



# Final Report

December 2015

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## 1. Introduction

A well-known writer recently promoted an understanding of Christian faith and practice that is built around the image of a trampoline. Its energy-giving springiness and flexibility is, he argued, a model for how the Church should be. The world of trampolines stands in sharp contrast to what he calls "Brickworld", a place of rigidity, regulation and structure that is perceived as negative, restrictive and unnecessary.

Ignoring any theological questions it might raise, this is an argument that is mechanically flawed. For in its rush to celebrate all things elastic and springy, it seems not to notice that a trampoline only actually works because it is attached to an extremely rigid and immovable frame. Without that frame, the springs and jump-mat would be completely useless.

This argument also includes no perception of the unseen. It is, for example, only because of the unchanging, immovable and utterly predictable laws of gravity that any trampolining ever takes place. And while the safety nets, with all their rigidity and fun-spoiling necessity might not be worth a mention, they have a vital role to play in releasing its pleasure in relative safety and security.

The idea of trampoline Christianity represents an increasingly common and in my view false dichotomy in Christian thinking. If we only see rigidity and flexibility as two conflicting opposites, then this report is likely to be seen as very much belonging in "brickworld". Much of its content has to do with structure, process, regulation and systems – things that could be seen as getting in the way, if we believe that all it takes to trampoline are springs and a mat.

Yet I want to suggest that the trampoline metaphor is, in reality, quite a helpful one; indeed the intent behind the entire IGNITE project is to generate a vision for ministry that is flexible and energy giving. But it seems that there is already no lack of energy or vision within our Baptist community. What is more often missing is the means to harness and capture that energy, any framework around which it can form, so that our shared life can often fail to be as informed and inspired by the vision of those who participate in it, as it might be.

So I make no apology that much of what follows is seeking to define a clear and rigid framework that can support and enable ministry in the coming decades. I hope it also enables us to be captured and "ignited" by the invisible but vital energy force of God's Spirit. It does not seek to define how to trampoline, because that is something people tend to do best when they are allowed to work it out for themselves. But it seeks to offer both the framework and the safety nets to allow God's people to explore and experience his calling and purpose.

In introducing its contents, I want to thank the IGNITE team who have worked so hard to consult, listen, reflect and collate the vision and ideas that have emerged through this process. I also want to thank the Baptist Union Council for both commissioning this work and also for placing their trust in us as a team to complete it. We also want to thank the many, many people who have contributed to its contents, especially those who have handed over their meetings and fellowship gatherings to our control, and those who have taken the trouble to share their stories, which has at times been a personally demanding experience. We should also pay tribute to the many working groups, committees and other bodies whose existing work and reports have been a rich resource.

We offer this report, not as a "fait accompli" but as a genuine attempt to capture the thinking of Baptists Together as we have encountered it, and to stimulate and inform an ongoing conversation about how we can best invest in ministry and mission in the 21st century.

Phil Jump  
October 2015

## 2. Executive Summary

This review was established by BU Council at its meeting in March 2015. The key brief was to establish a small team that would consult as widely as possible on all aspects of ministry among Baptists Together. The Project Team was appointed by the Baptist Steering Group (BSG) after a process of public advertisement via the BU website and email link. BSG also appointed a small oversight team to guide and hold the process to account. The project leader has reported regularly to BSG throughout. The team included a specific researcher and as well as engaging in widespread consultation and statistical research, has also sought to draw together various reports and consultations going back for some years. This has included a general invitation for ministers and leaders to “share their story” along with significant discussions with colleges, Regional Ministers and the Specialist Teams at Baptist House.

This executive summary seeks to provide an overview of the report that follows, and a narrative which introduces the key aspects the emerging proposals.

### **We were invited to explore three key questions:**

- What sort of ministries will we need in the future?
- What support will these ministries need?
- What of this should be done nationally, regionally and locally?

### **These are not questions that we sought to address in a vacuum:**

- We have a longstanding tradition of recognising and affirming ordained ministry in our Union, through which we have often reflected theologically on the nature of ministry in Christ's Church. One of the foundational documents, which has informed and underpinned much of the thinking of this report, was a paper prepared by an already appointed working group. This is included as appendix 1. Our work has also been informed and inspired by the paper on mission and leadership, written by Roy Searle, which was another of the foundational documents commissioned in preparation for this review. This report can be downloaded from the Baptists Together Website.
- There has been a number of extensive ministry reviews in recent years.
- We have a clear commitment to defining our Union as “Growing healthy churches in relationship for God's mission.”
- Through the Futures Review, the basic principle of accredited ministry was affirmed as a feature of our shared life.

## What have we discovered?

**Ministry is Changing** – our mission context is changing; the way in which churches express and experience ministry is changing; the technology available to us is changing; the kind of people offering for ministry is changing; the roles to which they are eventually called is changing; the way in which our churches support ministry is changing and so we could go on.

We could easily respond by seeking to take a snapshot of the situation as we see it and devising a model of ministry to fit that. We have deliberately chosen not to do this, but rather to ask, “How can we develop a vision for ministry and ways of supporting it that can continue to adapt and be responsive to those changes, while at the same time retaining meaningful continuity with all we have understood and experienced as ministry in our journey thus far?”

We would suggest that this requires three key shifts:

- To re-affirm what we understand by ministry.
- To re-imagine how we recognise and develop ministry.
- To re-define how we support ministry.

## Re-affirming our understanding of ministry

At the heart of this is one simple question

**“For all the changes and realities that we acknowledge, what will continue to define Baptist ministry in future decades?”**

We would offer four key responses to this:

**The Marks of Ministry** – deliberately attempting to shift the emphasis of ministry identity away from any particular “job to be done” towards the development of an understanding of the wide variety of roles, in a way that reflects who we are and what we understand by ministry as a Baptist People. Our vision is to enable an increasingly diverse community of ministers to be embraced, while maintaining a common sense of identity amongst them.

**Personal Development** – building into our Newly Accredited Minister (NAM) programme a deliberate investment that enables individual ministers to explore their future support needs after that period, so that they become equipped to reflect on their context and identify their on-going needs.

**Continuing Ministry Development** – introducing an intentional programme that enables all ministers to reflect on their experience and future vision in order to identify their on-going needs. This includes offering a tool-kit to Regional Ministers, ensuring that Associations have the capacity to offer this programme, and perhaps looking at other events (eg Refresher Conference) as having a key, enabling role.

**Introduction of a Ministry Covenant** – taking seriously the idea that ministers are members of a covenant community. Ministry can therefore be defined less in terms of achieved standards and experience, and more in terms of a forward commitment to “walk together and watch over one another in love”.

**In short, we need ministers who:**

- Display consistent character and behaviour
- Are equipped to recognise their developing needs
- Are engaged in active Ministry Development
- Are engaged in a defined covenant relationship

## Re-imagining how we recognise and develop ministry

There can never be a “one size fits all” approach to recognising and developing ministry. We need to explore how to introduce greater flexibility, while maintaining a clear consistency of standard. This could be achieved by:

**Integrated Ministerial Recognition (MR)** – consistently using the “Marks of Ministry” as the benchmark for affirming an individual’s call to ministry, we offer a series of proposals that will enable a far closer working relationship between Association and National MR Committees. This will ensure a consistency of standard and explore how a more localised approach to National MR can be developed. As a result an individual’s

character and calling can be taken into account more fully, **even** where candidates do not seem to “fit” traditional perceptions of ministry.

**Formation Partnerships** – celebrating and affirming the work of our Baptist colleges and their vital contribution to ministry formation, we also recognise the partnership between London Baptist Association (LBA) and Spurgeon’s College in developing a “portfolio” approach to formation. We would urge that such approaches might be developed and become accessible throughout BUGB.

It is important to emphasise that key to any portfolio route is an effective relationship between an academic community and those who support ministry on the ground. There is already a great deal of effective collaboration between our colleges, associations and other groups such as Urban Expression or Pioneer Collective. Our vision is for “Formation Partnerships” to be established in order to recognise and develop this kind of collaboration.

We would also look to the National MR committee to provide a framework of accountability and oversight. This would allow partnerships greater flexibility and freedom to commend ministers in a way that maintains consistent standards.

**Residential Selection Conference (RSC)** – currently offers a route into ministry through an intensive three-day assessment programme. Whilst this provides flexibility, it has limitations, not least that a great deal depends on a very short, intense process. There is limited scope therefore to respond to those who offer less traditional expressions of ministry. We do not propose to abolish RSC. However the introduction of portfolio formation and greater local decision-making could significantly reduce the need for it. Although where there is still a need for a nationally operated route to accreditation, this could be devolved to a Formation Partnership.

**Bi-vocational Training** – We sense a growing need to particularly embrace a pattern of ministry which has come to be described as “bi-vocational ministry” (recognising that in reality this refers to a variety of approaches and that for some the term “bi-vocational” feels inappropriate) By embedding flexibility into our processes, we enable diverse expressions of ministry to be embraced. Bi-vocational Ministry should be seen as a vital option and an intentional choice, in missional or emerging contexts and traditional church settings. We commend further exploration with our colleges, and proposed Formation Partnerships, to develop relevant approaches to ministerial formation that:

- can be readily accessed and fulfilled by those who remain in some form of paid employment.
- explore the particular and unique challenges of providing ministry alongside some other recognised role or employment.
- provide bi-vocational training in likely areas of application (eg theology and business studies; theology and community development).

Our current “youth specialist” category offers a template for this, combining ministerial formation with a recognised youth-work qualification. We recommend that the Specialist Team includes someone who is clearly recognised as a point of contact for specialist ministries including “bi-vocational”.

**In summary, we need Recognition and Formation that**

- Is consistent and responsive
- Integrates accreditation, learning and local practice
- Relies on local assessment as much as possible
- Welcomes and supports specialist ministries

## Re-defining how we support Ministry

Whatever structures and partnerships we develop as a Baptist community, we have to recognise that the key foundation of ministry support is the local church. A minister's relationship with a calling church is crucial to on-going effectiveness, and it is within the life of the local church that ministry develops within every Christian disciple. We are therefore considering the support of ministry from the perspectives of the local church and the wider Baptist community.

**Supporting ministry in the local church** - Not every church will experience leadership through the appointment of an accredited Baptist Minister. Our future vision needs to recognise and embrace this. At times the varying expectations of a church and minister can result in misunderstandings, tensions and difficulties. Therefore we recommend the following:

**"Foundation in Christian Leadership"** – our colleges and associations already offer a variety of training opportunities for local leaders, including courses developed through the Baptist Training Partnership. We believe that these should be more proactively affirmed and encouraged across Baptists Together, and as much as possible given a common identity that is recognised and meaningful throughout our movement. There is clearly some inconsistency at present both in the availability of this type of training and formation, and the way in which it is recognised and promoted. Our intention is that, as a result, a greater diversity of local leaders would be identified and released to serve, thus further strengthening and equipping healthy local churches.

If this is also shaped by "Marks of Ministry" there is greater possibility that our expectations of leadership however provided, will remain consistent. This could also be the basis of a "foundation for ministry" by which an individual is able to begin ministry formation without making the significant life-changes that are often required once full-time formation begins. This offers greater opportunity for reflection and assessment at an early stage.

**Local Church Code of Practice** – to enable ministry to flourish, the culture of a local church needs to be such that individuals feel adequately supported and empowered to exercise their calling. By introducing a voluntary "**Code of Practice**" we can assist churches in understanding their responsibilities towards a minister and provide an objective basis from which a Regional Minister or other office holder can operate effectively in situations of difficulty.

We commend the development of a suite of resources to enable churches to identify the skill-set they require and to help them to ask the questions which would enable a church and minister to better identify whether they are suited to one another. (There are many examples of these already being provided by Associations and Specialist Teams – these would offer the basis of any such provision).

**Leadership and inter-personal skills** – are crucial to effective ministry. We recommend an analysis of current recognition and formation models to ensure that such skills are being highlighted and developed. We also recommend instituting a "leadership academy" that can draw together the insights and experiences of leadership development that already exist within our Baptist community. In particular we encourage the development of a vision for leadership that is grounded in our understanding of congregational governance and servanthood. One particular expression of this would be an exploration of ways in which full-time ministers can become "leadership mentors", supporting individuals who are offering leadership in neighbouring churches that do not have access to an accredited minister.

**Interim Ministry** – Our discussions have included some engagement with other denominations that have introduced training and recognition of "interim ministers". These are individuals who have training and experience in being able to oversee transition within the life of a local church. We commend further exploration of this in a Baptist context, creating a recognised ministry within our community, which can provide expertise in training and appointing interim moderators during pastoral vacancy.

**Exploring Ministry with young adults** – Many of our young adults take part in various gap-year and intern schemes. This presents us with a challenge and an opportunity to consider how an intern scheme might be developed within our Baptist community, and how this might help participants to explore their longer term calling and vocation. There are several creative schemes currently operating and some of our associations and other church networks are also exploring this. We recommend some investment in bringing such people together to explore how an intern scheme could be further developed and integrated into our overall ministry vision.

**In summary, we need Local Churches where**

- Leaders value and have access to quality training
- Ministers are properly valued and supported
- Effective Godly leadership is developed
- Support is available through transition
- Young adults are mentored and inspired

## Supporting Ministry as Baptists Together

We cannot fulfil this vision without appropriate support and administrative structures. To help this become reality we commend:

**On-line multi-user database** – much of our current capacity to support ministry is absorbed by operating systems of record keeping that could be made significantly more efficient. The introduction of a multi-user database with appropriate protocols would enable much greater collaboration across BUGB. We welcome the “Collaborate” database project and highlight *its strategic importance and its potential for fulfilling the needs, both present and future, of ministry support*. We also recommend that the development of this project should consider and include how key information and data can be collected and stored so as to assist us in monitoring key ministry and mission trends, and in particular our performance in relation to our various justice commitments.

**The role of MR Moderator** – The role of MR moderator is crucial within our ministry structures. While the day-to-day operations and processes might lie with the Ministries Team, it is vital that they are seen to act on behalf of an independent and separately accountable MR committee. We would encourage that the time-investment required for MR moderator is properly measured, and that consideration is given to making this a remunerated secondment. We recognise that the operational side of ministry discipline is the responsibility of the Ministries Team, co-ordinated through the Baptist Steering Group (BSG). However we sense that the regulatory aspect of ministry discipline (the actual decision making rather than the arrangement of interviews etc.) needs to have a degree of independence, enabling it to truly reflect the disciplines of a covenant community rather than a regulatory body. The working reality of this needs further working through, but we commend the principle as something to be affirmed.

**Appointment of a Formation Co-ordinator** – Many of the proposals above require an on-going investment in developing our understanding of ministry and devising appropriate responses. We believe that this would be most effective if made the responsibility of a recognised post-holder, employed within the Ministries Team. This might be a part-time appointment, and needs to be someone who can develop key peer relationships among college principals and other stakeholders. We believe that this post can be funded by savings made through the introduction of the database. There may be value in “forward funding this” pending full implementation of the database.

**Integrated Ministry Process** – Many of our processes require the interaction of associations, National MR Committee and Specialist Team members. We recommend that these are reviewed and documented in a way that defines them from the perspective of the various stakeholders involved.

**Maintaining a forward vision for ministry** – The task of the IGNITE team has been to implement an intensive review of our approach to ministry. In so doing we have become aware not only of the breadth and depth of this task, but have also had to consider how much capacity there is to introduce change at any given time. We offer the recommendations of this report as those which we consider most appropriate and necessary in our immediate future. It is of course now a matter for the established structures of our Union to consider these and take things forward for implementation.

However, we should not lose the sense of needing to continue to look forward, and to recognise that this is often best done collaboratively. While BSG holds the overall strategic and operational brief for our Union, we believe there could be significant value in a collaborative group being established to work more directly alongside the Ministries Team, through which BSG might exercise that more general oversight.

**In summary we need a Union that:**

- Stays in touch through effective and efficient sharing of information
- Has accountable leadership
- Invests in Ministry Development
- Has clear and transparent support and disciplinary processes
- Continues to develop a strategic vision for ministry

## 3. Data Analysis

One of the reports that was commissioned for our consideration was significant research into leadership and mission by Roy Searle. In it he included the observation that "the first task of leadership is to define reality." Therefore as IGNITE set about exploring the future of ministry it made sense, as far as possible to explore ministry as it is currently being exercised across *Baptist's Together*. What follows is an analysis based on anonymised data extracted from the BUGB Ministries Department database. This only covers some of the main findings. More information can be provided as required.

It seems important to highlight not only the factual evidence that has been gleaned through this exercise, but the value of the statistical approach that underpins it. We have to say that there are times when policy on various matters has been founded on anecdotal evidence, untested perceptions and simple assumption. We might not be surprised if in such instances, the resulting policy does not achieve the desired results, or indeed sets out to solve problems that never existed in the first place.

It has been interesting for team members to participate in various meetings (at times not directly linked to their IGNITE role) and to be able to share and quote some of the statistical analysis that has been gleaned. At times this has flown in the face of prevailing assumption. We commend this approach and encourage our Union to recognise that there are several within our community who have the necessary skills to enable this.

We would also highlight more generally the point made in several places in this report. If we have clear aims and values, it is important to consider what information and data we need to obtain and record, if we are to effectively analyse our future performance in this area. In short – we cannot present and interpret information we have not stored – we cannot store information we have not collected. If we want to know how we have improved in five years' time, we need to consider what information we need to start collecting now.

The data on which this report is based was extracted on two separate dates: 16 July 2015 and 22 September 2015. The first extract allowed us to explore what information could be readily gathered and analysed. The second set was extracted to allow what we have reported to be based on the most current information possible.

Most of the statistics cited in this section are based on data collected on 22 September 2015. However some of the analysis was linked to annual return data, for which the latest date was 2014. This analysis is unlikely to be affected by any changes made to the database between 16 July and 22 September. Therefore those statistics were drawn from the first set of data extracted (ie on 16 July). The narrative indicates where this is the case.

Information contained within a database is constantly changing and any analysis based on data extracted can inevitably only be a 'snapshot.' That is true of the following analysis. At different times of year various factors will cause data to change. That is certainly true of the time over which our data is collected. At least three such factors are significant to this analysis:

- For a variety of reasons September is a time when many ministers move pastorates.
- September is also a time when new Ministers-in-Training (MiTs) begin their studies
- September is when many students who have completed the college part of their formation are ordained, enrolled and move from MiT status to becoming Newly Accredited Ministers (NAMs).

All of these mean that had the data been extracted a few days later may have looked slightly different. However overall these variations would have been relatively minor. The date selected for the second data extraction balanced the risk of change with allowing enough time for meaningful analysis.

## The Overall Picture

As a Union, we celebrate and support many expressions of local church ministry, but this continues to be mostly expressed through a pattern of ordained and accredited ministry. There are currently around 2700 accredited Baptist Ministers of whom just over 900 are retired. Many of our churches though receive ministry from local groups of leaders and/or elders none of whom would be designated as a “minister” – in others ministry is exercised by individuals who are called and recognised by the church but, for various reasons, are not nationally accredited. The statistics that follow, seek to offer a more detailed picture of these realities:

### Total ministers based on current Accreditation status

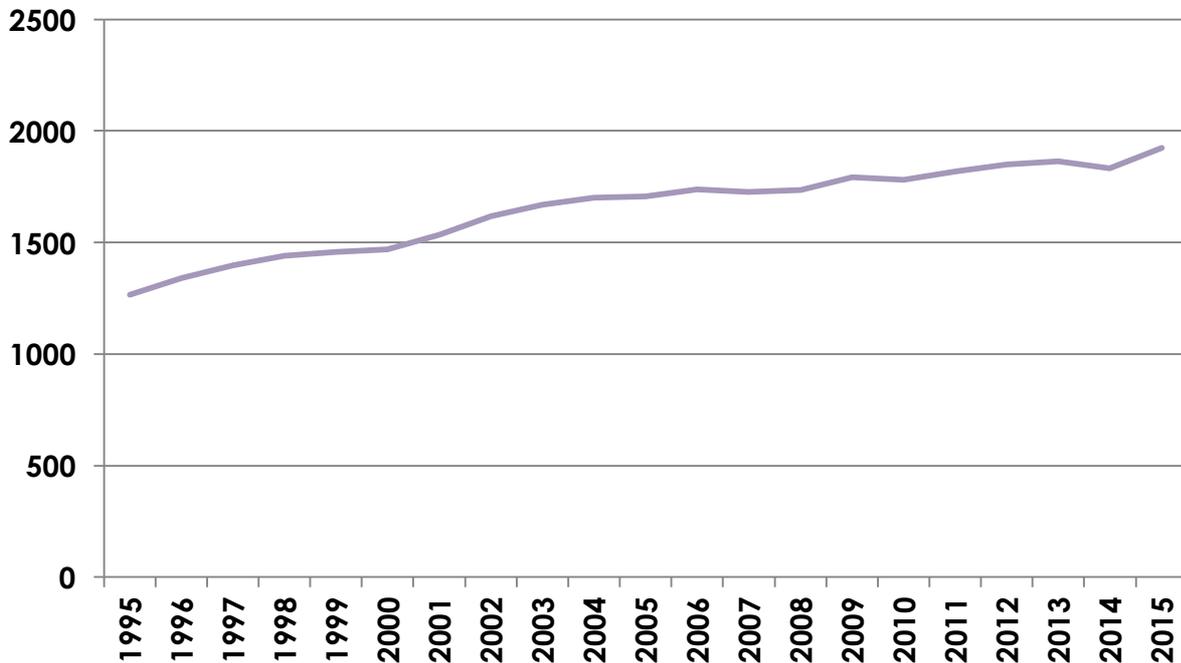
Category	Female	Male	Total
<b>Fully Accredited</b>			
Minister	155	1066	1221
Youth Specialist	11	18	29
Evangelist	4	15	19
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>1099</b>	<b>1269</b>
<b>NAM</b>			
Minister	60	117	177
Youth Specialist		7	7
Evangelist	3	5	8
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>192</b>
<b>In Training</b>			
Minister	49	100	149
Youth Specialist	2		2
Evangelist		1	1
Church Worker	2		2
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Applicant</b>			
Minister	11	42	53
Youth Specialist		1	1
Evangelist		2	2
Church Worker	1		1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Other</b>			
Retired	75	904	979
Other	25	35	60
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>939</b>	<b>1039</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>2313</b>	<b>2711</b>

**Table 1: Breakdown of all ministers on the accredited list as at 22 September 2015**

Table 1 offers a breakdown of all the accredited ministers, according to main ministerial categories and accreditation status. Overall there are 2711 ministers who are either accredited or in the process of seeking accreditation. 398 are women, 2313 are men. Over a third of the ministers on this list (979 out of 2711) are retired. On 22 September there were 154 ministers in training and there were 57 applicants awaiting a

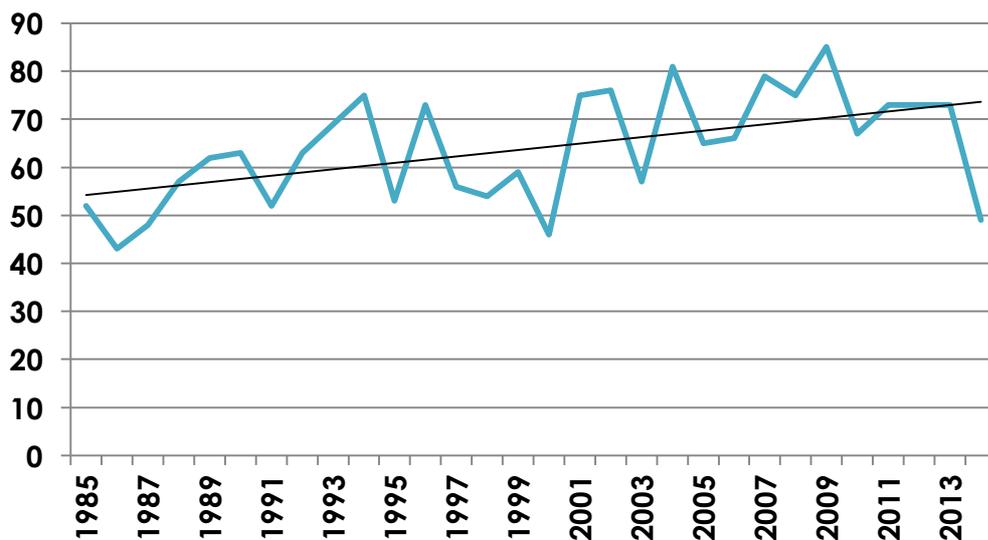
decision regarding ministerial recognition. Overall the vast majority are categorised as 'ministers' with 39 categorised as 'Youth Specialists', 30 as 'Evangelist' and 3 as 'Church Worker' (in all 3 cases these are Parish Nurses).

The 'Other' category comprises 35 people on Leave of Absence and 25 who are 'Out of Pastorate.'



**Figure 1: Total Number of Ministers Registered 1995-2015**

Figure 1 shows an upward trend in the number of ministers registered in our churches over the last 20 years. Of itself this does not mean that more ministers are accredited. Potentially it could be the result of better recording and reporting.



**Figure 2: Total Number of Ministers Enrolled on the Accredited List since 1985**

However Figure 2 shows an upward trend in the number of accredited ministers being enrolled over the last 30 years.

In Figure 3 we then compared this with the number of ministers retiring over the same period. This reveals that over the last 30 years there have consistently been more ministers enrolled than have retired. 2014 was an exception. It should however be noted that the two trend lines indicate that the gap is narrowing.

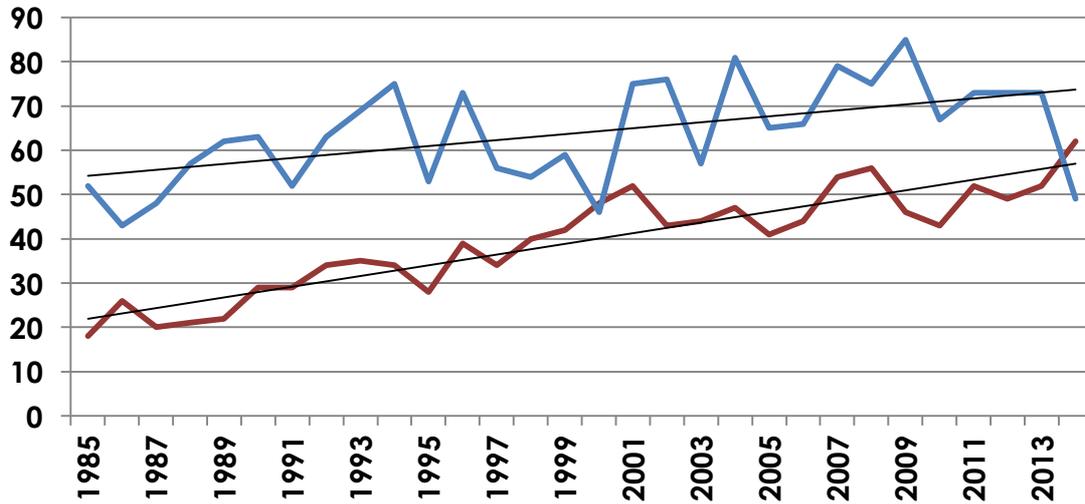


Figure 3: Total Number of Ministers Enrolled on the Accredited List since 1985 (in blue) set against the number of ministers retiring each year since 1985 (in dark red).

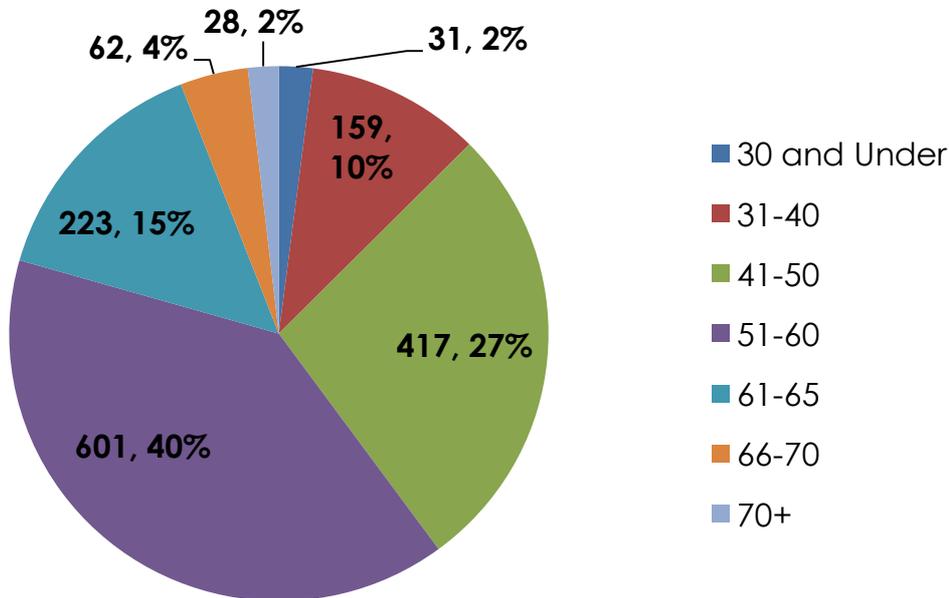


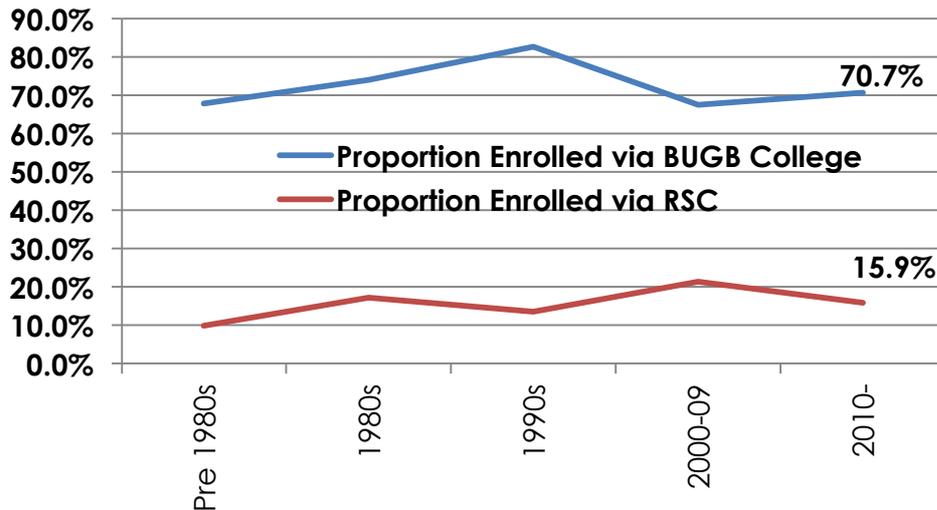
Figure 4: Age Profile of all active ministers on the accredited list as at 22 September 2015

Figure 4 offer a breakdown of all active ministers on the accredited list, according to age bracket. This does not include applicants, MiTs and those who are retired. These leaves us with 1521 ministers, of whom 1018 (67%) are aged between 41 and 60.

If we assume an average retirement age of 65 we would expect 695 ministers to retire in the next 10 years. In the *last* 10 years we have had 705 ministers enrol. Given that the numbers enrolling has been trending upwards we would expect enrolments to continue to exceed retirements for at least the next 10 years.

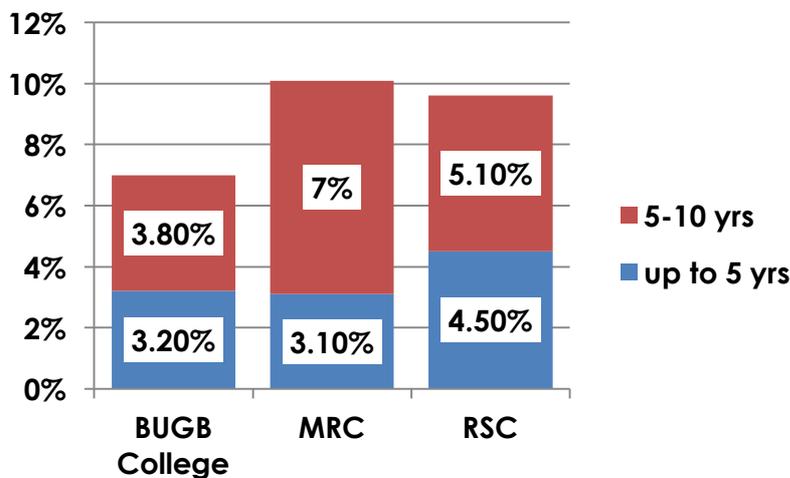
### Active Ministers' Routes into Ministry

We also analysed the routes active ministers took into accredited Baptist ministry. Of the 1521 active ministers on the accredited list, just under  $\frac{3}{4}$  (72.6%) enrolled via a BUGB Baptist college. Figure 5 shows the trend over time. In the 1990s this figure was over 80%. It currently stands at 70.7%.



**Figure 5: Chart showing percentage of active ministers enrolled via a BUGB affiliated college and Residential Selection Conference (RSC)**

Other routes are other UK colleges (2.9%), MRC Decision (6.3%). A few passed a BU exam (discontinued since the 1980s), while others came into ministry via international colleges or have pursued the portfolio route. However, by far the most commonly used other route is through the Residential Selection Conference. About 17.2% of all active ministers enrolled via RSC. The current figure stands at around 16% (see Figure 5).



**Figure 6: Percentage of Ministers enrolled since 2000, no longer on accredited list**

What impact does the route into ministry have on how long ministers remain on the accredited list? Figure 6 highlights the percentage of ministers, enrolled since 2000, who are no longer on the accredited list, whose ministry lasted less than 10 years. Of those enrolled through an MRC decision just over 10% are no longer on the accredited list 10 years later. The figure for those enrolled via RSC is slightly lower, at 9.6%. The equivalent figure for those enrolled at a Baptist college is 7%. These figures do not include those who have died whilst in ministry or those who are retired.

**Ministerial Trends over last 20 years**

One of the key findings is that our Baptist churches are calling greater numbers of ministers. In figure 6 we see the number of our churches without any minister fall from 723 in 1995 to 440 currently. This number fell steadily until 2006; since then it has levelled off. Figure 6 shows that the numbers of churches with 1 or 2 ministers has increased over the same period. However the most marked change can be seen in Figure 7 in the rise in the number of churches with 3 or 4 ministers. Indeed some have 5 or even 6 ministers.

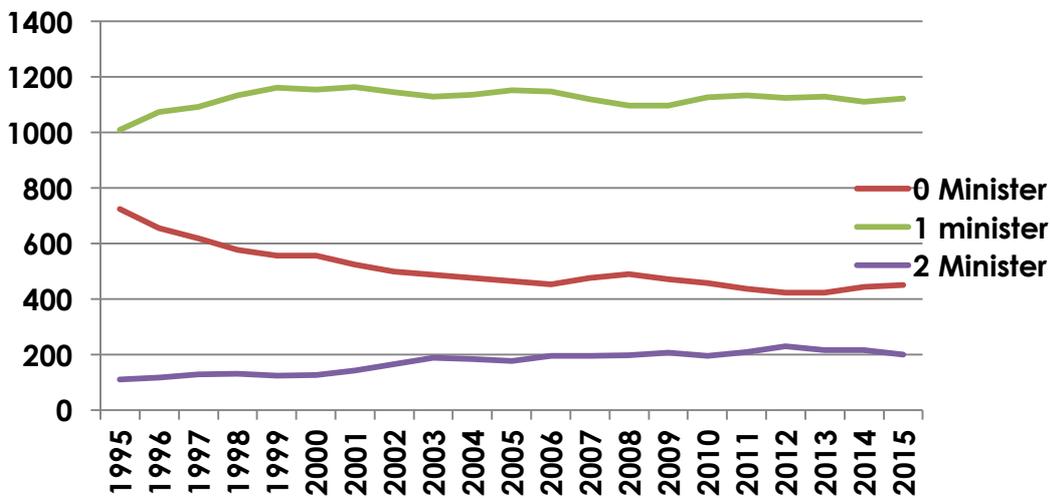


Figure 6: Number of Churches with no minister, 1 minister and 2 ministers, plotted over last 20 years

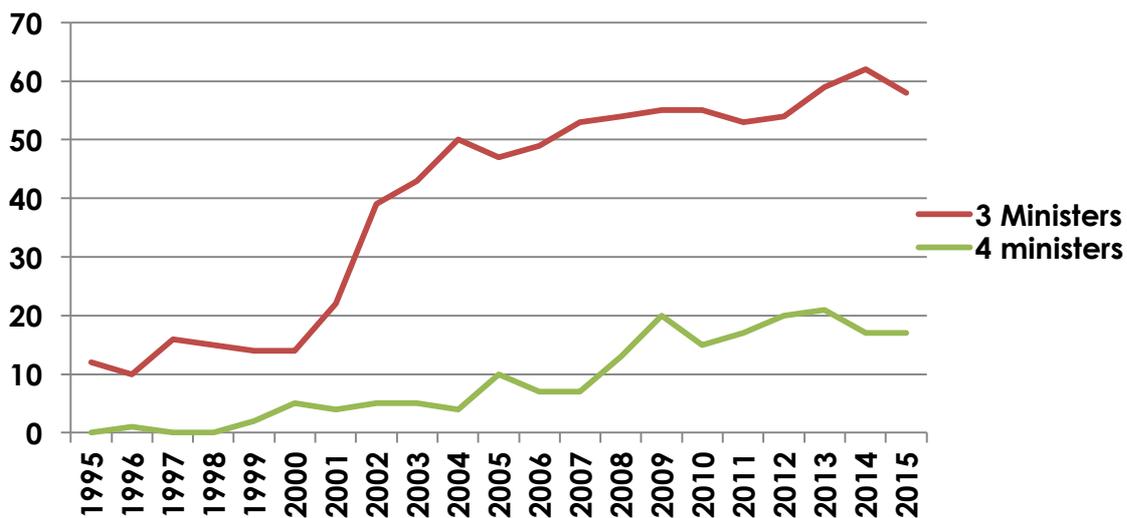


Figure 7: Number of Churches with 3 or 4 ministers, plotted over last 20 years

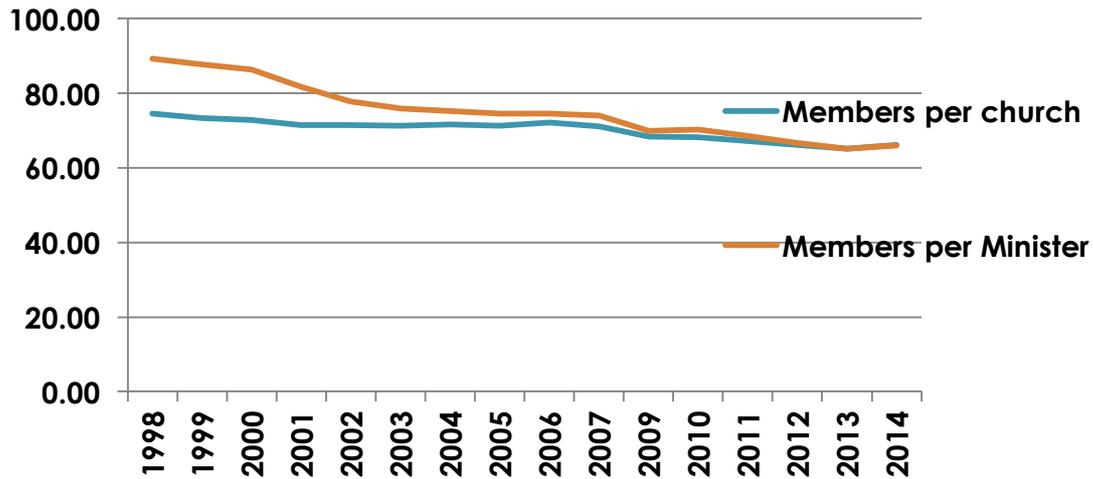


Figure 8: Chart showing trend of number of members per church, and the number of members per minister in churches since 1998 (the date for when Annual Return Statistics were available)

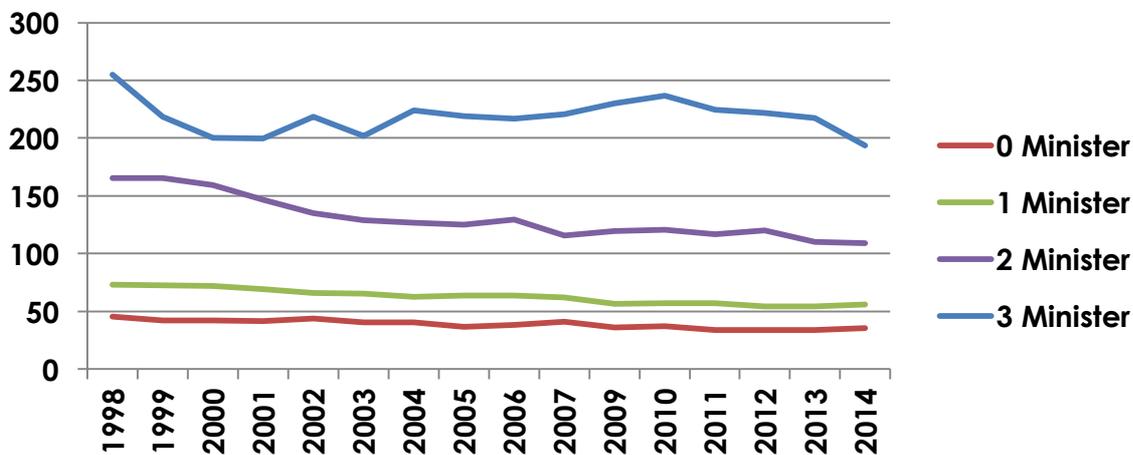


Figure 9: Average size of church without a minister, and with 1 minister, 2 ministers and 3 ministers

Figures 8 and 9 also highlight this trend. In Figure 8 we can see that Annual return statistics are indicating that the average membership of Baptist churches has fallen slightly since 1998. However at the same time the ratio of members to ministers has also fallen. This means that there are more ministers per member now than in 1998. This also borne out by the Figure 9, especially in churches with multiple ministers. For example the average membership of a church with 3 ministers in 1998 was 255. Last year the equivalent figure was 193.

### The Current Position

Figure 10, on the next page outlines the current position. By far the most common pattern of ministry in our churches is to have 1 minister. This is the case in around 3 out of every 5 churches (61%). However 23% of our churches (440) report having no minister. Around 16% adopt multiple minister models.

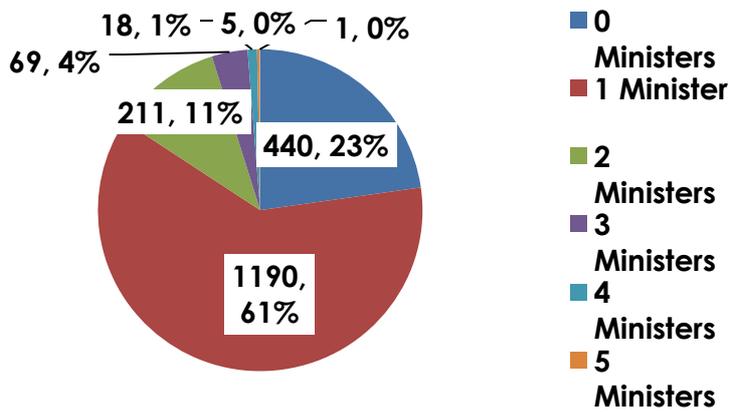


Figure 10: Pie Chart showing proportion of churches within BUGB, broken down according to the number of ministers

Figure 10 does not say anything about accredited Baptist ministry. In figure 11 when we look at those churches who have an accredited Baptist minister we see that 46% of our churches do not have any accredited minister. When we break it down further, in figure 12 we see that more than  $\frac{3}{5}$  of our churches do not have a minister who trained at a BUGB college.

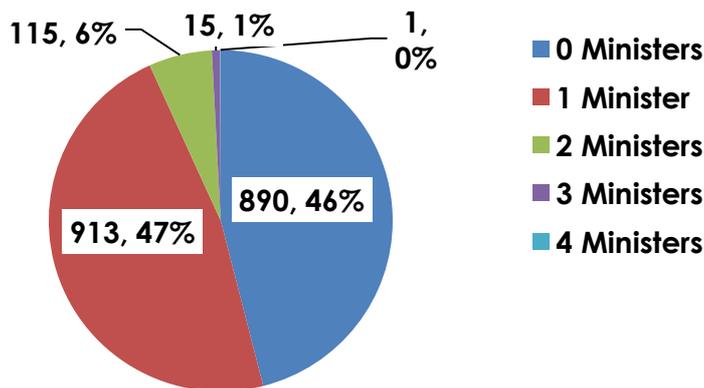


Figure 11: Pie Chart showing proportion of churches within BUGB, broken down according to the number of accredited ministers

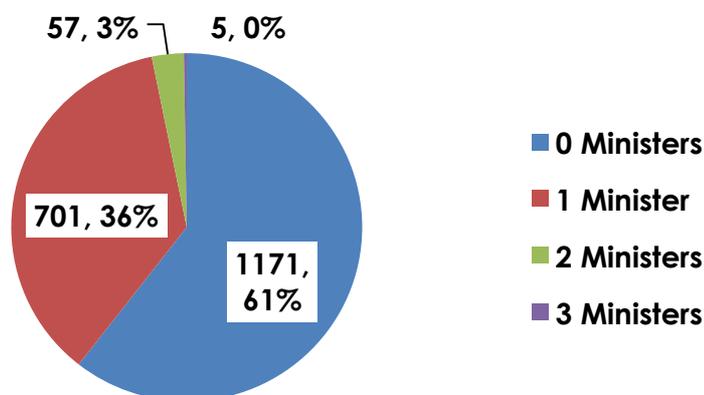


Figure 12: Pie Chart showing proportion of churches within BUGB, broken down according to the number of accredited ministers who trained at a Baptist college.

Although we have been able to follow trends in the total number of ministers, we have less precision in gauging how ministry is practised. In particular these figures do not tell us how many of those ministries are full time or part time.

Between 2004 and 2011, National Settlement Team (NST) produced data which highlighted this. Figure 13 shows that over the period the number of posts that were part time increased, from around 19.5% in 2004 to 25.5% in 2011. If we included MiTs in that analysis that figure increased to 22% in 2004 and just under 31% in 2011.

If this trend continued we would expect that by now around 26% of posts would be part time rising to 28.7% by 2020 and 31.4% by 2025.

Pulling various trends together from this analysis we would expect the number of ministers to continue to rise, but that what has often been traditionally considered 'full time ministry' may be less common in future. Ministry could be exercised quite differently in future and it is wise to consider how these changes might impact us and how we might shift to accommodate it.



**Figure 13: Percentage of ministry roles which were part time (source NST)**

## 4. Marks of Ministry

One of the foundational questions that this review has set out to answer, perhaps even THE foundational question, is “**What will define Baptist Ministry in future decades?**” Much has been shared that offers insightful and even visionary responses to this. We particularly commend the paper by Roy Searle (mentioned in the introduction to section 3) as something that our churches, associations and colleges should seriously examine alongside reports like this one.

There are many realities that have given rise to this question, but two of particular relevance are:

**Patterns of Ministry:** The way in which ministry emerges and is exercised in our churches today is increasingly diverse. Some simply struggle to afford anything resembling a stipendiary, ordained minister on a full or even part-time basis; some are appointing more than one minister, often in specialist roles that might once have been undertaken by volunteers; some are even questioning whether paid ministry remains the most appropriate deployment of what is often the largest proportion of their financial expenditure. Many of our churches either through necessity or conviction have developed effective patterns of ministry, for instance with elders or leadership teams, which simply do not involve anyone who would comply with any traditional perception of an ordained minister. Even where that more formal expression of ministry remains, it is often in a context where tasks, once associated with an ordained minister, are shared with others in a pattern often described as “body ministry”. This is not simply a reaction to financial pressure but one way of embracing of a pattern of church-life that many would argue more genuinely reflects our understanding of what it means to be the “Body of Christ.” In addition, many churches experiencing a pastoral vacancy have not simply looked to an “external candidate” (an accredited minister commended by the wider Baptist Community), but also “internal candidates” (individuals from within the congregation who are open to be formed and developed by the wider Baptist community). Our research has revealed that less than 50% of BUGB churches currently receive ministry from an individual who has followed the traditional route of Association Recognition, College Formation and Accreditation.

**Expressions of Ministry:** Coupled with, but also distinct from, the above is a recognition that “ministry” is also expressed in an increasing diversity of roles and appointments. This would include chaplaincy, evangelist roles, and church-planters with many seeking to combine some form of ministry calling and what might often be described as “secular employment”. These tend to be described as “Bi-Vocational Ministers” though many question the helpfulness of this term (and indeed the idea that any form of employment can be described as “secular”). Even where ministry continues to be defined as the senior leader of a local congregation, there tends to be a greater sense (often more amongst ministers and local leaders than other congregational members) that there needs to be a stronger missional and strategic element to that, in contrast to what is seen as the more traditional role of pastor-teacher. There have been some quite intentional developments in this direction, for example the establishment of Youth Specialist and more recently Pioneer Ministry formation tracks within BUGB.

We clearly need an approach that is able to develop and support these various expressions of ministry, while at the same time not creating an unmanageable array that cannot be resourced and sustained effectively. One of the key tasks of the IGNITE project has not only been to reflect on the implications of these present realities, but also to explore what new patterns of ministry are likely to emerge in the forthcoming decades. Our mission context is changing, the needs of local churches are changing, the opportunities and challenges we confront are changing and even our understanding of what it means to be a Gospel people is changing. We need ministry that can both respond to and anticipate these realities. We also need ministry that remains true to our foundational understanding of what it means to be called and set aside for this vocation.

Historically, we have tended to accommodate more obvious developments by creating additional categories within the accredited lists. This has reflected a genuine openness to include and embrace those who embark upon new patterns of ministry, but it has not been without its shortcomings. This is often because

our systems and processes have inevitably been somewhat unresponsive, having to catch up with developments and therefore never quite feeling satisfactory to those who engage with them.

Clearly, one approach for IGNITE would be to try to look ahead, so that we might better anticipate what new expressions of deployment and role are likely to emerge, and seek to define approaches to recognition, formation and accreditation that better suit them. This might be of benefit in the short to medium term, but risks us simply becoming locked into new visions of ministry, albeit updated, that are likely themselves to become obsolete within a few years.

We have therefore deliberately taken a different, perhaps even opposite track. Rather than seeking to identify what new categories of ministry or patterns of training and formation might be needed, we have asked two different questions:

**For all their diversity, what do our current and anticipated expressions of ministry have in common?** Whether we consider them to be a Pioneer, Prophet, Evangelist or Pastor-Teacher, what are the common abilities and behaviours within such people that make us comfortable in commending them as “ministers”. We would suggest that rather than developing new categories of ministry, we try as much as possible to work towards a “single list” of accredited persons. This would recognise that their experience and abilities might be quite different, but place the emphasis on what they have in common. One of the papers that council commissioned as part of the IGNITE review, offered a theological overview of our understanding of ministry. This has been developed into the tangible “marks” that are outlined below.

**How can we build on-going flexibility into our approaches to ministry support and development?** We do not see IGNITE as primarily seeking to cast a particular vision. Instead we are asking how our Union can continually release the vision and potential of those who are part of it. This includes being a Union that invites and initiates such thinking, and is organised in a way that can respond and adapt to our sense of God’s leading when it emerges. We suggest that this requires structures that are not restrictive and limiting, but that do offer clear frameworks and boundaries within which there can be greater flexibility and creativity.

We acknowledge that we have retained a focus on the inherited concept of nationally recognised, accredited and ordained Baptist Ministry. The Futures consultations clearly revealed a widespread desire for this to continue, and little has emerged since to challenge this.

However, we must also recognise other patterns of ministry and leadership that have been identified above. These are of great benefit to many of our churches, and it is vital to engage with and support all who are entrusted with leadership within our congregations and beyond. Placing our initial focus on ordained ministry is in no way dismissive of these, but rather an affirmation of their importance. By developing a definitive expression of the qualities of this kind of ministry, we have a foundation from which to provide support and recognition to other expressions of leadership.

This requires a change of thinking in our approach. Our Union has most recently sought to define Baptist Ministry through a schedule of core competencies. This was an understandable step in the right direction of seeking some shared perception of this calling and was largely developed as a reaction to changes in employment law, offering churches an objective basis from which to review and assess on-going appointments. It also offered itself as a foundation for the development and regulation of college formation and Association MR procedures.

However, to define ministry in this way creates two problems:

It reduces ministry to a “Job to be done” – a role for which people can be trained. This often leads, in local church contexts, to individuals questioning the value of employing someone to undertake tasks that others seem able to perform adequately. It also leaves individuals who explore a sense of calling, feeling that they are being assessed against their ability to fulfil a particular set of prescribed tasks, when their own sense of vocation may be to something quite different. This mitigates against any alternative patterns of leadership such as those referenced above. At best, this can leave people feeling like a round peg in a square hole, at worst, it can generate significant feelings of rejection and disaffection.

By using competencies as the basis of assessing people for ministry, the distinction between the local church as employer and our Union as the accrediting body is also blurred. We would argue that a schedule of core competencies is a helpful resource to be offered to local churches as part of the advisory role of specialist and Association teams. **However it is primarily down to the local church to determine the core competencies for any ministry appointment it wishes to make** (and indeed whether any given individual is able to display them). The task of our Union is to commend people whose character and approach means they will undertake any task in a way that exemplifies a particular set of values and behaviours that we designate as "Baptist Ministry".

This then begs the question as to what should be the basis for any shared recognition of ministerial suitability. The Review of Formation and Funding working group identified and responded to these limitations by suggesting that core competencies should be supplemented by a catalogue of virtues and values. We would affirm the spirit of this, but question whether this leads to an unduly complex situation, and also risks failing to express properly their complementarity.

We have identified the need for ministry in the future that is flexible and multi-faceted. If we seek to define such ministries primarily in the language of competencies, we risk producing an ever expanding and unmanageable schedule, accompanied by an equally complex catalogue of categories, qualifying offices and so on.

We have already identified that we propose a shift in the opposite direction, seeking to explore what people have in common that defines them as those we feel able to affirm and accredit, to some degree irrespective of role.

It is on this basis that we propose the introduction of "Marks of Ministry." Other terms were considered, including *capabilities*, but there is a sense that whatever designation is used, with time, the title begins to define expectations rather than the intent of first choosing it. In other words we are seeking a term that expresses less of an interest in what individuals can "do" in favour of an emphasis on who they are and why they do what they do.

"Mark" is sufficiently ambiguous to draw its meaning from that collective intent, yet is not completely abstract. A mark is a tangible imprint that reveals something of the character of the person who has made it. It is an impression that can be made in a variety of contexts, but there is a consistency derived not so much from where it has been made but what has made it. We would expect these "marks of ministry" to be detectable in whatever role an individual, who was so recognised and accredited, went on to fulfil.

### **What then are we accrediting?**

The idea of "marks of ministry" arises from the question, "What are we accrediting?" Many may feel uncomfortable with this form of words, arguing that ministry is about people not "things". We recognise this, but would nonetheless argue that without this "What" any assessment of ministry becomes subjective and vague. We need to be able to give a clear account of what it is that we have detected within individuals that causes us to affirm them, and for that matter be clear about what is absent when we do not.

We would suggest that there are three crucial stages at which we should seek to detect "marks of ministry", and that the particular "marks" under scrutiny will be affected by that stage:

**Ministerial Recognition:** What are the inherent characteristics that we would expect individuals to demonstrate as affirmation of their suitability for ministry? These are aspects of character that we would expect to be present in those looking for ministerial recognition whatever experience of local church leadership they may or may not have had. They are likely to be expressed through instinct, personality, interaction with others and an existing degree of "standing" in church and other contexts.

**Ministerial Formation:** What are the particular characteristics that we would want to nurture and develop as part of a programme of ministerial formation? These may not be present in individuals at

the outset of their ministry journey, but we would expect there to be some aptitude to develop them, with evidence of this emerging through their formation experience. These are the marks that would define the interventions that constitute a programme of formation and any associated assessments, both vocational and academic.

**Ministerial Practice:** These are the behaviours and attitudes that we would expect individuals to demonstrate and develop as an on-going expression of their vocation. This is likely to include issues of personal discipleship and growth, and also how they reflect their covenant identity as ministers who are accredited and accountable beyond the local church.

We have compiled some initial suggestions as to what these might be. The purpose of offering this paper for consultation is to invite interested parties to consider these and offer suggestions for improvement. We welcome feedback, requests for clarification, concerns regarding what has been omitted or overlooked, and so on. We do not see what follows as the finished article but a discussion starter! Responses are welcome at [ignite@baptist.org.uk](mailto:ignite@baptist.org.uk)

## The Marks of Ministry Calling.

**Clear evidence of a call that originates from God.** This will be supported by personal testimony and attested by other mature Christians who know the candidate well. We should expect a “balance” between a person’s clear confidence in their calling, yet at the same time a realism about the implications of such a call, which is likely to involve some degree of personal struggle. We would expect evidence that this sense of call is the result of more than human aspiration, and that someone has recognised and explored other options and remained obedient in the face of these.

**A personal maturity and deepening of a candidate’s relationship with Christ.** We would expect that individuals have a Christ-likeness and can show themselves to be people of prayer who seek to “dwell richly” in the Word of God. We should expect them to share the story of those events, experiences, disciplines and relationships which have deepened their own personal faith and walk with God.

**Clear evidence that a candidate is someone whom others naturally trust and follow.** It would be unusual for this not to be evidenced by a reasonably senior and responsible role within the sending church. In its absence there should be clear and understandable reasons why, communicated not only by the individual, but others who can attest the reality of the situation. But we should not dismiss the evidence of this quality being seen in other aspects of a person’s life, and indeed expect some degree of consistency between working life, social and community contexts. As well as attracting trust, we should seek evidence that those who sense a call to ministry have the character that makes them worthy of it, and that they do not abuse it when granted.

**A clear sense that God’s purposes matter more to a candidate than personal goals and aspirations.** To some degree this should be evidenced by the fact that candidates see themselves as following a call rather than pursuing a career. There should be evidence of this from the Christian journey: they may be leaders, but should also demonstrate themselves as those who put the interests of others before their own. How has a sense of God’s purposes, God’s sovereignty, the needs of God’s people and the disciplines of being part of a Christian community shaped their discipleship and service? Where is the clear evidence of this in their journey so far? Where are the examples of servanthood and humility in their stories?

**A sense of belonging to the Body of Christ in all its diversity.** We should expect ministers and leaders to come from a wide range of ethnic, gender, socio-economic and other backgrounds. While

recognising that they will be shaped by their life experience and worldview, it is vital that they can value and include people who are different from themselves, and that they do not display prejudice and inappropriate value judgements in their perceptions and interactions with people. We should expect that they welcome difference and diversity as an opportunity to grow and learn from others.

**A proven ability and adequate humility to listen and learn.** A necessary pre-requisite for formation is the ability to apply experience and learning to new situations. Servant leaders are those who can demonstrate that they still have much to learn, that they respect and evaluate the views of others and that they are gracious in the face of opposition and difference. We should expect evidence in both church and work life that they have been open to and influenced by the thinking and insights of others, that they recognise their own limitations and are willing to expand their boundaries.

**An individual with measurable leadership potential.** While opportunities for leadership may, to this point, have been limited, we might reasonably expect some existing contexts where candidates have demonstrated leadership potential. This will largely be evidenced by their interactions with other people. This will include: Self-awareness, including a recognition of their impact on others, and acknowledging a sense of their own shortcomings and negative traits; the ability to enthuse, inspire and excite others; having, not only, a vision for change but some sense of how this could be achieved; the ability to influence, co-ordinate, pull together and bring out the best in others; a sense of God's vision and purpose as distinct from human aspiration and ideals.

**Tenacity and character in the face of disappointment and struggle.** It is important that suitability for ministry is not only tested in a context of success, but also of struggle. We might reasonably expect some evidence of remaining personally committed in the face of disappointment or simply the routine and mundane, but also being able to encourage and re-motivate others. This needs to be tinged with realism, that candidates have demonstrated empathy and engagement with the struggles of others and not simply an "imposed enthusiasm" in the face of genuine difficulty and distress.

**Fruits of ministry in the here and now.** While recognising that we are assessing people at a preliminary stage, it seems reasonable to expect that there will be some evidence of effective ministry already present. What have been the fruits of a person's existing contributions in the life of God's people? Using the model of Ephesians 5, we might expect at least **one** expression of this ministry to be:

- Evidence of others becoming followers of Christ through their influence
- Evidence of others learning and growing in Christ through their influence
- Evidence of others being supported and strengthened in situations of struggle and vulnerability through their intervention
- Evidence of a ministry that extends beyond their own local church
- A grasp/vision of realities that they want to challenge through their Gospel convictions
- Evidence of pioneering new Gospel and Kingdom contexts

As stated above, we offer these marks more as an illustrative rather than definitive list at this stage. What we see as more important is to reach a consensus where any MR assessor could express with confidence how a successful ministry candidate has offered clear evidence of demonstrating a number of agreed criteria – criteria that we believe are best expressed as "marks of ministry".

We also sense that there remain local church contexts, where for various reasons, individuals find it difficult to express and explore a call to ministry. This may be because current patterns of church-life do not enable their particular giftings to emerge, or because of inherent assumptions about who is and who is not called

to ministry. Our hope is that making these “marks of ministry” well-known and accepted will be one way of challenging such realities.

## The Marks of Effective Ministry Formation.

These are the characteristics, capabilities and motivations that we would expect to nurture and hone through a process of formation. They may or may not be demonstrated or present when an individual is accepted, but they should emerge or develop as formation continues. These are marks that might be demonstrated in quite diverse ways as ministry forms in different contexts, but they are marks that will nonetheless be present.

**Clear evidence that through the process of formation an individual's relationship with God has become deeper and stronger.** We might expect that any process of formation will introduce a candidate to what might be called the “technical” skills of ministry. While these are important, we sense it is also crucial that a minister remains a disciple of Jesus, whose relationship with God is enriched and deepened through experience of ministry and leadership - not undermined. We have to acknowledge that specific experiences in ministry can have a negative impact on an individual's spirituality. We would look for evidence that a person has the mechanisms to recognise and cope with such realities, and that overall faith has deepened in the transition to ministerial leadership.

**Being someone who is a self-starter and takes initiative.** Irrespective of the eventual role, a minister should be someone who naturally sees the possibilities for things to be different and takes responsibility to initiate steps towards that. Through formation we should expect that people have been presented with opportunities to demonstrate this, supported in crafting their responses and have gained the confidence and aptitude to be natural agents of change. They should be natural responsibility-takers and not simply passive recipients of the status quo. This might be expressed through an intentional one-to-one pastoral relationship or by planting a new church, but a minister is nonetheless a responsibility-taker, when need for change is evident.

**Development in becoming a leader and a team-builder.** We struggle to envisage any ministry context where an appropriate possession of leadership and team-building skills is not essential. This needs to be a crucial element in any process of formation with opportunities for both learning, but also applying and testing these skills within an appropriate context. We recognise that there are some models of leadership that fly in the face of our traditions and understandings of Scripture, and that in response some Baptists have become reticent about promoting the concept of leadership at all. We believe that this is both mistaken and to the detriment of the local church. We need to reclaim a Biblical understanding of leadership not by avoiding the term, but by re-defining it in a way that reflects our vision and values as a Baptist community.

**Being someone who seeks and draws others into an awareness of God's presence.** We recognise that for many individuals this will continue to be expressed in a ministry context through the traditional role of pastor-teacher. However we believe that this is an essential element in any expression of ministry. Indeed it is this that is one of the defining characteristics of genuine Christian ministry rather than mere human activity. If we are to seek new expressions of ministry, many of which will not be defined by traditional support structures or inherited roles, this is likely to become increasingly a defining mark of ministry. In many traditions this is expressed in presidential and sacramental language; we have good reason to resist this, but whether someone is an evangelist, prophet, pioneer, apostle, pastor or teacher, this mark of ministry is to draw others to Christ in the midst of that role.

**Demonstrating that an individual is a theologian or “God thinker”.** Coupled with the above we would argue that another key mark is to be someone who responds to any situation and challenge with Christian maturity and insight. Glen Marshall puts this well in a submission he was asked to make to the project following a meeting with college principals. The section in question is worthy of being reproduced in full.

*“The Church in the UK today is under pressure and facing decline. As a minority community in a pluralistic society we face two particular risks: on the one hand despair, on the other desperate pragmatism. Both reactions are faithless. Despair gives up on the God who never gives up on us, it settles for less than God intends. Desperate pragmatism puts its trust in whatever seems to “work” and lacks the wisdom to judge if a particular course of action is true to the Way of Christ. Those called to minister to the Church of Christ are charged with a responsibility to help us to avoid such folly and to walk instead the path of faithful adventure.*

*For this we need ministers who are theologically savvy, rooted in the scriptures and in touch with now. We need women and men who are able to interpret the gospel with faith and imagination, nourishing those whom they serve and equipping them for mission in today’s world. This requires a profound understanding of The Bible, a thorough familiarity with theology and a deep faith in the enduring significance of the Christian message. We need local theologians who are neither squeezed into the world’s mould nor shackled to the church’s past.”*

**Having the inter-personal skills to build and maintain wholesome community.** Some of those who contributed to this project did so from the perspective of providing support and response when ministry breaks down. Almost without exception the key failing they cited was an absence of those aptitudes most often described as “people skills”. We should expect that through formation, individuals come to recognise and appreciate the importance of the community of God’s people not only in terms of Baptist identity but also pastoral dynamics. They must be those who can function in community and contribute positively to the life of any community. This would include not being threatened by dependency and interdependency with others, valuing and welcoming diversity and difference, being unselfish and generous of spirit, being self-aware and able to demonstrate that they have had a positive impact on others.

**Welcoming of accountability and peer-support.** In many respects, this builds on the aptitude demonstrated at the MR stage “ability to listen and learn”. We might expect in formation that a clear support structure is put in place where an individual has some form of mentor/tutor relationship and also is part of a recognised learning community. It seems vital to on-going ministry that individuals welcome, participate and benefit from these relationships, seeing themselves not only as relating to their specific local context, but valuing and recognising that they are part of a greater whole. We would want this to be not just a pragmatic recognition of interdependence, but also, and more significantly, an expression of who we are as the wider Body of Christ.

**A vision for further personal growth and development.** We should not expect that those emerging from ministerial formation consider themselves to be the “finished article”. Formation should embed within someone a desire to learn and grow further and we would expect an emerging minister to offer a clear vision for personal self-development in future. There should be evidence that formation has both equipped people for ministry and also nurtured the longing to learn more, not because of prescriptive expectations of ministerial regulations, but because they have been inspired to do so through learning and reflection.

**Learning to value and respond appropriately to diversity and difference.** It seems vital that ministers, while being clear about their own identity and calling, can also respect and deal appropriately with diversity and difference. Any process of formation therefore should help individuals identify their own preconceptions and prejudices, and also place them in contexts where these are confronted and challenged. Exposure to difference should reveal an unselfish generosity of spirit, gracious engagement and clear self-identity.

**An ability to “read context” and to see opportunities, challenges and potential.** Whatever form it takes, ministry is more than simply implementing a prescribed programme or maintaining that which has been devised by others. We need ministers who can engage with their communities and contexts as they find them, recognise how things operate and see what matters to people, so that they can relate our Gospel message in, to and through those environments. We might expect formation to expose individuals to new and different situations from those to which they are most accustomed. Through these they should develop and demonstrate a good understanding and knowledge of the life, values and social dynamics of a range of situations. They need to be those who know how to win respect within the wider community, are not intimidated by it and have a clear affinity for their ministry context. At the very least, they should have the self-awareness to recognise those situations for which they are not suited and gifted.

**Good self-awareness and understanding.** Formation should enable individuals to recognise their strengths and weaknesses, particularly in how they relate to their ministry calling. This might include, but should be more than, some form of profiling and personality analysis. This is not simply a matter of showing people their particular personality traits. It should hone their ability to recognise these for themselves. They need to be those who accept their limitations and weaknesses and demonstrate a willingness to work on those areas where appropriate. They should also have confidence and awareness to seek support and share tasks with others in the light of their shortcomings. They need to be aware of their impact on other people and be able to take account of the needs, abilities and attributes of others. This should include recognising their strengths and working in ways that makes the most of the gifts that God has given them. They need to be those who know how to give of their best and bring out the best in others.

**Coping with failure and risk.** We should expect that ministers can not only operate in situations that they and others might describe as “successful” but also cope, and be an encouragement to others, in the face of struggle and disappointment. Ministers need to be those who display faithfulness and longsuffering, which at times should include showing appropriate grace, forgiveness and forbearance when others act unreasonably towards them. This does not require always being a “walk-over” but we should expect that their response is considered, appropriate and not self-indulgent. Coupled with this is what has sometimes been called a “holy discontent” that leads them to push at boundaries and explore new horizons. While not being reckless and irresponsible, an effective minister should not be risk-averse.

**Clear growth and development in key areas of ministry.** Having used the model of Ephesians 5 at Recognition stage, it is reasonable to expect individuals to clearly evidence growth and development of gifts that have already been recognised, while also exploring others. Through formation we would expect them to demonstrate an aptitude for **at least one** of the following:

- Engaging with people in ways that helps them become followers of Christ
- Enabling Christian disciples to learn and grow in Christ
- Being an effective pastor to God's people in a range of circumstances
- Exercising leadership and ministry beyond the local church
- Exercising a prophetic ministry that is Biblically founded and Kingdom focussed
- Effective as a pioneer minister in new and emerging contexts

## The ongoing Marks of Ministry

These are the behaviours and habits that we would expect as an expression of an individual's on-going commitment to and suitability for ministry. The foundation of this is the covenant concept of recognising ministry as part of a covenant community “walking together”. We offer as the basis of this our Union's

“description of culture”. If this is to be what defines our Union, it must be that which defines those who minister within it.

**Committed to Spiritual health.** We might reasonably expect that a serving minister can outline clear and tangible engagement in activities that will contribute to personal spiritual growth and some evidence of a deepening, on-going relationship with Christ. Human frailty is no less a reality for ministers than anyone else; this is not a matter of prescribing a “level of spirituality” that must be maintained, but seeking to have in place relationships, activities and accountabilities that are conducive to spiritual wellbeing.

**Inspired and Inspiring.** Ministry should always be seen as a vocation, not simply become “a job to be done”. This would be evidenced by the fact that individuals continue to inspire others and seek inspiration for themselves. Should this diminish, they would be self-disciplined and proactive in acknowledging and addressing their needs. We might also expect any expression of ministry to include a clear desire for others to become faithful followers of Jesus.

**Spirit led.** Because ministry remains an undertaking that relies on and is directed by the Holy Spirit, an individual establishes and maintains spiritual disciplines that nourish a living relationship with Christ through the Holy Spirit. As a result, there will be on-going evidence of the fruits of the Spirit in a minister's life.

**Kingdom Seeking.** An effective minister in any context is not someone who is immune to human need, injustice and oppression. We might expect there to be evidence of a yearning for God's Kingdom both in the tangible activities of an individual's ministry and the underlying motives that fuel them. We would particularly expect that leaders challenge any injustice that mitigates against our Union's commitment to embrace equality, diversity and difference.

**Team focussed.** We should expect that a serving minister is both a “team builder” and “team member”. This should be evidenced by a positive and active relationship with the wider Baptist family which has a measure of accountability as well as social and participatory links. As well as actively engaging with peers beyond the local church, we might expect that a minister can offer clear evidence of building a sense of team with fellow leaders in the local context, and model an inclusive approach to working with others.

**Embracing adventure.** Ministry is more than sustaining the status quo and we should expect that serving ministers can offer evidence of exploring new horizons for themselves and the local church, and also having forward vision that is neither reckless nor risk-averse.

In the early years of ministry, it is current practice for much of this to be expressed through a Learning contract. However, while maintaining this principle, we suggest that a Learning Contract needs not simply to be a matter of acquiring more knowledge but testing how that knowledge is now applied in day-to-day ministry practice. This might even lead to re-considering the terminology, particularly in the light of our commitment to covenant.

These may well look quite different in various contexts, but we would argue for a schedule that should nonetheless be consistently present in any ministry situation. So, for example, a Pioneer may have a very different set of competencies and priorities from those of a Pastor Teacher, but both should have the ability to read their particular situation and express a vision for how things can be different. For a Pioneer, this might well be a vision for an appropriate Fresh Expression in a specific socio-economic context, for a pastor-teacher it might be a vision of renewed openness to the Holy Spirit amongst a somewhat settled and traditional congregation. What each has in common is the ability to “read” a situation, discern God's purpose and provide effective leadership towards that end.

We invite members of our Baptist Community to prayerfully reflect on these Marks of Ministry and to offer response and feedback.

# 5. Affirming and developing Ministry

At the heart of this report, and indeed our Baptist understanding of ministry, is that within the community of God's people, everyone has a role to play – ministry is a calling of all. But, as is often repeated at our Baptist induction services, while everyone is called to minister within the Body of Christ, there is a form of ordained ministry that we particularly recognise and set aside some individuals to fulfil.

Those other expressions of ministry are a vital part of our shared life, and are addressed in other sections of this report. However one of the strongest affirmations of the consultations arranged as part of the Baptist Futures Process was an ongoing commitment to some form of recognised ordained Baptist Ministry. We have not detected any subsequent calls to re-consider this, so have taken as one of the starting points of this review that it should continue.

Ordained Ministry remains an important and responsible calling. Those appointed to this task have significant influence over congregations and tend to enjoy a place of privilege and trust within the wider community. Every Christian is an "ambassador for Christ" but it is intrinsic to how ministry is understood both within the Church and wider society, that those who are recognised and ordained as ministers are particularly required to display attitudes and behaviours that commend them as Christ-like, and at all times are representative of the identity and values of the Christian faith.

## Living in Covenant

Ministry therefore, while at times carrying immense privilege and trust, also requires a commitment to particular disciplines and accountabilities. We have traditionally expressed this by describing ministers as "covenanted persons".

However, we would acknowledge that with time, perhaps through seeking to conform to external regulatory and statutory requirements, this has often been expressed and experienced as complying with a set of centrally defined rules. A number of ministers have commented that the language of "covenant" tends only to be heard in contexts of discipline. We might respond by arguing that the significant investment made in Regional Ministry, the Ministries Team and the work of local and national Ministerial Recognition Committees (MRC) are all an implicit expression of that covenant relationship. However we do sense that there is a need to be more explicit about the covenant foundation of ministry and to ensure that it defines both our **language** and **processes** going forward.

We sense a need to re-state and reclaim our Baptist Understanding of covenant ministry. Ministers are not those who are required to be compliant with a framework of hierarchical regulation, but intentionally become part of a **covenant community of mutual accountability**. It is inevitable that this will often be expressed through some communally agreed code of practice, but it is vital that our "ministry regulations" are recognised as an expression of this, and not allowed to become perceived or operated as the diktat of any authority body.

We particularly commend the introduction of a **ministry covenant**, which would be the basis of our shared support and relationship with those who are called to minister in BUGB churches. Our key focus is not so much on the qualifications or experience that an individual brings to this role, but the mutual relationship that should exist between themselves, their church, other local Baptist ministers and congregations and those individuals who have a trans-local responsibility within Baptists Together.

A number of our recommendations seek to enable this;

**Role of team leader:** It is inevitable that the specialist team leader will have a key role in dealing with matters of discipline and oversight. We would expect this to remain, but believe that our

language and processes need to reflect that they are acting as a servant of our Union, enabling the day-to-day expression of this covenant relationship, not exercising authority over ministers.

**MRC Moderator:** Moderator of Ministerial Recognition Committee (MRC): Coupled with the above, it seems vital that the moderator of MRC has the scope to operate independently of the specialist team, or indeed Regional Ministers and other trans-local office holders. At the heart of our understanding of ministry is a mutual accountability to which everyone chooses to submit. We suggest that in future they are appointed in a way that clearly defines and protects this, so that there is direct accountability attached to this role that is independent of (but complementary to) the specialist team. Further recommendations are included below, which seek to ensure that they have adequate capacity to develop an appropriate relationship of peer accountability with the ministries team leader and other key individuals.

**Ministry Covenant:** We commend the development of a ministry covenant that would seek to define the intrinsic relationships that are highlighted above. This has the scope to be applied beyond accredited ministers, establishing a defined relationship between non-accredited ministers and our Union, without undermining the prevailing significance of accreditation. In effect the covenant would be "forward looking" expressing our affirmation of any ministry appointment in terms of "this is what will define the relationship between us as things go forward".

## Recognising Ministry

For many individuals who respond to Ministry call, the Association Ministerial Recognition (MR) process is the defining point at which they may decide to leave their current vocation and make significant life changes. While our Union clearly needs some confidence in those who are commended by MR committees, we also have a similar responsibility to the candidate. It is important for them to feel that they have engaged in a worthwhile and thorough discernment process. We also have to recognise the increasing reality that many ministers in training are placed into a sole pastorate from the outset of their formation.

For all of the reasons above, it is vital to have a robust and consistent process of Ministerial Recognition. Those who are commended for ministry need to feel that they have been thoroughly and properly tested and considered, those who eventually receive their ministry need to be confident that they are worthy of the trust and responsibility that is immediately placed upon them.

The process of Ministerial Recognition is initially overseen by our Baptist Associations. The early stages are likely to be informal, and usually involve some interaction with a Regional Minister or other appointed representative of the Association. This will usually be alongside or perhaps after considering this within their local church or amongst fellow Christian believers.

Because of the exploratory nature of such conversations, which can at times continue for some years, there is no consistent way of recording an individual's interest. We suggest that as a new on-line data system is developed, it should include opportunity to record "expressions of interest" in ministry. This would allow individuals to subscribe to Baptist publications etc. and also provide an audit basis to minimise the chance of people "falling through the net"

Discussions with a number of Regional Ministers and MR Committee members also suggest that there is value in exploring some shared definition and specification of the role of a Regional Minister or other Association representative in those early discussions, perhaps also defining some of the key areas such discussions should cover. While not wanting to rob the process of its relationality, an appropriate degree of structure may also be beneficial.

Formal application begins with the completion of a thorough application form and also requires a commendation from the local church, three referees and a preaching reference. As one contributor with significant MR experience observed:

*"The first Ministerial Recognition Committee is the local Church Meeting. This means that we have to ask what sort guidance and encouragement is being given to our churches and by whom as to what Baptist ministry is and who is fit for that purpose."*

Yet we must also recognise that it is a relatively rare occurrence in the life of most local churches, and as such they are unlikely to have a particularly high level of confidence and experience in what they are being asked to do. There has been strong affirmation of the need for clearer guidance for churches in commending potential ministry candidates and also ministers and leaders as they support them. This might include some outline of process as well as challenging inherent stereotypes and prejudices by offering more objective criteria against which to consider ministry candidates. Some Associations already have some resources in place, and there are some downloads on BUGB website. We sense that these could be consolidated into a higher profile publication that becomes integral to the completion of a commendation proforna.

If a candidate is commended by an Association Ministerial Recognition Committee, they will then apply to a Baptist College to undertake ministry formation. In some cases, usually where they already have theological qualifications and have been serving as a minister of a Baptist Church for at least two years, they will attend a Residential Selection Conference (RSC).

Once formation or RSC is complete, and individual will be enrolled as a Newly Accredited Minister (NAM) and will undertake a period of probation for three years. During this period they will be assigned a mentor, will undertake an agreed schedule of further study (Learning Contract) and will be expected to attend, along with other NAM's, regular reflection days organised by their local Association. During this period an Association Review Group will monitor their progress, and if all goes well, will commend them to the National Ministerial Recognition Committee (MRC) for full enrolment.

All of this process is overseen by a National MRC, which is also responsible for approving the removal of ministers from the accredited list, granting leave of absence, considering whether or not a minister is in "Qualifying Office" when not engaged in a local church pastorate, reinstating or re-classifying ministers when appropriate.

These processes generally serve us well, but we believe that there is scope for significant improvement and streamlining within them. In particular there is concern of a potential, and sometimes actual disconnect between Association MRC's and the National MRC. We believe that if this could be addressed, not only could there be greater consistency of standard, but it offers the potential for some of the National MRC's responsibilities to be devolved regionally.

We do have to report that we have heard of some cases where quite poor and potentially discriminatory practices have prevailed in particular contexts. We also sense more generally that Ministers recognise and at times express concern about an apparent inconsistency of approach.

Association MRC's must accept that they are making decisions on behalf of our Union as a whole. Once commended, individuals may serve anywhere in the UK (and beyond). Concern has also been expressed by our Union's legal advisors that an accreditation system for which BUGB is ultimately responsible is accessed via a diverse network of local un-regulated bodies.

Whilst acknowledging the difficulty in assembling association MRCs, in finding the right mix of individuals (ordained and lay, gender, ethnicity etc), we believe that there is much to gain from providing some strategic training from the national resource to MRCs. We believe that nationally funded MR training/workshops should be provided to all who serve on MRC's. There will be many individuals who are already trained in interview techniques and such processes from other walks of life. Nevertheless, these

skills whilst being transferable, may benefit from further training in how to discern a spiritual call as this is somewhat different from selecting a candidate for a workplace role.

It has been recognised that such proposals have significant resource implications, and if additional work is required by Associations, it cannot simply be “absorbed,” but consideration needs to be given (as is the case for other recommendations in this report) to what resourcing would be needed to realistically enable this. However we reiterate the point that effective leadership is vital to the development of healthy, growing churches. What is the greater long term cost of inadequate MR procedures?

**We therefore commend:**

Within 5 years all members of Association MRC's will have undertaken an agreed common standard of training and assessment for their task. This would include technical issues such as diversity, equalities training, but also explore the spiritual dimensions of Christian calling and an outline of our Union's agreed standard of “marks of ministry”. Training would also become an intrinsic element when inducting a new member of an MRC. There also seems value in establishing a “refresher period” (say 5-7 years) after which it would be a requirement for an individual to undertake a refresher course.

An additional recommendation emerged that consideration is given to a specified “composition” of an MRC. For example the inclusion of existing ministers, people with recruitment experience, non-ministerial members, those with counselling and other specialist skills etc. (as well as clear concerns to maintain a balance of gender, ethnicity etc.)

Working for closer integration in the composition of the national and Association/Regional MR Committees. As much as possible the national MRC should be drawn from trained, serving members of local MRC's. In many respects the national MR committee should be seen as a coming together of Regional MR's, and Regional MR's, **a local expression of the national.** (While everyone will not serve in both capacities, members of national and Association MR's should be largely interchangeable)

Each Regional/Association MRC should consist of two members from the national pool, who are not from that Association. This is likely to facilitate stronger inter-relationship, sharing and maintaining best practice.

An annual gathering of local MRC moderators with the National MR moderators (see below) and Ministries Team Leader that could enable the sharing and development of best practice etc. Such a body could have terms of reference which include the oversight of practice, key ministry specifications etc.

Building into our annual data-collection, information that with time can offer key feedback to the national and local MRC's on general performance and also highlight key issues that might require further consideration at MRC stage.

Without becoming over-bearing, the national MR committee should seek to include within its remit maintaining a system of regular assessment to help Associations and itself maintain and share best practice.

The role of the National MRC moderator is a crucial one within our shared life. While many of the MRC functions are facilitated by members of the Ministries Team, it is important that the Moderator has the scope, experience and capacity to operate independently and to exercise a degree of peer accountability with the Team Leader. We recommend that there is a thorough audit of the Moderator's role to determine the realistic time commitment that is required. We recommend serious consideration of offering remuneration for this role so that individuals so appointed can be seconded for a set number of hours per month. We see this as being a

secondment, not an employee and would not recommend a departure from a time-limited appointment (3 years with possible extension for up to 6).

Coupled with the above, we commend the appointment of two vice-moderators who can share this workload but also convene MRC's locally.

As a pool of recognised National MRC members is developed, it should become possible to convene local gatherings of the national MRC, particularly if the Moderator and Vice-Moderators are geographically spread. This would enable more streamlined decision making while maintaining consistency of standard, and also reduce travel.

As commended elsewhere in this report, we sense there are a number of areas of our shared life in which a more responsive and effective approach could be achieved by devolving some of the existing National MR functions and responsibilities, while at the same time giving national MR a more "regulatory" role in respect of this.

**Further exploration of an Association "accompanier":** We note the recommendation of the original report, and also the reality expressed by many Associations that there is a growing expectation of volunteer roles etc. etc. which can often prove difficult to fill. However we do sense that some form of pastoral support is important for those exploring ministry. Even if someone is unsuccessful at MR, for them to have reached this stage, suggests that they have a valuable contribution to make in some form of leadership. Looking therefore at how we "debrief" unsuccessful candidates is important. Some of this work could again be done by equipping local churches and ministers with guidance resources to support candidates. We also sense there may be learning points from the Southern Counties Footsteps Programme about how we attract and develop our volunteer base. It may also be that this could be included in the brief of some local MR committee members. We would also encourage serious consideration of the "Foundation in Christian Leadership" proposal outlined elsewhere which could function as a context in which a local leadership calling is affirmed and developed, while at the same time being an assessment context for wider ministry.

**Being more proactive and intentional in promoting ministry:** We sense that there is a general tendency across our Baptist Community (including local churches) to be reactive in terms of identifying MR candidates – leaving them to come forward of their own devices, rather than actively encouraging people to explore their vocation (which may or may not include ministry.) We would encourage the recommendation of "exploring your call" days, and would want to commend to Associations and Colleges to collaborate so that such events are regularly held across our Union. This could include exploring the role of the ministries team in encouraging, supporting and resourcing these. We also sense that many people are more challenged to explore "calling" at Christian conferences and events and wonder whether this diverts potential candidates in other directions. We might respond to this by considering whether a Baptist presence at key events, geared towards responding to issues of call (among other things) might be worthy of consideration. We also sense a need to promote the local church as a place of calling and challenge, and to explore how this can be encouraged and enabled.

**In order to achieve the vision outlined above, we recommend the following:**

- (i) That work is done to draw together existing documentation/process for local churches and work with Associations to produce a standard "application support pack" so that churches/ministers are able to provide an objective assessment of a candidate, against a clear and agreed framework. NWBA has offered a "church form" which has been developed to try to help local congregations be more robust and objective in their assessment of candidates. A number of Associations have requested this over time – but there is no feedback as to how extensively it has

been used, or indeed whether other Associations have better criteria and documentation to offer.

- (ii) That a similar exercise to (i) is undertaken in relation to individual referees – whereby referees are sent a longer questionnaire with guidance notes etc. to complete.
- (iii) That the “Marks of Ministry” outline, refined though further consultation and reflection becomes the agreed standard for MR assessment. To aid in its application, we would develop for each “mark” a number of evidence criteria that would help MR committees to assess candidates against them.
- (iv) That we develop a further resource helping candidates, churches and those who advise and support them to reflect on “what do we experience and recognise in a “call from God?””
- (v) Associations are invited to audit their existing MR processes against the agreed person specification, definition of call etc. and make any adjustments that they deem necessary. Ways should then be explored for how Association MR teams can be facilitated in sharing best practice and developing shared resources and accountability.
- (vi) That in doing all of the above, we recognise the diversity of people, gifts and contexts from which they come, and as much as possible develop criteria of assessment that are around character, aptitude and transferable skills rather than specific tasks traditionally associated with ministry. (e.g. the current emphasis on “preaching” both at MR and settlement, reflects an assumption that this is always a key ministry role – in reality it may not be.)
- (vii) The responsibility for overseeing MR rests with Associations. However, we see colleges as having a key role in this, working with Associations to reach the point where “no-one who is commended by an Association MR would normally be turned down by a Baptist college.” This is not to say that colleges might not from time to time suggest that a candidate may be more suited to the formation patterns of a sister college. This is likely to require input to the “person specification” and “involvement in process” from colleges so that they have confidence in the MR commendation system, and can accept its outcomes.
- (viii) That a “foundation year” is encouraged and introduced, initially on a voluntary basis. That a clear process of pilot and review is agreed, with a view to it being universally adopted should the pilots prove successful. We should note in this respect that our inherited processes (albeit significantly modified) were originally designed for individuals who would arrive at college “ready to study”; the present reality is that virtually all Ministers in Training need to be “ministry ready” when they begin formation. It does not seem unreasonable (and might even be argued as irresponsible to omit) to expect some formation and in-service assessment prior to beginning a training pastorate. John Claydon (NBA) has already prepared a paper on behalf of the Northern Teams working group; this is commended as the basis from which to develop this.
- (ix) That we agree and introduce an appropriate “review” process whereby Association MR’s remain accountable for maintaining the agreed standards of assessment and person specification.
- (x) That we invite relevant justice groups to participate in the development of this approach, so that as much as possible they are particularly accessible and attractive to those types of people who are currently under-represented in Baptist Ministry.
- (xi) That relevant justice groups are invited to “audit” the introduction of these approaches and have opportunity to offer feedback and recommendation for change in the light of their findings.
- (xii) That once an agreed structure for “standard” Ministerial Recognition is in place – immediate thought is given to its suitability for specialists (e.g. Chaplains, Youth Specialists, Pioneers etc.) with scope to adapt it accordingly.

## Specialist Ministries

One of the working groups at BU council was particularly invited to scrutinise the “Marks of Ministry” from the perspective of specialist ministers. Our vision is that by adopting this approach, there will be a natural progression towards better including and affirming specialist ministries. Their general reaction was positive, affirming that this would more easily accommodate and recognise the broader aptitudes and giftings that are emerging. A subsequent discussion with the Sector Ministries (chaplaincy) Co-ordinators solicited a similarly positive response in principle. We anticipate therefore that if implemented, this report’s proposals will better embrace these specialisms. However we would offer the following observations/recommendations:

- (i) That some “post implementation” review is arranged to audit how effective these changes have been in promoting, recognising and affirming specialist ministries, similar to what is proposed in respect of justice issues.
- (ii) That the particular needs and opportunities of what are commonly called “bi-vocational” ministers are specifically considered, and building on the foundational work done through the “Glass half empty – Glass half full” conference at Bristol College, Baptists Together develop a clear strategy for “Bi-vocational” ministry.
- (iii) In embracing the principle of “working towards a single list” that the needs and identity of existing specialist ministers are particularly considered.
- (iv) That more work is done to explore how we support chaplaincy and other sector ministries. (The Ignite project leader is scheduled to participate in the sector ministries working group meeting in December 2015.)
- (v) The further consideration is given to developing support and practical resources to help churches at appointment stage, so as to properly identify and assess the specific competencies that are needed for their particular situation. (This recognises that increased specialism is likely to mean a greater diversity of ministry gifts.)
- (vi) We sense that further exploration is needed as to how the current work done in supporting and developing Sector Ministries is better embedded into our Union’s strategic planning in the context of colleges, Associations and BSG.

### Some other outstanding issues:

**SPOUSES:** It was noted that there appears to be quite a broad variation of approach in how a potential minister’s spouse is or is not included in the MR process. This would include some Associations appearing to make this a matter of discretion for the couple themselves. This is an important matter that needs further thought and research. We sense that to do this properly will take time, and that rather than waiting for its completion – work is begun as outlined above, and reflection around spouses occurs in parallel. Further changes can be introduced, if required, when this is appropriately completed.

**FOLLOW-UP:** If MR is to be effective, then we need to be open to the possibility that it will not be an uncommon event for candidates to be turned down. We should expect this, but also note that an individual who has got as far as an Association MR interview, clearly has a sense of being called by God to some form of service. We recommend further consideration of how unsuccessful candidates can be followed up, and commended positively into other avenues of Christian service.

**PERSONALITY PROFILING:** Suggestions have been made in several contexts that there should be a more widespread use of propriety personality testing tools; this has been met with mixed responses. The working group in the Funding and Formation report explored this and recommended that they are not used – the subsequent summary suggested that they should be. Initial conversations with some HR specialists, have

highlighted that profiling tools have many and varied applications, and there is a need to determine what behaviours and aptitudes are a priority for us to identify, and on this basis to explore whether appropriate resources are available. We would suggest that further thinking and research is undertaken, and that an eventual outcomes and recommendations can be fed into the ongoing process as they emerge.

**ISSUES OF JUSTICE:** Throughout our consultation we consistently encountered questions of justice. Sometimes this was through experiences shared through individual stories, in other instances it was by analysing those statistics that we were able to glean from our existing databases and records. In many of the early consultations, justice, particularly in relation to race, gender and disability was identified as something that should be a priority for our ongoing work. We have not lost sight of this, and would acknowledge that there is clearly work to be done in this area. In highlighting the need for this to remain on the agenda, we would offer two particular recommendations:

We sense that ONE reason that justice issues emerge is because, in some instances, there is a lack of sufficient process, specification and training. So for example, while we might be dismayed at an inappropriate question being asked at an MRC interview, this is perhaps made more likely because there are no agreed common criteria against which to judge candidates, and while we do not doubt to due diligence of Associations, the reality remains that individuals can serve on MRC bodies, without any requirement for training or assessment of their suitability. We SHOULD NOT assume that the proposals above will eliminate every justice issue, but we suggest that a more useful audit could be undertaken after the recommendations above have been introduced and embedded into our process. We suggest that justice groups are consulted and have opportunity to influence the final content of this report, and that a clear and thorough review of key justice issues is scheduled for (say) 5 years' time.

We also struggled at times to answer some of the justice questions we were asked – key data that might help to monitor our performance in this respect is currently not collected, stored and analysed. We recommend that as part of the ongoing COLLABORATE database project, a review of justice concerns is undertaken and a clear specification of how the database can be designed to store and analyse relevant information is included in this ongoing work. This will then provide the core data to support the review outlined above.

## 6. Ministry Formation

Currently the default route into Baptist Ministry is through an Association Ministerial Recognition Committee and then a formation programme at one of our Baptist Colleges. Alternatives to this exist, some involving a decision of the national MR committee (usually when an already accredited minister is transferring from another tradition) and others through a Residential Selection Conference (RSC) (usually when someone is already serving as a minister in one of our churches). More recently the London Baptist Association has developed a "Portfolio Route", working in partnership with Spurgeon's College to offer a model of ministry formation for those who have clear ministry ability and experience, but for whom an academic award is genuinely unachievable.

This is an overall approach that has and does serve us well, and there is no intention within these proposals to significantly change or make this obsolete. However there are some limitations to it that we would summarise below:

In reality only around 40% of our churches receive ministry and/or leadership from an individual who has followed the "normal" MR/college route. In the light of this, it seems important to explore the potential benefit of making alternative patterns available.

The LBA portfolio route is now a well-established reality, yet it is only available in one geographic location. If this is to remain, it seems fair and right to explore how it can be made more widely accessible.

We recognise that patterns and expressions of ministry are changing, and seek an approach that does not compromise on standards, but is able nonetheless to embrace the diversity outlined elsewhere in this report. Generally our colleges have proved themselves able to adapt and be flexible to a variety of formation contexts and needs. However this can often be against a backdrop of needing to negotiate exceptions, which in turn can create a perception that individuals who are exercising alternative forms of ministry are something of a "problem". There can also be a significant element of uncertainty and at times frustration, as this can require prolonged and time-consuming negotiations with the National MR committee.

Colleges are quite clear that while academic study is a vital and beneficial element in future ministry, it is also a "means to a broader end" in that it provides a context in which much of the character and calling of ministry can be assessed and developed. In the case of individuals who benefit from college formation and show themselves to be fit for ministry, but struggle to achieve the prescribed academic awards, there can often be limited scope to offer alternative formation routes from the outset, or to do so with certainty as struggles emerge.

We celebrate the fact that through significant support within our colleges, many individuals have achieved academically. However, some have questioned whether this is always the most productive investment in equipping someone for lifelong ministry, given that the college formation experience is time-limited.

Although the current Portfolio route is accredited by a Regional Association, in reality it is offered in partnership with a Baptist College; it seems unhelpful and misrepresentative to make a distinction between "portfolio" and "college" formation. If portfolio is to be offered as a future option, it would seem better to perceive it as one of a number of options open through a single formation body, rather than a complete alternative to college.

Although we speak of Baptist Colleges, in reality they are more than that. Our colleges maintain an approach to formation that has not only grown out of many years of Baptist influence and engagement, but also tend to have deeply embedded partnerships with Regional Ministers, churches and Baptist Associations. This is not always recognised, which in turn can raise questions

about what distinguishes them from other theological training institutions. We would also question whether the term “college” adequately expresses this sense of local partnership, and whether as a result it generates a perception of an unduly academic process – does this in turn put some potential candidates off?

While a clear sense of Baptist identity and ethos is riven through the life of our colleges, we nonetheless struggled to find any clear, commonly recognised definition or specification of what a Baptist College is, and what is required of them. We believe it would be beneficial if something of this nature existed, so that colleges have a clear benchmark against which to measure their provision, and other stakeholders have a basis from which to engage with them when working together.

Our colleges are not currently not located in an even geographic spread. This raises accessibility issues for some churches and candidates. Appropriate partnering with Associations and/or other relevant bodies might help address this. When no other option exists, it does not seem unreasonable to consider a partnership that might include a theological training institution that is not currently recognised as a “Baptist College”. Remaining consistent with our “framework” approach, we are not advocating this, but are seeking to create an environment where it is possible.

There is a great deal of creative and effective work done by our colleges, often in partnership with churches and associations. Yet this is often **appears** disjointed and inconsistent, because we do not use common terminology to define and explain it. This can mean that various resources and opportunities do not enjoy the profile they might otherwise achieve, and participation in them is not always as recognised within our Baptist community as it might be. The benefit of training and formation does not therefore always impact our churches as much as it might.

This in turn can mean that good practice developed in one context is not naturally shared or adopted more widely, which in turn can generate further inconsistency of practice and opportunity. This is a particularly important point to recognise, as many of the proposals that follow are largely legislating for what is already being done by at least some of our colleges and associations. Our intent is not to imply the opposite, but to affirm its value by enshrining it in our procedure and practice.

While the RSC process is of value in some contexts, there appear to be many instances where a longer-term process of assessment by those who can accompany an individual locally, would actually be a more insightful and robust way of assessing their suitability. Creating greater local flexibility could provide more opportunity for this to be the case.

In the light of the above, we believe that there is value in creating more flexible and alternative approaches to formation alongside the established pattern of award-based theological study. However, in the interests of consistency, it seems desirable that these are overseen wherever possible by the same organisational bodies. It would also help prevent any future prejudice, as an individual who has followed a portfolio based route, would nonetheless be commended by the same institution that commends those who follow an award-based track. (Again we should stress that this does not represent any departure from current practice; what we are seeking to achieve is a context in which this can feel “normal” rather than “difficult” as can sometimes **appear** to be the case.) We sense that the key task of IGNITE is to help create a framework in which that becomes possible rather than fully prescribe how it should be done. We would also argue that while the LBA portfolio might not be the only, or even definitive approach, it offers a model that could well shape the thinking of other Associations and colleges, and indeed we note that one such proposal has already been forthcoming in the West.

In order to enable this, we are suggesting the introduction of what we are calling “**Formation Partnerships**” – we feel sure that better expressions can be found, but offer this as a working title that seeks to embrace that dynamic relationship between the academic identity of our colleges and their belonging to a wider

covenant community. The introduction of this term seeks to express the distinction between the role of our Union in defining our overall vision for the recognition and formation of ministers, and the role of Colleges, Associations and other partners in providing this. (In so doing, we must also recognise that colleges are a key presence within that wider Baptist community.) The designation “Formation Partnership” serves to define that organisation to which we entrust the formation of Ministers and the required specification to which they would work – it is in effect a theoretical entity that serves as a common template to which our colleges can work.

**We should stress** we are commending the concept of “Formation Partnership” not as an additional layer of bureaucracy but as a way of expressing **reality as it is now**. We have enabled one Association to offer formation via Portfolio, but in reality it is being done in **partnership** with a college (Spurgeon’s). What defines our colleges as distinct from other theological training institutions is that they work in **partnership** with local Association teams and church representatives to offer a pattern of formation that is far broader than simply “training”. We are commending the idea of “Formation Partnerships” as a way of better expressing this long-established approach, but also as a basis for further exploring and defining how the arrangement can most benefit from what each stakeholder is able to contribute. We do have to accept that we cannot offer such a definition without at least being open to the possibility that new bodies might emerge that are so defined, and indeed there may be particular circumstances in which this is desirable. It is clear from our statistics that by overtly promoting the breadth and flexibility of our approach, there is potential to attract and include a far greater proportion of local leaders and ministers to engage in some form of Baptist formation.

The outline vision for Formation Partnerships involves a shift of emphasis in two directions:

**Breadth:** By commending an intentional partnership in which Associations and/or other groups of churches and ministry practitioners have a peer relationship as part of what a “college” is, there is greater scope to formally include the resources, contacts and assessments of these networks in the formation and accreditation process. It also allows greater flexibility in how the (currently separate) formation and Newly Accredited Minister (NAM) requirements can be combined or offered concurrently. (At present Formation is usually overseen by colleges and NAM probation is overseen by Associations.)

**Devolution:** Alongside this, we believe there is also scope for Formation Partnerships to have greater freedom to commend ministers for enrolment without direct reference on a case by case basis, to the National MR committee. This is not to imply that there should not be a clear national standard, but the role of National MR would be more regulatory, ensuring that standards and processes were “fit for purpose”. However, where a candidate does not “fit” the usual patterns of Formation, but is nonetheless deemed suitable for ministry by the Partnership, it would have greater liberty to use its own judgement. (The Partnership might choose to “refer” a candidate to National MR where there is genuine uncertainty.) This of course does require that National MR has an effective working oversight role, and elsewhere in this report we offer recommendations for improved statistical recording so that there can be clear empirical feedback to Formation Partnerships.

We believe that this has two immediate advantages:

The first is that it allows our process of Formation to be far more responsive to the needs of individuals called to an increasingly diverse range of ministries. Coupled with the Marks of Ministry, it provides the opportunity to introduce a clear and objective process of formation and assessment, and while not dismissing a route that is founded on an academic award, provides flexibility where those to whom we entrust formation believe it is desirable. One particular reality that we increasingly sense the need to address is how to support and enable what is often called “Bi-vocational Ministry”. A partnership-based portfolio option might well be a particular advantage in this context.

We recognise that devolving responsibility more locally could result in an inconsistency of standard; this is a further reason for commending the concept of a properly defined partnership. The interaction between the Association (or other recognised entity) and college, creates a mutual accountability that safeguards either partner from undue pragmatism or pressure. The local partnership relationship offers something that has the potential to be more responsive and dynamic, while at the same time maintaining the element of external accountability that is currently offered by the National MR referral.

The second is that it provides the basis to engage and explore the development of individuals who might not currently be seeking accreditation, but have existing positions of ministry and leadership within our Baptist Churches. We would again cite the surprisingly high proportion of churches that currently do not receive ministry from those who have followed our established college-based routes. It seems important to our shared identity to seek as much as possible to promote Baptist vision and values across every expression of leadership within our churches.

### How would partnerships be formed and “regulated”?

We do not see Formation Partnerships as simply operating in a “free market” but neither should we preclude others being developed if this is deemed appropriate. At the heart of these proposals is the desire to establish a clear strategic vision for ministry development and formation across Baptists Together. A crucial appointment is that of a Formation and Training co-ordinator, based within the ministries team, who would enable strategic oversight of our current and future provision. That individual cannot work alone, and we sense that the current MR Committee and the Baptist Colleges Partnership (BCP) might offer a context for their work. This might well include commissioning and developing new Formation Partnerships where there is a recognised need. However, any such decision would be made as Baptists Together, taking into account the needs and concerns of all relevant stakeholders.

It has been interesting to discuss the role and purpose of the Colleges Partnership with various key individuals, and to recognise a significant variance in understanding of this body. At one extreme it is perceived as being convened by our Union as a place of accountability and oversight for the colleges, at another it is seen as a college gathering at which others are invited guests. Rather than arguing the rights and wrongs of these, it seems better to define what our future needs might be, and to recognise the value of clear terms of reference to which everyone can subscribe.

We do believe that a clear regulatory framework would be of benefit to everyone involved and affected by ministerial formation, and that BCP has the potential to offer this. It has already introduced an effective programme of peer review, and there is clear scope for this to include some scrutiny of such things as portfolio formation, how other stakeholders inform and contribute to its work etc. This need not be unduly officious, but can robustly maintain a shared standard of ministerial recognition. Ultimate oversight of this should be the responsibility of BUGB trustees, probably devolved to the National MR committee, but this is a matter for trustees to determine and affirm. (We should note that the BUGB trustees have responsibility to oversee our reputational and legal liability in respect of nationally accrediting ministers.)

We recommend that consideration is given to both the name and composition of BCP, so that is perceived and operates as a place of genuine collaboration and representation for all key stakeholders. It would also provide strategic input and accountability for the Formation and Training co-ordinator, who would have a key role in maintaining a cohesive network of Formation providers.

For this to work effectively, there needs to be a clear set of criteria by which a Formation Partnership can be determined as “fit for purpose” and a clear operational framework for ongoing review and re-validation.

We also recognised that one of the areas where portfolio has been particularly valuable is in providing a way forward with students for whom English is not their first language. We also noted that often academic

study is limited by a lack of first-language text books and tuition. We recognised that this might commend to us a more strategic response including:

- (i) Collecting details of ministers with non-English fluency on our database so that we can more easily source mentors and accompaniers who can engage with students in their native language.
- (ii) Encourage greater publication of Baptist-rooted theological resources translated into other languages – this would have application well beyond the portfolio context.
- (iii) Collaborate more with BMS to explore how we can develop multi-lingual study resources.

We had some discussion around the “portability” of Portfolio Accreditation. The LBA route provides access to the national register of ministers, and as such an individual is considered suitable to minister in any BUGB context. We explored the realism of this from two perspectives. In some cases the linguistic and cultural specialities that a Portfolio Minister offers are somewhat rare, and there are questions of missional responsibility to not to deflect them away from their specific context, by encouraging them to embrace more general ministry identity. The other perspective, using language as an example, is that the overwhelming majority of Baptist Churches would expect a fluent English speaker to be a pre-requisite for ministry. A Portfolio Minister might have demonstrated their suitability in situations where this is not so, so while thoroughly competent to minister in a language-specific context, might not be so where fluent English is a requirement. We might note that there is also a varied operation across Associations of “local recognition”. In some places this effectively means accreditation to serve as a minister within the geographic boundaries of that Association; in others it means recognition that is far more place, role and time specific and not transferable even within the Association. If a more consistent understanding of Local Recognition was developed alongside national accreditation, might this offer a better alternative in some instances?

The requirement for “Baptist history and principles” is one that we would generally affirm – even suggesting that the current scope of this should be extended. We welcome the portfolio concept as the basis for defining a new approach to this, which should still include an element of study, but also some clear assessment of a candidate’s receptivity by putting this into practice in their ministry context. We would commend the previously suggested idea that “Baptist Vision and Values” is perhaps a more engaging description of this element.

There are a number of contexts at present where individuals access Baptist college training in a “Lay” capacity and then transfer to an accreditation path. Partnership based portfolios might provide a way of building on this existing learning when it has taken place outside of a formation context. It seems as much as possible we should seek to develop an approach that communicates a sense of forward and on-going journey.

We also noted that many individuals still value degree level qualification, and the general reality is that where this is possible, people are prepared to put in the effort to achieve it. Portfolio should not be an “easy option” but a different way of assessing ministerial suitability. We should not assume or present a portfolio approach as something that puts people off academic study - in fact it could attract people to consider ministry, believing a degree to be beyond them, who are then encouraged to realise that it is within their capability.

Although Associations may well be more overtly involved in Formation Partnerships, we do not see them as replacing an Association MR process. It seems important that assessment of suitability for ministry retains some structural separation from those organisations that are perceived as being the potential beneficiaries of successful outcomes. We also sense that it is a proper reflection of our ecclesiology that MR suitability is assessed on behalf of a partnership of local churches, joined together in Association. This

also addresses the reality that while it is a “standing requirement” for Associations to provide an MR process – it is a matter of voluntary decision to become or join a Formation Partnership. However, while being convened by Associations, we would commend the recommendation of previous reports that Associations seriously consider the contribution that college representatives might make to the MR process locally.

We should recognise that our current formation process **usually** lasts in reality between 6-7 years, namely:

A period of around a year of application and MR interview etc.

A three-year period of college formation

A three-year probationary period as a Newly Accredited Minister (NAM)

Greater flexibility could include the freedom to use that 7 year period more creatively, retaining the sharp distinction between a Minister in Training (MiT) and NAM in those situations where this is best suited, but adopting other patterns when appropriate. So, for example an individual who can access part-time study over a six year period, while remaining in the same pastorate might combine the two from the outset. We are **not** seeking to necessarily commend this, but rather to illustrate that a Formation Partnership provides a context where this could become possible if deemed appropriate. One current difficulty is that while a college has principal oversight of a MiT, this passes to the Association once they become a NAM. A partnership has the potential for both parties to operate dual oversight from the outset.

One unresolved (and not completely dependent) question is who assumes “overall responsibility” for an individual’s ministry formation? The reality of the current situation is that, aside from their local and calling church, an individual is assessed by up to four independent bodies prior to full accreditation. (Sending Association MR – college – calling Association MR/review group – national MR.) We might take the view that this reflects a thorough and multi-faceted process that we wish to affirm, or may feel that it is unduly cumbersome and inconsistent. Clearer assessment criteria and better information sharing will go some way to remove potential inconsistencies, but we also question whether so many separate bodies is a good deployment of our resources, or the most helpful for ministry candidates.

As already noted, establishing Formation Partnerships provides the potential to integrate certain elements of the current process – but this can only happen with some equivalent flexibility for the oversight of the process. We also note that in some Christian denominations, oversight remains with a single body throughout the journey to accreditation, with the parties in effect acting as an agent for one or other specific element. We are not commending any particular approach at this stage, but highlight this as an area for further consideration and discussion.

### **How would a Formation Partnership work?**

It should be stressed that the vision for Formation Partnerships is not one of wholesale change, but rather to place a framework around the present realities that is consistent, transparent and fair.

It cannot be right, for example, that a candidate for whom English is not their first language has a route to accreditation that does not require academic study in a foreign language if they live in London, but are denied this if they live in Bradford or Bristol. Equally, we have to grasp the reality that our formation provision is not evenly spread, especially on the Eastern side of the UK.

We believe that the establishment of Formation Partnerships does not undermine or negate any of the current formation opportunities, but creates an environment in which they can be affirmed where they exist and replicated where this is desirable. Formation Partnerships do not replace colleges or other formation tracks; they define what they are and offer a vision for their future direction. They also seek to give clearer expression to the already widespread practice of colleges working in partnership with the

wider Baptist community. While seeking to enable greater flexibility, it is also important to ensure that various options remain numerically viable,

In short a Formation Partnership is an organisation, partnership or consortium that has demonstrated itself to be able to competently develop and assess the suitability of candidates for Baptist Ministry through some ongoing process of formation. Assessment would be against the agreed criteria laid down by the BUGB for this purpose. The starting point for defining these criteria is the document "Marks of Ministry" that has been offered by the IGNITE team, and will no doubt develop through ongoing consultation.

A Formation Partnership can be any organisation that shows itself to be fit for purpose and will be awarded this status by BU Council at the recommendation of the National MR Committee. However, it needs to be stressed that we envisage this greater flexibility going hand in hand with a robust specification that maintains the integrity and consistency of a genuinely Baptist accreditation track. We would expect our Baptist Colleges and the LBA Portfolio Board to be immediately enrolled as Formation Partnerships. We anticipate that as the criteria and specifications of Formation are developed, that this would happen collaboratively and they would be embraced by the established Formation bodies.

The defining norm for a Formation Partnership would be one college working in partnership with one or more neighbouring Associations. However there is no reason why more than one college could not form a larger group, or one or more Associations could not create a Formation Partnership without a college when they do not have natural geographic links with one. We should also not discount the possibility that either Associations might seek to form accrediting bodies with colleges that are currently not recognised as Baptist Colleges, or indeed those non-Baptist colleges might not take the initiative of seeking Formation Partnership status by working with an Association. However we would encourage that this is not done lightly, and indeed recognise that the National MR committee might reserve the right to not recommend a Formation Partnership for validation on the grounds that sufficient capacity and accessibility already exists.

The vision for Formation Partnerships is to bring together the clear benefit of informed academic and theological study alongside the insights of leaders and practitioners within our movement. Operated well they provide a context for each to bring out the best in the other and the context for constructive dialogue when different concerns and interests might appear to be in conflict. As already highlighted, they largely give scope and definition to the existing collaborations that exist between our colleges and other stakeholders in our Union, and seek to offer a benchmark against which to measure our commitment to collaborative working. They seek to avoid formation either becoming intellectually disconnected from the day to day realities of mission and ministry, or simply a pragmatic response to immediate needs.

At the heart of this vision is for colleges to have greater flexibility to embrace alternative approaches to formation where this is desirable and to draw on the practitioner experience of their partners to assist in this, and provide objective accountability. This might include, for example, a college partnering with the Pioneer Collective to offer formation track for pioneers.

In order to qualify as a Formation Partnership an organisation is likely to comprise.

At least one Baptist Association.

At least one theological training institution able to confer awards up to degree standard that meet the requirements of Baptist theological formation.

A cohort of trained mentors/tutors who are experienced, accredited Baptist Ministers.

An appropriate syllabus for training mentors.

A review body to oversee the progress of ministers in the early years of service.

A demonstrable ability to offer formation to an agreed standard of ministerial suitability.

A clear Baptist ethos within all of its training and portfolio assessment.

A clear ability to offer a recognised syllabus of Baptist "vision and values".

An effective accountability structure to BUGB's ministry oversight bodies. (We note that our colleges have already established a peer review scheme, which could be the basis of this going forward.)

While this possibility should not be exclusive, there is a deliberate attempt to define this around the resources normally available through a partnership between at least one existing Baptist Association and a Baptist College.

Once validated and established, a Formation Partnership would have full powers to accredit those it deems to be suitable for Baptist ministry, according to the specifications laid down by BUGB.

The national MR committee would not have power to over-rule an accrediting body in any individual case. However it would have the power and responsibility to:

Arrange regular reviews of accrediting bodies to ensure ongoing quality standard.

Arrange immediate inspections where there is clear evidence of non-compliance to agreed schemes or other tangible causes for concern.

Withdraw approval for schemes where there are clear and consistent shortcomings in those who have qualified through that scheme.

Ask within reasonable timescales for schemes to be amended to reflect changes to ministry requirements.

Approve new schemes or significant amendments to existing schemes where these are requested by Formation Partnerships.

The national MR committee might also act as a "second opinion" where a Formation Partnership was unsure about an individual's suitability for accreditation.

## **Ministry Formation**

Ministry Formation would be through one of a number of agreed schemes that were examined by the National MR committee and deemed fit for purpose. There is no limit to the number of schemes that a Formation Partnership might offer, but it would be encouraged that each has at least one academic route offering a recognised degree or diploma award and one portfolio route, offering a variety of in-service assessments that align with the recognised accreditation standard.

We note the existing Residential Selection Conference and are not closed to a scheme that is based on this approach. However if a portfolio approach is fully operational and geographically accessible, it does not seem unreasonable to envisage this style of approach becoming obsolete. Should it be continued, we recommend that lead responsibility is devolved to a Formation Partnership with an appropriate handover arrangement from BUGB. We suggest that BUGB organised RSC's could be phased out by 2019.

In establishing this approach we re-affirm our existing pattern of formation (a set period as part of a college learning community, followed by an in-service probationary period supported by mentoring and further study) as the defining norm for Baptist accreditation. However we recognise that there are those whose life-circumstances and learning aptitudes require alternative formation routes. While zz8

That all applicants for formation should be encouraged to explore the academic formation route as their first option.

That anyone who becomes accredited by any alternative route, would be considered as commended for ministry in a way that does not distinguish between different formation routes.

While recognising the distinction between a portfolio-assessed experience and the achievement of an academic awards, we do not believe that these should be seen as opposites and that an element of each should be in all formation assessments. An individual who has no inclination or aptitude for learning is very unlikely to become an effective minister in any context; an individual with academic qualification but lacking in the key marks of ministry will be similarly unsuitable.

For this reason it is important that the oversight of any Formation Partnership represents a balance of academic input and effective practitioners. It is unlikely that a Formation Partnership would be approved without effective representation of experienced ministers, trans-local leaders or similar individuals, working in partnership with academic practitioners.

### **Period of Formation**

Each Accrediting Body is free to introduce schemes in any structure that they deem appropriate. However we would commend the established approach of a 7 year period of formation comprising a one year foundation, 3 years intensive formation, 3 years of probationary service, as a baseline. We would maintain the absolute minimum of a five year period, based on the current minimum of 2 years of intensive formation and 3 years of probationary service.

### **Leadership**

Alongside the above, we sense that there is a need for greater emphasis on leadership skills and aptitude within ministry formation. We recognise that historically, experiences of assertive leadership that are clearly non-Baptist, have created an antithesis towards the very concept and terminology of leadership in some parts of our Union. While understandable, we believe that this response is also unhelpful, and there is a need to develop and promote a clear understanding of Baptist leadership founded on our Biblical models of communal discernment and governance.

Again, we would recognise that a number of leadership development tracks are being explored and offered by colleges, and believe there is scope and need to draw these together, along with experienced practitioners and trans-local ministers with leadership experience. The phrase may be too grand, but we sense the need for some form of Baptist “leadership academy” that can both commend and develop a greater appreciation of Godly spiritual leadership within our Baptist community.

In some respects this focus is emphasised in the “marks of ministry” paper, and of course it would also inform the “foundation in Christian Leadership” referenced below. We also commend developing a cohort of trans-local leaders; equipping suitably gifted Baptist Ministers to act as leadership mentors in local churches where stipendiary or accredited ministry is not currently a realistic option.

While clearly requiring further development and definition, we commend the principle of visibly reclaiming an appreciation and affirmation of effective leadership in a Baptist context.

### **Formally Recognising and Affirming Ministers**

We recommend that ministry within our churches is recognised in three ways:

**Nationally Accredited Ministers** – Baptist Ministers who are tested and ordained as able practitioners and who are committed to a covenanted ministry community.

**Locally Recognised Ministers** – Individuals who have been called by a community of local Baptists in a specific place and time. While offering no assessment of their suitability for ministry,

recognition would be based on a covenant commitment to ministry in line with that expected of an accredited minister.

**Equipped Local Leaders** – Individuals would be able to obtain a nationally recognised **Foundation in Christian Leadership** that draws together, consolidates and expands courses already being offered that would stand in their own right, but could also be part of a preparation for further Ministry Formation, and ideally would offer some credit in respect of future academic or portfolio awards.

**Nationally Accredited Ministers:** These are individuals who would be recognised and accredited largely as is the case now. No-one would be considered for National Accreditation unless they were commended by an Association/Partnership Ministerial Recognition Committee as is the current case. We do not believe that MR committees should be operated by Accrediting Bodies, and believe that the recognition of call should remain with a body that represents the coming together of local churches. Once commended by an MR committee, an individual can apply to various Formation Partnerships for a programme of formation in accordance with their approved schemes. The Formation Partnership would not normally see its role as re-examining the call of the individual, but rather assessing the best formation route for that individual (this might include suggesting other Formation Partnerships). Once the Formation Partnership is confident that the individual has satisfied the requirements of an approved scheme they will be commended to the National MR committee for enrolment.

**Locally Recognised Minister:** The basis of Local Recognition is to engage in a covenant relationship with an individual who has already been called to a ministry position within a Baptist context. In such cases, the individual will have been appointed prior to applying for recognition. The basis of this recognition is “in this role, in this place at this time”. In this context the term “local” does not refer to a region but a specific role and context. The individual’s recognition is restricted to that context and is not transferable. If an individual moves from this position to undertake a new role, their LRM status will cease, though they can re-apply for Recognition in their new context. It should be noted that Local Recognition is not intended to replace regional recognition, which we would suggest should no longer be necessary. If an individual is fit for transferable ministry service in one Association, it seems reasonable to argue that they should be suitable for service in any Association. On this basis, an existing scheme should enable them to become accredited. Equally if they have only proved themselves suitable for ministry in one location, it seems unwise to assume that they are any more transferable within a set geographic area than nationally. It would seem appropriate therefore that they are Locally Recognised. Local Recognition should not be seen as an automatic right, we recommend that it is overseen by Association MR Committees and operates within some agreed national guidelines that involve both assessment and ongoing covenant relationship.

**Leadership in local churches:** There is a vital ministry provided across our Union by individuals who are not ordained ministers, but nonetheless are gifted as preachers, evangelists, providers of pastoral care and in other leadership roles. We want to encourage that, as much as possible, such individuals are both affirmed and also offered the opportunity to develop and hone their gifts. There are already several very good examples of Baptist Colleges and Associations working individually and in partnership to provide models of formal recognition through programmes of study and formation. Many of these are based on the longstanding Baptist Training Partnership, and are also made available to those who seek to grow in discipleship and to serve more effectively in their local churches and communities. However, we must also accept that such opportunities are not consistently available, and there is considerable variation of language and approach to how this is promoted and made available. This can be particularly unhelpful when individuals move between churches and Associations. We would encourage all Formation Partnerships to promote and develop their lay training programmes, developing a co-ordinated approach that makes them geographically accessible across our Union and actively welcome a greater

range of lay leaders and members of local church communities. We aspire to a culture where Baptist congregations would see engagement with such programmes as a necessary pre-requisite for any role of spiritual leadership within a local church. We believe that if such practice were enabled and advocated it could also go some way to helping churches appreciate and support the role of accredited ministers better. In order to enable this, we envisage a key role of the new Formation and Training co-ordinator to work with Formation Partnerships to develop this. It is suggested that we work toward a common terminology for this qualification as the 'Foundation in Christian Leadership', for anyone taking the courses, but especially for those seeking recognition as Lay Pastors or Lay Preachers, or in some other Regionally Recognised Leadership role. Such courses and formal qualifications could increasingly become the first element in the formation journey for those seeking national accreditation. They provide a context in which a call can be tested prior to any major life-changes (e.g. moving house, ceasing employment) being made. This means that the negative impact of failing to progress through accreditation, might be somewhat reduced.

### **What are the key changes being proposed?**

Working towards a portfolio route for accreditation being available across our Union.

Encouraging and enabling colleges to broaden the scope of their provision by working in more direct partnership with Associations and other relevant bodies. (In many cases this is more a matter of recognising and giving definition to existing practice.)

Giving greater freedom to colleges/Associations to commend individuals for ministry against a consistent standard but also taking into account any unique local circumstances and needs. We see this as particularly valuable in enabling our Union to be far more responsive to Pioneers, evangelists and other emerging expressions of ministry.

Shifting the emphasis of National MR more to one of setting and agreeing the core criteria for ministry, and ensuring that standards of consistency are maintained.

Offering clear criteria and specification against which colleges and formation tracks can work in developing a consistent standard of accreditation.

Providing clear criteria and validation standards, should there be a requirement or aspiration to develop new routes to accreditation in future.

Working towards greater consistency in defining accredited ministry and locally recognised ministry.

Developing a commitment to effective Christian leadership through training and recognition that is celebrated and affirmed across our Union.

# 7. Ministry in Covenant

We have a longstanding practice of describing ministers as “covenanted persons” yet many suggest that we are perhaps less clear about what the tangible implications of this are on a day to day basis. At the heart of the IGNITE proposals is to re-cast many of our existing practices and processes in ways that reflect this commitment to covenant identity. We also commend the introduction of a local church “code of practice” which could be the basis of a covenant relationship between church and minister.

Another suggestion that has been circulating for some time within our Baptist community is the requirement for some form of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as a further expression of covenant responsibility. This has attracted mixed responses, which we would summarise below:

The general principle of engaging in regular personal development is largely affirmed and seen as positive.

The idea that ongoing accreditation should rely upon engagement in some form of structured CPD programme is considerably less popular, and for some raises questions about freedom of choice for churches and ministers.

There are concerns that “CPD” implies a “professionalization” of ministry that could undermine the calling and vocational nature of accredited ministry.

Some have perceived the idea of “CPD” as simply requiring ongoing academic study, and are keen that any emerging programme recognises a breadth and variety of approaches and needs.

In response, we are suggesting an approach to what we have designated Continuing Ministry Development (CMD)

## How could a CMD programme work?

A number of previous consultations have already highlighted a general enthusiasm to see Continuing Ministerial Development as core to our understanding of Baptist Ministry and Leadership. As ideas have been shared, this enthusiasm and a vision for what could be achieved has significantly grown, and any reservations that have been expressed, have been in relation to the detailed operation of any scheme – not the idea “per se”. The IGNITE review has therefore focussed on how this might be done, rather than seeking to consult further on the core principle.

It is important that people recognise the term CMD as more than semantics. We are not bound by anyone else’s definitions of what this might be; it is what Baptists Together choose it to be.

The brief we have developed is to “create a culture where CMD is the norm.” This is important and helpful terminology, and very much informs the proposed approach. “Creating a culture” does not mean making it compulsory, or indeed trying to standardise CMD. It means making it so “normal” that it becomes instinctive for people to engage with it.

Edgar Schein speaks of changing a culture by exploring the “artefacts” of an organisation – i.e. the visible signs, symbols and behaviours that prevail. We achieve cultural change not by devising a process for something, but by consistently acting in ways that communicate that the issue really matters to us.

If CMD is to become a cultural norm, then it needs to become embedded in everything we do. It does not need to be forced on people, and it does need to take account of our Baptist tendency to act somewhat independently.

It is for all of these reasons that the central plank of these proposals is a 2-yearly engagement with a Regional Minister, or designated accompanier. This is to enable an intentional reflection on ministry performance and experience, so as to work together on a clear and not particularly complicated vision for a minister's self-development for the three years ahead.

Our proposal is that each Association is asked to consider what resources it would need for this to become reality and that consideration of these resource needs are included in any eventual process. We recognise that this might involve considerable expense, but would repeat the cultural point made above. If it proves expensive, the question that we invite our Union to consider would be "is this sufficiently important to us to warrant this investment?"

This can be achieved through the following

1. Designing a basic "interview plan" that a Regional Minister can use with a minister or leader. While recognising that this is already within the capabilities of any Regional Minister, and indeed often happens anyway, using a common format sends out the message that this is something that matters to us all. It also means that as ministers move between Associations, this is something they are naturally familiar with.

As part of our work, we have developed a pilot interview format which HEBA, EBA and NWBA have been seeking to trial across the summer of 2015. Initial feedback is that this has proved useful and been well received.

2. Introducing a future Personal Development Plan as part of our support for Newly Accredited Ministers as they come to the end of their probationary period. This should be a supportive experience and could be the responsibility of either:
  - The college as part of the Learning Contract
  - The Association Review Group/Mentor
  - A workshop exercise within the national NAM conference
  - An agreed combination of these.
- 3 Exploring how the established practice of "Refresher Conferences" might be used to make CMD a central element. This could include presentations/seminars on key areas of wellbeing and development, and/or work towards a minister producing a personal Development Plan as part of the event.
- 4 One real benefit of this arrangement is that non accredited ministers and lay leaders of churches without ministers could be easily included. This creates a stronger sense of common identity within an Association, without compromising Accreditation. We might also consider whether it could become a compulsory condition of waiver granting etc.
- 5 Including within the database, modules for ministers to record their key development objectives, and various reminder notes, reports and letters for RM's, Association offices and the ministers themselves. If suitably designed from the outset, the database should enable reminder letters etc. to be generated without additional staff input, offering vital "nudges" to everyone involved.
- 6 Develop a one day training module that would help ministers grasp the basic elements of a Personal Development Plan, recognise its value etc. Once available, we could work towards there being someone in every Association who is equipped to offer the workshop to ministers' groups etc. This could also form the core syllabus of refresher conferences, and be included in the NAM conference. Thus there would be a consistency of approach across our Union.

- 7 All ministerial and management staff in our Union and Associations would need to participate in this at an early stage. It will not be seen to be of value if those who are commending it do not demonstrate their personal commitment to it.

The vision is not to produce a standardised programme of CMD, though we recognise that many Associations, Colleges and Specialist Teams do offer CMD type workshops and training events. Participation in these might well be included in a minister's Development Plan, but they are by no means compulsory. It is inevitable that by working with ministers in this way, common needs will emerge, and thus there is scope to then develop resources together which address these. This though is more of an inevitable outcome than an imposed necessity.

The trial document that has been piloted by HEBA, NWBA and EBA is included as Appendix 2

## National Settlement Team

The IGNITE review has not scrutinised the work of NST, though we note that a fair amount of review and development is built into the operational work of NST. The COLLABORATE project has also recognised the need and opportunity of exploring how a multi-user database can enable the settlement process.

Given that the IGNITE project leader is a member of NST, we sense that a review led by this team would risk not having sufficient objectivity and credibility.

We recommend that a review of the work of NST is arranged, led by someone independent of the team within the next two years.

## 8. Helping Churches to receive and recognise ministry

We have already identified that in our Baptist tradition, ministry is the task and calling of the whole church. Our future vision needs not only to be one in which those set aside for ordained ministry can flourish, but where the ministry of everyone is encouraged and affirmed. These two are not unrelated; it is often through the support and care of an effective Minister that others discover and develop their gifts and calling, and Ministers will be at their best when surrounded by a supportive and Christ-centred church community.

Sadly, there are occasions when this relationship does not go well, and while exceptional, it is vital that we take account of this. We also sense that while it does not always result in breakdown or crisis, there are many occasions when ministers and churches fail to realise their full potential because of a mis-match in expectation and understanding.

We have previously used the model of Ephesians 4:11 to help define the various expressions of ministry that we want to develop and affirm. It might usefully be noted that the subsequent verses are no less definitive, but assess ministry on the basis of how it is experienced within the local church community. Authentic ministry is that which equips God's people for service, builds up the Body of Christ, nurtures unity, deepens the understanding of Christian disciples and enables others to become more like Christ. From some of the stories that have been shared with us, we would have to ask whether this is always uppermost in the minds of local churches and leaders when ministers are called and appointed.

It seems important to do all we can to both nurture and sustain an environment in which local church ministry flourishes, and also to have effective means of intervention when things do go wrong. This section particularly seeks to focus on what we have described as "helping churches receive ministry" recognising that alongside any investment in individuals as leaders and ministers, we need also to give serious focus to creating local situations in which their gifts and calling can be effectively and fruitfully deployed.

It is for this reason that we believe the "marks of ministry" should not only be a definitive document for our approach to accredited ministry, but local church leadership in general. An effective ministry relationship depends upon there being a unity of purpose within the leadership structure. We would argue that the "marks of ministry" (however they are ultimately expressed) need to define our overall understanding and expectations of local church leadership in its every expression. We would commend the eventual development of church-life resources that might explore, for example, how the "Marks of Ministry" are reflected in the appointment of deacons and the operation and purpose of their shared role.

It is also useful in this context to reiterate the point that a "sending church" has a crucial role in recognising and testing the calling of individuals who begin to explore accredited ministry within their community. A clear understanding and appreciation of the role of an existing Minister is also a vital backdrop for discerning God's purpose when individuals emerge who sense this call themselves.

### Equipping local leaders

Elsewhere in this report we have offered two key recommendations. One is the development of a Foundation in Christian Leadership, which can be operated as an initial stage in ministry formation, but also as a means of equipping leaders who do not feel a call to ordained Ministry. Our hope is that by using this common foundation, and commending it widely, there is a greater likelihood of achieving the unity of purpose that is described above. We would again commend a culture where "it is normal for leaders in local Baptist churches to have engaged in a degree of mutually recognised formation".

We have also recommended an approach to leadership development, whereby suitably gifted and called ministers are equipped as leadership mentors, particularly to enable our Union to invest in those churches that are unlikely to appoint stipendiary or accredited ministers.

We believe that a commonly defined investment in local church leaders could make a significant contribution to building healthy local churches and also supporting and releasing effective ministers.

Our consultation has included meetings with groups of local lay leaders. Included as Appendix 3 is a summary of the comments and feedback we received. We encourage those with relevant influence and responsibility to review these and consider how we can further develop ways of supporting these needs.

Conversations with the Sector Ministries working group identified a growing trend towards offering sessional chaplaincy through non-ordained local church volunteers. This would offer further scope to work with chaplaincy providers to explore the development of appropriate training and assessment resources, and could further contribute to a local church developing its understanding of the nature of ministry.

## Interim Ministry

It has been suggested that Baptists might benefit from developing some form of structured Interim Ministry in churches where there is a perceived need for transition, or perhaps to address difficulties that have been encountered in a previous pastorate. We have been able to engage with one Anglican diocese that has developed this, accessing training from the United States, where this is quite common. We have also met with Acorn Trust who offer a programme to prepare churches for ministry, again largely but not exclusively in an Anglican context. Acorn have worked with one Baptist Church in HEBA, and feedback from the church has been largely positive.

We commend the further development of Interim Ministry, reflecting on these and other resources, with a suggested focus on:

The potential and practicalities of exit interviews for churches and ministers when pastorates come to an end.

Developing a training syllabus for interim ministry.

Exploring the logistical practicality of Interim Ministry (e.g. housing, travel, remuneration between appointments) and seeking to adjust our practices and provision to accommodate this.

Developing a recognised cohort of Interim Ministers within BUGB

Capturing the expertise and experience of interim ministry to provide improved guidance and support for interim moderators.

## Code of Practice

The relationship between a minister and a local church is crucial, and one that should not be taken for granted. We believe therefore that a "code of practice" to which churches can voluntarily subscribe, would be a useful resource in helping churches and ministers be clear about what they might reasonably expect of one another.

While our Union could not REQUIRE this to be introduced, ministers could be made aware if they were settling in a church that has chosen not to sign-up. The code of practice would seek to reflect the mutual expectations of church and minister in their ongoing covenant relationship.

One common concern that has been expressed is that when ministers experience difficulty, there is no direct authority base from which a Regional Minister might necessarily become involved. The code of practice should include and provide a mandate for a Regional Minister or other representative of the wider Baptist family to become involved if either party was considered to be acting outside of its spirit and intent.

## Diversity, Difference and Justice

One of the concerns that has been repeatedly shared with us relates to the various difficulties that continue to be encountered by ministers in relation to issues of race, gender and disability. From what statistical research has been possible, it appears that we have taken some steps forward to becoming a more inclusive community, but there is more to do. In relation to gender particularly, if trends continue there will be a significantly higher proportion of women ministers in the decades ahead.

Proposals elsewhere in this report seek to offer a clearer and more consistent framework in areas like MR, which we hope will go some way to addressing the prevailing instances of inappropriate attitudes and behaviours. We are also proposing a more intentional and planned approach to collecting and storing data so as to monitor our performance in respect of our justice commitments.

However, there needs to be a twin-track approach. While we can take steps to address such matters in our shared structures and processes, this needs to be reflected in local churches. Particularly in relation to settlement, several ministers continue to report significant difficulties. It seems important therefore that in developing the various resources and initiatives referenced in this section there is a specific focus on issues of diversity, difference and justice.

## Competency and Character

The “marks of ministry” are a deliberate attempt to shift emphasis away from a competency-based specification of ministry. While this can serve us well in relation to accreditation, local churches will nonetheless need to largely define ministry appointments in terms of specific roles and tasks. We have made the point that given the increasing diversity of ministry roles, it needs to be the responsibility of the calling church (or other agency) to ensure that an individual has the particular competencies for the position that it is seeking to fill. This also means of course that when an individual's competency comes into question, it is not so much a matter for BUGB to review their accreditation, but to enable and advise the local church in providing competency support and formal procedure.

We recommend therefore that the many resources currently produced locally (largely by colleges, associations and BUGB) are drawn together into a clear set of guidelines to help churches at each stage of the process – this would include:

- Advice and guidelines for putting together a competency-based Job Description and Person Specification.

- Advice and guidelines on competency-based interview and assessment.

- A clear process for dealing with any concerns that arise subsequent to appointment. This could be referenced in the code of practice to which church and minister subscribe upon appointment.

- Clear procedure for a church and minister to follow when there is a need for intervention on the basis of a minister's ability to fulfil their role.

## Summary

We offer the recommendations above as a number of practical steps that might be taken to help ministers and churches better relate. Irrespective of whether or not these are taken forward, we believe that the broader principle should not be lost; that any review of ministry needs to include this element of how ministry is received by local churches, as well as how it is facilitated by our wider practices and structures.

## 9. Ministries – Specialist Team

Clearly a review of this nature would not be complete without significant engagement with the core team at Baptist House that enable our Union's development and support of ministers and local church ministries. The team also has a key role in the ongoing implementation of the IGNITE proposals and the further vision that develops from them. It is important therefore that the operational role of the team and its future development is included in this report.

### **Operational Procedures**

An inevitable part of the team's role is to oversee and implement various procedures and processes particularly in relation to maintaining Ministerial Recognition rules and discipline. This often requires working with College and Association Team members and other stakeholders, and can also involve significant fluctuations in resource implications for the Specialist Team. Significant work has already been done to document various key procedures and update them in line with emerging statutory legislation, so as to ensure that all stakeholders are clear about their responsibilities and have clearly defined procedures to follow. It is important that future proposals embrace this work, and that adequate investment is made in their completion and implementation. A commitment to collaborative working goes hand in hand with clearly defined process and appropriate training and briefing for all those involved.

### **Management and Handling of Data**

Another key element in the development of collaborative working is that key stakeholders have easy and effective access to shared data and information. It is vital that we maximise the potential of new technologies and that the concurrent "Collaborate" database project takes full account of the vision of the IGNITE report and the technical implications of the emerging proposals. An effective multi-user online database is absolutely necessary to this, and we cannot overstate the importance of enabling the team to make maximum use of this facility. This has the potential to offer significant savings in staff time, (including those in colleges and Associations) and could better enable resources to be invested in the strategic and proactive aspects of the IGNITE vision.

### **Engaging with our Union's wider strategy**

Significant changes have taken place within our Union in recent years and much benefit and potential benefit has been achieved through these. However this has required the re-structuring of some longstanding structures of management and accountability that connected the work of the former Ministry Department to the wider work of our Union. It is important going forward that attention is given to ensuring that the day to day operations of the team remain connected to this broader strategy and vision, and that our forward strategy is able to benefit and be informed by the experience and insight of the Ministries Team.

### **Conferences and Events**

The Ministries Team currently arranges and oversees several conferences including the Newly Accredited Ministers' conference, pre-retirement conference, Refresher Conference etc. Some of these have been put "on hold" recently, though no permanent changes have been made. We commend the introduction of a rolling programme of collaborative review to ensure that these continue to remain fit for purpose and their structure and content can benefit from a broad range of insight, availability and experience.

### **Churches Ministerial Counselling Service**

The Ministries Team currently provides the administrative hub of the multi-denominational Ministerial Counselling Service. The IGNITE review has created the opportunity to independently reflect on this service, and it clearly provides an important service that needs to be effectively sustained. The service also provides opportunity to better understand some of the pressures and pitfalls of ministry

**Training Grants and Bursary Funds**

The Ministries Team have historically administered a number of bursary funds on behalf of Baptists Together. Work has recently been done to consolidate a number of longstanding benevolent funds that have been part of our Union's ministry and support. We commend the exploration of how existing resources for ministry development can best be deployed and targeted so as to support and contribute to our overall vision and strategy for ministry and leadership. We would encourage that this includes an approach to promotion that ensures they are equally accessible and available to all potential beneficiaries.

**General Staff Issues**

The care and wellbeing of staff members at Baptist House must remain a priority for us, and in seeking to work as effectively and efficiently as possible, it is important that our responsibilities to the Baptist House Team are not overlooked. This clearly belongs to a wider context than just the Ministries Team, but we affirm and encourage the ongoing commitment to this, and particularly commend that the implications of this report for staff members are fully assessed and considered. The implementation of this report and emerging proposals must be a key component in the role of the new Ministries Team Leader.

**Formation and Training Co-ordinator**

At several places in this report we make reference to the proposal to appoint a Formation and Training Co-ordinator as part of the Ministries Team. We commend fuller consideration of this proposal and the investment of necessary resources to make this possible.

# 10. Questions and Answers

A first draft of this report was presented to BU council at its meeting in October 2015. The feedback and responses received have been included in the text that is now offered. We felt it might also be useful to offer a summary of the key questions and concerns that were raised, and the responses that were offered.

## **FUNDING & RESOURCES**

A number of questions focussed on whether some or all of these proposals are affordable. This is a valid observation, but we might equally argue that this is a matter of priority. In short – are these proposals important enough for us to invest our resources in making them become reality?

## **SHOULD/CAN THINGS BE COMPULSORY?**

A number of questions arose suggesting that things might be compulsory, or indeed questioning if this was appropriate. We would suggest that by “creating a culture where it is the norm” both in terms of church code of practice and Minister 2-year review, at settlement, churches and ministers are likely to discover they are disadvantaged by not participating. We suggest that if it becomes “unusual” not to be taking part, this in itself will be a significant incentive.

## **LOCAL ACCREDITATION**

Questions were raised about how and whether this would continue. We commend Local Recognition in the Ministry Formation section

## **LAY PASTORS/CHRISTIAN TRAINING PROGRAMME ETC.**

Several people questioned the future of various existing resources. We suggest that part of our present difficulty is that these are not consistently offered and operated. All of these could be included in a future “Foundation in Christian Leadership” and/or local recognition.

## **HOW DO WE EDUCATE CHURCHES?**

Questions were raised about whether churches need more help in understanding ministry, calling etc. There is a significant section on this – “helping churches to receive ministry”

## **USING EXISTING MINISTERS AND CHURCHES IN TRAINING**

Some suggested, as a possible training model, working in support of an existing minister while being mentored etc. We suggest that while this is not legislated, Formation Partnerships create greater scope to make this a reality. The introduction of portfolio could also make this a core element in that approach.

## **WHAT IS A MINISTER?**

Some felt that there is insufficient definition of what a minister is. This is a valid point and requires further consideration. However, we would argue that this is somewhat implicit in the recommendations within “helping churches to receive ministry” and “marks of ministry”. Our work has been informed by a reflection paper that was prepared as a foundational resource for the project.

## **COMPETENCY**

Some question where the introduction of “marks of ministry” has displaced competency too much. This is something that the project team itself has recognised and discussed. There is scope to give this further consideration but we would point out;

This is somewhat implicit in the “Ephesians 5” criteria. (We might note that one group suggests that at least two of these need to be present rather than one)

Many of the marks of ministry, if properly tested would require core competencies to be present if they were displayed.

We need to do more work on the subtle but important interface between accreditation which is the responsibility of the Union and Appointment which is that of the local church.

#### **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE MINISTRIES TEAM?**

Several questions have emerged about the future role and function of the ministries team. The team currently provide the core administration to enable our systems to operate. We see this as continuing. The reduced workload through improved technology is likely to be offset by increased scope (e.g. more data collection, administering CMD interviews etc.) We are also proposing some “critical distance” between the regulatory aspect of discipline (through an independent chair of MR) and the operational, which would remain the role of the ministries team. The new position of Formation Co-ordinator and the development of the “Leadership Academy” would also require the organisational support of the ministries team. We envisage a similar sized resource but with a greater scope and impact.

#### **COLLEGE ACCREDITATION**

Some concern was expressed over college accreditation and standards. We would point out the statistical reality that there is a far higher fallout in ministry from the non-college routes. It should be noted that formation partnerships include clear input from Associations and churches, and that the provision of assessment criteria etc. need to be rigorously monitored.

#### **RSC REMOVAL**

Some concern was expressed over apparent removal of RSC (Residential Selection Conference). We would highlight that there is no proposal to remove this, but we do believe that a portfolio option and greater local flexibility might significantly reduce the need for it.

#### **COVENANT**

Questions were raised over whether this would apply to non-accredited ministers. The answer is an emphatic “yes”. We believe it should become the “norm” and could also be a minimum requirement for waivers, HM funding, new membership etc. One of the regular complaints is that when intervention is deemed necessary, our ecclesiology often mitigates against this. This is especially true in the case of a non-accredited minister. The covenant would be the basis of a church and minister’s ongoing relationship with the wider Baptist community.

#### **CAN THIS PROVIDE FORMATION HUBS IN GEOGRAPHICALLY REMOTE LOCATIONS?**

The proposals do not prescribe this, but offer a clear framework for how it can be done if required. We see this as another expression of the “framework” approach we have sought to adopt. We would stress (as is already established practice in some places) that a college/Formation Partnership can establish a geographically remote “Hub” without establishing an entirely separate Partnership institution. We do believe that it is within the scope of this report to advocate whether or not additional FP’s should be established, we have offered a defining framework for how it should be done.

#### **WILL FORMATION PARTNERSHIPS BE NUMERICALLY LIMITED?**

Some concern was expressed as to whether a very high number of Formation Partnerships would emerge. FP’s would be validated by a central body (BSG/Council?) so there is definite control over the numbers. While it is a matter for decision making structures to determine, there seems little point in creating a new FP without there being clear compelling reasons to do so. We would again stress that our key concern is to place a clear framework around what already exists, and to create scope for all stakeholders to offer various options equally, not to offer future policy in this respect.

#### **MARKS OF MINISTRY – INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**

The suggestion was made that this should include relational and inter-personal skills. There is clear scope for further development and refinement of the “Marks of Ministry”. We do though believe that these are present within what is already offered.

# Appendices

Appendix 1 - Support paper - What Baptists have affirmed and do affirm about ministry.  
Commissioned by Baptist Steering Group (BSG) as one of the foundational documents for the IGNITE working group.

Appendix 2 - Terms of reference for the IGNITE working group, agreed by BSG April 2015)

Appendix 3 – Documents used in the pilot programme of the Minister's Biennial reflection.

Appendix 4 – Reflections from local leaders – a summary of comments and observations offered at various meetings with local leaders in churches without recognised ministers.

Appendix 5 – Summary of Proposals – a numbered summary of the key proposals arising from the full text of the report.

## **Appendix 1**

### **What Baptists have affirmed and do affirm about ministry**

The following reflection on the nature of and possibilities for Baptist ministry today is offered as a primer for the Ministry Review Group. As such it represents a conversation which, given the remit to be concise, draws on theological, biblical and contemporary contextual understandings without giving detailed or explicit references.

### **What makes Baptist ministers? God calls, we respond**

1. Ministers are called by God, and their call is discerned and recognised by God's people in the church. Our MR and college processes, together with the issuing of an invitation to minister by a local church, association, college or other agency, represent our human participation in the process of God's call upon the life of a disciple.

2. Ministry arises from within the church, and is usually first recognised and encouraged in the church. However, just as the church is not for itself but for the Gospel and for the world, so ministry too is for the Gospel and for the world. 'Pastoral ministry' represents one aspect of the mission of God in which those who are called to be ministers, and the church, are privileged to share. Ministry belongs not to the church but to God. It is God's ministry in Jesus Christ in which we are invited to share. Ministry will serve the well-being and building up of the church, but it is not inward looking: ministry must be understood within the mission of God, the *missio dei*.

3. Ministers may be called to a local church, or to exercise ministry trans-locally, but our system of discernment and testing suggests that their ministry is not restricted to the particular place in which they currently exercise it. They are ministers of the Church as well as the church, with a Kingdom focus. Within our ecclesiology, the processes by which we discern and affirm ministry indicate that we are always more than the sum of our parts. Ministers belong to the Baptist family as well as to their particular current location, and are a resource for the whole family.

4. Consequently, we offer the following affirmations:

a. The language of covenant expresses these relationships well. A covenant is not a contract, but a relationship of mutual trust and accountability in Christ: those in ministry offer evidence of 'call, competence and character'; the wider family offers nurture, affirmation and commendation; mutual support and accountability is assumed by all. It is necessary to note that where this covenant is broken there sometimes follow legal consequences, and ministers, as well as local churches and associations, need support in navigating many of the external requirements which increasingly press upon them.

b. In the foreseeable future there may need to be a greater diversity than at present – both in who 'calls' a minister (pioneers, for example, may well need to be called by a body other than a local church), and in whether and to what extent that ministry is funded.

c. While we can point sometimes to effective and lively ministry by those who are not accredited, as well as sometimes to unimaginative and ineffectual ministry by those who are, a high quality ministry is most likely to be offered among the Baptist family by maintaining a national system of accreditation. This is both an important ecclesiological point about our fellowship together in and for the Gospel and also a pragmatic point about the possibility of chaotic developments which will undermine trust and portability. However, the current system of 'accreditation for life' appears problematic. Theologically, it suggests that the call is tested once and for all, rather than continually and prayerfully reviewed; pragmatically, it can make ministers complacent and unwilling to commit to life-long practices of learning and development. There is a strong case for accreditation to be reviewed every (say) seven years, and made dependent upon CPD.

### **What do Baptist ministers do? Labels, diversity, tasks, outward orientation**

5. Baptist ministry has been described in various ways – traditionally as one of 'word and sacrament,' and more recently as one of 'pastoral or servant leadership.' There are good reasons to be cautious now about

these and other descriptors: nearly every term is only helpful to a point, and also has negative possibilities associated with it. A ministry of word and sacrament may sound too focused on looking inwards and serving the life of the current congregation (though word and sacrament can be understood evangelistically); ministers must exercise leadership in their given sphere, but giving the language undue prominence carries risks of an over-corporate style and the importing of inappropriate leadership styles and understandings.

a. Fluidity in terms is inevitable, and perhaps even welcome. However, beyond a multiplicity of labels adopted by ministers and their communities, we believe that it is still possible to discern a commonality that allows us to regard a cohort of individuals as 'Baptist ministers' – even if this is untidier than we would like.

b. Untidiness in general is inevitable too. While we continually try to rationalize and tame, and to have things done 'decently and in order,' we are reminded that in Acts the story of the church is one of a community constantly playing catch-up with the Spirit. These two realities must be creatively held in tension: the need for order, and an openness to the new moving of the Spirit who goes on ahead.

6. Baptist ministers will generally do a number of things, but they will not actually do anything which a local church could not in principle ask someone else who is not a minister to do. However, ministers will do such things as teaching, preaching, pastoral caring, and exercising strategic leadership in a particular way on behalf of the congregation and often in a distinctively representative way. Ministers represent their communities, and in turn, represent the larger community of the Baptist family, by virtue of their particular and peculiar place among us. They may not be the only people who represent their communities, but they will do so in particular ways.

7. Ministers are concerned with the enabling of ministry within the community. While older models of ministry may have envisaged that the minister would do everything, we now see that this is neither desirable nor possible. Ministry is exercised by the whole community of Christ's people, and 'the minister' functions as a catalyst to nurture, encourage, provoke, and resource the ministry of the whole people of God, a process which will require team working and team building. Increasingly, ministers in local congregations will be focused on mission, and enabling mission – recalling that 'the church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning.'

8. One of the polarities in understanding of ministry which has emerged in the last few decades is that between classic and communal views of ministry. In the classic approach, ministerial tasks are defined in historic ways and assumed to be 'given' and universal; a more communal approach recognises that ministry is dispersed among many or all members of a community and that the precise tasks which ministers undertake will vary by local negotiation from place to place as the ministry of Christ is manifested through the community of his people. Such communal patterns are likely to be more flexible and to give a larger place to the particular gifts of individual ministers, or the particular demands of their context.

a. Most who serve in local churches will continue to teach, preach, envision and exercise strategic leadership, be engaged in pastoral care, and encourage and lead the church in outreach, as well as playing a role in the general overseeing of the community. However, in our changing circumstances there will be more variety in what local ministers do and how they do it. It will be important for local churches and their ministers to seek the mind of Christ together on how ministry and ministries are to be expressed in their location.

b. The historic over-reliance on 'preaching with a view' seems increasingly dubious and partial given the range of tasks to be undertaken by ministers in the 21st century – and other significant areas in which ministry may be found wanting, or even fail, need somehow to be included in the process of testing a call to a particular situation.

c. Ministry has never been defined by the number of hours given over to it, or by income received for it – even if the 'labourer is worthy of his hire.' In the future a greater variety of patterns of ministry will also be in evidence – as some work bi-vocationally and flexibly. These developments will test us in a number of ways: for example, in the availability of those in ministry for their communities, and in the practical needs of formation and support for such ministries.

d. Ministers, and ministry, in response to lively theological reflection, will need to be flexible and adaptable. We need patterns of ministry, and methods of resourcing them, which are strong and flexible like a tree, rather than rigid and brittle like a machine.

### **Who are Baptist Ministers? Formation, Character, Discipleship, Dispositions**

9. With an increasing variety of, and balance in, the tasks that Baptist ministers undertake, other matters need to be drawn into focus. Being a Baptist minister has never been, even for those who have been happy with generally 'functional' language, simply a matter of completing a set of tasks. Ministry is also a matter of character, of who the person is. This is why we speak of 'formation' as well as 'training' in the process of preparation for ministry.

Speaking of a 'way of being' does not suggest that ministers occupy some rarefied and higher spiritual plane, but indicates that ministers commit to intentional and consistent practices pertaining to availability for God, others, and the fellowship of God's people. They will cultivate certain dispositions that relate to their own spirituality; their relationships with others ('uphold the bond of unity'); strategic leadership; accountability to their local community and the wider family; and bearing responsibility along with and on behalf of others.

10. The stress on character, on the person of the minister, includes an inevitable focus on them as individuals which is more intense and concentrated than for other members of the congregation, just as their representative role leaves them open to greater scrutiny than others. For those outside the community of faith the minister will often be taken to 'stand for' the church, and, indeed, for Christ too. This uncomfortable observation must be connected to another: that ministers are called to be exemplary disciples – a fact indicated by the different standard applied to ministers by MR rules, for instance, but also reflecting Scriptural mandates for those who have prominence in the church community.

11. The most important disposition that the minister will embody is probably that of continually directing their community to the presence and activity of God. In many respects, this could be taken to be the main heading on a job description from which all else follows. It encompasses spiritual accompaniment; prophetic speaking; leading in theological reflection as a 'theologian in residence;' directing the community to outreach; evangelism; teaching, preaching and celebrating the sacraments; pastoral work inside and outside the community of faith; and so on.

Ministry so understood is essentially relational, and those who are ministers will have strong gifts in making and maintaining strong relationships. Within these they will be able to bear the Gospel in word and deed, and direct attention always to God in Christ.

Rob Ellis, Adrian Argile, Chris Ellis, Rachel Haig, Colin Norris, Stuart Murray Williams

January 2015

## Appendix 2

### IGNITE Project Team – terms of reference (agreed with BSG April 2015)

To work with Associations, Colleges and Specialist Teams to develop a vision for a structured approach to inspire and enable serving church leaders to invest in their own development with a clear vision for mission in their own local context. While being centred on Accredited Ministers, it should include all church leaders including pioneers, lay teams etc. This should include:

A clear plan for how this can be communicated and initiated for all ministers and leaders

An outline of the resources needed to sustain and promote this approach

Clear recommendations for how engaging with this can be promoted and assumed in key elements of ministry recognition, formation and support.

To review our existing processes and structures in relation to ministry, exploring their effectiveness and efficiency, making recommendations for improvement where it seems appropriate. This would include:

Compiling a clear description of the key activities of the ministries team and associated councils and committees, both as they currently function and with any recommendations for change.

Shifting the emphasis of language and process from one of regulation and control to one of enabling and encouragement.

To particularly reflect on the existing backlogs and legal casework, to explore whether this can be alleviated in future through different approaches to process, status, communication and vocabulary etc.

Developing a communication plan that ensures clear information is available to relevant stakeholders involved at key stages of the ministry process. This should include both promotional material, and outline of process for those involved in implementing it. Communications should take due regard of our Union's overall vision and culture, particularly seeking to engage those who are under-represented in ministry at present.

To work in liaison with the Database project to develop a clear plan to make optimum use of ICT in our ministry support and oversight.

To produce a 3-5 year development plan for the work of the ministries team which embraces the above. This would be used as a key element in the recruitment of a permanent Team Leader.

To act as *critical friends* to the interim Team Leader in scoping and implementing immediate developmental change where this is deemed appropriate.

To produce a plan for sustained review and development in the future so that this becomes the embedded norm –including appropriate governance and accountability structures.

## Appendix 3

### Biennial reflection on ministry – introductory notes

As Baptists, we are a naturally diverse community, who will have different approaches in needs in relation to almost all aspects of ministry. We have made a commitment to generating **“a culture where Continuing Ministry Development is the norm”**. In seeking to achieve this, there are some important things to emphasise:

Continuing Ministry Development is **ours to define**, and in this context should not be taken to mean an exclusively academic programme or indeed, one that involves any element of training and study where this is not appropriate. What we are seeking to do is to value and encourage the process of a minister reflecting on their ministry practice and investing in those things that will benefit their growth, wellbeing and effectiveness.

There are many and diverse resources and opportunities for growth and development. This is not an attempt to prescribe or restrict what a minister might engage with. The uniform element is simply to invest time and effort into helping a minister reflect, respond and where appropriate acting as advocates to the church for support in accessing this.

This investment is envisaged as an intentional engagement from a Regional Minister, or other individual recognised as having responsibility and appropriate expertise. After some guided reflection on their current ministry experience, a forward vision for personal growth and development would emerge. This would take place through a structured interview of around 2 hours – this is intended as an investment in that minister – it is not an appraisal or performance check. It is designed to be of benefit to that minister, not to satisfy any ministerial regulations. By offering a uniformed structure, we hope to develop a greater sense of community and shared identity as ministers without imposing any centralised expectations.



To the Minister

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this pilot programme. Please engage with it as a genuine expression of support in your ministry, but also please offer us honest feedback as to how useful you found it, and how it might be improved.

The key purpose of this engagement is to help you put together a “forward development plan”. This is your own personal vision for how you can grow and flourish in ministry and needs to be defined by your needs, not the expectations of others. While we do not want to be over-prescriptive, a good development plan might include:

- Some elements designed to address your personal wellbeing and quality of life

- Some elements to help you grow as a disciple of Jesus

  - Some elements of study to learn about new developments and ideas or to deepen your understanding of relevant ministry issues.

  - Some elements to help you offer leadership and vision in your present ministry context.

However, before you can plan for the future, it is helpful to reflect on the present and perhaps learn from the past, so the questions attached are offered to assist you in this. Try to spend a couple of hours with them before you meet with the person who is accompanying you in this exercise.

Try to draw out your main conclusions before you meet, but be open to consider these further. By discussing it together this may sharpen your vision, or perhaps enable them to share the experience of others or ideas and resources they are aware of.

Our vision is that this would be used at least every two years, and that you would make a clear record of your development aims. Meeting in two years’ time would enable you to reflect on how successful you have been in achieving them, and also how useful they have been.

The purpose of engaging with an accompanier is not to legislate or regulate this process, but to simply recognise the human reality that we are often motivated better to do things when we know we will be accountable to someone else for doing so.

This will often be a Regional Minister with whom you already have a mutual relationship of trust. They may also be able to act as an advocate for you, if perhaps the church or employer is not being supportive in allowing you to engage with your development plan.

Can I thank you again for taking part in this trial – I hope that together we can develop something of real benefit to ministry and mission in our churches.

Yours in Christ

Phil Jump – Project Leader

## Thinking about Yourself

How are you - In your relationship with God? In your relationships with family? In your physical and emotional wellbeing?

What have you learned about God and your faith in these last two years?

How would you describe your passions in life and ministry?

What are the 'monsters' that you contend with?

## Thinking about your current role

What would you describe as your key achievements and successes in the last two years?

What have you learned about yourself through them?

What opportunities are there to build on these?

What would you describe as your biggest challenges and struggles in the last two years?

How have these affected you?

In your relationships and family life?

In your personal spirituality and walk with God?

In your role as a minister?

Are there things you need to change as a consequence?

Are there practical steps you could take to help you better respond to such circumstances in future?

## Thinking about your calling

To what degree do you believe you are fulfilling the ministry to which you are called?

What are the things that enable this?

What are the things that mitigate against it?

What are your hopes and fears about the coming period in your ministry?

## Thinking ahead

Do your responses to the questions above, suggest actions you might take in the next 3 years to help your ministry develop and flourish.

Are there things you need consider changing/stopping? What steps can you take to make this happen?

Are there things that you need to initiate or participate in? What steps do you need to take to make this happen?

As a Union, we have identified five key areas that we believe should be the mark of our approach to mission and ministry. You are invited to use these as a framework to reflect on your experience of ministry in the last couple of years.

## BELONGING

We believe that it is important for a minister to have good relationships and support beyond the local church. We also believe that a key role of ministry is to encourage and develop effective relationships among those we are called to serve. You are invited to consider:

Where is my sense of belonging beyond the local church expressed and experienced?

How am I building community within my own church or ministry context?

How does my belonging to the wider Baptist family express itself? What would help and encourage this?

## INSPIRATION

We believe that effective leaders need to be inspired in their own faith and also be those who inspire others to live as effective followers of Jesus.

What has inspired you in your ministry? How can you maintain this?

How do you inspire others to become and remain faithful followers of Jesus?

## HUNGER FOR GOD'S KINGDOM

We recognise the call of Christ to pray for the coming of God's Kingdom and believe that ministers and leaders have a key role in pursuing its cause and encouraging others to grasp this vision.

How is God calling you to engage in the local community and wider society?

In what ways are you challenging and equipping God's people to "seek God's Kingdom"?

## SPIRIT LED

In what ways have you grown and been shaped by God's Spirit at work within you?

How are you encouraging and enabling others to be Open to God?

## EMBRACING ADVENTURE

What new horizons and opportunities have you explored in the last couple of years?

What is your vision for the future of your own ministry and those you serve?

How are you enabling others to develop and pursue a forward vision?

In the light of the considerations above:

What personal and spiritual support do you need to further flourish in ministry?

What practical steps might you realistically commit yourself to in the next 3 years?

*(try to make these as specific as you can, and where appropriate set yourself an appropriate timescale (e.g. rather than “I will pray more” – “I will set aside an hour every Tuesday morning for prayer and communion with God”)*

*You will not be judged or assessed on your success or failure in achieving these personal goals, but are encouraged to be open to discuss at a future interview how you have benefitted from them, or why they have proved difficult to achieve)*

## Reflections from local leaders.

In conversation with local leaders and through some of the stories shared, we picked up the following reflections from people in churches who do not have appointed ministers:

*"We need help in reaching people outside of the church. We have limited capacity and to be honest because most of us have been around here a long time, we tend to focus on "keeping things going." We know that we need to be doing more than that, but it can take quite a lot out of you just holding things together as they are. We also get so busy with "church stuff" we can lose touch with the "world out there".*

*"Jesus gave us the idea of sending people out two by two and learning the hard way. Often for local leaders it's the same."*

*"It's hard to challenge the expectations of the church when you are "one of them". Our task is to show people Jesus, but people expect you to run things."*

*"I often feel quite inadequate – there isn't really anyone around to tell me whether or not I should."*

*"It can be very demanding – you are often holding the pain and struggle of people – and then you have to deal with criticism – that can be really tough to cope with."*

*I am not an academic person. I would love to have some input and support but I struggle with the set-up we have at the moment "I am afraid of exams" Possibly a mentor or similar would be great.*

*"The minister" is an assumed point of contact – I am not sure people have that when there is a visitor at the front each week.*

*"Running the church things is OK but I struggle with the pastoral side of things"*

*"How do people pray for their leaders? I am not sure they see us that way."*

*"We believe in the Priesthood of all believers so we should be able to do this."*

*"One of my key concerns is "succession". When a minister leaves or retires you can just find another one – who is going to replace us? We don't have the luxury of retiring – you have to keep going because there just isn't anyone to take over. Maybe we need help "giving up" – it's hard to lay down a role and then stay at the church and see others struggling without you, so you end up doing it again."*

*"We have valued the Association and the way we have been supported – this needs to be part of the infrastructure of Associations."*

*"We have valued weekend retreats at a local (non-Baptist) college – perhaps the Baptist Union could offer something like that. Yes – a kind of weekend retreat 'equipped to lead'." Someone else added – "but who looks after the ranch while we are away?"*

### Areas that we would seek help with:

Developing prayer in the church

Getting others to "do"

Learning to look at the church from outside

Mission audit

Worship resources

Discipleship

Preaching

## Appendix 5 – Summary of Proposals

- (1) The Introduction of an **online multi-user database** allowing record keeping and tracking for all aspects of ministry progression from initial application to retirement and beyond. It must be appropriately accessible to individual ministers, Association and College Teams (including mentors and tutors) as well as members of the Ministries Team – with appropriate security, encryption, access controls and protocols etc. This must include adequate technical support and an intentional commitment to its introduction and support from senior leaders across BUGB. (Including the Ministries Team Leader). This needs to include adequate training and technical competence as integral to ongoing staffing and management provision. The default philosophy for this should be “input at source” (i.e. if a mentor has met with a NAM, they are able to record this direct onto the database.)

One of the clear messages that has emerged through the research elements of this project is that we cannot measure what we do not record. In designing the database it is crucial that our Union also explores its key priorities and values, and considers what information we need to collect if we are to measure progress against these. Two examples which illustrate this are (i) despite a longstanding commitment to diversity, we do not store the ethnic details of ministers, so cannot make comparisons or monitor, (ii) questions were asked about women in local church team leader roles – again we do not record the specific roles that ministers undertake, so could not respond. IT SHOULD BE NOTED that these are illustrative and we are not arguing that these two should necessarily have been recorded. Our point is that we need to look forward, identify our key priorities and begin to collect and store data that will be useful in reviewing our progress in years to come. This needs to be built into the database design and associated processes and systems.

- (2) Introduction of **recognised training and assessment for all Association and National MR committee members** with a view to this being mandatory by 2020. This should lead to a “national pool” of MR assessors with increasing integration of membership between national and Association MR’s. We would work to the norm of inviting those who have served on Association MR’s for 3 years or more to join the national pool.
- (3) Consideration of **Moderator of MR being a financially supported position** (say 1 or ½ day per week) with two Vice Moderators also being appointed. A Nationally recognised MR committee would be any gathering of recognised assessors that is moderated by one of these three. We also believe that the MRC Moderator has a vital role in the peer accountability of the Ministries Team Leader and for that reason they should be appointed by and be a member of a recognised independent body (probably BU Council).
- (4) Development of a commonly recognised schedule of **“marks of ministry”** to replace the current core-competencies. This would involve a far greater focus on characters and behaviours rather than abilities to perform pre-defined duties and might be measured in other contexts than just local church. A key focus of these would be that they can be applied to a number of patterns and expressions of ministry but express a common standard of ministerial character and behaviour.
- (5) Review of the ongoing necessity of **Residential Selection Conference**, and if continued to be arranged and overseen by a selected Accrediting Body through a process of tender. (see 16 below). (NB we are not suggesting the elimination of a route into ministry that is directly overseen by national MRC – our hope is that the implementation of other proposals will offer alternative options that would make RSC no longer necessary.)
- (6) Appointment of a (possibly part-time) **Training and Formation Co-ordinator**. This should be a senior appointment who can work with Team Leaders and College Principals as peers. Their role is to oversee the processes of formation and accreditation working with accrediting/formation bodies to develop a workable ongoing process of review, and to enable emerging patterns and expressions of ministry to be continually nurtured, tested and included within our processes and structures. Their brief should also include the development of resources and training to support local church leaders who might not be accredited ministers.

- (7) Working with NAM's to help them put in place **a future personal development plan** prior to full enrolment. The detail of the plan needs to be seen not as a further requirement of NAM process, but as part of the supporting them in future ministry development. This would be a supported and documented process and the role of Union/Regional Minister could include acting as an advocate for the minister in ensuring that the church supports and resources this. This would become the foundation of the ongoing process outlined in (8) below.
- (8) Introduction of a minimum two-yearly **personal development interview** for all accredited ministers. This would include the review and extension of an ongoing 3 year development plan.
- (9) Introduction of a **local church "code of practice"** which would be voluntarily offered to all churches appointing ministers. While our Union could not REQUIRE that this is embraced, ministers would be clearly aware if they were settling in a church that had chosen not to sign-up. The code of practice would seek to reflect the mutual expectations of church and minister in their ongoing covenant relationship, and would provide a mandate for a Regional Minister or other representative of the wider Baptist family to become involved if either party was considered to be acting outside of its spirit and intent.
- (10) Introduction of a **Ministry Covenant** as the foundation of ongoing accreditation – this would enable recognition to become primarily "forward looking" rather than retrospective, thus providing scope for greater flexibility while retaining clear accountability for ministers seeking accreditation and recognition through non-traditional routes. (In other words our recognition of an individual becomes far more based on what they commit to do and be in the future, rather than the qualifications and training they might have achieved in the past)
- (11) Introduction of **clear, consistent and documented office systems** for the handling of all process and in particular disciplinary matters and information sharing. This should include an integrated approach with Regional Ministers who should be trained in necessary process, and recognised as an integral part of the overall ministries resource.
- (12) Review of current training provision **to explore a greater element of leadership and people management skills** necessary for the fulfilment of any form of ministry. We would also encourage our colleges to explore the development of bi-vocational training options, providing additional skills acquisition (e.g. community development, business studies etc.) This also offers the potential to develop a prophetic voice through the introduction of ethical and theologically rooted learning on key "secular" issues.
- (13) Exploration of **revising our preparation for ministry** with a view to offering a more thorough preliminary module in which a candidate would be developed and assessed prior to embarking on full-time formation. We recognise that ministry candidates will offer a variety of experience and indeed engage in quite diverse patterns of formation, but make this proposal out of a two-fold concern. The first is that for many Ministers in Training, (MIT's) embarking on a programme of formation requires them to take the sole pastorate of a functioning local church, possibly with no real prior experience of pastoral ministry. We have to acknowledge that while it has evolved with time, the basic pattern of Ministerial Recognition was established at a time when candidates were being commended for a course of full-time study as those with "calling and potential for ministry". We now require many MIT's to be "ministry ready" from the outset. The second arises from an observation that some of the questions around a candidate's suitability have only emerged through undertaking a process of formation – it might be that a foundation programme could be developed that would also help identify these, so that an individual can re-consider before making significant life changes that would make withdrawal much more costly. We suggest a standard norm of a 1 year foundation, and would invite colleges to consider whether some academic or vocational credit could be gained through this process, thus reducing demands on a student in the first year of full formation. We recognise that there may be circumstances where this requirement could be waived (i.e. where a candidate is already in pastorate and anticipates remaining there as a placement church). However we would expect there to be some identified

elements within this foundation year, and any waiver to be based on an objective demonstration that these have been met.

- (14) Recognising that over 50% of our churches experience a model of leadership that is not provided by a minister who has participated in our traditional model of formation, a serious engagement to develop alternative patterns of training, formation and oversight that fit present reality. This could include;
- a. Developing the work done by the LBA portfolio and working with other Associations and partnerships to roll out similar patterns elsewhere.
  - b. Devolving accreditation to "formation partnerships" with BUGB installing a robust system of regulation and validation of the partnerships themselves. (NB the role of BU is not to "test" the individual candidates, but to ensure a consistency of standards, processes and systems)
  - c. Exploring the development of "leadership mentors" – individuals who can intentionally engage in ministry which supports a group of leaders trans-locally, being developed in the key leadership and mentoring skills to do this.
  - d. Foundational training and formation in Christian Leadership that should be encouraged for elders, deacons etc. so as to generate a closer resonance between ministry and local church expectations.
- (15) **Introduction of "Formation Partnerships"** – ideally partnerships of colleges, associations and other relevant stakeholders that are empowered to offer formation and accredit ministers. This includes the introduction of clear regulatory criteria and a robust but not overbearing programme of inspection and validation. However, within these parameters, such bodies are free to operate at their own discretion. (high accountability – low control) We hope that this would not involve any significant increase in workload for colleges/partnerships except that rather than engaging with MRC to negotiate accreditation for individuals who do not "fit" on a case by case basis, they would be free to make their own decisions in this respect – instead engaging from time to time with MRC to show that their overall processes and procedures are fit for purpose.
- (16) While we expect these proposals to offer greater scope to embrace more diverse expressions of ministry, we note the particular focus at present on what has been described as "**bi-vocational ministry**". We are grateful for initial work done by Bristol Baptist College in relation to this, and its willingness to allow IGNITE team members to engage in its recent conference. While maintaining a commitment to respond to a variety of ministry needs, we commend a particular focus on Bi-vocational Ministry to take forward the work that has already been done.
- (17) **The establishment of a working group** similar to the IGNITE team to provide ongoing accountability and support for the ministries team and be a key part of its forward strategic thinking. Its work should be less intense than has been required by this review, but it should provide an ongoing oversight of the implementation of Council's existing recommendations and a brief for strategic oversight of ministry and leadership development within our Union. Its convenor should have a peer to peer relationship with the Ministries Team Leader, albeit one that respects formal line-management structures.
- (18) In the light of our current commitments to embrace gender, racial and disability justice, that consideration be given to the information that needs to be collected and stored in order to monitor effectively our performance in these respects for the next five years and beyond. Necessary changes to our database and proformas should be introduced within 12 months. In addition existing justice groups should be enabled and supported in monitoring the implementation of the IGNITE proposals, and in reviewing the relevant data so as to identify and make recommendations in the light of any justice issues that have failed to be addressed.

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