

Order for Baptist Ministry

2022 Convocation

After two years of online Convocations in 2020 and 2021, the Order gathered once again for 28 hours in person at St Columba's, Woking, with the theme from the founding document, *The Dream, of Daring to Disagree: "Valuing dissent and freedom conscience."* The St Columba's team were as hospitable and helpful as ever, and we were glad to be back. Illness and caring commitments led 5 people who had booked to be absent, and so the numbers present hovered around the 20 mark, with a couple able to attend on only one day.

Our theme was exploring how we can dissent and disagree well — a theme that has particular resonance for the wider Baptist Union as it discusses its approach to human sexuality. While this issue was not our focus, it was one of the background concerns. In plenary sessions, Alexandra Elish asked what was holy dissent, and in the second half of the first afternoon, we welcomed Stephen Ibbotson, Baptist minister and spiritual director/retreat enabler, to consider how we dissent with the contribution of contemplative spirituality. On the second morning, after sharing the life of the Order in community discernment, we explored together what we had heard, producing some guidance for us, and others perhaps, on the contribution of our particular practices and vision to the task of resolving disagreement and dissenting well. The results have been written up in a separate document.

As usual we began with the Wednesday Morning Office, continued with Mid-day prayers, the relatively new evening office, and Night Prayer at 21.00 on the first day, and used the Thursday Morning Office and Communion on the second. Two attendees made their vows at the Communion service, and so became members.

The Core Group came with the proposal that the 2023 Convocation be online, once again, but the mind of the gathered members (in good Baptist practice) asked the Core Group to think again and find a way of gathering members personally, with a hybrid model most likely. They will do so, with some rooms already booked shortly after Convocation at St Columba's for 14–15 November 2023, and a fully in person Convocation planned for 2024.

Paul Goodliff
Convenor, Core Group.