



Guide to creating a church profile

1. Introduction

Your church profile is a key document in your search for new or additional ministry. It provides prospective ministers with their first opportunity to discover something about you. Ministers will look at it, along with any website you may have, not only for facts about the church and its community. They will also want to understand something of your church's heart. What is your church passionate about? What is important to the members? What is distinctive about who you are or what you do? What would you fiercely defend? What do you long to see happen?

So, care should be taken in preparing this document. It may best be done by a small group, though as the final version will have to be approved at a church meeting, it is helpful to consult widely as it is being written.

The best church profiles are:

- realistic and honest;
- neither too short or too long;
- clearly laid out; and
- well-presented.

In addition they should:

- include some pictures;
- give a good introduction to the church as it is now;
- explain the direction members feels God is asking the church to take;
- avoid getting bogged down with fine details and statistics; and
- set out practical arrangements clearly, such as stipend and manse provision.

At the end of this document you will find a **sample** profile of a **fictional** church. This is not intended to be a template which you have to use but to give you something you may like to use as a starting point for yours.

2. What to include in your profile

You should ensure that you include the following information. It is helpful for ministers if the information is presented in the following order:

A. An introductory paragraph

Give a brief description of what you feel to be the most important features of your church. This does not have to say everything as there is room later on to expand. But it acts as a signpost to what you feel a prospective minister should immediately know. Remember this will be the first thing they read.

You might like to weave together three elements:

- The basic identity of the church – scale and setting.
- What you are especially proud of.
- What you are especially hopeful for.

For example,

“We are a church of eighty members set in an ethnically diverse city suburb. We span the complete age range from babies to the elderly and have been encouraged recently by the arrival of several families from other parts of the world. We have an established presence in our community through our job club and long-running toddler group and have excellent relationships with our local councillors, MP and other community leaders. We are excited about the prospect of empowering each other to be missionaries wherever God has placed us – in our workplaces, streets, schools, clubs and families.”

Though this section comes first, it may be easiest to write last, once you have considered the further sections below. Please note that for your church to be included in the Pastoral Vacancy List (PVL), you will need to include a summary of your church and its vision in up to 100 words. What you write for this section of your church profile can double up as the summary to include on the PVL information form which your regional minister will give you.

B. The church as it is now

Go into more detail about the makeup, character and activity of your church. You might find the following list of questions helpful, though it is not exhaustive.

- What is the number and range of people among the membership and congregation? You might offer a profile of ages, ethnicities, employment, and so on.
- What is the makeup of your leadership and/or staff?
- What is the frequency, ethos and style of worship? You could describe a typical service.
- Are there any distinctive theological positions that are important to the membership?
- Do you have a set of agreed or unspoken values that you hold dear?
- What opportunities exist for fellowship, prayer and discipleship?

- How do particular groups of people participate in church life? Such as the elderly, children, young people, young adults, singles, and so on.
- How does the church participate in mission to its community? Mission is broadly understood to include evangelism, social action and participation in the community.
- What mission projects or missional people do you support beyond the church?
- Do you own buildings or other assets and how are they used?
- How do you relate to other local churches, organisations and institutions?
- Have you recently undertaken or completed any particular projects or initiatives?

As you write this section, please don't be shy of either the church's strengths or weaknesses. You can make clear where you feel God has blessed you with growth or depth or inspiration. Likewise, it will help prospective ministers if you are honest about aspects of church life that have declined or which you know deserve greater attention.

Try to avoid labels if possible. People interpret words like 'evangelical', 'inclusive', 'conservative', 'charismatic', 'affirming', 'mainstream', in different ways. Try instead to describe what the church looks and feels like. For example, "We often have different expressions of the gifts of the Spirit in our worship services". Or, "We work really hard to include people as they come to us, whatever their ethnicity, background, or lifestyle."

When you are describing your church's ethos, worship style, or theological positions, please be open about disagreement in the church. Some churches have a settled position on certain topics, or have adopted a way of being or worshipping that sits well with almost everyone. Other churches may be holding opposing and strongly held views or preferences in tension. It helps potential ministers if you are honest about such tensions, which are often a perfectly normal part of church growth and development.

C. The surrounding community

Say more about the area surrounding the church. There is no need for detailed statistics or demographic breakdown. The idea is more to paint a picture of what the community feels like. Questions to address might include the following.

- How would you describe your area to other people? For example: rural village; post-war estate; city suburb; tourist town, and so on.
- What is distinctive about its mix of people? You might think in terms of age profile, ethnicity, affluence, mobility, education and more.
- Are there particular industries or institutions that shape the community's identity?
- Does the area have a notable history that determines how it sees itself?
- Is there already a strong sense of community and if so, how is this expressed?
- What does the community pride itself in or do really well?
- Are there glaring needs or tensions in the community?

You might want to indicate the extent to which your church membership reflects its surrounding community, or name any groups with which the church is particularly engaged.

D. The church you wish to see

Write about what you believe God is calling your church towards in the coming season. How definite you can be about this will vary. You may have a clearly defined vision and even a strategy of how it will be realised. You may alternatively simply have a number of hopes for different areas of church activity, or key priorities the church is keen to pursue. Or it may be that you are not at all certain about what the church should *do* next, but have a strong understanding of the way you wish to be – a set of values that will shape your approach to every aspect of church life.

There is no right or wrong way of capturing your hopes for the future. Write what you can, so that it may be a starter for discussion between you and the potential ministers you meet. How you arrive at and agree the content of this is covered under section 3 below.

E. The ministry you are seeking

Try to capture the particular gifts and strengths you wish a new minister to have or the approach you wish them to take. There is always a danger that church members, if asked what they want in a minister, manage to list between them every possible gift and attribute. So, the aim here is to discern a small number of key attributes, skills or experiences through which a minister will best enable the church's vision for the future. It can also help to think whether there are qualities without which the minister risks being always in conflict with the membership.

Here are some questions you can use to begin thinking about which attributes you are especially keen to see in a new minister. Both the questions and the examples are suggestions only. They are not remotely exhaustive and inevitably tend towards stereotypes. There is no reason, for example, why a minister might not be both dynamic *and* reflective. But the questions may help you think of the best way to capture the essence of what you are looking for. Remember, you are not supposed to answer each question, but draw from them a short list of key gifts and skills you are looking for.

- **What style of leader will best suit the coming season?** A commanding decision-maker? A collaborative team player who will consult widely? An enabler of others who is willing to hand over tasks to emerging leaders?
- **What personality will enable the church's vision for the future?** Dynamic and creative, able to generate new ideas? Calm and reflective, able to bring healing and unity? Tough and resilient, able to deal well with conflict? Risk-taking, able to lead the church into innovative and sacrificial ways of being?
- **What values do you hope the minister will hold?** Is it important the minister has a special passion for justice, inclusion, biblical faithfulness, Baptist principles, diversity, teamwork, openness to the Spirit, and so on?
- **Where do you expect the minister to spend most of their time?** Is their focus to be out in the community, networking with local people and organisations? Or is your primary expectation for them to pastor, teach and nurture the congregation? You may want to

consider what is already well-resourced in your church and think how a minister's gifts might complement rather than duplicate this resource.

- **What approach to worship and preaching is most appropriate?** What is your expectation for their worship leading and preaching? If worship and preaching are important, what approach will fit the congregation as it is? And which gifts will enable to congregation to grow into new ways of encountering God?
- **Are there certain groups you want a minister to engage with especially?** Are you expecting a minister to focus pastorally or missionally on particular constituency? For example: a multi-ethnic community, children, young adults, the elderly, the homeless, refugees, those with poor mental health, the arts world, a local industry, a social group? The list could be extended.
- **How competent does the minister need to be organisationally?** Will the minister have to undertake all their own administration, or is there support for this? Are you hoping they will manage a major project, or bring great experience of church and charity governance? Are you looking for them to be skilled in change management?
- **Is there a certain theological profile the minister must fulfil?** This question needs great care. It is probably unwise to be too definitive about the theological standpoint of your minister as theology is not fixed and growth comes through the introduction of new insights and viewpoints. However, if you know the church will struggle with anyone not committed to a certain theological framework, be it well-defined or deliberately open, this may be worth saying. (Please see below with regard to views on women in leadership.)

As you develop your thoughts, try to explain the terms you use. For example, rather than stating, "We are looking for a strong leader", explain how you hope the minister will exercise leadership. Rather than saying, "We want the minister to be charismatic," explain what this looks like in practice.

It is also very important to have a conversation within the church leadership and with the whole church about the different *types* of candidates who might apply. It is best to name and discuss any assumptions about a minister's background or circumstances before your profile is submitted. So, please set aside time to explore carefully and graciously the expectations church members have about any incoming minister. It is helpful to ask people to imagine different scenarios. How do they feel, for example, if the minister is either highly experienced or newly accredited; old or young; male or female; single, married or divorced; with or without a family; White, Black or Asian; familiar with or new to the area; able-bodied or disabled; working as a couple in shared ministry? As much as is possible, imagine the unique opportunities that *every* type of person would create, different though they may be. This process of discussion will help you to be as open as possible when you eventually meet the person God is calling to serve you. It also helps to avoid later embarrassment and conflict when unspoken assumptions emerge only after you have met with candidates.

Further to this, **please note that Baptist Union wholly supports and affirms the ministry of women in our churches.** We are aware, however, that there are a small number of member churches who do not. If this is the case for your church, then you **MUST** indicate this in your profile. You should only do so after a process of listening and discernment and we strongly encourage you to explore this issue with the help of your regional minister or moderator before taking a decision. The Baptist Union desires that no ministry position is closed to our ministers on the basis of their gender alone. There is also guidance to help you think through this matter in appendix 3 of our Churches' Guide to the Baptists Together Settlement Process.

For your church to be included in the Pastoral Vacancy List, please remember that you will have to include a summary in up to 100 words of the ministry you are seeking. (This is in addition to the 100-word summary describing your church.) What you write for this section of your church profile can be the basis for that summary.

F. History of the church

This is not mandatory, but a brief overview of the history of the church may help potential ministers to understand the context of the church better.

G. Practical matters

In this final section of your profile, please include:

- Details of the stipend you will be offering. This would normally be linked to the Baptist Union standard stipend (see www.baptist.org.uk/stipend).
- The ways in which you will support the minister's continuing ministerial development.
- The number of days or hours you expect the minister to work, if you are only offering part-time ministry, and any flexibility you have with this.
- Information about the way you will be providing accommodation and workspace for your minister. If you have a manse, please provide a description and pictures. Some churches even provide a link to a video tour of their manse.

It is also helpful to include information about the things people generally consider when they are moving to a new area, such as local schools, leisure and sporting facilities, transport links, and so on.

3. How to prepare the profile

Where possible, consult with the whole church in the early stages of preparing a profile. Allow them to have a voice in saying what they believe the essence of your church to be; what direction God is calling you to head towards next; and what gifts and skills you should look for in a minister. If the church has children and young people, think about how they can be included in this process.

A 'vision day', in which the church sets time aside to gather to gather, look at itself and discern what God might be saying about its future, can be a good way to achieve this. If they have not already offered help in this, you can ask your regional minister if they will lead such a day.

Alternatively, you could ask your interim moderator if you have one. A suitably gifted church member could also help, although an independent person may be a preferable and more objective facilitator.

Following a vision day, it is best for a small group of appointed people to shape the wording and presentation of what was discussed and decided. Other aspects of the profile, such as a description of your church's current life, or an outline of the surrounding area, can be delegated to someone who is able to research and clearly present the different categories. The practicalities of stipend and accommodation arrangements are likely to be determined by the leadership team.

It may help to nominate one person to collate the different sections into a unified whole. They should ensure the finished profile reads like one document. This includes checking for and amending facts or opinions which contradict each other. Once collated, ask someone who was not involved in the production of the profile to proof-read.

You should then ask the church meeting to formally approve the profile. You can, of course, take draft copies to more than one church meeting to allow further opportunities for wider input.

4. Submitting your profile

Once your profile is completed and approved by the church meeting, please send it as a Word document or pdf file to your regional minister.

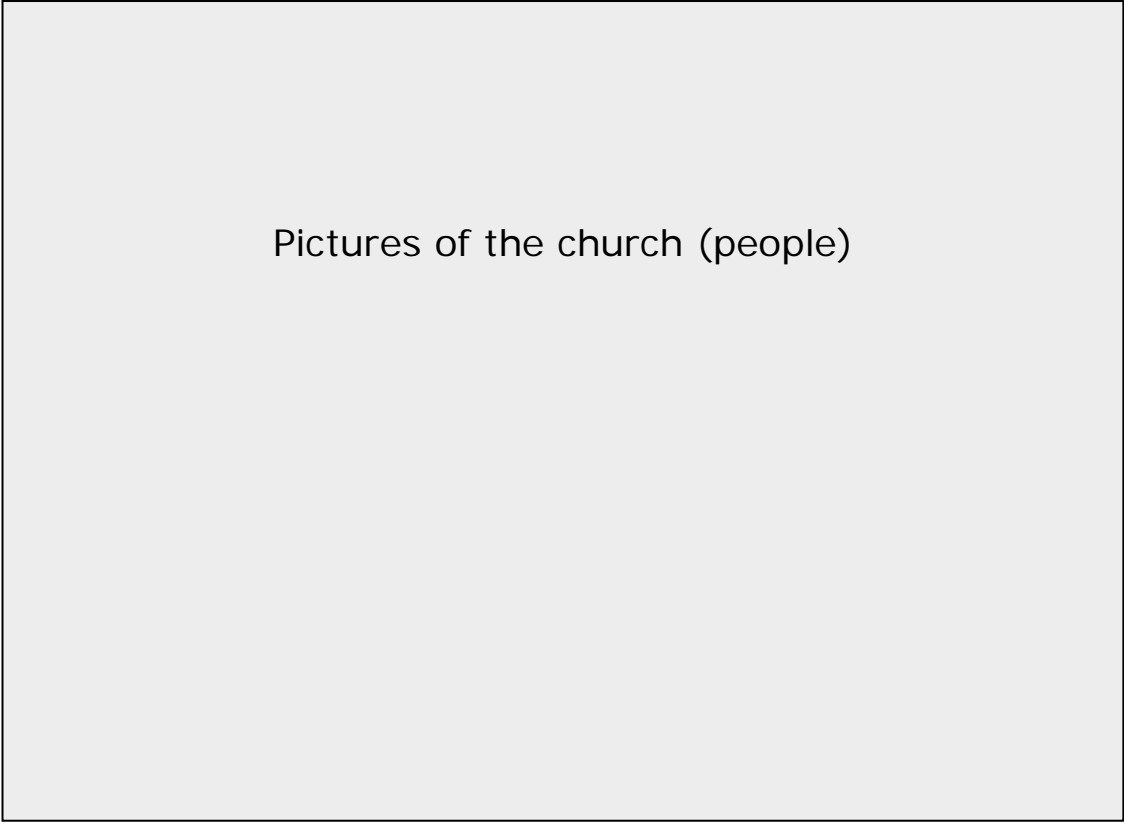
They will forward it onto the Baptist Union's Ministries Team for inclusion on the 'Pastoral Vacancy List'. This is a password-protected section of the Baptists Together website. Accredited Baptist ministers and ministerial students in the final year at college are able to view this list and ask for their name to be sent to churches they feel to be might be right for them.

More information can be found in the Churches' Guidance to the Baptists Together Settlement Process which can be obtained from your Regional Minister.



Church Profile for Upson Downs Baptist Church

Agreed by the Church Members' Meeting
January 2021



Pictures of the church (people)

www.upsondownsbc.org

1. Introduction

We are a lively and friendly group of Christians who live in, or near, the market town of Upson Downs in south Whareshire. We are varied in age, background and, to some extent, in theological outlook – although at heart we are evangelicals and would describe ourselves as Bible-based and Spirit-led. Over recent years we have become much more involved with our community and are particularly pleased with the way our CAP Debt Centre has strengthened this. We are keen to develop this and other ways of making our faith and church more relevant to those we seek to reach.

PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A SAMPLE PROFILE FOR A FICTIONAL CHURCH

2. Our Church as it is now

A. The People

Around 120 adults make up the church at the moment (including 'active' non-members). Demographically, the church reflects the make-up of Upson Downs and the surrounding villages in that it is predominantly white and middle class although our involvement with CAP has led to people from different backgrounds joining us and coming to faith.

Just under 60% are female ...and the age distribution looks something like this.

In terms of English church statistics we have more 20-30s than the national average.

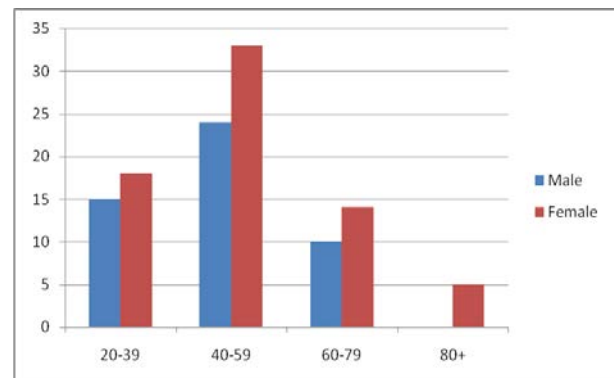
Many of those in the 30-50 age group are married couples with children and teenagers who attend the church.

Around 55% of the adults in the church are in full or part-time employment, 10% are full-time homemakers and 25% are retired.

Those who are in employment are mainly in IT, teaching, healthcare or the charity sector. As at January 2021 there are 95 church members.

We currently have ten people on our **leadership team**. Most of these six men and four women are under 60 and the majority are in full-time employment.

We also have three part-time staff – a church administrator, a youth co-ordinator and a community co-ordinator.



B. The Services

Until March 2020 we had two services each Sunday but since the start of 'lockdown' we have had just one which has been online. Our services mainly take place on Zoom but are also (when restrictions allow) broadcast from church with a few people present in the building. Services have been led (since our last minister left in the summer) by a committed team of preachers and worship leaders with the support and expertise of our amazing tech team.

On most Sundays we have also had Zoom groups for children and young people – at various times and with varying levels of success. It is probably true to say that our work with children has particularly suffered as a result of the pandemic and there are a significant number of families with young children who have not felt able to participate in our services in recent months.

Prior to March we had a fairly standard morning service with children and young people in church for the first 30 minutes or so before going to their own groups. This was attended by around 80-100 adults and 40-45 children/teenagers. The services are informal and relaxed (with occasional use of the gifts of the Spirit) and communion is celebrated on the third Sunday each month – a tradition which we have continued whilst holding online services. We also had an afternoon/evening service which has been held at various times in recent years. Attendance was much lower for these services.

As we look towards the time when we will be able to hold services for all in our church building again we would want a new minister to help us develop what these should look like in the 'new normal'

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C. The Activities

The church runs many midweek activities although not all have been able to take place in recent months.

We currently have about 10 small 'Life-Groups' which are meeting online each week and this has been supplemented by weekday midday prayers run by a small team of church members.

Our 'Living Room' drop-in centre has met in person at times over the last year but is currently meeting online.

Until lockdown we were running a thriving Toddler group on a Tuesday morning - attended by around 40 parents or carers and their pre-school children. At various times in recent months we have been able to run a greatly reduced version of this for a few families a time. Alongside this our Community Co-ordinator has tried to keep in touch with as many toddler families as possible.

We have also had to suspend our weekly group for seniors – although our Community Co-ordinator did manage to organise an online Christmas party for some of the members. The pastoral team manage to keep in touch with the members by phone and occasional visits when allowed.

On Friday evenings the youth club would normally run. This is open to all young people of secondary school age with a variety of activities each month. This is something we have also had to suspend but our Youth Co-ordinator and her team are working hard to maintain contact with those who used to attend this.

For many years the church also runs a Holiday Club for one week in the summer holidays. This is attended by about 80 children (a mix of church and non-church children) and last year we held a greatly reduced online version. We are hopefully that we will be able to run a 'normal' one again this year!

The church always has a float in the town carnival and currently holds the trophy for "Best Overall" in Carnival – which was last held in June 2019. Many people are involved in decorating the lorry, costuming everyone and in playing & singing the music. Our aim is to share the gospel message in a fun way which fits with the theme of the carnival.



We run a Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Debt-centre with support from other local churches. The Centre Manager is one of our church members and many others are involved as Trustees and volunteers. Virtually everyone in the church is involved when we put together Christmas hampers for clients and their families.

We are also very involved with the local Foodbank which is run as a Churches Together Initiative. One of our church members is a Trustee and has taken on a very hands-on role with this during the pandemic – when the Foodbank has been significantly busier than before.

D. The Buildings

Upton Downs Baptist Church was founded and built at the beginning of the 19th century and the building still stands in part on the original garden wall of the founders. Much has changed since then with major refurbishment and extension taking place toward the end of the 1990s. At this time, a new kitchen and toilets were added at the rear of the

premises and the front of the church was given a second floor and a new but traditional look. The organ was removed 20 years ago, but its former location at the front of the sanctuary continues to hold the musicians and worship team. The age and construction style of the building continue to pose maintenance concerns but these are well managed by our Church Buildings Group.

A walk through the building begins in the foyer, with toilets to the right and the church office to the left. Taking the stairs to the left leads up to two rooms currently organised as the CAP office and a youth room.

The main worship area leads straight off the foyer and has a capacity for around 200 seated. At the rear is our technical desk where sound and projection are managed.

Under the floor at the front of the seating area in the sanctuary there is a baptistery (recently tiled throughout). The stage area is essentially a small step height above the general floor. From this two doors lead directly behind the stage through to the kitchen (refurbished in 2018) and the school room.

The school room is used for both children's work but also for our Monday "Living Room" drop-in. It has a hatch through to the kitchen and is occasionally used for fellowship meals and as a dining area. The room also has sound and video feeds from the church if required as an overspill to the main sanctuary.

A passageway leading from the school room passes the kitchen and a "Quiet Room" and leads to two further toilets and a staircase. Upstairs are three rooms used for Sunday school or other small groups. Heating throughout the buildings is achieved with electric convector heaters.

Adjacent to the building on the left hand side is a small public car park- currently there is free parking on Sundays.



E. Wider connections

Baptist: The church is in membership of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Middle England Baptist Association. It supports both Home Mission and BMS World Mission financially and in prayer. The church is linked with BMS missionaries working in India.

Ecumenical (local): The church is part of 'Churches Together in Upson Downs' (CTUD) which, in addition to ourselves, consists of two Anglican churches, a Methodist church, a Roman Catholic church, a United Reformed church and a Community Church. It is an active group which holds united services twice a year and a joint Act of Witness in the town on Good Friday. It was also this group which started the local Foodbank around 5 years ago. There is also participation in the towns' Remembrance Day service and carol service. There are occasional meetings to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Other: The church is in membership of the Evangelical Alliance and supports a number of mission organisations working both in the UK and Overseas.

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3. The Area

Upton Downs is a thriving market town which sits on the banks of the River Why, just ten miles from the county town of Whereford, and has a population of around 12,000. There are currently a number of new housing developments in progress around the town so population is increasing. Surrounded by attractive villages, it is in an area of natural beauty and has a colourful history and mediaeval charm.

The centre is a major conservation area with fine examples of churches and architecture dating back to the 14th century. The narrow streets with their variety of (mainly independent) shops, pubs and restaurants, along with parks, commons and gardens make it a very pleasant town.

The secondary, primary and pre-schools are highly thought of and there are good medical and dental facilities, a theatre/cinema, an award winning

museum and many clubs that provide most sports and leisure activities for young and the old. The elderly are also well catered for within the community including a number of residential and nursing homes.

Annual community events (in 'normal' times) include a popular carnival, music festival and bonfire-night, that are well supported.

Upton Downs has its social problems, though they may not be immediately apparent to many people under the façade of its gentle atmosphere and olde worlde charm. There are lonely people, broken relationships, stressed-out parents, disaffected youth and people trying to make ends meet just as you would find in any other place in Britain. As a church this is something we have become more aware of in recent years due to our involvement with Foodbank and CAP.



4. The Church we would like to see

In January 2021 the church agreed that

1. Above all, we should be a people who love God, love each other and love the community we are called to serve.
2. We want to see people of all ages using and developing their gifts and fully participating in the life of the church and its mission. We are aware that there is a need for a more structured approach to identifying and using the gifts God has given to us as a body.
3. We want to be a church that is growing and moving forward with God. However we recognise that our priority should be to grow 'the kingdom' rather than 'our church'. (We admit that at times it has felt like the other way round!)
4. We particularly want to develop work in the areas of new housing being built around the town – in partnership with other local churches
5. We need to develop and implement strategies for moving people from the fringe (and beyond) to the centre – changing them from contacts to disciples.

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6. We want to continue to be rooted in God's Word and to be helped in this by receiving inspirational Bible-based preaching and teaching – from a new minister and others who are already part of our church.
7. We want to be a people who keep on supporting and encouraging each other in our day-to-day life and who are better equipped to be 'salt and light' in the communities God has placed us in.

5 The Minister we believe that we need

We believe therefore that we need a minister who will help us develop our life together in this way. Specifically we believe we need someone who:

- Has a deep and profound respect for the Bible in their own lives and knows how to communicate that well to others – and will enable other church members to do that as well.
- Will inspire, challenge, encourage and work innovatively with the whole church to move us forward together into the future that God has prepared for us.
- Has a collaborative style of leadership which will enable him/her to work well with our existing (and future) ministry teams.
- Will encourage, inspire and equip church members to use and develop their God-given gifts both inside and outside the church.
- Will help us have even greater confidence to live out the gospel in the community through both words and actions.
- Has the experience and passion to effectively integrate the people we have connected with, into the church community.

6. A brief history of the church

The church was formed in 1815 when a local doctor left the parish church and built a chapel at the bottom of the garden of his large High Street home for a group who wanted to adopt believer's baptism as an expression of their evangelical faith.

From the outset village evangelism was fostered and chapels were founded or assisted in five nearby villages although only one of these now remains.

Although now in trust with the Baptist Union Corporation, our original Trustees were a large group of local members including, notably, some women. The list of pastors of over the years shows that often the church had a leadership with a thinking approach, appreciated by its congregation that was often representative of town shopkeepers and tradesmen. As the market town size did not grow particularly, the church weakened when the peak of Victorian church growing was over. It only regained strength with active lay leadership assisting post-WW2 pastors.

Reformed and then charismatic influences came to a head in the early 1980s when a group left over the issue of male eldership to form what has now become the Upson Downs Community Church. The continuing church, which is wholly supportive of women in leadership, regained strength, however, and has grown steadily under two long pastorates. UDBC remains in the mainstream flavour of the Baptist denomination and has close links with all the other churches in the town including the Community Church.

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7. Practical Matters

- i) We intend making this appointment in line with the BU Recommended Terms of Appointment and will be offering a stipend which is between 10% and 20% above BU Standard Stipend.
- ii) We will enable and encourage our minister to participate in the Baptist Union's CMD programme.
- iii) We have just sold our previous Manse and bought a four bedroom detached house on one of the new housing developments – $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the church building. (Three other couples/families in the church are in the process of moving to this same development)



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