

EBA Moderator Role

1. Background

EBA exists to help grow healthy churches in relationship for mission in the East of England. It is made up of churches spread across Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk and most of Cambridgeshire. These churches are varied, some are rural, suburban, urban, coastal, town centre, village, city, large, medium, small, new, old, pioneering, conventional, and so on.

2. Purpose of the Moderator Role

It is often helpful for churches to have a moderator to walk with them when they find themselves in a pastoral vacancy, with a view to either filling that vacancy or exploring alternative options.

The church's regional minister usually helps the church find a suitable moderator, but a moderator is ultimately appointed by the church meeting usually on the recommendation of the church's leadership team.

3. Duties and Responsibilities

Typically, a moderator may undertake activities in relation to some or all of these phases:

- i. *Bringing the present ministry to an appropriate conclusion*
- ii. *Enabling the church to function without a minister*
- iii. *Guiding the church to the appointment of another minister*

It is important to note that there may be some overlap between the phases, and that some of the phases might not be applicable, if for example the church moves towards a merger or closure or decides to move to a long-term or even permanent mode of operating without a minister(s).

i. Bringing the present ministry to an appropriate conclusion

The moderator will usually have an initial meeting/conversation with the regional minister responsible for that church, outlining the church's recent history and why they are in pastoral vacancy. This will cover details such as whether the previous pastorate ended well, any issues that need to be resolved relating to the minister vacating the manse, or the finalising of all financial commitments to the previous minister, and any arrangements that have been made for the previous minister to lead any particular services (e.g. marriages/funerals/baptism etc.)

ii. Enabling the church to function without a minister

This will involve the moderator familiarising themselves with the church's constitution, annual accounts/reports, the key personnel in the church – treasurer, secretary, other leaders/staff/volunteers - and with the activities of the church, including those that relied heavily on the minister which it may not be possible to maintain. It may also involve things like helping to ensure there are people in place to take a lead on things like planning worship services, devising preaching plans, booking preachers, overseeing the musical aspect of worship, looking after the manse (including liaising with utility companies, insurers, organising any maintenance, decoration needed), updating the church notice board/website/social media platform pages (including removing details of the previous minister), monitoring the minister's email inbox.

Some moderators are able to offer some preaching, pastoral cover for emergencies, help with life events such as baptisms and weddings, as well as pastoral advice and care to the leadership team. Where a moderator gives significant time and support, they are sometimes known as an interim minister. The moderator should make sure there is clear agreement between them and the church about what they can and cannot cover in their initial discussions with them.

iii. Guiding the church to the appointment of another minister

The church's regional minister will ensure the moderator and the church has access to guidance to help with this process such as:

- When a Minister Leaves
- Baptist Together Settlement Guidance for Churches
- Baptist Together Settlement Guide for creating a Church Profile
- Ministerial Remuneration Guidance
- Terms of Appointment

The moderator will often facilitate discussions with the leadership and wider church on where the church sees itself heading. It is not the moderator's place to shape the direction the church takes but rather to help the church discern the mind of Christ for its future. This will involve helping the church reach a consensus on what they seek in a new minister, and that may include helping them consider what their views are on things like women in ministry, same- sex relationships, as well as calling a minister-in-training or a newly accredited minister.

The moderator usually helps the church agree who will be responsible for drawing up a church profile, and will help set the deadline for this to be done, and at which church meeting it will be agreed upon.

The moderator also has a role to play in helping the church agree who will make up the *search team*, how the leadership team will relate to this team, and which person will receive settlement emails and make sure this is communicated to the regional minister, as well as agree on who is going to be in communication with prospective ministers, and help ensure confidential requirements within settlement process are adhered to by all concerned. The moderator would also usually chair the special church meeting that decides whether to call a particular minister or not.

A moderator may liaise with the regional minister about the settlement process, but the church secretary (or equivalent) will remain the regional minister's primary contact for settlement matters.

If a new minister is called, the moderator may be asked to lead their Induction service. It is also usual for the moderator to make themselves available to meet with the new minister once or twice to pass on any information or observations they have made during their time as moderator.

4. Experience, Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

The church seeking a moderator will need a brief outline from the moderator of their past experience, gifts they feel they will bring to the role of moderator, and how much time they are able to offer.

A moderator may or may not be an experienced minister but should have the following experience, knowledge, skills and abilities:

- Experience and practical wisdom of how churches work
- Knowledge of and contacts in the wider Baptist family
- Ability to offer consultancy, facilitate and enable, rather than direct
- Courage and skill to challenge without creating antagonism
- Skills in chairing meetings, allowing discussion to ensure all voices are heard, enabling participation and processes for finding consensus.

5. Moderator Training and Support

Moderators are required to complete the Baptists Together Levels 2 & 3 Safeguarding training, and Equality and Diversity training, and undergo a DBS check.

Moderators are also encouraged to engage in aspects of the Baptists Together Continuing Ministerial Development (CMD) programme that are relevant to their moderator role.

EBA aims to bring moderators together from across the region once a year for updates, encouragement and support. This is supplemented by regional ministers making themselves available for periodical one-to-one meetings with moderators.

6. Moderators' Expenses

Churches normally pay a moderator the usual preaching fees and reimburse them for all their expenses. They may also give the moderator a love-gift when the task is finished or if the time spent with them becomes lengthy, some interim gift(s) are usually also offered. It is helpful for moderators to speak to the church's regional minister for further information about guidance offered to churches on covering moderators' expenses.

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