

Telling my Story - Bob

As a child, my parents sent me to Sunday School, as that was what parents did then (regardless of their own beliefs). By the time I was an older teenager, I considered myself an atheist. I was drawn to the sciences at school, and treated with great scepticism all claims to authority that could not appeal to testable facts. Suffering and injustice in the world around me made me question God's existence.

Having gained a degree in Chemistry, I embarked on research for a PhD. I shared a laboratory with a Christian, who earned respect for his beliefs by his loving nature. So, I gave him the courtesy of listening to his arguments and taking the trouble to seek to refute them. I was particularly interested in his claims about the resurrection of Jesus.

This caused me to read the New Testament with an open mind and over a period of time I responded to Jesus' death for me by becoming a committed disciple of Jesus. Wanting to make public my desire to follow Christ, I found my way to a Baptist church. I liked their stress on personal choice, in believers' baptism, and democracy and equality in church government. The minister took the time to answer my questions and, the first time I attended, I saw someone had brought a homeless sleeper to church with him, which impressed me.

At my baptism, the minister had what I believe was a prophetic word calling me to become a Baptist minister. The Bible spoke to me and I wanted to share what it said with others. I attempted to pursue a career in Chemistry, while ministering as a 'lay preacher', but in time, I followed what I believe was God's call. On the recommendation of my original pastor, I trained at the Baptist College in Oxford, which suited me, as we were encouraged to think for ourselves.

While I gained much academically from my time there, the best thing was, I met and married my wife. She was a member of a church where I was the student assistant. We feel a shared call to work as a team.

We were first led to spend thirteen years serving in the Welsh 'Valleys', through the Miners' Strike and subsequent pit-closures. We then spent twenty years pastoring a church in North London, till I retired. Here we endeavoured to build a genuinely multi-ethnic congregation.

In our retirement, we have joined an Anglican 'church-plant' on a local estate. It does good work combatting gang-violence and denominational differences are not that important at the grass roots.