

Ministry: Seeking another minister may be a major concern of the church, but regular Sunday ministry and mid-week ministry also needs to be planned, etc.

Membership: This provides an opportunity to focus on the pastoral needs of the church and opportunities for discipleship and baptism, etc.

Money and materials: This would include Finance, Fabric and other resources.

Payment of a Moderator

A Moderator should be paid usual preaching fees, and should have expenses reimbursed, etc. Any remuneration received, such as preaching gifts and even expenses should be declared in a Tax Return, but allowable expenses can be claimed against payments.

Serving as a Moderator in a Baptist Church

A privilege and an opportunity

A church may have no minister, or their minister is leaving and is looking to the future. The ministry of a Moderator can be extremely valuable in supporting the church and offering guidance. The experience can be enriching for the Moderator who can exercise a ministry free from the norms and agendas of their own church. It brings the privilege of seeing another churches operating in a totally different way with varying resources, seeing people flourish in a time of change and leaders grow in confidence. Moderators are nearly always given a very warm welcome and it can lead to opportunities for further pastoral support for the church depending on the time the Moderator has available.

Moderators

The Moderator's main task is to help the Church discern the future as it seeks God's will for the its life and witness in the absence of a minister. This may well be in seeking a new Minister and a major way in which they can help a church in this is in the preparation of the Church Profile. (See *Facing A Pastoral Vacancy* http://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/388570/Facing_a_Pastoral.aspx). However, it should not be taken for granted that the church will automatically seek a new minister.



Appointment of a Moderator

A Moderator is appointed by the Church Meeting on the recommendation of the leaders and will not normally be a member of the Church. The Regional Minister offers help to a church to find a suitable person but does not appoint them. As part of the process of the appointment of a moderator it would be important for the church's leadership to have an exploratory meeting with the Moderator to see if there is an appropriate common understanding and to establish something of the nature of the role. The appointment should ultimately be made by the Church Meeting.

Role of a Moderator

The Moderator normally chairs leadership and Church Meetings, especially those that may relate to the Pastorate. As such he/she has the advantage of being neutral and more easily able to facilitate everyone working together. However, the moderator is not entitled to vote unless they are a member of the church. If the Moderator has time he/she may also be able to do some preaching as it is a good way to connect with the congregation. The Moderator may also be able to cover pastoral emergencies or 'specials' like baptisms and weddings, as well as offer pastoral advice and care to the leadership team. Whilst the Moderator may also liaise with the Regional Minister about the settlement process, the Church Secretary (or equivalent) should remain the primary contact.

Varying roles of a Moderator

The possibilities for a Moderator are limitless. He/she can bring a healthy influence to a Church at a critical time in its life and prepare a Church for new ministry. Even when a new Minister is not in prospect the Moderator may be used of God to build up a fellowship and enable it to embrace its challenges and opportunities. The relationship has brought mutual blessing to Church and Moderator while the 'releasing' Church of the Moderator has also found benefit for their sacrifice through the wider involvement in the work of the Kingdom. The period of vacancy provides an excel-

lent opportunity for the church to engage in some form of review of its life and mission such as Springboard.

Sometimes churches need more help after a Minister leaves and a different kind of Moderator. This is just the kind of thing to talk to your Regional Minister about. In some situations it might be more appropriate to consider an 'interim minister' who might work with the church on specific issues in preparation for the future.

Challenges for Moderators

Often the churches being served will require a certain amount of travel and expenses should be covered. Sometimes a Moderator may have to draw a line and acknowledge that he/she is only the Moderator and not actually the pastor and so refrain from certain roles or tasks. It is important that the expectations of both the church and the moderator are clarified very early in the relationship. Sometimes great patience is needed in working with leadership teams that have very different needs and vision as part of the process of leading them further on in the purposes of God. Grace is required in helping people adjust to not having a minister, to rising above disappointments, to overcoming entrenched attitudes and enhancing vision and building a team ethos within the leadership.

Developing Agendas

Some churches will be well served by those who will craft agendas well in advance and make the Moderating role so much easier. However, sometimes there will be those who are uncertain about constructing agendas, or there may be inherent power struggles or personality clashes that inhibit good practice and agendas are not prepared. A simple use of the letter 'M' can give a framework for most agenda items, taking for granted opening devotions, minutes and matters arising.

Four Ms of the agenda:

Mission: Having mission first reminds the leadership and church of its prime purpose and can include evangelism, social action and overseas mission, etc.