

You have received this information as someone who has expressed interest in finding out more about what is involved with becoming ordained by the Baptist Union of Victoria.

There are several key documents that are important for you to have:

1. This document *Are You Thinking about Ordination?*, which is intended to provide a clear outline of what is involved in the process of applying to be an ordination candidate, as well as relevant general information.
2. The DSG Guidelines, titled *Guidelines to Assist a Church Establish and Conduct a "Discernment and Support Group"*.
3. The actual *Ordination Candidature Application Form*, which is due August 31st in the year you are applying.
4. *Ordination Candidature Applicant Referee Information and Form*, which is to be provided to three referees as per instructions below.
5. The *Ministry Review Task Force Report*, which was adopted by Assembly in 2000 and provides the framework for the current ordination process.

As outlined in the "Steps to Ordination" process later in this document, the application process is quite involved and a lot takes place before actually submitting an application. Therefore, things need to be well underway by February in the year in which a person will be applying.

Please read through this document carefully. If you have any questions please contact the office of Alan Marr, the Director of Ministries (**DoM**). Alan's Assistant, Mel Price, will be able to answer your questions and / or book an appointment. You can reach her on 9880 6188 or email mel.price@bu.com.au

The Pastoral Leadership Selection Committee (**PLSC**), which is elected by the BUV Assembly, is responsible for the initial or 'provisional' selection of candidates for training as Pastoral Leaders with the Baptist Union of Victoria (**BUV**).

The Leadership Training Committee (**LTC**) will oversee training once a provisional candidate is confirmed by the PLSC. The LTC supports the pivotal role of the Coordinator of Leadership Training (**COLT**).

The following are documents, policies and information of which all potential applicants need to be aware.

A. Ministry Review Task Force Report:

Applicants need to be familiar with the provisions of the Ministry Review Task Force Report, which set the framework and reasoning for the current ordination process. Applicants will be asked about their reflections on this document both when they meet with the DOM and DOLT as well as during any interview with the PLSC.

B. The Baptist Union of Victoria Doctrinal Basis:

The application asks whether the applicant assents to the following, which is the Baptist Union of Victoria's Doctrinal Basis:

1. The divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.
2. The existence of one God in three persons - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
3. The deity and incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity.
4. The fallen, sinful and lost estate of all people.
5. The salvation of men and women from the penal consequences and power of sin through the perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ, His atoning death, His resurrection from the dead, His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His unchanging priesthood.
6. The immediate work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of men and women, in their sanctification, and in their preservation to the heavenly Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. The necessity, in order to know salvation, of repentance towards God and of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
8. The resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment of all people by the Lord Jesus Christ.
9. The two ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are of perpetual obligation: Baptism being the immersion of believers upon the profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a symbol of the fellowship of the regenerate in His death, burial and resurrection; the Lord's Supper being a memorial, until He comes, of the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Policies of the Baptist Union of Victoria:

1. Persons who engage in homosexual practice will not be ordained.
2. Any candidate for ordination who has been divorced, or is married to a person, who has been divorced, must meet with the DOM to outline the circumstances related to the marriage breakdown. If the DOM is

satisfied that there has been no moral impropriety on the part of the candidate the application may proceed.

3. The BUV is committed to every church being a safe place for all who attend its activities. For this reason we have in place a Duty of Care policy document which outlines clearly the requirements for all who exercise leadership in a church. Potential applicants should familiarize themselves with this document.

It's About Discernment

The primary objective of the BUV's ordination application process is captured in the biblical statement, "so that you might discern what the will of God is, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12: 2)

The "you" in this verse is 'you' (together) meaning that the pursuit of the will of God is something that we will explore and discover together. The 'you' in our process involves not only the applicant (and their spouse - if applicable), but the church (through the DSG) and the Union (through the members of the PLSC).

The discernment process must commence like the tossing of a coin. At this stage we do not know whether it will come down 'heads' or 'tails'. The outcome of our decision is 'up in the air'. We should all enter into the process without predetermining what the outcome will be.

At some stage in the discernment process the applicant, through prayer, ministry involvement or reflection, may develop a sense of unease about becoming ordained. Admitting and owning this state should not be seen as a statement of failure. On the contrary, the discernment process is working and the process needs to be trusted. Similarly, the church, through the DSG, may not consider that pastoral leadership is the calling for the person involved. That recognition is not to be a statement that the person is deficient or disadvantaged. There are many more vocations than pastoral leadership and the key thing is to discern the calling that is appropriate for the gifts with which God has blessed the person involved.

The interview with the PLSC is also a vital step. Sometimes a 'red light' is given by the PLSC, which indicates that while the person has gifts for Christian ministry the calling and giftedness for pastoral leadership has not been discerned. Occasionally an amber light is beamed to the applicant, which indicates that the interview group is not sure and more time in ministry with the help of a DSG might be needed to give clarity and certainty to the process of discernment. Often a green light is given, confirming both the person's calling and the affirmation by the local church.

When an applicant feels they have a calling and 'the right stuff' for pastoral leadership but this is not affirmed by the DSG or the PLSC that person is often disappointed and can feel rejected and angry. It is possible for people in each of the three phases in this discernment process to get it wrong. Discernment,

however, is ultimately an act of surrender, not only to God but to those involved in discovering God's will for our lives. If you are not prepared for a DSG to say, 'Wait' or the PLSC to say 'No' then you are not ready to enter into this discernment process. Even initially unwelcome decisions can be part of a process of ultimately discerning the 'good, acceptable and perfect will of God'.

Steps to Ordination

The steps to ordination are likely to be as follows:

Step 1: Exploring Ordination

- 1.1 An interested person contacts the DOM's office to request information about ordination.
- 1.2 The person discusses the prospect of ordination with their Senior Pastor (or, if this is the person themselves, an appropriate member of the church leadership).
- 1.3 The potential applicant indicates to the DOM's assistant that they are interested in finding out more about ordination through meeting with the DOM and Whitley Principal to go over what the process entails. The potential applicant is accompanied by their spouse (if applicable) and a representative from their church (e.g. Senior Pastor) to ensure everyone is clear on the level of commitment required.

Due to the schedules of the DOM & Whitley Principal, times for such meetings are set aside in May/June and October. Therefore, it is best for a potential applicant to contact the DOM's office once they think they would like to talk further about the possibility of ordination. Attending this meeting does not mean the person has to apply for ordination; it is purely for exploration and clarification.

Note:

If the potential applicant has done prior theological studies:

As part of the application for an interview to discuss the ordination process, the potential applicant is to provide the DoM with all relevant study documentation. Do not assume that study can be cross-credited.

If the potential applicant is currently studying at Whitley:

*It is recommended to speak with the Dean of Students at Whitley College prior to the above meeting in order to discuss the impact on their study plan if they are accepted as an ordination candidate. **David Enticott** is the current Dean of Students and can be contacted on 9340 8013.*

Theological training is no guarantee of acceptance to become an ordination candidate.

Step 2: Applying to become a Provisional Candidate for Ordination

(Refer also to the "Checklist for the Application Process to Become a Provisional Candidate for Ordination" at the end of this document.)

- 2.1 The applicant indicates to the DoM's assistant their willingness to engage in the Ordination Application process.
- 2.2 The applicant is allocated a "PLSC Contact" who will be a reference point for them throughout the application process; to answer questions, hear the applicant preach, provide guidance about the process as needed, etc.
- 2.3 The local church plays an important role in the application process in reflecting with the applicant upon their call and providing opportunities to test their gifts for ministry. Therefore, the Discernment and Support Group (**DSG**) is an integral part of the application process.

The Discernment and Support Group:

- o Is appointed by the church. However, the applicant is responsible for initiating the formation of the DSG in sufficient time for the work to be carried out. The applicant may make suggestions to the senior pastor / church leaders regarding the composition of the DSG, bearing in mind the need to appoint a group who will complete the work on time.
- o Needs to be established and have commenced meeting by the end of February in the year the person will be applying (see DSG guidelines).
- o Is encouraged to invite the PLSC Contact to visit a meeting to answer questions and explain thoroughly the role and responsibilities of the DSG.
- o Must *meet at least six times* with the applicant *over at least six months* in order to enable the DSG to work through the process effectively. The purpose is to allow ample time for the applicant to receive feedback about their ministry and to actually implement changes. The DSG needs time to observe the applicant's willingness/ability to grow in their ministry as a result of direct constructive instruction and feedback. *Where the DSG is not established until March or later, the applicant will need to look towards the following year as the year of application.*
- o Is to meet their responsibilities as outlined in the DSG Guidelines.
- o **Must submit their report to the PLSC before August 31st.**

Note:

It is considered to be a direct reflection on the applicant if their DSG does not complete their work on time or sufficiently. Therefore, if the applicant experiences difficulties with their DSG they are strongly encouraged to ask their PLSC Contact for guidance or assistance in getting the DSG on track. If the DSG does not commence meeting by the end of February the applicant will need to delay their application submission until the following year. Likewise, if the DSG does not submit their final report by

August 31st, the applicant will have to postpone their application until the following year.

2.4 The applicant contacts the psychologist, **Wenda McPherson**, on 0422 329 747 or wenda.mcpherson@optusnet.com.au before the end of March to arrange a time for the applicant's psychological assessment.

- The applicant has a half-day appointment with the psychologist. If English is not the applicant's first language, he or she may choose to bring an interpreter to the interview with the psychologist.
- Based on the time spent together as well as the tests that the applicant completes, the psychologist develops the applicant's assessment. The completed assessment is posted to the applicant for them to read
- The applicant provides the psychologist with feedback about the assessment's accuracy. Once both agree on what is to be included, the psychologist will submit the assessment to the PLSC by August 31st.

2.5 There are two different preaching assignments.

1. The applicant and their PLSC Contact arrange a suitable time for the Contact to hear the applicant preaching. Since most Contacts are pastors, this will need to be arranged through consultation with them as soon as possible. The Contact will provide the applicant with feedback and will also submit a report to the PLSC by August 31st.
2. From a different service during the year of application, the applicant is to provide the following information:
 - An order of service.
 - A typed manuscript / notes of the sermon they preached.
 - A DVD (clearly labeled with applicant's name) of the whole service (it is important to provide specific instructions to whoever is taping to ensure the whole service is taped i.e. not just the sermon).

Note: If a sermon is preached in a language other than English, an assessor conversant in that language will need to be appointed in consultation with the DOM.

2.6 The applicant requests three people to be referees and provides each referee with the "Applicant Referee Information" and "Applicant Referee Form" documents, via email. The referees are to complete and submit their forms directly to the Director of Ministries by August 31st. **The applicant is not to see the completed referee form nor ask about what the referee wrote. References are returned to the DoM office via Mel Price.**

The requirements for the three referees are:

- ❑ No referee can be related to the applicant.
- ❑ One referee is to be the Senior Pastor of the church unless the applicant is the Senior Pastor, or the Senior Pastor is involved in the DSG. If this is the case, then this referee is to be another recognized leader within the church.
- ❑ One referee is to be from outside the church. Perhaps a former employer, supervisor or work colleague.
- ❑ The final referee can be from inside or outside the church. Anyone who knows the applicant well.

Note: *Although the applicant is not to see the referee form or include it in their personal application submission, they are responsible for ensuring their referees submit the forms by August 31st. For an application to be complete there must be three referee reports and they must be submitted on time.*

- 2.7 The applicant ensures **all aspects of the application process** (the application form, DVD of sermon, PLSC Contact reviewing a different sermon than the DVD, psychological evaluation, DSG report, etc) are completed on time and **submitted by August 31st**.
- 2.8 The applicant and their spouse (if applicable) will meet with the PLSC for a full Interview Day from 8.45am-5pm. On the basis of such a meeting, the PLSC will decide whether or not to accept the applicant as a provisional candidate for the ordained Baptist ministry and commend the applicant to Whitley College for training.
- 2.9 All applicants will receive a letter indicating the outcome of the interview, a copy of the minute relating to their application and, where applicable, a statement about areas for attention. Their Senior Pastor and the DSG Chair will receive similar letters.
- 2.10 Whilst applicants may possess various pastoral skills, they may not be suitable for the wider ordained ministry. If the applicant is unsuccessful, representatives from the PLSC may visit with them to explain the PLSC's decision.

Step 3: Provisional Candidacy

If the applicant is accepted as a provisional candidate, the PLSC will suggest areas for development during their provisional candidacy. The suggestions will be based on the DSG report, comments from referees, and the observations of the PLSC.

The provisional candidate is to set specific goals for the year in light of the suggestions for development from the PLSC. Therefore, within a month of acceptance as a provisional candidate the person must indicate

to the DOM's assistant which of the following two options for goal-setting they have decided on:

- a) Participate in Supervised Theological Field Education (STFE) at Whitley during their provisional candidacy year.
- b) Personally set and submit their goals for their provisional candidacy year, in conjunction with their supervisor. .

The provisional candidate is to provide the DOM's assistant with the names and contact details (email) of three referees who have been in the same church/ministry in a position to monitor their progress during their provisional candidacy. Possible categories for the three referees are:

- Senior Pastor
- Church Secretary
- Member of the DSG from the application process
- Elder / Deacon
- Other significant leader in the church

By **August 31st** the provisional candidate is to provide a personal reflection on their year as a provisional candidate and how they have progressed with their goals. The reflection should also include what they have been learning from their study, ministry situation, and personal life. It is to be no more than two sides of an A4 sheet.

The PLSC will also seek reports regarding the provisional candidate from the staff at Whitley. Feedback is provided regarding the provisional candidates: self-awareness; ability to work on issues; progress; how well they relate to and care for other students; their ability to articulate ideas; punctuality; attendance; completion of assignments; diligence to the study process; and anything that has been a hindrance to them during the year.

The provisional candidate will meet with the PLSC to discuss how they are travelling with their candidacy and whether it is appropriate for them to continue as candidates for ordination.

On the basis of this meeting the PLSC may then confirm the provisional candidate as a full candidate and commend the candidate to the ongoing supervision of the LTC.

Step 4: Candidacy for Ordination

- 4.1 The candidate will usually have another two years of training under the supervision of the LTC. Factors such as age, study that has already been or needs to be completed, and the experience level of the candidate, will be taken into account in determining the appropriate length of time for candidacy.
- 4.2 At some stage during candidacy every effort will be made to associate each candidate with a church or ministry situation other than the one in

which he or she has been nurtured. This will usually be part of a supervised field experience.

- 4.3 Confirmation of candidacy is no guarantee that a person will be ordained. Ordination also depends on:
- a) The satisfactory testing of the call to ministry and the practical evidence of the gifts and graces appropriate to the pastoral ministry.
 - b) The satisfactory completion of training.
 - c) The receiving of a call to ministerial service related to, and approved by, the Baptist Union of Victoria (this includes acceptance for service with the Global Interaction).
 - d) The recommendation of the LTC ordination sub group.
- 4.4 Each step of the process allows time and opportunity for ongoing discernment by both the applicant and those who are journeying with them.

Checklist for the Application Process to Become a Provisional Candidate for Ordination

- ❑ Initial Exploration Contact the DOM's assistant to request information about ordination.
- ❑ Provide Senior Pastor (or key leader in your church if you are the Senior Pastor) with a copy of the documentation.
- ❑ Contact the DOM's assistant to organise an exploratory meeting with the DOM and Whitley Principal to go over what the process entails. (Ideally contact the DOM's office anytime between March and September in the year prior to application.)
- ❑ Ensure Senior Pastor and spouse (if applicable) can attend the meeting.
- ❑ If you have previously done theological studies, provide the DoM with documentation of all relevant previous study.
- ❑ If a current Whitley student, speak with the Dean of Students to discuss the impact on study plan if accepted as an ordination candidate.
- ❑ Attend exploratory meeting with spouse (if applicable), Senior Pastor/Church Representative, DOM and Whitley Principal).
- ❑ Indicate to the DoM's office willingness to engage in the Ordination Application process. (This can be done at the exploratory meeting or soon afterwards.)
- ❑ Receive a PLSC Contact.

DSG

- ❑ Ensure the Senior Pastor & church leadership are aware of their need to see a DSG established and operating by end of February at the latest.
- ❑ If appropriate, provide suggestions regarding potential DSG members.
- ❑ Ensure the appointment of the DSG takes place at a church meeting and determine which process will be used.
- ❑ Organise for the PLSC Contact to visit the DSG. (Ideally the first meeting would be the best time for the PLSC Contact to attend.)
- ❑ Commence DSG. (Ideally this is done by January, but must commence by the end of February. *If the DSG does not commence meeting by the end of February the applicant will need to delay their application submission until the following year.*)
- ❑ Meet with the DSG at least six times over at least a six-month period.
- ❑ Receive final report from DSG *before the end of August.*
- ❑ Ensure the DSG Chair submits the final report *by August 31st.*

Psychological Assessment

- ❑ *By the end of March*, contact the Psychologist to organise a time for the psychological assessment.
- ❑ Attend psychological evaluation.
- ❑ Consult with the psychologist to jointly agree to what will go in the final profile being submitted to the PLSC.

Preaching

One:

- By the end of March*, determine when and where the PLSC Contact will hear you preach.
- Preach.
- Receive the PLSC Contact's feedback.

Two:

- Tape (DVD) the *whole service* for a *different* time you preach.
- Keep manuscript/notes and an order of service.

Referees

- Approach the three people who will be your referees (no relations; one is the Senior Pastor or Church Representative; one is from outside the Church; one is anyone close) and provide them with the "Applicant Referee Info" and "Applicant Referee Form".

The Application – all aspects are due by August 31st!!

Ensure the following are organised in time to be submitted by others:

- The psychological assessment.
- The PLSC Contact's sermon evaluation.

Ensure the following people complete and submit their work:

- Feedback from three referees.
- The DSG final report.

Submit the application, including:

- An application form with every question answered.
- An accurately completed "Consent to Check and Release National Police Record" form. (Be sure to read the instructions!)

From a single service you preached at in the preceding 6 months:

- The order of service.
- Your manuscript / notes for your sermon.
- A DVD of the whole service.

Interview Day

- Advise the DoM's assistant regarding availability for the pre-set Interview Days.
- Ensure spouse (if applicable) is able to attend the Interview Day. (If single, the applicant may invite a friend or church member / leader / pastor to accompany them. This person would not be present at the interview but would be a companion during times of waiting, coffee breaks and lunch.)
- Make suitable arrangements for children (if applicable).
- Attend the Interview Day – being sure to arrive on time.

The necessity to have all parts of the application submitted by August 31st cannot be overly stressed. Applicants who have submitted all their material to the DoM's office by August 31st will be interviewed later that same year.

Late applications will not be able to be considered. Those who have not submitted all their material by August 31st will have to wait 12 months to be interviewed.