**Violet Hedger: Her Life and Ministry**

**Deborah Rooke, Regent’s Park College**

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Abstract

*This contribution will consist of a paper which offers an overview of Violet Hedger’s life and ministry, drawing on a range of sources relating to her early life, her ministerial training, her four pastorates, and her periods out of pastorate. It will be accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation to offer visuals of some of the source materials and other relevant material. As far as is possible, given the limited time available, the point will be to bring Violet to life and to demonstrate just how much of a pioneer she was, as well as to reflect on what difficulties she would have had to face, and on what her legacy has been.*

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Violet Hedger (1900-1992) is known for being the first College-trained woman in the United Kingdom to enter ordained Baptist home ministry. This paper will give an outline and short assessment of her life and ministry.

**From birth to college**

Violet was born on 5 January 1900 in Hornsey, Middlesex, to lower-middle-class parents. From an early age she was involved with the flourishing Ferme Park Chapel, a Baptist church about a mile from her home, where the Rev. Dr Charles Brown was the minister. Brown was a great influence and support to her in her ministerial journey.

Violet appears to have been a gifted child. In 1912 she won a scholarship to secondary school,[[1]](#footnote-1) attended Hornsey High School for Girls, and passed the London University matriculation examination with honours at the age of 17.[[2]](#footnote-2) Her subsequent application to Regent’s Park College in 1919 was encouraged and supported by Charles Brown,[[3]](#footnote-3) and her acceptance for and progress through the course is documented matter-of-factly in College Committee minutes and annual Reports.[[4]](#footnote-4) She completed her four-year training in the summer of 1923, but it was not until 7 January 1926 that the announcement of her beginning a pastorate at Littleover appeared in the *Baptist Times*. The novelty of her appointment is clear: ‘So far as we know, Miss Hedger is the first woman student from one of our theological colleges to enter the home ministry, and the experiment made by the Littleover church will be watched with much interest.’[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Littleover, 1926-1929**

Violet’s appointment to Littleover certainly generated interest. The *Derby Daily Telegraph* noted Violet’s appointment and the start of her ministry, explaining that ‘Miss Hedger … took a full four years’ theological course at Regent’s Park College, and graduated B.D. in London University.’[[6]](#footnote-6) Clearly Violet’s educational qualifications were important for her credibility as a minister. Press reports and notices appeared in papers up and down the country,[[7]](#footnote-7) and there were even brief notices in papers across the US[[8]](#footnote-8) and in Australia.[[9]](#footnote-9) One intriguing notice comes in the *Manchester Guardian*, where a short report closes with the statement, ‘As pastor Miss Hedger will undertake the customary duties in full’, suggesting that this might have been in doubt.[[10]](#footnote-10)

What, then, were Violet’s duties? Preaching was a significant part of them. As well as regularly preaching twice on Sundays at Littleover, she often spoke at Sunday afternoon gatherings elsewhere in addition. She also fulfilled a busy schedule of weekday speaking engagements: church anniversaries,[[11]](#footnote-11) Girls’ Life Brigade battalion services,[[12]](#footnote-12) Free Church women’s gatherings,[[13]](#footnote-13) Sisterhood anniversaries,[[14]](#footnote-14) and local and regional Baptist meetings.[[15]](#footnote-15) She was clearly a talented speaker, as evidenced by a local press report of Littleover’s Sunday School anniversary services:

A very fine sermon was preached by the pastor, whose able discourses Sunday after Sunday are much appreciated by large congregations. … [T]he quality of her preaching is very high. Her pulpit style and delivery is also attractive: she has a clear, beautiful voice with faultless enunciation.[[16]](#footnote-16)

In an era and a church culture where preaching was a more central part of ministry than it has since become, Violet’s gift for preaching was vital to her acceptance and success as a minister.

But Violet did not simply preach.[[17]](#footnote-17) On Whit Tuesday the Sunday School held outdoor and sports activities for their ‘scholars’, in which Violet was involved as a staff member and as the prizegiver.[[18]](#footnote-18) She also attended various other functions and fetes.[[19]](#footnote-19) She started a young people’s fellowship which proved immensely popular – even though she incurred some disapproval by taking them to mixed bathing at the local swimming pool.[[20]](#footnote-20) In 1927 she started a Women’s Bright Hour for all women regardless of social class, rather than separating ladies’ and women’s meetings as was the case elsewhere.[[21]](#footnote-21) This celebrated its first anniversary on Sunday 2 December 1928, when women carried out all the duties in the services.[[22]](#footnote-22) The conviction that women were able, and should have the opportunity, to do every duty in the church was one that Violet later expressed in an article about her ministry in the *Baptist Quarterly*.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Violet’s ministry also had trans-local aspects. One was her swift elevation to vice-president (October 1927)[[24]](#footnote-24) and then president (October 1928) of the Derby and District Baptist Union.[[25]](#footnote-25) The second was her participation in national conferences concerning women in ministry that were initiated by the Union of Women Voters, first in 1926 at Golders Green where Violet conducted a service of worship,[[26]](#footnote-26) and then in 1928 at Somerville College, Oxford, where she spoke on what women can bring to ministry. Her thoughts are captured in a newspaper report about the conference: that women are especially suited to pastoral work, that they can make the church into the home it really is, that they can bring a fresh and vivid idea of God to men’s hearts, and that they are especially near to God because of their creativity and their nearness to the facts of life and death.[[27]](#footnote-27) These are aspects that she unquestionably sought to embody in her own ministry.

**Interlude**

Despite the success of the Littleover ‘experiment’,[[28]](#footnote-28) it would not be prolonged. The church invited Violet to stay beyond the initial agreed three years,[[29]](#footnote-29) but after lengthy consideration she declined the invitation.[[30]](#footnote-30) Precisely why is unclear; but it was several years before she would be in pastoral charge again. Her name was sent to twenty-six situations before she managed to settle at North Parade Baptist Church, Halifax, in late 1933. During her more than four years out of pastorate (October 1929-December 1933) she continued to preach up and down the country. But despite her evident popularity as a preacher and speaker, churches were unwilling to contemplate her as their pastor.[[31]](#footnote-31) She must have been extremely relieved when the introduction of her name to North Parade, Halifax in November 1933[[32]](#footnote-32) finally resulted in an invitation to the pastorate.

**Halifax, 1934-1937**

As at Littleover, Violet’s arrival in Halifax was greeted by upbeat local press reports.[[33]](#footnote-33) Her recognition service on Tuesday 16 January 1934 was reported in detail, including the words of Charles Brown, Violet’s home minister, who was one of the participants: ‘He congratulated the church on the enterprise and courage in securing Miss Hedger. But for her sex, Miss Hedger could have settled in several churches.’[[34]](#footnote-34) One is minded to reflect on how far the same is true ninety years later for women such as Violet.

As before, Violet’s ministry in Halifax included a packed programme of preaching and speaking for a variety of services and events, including those as chaplain to the church’s Girls’ Life Brigade and Rover Scout groups.[[35]](#footnote-35) Violet’s creativity can also be seen at work. For the annual church meeting on Saturday 26 January 1935, instead of a business meeting with spoken reports, some aspects of the church’s work were presented via displays, there was an effort to create a ‘cheerful domestic atmosphere’,[[36]](#footnote-36) and Violet referred to the church as ‘the home’ and to the balance sheet as the ‘household accounts’.[[37]](#footnote-37) As she had done at the previous annual meeting, she stressed the concept of the church as a family.[[38]](#footnote-38)

Press reports show some of Violet’s other activities. At the North Parade church she instituted, and participated in, series of winter lectures on various topics. She was the first woman to serve, in 1936-37, as the town’s Free Church Council President; participated in two united services for peace held in the town; and twice attended magistrates’ hearings to protest against alcoholic licensing for premises in the town. As she had done at Littleover, she arranged and chaired a meeting at North Parade to which the renowned Anglican campaigner for women’s ordination Maude Royden came and preached. But one of the biggest events of her ministry at Halifax was the Sunday evening service at North Parade for 21 March 1937, which was broadcast live on the radio, making her the first woman to preach at a broadcast service. A subsequent article in the *Halifax* *Courier* stated that after the broadcast she had received ‘over 600 “thank-you” letters’ from England and around the world.[[39]](#footnote-39)

**Chatham, 1937-1944**

Violet’s ministry in Halifax ended in September 1937, when she moved to Zion Baptist Church, Chatham. This would be Violet’s longest ministry (almost seven years), and a difficult one for her own health: as well as several months’ medical leave in 1940, her ministry at Chatham came to an abrupt end in June 1944, after her home was bombed and she was buried in the rubble for several hours, resulting in skull and spinal injuries.[[40]](#footnote-40)

But there was plenty of ministry to come before then. She encouraged the church to appoint a press correspondent to keep the local papers up to date with church services and activities, giving sermon titles when Violet was preaching. The titles indicate an effort to engage those outside the church as well as meeting the needs of the existing congregation: ‘Fear or friendship: On which is your life based?’[[41]](#footnote-41) ‘Clues abound pointing to truth. Can you follow them?’[[42]](#footnote-42) ‘You can begin again.’[[43]](#footnote-43) And, on the Sunday after the declaration of war, ‘God’s goodness outweighs man’s evil.’[[44]](#footnote-44) In addition to preaching, Violet was instrumental in forming a Free Church Council in the town and was its first president.[[45]](#footnote-45) She persuaded her own church to admit women to the diaconate.[[46]](#footnote-46) Outside of local church life, Violet attended a magistrates’ hearing to oppose a drinks licence for premises on a new housing estate,[[47]](#footnote-47) and was involved in court hearings for two men who applied for registration as conscientious objectors.[[48]](#footnote-48) In mid-1939, she led the church to record their conviction that war was contrary to the will of God and that they would work to promote peace alongside other like-minded organisations.[[49]](#footnote-49) This was followed in early 1940 by a decision not to invest the church’s capital in War Loans despite encouragement from the Baptist Union to do so.[[50]](#footnote-50) Nevertheless, Violet accepted an invitation from the military chaplain to speak to the men in the Chatham barracks.[[51]](#footnote-51) She also preached around the town with an Anglican colleague, in the open air and in clubs and pubs.[[52]](#footnote-52)

During her time at Chatham, Violet was invited to participate in two major trans-local events. The first was the sixth Baptist World Alliance congress held in Atlanta, Georgia, during July 1939, at which Violet led the devotions for the women’s sectional meeting.[[53]](#footnote-53) The second event was a London-based conference arranged in April 1943 by the Society for Equal Ministry of Men and Women in the Church, at which Violet was a speaker. Several newspapers report her comment about some people not trusting women clergy to bury people properly, and how at a recent funeral the family had been happy for her to officiate at the house, but they wanted the vicar to do the interment.[[54]](#footnote-54) She also insisted that the only relevant consideration about marriage for women ministers was whether it made them less able to preach the gospel.[[55]](#footnote-55) It is possible to sense from these comments some of the entrenched prejudices against which she and other early women ministers struggled, and as before, one is minded to ask how far these and other prejudices still exist.

**Interlude, 1944-1951**

As noted earlier, Violet’s ministry at Chatham was cut short by the bomb strike on her house in 1944, which necessitated a lengthy convalescence. She returned to work some five years later in 1949, as Secretary of the National Sisterhood, a non-denominational Christian women’s organisation. She continued seeking a pastorate via the General Superintendents’ meetings, but in the meantime, as Sisterhood Secretary she travelled the country speaking at services and women’s events. Eventually, at the Superintendents’ meeting on 16-17 July 1951 her name was suggested for Chalk Farm Baptist Church in north London,[[56]](#footnote-56) and by November the same year she had accepted the pastorate. Her acceptance was heralded by articles in the local press which quote her saying that she sees in Chalk Farm ‘“a challenge to put over practical Christianity and to make it so gay and attractive that it becomes a living reality and a shining light in what must be confessed is a somewhat dark district.”’ [[57]](#footnote-57) Clearly, despite the years out of ministry, her sense of mission and vocation were undiminished.

**Chalk Farm, 1952-1956, and beyond**

Like Violet, the Chalk Farm church had suffered the fate of being bombed out during the war,[[58]](#footnote-58) making her the ideal person to help the congregation rebuild themselves. Ever the pioneer, though, her plans for their new buildings were decidedly unconventional. A local press report describes how despite some opposition she had painted their temporary worship-space yellow, and outlines her projected interior colour scheme of blues, pinks and creams for the new church hall.[[59]](#footnote-59) Equally delightful, and revealing, is Violet’s reported response to the interviewer’s question.

Why? Miss Hedger’s vivid blue eyes lit up. ‘Because I think that God is light and beauty,’ she said. ‘I think we should have a light and beautiful church in which we can worship,’ she added.[[60]](#footnote-60)

Sadly, Violet did not see the church building itself completed during her ministry at Chalk Farm, which ended in 1956. But a newspaper report on the new church’s dedication in 1958 indicates that its design was indeed light and beautiful.[[61]](#footnote-61)

After Chalk Farm, Violet returned to an itinerant preaching ministry, travelling widely around the world. Indeed, an article from 1980 presents her, now an octogenarian, as spending about two months of the year overseas for the purposes of ‘missionary work’.[[62]](#footnote-62) From reports of some of her speaking engagements,[[63]](#footnote-63) it seems that at least some of her travelling was done under the auspices of the Bible Society.

**Closing thoughts**

What, then, is Violet’s significance for our Baptist conception of ministry? Violet showed that it was possible for a woman to be not just a minister but an effective minister. By her persistent pursuit of pastoral ministry she asked questions that demanded answers; she took seriously a theoretical theological position on women’s ability to serve equally with men and exposed its practical implications.[[64]](#footnote-64) She modelled a response to a calling based on her particular gifts rather than on more traditional gender-based patterns of service; at the same time, she had a strong sense of what women *as* women could bring to the staunchly male model of ordained pastoral ministry. Although her ideas on this score are open to critique from a modern perspective, what is important is that she saw women primarily as people with gifts and vocations and secondarily as women, so that womanhood was an addition to the gifts and vocations rather than a determiner of them. She was a living experiment, which cannot have been easy; alongside the glowing reports of her successes and the demand for her preaching were the snide comments, the open challenges, the refusal to accept her as ‘a proper minister’.[[65]](#footnote-65) But she persisted, and her persistence provided a new vision of pastoral ministry that gave other women permission to follow in her footsteps. True, it has taken a long time for others to follow, because it has taken a long time for them to be accepted in doing so. But in order for anyone to follow it was necessary for someone to take the difficult first steps, and she was the one who did.

Altogether, then, Violet’s life reflects what the press reports her as saying at the outset of her ministry in Littleover:

‘As to my presence in the ministry, I could do nothing else. … I know one thing. I must preach. Otherwise I should have no peace of conscience.’[[66]](#footnote-66)

It is hard to find a better summary of the life of this pioneering woman minister.

1. ‘Scholarships and Free Places’, *Hornsey Journal*, 27 September 1912, p. 4. At this date, education beyond the age of twelve was neither free nor compulsory. Secondary education was not compulsory until 1918, and not free until 1944 ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/secondary-schools](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/secondary-schools), consulted 10 July 2024). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. ‘Girl Clerk as a Preacher. Baptist Pastor at Age of 25’, *Westminster Gazette*, 14 January 1926, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Noted in the Ferme Park Church meeting minutes (23 July 1919; 10 September 1919). They are extremely understated reports of what was a groundbreaking event. Initially wanting to be a missionary, she had applied to Spurgeon’s College for training, but was refused because they did not admit women (Interview with Violet Hedger in *The Baptist Times*, 11 January 1990, p. 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Regent’s Park College Committee minutes, 30 September 1919 read, ‘Miss Violet Hedger, 19, Ferme Park. Accepted on probation for the usual course’. The official College *Report* for the year ending 30 September 1919 notes with some pride, ‘we now have thirty-one students, two of whom are married men and one – for the first time in the history of the College – a woman’ (*Report of the Committee of the Baptist College at Regent’s Park, for 1918-1919* [London, 1919], p. 4). Subsequent College *Report*s list Violet’s exam successes, and her eventual course completion in 1923, alongside the other students (*Report* for 1922-1923, p. 23). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ‘A Woman Pastor’, *The Baptist Times*, 7 January 1926, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 16 December 1925, p. 8; 8 Janary 1926, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Violet’s appointment to the pastorate was announced in *The Vote*, a weekly publication of the Women’s Freedom League, in a section giving news of women preachers (*The Vote*, 8 January 1926, p. 10.) Other reports include ‘Girl Clerk as a Preacher. Baptist Pastor at Age of 25’, *Westminster Gazette*, 14 January 1926, p. 7; ‘Lady once War Office clerk. Now pastor of a church. Her life’s ambition realised’, *Belfast Telegraph*, 14 January 1926, p. 8; *The Cornishman and Cornish Telegraph*, 20 January 1926, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Papers across the country reported the event, from Boston, MA (*Boston Post*, 31 January 1926) to Brownwood, TX (*Brownwood Bulletin*, 22 February 1926) and Spokane, WA (*The Spokesman-Review*, 7 February 1926). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Overseas newspaper citations obtained from [www.oldnews.com](http://www.oldnews.com), accessed 29 July 2024. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Several other newspapers used this article as their source for the news. See *Hull Daily Mail*, 28 January 1926, p. 9; *Oxford Chronicle*, 29 January 1926, p. 10; *Northampton Daily Echo*, 30 January 1926, p. 3; *Banbury Advertiser* 4 February 1926, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. ‘Whitchurch. Baptist Chapel Anniversary’, *Crewe Chronicle*, 6 November 1926, p. 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. ‘Girls’ Life Brigade. Parade Service Items’, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 2 October 1928, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. E.g. ‘Free Church Women’, *Leicester Mercury*, 21 January 1928, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. E.g. ‘Baptists’ Lady Pastor. Visit to Nuneaton Sisterhood Meeting’, *Midland Counties Tribune*, 12 November 1926, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. E.g. ‘Derby Baptist Union. The Spring Rally’, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 10 April 1926, p. 2; ‘Woman Minister Addresses Baptist Association’, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 12 June 1929, p. 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. ‘Miss Violet Hedger. Conducts Littleover Anniversary Services’, *The* *Derbyshire Advertiser*, 3 June 1927, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. E.g. ‘Sunday Schools. How the Children Enjoyed Whit Tuesday. Littleover Baptists’, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 27 May 1926, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. For example, she was present at the opening of the neighbouring Junction Street Baptist Church bazaar (‘Junction Street Baptists. Oriental Bazaar for New Church Fund’, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 17 November 1926, p. 6), and of course at Littleover’s own fete (‘Littleover Baptists. Fete Raises Funds for the Church’, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 11 July 1929, p. 9.) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. *The Baptist Times*, 18 January 1990, p. 6; Sylvia Dunkley, ‘Women Magistrates, Ministers and Municipal Councillors in the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1918-1939’, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Sheffield, 1991), p. 298. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. *The Baptist Times*, 18 January 1990, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Not only was there a special afternoon gathering with a woman speaker but a communion after the evening service (‘Sunday Services’, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 1 December 1928, p. 6). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Violet Hedger, ‘Some Experiences of a Woman Minister’, *The* *Baptist Quarterly*, 10.5 (1941), 243-53 (pp. 249-50). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. ‘Derby Baptist Rally’, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 13 October 1927, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. ‘Rev. V. Hedger Baptist Pres. Induction at Osmaston Road Chapel’, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 23 October 1928, p. 3. The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* report on her induction (23 October 1928) remarked on the fact that ‘she has not yet been in the locality three years’ (*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 23 October 1928, p. 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. ‘Women in the Ministry’, *The Vote*, 24 September 1926, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. ‘Women Ministers in Conference at Oxford’, *Oxford Chronicle*, 19 October 1928, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. ‘Matters Feminine. Rev. Violet Hedger’, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 26 January 1928, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. ‘Woman Pastor Resigns. Loss to Littleover Baptists’, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 28 June 1928, p. 10. She did, however, stay for nine months beyond the three years, possibly to enable her to complete her presidential year for the Derby and District Baptist Union (‘The Rev. Violet Hedger. Leaving Littleover Fifteen Months Hence’, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 29 June 1928, p. 1). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Baptist Union Minutes, Sustentation Fund Sub-Committee, 4 June 1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Violet had visited North Parade when seeking her first pastorate. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. ‘The Trend of Things. Women Pastors’, *Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian*, 8 January 1934, p. 4, [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. ‘Halifax’s First Woman Minister’, *Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian*, 17 January 1934, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. ‘Girls’ Brigade Chat. P. and F. Night’, *HDCG*, 23 May 1934, p. 3. ‘Inauguration of Rover Scout Den’, *HDCG*, 18 October 1934, p. 2. ‘New Colours for Scouts’, *HDCG*, 28 June 1937, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. ‘The Touch of Home in Church Life. New Ideas at North Parade Baptists’, *HDCG*, 28 January 1935, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. ‘Rev. Violet Hedger’s New Appointment. Chatham Pastorate. A Feminine Pioneer’, *HDCG*, 3 June 1937, p. 6. The letters are said to have come ‘from almost every county in England, as well as from Canada, India and South Africa.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. ‘Five-year battle’, *North London Press*, 26 November 1954, p. 11. In an interview she gave for the *Baptist Times*, she recalled regaining consciousness after the bomb strike to find herself still in bed covered with a blanket of snow (*BT*, 11 January 1990, p. 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. *Chatham News*, 13 January 1939, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. *CN*, Friday 24 February 1939, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. *CN*, Friday 26 May 1939, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. *CN*, Friday 8 September 1939, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Deacons’ minutes, 18 July 1938 [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Deacons’ minutes, 7 November 1938; Church minutes, 2 February 1939; Deacons’ minutes, 24 April 1939. The presence of women on the diaconate caused a question over the seating arrangements at the communion table, which was fully discussed before it was decided to retain the existing arrangements (Ibid.). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. ‘New Hotel for Chatham’, *Chatham, Rochester and Gillingham News*, 10 February 1939, p. 18; Deacons’ minutes, 9 January 1939. Her opinion did not prevail with the magistrates. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. ‘ “Not Taught To Kill”. Rochester Men Before Conscientious Objectors’ Tribunal. Lady Minister Supports Application’, *CN*, 10 November 1939, p. 7; ‘Unqualified Registration. Conscientious Objection of Chatham Journalist Sustained’, *CN*, 1 December 1939, p. 4. One of the appellants was a member of her own church. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. The Chatham church minutes, signed by Violet, show that the resolution for peace was introduced by ‘the Pastor’ and was agreed at the meeting on 27 July 1939, at which ‘the Pastor’ presided. The deacons’ minutes, however, show that the meeting was agreed for Tuesday 27 June rather than 27 July, and this must have been when it took place. On 27 July Violet would have been in Atlanta at the 1939 Baptist World Congress (see below), and so could not have presided over a church meeting in Chatham. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Deacons’ minutes, 26 March 1940. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. ‘Army Chaplains’ Posts for Women?’, *Newcastle Journal and North Mail*, Tuesday 19 March 1940, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Interview with Violet Hedger, *The Baptist Times*, 11 January 1990, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. The meeting took place on Tuesday 25 July. See Ernest A. Payne, *Baptists Speak to the World: Atlanta 1939*, pp. 60, 62; *Sixth Baptist World Congress Official Report* (Atlanta, GA: Baptist World Alliance, 1939), p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. E.g. ‘Trend of Things Day by Day. Women Ministers’, *Halifax Daily Courier and Guardian*, 7 April 1943, p. 2. This is a comment she also made in her article in the *Baptist Quarterly* (*BQ* 10.5 [1941], p. 247). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. ‘Trend of Things’, *HDCG*, 7 April 1943, p. 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Less than a mile from Regent’s Park where she had originally trained for ministry, and about five miles from her home in East Finchley. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. ‘Woman Minister for Chalk Farm Church’, *Hampstead News*, 27 December 1951, p. 12; ‘Woman minister plans to bring joy to Chalk Farm’, *North London Press*, 28 December 1951, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. ‘Golden Key Heralds Baptists’ Golden Era’, *North London Press*, 9 May 1952, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. ‘ “Sunshine Susie” is bringing colour to the church’, *North London Press*, 26 November 1954, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. *The North London Press* reported that it had taken three years to get a building permit for the church following the completion of the church hall, which means that despite having made preparations and raised funds they would not have begun building the church until 1957. The paper describes the church thus: ‘The new church has been built in a modern style. Simplicity, light and space are the chief features. The walls are a pale cream colour, the floor is covered with linoleum and the widely-spaced pews are of polished light oak.’ (‘Bombed six times – Baptist church is rebuilt – and paid for’, *NLP*, 28 February 1958, p. 11.) It is ironical, however, that Violet is completely absent from the report, to the extent that a visiting minister present at the ceremony is said to have ‘frequently taken services during the 14 years the church has been without a minister’. The 14 years may well refer to the period before Violet arrived in 1952: on 7 March 1952 the same paperreported the death of the Rev. Dennis Wilkinson, ‘who from 1932 to 1937 was pastor of Berkley Road Baptist Church, Chalk Farm’ (p. 13). That being the case, it looks as if the 14 years mentioned in the article about the new church building do refer to the period between the end of Wilkinson’s ministry at Chalk Farm and the beginning of Violet’s, but the impression given is that it is 14 years since the church has had its own minister, which is not true. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. ‘On the World Gospel Trail’, *East Grinstead Observer*, 20 March 1980, pp. 12, 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. So, for example, as guest speaker at a meeting of the Worthing BFBS Auxiliary in 1965 she ‘drew on her recent experiences in Turkey and the near East’ to stress the demand for literature (presumably Bibles) (‘Bible Society’s gifts doubled in nine years’, *The Worthing Herald*, 14 May 1965, p. 20); and at a meeting of the Worthing Brotherhood and Sisterhood on 4 December 1977 she spoke on ‘The Gospel for Hong Kong’ (‘Brotherhood’, *The* *Worthing Herald*, 9 December 1977, p. 20). [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Cf. her comment in ‘Some Experiences’: ‘[A]lthough our churches are built on Scripture, and sing “Your sons and daughters shall prophesy”, they never really believe it’ (p. 246). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. ‘Some Experiences’, pp. 246-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. ‘Lady Minister Inducted to Littleover Baptist Church’, *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 4 February 1926, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)