



Eastern  
Baptist  
Association



# Care Covenant

A “way of being” for church and  
minister

## Care Covenant

How should a pastor and a church “be” together? This may seem a strange question. Don’t we all know what churches expect of ministers and ministers expect of churches? Well, mostly, we have a fairly good idea, but often, if things go awry, it’s because the expectations were not clear or did not match.

This leaflet is to provide a simple way in which ministers and churches can be clear in their commitment to one another and to the common tasks of the church by forming a “Care Covenant”.

A covenant is an agreement between two parties. Through it each party benefits in some way and has responsibilities which are agreed upon. At Mount Sinai God agreed to make Israel his “treasured possession” and a “kingdom of priests” and the people agreed to “obey fully” God’s law.

In the Care Covenant, the church agrees **to support** the minister in specific ways and the minister agrees **to be accountable** to the church. These bring benefits to the minister, which in turn benefits the church.

The three specific areas mentioned in the leaflet are:

- Maintaining a healthy and authentic spiritual life

- Continuing ministerial development as part of discipleship

- Taking periodic stock of ministry as a way of being accountable.

The church **supports** by allowing the time and meeting the cost for the various activities agreed upon. The minister **is accountable** by keeping the church informed of what he is doing (clearly this does *not* mean going into detail of what is said at, say, peer supervision, but it *does* mean letting the leadership know peer supervision is happening). Concerning conferences, courses, etc., the minister could report back to the leadership in some way of what took place.

We can abbreviate the three areas into two-word headings and grouped below each one the different opportunities that can be taken:

### Spiritual Growth

- Local ministers' fellowships
- Annual ministers' conference
- EBA and Baptist assemblies
- BU 5 year Refresher Course
- Spiritual director

### Continuing Development

- Annual Study Week
- Sabbatical
- A part time study course

### Ministry Reflection

- Guided self-appraisal
- Non-managerial supervision
- Peer supervision
- Mentoring

The minister and church (maybe with a Regional Minister) would agree what opportunities the minister will take and how he will keep the church informed. After an agreed period of time, the church leadership could review with the minister how the Care Covenant is working. Where a church has a team of ministers there will almost certainly already be some system of mutual accountability. The above principles will still hold good in establishing covenants both within the team and between the team and the church.

By having such covenants where ministers are maturing in their spirituality, developing their minds and reflecting on their lives, both ministers and churches should gain!

A “Care Covenant” is a way in which church and pastor can express their mutual discipleship. It is an agreement in which, under God, we commit to support one another and offer accountability to one another for the tasks we undertake.

It is something to be seriously encouraged but must be entered as a matter of choice and not by compulsion. A positive commitment is needed from both minister and church to a life of support and accountability.

### **For a minister.**

The covenant will encourage ministers to reflect on how they access the personal, spiritual resources they need to underpin effective ministry. It will enable ministers to consider how they are accountable for their ministry.

### **For a church.**

The covenant will help churches to consider how they support and encourage their ministers and establish helpful practices for that. It enables reflection on time made available and resources given to enable a minister proper continuing spiritual and professional development.

### **For Association & Union.**

These play a part in the covenant by the provision they make in supporting ministers and churches.

As already outlined, three broad areas are covered touching on ministerial life.

- a) Maintaining a healthy and authentic spiritual life.
- b) Continuing ministerial development as part of discipleship
- c) Taking periodic stock of ministry as a way of being accountable.

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The table opposite outlines how all this might work out in practice.

<b>Covenant</b>	<b>Minister</b>	<b>Church</b>	<b>Association</b>	<b>Union</b>	<b>Colleges</b>
<b>Spiritual Growth</b>	Attend local Ministers' Fellowship Peer Supervision Prayer Triplets Spiritual direction	Ensure space for minister's issues on leadership meeting agendas	Space for retreat & reflection in ministers' fellowships and conference	Refresher Conference every 5 years	Models ways of doing this for students NAMS etc
<b>Continuing Development.</b>	Find relevant development opportunities. Take a Sabbatical every 7th years	Provide space to meet needs. Annual week's study leave. Book allowance	Provides information on available resources.	Offers materials, resources and grants	Various courses supporting development
<b>Ministry Reflection: Self Appraisal</b>	Undertake periodic self appraisal	Contribute as asked to minister's self appraisal. Consider wider appraisal of church & leadership.	Support, care & guidance for this process through a Regional Minister	Offers framework for guided self appraisal. Trains Guides.	
<b>Peer Supervision</b>	Work with a colleague in reflecting on ministry	Allow regular time for meeting	Provide training & support for the scheme.		

## The Next Step.

Probably the best way ahead is to invite your Regional Minister to discuss further what making a care covenant involves. Your RM will help minister and church produce a pattern that is mutually agreeable and beneficial to all. Once established, this can be reviewed, probably annually, and any necessary adjustments can be made.

In some ways it could be argued that all the above will naturally happen in a church. Experience shows that this is not always the case. This is not to do with ill will on anyone's part, but is often simply because the issue has not come to the surface of thought. It's assumed it will happen! This approach makes it clear what might be done and provides minister and church with an agreed approach that will enhance the ministry and mission of the local church.

The following could be used as a form of words to encapsulate what a Care Covenant is.

We (minister) and .....on behalf of ...Baptist Church agree to the mutual pattern of support and care outlined below

.....  
In this way and others the Lord may reveal we resolve to walk together and to watch over one another in mutual respect and love for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Signed:

Date:

## Contact Details for Regional Ministers

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### Useful resources.

Baptist Union of GB	<a href="http://www.baptist.org.uk/">http://www.baptist.org.uk/</a>
The Alban Institute	<a href="http://www.alban.org/">http://www.alban.org/</a>
Ministry Today	<a href="http://www.ministrytoday.org.uk/">http://www.ministrytoday.org.uk/</a>
Association of Pastoral Supervisors and Educators	<a href="http://pastoralsupervision.org.uk/index.html">http://pastoralsupervision.org.uk/index.html</a>
Society of Mary and Martha	<a href="http://www.sheldon.uk.com/">http://www.sheldon.uk.com/</a>
The Retreats Association	<a href="http://www.retreats.org.uk/">http://www.retreats.org.uk/</a>
Continuing Ministerial Development	<a href="http://www.rpc.ox.ac.uk/index.php?pageid=135">http://www.rpc.ox.ac.uk/index.php?pageid=135</a>
Continuing Development in Ministry	<a href="http://www.spurgeons.ac.uk/Home/TheCourses/CentreforDevelopmentinMinistry/tabid/123/Default.aspx">http://www.spurgeons.ac.uk/Home/TheCourses/CentreforDevelopmentinMinistry/tabid/123/Default.aspx</a>
The Mennonite Centre	<a href="http://www.mennoorg.uk/">http://www.mennoorg.uk/</a>
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