2014 *Baptist Quarterly* article by Faith Bowers.

There was a steady though small flow of women into ministry in the 1970s and an increasing number in the 1980s, including one who went on to be Deputy General Secretary of the Union, Myra Blyth; several who served as college tutors; one who became the first woman minister to be President of the Union in 1986, Margaret Jarman, a deaconess who became a minister (and the first woman student at Spurgeons); one who served for the BU with the World Council of Churches, Ruth Bottoms; and many who served local churches. The 1990s saw the appointment of Pat Took as the first woman Superintendent, and the next decade saw several women called to significantly large or historic churches as sole or lead pastor, as well as the first black female accredited minister in Kate Coleman. Kate would go on to serve as President in 2006-7, and in 2013 the Union appointed a woman, Lynn Green, as General Secretary.

In the mid-80s, an annual meeting of women ministers began, which would last a couple of decades. Such a gathering offered several things; the discovery that we were not odd, there were several of us (a recognition not to be underestimated), the discovery of our history through meeting those who had gone before, and the possibility of affecting policy and expectation. Maternity leave was written into terms of settlement (though we failed to get



paternity leave included at that point – not for want of trying), and we got issues around settlement and the shape of training considered by those who had responsibility. Various statements and undertakings were made, such that the then superintendents, and now regional ministers, agreed to challenge churches who refused to consider women during vacancies, colleges worked to ensure that women students were not barred from preaching in certain churches, and modes of training were examined. All of these – often behind the scenes – actions have changed the landscape considerably.

The proportion of women candidating for Baptist ministry is still lower than other denominations, and it is not easy to disentangle the reasons for this. There are still churches where women cannot be deacons, let alone preach or be pastor. There remain those who maintain – and have no difficulty in telling us so – that women should keep silent.

But then, we never did agree on everything, so why should this be different. There remains a distance to go, but even in my ministry life (30 years this month) I can see important changes.

And as we sometimes mutter and feel frustrated, it is salutary to remember Violet Hedger, and Edith Gates and Maria Living Taylor... on their grace, their courage, their conviction, we build. And we give thanks for them.

Ruth Gouldbourne is minister at **Grove Lane Baptist Church** in Cheadle Hulme, where she started in July 2018.



*Before that she had been part of the ministry team at **Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church** in London, where she moved after teaching history and doctrine in **Bristol Baptist College** for eleven years. Her doctoral research covered issues of gender and theology in the radical reformation and since then she has written on Baptist identity and history in various contexts, and on women and ministry in various other contexts. In 1998, she was the **Whitley Lecturer**, exploring aspects of women and ministry in Baptist history. She was ordained 30 years ago, has been privileged to be mentored by various amazing women, and is delighted that her calling is not so unusual nowadays.*





**Introducing Violet Hedger. By Molly Boot**

In October 1919, Violet Hedger arrived at **Regent's Park College**, as the first Baptist woman to be college trained for ordination. At 19 years of age she stood before the interview panel at Regent's, explaining her desire to become a missionary in Africa.



When asked whether she would go to Africa at once if sent by the college, she refused, insisting that she needed to be trained first. Seemingly, the college agreed, and she began her studies.

It was a turbulent time for Regent's: the building itself had been taken over to house blinded soldiers and sailors, while students were taught and housed between Hackney and New College, and G P Gould's retirement was looming. A pioneering principal, Gould supported Violet's application.

Unfortunately, by the time of her arrival, H Wheeler Robinson had succeeded him, and Regent's became something of a hostile environment. Wheeler Robinson ignored her presence, and required that she pay all her own examination and entrance fees, though it was the custom of the college to cover these for its students (this was rectified by Professor Paul Fiddes during his time as Principal of Regent's, who presented Violet with a framed cheque). Nonetheless, Violet loved her time at college, and spoke fondly of the support she received from her fellow-

students. She was awarded her BD in 1923, and began the difficult search for a pastorate.

Though met with setbacks and suspicion, Violet was ordained in 1926, and began a ministry at Littleover, a struggling church who, before her arrival, had not seen a single baptism in 15 years. Violet's ministry saw the church revived as her preaching stirred the congregation to take up the great adventure of the Christian life.

Violet's ministry was adventurous enough without the addition of World War II: in Chatham, her manse was bombed three times, the third time leaving her unconscious, buried for hours and permanently injured. Another time, she conducted a committal during an air raid, among the booming of guns. Undeterred, she would later go on to rebuild Chalk Hill Baptist Church from the rubble of war,



Photos from the Angus Library and Archive, Regent's Park College, Oxford (<http://theangus.rpc.ox.ac.uk>)

all the while enduring with resilience the prejudices of her congregants and colleagues.

In a wonderful article for the *Baptist Quarterly*<sup>1</sup>, Violet recounts all too familiar stories of being accosted by those who questioned her calling. 'O Paul, Paul, what prejudices are laid to thy charge!', she exclaims as she writes of those who demanded what right she had to preach, excused themselves from her anniversary tea – on account of the idea that the apostle might have absented himself – and who questioned her presence at fraternals. In the latter case, when asked what Paul would think of her attendance, Violet replied 'I'm not sure, but I will ask him when I meet him!'

I strongly suggest you acquaint yourself with Violet. She was truly a trailblazer, a remarkable minister and mind, who believed passionately in the God who calls women and men alike to lead others into his presence: and as Violet pointed out 'The very use of the masculine 'him' limits our thought. God is not a man... May there not be something of threat, lovely God, that woman can teach? May not womanhood itself reveal him, who is our Mother?'

**Molly Boot** is a minister-in-training currently studying at **Regent's Park College**



<sup>1</sup> *Baptist Quarterly* 10.5 (January 1941), pp 243-253



## When is a minister not a minister?

For many years women exercised ministry in our Union as deaconesses.

Julie Aylward traces their story

The first deaconesses were recruited in 1890 when Dr F B Meyer and the Revd Hugh Price Hughes became concerned about the moral and social conditions of the population. The Sisters had a ministry of comfort to the poverty-stricken people: 'to help and to brighten the lives of men, women, and children and most of all to win them to Jesus Christ.'<sup>1</sup>

Many were qualified nurses but they also conducted mothers' meetings, taught in Sunday School, visited people in their homes: scrubbing their floors, cleaning their homes, nursing their children, tending their sick, and sitting with the dying.

By 1907, 20 deaconesses were working in London. Sister Lizzie Hodgson was attracting 500 women a week to her open-air meeting and preaching on Sunday nights filling the Lyric Theatre,

(capacity 1400). Gradually they were posted to the 'provinces' and South Wales, or as missionaries.

Deaconesses were not allowed to marry as it was believed they would be unable to fulfil the duties of wife and mother and be a deaconess, though this later changed.

During the 1914-18 war deaconesses began to take on churches where ministers enlisted. When the men returned the women graciously stood aside. This was repeated during the Second World War.

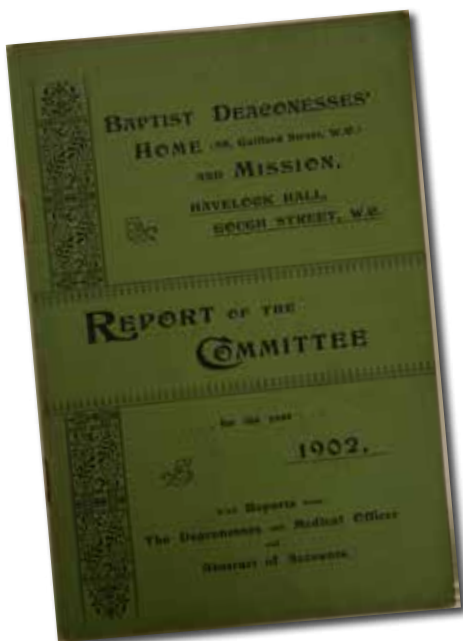
This development led to Baptist leaders questioning the rights of the church to deny women the opportunity to enlarge their ministry. In 1915 Dr Charles Brown said: 'the Sisters are as truly ministers of Christ as the men ordained to the ministry of the Word'<sup>2</sup>

The Sisterhood became an official part of the Baptist Union in 1919, recognising the important work they were doing in churches. Deaconesses were a solution to the problem of urban churches: building up failing churches or planting new ones where the men refused to go because the pay was poor, with harsh conditions. They developed churches till they could afford a male minister. One source of pain was that the establishment of the church was often dated from the arrival of the male minister.



<sup>1</sup> Rose, Doris, M, *Baptist Deaconesses* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press Ltd, 1954) p6.

<sup>2</sup> Rose, Doris, M, *Baptist Deaconesses* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press Ltd, 1954) p12.



The advantage for churches was the much smaller financial commitment: deaconesses had a very minimal stipend and no requirement to provide a manse.

Duties varied immensely: initially permission was often not granted for preaching in church, presiding at communion, or performing baptisms. Eventually they were allowed to preach and preside but a restriction remained on baptisms, either for reasons of modesty, or for fear that they were not strong enough - this too changed.

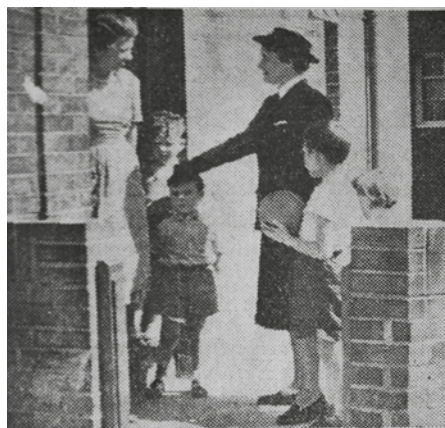


One Sister commented: "The women went where only the women could go and reclaim the people and that was because only women were likely to give themselves to sordid menial beginnings of the task which had to be done."<sup>3</sup>

As the work progressed so did the training: speaking at meetings, theology, Bible study, elocution, and the cultivation of the spiritual life. Later New Testament Greek, apologetics, homiletics, church history, and psychology were added.

By 1932 there were eleven Sisters in pastoral charge of a Baptist church, three ordained as ministers. Whilst women were allowed into ordained ministry the majority preferred to train as deaconesses, believing that they should be in a servant role rather than in the leadership role traditionally associated with men.

By 1945 an increasing demand for deaconesses resulted in several recruitment drives. However, a rise in stipend prevented poorer churches from having even a deaconess and so demand reduced.



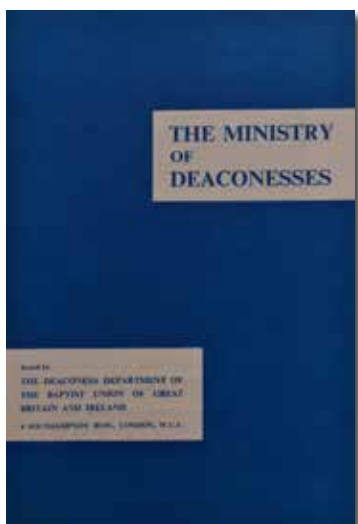
Sister Muriel Scott visiting at Hangleton Valley, Hove, Sussex, where she served this Initial Pastorate for five years (1956-61). After a short period with a student Pastor the church now has a full-time minister, the Rev. P. N. Morgan, of Cardiff College, who settled in October. Large grants from the Home Work Fund have been made for the stipends of the deaconess and the present minister.

Article from *The Baptist Times*  
- 12 December 1963

In the 1960s four of the Sisters, who were effectively doing the work of a minister, decided to seek ministerial recognition, which they were granted - but without financial support from the Baptist Union.

Despite the fact that the Union saw no objection to women as ministers, enquirers were directed to the Deaconess Order. This suited most but for some this response represented a crushing blow to what they believed God was calling them into.

Resistance came not from the structures of the Baptist Union but the churches. They were happy to accept a deaconess fulfilling the ministerial role, but were very resistant to a female minister. One deaconess reports that even though she had been in sole and full pastoral charge of the church, when she gained accreditation several families left, objecting to her being a minister in the same role.



Baptist Deaconesses at Struan Training College

3 Sister Lena Parkinson. 'Sisters of the People: the Passing Years'



Thus began the journey towards the decision for all active deaconesses to be transferred to the accredited ministers' list. This was no easy decision for the women, many of them feeling that there remained a distinctive role that deaconesses could fulfil.

'When our Order finished, a number of our Sisters were very sorry to lose the title sister and to be called Rev... because the deaconess is one who serves... every person is different and everyone has different gifts we fulfil a different role. I do feel that the roles of men and women are complementary, each have their part to play.'<sup>4</sup>

However, after much heart searching, the Deaconess Conference in November 1974 took the difficult decision to agree to the transfer. On 23 January 1975 the Deaconess Council met and issued the following statement:

*'Believing that the function of the Deaconesses has, under God, become that of a Minister, agree... to the transfers of the Deaconesses to the ministerial list, and the dissolution of the Deaconess Order.'*<sup>5</sup>

Some deaconesses chose that moment to retire, others moved onto the accredited list, but took some time to adjust to the new status that they had.

<sup>4</sup> Sister Winifred Waller interview

<sup>5</sup> Deaconess Committee minutes, 23 January 1975.



Group at the Baptist Assembly 27 April 1976  
which included a thanksgiving service for the Deaconess Order

Sister Winifred Willmott conducts a cradle roll service



The Baptist Union had been on a long journey and it seems that the existence of the Deaconess Order had been used as a way of avoiding the difficult task of commending women in ministry to the denomination and that the women had been allowed to do the work of ministry without the recognition.

On 26 June 1975, 80 deaconesses were transferred to accredited list. There was a thanksgiving service at the next Baptist Assembly. It was recommended that all deaconesses had some kind of service to mark the change of status.

At the 1977 Assembly Ernest Payne reflected that the Union had too often 'left to the women jobs that had daunted us men' and that although the Baptist Union should be proud of the Deaconess Order:

*their pride must be touched with a bit of shame because so many of the stories have behind them a great deal of heroism and heartache... quite frankly we have not as a denomination given them adequate support or recognition.*<sup>6</sup>

When is a minister not a minister?... when they are a Deaconess<sup>7</sup>

**Julie Aylward** is a Baptist minister currently serving as a prison chaplain.



*Research on the Deaconess Order was done as part of sabbatical studies and is ongoing. She writes: I am indebted to **The Angus Library** for access to their archive and especially to Nicola Moore's paper: Sister of the People The Order of Baptist Deaconesses 1890-1975. This is inevitably just a glimpse of the amazing story of the work of Deaconesses in our denomination serving the gospel in the most inhospitable places for little pay or recognition.*

<sup>6</sup> Cassette tape April 1977 'Sisters of the People'.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Jarman in undated leaflet found in Deaconess archive in Angus Library Oxford



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Baptist Union President Dianne Tidball greets Fully Accredited Ministers at the Baptist Assembly 2017



## A reflection on women in ministry today

**The numbers of women in accredited ministry are growing, though there are many who never set out to explore God's calling of them. By Siân Murray Williams**

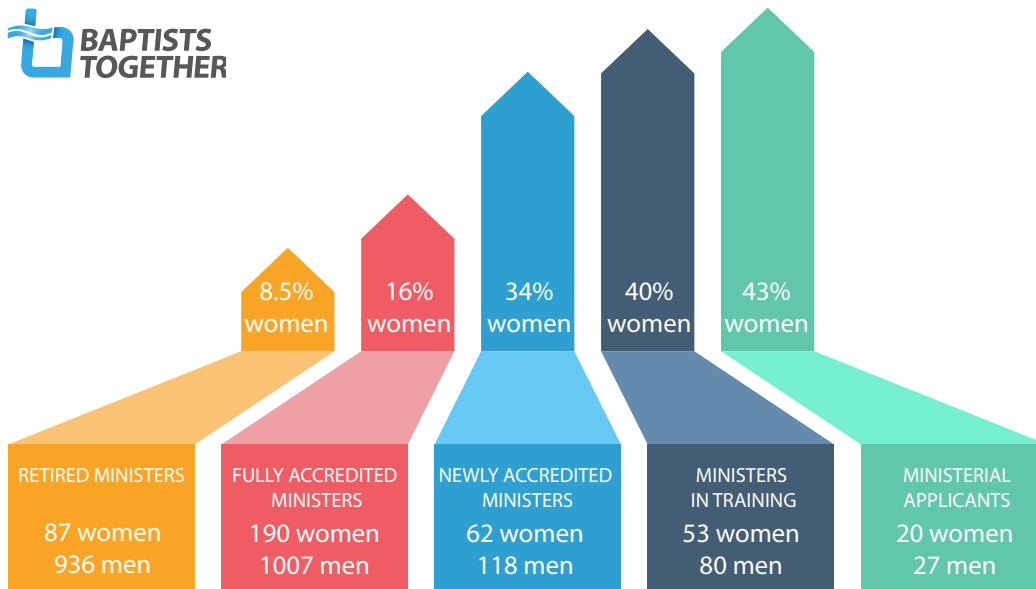
When googling images for a PowerPoint presentation on 'Baptist Women in Ministry' some years ago, I was a little startled to see the first image that popped up was a poster for the film 'Attack of the 50ft Woman'. It was an image that would doubtless have empowered some and terrified others. It made me smile.

My own journey in ministry has been relatively straightforward. I am grateful to have grown up in churches who affirmed the ministry of women. In my teens I had that first tentative conversation with my minister about an embryonic sense of call to ministry. I was part of the most wonderful and creative youth group who regularly led services in church and at two local nursing homes. These early experiences were utterly formational for me. We were part of the pre-Spring-Harvest-early-Greenbelt generation. Following three years working in administration at the Baptist World Alliance in Washington DC, I came back to the UK and joined the staff of BMS World Mission in both promotion and personnel work. That season eventually led to the deep sense of God's call to theological education and ministerial formation, culminating in three very happy years at Regent's Park College. A pastorate with the courageous community of *Littlemore Baptist Church*, Oxford, led to nine rich and stimulating years on staff at *Bristol Baptist College*. Different ministries. Different locations. Different gifts called for and generously given. But the bottom line

was this - I knew God's call to it all. It was that simple. This sense in my heart and, thankfully, affirmed by the wider community of the church, was that this was of God's making, and obedience to that was part of my discipleship, my following of Jesus.

At no point did anyone tell me that I couldn't do this. They might have thought it, but no-one said anything to me. I'm aware of the grace of that now. I had to be honest about my sense of call but I never had to defend my experience of it. I had to be responsive to ways of working out my calling but not in a hostile environment where the deepest thing in my heart was discounted on cultural or theological grounds. I was held in a wider community of Baptist work and witness which gave me the 'spacious place' to explore and respond, to struggle and grow, to fully inhabit my baptised life.

And I am grateful that I, along with more than 330 other women (and many others who have gone before us), have found in our Baptist Union a place within which to exercise accredited ministry. The days when it was possible to count the number of women in accredited ministry on the fingers of one hand are long gone. Over the years since Edith Gates became the pastor of Little Tew and Cleveley in 1918, the number of women applying for and exercising accredited ministry has steadily, if painfully slowly, grown.



So to the number crunching. As of October 2018, there are 1,023 retired Ministers of our Union of which 87 (8.5%) are women. There are 1,197 fully accredited active Ministers of which 190 (16%) are women. There are 180 Newly Accredited Ministers of whom 62 (34%) are women. Ministers in Training number 133 of whom 53 (40%) are women, and there are 47 Ministerial applicants, of whom 20 (43%) are women.

This trajectory lags behind but resembles that of sister denominations. In 2017, 29% of Church of England clergy were women, and at the moment just over half of the ordinands in training are women. Two years ago, the Methodist Church had 1,812 Ministers of whom 667 (37%) were women. Today, there are 1,632 Ministers, of whom 681 (42%) are women. The United Reformed Church currently has 1,383 Ministers, of which 431 (31%) are women, but this percentage increases to 61% of their Newly Accredited Ministers and 56% of their Ministers in Training.

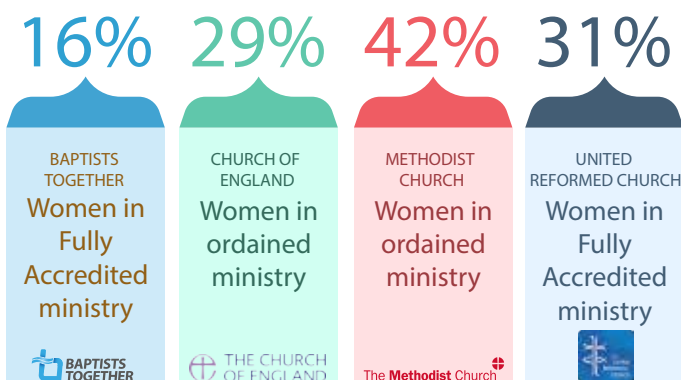
While the numbers of women in accredited ministry are growing, there are many who never set out to explore God's calling of them. The reasons are varied – church communities that continue not to affirm the ministry of women citing Biblical interpretation; cultural 'norms' where the called woman cannot respond healthily to God's call because the context for her discipleship discounts it; the prevalence of 'complementarian theology' in many churches which pre-shape the service of women to help men to exercise theirs. These contexts tend to welcome the service of women in what's perceived as the

'soft' stuff - relational, pastoral, caring - while the called men get the 'tough' stuff - leadership, preaching, vision setting. That division, of course, reveals a complete lack of understanding as to the 'tough' nature of excellent pastoral care, and the need of first-rate inter-personal skills in enabling church communities to respond to God's leading in ministry and mission.

Being a flourishing people of God demands a renewed commitment to healthy relating. The urgent task of ministry and mission lies before us in a rapidly fragmenting world. We need to work out the God-given calling of the whole people of God in generous, faithful and transforming ways. So let's model functioning healthy ministry in a world well acquainted with fractured, power-based, oppressive relationships. Let's move to a place where a single-sex diaconate or eldership is unthinkable; a single-sex regional ministry team is anathema; where colleges, who have been at the forefront of encouraging women in ministry, might appoint a woman Principal (recognising Northern Baptist College's pioneering co-Principals model); where women feel free and welcomed to be considered as ministers of large, multi-staffed, well-resourced churches along with the small or struggling or pioneering.

A sea change in the releasing of more women into accredited ministry will have implications for church discernment processes, regional ministerial recognition committees, Union, Association and College Trustee Boards. But the time has surely come. We won't see an army of 50ft women. Just faithful ones, called, gifted and ready.

With grateful thanks to sister agencies and the Specialist Ministries Team for the figures.



**Siân Murray Williams** is the moderator of the Ministerial Recognition Committee



*Siân is a Baptist Minister now living in Canterbury, Kent, with husband Stuart and mother Betty, for whom she is a full time carer. Formerly Co-ordinator of Ministerial Formation at Bristol Baptist College where she taught for nine years until 2015, Siân is now a spiritual director, mentor and retreat facilitator.*





## Marking the centenary

**Mary Taylor reports on last year's conference for Baptist women in and exploring ministry, and the statement which emerged**

100 years provides a sharp focus. 100 years since the first women were recognised as Baptist ministers in the modern meaning of that title. 100 years since the training, which had long been offered to men by colleges such as Bristol and Rawdon, was opened up to 19-year-old Violet Hedger from Hornsey Rise.

It turned out to be good timing that the Baptists Together Gender Justice Hub was seeking a fresh identity after all the upheavals of the Baptist Futures process. There have been a number of active and pioneering groups who have advocated for the full inclusion of women in Baptist life and it is important to honour their major contribution. The latest group was relaunched just in time to celebrate these significant centenaries.

### A conference – a crazy idea?

Working alongside the Black and Minority Ethnic Women Ministers' Network, we came up with an idea for a joint conference; something that would bring Baptist women together from across as wide a spectrum as possible. It felt a bit of a crazy idea. Previous gatherings of Baptist women had perhaps fallen to institutional inertia and it was a genuine concern that 'nobody would want to come'. We formed a small taskforce, Gale Richards, Sharon Prior and me, and began to plan, book, advertise – and pray.



*Celebrating, surviving and thriving* – our title for the conference - summed up its purpose.

**Celebrating** the centenaries of those early pioneer women was to be a key aspect. When we met at the conference in June, their stories were told and there was a genuine sense of gratitude and admiration for Violet Hedger, Edith Gates and Maria Living-Taylor, the first three women recognised and ordained as Baptist ministers. We also watched a moving video of Margaret Jarman, just days before her death on Easter Sunday 2018, which increased the powerful sense of standing on the shoulders of giants.

**Surviving** as women in ministry, surviving overt and covert opposition to our calling, surviving sometimes negative experiences through ministerial recognition, training and settlement, surviving by walking together to strengthen one another. One of the highlights of our time was in the stories which we shared, from the front and in groups, which were accompanied by both laughter and tears of recognition. Some of these stories – from Catriona Gorton, Gale Richards, Trisha Miller Manarin and Dion-Marie White, can be found later in this magazine.

And then **thriving**. Pat Took's reflections from scripture were aptly encouraging, challenging and comforting. The negative stories and experiences were to move us forward to envision a new future. In the words of Claire Nicholls, reporting back for *The Baptist Times*, 'As we explored what we might say to our Baptist family, who we love and who frustrate us, who we embrace



and want to step up and serve, one thing that stuck out clearly was our stories. Listen to our stories... Stories of God's Kingdom growing and thriving as he empowers women to be who they are made and called to be... Listen to our stories – yes apologise if you need to... but then choose to change – the systems, the structures, the processes, the talk, the traditions, the culture.'

**Our statement**

Over the course of the conference our discussions led us to bring a corporate statement to our Baptist family on how together we might thrive. It was genuinely positive and forward looking. Violet Hedger would reflect that all too often Paul won over Joel, and that the Pentecostal prophecy was not taken sufficiently seriously. So our statement begins:

*'...and your daughters shall prophesy'*

June 2018

**From the participants of Celebrating, Surviving and Thriving: a conference for Baptist women in ministry. In celebration of the centenary of the recognition of women to be Baptist ministers, we commit ourselves into our shared life and take courage to step forward in living out our call...'**<sup>1</sup>

Our statement came through a genuinely Baptist discernment of what the Spirit was saying to us as we gathered. How can we come to a place where, as a Baptist family, the Holy Spirit is free to release to us all the giftedness of God, not limited by being Jewish or Gentile, male or female, slave or free? Well here are our suggestions.

***First came the personal commitment of each one who was at the conference, to step up and go where God calls.***

And for the Baptist family to continue to celebrate and support that calling with a sense of urgency and justice. We identified the utmost importance of role models, those who go before us to show the way and the need to resource focussed-mentoring, identifying for every

<sup>1</sup> The full text of the statement is available at: [www.baptist.org.uk/womenministrystatement](http://www.baptist.org.uk/womenministrystatement)

called woman someone to be alongside, to coach, to mentor, to spiritually accompany as is needful.

And then to ***intentionally open up places to experience, to try out, to learn and grow in ministry.*** Placements, internships, apprenticeships – call them what you will – working with both women and men who have both experience and the capacity to train and nurture those who come next. Not just Paul and Timothy but Paul and Teresa or Polly and Ted! And to extend that intentional, purposeful and ambitious determination to change the status quo into our structures and programmes.

Why was settlement singled out? Well it is in the processes of call and settlement where deeply ingrained and often unconscious bias against women in ministry are to be found in our denomination. The stories and the statistics need to be reflected on and action decided.

**'A strong sense of shared calling'**

Through powerful worship, prayer, conversations, stories and craft, in just 24 hours, a strong sense of shared calling and a network of support and encouragement was born. The conference was a miraculous, joyous time of being together with much hope of fruit to come. Already an active, helpful and pleasant-mannered(!) Facebook group initiated by one participant is a source of prayer and practical help as well as theological reflection. A number of women have initiated conversations with their Associations about the kind of intentional support that would make a significant difference to women in their area. We hope for a conversation with Team Leaders and the Baptist Steering Group to bring the statement to a place where influence resides.

We will continue to celebrate God's indiscriminate call on all our lives. We will wear violet!

**Mary Taylor** is a Regional Minister in the **Yorkshire Baptist Association**, convenor of our Gender Justice Hub and was previously Minister of **Wakefield Baptist Church**.



Photo: Steff Wright



Delegates at the Celebrating, Surviving, Thriving conference - June 2018

Photo: Steff Wright





## Arguing against arguments for women in ministry

**Baptists have argued for women in ministry with the same complementarian theories used to argue against women in ministry. This limits our conclusions, writes Beth Allison-Glenney – and is why we need to question underlying presumptions to truly fulfil our call to be the body of Christ**

I've spent a long time trying to understand how and if women are different to men. The conversation came up frequently as I discerned a call to ministry through my teens and into university.

There seemed to be two answers: the first said I couldn't be a minister because I was a woman, and would go something like this: "men and women are equal but different, and so they have different roles to play in church". This is a position that assumes a complementarity between men and women, where men have a headship or hierarchical role. Men have the

leadership responsibilities in the different spheres of private and public life: they are the head of the family unit, church life, and even – depending on your theology - the appropriate leaders in civic life.

The counter argument was a clever twist on the first: "men and women are different but equal, and so we need them both to play their different roles in church leadership". It's a comment I used a lot: "we need women, precisely because they bring different styles of leadership and different experiences of pastoral care".

Both of these arguments share the same premise: there is a complementarity between men and women. However they come to different conclusions about whether this prohibits or necessitates women being in ministry.

Our key argument for Baptist women in ministry is this second position. For my master's dissertation I examined every text between 1980 and 2015 written, commissioned or published by the Baptist Union of Great Britain, or documents written by British Baptist authors that were arguing for women in ministry.

I discovered this argument for complementarity is based on our understanding of creation, arguing that men and women were created to be complementary partners, and therefore men need women in order to do their work in the world and would be (and have been) diminished without them. Integral to our arguments for women in ministry is that men and women reflect the image of God together, rather than seeing it as they each reflect God. We believe that as God created humanity in his image, 'male and female', our biology contains a God-given way of being. This means human gender therefore reflects something of the divine, so it is an eternal reality and it isn't limited to being something constructed by our society.

This leads to the idea that the distinctions between men and women, even though they can be hard to pin down and are not hierarchical, ought to be maintained in the church. The next key argument for women in ministry found in our Union texts comes from this idea: we need to reclaim femininity as something positive. Feminine styles of ministry are needed because a negative male, patriarchal structure has been seen to dominate in church and Union life, and women have been forced to conform their ministry into male styles of leadership. What is meant by these styles varies author by author, but there seems to be a common idea about femininity being creative, relational and non-competitive. For some authors this femininity is a stylistic thing, for others even spiritual gifts themselves are feminine, but the agreed outcome is that enabling women to partner in ministry with men leads to a change in culture that rescues us from sinful structures. The goal is therefore to bring women who minister femininely in to partnership with men, thus reflecting a full image of God, which is how we were created. Without women, and it is implied, women who minister 'like women', the church will only reflect half of the image of God. Significantly, as the goal is to re-establish this divinely-ordained complementary partnership, the hope expressed in these documents is that these men and women would minister together. Some arguments even explicitly suggested husband and wife partnerships are the goal.

Beth Allison-Glenny welcomes delegates to Assembly 2016



This means our case for women in ministry is still rooted in the 'equal but different' language. Arguing that women bring complementary gifts and styles to that of men continues to define women's ministry in relation to men. If women are constantly referred to as bringing collaboration for the good of a male-dominated church, then this begs the question of whether women being collaborative has suited a patriarchal society and allowed men to stay in their positions of leadership?

We should be cautious that what is understood as masculine and feminine has been defined by that same patriarchal culture. Thus women are critiqued for ministering in ways that are not feminine, rather than the categories of what male and female leadership might look like being reconsidered. Not all women are pastoral and collaborative, and many men are. This stereotyping also does not allow for the vast variety between women's styles (and indeed male styles), as they get reduced in this way. This is important because it can mean that men and women who are in power (often white, well educated, middle



Photo: Steff Wright

class, able bodied) can define the categories of masculinity and femininity for people for whom their ethnicity, for example, is more fundamental to their experience of being embodied or discriminated against.

Furthermore, this argument for women in ministry suggests that women are created and ordained in order to help men, rather than being a good thing in themselves. If we argue as a Union that men and women are so fundamentally different in their ministerial styles and this is why we should ordain them, then this gives credence to the churches who do not wish to settle a woman because they feel they 'really need a man'.

Women should be in ministry simply because God calls them to be there, just as not all men are called to ministry. An understanding of women's ordination that argues that we need women for the styles they bring is to assume that God calls us based on the competencies we have. This is not how salvation or ordination works: God qualifies the called, not vice versa.

We have argued for women in ministry using the same theories people have argued against women in ministry, and this limits our conclusions. What we need to do is to reckon with the underlying presumption. Our theology of what we were created to be is always going to be marred by the Fall, so instead we should look to how we are re-created. As the church we are called to be the body of Christ, in which there is 'no male and female'. What happens if we start from there?

**Beth Allison-Glenny** is the Public Issues Enabler in our *Faith and Society Team*. She previously pastored *John Bunyan Baptist Church* in Oxford.



# My story...

Over the following pages we hear from a variety of Baptist women in ministry



**“Lynn, I have something for you to do for me”**

## Lynn Green – General Secretary of our Baptist Union

I was awoken in the middle of the night and my bedroom was flooded with light. Out of the light I heard God’s call, “Lynn, I have something for you to do for me”. I was 14 years old and I certainly had no idea what this meant. My first thought was, “What can a woman do for God?” The only option I was aware of was to be a nun – which definitely did not seem like an attractive option. Overwhelmed and with no clue what this could mean, I parked this experience and tried to go back to sleep. But I would say in this encounter with the Living God, I undoubtedly became a follower of Jesus. Later, in my Gideon New Testament, I read the call to be baptised, so I rang my local Baptist church and the rest, as they say, is history.

In those early years I continued to carry that sense of call, but neither I nor those around me knew what to do with it. People were loving and supportive, but I just didn’t fit into their existing frameworks of reality. Various suggestions were offered; maybe a calling to be a minister’s wife, maybe a calling to be a theologian, and by the time I was leaving university I had come to the (convenient) conclusion that maybe this was a calling for later in life. I left university, found a job, got married and settled down.

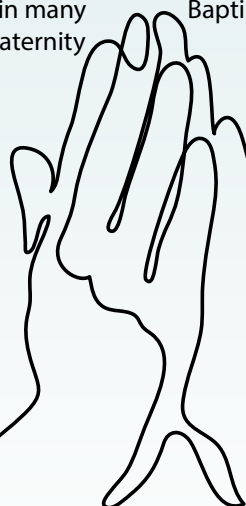
It was attending Spring Harvest in my early 20s that put calling back onto the agenda. For the first time I told my story to someone – an unknown Anglican deaconess – who was the first person to put into words that I might be called to ministry. That significant moment gained momentum through the encouragement of our new minister, Paul Hills, and by the time I was 26 I had taken voluntary redundancy and started training at **Regent’s Park College**.

At the end of training I was appointed as the part-time associate minister at **Wokingham Baptist Church** which ended up being a 16-year calling. At Wokingham I was blessed in many ways; supported to take maternity

leave twice and to minister in all sorts of patterns as our family grew up. They then had the vision and courage to appoint me as Team Leader for the last 10 years of my ministry there.

The last year or so of local church leadership was spiritually challenging. I felt completely stuck and dead and in a spiritual winter time. I could no longer see any way ahead and even wondered if I had mistaken God’s call. In that winter season I relinquished everything. God’s word to me at that time was to rest, wait and deepen my trust; “at the right time”, he said, “the sap will rise.” And out of that ending, at the right time, did indeed come a new beginning. Firstly, into Regional Ministry and then, after only a few years, I found myself as General Secretary of our Union. One thing I am sure of is that only the Lord could have brought me to this place!

Reflecting back on my journey, I am very grateful to say that it has been characterised by loving support, imaginative thinking outside the box and a willingness to try new things. I hope that I model such creative possibilities and pray too that this will be everyone’s experience right across Baptists Together.





**‘Women experience God’s call with the same urgency and insistence as men’**

**Pat Took, former Team Leader of the London Baptist Association, Baptist Union President 2011-12**

It was the Mennonites who opened my eyes to the reality of my situation. All those attending the conference were lined up facing a lawn. We were then invited to take a step forward if we:

- » were born in this country
- » were over 35
- » were educated to post-graduate level
- » were married (and if this was our first marriage)
- » had children
- » owned our own house
- » took a more than size eight shoe
- » had a job which involved responsibility for other people...

As the exercise continued, I found myself out at the front with a couple of bishops and an archdeacon. I realised for the first time that although I have no interest in power and neither like nor understand power play, nevertheless I have considerable reserves of personal power which come not from merit but from circumstance. So when I have received an unequivocal call from God to serve, as church member, deacon, minister, General Superintendent, Team Leader, and finally as President, I have expected that my brothers and sisters would want to question and test that call, but not that they would question my humanity – my gender, race, age or education. I have assumed that I would be treated with respect, and generally I have been.

And when I have encountered the inevitable rubbish – have been patronised, ignored, or dismissed – when doors have not opened and invitations have not come – I have been confident to face down the irritation in the strength of all the kindness, encouragement and welcome I have received, all the extraordinary doors that have been opened to me and the generous cooperation of the men (and it has largely been men) that I have worked with. I have no cause for indignation on my own behalf – on the contrary, much cause for gratitude.

But I do have cause for indignation on behalf of those who, not standing on such a strong platform, have found obstacles put in their way, have experienced debilitating prejudice and hostility and have borne the brunt of the fight against injustice. Like other gatekeepers, both men and women, I have tried to offer encouragement to gifted women responding to a call, to open doors and seek opportunities for them. But it has also been necessary, and continues to be necessary, to challenge those who refuse to acknowledge the full humanity and the full in-Christness of women. Women experience God’s call with the same urgency and insistence as men. To deny that God has a right to issue such calls is surely *lèse majesté* (an affront to dignity). To refuse to acknowledge the true experience of women is loveless.

And until this is resolved, until the church acknowledges, celebrates and listens to both young men and old men who see visions and dream dreams, both sons and daughters, male and female servants who receive the Spirit and prophesy, God’s presence in the world will not find its true and full expression, and the church will go limping on one foot.



**‘No more Rev Mrs, just let me be Rev Jenny please’**

**Jenny Few was at the heart of discussions to make Union life more inclusive**

Within a month of my ordination, in 1996, I went to the Denominational Consultation, which was a great time of creative talking and dreaming about the future shape of our Baptist Union, when all things seemed possible. Amongst many strands of debate was a desire for all aspects of Union life to be more inclusive of women and other minorities. At the time there was a (poor) joke that the women members of Baptist Union Council could all fit into the ladies’ loo at The Hayes. A recommendation was made that Council seek to reform itself, but it soon became clear that would be neither easy nor welcome by all. I well remember my frustration as the debate went on!

But Council agreed to set up the Women’s Issues Working Group (WIWG), with me as its first Convenor (1997-2000). We were a group of lay and ordained women and men, reporting to Council via the Finance and General Purposes Executive. This, at the end of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, and working in parallel with the BU Task Group on Women and Violence, and also coinciding with the end of the BU Women’s Mission Network, gave us a huge agenda. Our brief was *‘to look at every aspect of the life of the Union, with a view to promoting the gifts and ministries of women’*. That is what we set out to do, by various means: we

called on every committee and group in the Union to become more inclusive; we read the council documents ahead of the meetings and then tabled questions; we challenged, we niggled, we persisted, we wrote papers, we made representations everywhere we could think of. I still have a box file full of minutes, papers, and letters written to *The Baptist Times*, the General Secretary, the Head of Ministry Department and others. Looking back, I'd forgotten how much of a battle it was. It was costly, and it was hard work! I hadn't realised it would feel like trying to turn round the tanker of accepted norms, theological intransigency and almost total cultural and linguistic maleness. Naively perhaps, I did not expect such strong resistance – it was far more confrontational than it need have been! Why did many men and some women feel threatened?

In time the WIWG became the Women's Justice Group, and the next big debate in Council was in 2010, with another significant report on Women in Leadership. Meanwhile there were more women in prominent roles, as college tutors and Co-Principal, and as Regional Ministers, and on Council, including as moderator. There are also more women in pastoral charge and in training at Baptist colleges. A major survey of Assembly also revealed a move towards more women as key speakers, and in other 'at the front' roles. Had things changed sufficiently by 2010 to pave the way for the first woman as General Secretary?

Now, from the 'green pastures' of retirement, I conclude that things might be better than in 1996; there is thankfully more awareness of all forms of exclusion and underrepresentation, but compared with other denominations, there still seems a long way to go both in numbers of women in leadership and in their acceptance as equals. I am saddened to read of the same struggles by women as 20 years ago. On the *UK Women in Baptist Ministry Facebook* page, the same questions are often asked, the same issues regarding settlement, status, title, dress, how to deal with male attitudes, the same tired worn-out theological arguments.

I stood down from WIWG (but not from Council) because I'd had enough of being defined as a woman minister; I just wanted to get on with doing the job of fulfilling my calling. If God was OK with that, I didn't see why anyone else should object, and if they did it was their problem, not mine. So no more *Rev Mrs*, just let me be *Rev Jenny* please. Let me be 'gloriously myself', with no apology for how I dress or what earrings I wear, or anything else which is totally irrelevant to the amazing reality of being called by God to be a Baptist minister.

*Jenny was minister of Attleborough Baptist Church, Nuneaton (1996-2005), and Robert Hall Memorial Baptist Church, Leicester (2005-2011)*



**'I have had wonderful opportunities to shatter stereotypes'**

**Gale Richards is Minister of Zion Baptist Church (ZBC) in Cambridge**

I took up my post as sole pastor at *Zion Baptist Church* (ZBC) in Cambridge, and assumed my role as an associate chaplain for Anglia Ruskin University, in September 2016. I am the first female minister and the first minister of colour that ZBC has called in its 181-year history. On arrival I was also the only minister of colour in any of the city centre churches of the traditional denominations.

At my induction service one of the deacons openly shared with those gathered that the congregation had set out on their search for a minister asking God to send them a young married man with children. She declared God clearly had other ideas because God sent them me – a single woman! It is to the church's credit that with the help of a very able female minister acting as their moderator, they were able to recognise and be willing to listen to the voice of God, and call me unanimously as their minister.

From the moment I read the profile of the church on the pastoral vacancy list I sensed ZBC was the church God was calling me to. That sense of call has been confirmed over and over again at every stage of the journey.

Since my arrival my mere presence has posed a challenge to people's limiting images of what a minister should be like. Time and time again



Illustration: one line man | shutterstock.com

I have been assumed to be 'the help' or 'an assistant' by people catching sight of me while visiting the church. I have had wonderful opportunities to shatter stereotypes as I have been given platforms to preach at ecumenical gatherings and speak at community events, and university welcome talks for new students.

In our city centre location we serve a diverse range of people, from those experiencing homelessness, to short and long-term new arrivals to the UK wanting to improve their English language skills, to university students, and regular local Cambridge people.

This diverse community we serve has so far proven to be fertile ground for me helping to identify and release gifting in others. I have no doubt that the insights and experiences I bring to the role of minister as a single Black woman in the UK aids me in helping others to re-imagine what might be possible for them, through the power of God, whatever their current starting point might be.

I came across an entry dated 20 March 1854 in ZBC church records where a church member was noted as questioning the suitability of the then minister of ZBC. The question stemmed from the minister having 'spent a long time with black people' having served for a while in Africa before taking up his role as minister at ZBC.

I am left wondering what they would have made of the prospect that by 2016 ZBC would have its first female minister and first minister of colour!



### 'Not having a role model is not an excuse to not being one'

#### **Gemma Dunning - a Baptist Minister based in Leytonstone, London and Movement Advocate for Frontier Youth Trust**

Undoubtedly, I was that annoying kid at secondary school. Always questioning the teacher's decisions, always campaigning or petitioning for something and always pushing for equity of opportunity. I knew I was called to lead change but growing up outside of the church I had no biblical framework for this, just a hunger for justice and a passion for all people thriving.

I took the longest route into ordained ministry partly because of the lack of role models. I met children's workers, youth workers and community workers who looked like me, who I shared

values and similarities with... but ordained ministers seemed to be very different from me. Or at least, I was very different from them. How could I also be a minister if I wasn't like any of the ministers I knew?

So I sought out a very wise woman, head of formation at the time for Bristol Baptist College. In a breakfast meeting I laid on the table all the things God and I had been up to and all of who I was, the showreel and the back stage. I tentatively said to her "I think I am a minister"; not I think I want to be, should be or could be. In a moment of courage, I was bold enough to say the experiences, contexts and opportunities I had already had meant that God was not starting me off on a new path; rather I was already on the path of living who God had called me to be.

The obstacle I faced was in others receiving this as a valid expression of ministry, as it looked so different to those already with seats at the table. And for the first time someone looked at me and saw the marks of ministry rather than the expression of church. I had to learn to be bilingual, to speak my story in a way that others could understand too and see beyond the external. I have a different lens, having grown up on a council estate, a hunger for justice, a pastoral heart and a smidge of creativity and I believe these are all gifts from God that equip and enable me to play my part in the body of Christ.

I recognise that if this was my experience, then somewhere behind me will always be a younger woman looking out for someone that looks like her. Not having a role model is not an excuse to not being one. I get excited when I see young women gaining a sense of their own unique voice and running their own pathways, ones that look a little different from the majority. My hope is to always be a minister who spots the outsider and cheerleads for them, reminding them that the way God has uniquely made them is not a curse, but rather a blessing and gift to the church. →

Gale Richards shares the Lord's Supper with Zion Baptist Church



Photo: Toby Peters





**“Don’t worry about what you’re not: what are you?”**

**Emma Nash is an accredited Evangelist. She is mission development minister for the Oasis Coffee House at Leigh Road Baptist Church, Essex**

Looking back, my call to be a minister started very early on in my faith journey. I became a Christian on an Alpha course in my early 20s, having no background of faith or churchgoing in my family. I became a deacon at 25 and then very soon began to feel, despite enjoying my full-time job as a secondary school teacher, that my heart was really in the (far too many) volunteering roles I had at church.

My passion was for people who

didn’t go to church – people like I had been, like my family still were – and I wasn’t convinced that pastoring a Baptist church was the best fit for me. I remember driving to see my regional minister to discuss my emerging sense of call, and thinking, “I’m not sure I’m called to be a pastor.” I heard a voice in my mind saying, “Don’t worry about what you’re not: what are you?” and the answer that came forth straight away was: “I’m an evangelist.” That is one of the few times in my life that God has spoken to me very clearly, and I love the fact that he spoke by asking a question. He knew that I already knew the answer.

The biggest obstacle for me has been understanding my specific call to evangelism and working out how I might live out that calling as a minister. I was told that it might be wiser to seek ministerial recognition as a pastor rather than an evangelist, as that would give me more options when it came to settlement. Unfortunately, telling me something is difficult has always been the worst possible way to put me off from doing it. During my third year at *Regent’s Park College* my year group would all wait for the monthly email from the National Settlement Team telling us which churches had been sent our ministerial profiles. I will never forget the month my email didn’t come, and when I phoned up to enquire, I was told that there were no posts for which I was suitable on the list. “Is it because I’m a woman?” I asked my regional



Photo: David Elcock

minister very directly. “No, it’s because you’re an evangelist” he gently and kindly explained.

Eventually I was called to *Leigh Road Baptist Church* in Leigh on Sea to bring fresh vision to their church coffee house (a role I found out about on Facebook!). In my five years at Leigh Road I have lived out my calling by asking awkward questions, by recognising what God was already doing through the faithful people serving coffee to the community, and by looking for opportunities to share Jesus through words and actions. We proclaim the gospel by serving free meals to homeless people, by building community, and by talking about Jesus in our ‘Life and Soul’ course.

As a woman in ministry you will experience marginalisation, and as an evangelist you may struggle to find your place. But the hard road of figuring all this out will teach you more than you would have learned from an easy life.



Photo: David Elcock





### 'Honoured to carry on the pioneering work begun a century ago'

#### Catriona Gorton is Minister of Hillhead Baptist Church in Glasgow, and first woman in pastoral charge of a Baptist church in Scotland

*'I still remember meeting you and thinking, 'Wow, there's the woman who is the sole minister', almost like looking at an exhibit, a 'thing' of wonder.'* So wrote a minister friend responding to my post on social media marking the anniversary of my induction as minister of **Hillhead Baptist Church**, Glasgow, on 3 October 2009 – the day I became the first ordained woman accredited by the Baptist Union of Scotland in sole pastoral charge of a church.

A few months after that, at the (English) Baptist Assembly, I attended a seminar where someone shared that the **Baptist Union of Scotland** had recently appointed their first ordained woman in sole charge, and her name was Catriona Gorton. It was a strange feeling to have become an official part of Baptist history. One of the facilitators of the seminar, who knew me, handed me a microphone and asked for a comment. I have forgotten most of what I said, but I do recall saying that I stood on the shoulders of giants – Edith Gates and Violet Hedger. While my role is seen as pioneering, it is as nothing compared to the courageous tenacity of these women a century ago.

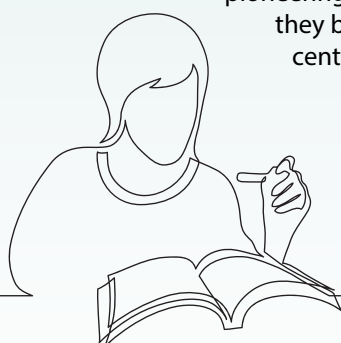
I have a vivid memory of attending my first ministers' conference in Scotland, where there was only one other woman, and at least a hundred men. Standing in the dining room, I looked around, saw no-one I knew, and felt very alone. In that moment was born the mantra that sustains me in such moments: 'Edith Gates, Violet Hedger... Edith Gates, Violet Hedger...'

Over the last nine years, I have been supported and encouraged by both the BUS and the Scottish Baptist College, and I count among my colleagues some amazingly supportive and encouraging men ministers. Even so, it can sometimes be a lonely place to be – we have yet to see the appointment of another woman in sole charge or as a senior minister, and many churches remain closed to the possibility of women ministers. Several talented women exercise only part-time and/or non-stipendiary roles, which makes me both sad and, at times, angry.

Despite the challenges, there is much to celebrate. I have had the privilege of mentoring two amazing women through their years before accreditation. I also serve on the Board of Ministry (think Ministerial Recognition Committee) where I have interviewed women of all ages exploring their calls to ordained ministry. Granted, they are either chaplains (once the only feasible route for women here) or associates in larger churches, but they inspire me with their grace, courage and humility.

Currently, around a dozen women exercise accredited ministry within the BUS, which is many more than when I arrived in 2009.

Recently another minister friend commented to me that, *'one day women in Scotland will recite a mantra that runs 'Edith Gates, Violet Hedger, Catriona Gorton'* – I still find it curious that I am viewed alongside these women, but I am honoured and proud to carry on the pioneering work they began a century ago.



### 'God chose me'

#### Siaan-Liane Mathurin, New Park Road Baptist Church

The alarm echoes into my dreams reminding me that it's 6am and the weekly hustle 'n' bustle continues. It's Thursday. I roll over in my bed, hubby Collins just leaving out for work, he's a bus driver working shifts. I spend some devotional time with God in prayer, take a breath and then I am on... Thursdays are full on.

Isaiah my 10 year old has to be ready to go by 7am when the cab arrives; Elijah, 15, takes the longest time to get ready, not helped by him constantly texting; Malachi, 16, is taking ages in the shower and my youngest Zion-Ezekiel, 5 is repeating this week's favourite gospel song... *'When Jesus says Yes... nobody can say No'*. Hectic is an understatement.

Eventually I leave home at 8am, then it's a 12-mile drive to work, dropping off the boys en-route, and arriving at church for morning prayers at 9:15am. I meet with the church secretary to chat over church business and any outstanding issues. Thursday afternoons I often do pastoral visits - I so love this part of what I do. It is such a privilege for someone to share their story with you and to be there to listen and pray.

I rush to do school pick up then over to my daughter's (praise God he gave me a church that is in the same road as my daughter, Kristina, who lives with my granddaughters Imani and Taylor-Mae). Pick up the girls then it's off to

McDonalds to eat, before dropping them all off by Kristina and then running over to church for the 7:30pm deacons' meeting. It finishes just after 10pm; I scoop up the boys and drive home.

Get in at 10:45; a long day. Don't get me wrong, I am not complaining. I love my life as I am finally living out the purpose that God always had for me. I am following the call into ministry that God laid on my heart many years before I recognised or understood what it was. I never desired, wanted or intended to be a pastor. My life story before Christ was extremely colourful. I had countless difficult times before I heard the call of God the Holy Spirit, was saved and transformed. My testimony is not pretty: rejected, affected, used, abused, damaged and confused, addicted, afflicted, searching for love and acceptance in all the wrong places, empty and alone inside, broken into so many pieces. It was not till I finally realised that void inside me, that void we are all born with is a God-shaped void; and to be truly complete we need to ask for forgiveness, submit to God and allow him to fill that void. I had spent many years trying to fill it with a whole manner of things. It was only when I let go of all I was and let God in that I became whole.

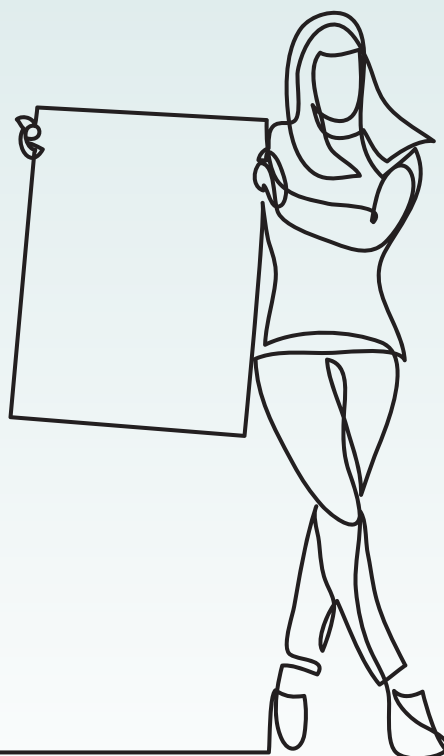
I had resisted God's calling for the longest time, tried negotiating with God about his timing, had a catalogue of excuses. I am a black woman with a small baby, a husband, seven children, grandchildren, limited finances - like he didn't know. But God just wasn't listening. When I had run out of excuses I submitted to God, promising myself that I would always be authentic and committing to always being obedient to him.

I spent the next three years of my life having my call tested while being transformed at *Spurgeon's College* where I gained, with support, deep theological, biblical, pastoral knowledge and understanding;

unlimited access to unimaginable spiritual direction and discipleship and opportunities to journey alongside Holy Spirit-filled men and women tutors and fellow students. At Spurgeon's my gender and my race were completely irrelevant to my calling, though I am grateful that they equipped me to understand that not all the world would share their biblical understanding.

The Lord has brought me such a long way through extreme difficulties, consuming valleys and mountains that were so high at moments I wondered how I was going to make it, but God just kept breaking down all the barriers. My journey has been arduous but even in those desperate, alone moments God has never left or let go of me.

I questioned my calling in those early days; questioned whether I, whose life before Christ was more akin with the woman at the well, was worthy to be a pastor/minister - a servant-leader-shepherd. God showed me; his calling on my life had nothing to do with being worthy or righteous because we are all sinners and none of us is worthy, none of us are born righteous - none of us can stand in our own right. It's about God's infinite grace and mercy and being committed to being in relationship with God and being obedient in all matters regardless. God has called me and set me apart so that's all that matters - I rest on that.



The hardest thing for me was that I met Christians who disputed that calling, solely based on my gender; I met Christian leaders who felt that because God had gifted me with children, some who had additional needs, that disqualified me; that because I choose to wear my hair in dreadlocks that made my calling 'questionable'. I was told that it was ridiculous to believe that I could be a pastor of a church and a mother to seven children.

I would reply that God called me, so who am I to question? (And isn't seven supposed to be the biblical number of completion?) My identity is firmly in Christ. I refuse to allow other people's perceptions to define me. The hurdles were many and seemed relentless at times from unchurched, from Christian brothers and sisters, from Christian elders and leaders, from friends and family.

Even with the church which I love so much, the process was at times painful: after they had agreed to have a minister-in-training, they had to have a subsequent meeting to determine whether they would accept a woman minister-in-training. When they wanted a permanent minister they had to vote to accept a female minister; and even then, after having been there two years, there was an open interview process where I was considered against others. The interview itself was a two-hour interrogation. I drove home in tears, wounded but not broken. God was not sleeping and had a plan, but it was a painful process.

I think many people were surprised when the church called me. The first woman, and a black woman. I was also the first minister in the history of the church to be given a fixed term year contract (offering a get-out clause - just in case). God is able; he can and he does and he will equip and enable me to be all he wants me to be. I love being a pastor serving God and serving God's people. I have so much joy and a deeper level of fulfilment than I have ever experienced.



### 'Be secure in your own identity in Christ'

#### Lisa Holmes, Minister of Skipton Baptist Church 1994-present (lead minister since 2013)

Sometimes it's only in looking back that you see God's hand has been on your life the whole time. From a very early age I loved church – I used to plead with my mum to take me to the evening service; listened to the inspired preaching of the Revd Stanley Voke, and enjoyed singing – my favourite being number 426 from the Green Baptist Book 'And Can it be'. Fast forward a few years and my passions are inspired, applied bible teaching and worship with a dose of transforming mission thrown in for good measure.

I was just approaching my 18th birthday when I sensed that God had something particular lined up for me – I was almost involved in a very serious accident on my bike and began to ask "Why has God kept me alive?" I changed direction and decided to study theology at London School of Theology (then LBC); subsequent to that I worked for four years for UCCF developing skills in teaching, training, leadership and pastoral care among students. Towards the end of this period I felt a particular call to consider Baptist ministry. I began to follow the process with my church and the *London Baptist Association* culminating in training at *Spurgeon's* and a MTh from Heythrop College, London.

The end of this period was one of the most painful times in terms of my gender. I was well into the process of being called to a London church when a bunch of people seriously questioned women in leadership. This torpedoed the process completely. The church leadership were brilliant in a very damaging time and only a few years later sent their first woman for training, but that was not to be my home!

After a tough few months I was called as Associate Minister to work with John Lewis in Skipton, N Yorkshire. It was two great years learning and growing. John treated me as an equal and was always encouraging and affirming with a clear view of God's future for me.

After he left I had a year on my own and then another senior colleague, Rob Harris, for the next 16 years. Time to move on maybe?? It seemed that God had other ideas and after due process the church called me to be the Lead Minister in 2013.

This last five years have been a really fruitful time for the church, building on what has gone before – our team has grown and been a huge encouragement, we are increasingly engaged in our community and have seen people coming to Christ. I have appreciated being able to serve the church beyond Skipton on the leadership of Spring Harvest, speaking at church weekends and regional events.

The key lessons I guess have been to be secure in your own identity in Christ – to be the best version of you that is possible, not defined by others' expectations. Timing of how things work out for women is often a little different (slower) than for men for a number of reasons (I had two children and of course that impacts!)

The other thing would be to deal with disappointments or prejudice before God and with grace. Try not to carry baggage with you as it will impact the effectiveness of the ministry God has called you to. →





**'I was encouraged to recognise that, as a woman, I probably wouldn't preach like a man... and nor should I try'**

**Barbara Carpenter is Chaplain at Lee Abbey, Devon, and was formerly Minister of Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church, Somerset**

Growing up in an Anglican Church the thought of being a minister never entered my head. I vividly remember though, in my teens, encountering a woman URC Minister and being deeply impacted both by what she said and by who she was. About this time, I began to attend a Baptist church, and very soon found my spiritual home there. I got married, had children and became involved

in church leadership. I began to be involved with the ministry of retreats and spiritual direction. I first heard the call to ministry while I was on an individually-guided retreat. I was convinced this was a ridiculous idea, but my retreat guide encouraged me to hear and take this call seriously, exploring it further on my return home. This I did. My minister laughed when I told him, so I gladly put the idea away.

However... God thought differently... the call grew stronger and some years later I had to face up to and properly explore it.

I think the biggest obstacle I had to overcome was my own sense of inadequacy and unworthiness – who was I to even think that I could do this? (I still climb over this obstacle on a fairly regular basis!) Other people put obstacles in my way... doubts about my abilities, concerns for the welfare of my children, the fact that I was a woman, being just a few. However, as I faced these each time God affirmed, confirmed and strengthened his call on my life. I have learned God is faithful, and that the saying 'where God calls, he equips' is true – I am called to trust and follow, not have it all neatly sewn up.

I would want to encourage younger women to have faith in the God who has faith in them. I think also I would want to encourage them to be themselves; one of the things I was most 'hung up' on when I was exploring my call was my ability to preach – I couldn't do it like the person I most regularly heard (a man). I was encouraged by a wise, experienced woman minister to find my own voice, to recognise that, as a woman, I probably wouldn't preach like a man, or even another woman, and nor should I try. God has given me a unique way to tell and share his story and build his church, and that's what I need to do, and is much of what, to my amazement, I do day by day here in my ministry at Lee Abbey.

I have few words to describe what I feel about one of my daughters being the student pastor of a church. I'm not sure she's following in my footsteps exactly, as I recognised her call before I knew my own, but it is such a joy to

see her responding to that call and to see how God is using her mightily in the work of his kingdom.



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**‘While I am following in my mother’s footsteps, I know I am doing what God created me to do’**

**Abby Lintern is Minister in Training at Crewkerne Baptist Church, Somerset (and Barbara’s daughter)**

‘Following in your Mother’s footsteps’ is often what is said to me when people find out I’m training for Baptist ministry... But that’s not quite how it is.

I wouldn’t completely class myself as a ‘Pastor’s Kid’ as I was married with a baby on the way when mum moved away to start her training. So being older I observed from a safe distance the highs and lows of starting out and continuing ministry after college.

When people ask ‘when did you know you were called?’ I find it really hard to answer. As a toddler I would sit my sister down and preach to her! The often quoted line for those times of parents sharing embarrassing stories was ‘Go home and tell your Mother that Jesus loves her!’ But I’m not sure that was when I knew I was called!

Well the real time I began to know I was called was back in 2009, when I began working for the Methodist Circuit as a Children and Families Worker. It was the first time I had really stepped out in Church life from under the shadow of my parents’ wings. In that time of standing on my own two feet, with God holding me so very tight, I knew I had begun to find what I was created to do.

The highs and lows of church life took their toll on me as I returned to worshipping in Yeovil, but the niggles of God kept pushing me to listen to his call, until, in 2016, I got to the point when I could deny it no longer and took the first step. As mum said in her story too, I was still feeling completely inadequate, so I tested the water by just signing up for my degree. Well it became quickly apparent on starting at **Bristol Baptist College** that it was where God wanted me to be, but I needed to be on the formation training as well as the degree. And I am living proof that if God calls you to ministry, he will equip you even when it comes to writing Doctrine essays!

So while, yes, I am following in my mother’s footsteps, I know I am doing what God created me to do. He’s led me to a wonderful church in Crewkerne with a chaplaincy role alongside it in the local secondary school, both of which will challenge and bless me I know.

My advice to other women (or men!) thinking about their call to ministry would be, don’t be afraid to push the doors, to trust that sense of peace and in fact that sense of unease, because when you find that thing that God has created you to be, there really is no better feeling. Even when life is complete madness of meetings, essays, lectures, children’s school uniform washing, services, God is faithful and there through it all.



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Photo: Next Leadership

**'A very unexpected journey...'**

**Cham Kaur-Mann is the first Asian woman Minister with the Baptist Union of Great Britain. She is Co-Director of Next Leadership, whose mission is to transform global leadership from the 'inside out', equipping leaders to serve well, in today and tomorrow's world**

Picture the scene: female, Sikh, from Marshall Street, Smethwick, Birmingham - hears about the god-man Jesus, as a child. Those of you who know your social history from the 1960s, will be familiar with references to Enoch Powell and the 'Rivers of Blood' to appreciate the context of my early years.

This exposure to Jesus came about as the result of the happy 'accident' of being taken to a Christian youth group by our then Jamaican lodgers. This 'accident' was unappreciated by both my community and parents once they realised what (and who) I was being exposed to. Years later, while at university, I had a decisive encounter where I gave my life to Jesus. I said, "yes, I will follow you, no matter what." And of course, life would never be the same.

Frankly, I didn't realise what I was letting myself in for! Not only did I face opposition from my family and my community amounting to ostracism, but I then entered into the world of the Western church. The learning curve was exponential. Having to adapt to church culture, and in my case Baptist

church culture, all felt very peculiar. I felt like an outsider, who didn't know the rules of engagement or understand the language. The texture and sound was strange and a far cry from the familiarity of the gurdwara I used to attend. Why did people sit on pews? Why no meals at the end of the service? Indeed, why no food in the middle of the service? Why did people wear thick coats during the service? Why wear shoes in the service? Why, why, why...

So, when I sensed the call to ministry, no one was more surprised than me! Who, me?! Why (again)? Surely not? There was no one else I could turn to who looked like me or who had a similar background to mine. There were no role models to follow, or to draw strength and encouragement from.

What kept me going? In a word... Jesus! And the call... and the reminder that if God had called me, no one could 'un-call' me! I also had a few good friends who loved me and believed in me and some mentors who encouraged and inspired me to persevere through the 'selection process' – alien though it was.

Opposition certainly came and there has been 'friendly' (and unfriendly) fire, sometimes from the unlikeliest of places and people (surprisingly, I was actively discouraged from my call to ministry by a woman in ministry).

I now appreciate that my cultural heritage, the way I eat my food, the unique perspective I hold and the lens through which I look at the world - are all a gift from God to the body of Christ. In the words of a wise friend, I remind myself, 'God has called me, *because of* who I am and not *in spite of* who I am.'



**On being called...**

**Claire Nicholls, Minister of Christ Church, Ramsbottom, a Baptist Methodist community**

University was a big time of discovery for me. It was also the first time that I encountered anyone who thought ministry was male - this came as a bit of a shock and a challenge. I didn't understand why until, on a Christian Union training weekend, I lay in my tent reading Isaiah 6, responding; "Here I am Lord, send me".

It was at this point - aged 20 - that I knew that God was calling me into ministry. I began to study some of those difficult Bible passages as God continued to gently nudge me into exploring my call in more depth.

I worked as a teacher and during that time, the call from God to ministry got stronger, and I was accompanied on the journey by ministers who affirmed my calling, encouraged by working with those in similar positions and pushed onwards by friends and family.



Claire celebrating Christmas with a member of the Getaway Club

Photo: Christ Church, Ramsbottom

It was at a Baptist Assembly that I took the next step. I remember vividly that women were encouraged to get on with it and follow God's lead. My journey to training took 11 years from that first call in the tent, but here I am, ministering seven years on. I am in an ecumenical context working with the Methodist Church, who only ordained their first female minister as recently as 1974, but have systems in place to mean that any church could have a female minister. Methodist staff meetings are the only ministers' meetings I go to where other ordained women are present, and remind me that being a lone female voice is not always how things are. One of my biggest challenges around here where women ministers are few and far between, is that I often feel I am representing all ordained Baptist women, and I am the lone voice that cries out – but what about the women we know...?

As we celebrate 100 years since the first woman entered college to train for Baptist ministry, we need to think about how we affirm and encourage women in their calling through processes that bring difficult encounters with those who challenge that calling because they are women. For me it was those who stood alongside me through those challenges from those I worked with in University CUs. Now it is those ministers who accept me as equal and go the extra mile to seek to open barriers to affirming women in their calling and ministry. It's those who recognise that I don't do this because I want to, but because I'm called to and can do nothing else, and as I keep on keeping on, pull me back up when someone undermines the person that God has called me to be. Being a woman in ministry presents particular challenges that we should not ignore, but I am always reminded to go back to that final push God gave me at Assembly to just get on with it and face whatever comes my way.



### 'Biggest challenge my own doubts – not opposition based on gender or race'

#### **Leoné Martin, Minister in Training at Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham, and theology student at Spurgeon's College**

God often chooses people that feel inadequate and underqualified for what He is asking them to do. That has undoubtedly been my story. When I was baptised in 2011, I could not have imagined that I would be a Minister in Training at my home church (*Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church*) and starting to study theology full time at *Spurgeon's College* seven years later.

In 2015 I began to sense that God wanted me to study theology and I started to study online with Spurgeon's College. Online studying didn't really work for me, and I began to question whether God wanted me to study theology.

However, the sense that God was calling me to teach his word would not leave me.

In May 2017 I felt torn; I was in a career I loved as a learning and development consultant, but I could not get peace. That month I was attending our annual church retreat, and I remember writing in my prayer journal 'God if you want me to study Theology, please make a way'. I wanted an answer, something clear and unambiguous.

I did not expect what happened next. Towards the end of our evening service that day the keyboard player and visiting minister prophesied at least two people present were meant to be studying theology at Spurgeon's College. Instantly I knew it was me and I began to cry. I should have been happy - I had my answer - but I was terrified. At the end of the service I shared with my Pastor that I believed the prophecy was concerning me, he laughed and said he had known that for a long time.

In September I started to volunteer at my church one day per week to test my call and about a year after my encounter at the retreat I had my ministry recognition interview which was incredibly affirming.

My biggest challenge throughout the process has been my own fears and doubts. My church has been supportive, and I have had exposure to women in ministry who have encouraged and mentored me.

I am grateful that, 100 years after the first woman entered a Baptist college for ministerial training, I have not encountered any open opposition to my call based on my gender or my race. Nevertheless, I understand that I am a beneficiary of many women and men who have paved the way for me, who have paid the price.

This inspires me to invest in other women who feel God has called them into ministry. I believe God has given me the ability to see potential in people and nurture it, mentoring young women at my church has allowed me to exercise this gift. Whether they decide to become Baptist ministers in the future or not, I hope to contribute to an environment where they can flourish, where they can explore and where they can see it is possible, that God can use someone like them for his purposes.



**'I could see myself in her shoes'**

**Molly Boot, an undergraduate and Minister in Training at Regent's Park College, Oxford, on placement at New Road Baptist Church**

I arrived at my sending church in September 2012 full of all the excitement that came with a new-found faith. Even at the age of 15, I watched the minister open scripture and celebrate communion and immediately thought 'I want to do that'. I could see myself in her shoes.

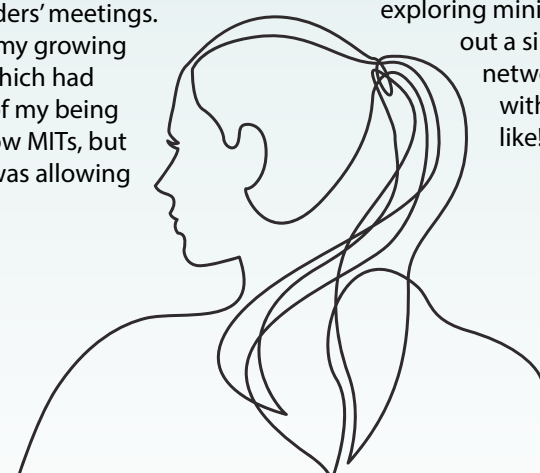
Until I came to *Regent's* to train, I was barely aware of my gender as a challenge: my parents, my church and my single-sex schooling taught me that there are no limits to what women can do. Coming to Oxford, however, I found myself unconsciously performing the very gendered roles set out for me. I felt I needed to be the nurturing, feminine counterpart to my male ministerial colleagues; at my placement church, I felt pushed into youth and children's work, and wondered why I wasn't allowed to preach at morning services or attend leaders' meetings. I was all too aware of my growing inferiority complex, which had developed by virtue of my being younger than my fellow MITs, but barely realised that I was allowing

myself to morph into a stereotypical view of what a female minister needed to look like: gentle, nurturing, good with children...

I am not, of course, saying that any of these gifts or qualities are negative in and of themselves, only that the expectation that I should fit that mould by virtue of my gender risked preventing me from discerning my gifts and vocation. In deciding not to go into the process of finding a church yet, I have been set free to keep asking what ministry may look like for me. God has expanded my calling and vision through the incredible teaching I've received at Regent's, and the opportunities to learn, preach, write, and lead that this precious time at college has afforded me.

One thing I didn't expect from Baptist ministerial formation was to discover a love for medieval and early-modern female Catholic saints! In reading their stories, I've discovered fantastic women like Teresa of Avila, who boldly spoke truth to ecclesial power; Hildegard of Bingen, an incredible pioneer of music and the arts in Christian community; Julian of Norwich, whose descriptions of Jesus as mother continue to rock the patriarchal foundations of the church. I believe that part of my calling is to bring their stories into our churches, and so to encourage creativity in worship and theology which equips the church for mission and worship in the 21st century and beyond.

I'm discovering my calling as I go, listening to God in the voices of female saints: the brilliant women who've formed the church, past and present. I've found myself surrounded by women who are my advocates, prophets, mentors and confessors, and would encourage any young women exploring ministry to seek out a similar network. Start with me, if you like!



**'Gender, race; a double portion of the impossible... but God has called me'**

**Beatrice Anayo is Minister of Stapleton Baptist Church in Bristol**

When I was 14, I was sweeping my church with a song of praise in my mouth. As I stopped, I heard a voice saying to me: "Keep yourself for my use."

I ignored it once, and then twice, thinking I was imagining things. When it repeated a third time I ran straight to the pastor's house. "The church is cursed," I said, "some voice is speaking in the building."

The pastor asked me what I had heard. I told him. He looked at me: "I think you are called to ministry," he said.

"What is ministry?" was my response.

"To become a pastor like me," he answered.

I laughed, like Sarah. "I cannot become a minister," I replied. We were in Cameroon. I had never seen a female minister.

This is when my call to ministry began. Initially I ignored it. In fact, it made me angry, because I thought it was impossible. I pursued nursing, and through this God gave me the opportunity to come to the UK. I wanted to become a mental health nurse which, due to financial constraints, wasn't possible in Cameroon, and then return to Cameroon to improve awareness of mental health issues.



Since arriving I have worshipped at **Stapleton Baptist Church** in Bristol, and here people have consistently seen and recognised my calling. Some have approached me, even strangers, asking whether I am a pastor. I still thought it wasn't possible, but the more I refused, the more people around me affirmed my call to ministry.

Slowly I gave up the fight with God.

I tested the waters by exploring the Prepare for Service course for lay ministers at **Bristol Baptist College**. The longer I was in the college, the more God revealed his calling upon my life to the tutors and staff.

I surrendered. As soon as I did, the devil started reminding me of the things that disqualified me. Gender, race; a double portion of the impossible.

But I said to the devil, "Get behind me, for God had seen all these impossibilities yet he is calling me." I pursued ministerial formation, and throughout the Baptist Union of Great Britain's processes my calling has been recognised, without a doubt. God has been very faithful. He has put wonderful encouragers along my path, especially men.

I believe God called me from Cameroon to be trained and ordained in the UK as a pioneer, so I could tell my story as an encouragement to others who are called into the vineyard of the Lord, no matter their gender or race.

I cry out to our Baptist Union and the Baptist World Alliance to assist me in creating awareness within the Cameroonian Baptist Convention; to ensure that female labourers whom God calls should be allowed to work in God's harvest field freely.

Let us all work for the advancement of the Kingdom of our God, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit who will continue to enable us to yield fruitful harvests for the glory of God.



**'Eventually it became even more uncomfortable resisting God, than suffering some people's disapproval'**

**Susan Stevenson is a Regional Minister with the South Wales Baptist Association. She was minister of Chatsworth Baptist Church in West Norwood, London from 1990-2007. Her husband Peter is a Baptist minister.**

It was 1983. The first pound coins were issued; *Return of the Jedi* hit the cinemas; and a twenty-nine year old minister's wife in Birmingham came out as being called to ministry. Except, of course, we wouldn't have talked about 'coming out'. A lot has changed in thirty-five years.

It had taken a long time for me to recognise that call, partly because I had no concept of a woman minister. The Anglicans didn't ordain women priests until 1994, and at that stage I hadn't heard of Violet Hedger.

In truth I was also wrestling with a sense of guilt, not so much theologically as culturally. Why could I not be content just being Peter's wife? Did I not value our young family? Both of those questions were voiced more than once, which hit me hard. Eventually it became even more uncomfortable resisting God, than suffering some people's disapproval.

Ministerial Recognition and Training followed. Then Settlement, and a courageous church in South London

called us as joint-pastors; unusual for those days and their idea. Five years later Peter was called to Spurgeon's and the church invited me to stay on as sole pastor.

I've never been keen to argue the case for women's ministry, as it can feel like self-justification. I've always believed that if this is the call of God, then God will authenticate it.

Amazingly God did, and together as a church, by God's grace, we experienced years of growth in so many ways. Then after nearly eighteen years I knew it was time to leave, although it broke my heart to do it. To be honest, I was aware that I'd not get the opportunity again as women are rarely given the opportunity to lead large and growing churches.

A lot has changed since then. When I was first ordained I could probably have named every female serving Baptist minister. Now there are so many more it's a more encouraging picture. Yet lots of things haven't yet changed. Currently I serve as a Regional Minister in South Wales and on those occasions when I'm substituting at meetings of Regional Team Leaders, I help to double the female presence.

When people comment on the gifts I bring to ministry, they talk about relationality, the gift for growing networks, the ability to live without knowing the exact destination of our direction of travel. All these gifts are characteristic of women's leadership. They are also the very gifts which are essential as we negotiate the contours of our place in God's mission. There is need for more change yet.

And how does change come? Recently I received a letter from someone I hadn't seen for over a decade. 'Thinking back,' it said, 'to when I was attending Chatsworth as a teenager it was incredibly empowering to see a woman, wife and mother leading a church community.'

I'm so grateful for the women (and men) who responded to God's call to ministry during my time in London. I'm equally grateful for those I have had the privilege of walking with here in Wales. If my being what God has made me to be can in any way encourage them to be who God has made them, then 'Hallelujah!'





**'I want to help people discern their calling in God, and to release them into ministry'**

**Linda Donaldson is Minister of Portrack Baptist Church, Stockton on Tees.**

My call to be a minister sneaked up on me; I became a Christian when I was 18 years old and from that moment had a passion to share my faith with people, to communicate God's word in ways that would enable people to grasp the enormity of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus and to understand the freedom and the fullness of life to which they are called.

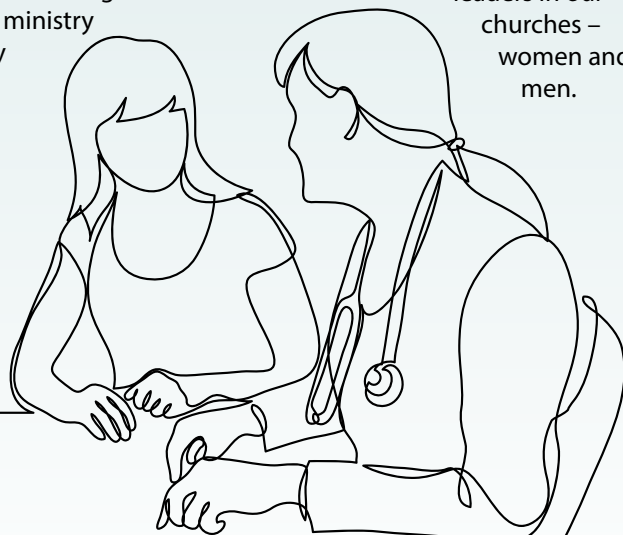
I subsequently attended Baptist churches in Scotland and in the North East of England where the prevailing teaching (in the churches I attended) was that women were not permitted to be in pastoral leadership in the church. I was involved at different times in a whole number of different ministries in the church - from youth work to pastoral care of older people, from personal ministry and teaching our own courses in prayer ministry to establishing a voluntary

service in conjunction with a local General Practice to offer support to frail/elderly people in our local community. While there was a level of satisfaction in serving in all of the above, there was also an enduring sense that I was not in the right seat!

I spent a year at Belfast Bible College during which I did a six week placement which involved leading a small Baptist Church (leading and preaching and midweek ministry); this was quite a revelation as for the first time I actually felt like I was in the right seat. However that was followed by a difficult couple of years due to family health problems and then in 2008 I was accepted to study as an independent student at Cranmer Hall in Durham. By the end of my study at Durham I realised I had taken myself down a narrower and narrower road and the only viable way forward was into ordained ministry. Overcoming the teaching I'd previously received and realising God's call was painful and wonderful - painful because the freedom to follow God's call had seemed hidden from me and yet wonderful because I was ready!

My passion remains the same as when I first became a Christian, which is to see people grow in faith, discern their calling in God and to release and enable people in and into ministry. To be able to do so with women in the North East of England is a particular blessing. It was the Warden of Cranmer Hall in Durham who invited me to meet with her and who identified my very clear calling to pastoral ministry - no one in my 25 years of membership in a Baptist church had done so. I want to encourage current church leaders and our associations to be actively looking for, enabling and releasing young

leaders in our churches - women and men.



**A chaplain's story**

**Sarah Crane, team chaplain at Milton Keynes University Hospital**

I was definitely not training for Baptist ministry!

I had attended various churches over the years but had become a Christian over a period of time at the age of 15 through the welcome and witness of **Seaford Baptist Church** (SBC) in East Sussex. SBC was, and I'm sure still is, a church which took young people seriously, listening to them and helping them grow. At 18 they encouraged me to spend time with them doing youth and children's work and start the day-a-week theology certificate at **Spurgeon's College**.

Even when I moved to Spurgeon's fulltime in 2008, having decided that a Theology degree would be good for whatever came next, I was adamant that I didn't have the pedigree to be ordained, and gave short shrift to anyone who suggested otherwise. Instead I felt I was called to be an ordinary Christian, out in the workplace. In the summer of 2009 I sat at the ordination of a friend (an occupational hazard) and listened to the words of Jesus in John 21; 'Feed me sheep', and the nudging of the Holy Spirit in the back of my mind, "Why wouldn't I ask this of you?" I was both overwhelmed and a bit grumpy. It was too late to fill the gaps before I finished my degree. With great support from Spurgeon's and the **London Baptist Association** I went into settlement instead. I would be ordained in July 2013 having been at the church which had called me three years earlier as one of their ministers.

I felt I'd found my footing, I was amazed that God would take someone young with so little Christian experience and yet there I was.

Less than a year later it seemed things were up in the air again. The church was looking to tackle a financial deficit and felt the need to make my original post as Minister for Youth and Children redundant. I really wasn't sure what God was doing, or why.

At the same time I was starting a placement at Fair Havens Hospice in Southend as part of a placement for an MTh module on chaplaincy. Going to the hospice was a long way out of my comfort zone: I was worried about the smells and the clinical reality of dying and death. I very quickly realised that the hospice was a place of laughter, struggle, joy in the little things, black humour, board games and a lot of cake. After a couple of weeks I was speaking to a friend who commented on how much I was enjoying it. She gently asked whether God might be stirring something in me in this time of uncertainty. I didn't quite dare hope to believe this but spoke to my NAM mentor, Alison, and other trusted friends. Alison had been both a hospital chaplain and a nurse before that, and was emphatic in her encouragement. With strong support behind me I started to look at jobs, having been advised that hospital chaplaincy would give broader experience to someone just starting out. I chose to take the offer of redundancy, left my church at the end of August and was amazed just a couple of days later to have been shortlisted for the post in Milton Keynes. The rest, as they say, is history.



Photo: Alison Marlow

I felt then, and still do, that I had found a Sarah-shaped hole to fit into. As an introvert I had found a setting where small talk was few and far between – like the hospice, this was an honest world. A bad day, frustration and devastation would not be ignored in favour of polite conversation. I also found too that in a world where 'proselytising' was off limits (I'll be honest I had to look it up at first) there was a wonderful freedom to respond to the questions of patients, visitors and staff about Christian hope and why Jesus might care about them and their situation. It's a great privilege to know that many of the people I speak to each day will never go to a church service but might know something of God's love and care through me. I feel very passionate about being a minister 'outside' of a congregation, building bridges and seeing God's grace at work in and through people with no knowledge of the Christian faith.

I also feel extremely fortunate to be able to be a person with influence over the life and culture of an organisation with more than 3500 employees and see a big part of the role as encouraging and supporting those staff in their work. This manifests in various ways, but the biggest element has been

setting up the Peer to Peer Listening Service for staff and seeing more than 50 volunteers support over 1400 members of staff in the two years we've been running. It's great to be able to share the belief that every person matters, regardless of their job or performance, but just because they do. I am still fervent in my view that the role of the local church is vital in order that we might see communities impacted by the Christian story and blessed by the Christians living alongside them.

It's hard to pinpoint times where being a woman has affected my experiences in ministry. I imagine as someone (until very recently) in their 20s, my age and gender have meant perhaps not being taken seriously. However, I also think that this has been an asset in rooms where being a young woman has been a disarming element or where a different style has enabled people to think again. We need to see diversity in those who lead us, in every sense, and we need to be communities who are growing spiritually in order that those leaders might be equipped to take their places, not just in the church but in the public sector, the market place and beyond. The female leadership I have known, in our Baptist family, in local church and family life has been an enormous blessing to me, alongside the support and encouragement of many men who are proactive at seeing women heard and represented.

Ultimately, I am constantly encouraged by the knowledge that the work is God's; whatever we do, whoever we are, we join God's work. Our goal should be faithfulness to being the people we are called to be, wherever we are, and to seek to notice God at work around us. Justice and inclusion will always be at the heart of this. ■

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Photo: Mitch Randall



Jenni leading prayers at EBF Council

Photo: EBF



Jenni preaching in Sofia, Bulgaria

Photo: EBF



EBF Executive Committee

## European Baptist Federation

In the 69 year history of the European Baptist Federation (EBF), there have only been two female Presidents, Birgit Karlsson from Sweden in 1993, and me, 24 years later.

This reflects both a doctrinal and cultural position across the breadth of the EBF family which stretches across Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia where the recognition of women as leaders has never been widely agreed upon. Some Unions have endorsed women in pastoral leadership for many years, although anecdotally the numbers of women compared to men have never been particularly high and, even within the West, some have very few women in pastoral charge - often restricted to smaller churches, team ministries, and chaplaincy.

There are sadly instances where countries which had previously recognised women in ministry are now strongly opposed to this position. As significant anti-egalitarian teaching is being offered from parts of the US, this stance is becoming more pronounced in younger male leaders.

When I have talked with some of my male colleagues from countries which do not recognise the ordination of women, their response is that the women in their countries are happily busy with women's ministries and show no inclination or desire for anything else. The comment "of course they have never seen any female role models to aspire to" may well be a double-edged sword, as it is clear that the lack of invitations for myself to speak in those countries suggests that they do not want their women to see a different role model.

As EBF President, my desire is to serve both women and men in the EBF. I seek God as to how I can both bless and challenge as I visit and talk at conferences and within churches and Unions. However I do feel strongly



Photo: Daniel Trusiewicz

Jenni in Latvia

about the marginalisation of women and if possible I use opportunities to speak about the calling and gifting of both men and women, for example in Egypt when I was asked to speak about how the Reformation has impacted Baptist women.

At times I do feel the pressure to do the 'best job possible' as if I represent the whole of womenkind. I have to remind myself of the hundreds of years of Patriarchy that needs to be breached, and trust that ultimately the battle is God's. He just calls me to play a small part in it, by turning up and being me - someone loved and blessed by God, who is prepared to be honest and vulnerable about the joys and difficulties of what it means to follow Christ.

And it has been a joy for me to see how warmly I have been welcomed by the majority of the General Secretaries and Presidents of the EBF, even those whom I know would be reluctant to offer the same opportunities in their own country. If that was ever in doubt, the welcome and opportunities at the 2018 Council in Lviv, Ukraine to talk and share with so many of the delegates confirmed in my heart that this was so.

Already I have travelled in an amazing variety of countries, with more to come in this second year of Presidency, and I have been afforded opportunities to speak to men and women from such different cultures and doctrinal positions. I have met Presidents of countries and officers of States. I have met large groups and small. I have talked with professional people and with refugees and outcasts. My eyes have been opened to suffering and pain - and yes, some of that is from women whose voices are silenced.

Occasionally some may have balked at calling me 'President' or 'Pastor', but my voice has been heard. Sometimes I am graced with hearing how my words have touched people's hearts. And I have been present - standing in solidarity with all who see the equal partnership of women and men as an integral part of God's kingdom of shalom.

*Jenni Entrican* is President of the European Baptist Federation 2017-19. Jenni was Baptists Together President 2015-16.



# An interview with Karen Kirlew

In 2018 Karen Kirlew became the first ever female President of the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU). Though her appointment received some opposition on gender grounds, the *Jamaica Gleaner* reported that she received an 'electrifying welcome' when installed as President at the JBU Assembly in February, while predecessor Devon Dick stated: "Never before have we seen such excitement, such enthusiasm and such expectation for an incoming President."

**Non-accommodating voices have created space for 'constant learning', she explains**

## Tell us about your call to be a minister?

I grew up in the Baptist Church in Jamaica, participating in many of the church's activities as a child, a teenager and young adult. As I grew older my involvement in the church deepened. As a result, I became more desirous of making myself available for the Lord's service and was seized by a longing to express this in service to God's people, in other words, the need to serve God's people increased.

In 1994, I was asked by the then General Secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union to be a part of the BMS (Baptist Missionary Society) 28:19 Action Team. I returned in the summer of 1995 and found that the desire to offer myself for service in the Church was stronger than it had ever been. I knew the Lord was calling me to be a pastor and for some time I struggled deep within. I spent another two years seriously contemplating what I thought the Lord was saying to me. In 1997, I applied for ministerial training and was successful. The support I received from my pastor (the Revd Dr Neville Callam), church family, parents and siblings encouraged me and allowed me to joyfully anticipate what responding to the call of God would mean for me.

## Were there obstacles that you have had to overcome?

Yes, there were obstacles that I had to overcome. These included:

- » Gaining an understanding of the social realities at work in the lives of people, especially those which inform behaviour and how people have positioned themselves in order to respond to their own needs. I had to determine how to respond as a pastor.
- » Dealing with those who were non-accommodating, which helped to create space for constant learning and reflection and coerced me into new ways of thinking, which allowed me to hear well the perspectives of others.



## What particular gifts has God given you for the Church?

- » Love for the created order
- » A spirit of nurture and care
- » A shepherdic spirit (as a guide)
- » A passion for the individual's wholeness
- » A deep desire to witness on God's behalf whether by proclamation or by lived reality
- » A keen sense of order
- » Always seeing the bigger picture as my picture (making the story of others my story)

## What would you do now to encourage younger women to consider a call to ministry?

I would do the following:

- a) Help them to **understand** their uniqueness as a woman and to allow the qualities of the Holy Spirit to become their own. They must understand that like the Holy Spirit they are compassionate and nurturing.
- b) Encourage them to **love** themselves because of who they are and without any comparison to others. Their love for their own creatureliness is an expression of their love for God who calls them to ministry.
- c) Reassure them of their own giftedness and resourcefulness. They must **respect** their own usefulness and view it in light of the worth that God ascribes to them.



*Karen Kirlew* serves as pastor of the St Ann's Bay Circuit of Baptist Churches, and is midway through a two year term as JBU President.

## 'I was uncertain what the call meant'

**Trisha Miller Manarin is the Executive Coordinator for the Mid-Atlantic Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and Baptist World Alliance coordinator for the Division on Mission, Evangelism and Justice**

From a young age, I sensed the presence of God in my life. I grew up in a multi-cultural environment before the term was in vogue. We were exposed to cultures from around the world through our community, church, school and inside our home. These experiences formed within me a desire to be a global person, a person respectful of culture, both within and outside the US, and broadened my understanding of John 3:16.

At the age of thirteen, I felt called by God to the ministry. Being a good Baptist, I said, "YES." I had no idea so many Baptists, women and men, did not believe God could call me - a girl! There was never a pulpiteer that said, "Be willing to do what God is calling you to do, but little girls, God only calls you to be missionaries or teachers of women and children, or maybe chaplains." I was uncertain what the call meant. I knew I loved the church, I loved serving and I loved growing in my faith, but I had assumed God was calling me to New York City to act.

Trisha with Gale Richards and Catriona Gorton at the Celebrating, Surviving, Thriving conference in June



Photo: Steff Wright



Photo: Margaret 'Maggie' Georgann Manarin

Nevertheless, I did not go to NYC. I had the privilege of continuing to grow in my understanding of God's love for the world as I would join others in ministry at our local rescue mission and prison, as I joined a predominantly African American church in Birmingham, AL where my pastor and Sunday School teachers had experienced first-hand what I had read in history books, as I traveled to Africa and Asia, and as I wrestled with great issues of faith and practice.

My seminary training provided opportunities to grow and develop my call as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While a missionary in Zambia, I met my husband who would eventually earn a PhD in African History. God has given me a heart for the world and yet a passion to walk alongside people so that our lives, together, might be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. I have served as a local church pastor and interim music, youth and children's minister, denominational

executive, international student minister, seminary professor and at the Baptist World Alliance. For me, the local church is God's great design for impacting the world and yet it is important for each local body to realise it is part of the greater Body of Christ throughout all time and the entire world.

I have been blessed to serve God in a variety of contexts which many clergy only dream about, but I have also faced rejection. In these 21 plus years since I was ordained, I have heard the words, "thanks but no thanks" more often than I care to remember. The pain of rejection, the scars of loving a congregation more than they loved me, the unkind things said about my children or even my husband, the seeming lack of acknowledgement of God's call upon my life can all become a heavy burden to carry. Yet, God has given me a gift of resilience and the gift to see God working in and through me, even in the face of rejection. ■



Photo: Dion-Marie White



Photo: Luke Shaw

One way our Baptist Union is seeking to equip today's and tomorrow's young Baptist leaders is through the Inspiring Leadership Programme (ILP). ILP is an annual two-month gap programme which seeks to encourage mainly Baptist young people of colour, between the ages of 18-23, to develop their leadership potential in Jamaica with the support of our Union's long-standing partner, the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU). Mentorship plays an important part in the programme, with participants assigned mentors in both Jamaica and the UK.



**"My call became clearer" - Dion's story**

Dion-Marie White from **Brixton Baptist Church** was the first person on the programme, spending two months in Jamaica in early 2017.

"So many people had said to me "You should be a pastor, you have leadership qualities." I wasn't so sure, but I was very interested in going on the programme. I knew that it would confirm whether or not this was a calling for me."

While in Jamaica Dion was given opportunities to lead and preach, as well as spending time at youth camps and with social workers. As the experiences built, she began to sense a clearer call from God – that of working with children and young people.

"It just seemed natural. I was put in contact with lots of children. I worked with a social worker in Ocho Rios, where we were working with children, trying to get them back into education.

"I really felt at this point that this is what I'm supposed to be doing."

Since returning an opportunity came up with the HEBE Foundation, which works with young people aged 13-20 to help them discover and use their talents. Dion helped on its Junior Apprentice project in the summer and this has developed into a part-time role.

This has also led to a youth group development role with a church in Islington.

"In my time I definitely had a sense that the call of pastor was not the call for me. I was happy to give the message when asked. I lead an online women's group - but I'm just not comfortable being a pastor.

"However I certainly sensed a call to ministry, but working with children and young people. I have always enjoyed working with them, but hadn't had the time to develop it further.

"Before going, I wouldn't have said this was my calling, so I'm very grateful for the opportunity to do this programme. I know now I'm in the right place."



**"I want to help young people discover who God wants them to be" - Lois' story**

Lois Delong of **Edmonton Baptist Church** was the second participant of the programme, spending two months in Jamaica in the summer of 2018.

At the time she was involved in working with young people at her church, serving in the student team at her university church, and serving as an evangelism co-ordinator at the university Christian Union.

"I wanted to explore the idea of ministry," she explained. "There was a sense of calling to be serving in the church.

"I wanted to explore the way God would work in a different culture, and a

different place, a different environment. I was trying to hear what God had to say."

While in Jamaica Lois had a number of teaching opportunities, from English and Maths to helping people to read, as well as preaching and leading Bible studies. Her time coincided with the end of term and a Vacation Bible School run by Linstead Baptist Church, and junior camp (ages 9-12) where she served as a counsellor

She returned in August, and is back at Lincoln University in the third year of a Biomedical Science degree. She described her time as an 'amazing' two months, where she grew in faith and learnt to trust God 'even more'. Opportunities to preach and work with young people have continued, and Lois sees a twin calling in both her professional career, and service in the local church.

"I want my job to be connected to health care. I want to go in the world and help other people.

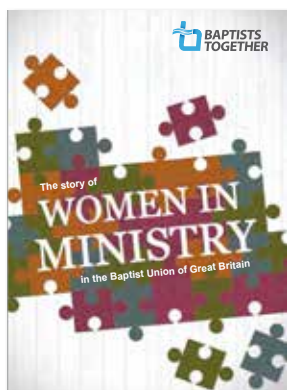
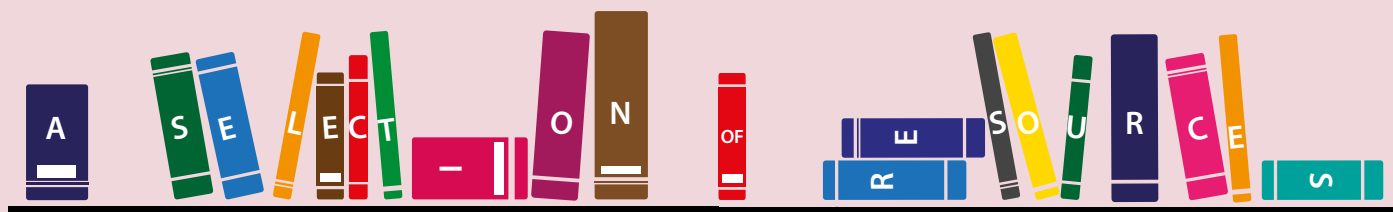
"I also feel a strong call to my church. I'm still involved in the youth team, and once I graduate I want to serve as much as I can there. I want to help young people discover who God wants them to be."

Photo: Luke Shaw



Lois assisting adults in their reading

For more about the Inspiring Leadership Programme, visit [baptist.org.uk/inspiringleadership](http://baptist.org.uk/inspiringleadership)



### The Story of Women in Ministry in the Baptist Union of Great Britain

Explores some of the ways in which Baptists have addressed the issue of women in leadership and ministry within the BUGB, with a view to informing the continuing debate on this difficult and potentially divisive subject.



### The Lydia Question

A collection of Bible studies and personal stories exploring women in leadership. As Baptists, we have been at the forefront of recognising and releasing the gifts of women leaders in the past and we don't want to lose this prophetic edge today.

This resource is designed to give individuals and groups the opportunity to read

and reflect on Biblical passages together and also offers suggestions for worship and prayer for small groups. These studies have been produced to be used alongside *The Story of Women in Ministry in the Baptist Union of Great Britain*.



### Dignity - Taking a Stand against Gender Based Violence

Across the world every one of us will have met someone who has been a victim of gender based violence. We just may not know it. Baptists Together is part of the Dignity Coalition aiming to bring this reality out of the shadows and supports churches in grappling with the issues involved.



### Becoming a Mother in Ministry

A new resource offered by Baptists Together - the first guide to the experience of taking maternity leave for ministers and for churches. Includes best practice guidelines and wealth of resources. Available to download from our website at [www.baptist.org.uk/mother](http://www.baptist.org.uk/mother)



### The Sophia Network

The Sophia Network exists to empower and equip women in leadership, and to champion the full equality of women and men in the church. The network is for all women who are in positions of leadership, who aspire to be leaders or who believe that women can be leaders.

In 2018 it released *Minding the Gap*, a report detailing the experiences, barriers and hopes of women in the church. It produced an accompanying manifesto for churches to consider signing up to featuring eight commitments to making their congregations places of gender equality.

Visit <https://blog.sophianetwork.org.uk>



### Project 3:28 - Women speaker database

Find UK-based women speakers for Christian conferences, events, festivals, and media. Search for free by specialism, experience, and more through this women speaker database. Also register to be a speaker on the database.

<https://speaker328.info>



### Just Aware!

This guided resource will be available from the end of 2019 to help groups of Baptists explore and enlarge their understanding of, and commitment to, justice as a fundamental gospel value. It will address unconscious bias regards race, gender and disability and move towards practical implications of a justice commitment - for ourselves, for our church communities and for the wider world.

Visit [baptist.org.uk/genderjustice](http://baptist.org.uk/genderjustice) for these three resources



## Recommended books



### Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls

By Francesca Cavallo and Elena Favilli

A 2017 book which aims to inspire children with the stories of 100 heroic women from Elizabeth I to Malala Yousafzai. Empowering and inspirational; true fairy tales for heroines who definitely don't need rescuing.



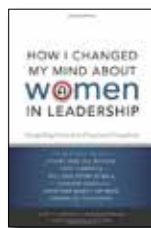
### Finally Feminist – A Pragmatic Christian Understanding of Gender

By John Stackhouse Jr

Stackhouse proposes a way forward for those on either side of the gender divide in this brief book. Useful for deepening the gender conversation in the church.



Illustration: one line man | shutterstock.com



### How I Changed My Mind About Women in Leadership

By Alan F Johnson (general editor)

Features a number of autobiographical accounts as to how various well-known evangelicals have come to change their minds about women in leadership and recognise a full shared partnership in the home and church based on gifts, not gender.



### Women and Worship at Corinth

By Lucy Peppiatt

Peppiatt offers an exhaustive treatment of the interpretive difficulties of 1 Corinthians 11-14.



### The Faith Lives of Women and Girls

Edited by Nicola Slee, Fran Porter, and Anne Phillips

Identifies, illuminates and enhances understanding of key aspects of women and girls' faith lives.



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Clare McBeath, Co-Principal of Northern Baptist College, has prepared a selection of prayers in response to the articles and stories in this edition.

Clare is also the co-author of the website Dancing Scarecrow ([dancingscarecrow.org.uk](http://dancingscarecrow.org.uk)), which offers worship resources that reflect the reality of 21st century Britain

### Finding our voice - a prayer for those exploring a call

A voice calls  
crying out from the street corners  
and shopping arcades  
A voice calls  
crying out from schools  
and community centres  
A voice calls  
crying out from hospitals  
and army bases  
A voice calls  
crying out from prisons  
and the aisles of supermarkets...

A voice calls  
and I know it is calling to me  
A voice calls  
but I do not answer  
A voice calls  
but I keep my head down

A voice calls  
but I have believed  
the cacophony of voices  
that tell me I don't fit  
that tell me I shouldn't  
that tell me I can't.

And so I remain silent.

A voice calls  
and I hear other voices  
stepping out from the shadows  
Edith Gates and Violet Hedger  
Maria Living-Taylor and Margaret Jarman  
pioneering women  
who have not allowed their voices to be silenced  
our fore-sisters, the numerous deaconesses  
who responded to the call  
ministering in the toughest of places  
and I realise that I am not called alone  
but I stand on the shoulders of giants.

A voice calls  
and I hear other voices  
stepping out of the shadows  
all firsts in their own way  
breaking new ground  
re-moulding ministry  
in many different shapes and sizes  
ministering from the edges  
championing justice and inclusion  
embodying difference  
celebrating the myriad of diversity  
that makes up the kaleidoscopic image of God.

A voice calls  
and I know it is calling to me  
A voice calls  
and I muster up all the courage and strength  
of a whole community of women past and present  
and I find my voice and I say:  
Here I am. Send me...

## And your daughters shall prophesy - a prayer of confession and commitment

I see a new heaven and a new earth  
where our daughters shall prophesy  
where the giftedness of women  
is welcomed and affirmed

I see a new heaven and a new earth  
where our daughters shall prophesy  
where women's leadership  
is nurtured and valued

I see a new heaven and a new earth  
where our daughters shall prophesy  
where women are set free  
to follow their calling

I see a new heaven and a new earth  
where our daughters shall prophesy  
where we are not surviving despite being women  
but thriving because we are women

I see a new heaven and a new earth  
where our daughters shall prophesy  
where women don't have to conform  
but can be who they are created to be

So often though  
reality is a long way from this vision  
Forgive us for the times we have doubted someone  
just because of their gender

So often though  
reality is a long way from this vision  
Forgive us when we have failed to recognise someone's gifts  
just because they don't fit into our image of what a minister  
should be

So often though  
reality is a long way from this vision  
Forgive us when we have allowed our own lack of  
confidence  
to stop us stepping up and taking our place as ministers  
and leaders

Forgive us and help us to change  
so that our daughters shall prophesy  
and we will live out and celebrate  
your new heaven and your new earth  
in the here and now.

## The goodnight stories of rebel girls - a prayer of thanksgiving and commitment

God who wears violet  
Let us tell the goodnight stories of rebel girls  
of Deborah  
who stands tall in the ancient line of the judges  
of the Hebrew midwives  
who defy Pharaoh to enable the birthing of life  
of Miriam  
whose sharp thinking contributes to her people's liberation

God who wears violet  
Let us tell the goodnight stories of rebel girls  
of Vashti  
who refuses to dance to her husband's command  
of Esther  
who skilfully works the system to orchestrate her people's  
survival  
of Hagar  
The outcast handmaiden who gives birth to a new nation.

God who wears violet  
Let us tell the goodnight stories of rebel girls  
of Rahab  
Used by men yet providing a place of sanctuary  
of Tamar  
raped and cast out yet refusing to be silenced  
of the woman at Zarephath  
who ministers giving everything she has

God who wears violet  
Let us tell the goodnight stories of rebel girls  
and to them add our own stories of rebellion  
telling them to our children and to their children  
empowering generations to come  
so that our children's children  
may tell their own stories of rebel girls  
and may even get to wear violet too.



# Exploring a call

Having heard some of the inspiring stories shared in this magazine, are you sensing a call to ministry?  
If so, what next?



**Talk with the minister  
in your church**

**Talk with the minister in your church.** Explore with them as a starting point.

**Chat and pray with  
Christian friends and  
colleagues**

**Chat and pray with Christian friends and colleagues:** where do they see God in this?

**Arrange to meet a  
regional minister**

Once you've chatted with your local minister, **arrange to meet a regional minister.** They are then able to guide you through the process.

If you are in a church where for theological reasons women in ministry isn't supported, **go directly to your regional minister to explore the call further.**

If the local church won't support the call on the basis of its theology of women and ministry, then the Association is still able to interview you. Though this has been the practice for a number of years, it is now incorporated into official guidance. In other words, if your church is not in favour on theological grounds, do not let that be a bar.

To find your local association, visit [baptist.org.uk/associations](http://baptist.org.uk/associations)

**There are safe spaces to explore online.** Mary Taylor highlighted the Facebook group which emerged from the Celebrating, Surviving and Thriving conference. Contact [together@baptist.org.uk](mailto:together@baptist.org.uk) for more details.

**Ministry takes different forms: what are you being called to be?** A pioneer? A teacher/pastor in a traditional setting? Evangelist? Chaplain? Youth minister? Children's and Families minister? Preacher? The Baptist Union of Great Britain offers national recognition and accreditation in a range of contexts. Visit [baptist.org.uk/exploringacall](http://baptist.org.uk/exploringacall)

**There are different levels of training.** As well as the full-time courses, each Baptist college has part-time courses that could be fitted in around work and other commitments. For more on our colleges, visit [baptist.org.uk/colleges](http://baptist.org.uk/colleges)

There is also much more detail on the Baptists Together website. Visit [baptist.org.uk/ministry](http://baptist.org.uk/ministry)

**Week of Prayer for Christian Unity****18-25 January**

The theme for 2019 is 'Only Justice', prepared by churches in Indonesia, based around Deuteronomy 16: 18-20.

[www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/weekofprayer)

**BMS World Mission Day of Prayer****27 January**

A day to pray for the work of mission, with the BMS staff in the UK and around the world

[www.bmsworldmission.org/dayofprayer](http://www.bmsworldmission.org/dayofprayer)

**Baptist World Alliance Day****2/3 February**

Baptists are encouraged to worship together and pray for one another in their churches

[bwanet.org/resources/worship-resources/bwa-day](http://bwanet.org/resources/worship-resources/bwa-day)

**Whitley Lecture****4 February**  
**Luther King House, Manchester**

Joe Kapolyo delivers this year's lecture, entitled 'From theology to theologies'

[www.baptist.org.uk/whitley19](http://www.baptist.org.uk/whitley19)

## Events

**Fairtrade Fortnight**  
**25 February – 10 March**

Events and promotions to make sure the message of Fairtrade is getting a national voice

[www.fairtrade.org.uk](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk)

**Women's World Day of Prayer****1 March**

Theme 'Come – Everything is Ready!', written by women from Slovenia

[www.wwdp.org.uk/2019-free-resources-to-download/](http://www.wwdp.org.uk/2019-free-resources-to-download/)

**Church Action on Poverty Sunday****3 March**

A day to focus on working together to close the gap between rich and poor

[www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday)

**Lent****6 March – 18 April****Baptist Union Council**  
**13-14 March****The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick**

[www.baptist.org.uk/council](http://www.baptist.org.uk/council)

**Christian Resources Exhibition North****13-14 March****Event City, Manchester**

[www.creonline.co.uk](http://www.creonline.co.uk)

**Easter Sunday****21 April****David Goodbourn Lecture:****'Sweet Charity'**  
**30 April****Luther King House, Manchester**

This year's speaker is Michael Taylor, former director of Christian Aid

[www.theologyjustice.org](http://www.theologyjustice.org)

**Christian Aid Week****12 – 18 May**

Support and pray for the work of Christian Aid

[www.caweek.org](http://www.caweek.org)

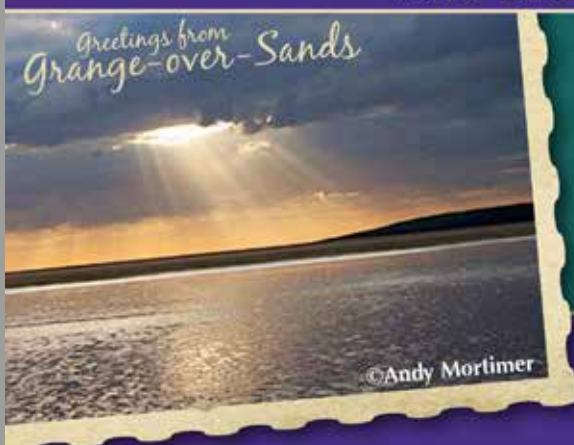
**SAVE THE DATE***to join us for our***Baptist Assembly***The International Centre, Telford**Saturday 18 and**Sunday 19 May 2019*

[www.baptistassembly.org.uk](http://www.baptistassembly.org.uk)

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*The training of those called to serve the Lord has always been rightly viewed as a vital component in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ.*



Baptist Colleges have played a leading and pioneering role in recognising the gifting of women to be ministers of the gospel and also in the formation and ministerial training of women for the pastoral office and positions of leadership within our Baptist family. This year we celebrate and give thanks to God for 100 years of women in Baptist pastoral ministry and of their faithful, godly witness and ministry to Christ and his Church. Do contact the Baptist colleges if you are sensing a call to ministry.

[www.baptist.org.uk/colleges](http://www.baptist.org.uk/colleges)



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\*Lines open 8am - 6pm Monday to Friday (except bank holidays).



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