



**Exploring a call to ministry
in the Baptist Union of Great Britain**

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Eastern Baptist Association

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with
all your heart and with all your soul
and with all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All
the Law and the Prophets
hang on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:36-39 NIV

All Christians everywhere are called to love and serve God.

We're given gifts, abilities and experiences that enable us to serve Him, one another and the wider community. Indeed the Baptist tradition holds dear 'the priesthood of all believers', an individual and corporate responsibility for being involved in God's mission and ministries.

Some ministries are specifically mentioned in the Bible as being particularly significant for the health and growth of the church. In line with this, individuals may feel compelled to take on a certain role or responsibility. In some cases, individuals may feel God is asking them to offer themselves to full-time Christian ministry in a pastoral, evangelistic or youth work capacity.

The Baptist family recognises that God may call individuals to be 'set apart' to minister on His behalf. There is a process in place which ensures such people are recognised, encouraged, fully trained and supported appropriately to enable and release them into ministry.

This booklet provides an initial guideline to that process.

If you have **relevant prior learning** e.g. theological training to degree level, the Min.Rec Committee may commend you to the Baptist Union's Residential Selection Conference. This body can commend people directly into the settlement system to seek a call to a church, or it **may** indicate the need for further training. When you meet with your RM the best "route" for you will be explored.

As the course of study undertaken is academic, it would be helpful for you to show evidence of a diverse range of Christian and secular reading including some on the following subjects;

- Worship
- Preaching
- Leadership
- Mission
- Church and Culture
- Theological readings and Reflections
- "Non-religious"
- Current Affairs

Given the nature and pressures of full time ministry it is also advisable to have ways to relax, hobbies etc.

God is not looking for "SuperPastor"



The Living God calls every disciple to service and ministry. Some are called to a specific ministry of leadership, often those who feel inadequate for the task. If God has called you, He will equip you for this task. Listen to God, test the call you feel God has laid on your heart and life. Pray, believing that God ALWAYS has your best interests at heart and will send the Holy Spirit to be with all concerned in the process of discernment.

The **Ministerial Recognition Committee** is the next step in the process of discerning whether your sense of call to full time Baptist Ministry is right and clearly understood.

Min.Rec., as it has become know, is an intensive day's interview focused on a variety of testing, selection procedures and prayer. You could be interviewed by as many as twelve people drawn from churches across the Association. It will include ministers and laity. The MRC will have already received your church commendation and a range of different references about you, along with a detailed personal inventory which you will have been asked to fill out. They will have been reading and praying long before you reach the interview room.

Whilst it is important for you to feel as relaxed and comfortable as possible, it is also important to recognise that full time ministry is a very 'public' responsibility. First impressions count and appropriate smart dress is sensible when attending for formal interviews.

The **decision** will be made the same day and you will be notified by telephone (usually the same day). Whatever decision the MRC arrive at, you will be supported by your local Association and your Regional Minister. In every case the aim is to help you move on to the next step God has planned for you.

After a **positive commendation**, the next step is a **College Interview** to seek acceptance on an agreed course of study. Part of this process requires you to undergo a **medical examination** and an enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau (**CRB check**) to make sure you are suitable to work with children and vulnerable adults.

Teacher, Police Officer, Sales Manager,
Baptist Minister, Librarian, Local
Government ... Hmmmmm



Getting involved in full time ministry needs to be more than just a good idea or career choice!

Even if you have a passion to serve God you need to have a clear sense of call and this needs to be thoroughly tested by your local church and the wider Baptist family.

Full time ministry is not an easy option, ask any existing pastor or minister!

Though serving God in this way can be immensely fulfilling it is often a lonely path. There could be repercussions for family life for example;

Manse life is often a bit of a 'goldfish bowl' and then there is the possibility of relocating every few years. People often have higher expectations of those in ministry than others and there is *still* a residual sense of ministers being 'on call' 24 hours a day!

God's call is as individual as the person and manifests itself in all kinds of ways. Sometimes it is difficult to discern whether this is Godly intent or human desire.

There are several things you can do in the first instance:

- Pray
- Read your Bible, make notes if need be, get your own thinking clear if possible
- Discuss your thoughts with your partner and family
- Approach your church leader and talk it through with them

So the thoughts won't go away, what next?
There are certain things you need to consider:

- ✓ Have you been a member of a local Baptist Church for at least 2 years?
- ✓ Have you had any leadership responsibilities?
- ✓ How have you been using your gifts and abilities to serve in church and in the community?
- ✓ How have you been growing in spiritual maturity?
- ✓ Are your relationships honouring to Christ?
- ✓ Have you ever led anyone to faith in Jesus Christ?
- ✓ How often have you preached in your home church?
- ✓ Have you preached outside your home church on at least 4 or 5 occasions?
- ✓ Do you know of and can you explain the workings of the local Association?
- ✓ Have you attended a local Association Assembly during the past 2 years?
- ✓ What do you know about the Baptist Union of Great Britain? Its core values?
- ✓ Do you know enough about the Baptist family beliefs and practices to want to commit to train for full time ministry?
- ✓ Are you willing to make the personal sacrifices necessary to pursue the *possibility* of God's call to full-time Baptist Ministry?

If you find significant gaps in your experiences, it may be advisable to address them now, before progressing to the next stage!



Next Steps

Meet with your **Regional Minister** who will help you and your family continue to test out the call. You'll be offered advice about the information you will need, how to go about looking at suitable colleges and applying for Ministerial Recognition. The RM will also explain about the process of church commendation. This usually requires you meet with the leaders and deacons of your fellowship who will work with you to help discern the call. If your church leadership believe the call to be genuine and the timing right, they will go to the church meeting and seek their support. Your sending church is usually an essential support throughout Ministerial training.

You can find out who your Regional Minister is from your church leader or by going to the local Association website:

<http://www.easternbaptist.org.uk/>

Training for full-time ministry requires a course of academic study via a **Theological College**. It is wise to send for prospectuses from a range of these to see if one in particular appears especially suitable for you. However, you can only apply after a successful Ministerial Recognition interview.

The following link will lead you to a short overview of colleges which belong to the Baptist Union of Great Britain and then onto individual websites;

http://www.baptist.org.uk/baptist_life/baptist_family/colleges/colleges.html