

Man Dies During Baptism, Pastor Now Charged With Gross Negligence Manslaughter

A pastor in the United Kingdom has been charged with gross negligence manslaughter following the death of a man during a backyard baptism, with charges now being brought nearly two years after the incident.

As reported by The Telegraph, Robert Smith, 61, died on Oct. 8, 2023, during a baptism held in a paddling pool at a home in Erdington, Birmingham. Emergency services were called shortly after 1:30 p.m., but Smith was “pronounced dead at the scene.”



Robert Smith

Cheryl Bartley, 48, pastor of Life Changing Ministries, has now been charged with one count of gross negligence manslaughter in connection with the baptism. The Crown Prosecution Service confirmed the charge following an investigation conducted alongside West Midlands Police. Bartley is scheduled to appear at Birmingham magistrates' court on May 14.



Cheryl Bartley

Smith, a barber from Brixton, London, was originally from Jamaica and had seven grandchildren. Reports state he had Parkinson's disease and had previously been baptized but sought a second ceremony to become a “born-again believer.”

The baptism was live-streamed on the church's Facebook page, but the video feed was cut short during the event and later removed.

Following the incident, Bartley reportedly shared a video

claiming she saw Smith in heaven “dancing with Jesus.”



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Life Changing Ministries describes itself as an Apostolic church focused on healing, deliverance and the power of the Holy Spirit. The organization appears to operate primarily online and regularly hosts “supernatural healing and deliverance” broadcasts inviting participants to join and be “set free.”

Malcolm McHaffie, head of the CPS’s special crime division, emphasized the importance of due process, stating, “We remind all concerned that criminal proceedings against this defendant are active and that she has the right to a fair trial.” He added, “It is vital that there should be no reporting, commentary or sharing of information online which could in any way prejudice these proceedings.”

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a journalism background from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and at the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of *The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man’s Commentary* and a contributor to Charisma magazine. For interviews and media inquiries, please contact media@.