

Church Secretary

encourage one another day after day

**Welcome
Pack**

Welcome

Welcome!



Congratulations on your appointment as a Church Secretary. Thank you for being willing to serve your church in this way.

The role of Church Secretary is a crucial one in the life of any Baptist church. Your role is to enable the church to function well so that it can fulfil its mission. This may sound daunting but Baptists Together are here to help you!

This leaflet explains the role of a Church Secretary and the support that Baptists Together can provide. We recommend that you keep it somewhere safe so you can refer to it when needed.

Please get in touch with the Support Services Team if you have any questions or need help with anything. You can do this via:

- email to supportservices@baptist.org.uk
- telephone on 01235 517700
- website at www.baptist.org.uk/supportservices

Thank you again for all you are doing for your church and for Baptists Together. We pray for you and hope you will pray for us as we seek to serve God together.

With every blessing

The Support Services Team



Let's Begin - some basics



1 The Church is a Charity

All Baptist churches are independent charities, whether or not the church is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. Churches are therefore subject to the requirements of charity law. Your church is a member organisation of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (the body behind Baptists Together) but your church is legally independent. If your church has an income of over £100,000 it must be registered with the Charity Commission.

2 The Church Secretary is a Trustee

Churches are subject to the requirements of charity law and therefore must have trustees. As a Church Secretary you are a Charity Trustee of your Church. This may sound more than you signed up for, but the Baptists Together team are here to support you with the smooth operation of your church in line with its legal obligations and constitution. We recommend that you read our guidance leaflet, C15: *Help I'm a Charity Trustee* at (www.baptist.org.uk/resources/C15).

3 The Church Constitution is crucial

One of the most fundamental responsibilities as Church Secretary is to ensure that the church constitution is followed, so it is essential that you have a copy of this document and are familiar with it. A church constitution (sometimes called 'Church Rules' or 'Church Handbook') lays out how the church operates. This will include:

- The process for people to become members of the church and any requirements for membership
- How key roles are appointed, such as Minister, Secretary, Treasurer and other leaders
- The requirements for church and trustee meetings
- How important decisions are taken

If your church constitution is quite old, it may be time to review it. Our Guideline leaflet C03: *Church Constitutions* is a good starting point and can guide you towards our Charity Commission approved template constitutions (www.baptist.org.uk/resources/C03).

Your main responsibilities...

It is hard to fully define the role of a Church Secretary as it varies significantly from church to church. However, the Church Secretary's objective should be that the church functions well so that it can fulfil its part in the mission of God. Here are some common tasks handled by a Church Secretary

Organising meetings

You need to ensure that meetings of Trustees and Church Members are arranged, and notifications sent in line with any constitutional requirements to those who might attend. You will need to ensure there is a suitable agenda, that minutes are taken and any decisions are implemented.

Guidance on writing minutes is available in our Guideline leaflet C13 at www.baptist.org.uk/resources/C13.

Updating Baptists Together

As a member church, it is important that you help your church engage with regional and national Baptist life. One key thing to do is ensure that your church record in the national Baptist database is kept up-to-date. This includes details of your key people such as the Minister, Secretary, Treasurer and their contact details. You can review and update your record at any time at www.baptist.org.uk/churchupdate.

Each year you will also be asked to complete an Annual Return to confirm that the record we hold is accurate, and to supply basic statistical information about your church.

Dealing with correspondence

The Church Secretary will usually be the church's main contact for Baptists Together and for other organisations. You need to ensure emails, post, phone messages, and other communications from external parties are dealt with promptly and acted upon where necessary. Remember communication addressed to 'the Church Secretary' is often for the benefit of the whole church.

Collaborating with the Minister

A strong working relationship will enable both the Minister and the Church Secretary to fulfil their respective roles. The Minister is the visible leader of the church, but the Secretary will work with them to ensure everything is in place to support them in their ministry. What this involves will vary depending upon the respective skills, experience and personalities of the Minister and Secretary. It is often wise to have a regular meeting to coordinate the work of the church and prepare for upcoming Trustees meetings and/or Church Meetings.

Handling a 'pastoral vacancy'

Where a church is between Ministers, this is referred to as a pastoral vacancy. Inevitably, you will have a heavier responsibility when there is no Minister. Usually, your local Baptist Regional Minister will support the church to appoint a Moderator, who is normally a local Baptist Minister who can guide the church through this period.

Guidance for churches facing a pastoral vacancy can be found at www.baptist.org.uk/pastoralvacancy

'Filling the pulpit'

If the Minister is on holiday, or absent for another reason, it is usually the Church Secretary who ensures there are arrangements in place for leading services and preaching in their absence. This can be a visiting preacher or there may be individuals within the church that can do this. Whatever is arranged, the details need to be put in place in plenty of time and communicated to all involved.

Everything else!

Depending upon how your church operates, a Church Secretary may be asked to take on other tasks such as producing newsletters, managing the church noticeboard, managing room bookings or coordinating rotas for worship. You will often need to take the initiative in noticing tasks which need to be done and ensuring someone does them.

Tips for Being a Good Church Secretary

Pray!

A Church Secretary needs a positive and prayerful attitude to the life and work of the church. Alongside the other leaders, pray for the work of the church and the people doing it.

Work as part of a team

A good Church Secretary ensures everything is done but they do not need to do everything themselves. You should collaborate with other people in the church, including the Minister, Treasurer and other leaders, and pass on tasks to those best placed to do them. You should also be on the lookout for people with gifts and skills that can be used in the church. Some churches employ an administrator who can be helpful to a Church Secretary by taking on some tasks.

Keep people informed

Often the most valuable thing a Church Secretary can do is ensure information is passed on so things run smoothly. It's important to make sure the church is kept informed about key things going on so they can get involved, although clearly there will always be some matters that need to be kept confidential.

Try to anticipate problems

If you can think ahead and prevent a problem happening it is usually far better than dealing with the consequences later. Church Secretaries should watch out for tasks that need doing or relationships that are strained and try to make sure they are addressed before they become problems.

Maintain good relationships

A good Church Secretary will get to know the full range of people within the church and listen to what they have to say. This will help to ensure that the whole fellowship is engaged in the work of the church and potential disagreements can be addressed early.

Get help when you need it

The role of Church Secretary can seem overwhelming at times with such a wide range of issues you might be called upon to handle. Baptists Together provides a range of support to help and these are outlined on the following pages.



Help is available

As a member of Baptists Together our teams are available to support you.

Your local Baptist Association team

Your local Regional Baptist Association has a team of Regional Ministers who are experienced ministers able to offer advice on a variety of church issues and signpost you to other support available. Regional Associations offer support to churches with mission, including financial grants from the Home Mission fund. They also offer safeguarding training and support for member churches.



The Specialist Teams



The Ministries Team (ministries@baptist.org.uk) supports all forms of Baptist ministry. They maintain the list of accredited ministers, operate the settlement process which helps match ministers with churches and provide a suite of guidance leaflets and other support relating to ministry. Of particular relevance to Church Secretaries are the recommended Terms of Appointment for ministers, and support for ministers in their ongoing development.



The HR and Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@baptist.org.uk) provides advice on HR issues and oversees safeguarding across Baptists Together. They develop national safeguarding policy and the training framework, and support Regional Associations in dealing with complex safeguarding cases.



The Support Services Team (supportservices@baptist.org.uk) offers practical support and advice to churches across a broad range of topics including finance and accounting, property, legal issues, church governance and church trusts. They also operate the Baptists Together Deposit Accounts, Loan Scheme and Pastoral Fund.



The Faith and Society Team (faithandsociety@baptist.org.uk) supports Baptists Together with resources and initiatives which enable mission, provide theological reflection and promote engagement with wider society. This includes publishing *Baptists Together* magazine and other resources, as well as engaging with other Baptist and Christian organisations in the UK and across the world.

Resources

Here are some key resources that you can access to support you in your role

The Baptists Together website, www.baptist.org.uk, is a great starting point for all things Baptist, including the latest news through the *Baptist Times* online newspaper. The online Resource Library holds an extensive range of guideline leaflets, webinars, videos and other materials to support you and your church. There is a dedicated page for church secretaries at www.baptist.org.uk/churchsecretaries.

Church Healthcheck, (www.churchhealthcheck.org), is a simple self-assessment tool developed especially for Baptists Together churches to assess their operations against good practice and provide signposting to guidance for any issues identified.

Baptists Together magazine is our magazine for the Baptist family. It is published 2-3 times per year and is sent to every Church Secretary. This will keep you up-to-date on developments across Baptists Together. You can download back editions from www.baptist.org.uk/togethermagazine.

Transform is published three times a year and provides specific guidance for church leaders on practical topics such as finance, HR, tax and legal matters. Previous issues can be downloaded from www.baptist.org.uk/transform.

Support Services Email: Each month the Support Services Team sends an email newsletter to every Treasurer and Secretary containing useful guidance and information to assist you in your role.

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