

VIDEO 2

COMMUNITY



We started with Jesus, the one we follow. We are reminded that all people, through all time and in all contexts can be guided by his Spirit and through his Word. As churches and organisations, our identity is found in being a **community of followers of Jesus**. This value of community shapes so much of what we do together.

We are part of a broad community made up of all the followers of Jesus throughout history and across the world who together form his body, the church. This is a **community of great diversity**, which we acknowledge and appreciate.

Within this grand movement, the Baptists emerged in England, when the church had practically become indistinguishable from the State. People became members of a particular parish church simply because they were born within the town or village where it was located. The early Baptists saw things differently - they affirmed that people become members of the church by **putting their faith in Jesus**. We continue to hold to this understanding. Of course, our communities are open to everyone, but our communal identity centres on our faith in Jesus.

Flowing from this is our **emphasis on baptism**, from which we get our name - it's important to us. Jesus was baptised and he asked his followers to go and baptise others. When people put their trust in Jesus, they demonstrate this by being immersed - going under the water and coming up - this symbolises the story of Jesus, his death and resurrection.

Another meaningful expression of identification with Jesus and with each other is **our simple meal of communion**. As we eat and drink, we remember what Jesus has done for us. We proclaim it to each another and to the world as we participate in this practice.

Within our community, we believe that each individual follower of Jesus is gifted for ministry. Ministry is not something done by professionals, or by a select few, but by all of us. Each has their part to play and **all are important**. We all need each other.

One of these gifts is leadership, and, as Baptists, we see leaders as part of the body. Leaders are identified and called by their communities to be representatives and partners. They are accountable to the members of the church, organisation or association. They are affirmed in their role as leaders through collective practices such as ordination, accreditation and recognition. Alongside these leaders, others are called and entrusted with the spiritual and practical leadership and governance in our communities.

Every follower of Jesus has direct access to the Spirit. This means that we practice shared discernment, meeting together to seek the will of Jesus and respond to him. While from the outside this might look like ‘democracy’ or ‘majority rules’, it is actually something quite different. Usually, when a group of people is undecided about an issue or idea, we encourage individuals and groups to listen for God’s leading. This is done best when we are in relationships of trust, we pray together, we dig deep into the Scriptures and we are attentive the Spirit. It can take time, but as **we discern together in community**, we move forward.

Our strong identity as a group of people following Jesus together is a key value because it distinctively shapes our practice in discipleship, discernment, decision making and community building.