

# CALLING A PASTOR

GUIDANCE FOR CHURCHES



**EFCC**



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Provided by  
The Evangelical Fellowship of  
Congregational Churches

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## INTRODUCTION: WHY YOUR CHURCH SHOULD CALL A PASTOR

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A church without a Pastor is like a flock without a shepherd.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom, Saviour and Good Shepherd of His Church. He is the ultimate Pastor, and he blesses His people with Pastors, elders and deacons.

In Ephesians—the clearest and fullest New Testament teaching on the Church—we see that we are united to Christ and to His Church and that by the Holy Spirit we grow together in godliness as the Lord's people.

At the beginning of chapter 4, Paul the Apostle sets out that the unity and oneness of the Church is seen as we all serve together using the different gifts of grace that the Lord has given each one of us. He expands this in the awesome and central Gospel teaching that the Lord Jesus Christ died, was buried, rose again the third day, and ascended on high, from where he gave gifts to His Church. What are these gifts? We are told in verse 11 that they are word-based ministries, the last of which is Pastors and teachers. The Pastor's role in the rest of the chapter is summarised in verse 12. 'For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.' Paul goes on to say that the Pastor equips the saints in the local church by (v14) guarding the flock against heresy and error, (v15) teaching and preaching the word of God in love, and (v16) encouraging each member in the church to serve and so grow in grace.

To summarise Ephesians 4, we could say that the risen Lord Jesus Christ has given Pastors to His Church so that the word of God may be preached faithfully and so that believers will grow in godliness and service.

Is it vital to call a Pastor? Yes! A local church can function without a Pastor, but it will be severely hampered, like a flock of sheep without a shepherd.

## Six steps to calling a Pastor

There are so many things involved in calling a Pastor, but we've boiled the process down to six main steps.

- Step 1. Assemble a group to lead the process.
- Step 2. Review the current situation.
- Step 3. Beginning the search for a Pastor.
- Step 4. Initial contact with the prospective Pastor.
- Step 5. The first visits.
- Step 6. Preaching with a view to a call to the ministry.

Before we take the first steps though, there are some key issues to be aware of and think through: the central and constant importance of prayer, the kind of man the church is looking for, and the differences between a Pastor, elders and deacons in the Scriptures. At the end we've also included some appendices which zoom in on practical aspects of the process in more detail.

## The whole process should be covered in prayer

From the very beginning everything must be covered in prayer before the Lord. We've seen that the Bible directs churches to call Pastors, and we know that it is important, so we must pray about it and cry out to the Lord that he would provide and make the way clear. Make a point of praying about it in Lord's Day meetings, and if you don't already have a mid-week prayer meeting, you could think about starting one and focusing your time on praying for a Pastor. As the church prays about it, everyone will become more engaged. Regular prayer is the best way to help the church discern the Lord's will and guidance.

## What kind of man are you looking for?

Calling an unsuitable Pastor can be utterly disastrous for a church, so it is critical to work hard in the lead up to issuing the call to make sure you know the way that the Lord is leading. Here are the essentials set out in Scripture and some broader considerations from Scripture that are desirable.

We have included in the appendices the EFCC ministry questionnaire. We send it to men who are applying for ministry in the EFCC and also so that current EFCC ministers can be accredited by us. Feel free to use this and ask prospective Pastors to fill it out so you can get a clearer picture of them. We can help with this if you would like.

## *Essential*

The standards of godliness for a Pastor and elder set out in the New Testament are extremely high. Of the 14 or 15 qualifications, only one is about ability to teach and all the others are about character and personal godliness. With that in mind, the main thing to consider when thinking about calling a minister is, does this man remind you of the Lord Jesus Christ? In the way he behaves towards others, in his speech and conduct, in his praying and preaching; does being with him make you love Jesus more?

The summary qualification in 1 Timothy 3:2 is that he must be ‘above reproach.’ In other words, is there something in his life as a believer that you can point to where there is disobedience to the Lord in public or in private? If there is, then the qualification has not been met. One of the best ways to find out about this is to make sure that the prospective Pastor has the full backing of the elders in his current church. If the man has not received the support of his current elders and church, it would be very unwise to pursue him.

Paul the Apostle also writes that an elder must lead and manage his household well, as a sort of test case for shepherding the church. This is extremely important because the way a man loves and cares for his wife and children is one of the clearest indicators of how he will love and care for the church.

The main competence qualification is ‘able to teach.’ Although it is the only one like this, it is extremely important because preaching and teaching the word of God is, after prayer, the primary responsibility of the pastor (Acts 6:4). Preaching is not just a lecture to inform the mind. When we hear good preaching, we are led, as the Holy Spirit uses the preacher, to take hold of the truth of God’s word with our affections. The ability to teach means that the Pastor has an excellent Bible knowledge and a good grasp of how God’s word fits together in theology. On this point, for churches in the EFCC it is important that the pastor agrees with the EFCC Basis of Faith and the Positions Paper.

Acts 6:4 tells us that prayer is the first priority of the minister of the word and sacraments, it is listed by the apostles before preaching. Therefore, a pastor must be a man who is marked by prayerfulness and a deep spirituality.

These are the essentials for ministry. If a prospective pastor meets these points, he will lead and serve your church faithfully.

## *Desirable*

Beyond this, there are many desirable qualities to look for and ask about a prospective Pastor. It is ideal for a man to have had previous ministry experience so that you can have a clearer idea of what to expect. In the EFCC we have no minimum expectation for formal theological training, but we would definitely commend theological training as a key preparation for ministry. A Pastor without such training can often become repetitive and

simplistic in his ministry because there is no deep well of theological and biblical knowledge beneath to draw from. Many EFCC Pastors have undertaken some part-time theological study alongside ministry if they have not received it beforehand.

## What about Elders and Deacons?

The Lord Jesus Christ, as our Prophet, Priest and King, perfectly contains in himself the offices of the Church. That's why the New Testament speaks of Christ as our Apostle (Hebrews 3:1), our Shepherd (John 10:11) and our Overseer (1 Peter 2:25). He is the source and the model of His gifts to the Church.

In the New Testament, there are two main ongoing offices in the local church, these are elders and deacons. Eldership is always spoken of in the plural, and the Pastor is one of the elders (Acts 20:17, 28). Put simply, there should always be more than one elder. The Pastor is the ruling and teaching elder, and the other elders are ruling elders (1 Timothy 5:17). The Pastor is set apart by the church to lead and to teach, so it is natural that the ruling elders support the Pastor in his leadership. The elders together must hold to a very high standard of godliness (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) because they are called to oversee (Acts 20:28) the church, to rule (1 Timothy 5:17), and to teach (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9) the people of God, feeding the flock of Christ on His holy word.

The New Testament also speaks about deacons. Like the elders, deacons are called to an incredibly high standard of godliness (1 Timothy 3:8-13), but it is not a ruling or teaching office, it is not a word-based ministry in the way that the office of Pastor/elder is. The deacon is called to serve in the church, particularly, as in Acts 6, to care for those in need. Deacons are also always spoken of in the plural in the New Testament. Together, the Pastor/elders and the deacons form the leadership of the church (Philippians 1:1).

Our focus here is to help churches call a Pastor and so it is vital to understand how the pastor relates to the wider church leadership and to the whole church.

Maybe you're reading this as a church that doesn't have elders or a Pastor, maybe just deacons, or perhaps not even that. If this is you, don't panic. Please do get in touch, and we can talk through how we can help and come alongside your church. We are eager to help.

Finally, before we get into the details, we want to encourage you as you start thinking about calling a Pastor. In the EFCC and across the evangelical church, we have seen countless wonderful examples of small and struggling churches that are close to the end but have been enabled to call a Pastor. In so many cases the Lord, in His goodness, has blessed the ministry and the church has been revitalised and grown and become a thriving church again.



## STEP 1: ASSEMBLE A GROUP TO LEAD THE PROCESS

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So far we've seen that every church should be eager to call a Pastor—he is a gift from the risen Christ to the church. But the first step towards this is agreeing as a church membership that it is the right and best thing to do for your church.

Once the membership is agreed, a small working group should be assembled to lead the process of calling a Pastor and to keep the members informed and consult with them frequently. The group should normally be the eldership, but if there are no elders, then the deacons can serve in this way. A smaller group can make decisions more quickly and act together efficiently on behalf of the members. When you are thinking about who should be on this group, personal godliness is more important than business acumen, but ideally you should appoint people who are godly and have a good degree of competence to work in this context. The role involves a good deal of administration, particularly emails as you contact different churches, organisations, Bible colleges and Seminaries, as well as prospective Pastors.

The members will make the vote on calling the Pastor, so it is essential that the working group regularly consults with and reports to the members. The church's trust deed and constitution may give some guidance on this. Formally, the working group should report with the members at regular membership meetings, this could even be done by asking members to stay on for half an hour after a service to talk through progress and to pray together to seek the Lord's will. It is also a chance for members to ask more questions and to make sure that there is prayerful unity as you move forward. Less formally, each member of the working group can be assigned a group of members so that the whole membership can be consulted one to one and people can give open feedback and feed into the process. Clear and transparent communication with the membership now will avoid unnecessary delay when you come to vote, and you will be more likely to reach a unanimous vote which is a wonderful sign of the Lord's guidance and leading.



## STEP 2: REVIEW THE CURRENT SITUATION

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Before the working group begins the search for a Pastor, it is extremely useful to conduct a review of the present state of the church. If you are a much smaller church with a membership below ten, or even with no formal membership, calling a Pastor at this stage may not be possible, instead, much broader considerations of the church's future need to be thought through in terms of revitalisation. Please reach out to the Ministry Director or Coordinator and we'd love to talk these issues through with you.

The review will significantly inform the search process and will help your church understand its needs and strengths more clearly. In turn this information will also help a prospective Pastor make his decision. Here are some questions to help get you started.

- What is the leadership structure of the church? The New Testament model discussed earlier is what should be aimed at, but if your church does not have elders and deacons fulfilling their biblical roles, how does the leadership function?
- What is the membership of the church and does this number accurately reflect the people attending on the Lord's Day? It is very important for a church to have a formal membership. The New Testament speaks clearly of meaningful commitment to the local church and believers intentionally coming under the authority of the leadership.
- What is the average size of the congregation in the morning and the evening?
- What is the age range and social background of those in attendance and is the congregation reflective of the local population?
- What are the midweek activities and evangelism? How are these events run, supported and managed by members in the church? Evangelism is a vital aspect of every church.
- Where does the church meet? Is it fit for purpose? Are there likely to be high levels of expense in repairs to the building in the near future?
- What is the average giving of the church? As independent churches, each should be self-supporting, but this is sometimes not the case. Indeed, we read about financial gifts to churches in Acts. Please do get in touch if you believe that the church is unable to cover the costs of supporting a Pastor. The Scriptures clearly set out the principle that

the Pastor is set apart by the church for ministry and provided for financially, so be as generous as you can with the Pastor financially.

- What is the state of unity in the church? The church is the bride of Christ for which He died, but often churches can go through times of difficulty and disunity. It is important to be open and honest about this question. Are there undercurrents of bitterness and resentment in the church that have been left unchallenged? If there are, a prospective pastor needs to be made aware of ongoing issues.
- Are the members active in serving in the church? The New Testament is clear, particularly the passage in Ephesians 4 that we looked at, that every believer in a church should be serving actively in different ways. But in some churches, there is an unreasonable and unrealistic expectation for the Pastor to do everything.
- Where will the church be in five years and ten years time? This question is very important as it can sometimes reveal unbiblical expectations and sentiment about a place of worship. On the other hand, a healthy, prayerful, Gospel centred understanding of working out the Great Commission is a sure foundation for future growth.
- What kind of Pastor do you think would be best suited to the church?



## STEP 3: BEGINNING THE SEARCH FOR A PASTOR

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### *i) Meet with the EFCC Ministry Director and/or regional Ministry Coordinator*

At any point in the process we would be delighted to be involved, but particularly at this stage, contact with the EFCC is an excellent way to access wider networks of potential Pastors for your church. We'd love to talk you through each step of the process and help in any way we can. We have had lots of experience in helping churches call Pastors. We may also be able to recommend specific men for the ministry in your church.

### *ii) Meet with local evangelical church leaders*

If there are evangelical churches reasonably nearby it is a good idea to meet with the Pastor or leaders of these churches so that you can gain wisdom and advice from them. God willing, they will be aware of your church and its history and background, so the advice they give will be useful. Ask them to give an honest assessment of your church. They may also have good contacts with prospective Pastors.

### *iii) Consider input from the previous Pastor of your church*

In most cases, when a Pastor's ministry at a church comes to an end, he leaves the church. But in the instance of retirement, sometimes the Pastor remains in the church, as a supportive elder or active member. Given what the Bible says about the role of a Pastor as a shepherd of the flock, it makes sense to seek council from the previous Pastor, whether he is still present, or elsewhere.

We would generally encourage pastors to move to a different church on retirement. The main reason is that if the retired Pastor stays, he will understandably still be viewed as the Pastor and this can make people think that it is unnecessary to call a new Pastor. But even when a new Pastor is called, the perceived differences between the two men can easily cause tensions and difficulties in the church, especially if the previous Pastor continues in a leadership role, formal or otherwise. Passages like Numbers 8:23-26 are relevant here.

#### *iv) Advertising*

The EFCC can advise on advertising in more detail, and we can come alongside you to help in filtering through applicants if required.

In the New Testament (e.g. Titus 1:5), the general pattern seems to be that men are raised up and appointed as deacons, elders and Pastors from within the church. But we also see leadership movement across the churches. Paul's missionary journeys and the movement of leaders when persecution breaks out in Jerusalem are clear examples of this.

These two ways of finding a Pastor should be carefully considered. Are there men in your church already who meet the high standards of godliness and ability to teach who could serve as an elder or Pastor? If there are not, then one of the best ways to explore and access possible Pastors is to advertise. Advertising is not essential, but we have found across the EFCC that it is often a fruitful process. The working group can put together a short advert that gives an overview of the church and its context, then sets out the kind of man that they are looking for and finally gives details on things like accommodation (is there a manse?) and basics of financial remuneration (normally details are not given at this point, but they can be). Finally, a contact email address needs to be provided, and interested men are asked to make contact with a covering letter and an up-to-date CV. It is great if you can include a logo or image of the church on the advert, and then we can place the advert on the EFCC website. You can also place the advert in other places like evangelical newspapers and theological seminaries. The EFCC website prefaces the adverts by restricting applicants to UK residents for visa reasons.



## STEP 4: INITIAL CONTACT WITH THE PROSPECTIVE PASTOR

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In God's goodness, when a potentially suitable candidate responds to the advert, a member of the working group should make contact. The EFCC Ministry Director or regional Ministry Coordinator would be happy to help here if you prefer. We strongly recommend that the church considers one prospective Pastor at a time. The 'beauty pageant' approach is perhaps more efficient, but it is deeply unsettling for the candidates and can set unbiblical expectations for the church. The best way to proceed with each candidate in turn is to send him the EFCC Questionnaire. It is in the appendices of this booklet and an electronic copy is available. While you wait, background checks can be made, including social media posts and especially listening to recordings of the candidate preaching.

If, following the return of the questionnaire, the working group wishes to continue, references can be obtained, and an initial conversation can be arranged. In some instances, the candidate may be restricted regarding references as it may unsettle his current church. References are vitally important to gain a clear and objective picture of the candidate but may sometimes be postponed. If possible, seek out at least two references for the candidate at this stage and ask them to comment on the candidate's conversion and call to the ministry, his strengths and weaknesses, his preaching and pastoral care, and his personal godliness and prayerfulness.

In addition to a written reference, it is a good idea to speak online or on the phone so that the referee can speak more openly and freely and to give you a chance to ask more questions.

In some instances, you may receive a negative reference, if this happens do talk with us and we can give guidance and may be able to provide a fuller picture. In most circumstances a bad reference is enough to stop a church considering a particular candidate, but occasionally there may be legitimate reasons to seek more references if you feel that the negative reference only gave one side of the story. References should be shared with the working group but for the sake of privacy and sometimes confidentiality they should not be shared with the wider membership.

The initial conversation with the candidate can simply follow on from the questionnaire answers to provide a clear structure. At this point the focus should be on looking out for red flags and listening to the way he speaks about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Gospel and the church. It is also useful to set out the steps that the church is following so that the candidate can have a clear idea about what to expect, particularly about how long the process is likely to take. The conversation should also cover particularly difficult times in the candidate's ministry that should be discussed at the outset. For example, if a Pastor has previously had times away from ministry.

If the working group is keen to continue pursuing the candidate, you can proceed to the next step.



## STEP 5: THE FIRST VISITS

As we mentioned at the beginning, prayer and the ministry of the word are the core responsibilities of a Pastor. Therefore, hearing the candidate preach in person is essential. In at least one of the visits it is useful to ask the candidate to preach on a particular text of Scripture. A potential Pastor will be tempted to preach his 'best sermons' and therefore specifying the text will give the church the chance to hear what a 'normal' sermon would be like.

The first visit is also a good opportunity, if possible, to meet the candidate's family and to talk and ask questions of him. This can be done less formally at this stage by the elders or working group or by the whole gathered congregation.

The church membership should be informed of the visit and its purpose and that the man is a potential new Pastor. It is an opportunity for the church leaders and the potential minister to talk freely together about what has led them to this meeting. If there have been difficulties regarding a previous ministry the church leaders need to be frank and charitable in the way they speak about it. If they believe there is blame attached to their handling of the situation this should be honestly admitted. The potential minister should also be entirely honest and open about his reasons for wishing to move, although there is a duty of confidentiality towards any church he is serving or has previously served.

It is good to talk openly about ministry and theological convictions as these will determine the shape of the man's ministry at your church. It is not a dry academic exercise, but a lively, God honouring discussion, that focuses on the Living God and His Gospel. Neither is it with a desire to catch one another out, but both parties need to get to know and understand whether this is going to be a suitable match.

The questionnaire can again form part of these discussions, but at this point you can dig more deeply into the issues. As Reformed facing Congregational churches, the norm for the EFCC is covenant baptism of the children of believers. Many churches, however, have a dual practice on baptism in which membership and leadership are open to those hold to either covenant baptism or believers only baptism. It is worth talking through these issues for the sake of mutual understanding and to avoid future disagreements.

In most cases, there will be several visits to preach from the candidate. The more work you put into this stage of the process, the less likely you are as a church to experience difficulties further down the line. If there are a series of visits and interviews the process has to be purposeful, and each visit should accomplish something. After each visit, the elders or working group should consult with the members and be keen to hear their thinking in a prayerful and biblical way.

If after initial visits the working group and the church believes that they should no longer pursue this man for ministry they should inform him as soon as possible. Unnecessary delay in telling the candidate can be very unsettling for him so it's important to let him know as soon as you can if you are no longer going to consider him as a candidate.

From the point of view of the candidate, this can be an emotional rollercoaster, so whoever is responsible for informing him of the church's decision to discontinue the process must do so lovingly, prayerfully, and clearly. On the other hand, if the decision is positive, the candidate should be informed immediately that the church would like to move to the next stage.



## STEP 6: PREACHING WITH A VIEW TO CALLING TO THE MINISTRY

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This is the time when the candidate is formally preaching with the expectation that following this visit the church will make a definite decision whether to call to the pastorate. Preaching with a view is very different from the earlier visits.

If possible, the visit should last longer than a weekend so that the potential minister can see the various ministries of the church and get to meet a wider group of people. Besides the preaching, the visit will involve a formal interview. Parts of the interview should include the man's wife, as she will be a vital support to her husband. It is important to note though that a minister's wife is not a second Pastor, she is a member of the church and undue burdens should not be placed on her. It is, however, vital that the wife supports her husband's ministry and potential call to the church.

The interview should be thoroughgoing and particularly focused on his vision and ambitions for the church and on any other areas of his CV and questionnaire that have not previously been covered. If the candidate believes that there are certain conditions he would need to be met, these should be discussed here. Further discussion should take place on the theological views of the candidate. Do not be afraid to ask him difficult or controversial questions, but always avoid being divisive, and expect and welcome difficult and probing questions from the candidate.

At this meeting you can discuss more of the practicalities with the prospective minister.

- Salary
- Accommodation
- Holidays
- Pension
- Allowances

Talking these points through at this stage will avoid future misunderstandings. It is not ungodly for a prospective pastor to want to know details of the salary and other details. The biblical principle is that the pastor is set apart by the church and provided for

financially so that he can focus on shepherding the church. It is important for the church to be generous in caring for the Pastor, particularly if he is married and with children.

It is wise and useful to engage the wider membership in the interview process. The questionnaire can be shared with them but there may be some confidential details that should not be shared. As a general rule, as the members will be the ones voting, they need to be sufficiently informed in the key areas to vote either for or against.

After the visit, there are several jobs to do.

- Any church members who were not able to attend church for the visit should be informed about how it went and provided with recordings of the ministry.
- References should have been gathered soon after the questionnaire was completed, but in some cases, matters of confidentiality mean that they could not. In such cases now is the time to contact the referees. Good references should not be underestimated and a bad reference should not be dismissed.
- The elders or working group should meet to talk and prayerfully reflect and take time to discuss with the members. Unanimity is not essential but is certainly desirable. There is likely to be a voting percentage requirement in the constitution of your church.
- The recommendation from the leadership should then be brought to a special members' meeting at which the leadership will go through all the details of the process so far and give the reasons for the recommendation. Some constitutions will include a clause about proxy voting. It is important to follow the constitution but if such a clause is not present, it is often wise to limit votes to those present.

It is the Lord God who calls a man to the ministry of the word and sacraments. The Lord's will is discerned through the Scriptures and prayer. Ultimately, the Lord's will to call the man to the particular church will be shown by the positive vote of the church membership. This is why it is so important to include the membership in consultation throughout the process.

If the recommendation and decision is not to call the Pastor, this needs to be conveyed formally to the candidate by letter. It is kind to speak with the candidate as well so that he can ask questions and discuss the issues in more detail. Again, this should be done without delay.

If the recommendation is positive and the church votes to call the man as the Pastor, the man should be informed as soon as possible. The decision should also be conveyed in a letter which will include employment details and a start date. It is wise to allow a reasonable time for the man to respond as he seeks the Lord's guidance, but this should not normally take more than a few weeks at the most.



## APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ENQUIRERS AND FOR THOSE SEEKING ACCREDITATION AS EFCC PASTORS

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Name:

Address:

Mobile:

E-Mail:

- 1 What are the significant steps in your conversion and growth as a Christian?
- 2 Tell us about your family situation: i.e. are you married or single, and if married, for how long; how many and how old are any children?
- 3 What grounds do you have for believing that you are called to the ministry? Please include how this has been confirmed by your home church, and by your own sense of God's calling on your life.
- 4 Outline the training you have received for ministry, both practical and theological
- 5 Are you in full agreement with the EFCC Basis of Faith and the Positions Paper?
- 6 Outline your philosophy of ministry. Please include your approach to the preaching of God's Word, evangelism, pastoral care, and missionary work. Please mention your experience in these areas.
- 7 What do you understand to be the essentials of the evangelical faith? Do you believe that the doctrines of eternal punishment and penal substitutionary atonement are part of what it means to be evangelical? How does this inform your understanding of fellowship between churches?
- 8 How would you describe your understanding of the authority of the Bible?
- 9 The EFCC is primarily Evangelical, but we are also Reformed Congregational. Our centre of gravity is the Savoy Declaration although subscription to this confession is

not essential. Please outline how you understand the biblical teaching on church leadership and the authority of Church members' meetings.

- 10 The trust deeds of most Congregational churches are Calvinistic. What is your attitude to this?
- 11 Reformed Congregationalism is paedobaptist, but this is not a requirement for ministry in the EFCC. What are your beliefs concerning the proper subjects and mode of baptism? If you adopt a baptistic viewpoint, how would you deal with the situation where believing parents request baptism for a child?
- 12 How do you understand the biblical teaching on the roles of men and women in marriage and in the church? (See the EFCC Positions Paper.) Please include your understanding of whether women should be elders and whether women should preach.
- 13 What do you think the Bible teaches about homosexuality, and how does this affect Christian fellowship?
- 14 How does the doctrine of man inform your views on transgender issues, and how would you pastorally care for an individual who was experiencing gender dysphoria?
- 15 What is your understanding of spiritual gifts in the church?
- 16 What are your views on the Lord's Day, and forms of church worship?

Please complete the questionnaire and return, with the names and email addresses of two referees, one of whom should be the minister of your home church. Please also include a CV.



## APPENDIX II: TEMPLATE ORDER OF SERVICE FOR ORDINATION AND INDUCTION

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### Background

*Ordination* means setting the man apart for the ministry of the word and sacraments in the wider Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. A nice way to understand this is that after the ordination, he will become Revd, instead of Mr.

*Induction*, on the other hand, marks that the new Pastor is now the Pastor of this particular church. Sometimes the new man needs to be ordained and inducted, but sometimes it is just induction.

This appendix provides some key wording for the acts of ordination and induction that form the core elements of the service.

Another minister known by the church or by the incoming minister can be asked to lead the service, and the service can include several other elements as well as singing, prayer and the reading of God's word. First, the history of the call from the perspectives of the church and also from the new minister. Secondly, a charge to the church. And thirdly, a charge to the minister. The charges often take the form of short sermons that set out the Christ exalting goodness of ministry and the responsibilities of the minister and the congregation.

### Introduction and Template Wording

Jesus Christ is the living Head of the Church and of each Church; and is the Saviour of the body. Jesus Christ has given gifts to His church for equipping of the saints; for the work of ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ. Part of these gifts given is certain roles and functions to help the whole body to build itself up in love. Elders are to shepherd the church of God, they are to lead, to pray and to care for all the church. Some elders have a gift and calling to teach and preach the Word of God—they can be called teaching elders, or Pastors, or ministers.

The members of \_\_\_\_\_ Church, having sought the guidance of the Holy Spirit concerning whom they should call as their minister / pastor, have called \_\_\_\_\_ to labour in the gospel among them and have invited us to come together that we may now ordain him to the ministry of Word and Sacraments, and to induct him as the pastor of this church.

### *Ordination*

Questions to \_\_\_\_\_ (new minister)

Do you believe in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and do you confess Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord? *Answer:* I do.

Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the infallible and inerrant Word of God, the only rule of faith and conduct? *Answer:* I do.

Do you wholeheartedly believe the doctrines of the Christian faith, as summarized in the basis of faith of this church and as centering on Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners, died on the cross for our sins, rose again for our justification, and is now the living, saving Lord overall, the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him? *Answer:* I do.

Do you believe in your heart that God has called you to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments and that by God's grace he has equipped you to meet the qualifications set out for eldership in the New Testament? *Answer:* I do.

Do you promise to fulfil your ministry, walking faithfully according to God's Word, such that in public and in private you may be an example of Christlike living to all? *Answer:* I do.

Ministers present to lay hands on \_\_\_\_\_ (new minister) and pray for him.

\_\_\_\_\_, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the saviour, we ordain you and set you apart to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the church, the blood bought bride of Christ.

### *Induction*

Seeing that God by His Grace has called you to be a minister of the gospel; that you have already made full proof of your ministry; the church here has been led to call you to the pastorate and that as we are about to commit to you its charge, I ask you in the Name of God and of His Son Jesus Christ, these following questions.

Do you promise to fulfil your charge faithfully: preaching and teaching the Word of God; leading His people; praying for the congregation; caring for their spiritual needs; seeking to maintain the peace and purity of the church and doing the work of an evangelist? *Answer:* I do.

Do you promise to be faithful in prayer and the study of God's word and to live in such a way, both publicly and privately, as to be an example to all? *Answer:* I do.

May God our Heavenly Father who has called you to this holy calling, Illuminate and empower you by His Holy Spirit to fulfil your ministry that you will walk faithfully and fruitfully to the praise of Gods Holy name.

Questions to the members of \_\_\_\_\_ Church to stand

Do you as members of this church, receive and acknowledge the Rev \_\_\_\_\_ as the pastor / minister of \_\_\_\_\_ church and accepting him as one who will watch for your souls and give account to God? *Answer:* We do.

Do you promise to receive the word of truth from him with meekness and love and to submit to his leadership when discipline is required? *Answer:* We do.

Do you promise to encourage him in his responsibilities and to assist him as he labours for your instruction and spiritual growth? *Answer:* We do.

And do you promise, while he is in this role, to do all you can to care for his practical needs and for his comfort among you, in a way that will honour God? *Answer:* We do.

Will you offer afresh your varied gifts in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ? *Answer:* We do.

*The right hand of fellowship to be extended by the officers of the church.*

*Prayer*



## APPENDIX III: GOVERNANCE AND CONTRACT

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### Introduction

There are few occasions when a church steps out in faith more than when calling a pastor. The previous sections have provided information to aid churches and prospective Pastors to consider their responsibilities in seeking to prayerfully identify God's provision for His church.

The following sections consider some of the practical aspects of calling and caring for a Pastor. These may on the face of it seem less spiritual however scripture encourages us to do things as 'unto the Lord' and well. There are governance and employment matters that are important to get right from the outset to avoid potential problems later down the line; pension provision is a good example covered later. This can all seem overwhelming, but the aim of this appendix is to help and ensure nothing is missed.

EFCC are here to support local churches and the Ministry Director, regional Ministry Coordinators, Trusteeship Coordinator and Operations Manager draw on extensive experience and work collaboratively to help churches navigate this crucial area. Contact details are to be found on the EFCC website.

### Governance

When calling a Pastor, it is essential to refer to your church's governing documents. Typically, this will be a Trust Deed and any church Constitution/Handbook. These documents often provide a process of how to go about calling a pastor, the leadership's role, the responsibility of the members and how decisions are prayerfully taken. It is essential that in a congregational setting that there is a well-defined and up to date membership list. This will enable you to identify who can properly be involved in the membership element of the process as set out in the church's governing documents.

# Employment

## *i) The contract*

Employment law can seem completely bewildering when calling a Pastor, particularly if it has been many years since a new minister was called. It is an area that it is important spiritually and legally to get right, but so often responsibilities are misunderstood. The terms and conditions relating to a Pastor's engagement provide both the Pastor and the church with clarity as you seek to honour and care for those set apart to serve in the ministry.

The basis for engaging the minister may be found in your Trust Deed and in past generations may have ranged from a formal minute in a church members' meeting or an exchange of letters. Neither of these options are now likely to stand-up to the rigour of modern employment law, and a clear contract of employment is desirable. Some see an 'exchange of letters' as a means of stressing that a Pastor is an office holder rather than an employee, however, the content often closely reflects what would otherwise be in an employment contract. A formal minute, though used in the past is not desirable as it fails to provide either party with clarity around key aspects relating to responsibilities.

The EFCC can provide a basic template employment contract or exchange of letters. It is important to stress that these documents do not represent the finished article, particularly as they were written at a given point in time and employment law is constantly changing. However, they are helpful in providing you with a guide to what churches need to cover, and we would urge that where possible you produce a basic draft using the template and then ask a qualified solicitor to consider the document.

## *ii) Specific terms and conditions*

### Notice periods

Notice periods are important because the process of discerning and calling a new Pastor may take some time, while the church will need time to adjust to an interregnum period and put arrangements in place to cover ministry. There is of course a balance to be struck in allowing the Pastor to take up his new ministry within a reasonable period of time. Provision should be made for a God honouring process within the contract of employment. See also Service Occupancy Agreement section below.

### Remuneration

A stipend or salary naturally forms the largest part of a pastor's remuneration.

Churches should meet their legal obligations in ensuring that the UK national minimum wage is provided. Many charities go further and look to the national living wage. Other churches seek comparable roles to that of Pastor and often look to teachers pay given the

key teaching element in a pastor's role. Current guidance on Pastor's salaries may be obtained from the EFCC Office.

The important aspect is that there is both clarity around what the salary is to be, the hours expected and crucially how this will be reviewed. The contract may reference hours being unregimented, but also stress that a normal working week is the expectation with the pastor expected to manage hours to allow for time off in lieu after particularly acute periods.

Best practice is to build in an annual review to consider what inflationary adjustments should be made. The underlying spiritual principle is that 'the labourer deserves his wages' (1 Timothy 5:18) and it is important that the church acts in a God honouring way and with high standards. It is therefore important that the church carefully considers its resources and sources of funding at the outset when considering calling a pastor.

### Pension

Under a process termed 'auto enrolment' It is now a legal requirement that an employer enrolls an employee into an employer's pension scheme when income thresholds are met—see <https://www.gov.uk/workplace-pensions/joining-a-workplace-pension> for detailed government guidance. There is also a duty to offer enrolment even when a monthly threshold is not met, so even if you are engaging a part-time pastor, you may have legal obligations. It is important therefore to read the government guidance available. If you are unsure, help is available through the EFCC Office.

An employer's pension scheme can often be easily achieved through a government backed NEST account. Currently, employers are expected to pay a minimum of 3% of salary into a pension although in reality a higher contribution is made by a contribution from the government of 1% and further increased by an employee's own contributions. The pastor can decline this offer, making his own provision but you will still need to make contributions into the pastor's scheme and periodically review, auto enrol and the pastor opt out.

### Holidays

Any exchange of letters or employment contract should make clear how many days holiday a pastor will be expected to take. On average around 25 days per annum are offered.

### Conferences

Theological and prayer conferences provide a precious time for pastors. They can offer periods of rest, retreat, fellowship, teaching and prayer that just cannot be replicated elsewhere. Churches are encouraged to look to enable pastors to attend one or two such conferences each year and provide financially for them to do so.

## Sabbaticals

A Christian sabbatical is a dedicated period of rest and spiritual renewal, often taken by Pastors, ministry leaders, or lay Christians. Often a sabbatical may be provided for in the 7th year of a Pastor's ministry. It involves completely stepping away from regular duties to focus on prayer, Bible study, and personal growth, fostering a deeper relationship with God and preparing for future service in faith. In the busyness of church life and ministry, often sabbaticals can be neglected or not considered at all, but we encourage your church to make provision for sabbaticals as a means of providing for your Pastor's welfare and spiritual growth, which ultimately blesses the wider church.

## Book Funds

There are potential tax advantages of providing a book fund for a Pastor though by far the greatest advantage is enabling the Pastor to continue to grow in his faith and knowledge and equip him for ministry in an ever-changing society.

## Probationary periods

A probationary period is a period of time, provided for in the contract of employment, to allow the new Pastor and church to get to know each other and establish the new ministry. They are often used in secular employment contracts but should be carefully and prayerfully considered in regard to a calling to ministry. Probationary periods are not appropriate when calling a full-time Pastor. However, probationary periods may be helpful for calls to associate or trainee pastorates where there is a recognition for the need to demonstrate a level of competence.

## iii) Service Occupancy Agreements (SOA)

A service occupancy agreement is used when an employer requires an employee to reside in a property owned by the employer for the better performance of the employee's duties. The agreement creates a licence that is personal to the employee. A pastor serving in a local community who needs to be physically close to those he serves is an obvious example and a service occupancy agreement is essential where the local church is providing accommodation in a manse in order to enable the pastor and family to fulfil his calling. These will typically provide clarity in relation to utility bills, council tax, internal & external maintenance as well as notice periods.







A church without a Pastor is like a flock without a shepherd.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom, Saviour and Good Shepherd of His Church. He is the ultimate Pastor, and he blesses His people with Pastors, elders and deacons.

The risen Lord Jesus Christ has given Pastors to His Church so that the word of God may be preached faithfully and so that believers will grow in godliness and service. A local church can function without a Pastor, but it will be severely hampered, like a flock of sheep without a shepherd.

The aim of this short guide is to help churches pray, think, and work together through the important task of calling a Pastor .



**EFCC** exalting Christ in growing  
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