baptist churches of new zealand
te hāhi iriiri o aotearoa

PASTORAL SEARCH HANDBOOK 1

ESTABLISHING A PASTORAL SEARCH TEAM

WHAKATŪRIA HE ROOPU HĪNANA

WAHAROA

You are faced with the need to select a new pastoral leader for your church. This is one of the most important tasks a church will face.

The purpose of this handbook is to share with you the experience gained from the work of leadership and search teams across many churches and to acquaint you with resources that can help you in your task.

There is an accompanying Pastoral Search Team Handbook with downloadable appendices that assist with guidelines for interviews, examples of letters, templates etc. We suggest you obtain copies of the handbook for each member of the Search Team. Printed versions are available from your regional leader.

We strongly recommend that, as you work on your task of selecting a candidate to present to your church, you remain in regular contact with your Regional Leader. They have accumulated wisdom and experience, and national contacts that will be invaluable in the pastoral search process.

The contact details for the Baptist Union Leadership Co-ordination Director and each Regional Leader are listed below:

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THE PASTORAL SELECTION PROCESS

This booklet will take you through Stage 1 of the pastoral search process—Church Leadership Tasks. Stages 2 to 7 will be undertaken by the Search Team and are outlined in the Pastoral Search Handbook 2.

Electronic versions of these handbooks are available through the Leadership Hub: leadership.baptist.nz/elders-and-governance.
For MyPlace portal login access please contact: info@baptist.org.nz.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP TASKS

NGĀ MAHI HAUTŪTANGA O TE HĀHI

1 CHURCH LEADERSHIP MEET THE REGIONAL LEADER

Your Regional Leader is a valuable resource person who can assist with the pastoral search process. They have accumulated wisdom and experience that you can draw on. The Regional Leaders from around the country form a national team who together will provide you with invaluable advice and assistance.

We highly recommend that as you start this process you meet with your regional leader to consider the following:

- What the church constitution says about calling a pastor.
- The possibility of an interim pastor.
- The possibility of a transitional pastor.
- How to choose a pastoral search team, and understanding the process.
- How best to call the church family to prayer.
- The ongoing relationship and communication between the church leadership and the pastoral search team.

2 THE INTERIM PERIOD

The way a congregation chooses to use its interim time can shape congregational growth, identity, and health for years to come, and wise use of the interim time can significantly increase the likelihood of good fit between your congregation and your next pastor.

Congregations that fail to make wise use of their interim time tend to repeat any exisiting patterns of congregational unhealth or leadership dysfunction. This leads to pain and confusion for the incoming pastor and hinders the congregation's ministry effectiveness into the future.

The time between a pastor leaving and the appointment of the next pastor may be brief but the church needs to be prepared for it to take many months. Recognising that this may be an extended amount of time, leadership need to decide how their church will be led during the interim period. The following are options for how you manage this time:

1. **THE CURRENT CHURCH LEADERSHIP TAKE UP THIS ROLE**
   This is simpler and can be an attractive option in the short term. The church has a refreshing variety of preachers from within the church and from outside. This is a good option if there are clear indications that your search process will not be a long one. Caution: many lay leadership teams are unaware of the increasingly complex demands of pastoral leadership and can quickly weary of leading the church in an interim period. Weary leaders and anxious congregations are too often tempted to rush that pastoral search process during prolonged interim periods!

APPOINT AN INTERIM PASTOR

An Interim Pastor's primary role in the interim period is caring for a congregation. This may be someone who is currently a church member, or someone from outside. Often the person is a recently retired experienced pastor, or a pastor who feels called to interim ministry. Your Regional Leader will help you identify possible people for this role. We recommend that any such appointment be made for a finite term rather than having a loose expectation like, "until we make a permanent appointment."

Churches with multiple pastoral staff may appoint an existing staff member as the interim pastor. If you decide to do this here are three things to consider:

a. Who will take on the existing role that person has been doing?

b. It may be difficult for that person to return to their former position on the staff. We advise that person to seek wise council from trusted mentors outside your church before agreesing to serve as Interim Pastor.

c. It is unwise to appoint someone to the interim role who is open to being appointed as the next senior pastor—a conflict of interest may develop and this has the potential to cause complications further down the track.

CONSIDER APPOINTING A TRANSITIONAL PASTOR

A Transition Pastor has two key roles over an intentional interim period - caring for the congregation, and leading change in the congregation. The transition process involves taking the congregation on a journey of self-study with the purpose of preparation for a new future. When calling a Transitional Pastor, the pastoral search process is put on hold for a period of 12-24 months (depending on the unique 'transition needs' of the congregation).

A church should consider making this kind of appointment in two circumstances:

- Where the previous pastor had a long ministry in the church (which may have been a good and fruitful season). The previous pastor's influence and style has heavily impacted every aspect of the church and its ministries. This can make it more complicated for another pastor to begin ministry in the church.
- Where the church has been through a difficult, painful period and needs healing and possibly reconciliation among members. In this circumstance, the church needs someone who has the gifts and experience to gently guide the church towards a healthy and healed state.
- Where the previous pastor has left under less than desireable circumstances. In this case the Transition Pastor helps the congregation grieve and regain trust in God and in church leadership.
- Where there were significant or sustained issues of unhealth, declining or stalled growth, and/or weakening mission impact. This is an opportunity for the church to do a review of itself and rethink its direction and the purpose to better clarify what they are looking for in their next pastor.

Your Regional Leader is able to guide you as you make decisions on the best way forward.

ELECTING A SEARCH TEAM

The church constitution would usually give guidelines for the electing of the team. If not, it becomes a responsibility of the leadership to initiate, with endorsement by the church. The team should be kept reasonably small (five to eight members), with a mix of leadership and general church members. Their task is to act as a team, not to lobby on behalf of sections of the church.

To avoid issues of those with an 'axe to grind' being elected, we recommend that the church be asked to suggest names to the leadership, with the final list coming back to the church for confirmation. Be wary of appointing someone whose spouse holds a key role within the church.

The pastoral search task can be time consuming and each person should be able to make this ministry a priority in the coming months.

It is essential to have at least one or two of the church leadership team (e.g. elders) as part of the Search Team to enable good communication between the two groups. As the Search Team does its work it often encounters some policy and/or philosophical questions that require the elders' input. You may also like to consider having an existing staff member on the team. They could bring a helpful perspective.

It is unwise to have all of the leadership on the Search Team. The large role of being in leadership will continue and this on top of the search, would be too much for the whole leadership to function effectively.

Please remember it is important to consider a mix of ages, gender and ethnic diversity when you select the team.

THE ROLE & RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SEARCH TEAM MEMBERS

Their task is to select a pastor who will lead, support, and guide your church in its ministry for Christ in the world. In Ephesians 4:11-12 we read of the ministry gifts:

> *"...that some would be prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..." (NRSV)*

They will need to consider how each potential pastor can work with your church to fulfil its ministry as you look toward the future. It is the team's function to find that pastor and to recommend him or her to your church for approval and call.

Suggested characteristics of a Search Team member:

Spiritually and emotionally mature; Prayerful; Willing to be led by the Holy Spirit; Respected member of the congregation; High level of commitment; Keeps confidentiality; Positive attitude; Humble—is willing to work within the search process and towards consensus;

Impartial and expectant—is trusting of God's working in and through the process, and is open to considering whomever God may be calling to the church, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, etc; Understands and can state clearly the church vision.

To reinforce the responsibility each Search Team member is undertaking, you may wish team members to put their commitment in writing. See Appendix 2 which is available through the MyPlace Portal under Resources - Pastoral Search.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Conflicts of interest need to be taken into account when applications are received. For example, if a Search Team member has a conflict of interest with an applicant that member will need to be excused from the Team while that application is processed including any interview or referee checking.

ESTABLISH A 'BRIEF' FOR THE SEARCH TEAM

The leadership needs to define the tasks and parameters of the team, e.g. will the team need to undertake any review of the church or develop the pastor profile? Is there a clear vision document for the church already in place? Does the church constitution require any recommended name to have the approval of the leadership before going to a church meeting? What are the implications for and involvements in the process of any existing staff?

Once the brief has been established and the team has been appointed you are ready to enter stages 2 to 7 of the pastoral search process (see Handbook 2: Working as a Pastoral Search Team—available from the regional leader).

CALLING THE CHURCH TO PRAYER

Prayer is a high priority if we want the Lord to be in charge of this process. Prayer for honesty, humility, unity and then guidance. Some churches plan for one person to pray for the pastorate in each Sunday morning service. Others call special prayer meetings, while others make this a feature at their small groups.

Calling the church to prayer is a great way for the congregants to know that they too are an important part of the pastoral search process.

FIVE CORE CONSIDERATIONS

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

The relationship between a pastor and the members of the church she or he serves is an important one. No matter what skills and background a potential pastor has, the ability to work with others is crucial. You will need to test this through the selection process.

COMMITMENT AND PERSONAL ETHICS

You desire and deserve a pastor who is deeply committed to Christ, to the church and to the world God created. It's important that pastors are people of moral integrity and dependability. This should form part of any referees' checks you make.

Te Wao Tōtara: Code of Ethics & Conduct articulates the standards of ethics and behaviour required of our pastors. Your team should be familiar with this code of ethics & conduct, and you should ask your prospective pastor about his/her attitude towards it during an interview. See Leadership Hub for this document.

QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE

Baptists in New Zealand have long recognised and supported the training of pastors for ministry. Since 1925 many pastors have been trained at Carey Baptist College. Across the years a number of students from Laidlaw College and other training schools have also prepared for and entered the ministry of our churches. Whilst we recommend appointing people who have been formally trained and who understand our Baptist ethos, we do accept that some who have done much informal training can also be recognised as pastors. In the case of appointing an untrained pastor we recommend that you include formal training as part of their ongoing professional development. This can be done by distance and part-time.

A careful approach should be taken in considering candidates not resident in New Zealand. This includes good checks into training and qualifications but also consideration of their approach to cross cultural understanding and ministry. How experienced are they in serving and working with people of a cultural context that is not one they know? What do they understand of New Zealand generally, including the bicultural and multicultural nature of New Zealand, along with an understanding of New Zealand Baptists? Can they contextualise their preaching and ministry? If they have a spouse and any children, what does a significant move mean for them? What expectations might they have about work/ministry/life style? It is better to have this clarified early on in the process than for either party to be surprised when close to the end of it. Don't forget to include the international version of police vetting—e.g. a federal check for Americans.

You may also like to consider the continuing education experiences that the candidate has had in recent years. Involvement in continuing education is a strong indicator of an effective pastor.

GIFTS AND SKILLS

Every church would like to have a pastor who is competent in all ministerial skills—preaching, teaching, pastoral care, administration, children's and youth work, and the many other dimensions of professional church leadership. A church, of course, will not find a pastor highly gifted and qualified in every ministry area. The study of your church, mentioned previously, will reveal what kind of gift-mix your church most requires in its new pastor.

BAPTIST ETHOS

It is important that your new pastor be a person who has knowledge of and commitment to the family of New Zealand Baptist churches and the mission for which they and your church exist. We have a statement of faith to which all members of the Baptist Union of Churches must adhere, along with a number of practices and protocols of Baptist church life to which we have agreed—e.g. Te Tiriti o Waitangi, The Treaty of Waitangi affirmations, women in leadership, sexuality and marriage etc. Your new pastor will need to be aware of, and agree with the statement of faith and affirmations. Information on each of these can be found on baptist.nz (About Baptists).

We do expect that all Baptist pastors will be registered, so it is important when calling a non-Baptist, or an overseas candidate, that they are aware of this. Any Baptist pastor applying to be on the Baptist Marriage Celebrants' Register must be registered. Information on baptist registration can be found at lifelonflearning.nz

You may receive names from a variety of sources, including from outside our Baptist churches. Your regional leader can assist you in securing background information about the people you might want to consider.

The goal is to make the strongest possible match of the abilities of a candidate with the needs of your church.

CALLING ASSISTANT OR ASSOCIATE STAFF MEMBERS

The Pastoral Search Handbooks have been written primarily for calling a solo or senior pastor, however, they will still be useful when calling other staff. Keep in mind that some parts of the process will not be necessary, and other parts will need to be added. You can discuss the differences with your Regional Leader. It will be important to have the Senior Pastor on the Search Team for any other staff appointments.

We advise checking your church constitution regarding the approval process when making non-senior staff team appointments.

CALLING SENIOR PASTORS

In circumstances where there is multiple pastoral staff and you are seeking a senior pastor, it is our strong recommendation that you obtain the advice of the regional leader. Each church situation is different, so it is not possible within this handbook to give the necessary guidance for these situations.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IF THERE IS AN INTERNAL CANDIDATE?

If a church member, elder, or staff member of the church wishes to be considered for the role of senior pastor, they should go through the same call process as external candidates. In this way, if they are eventually called, they will feel validated by the process. This also helps preserve objectivity.

STAFF TEAM CONSIDERATIONS

The impending change of senior leadership can be a vulnerable time for church staff. It is important that they are kept updated about the call process. Although they are the paid staff of the church, they are entitled to be treated with the respect accorded any other church member. Unfortunately, this is sometimes not the case. An example is when an associate pastor ends up leading the church but no thought is given to what happens to their role and expectations once a new senior pastor is appointed. Sometimes it is untenable for this pastor to return to their previous associate role, therefore, it is not always helpful to appoint an associate as the interim Senior Pastor. Your Regional Leader can help you to identify and think through issues specific to multi-staff situations.

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