

Advisory Board has as its primary function the specific responsibility of helping churches to find a new pastor when a vacancy occurs as well as working with pastors in identifying fresh possibilities for ministry in other places. In both instances the Board sees itself as a service group to pastors and churches.

As a matter of interest, the Board is appointed by the churches through Assembly. Half the membership are ordained pastors, the other half are lay persons. At any given point of time, the Board will be co-operating with anywhere between twenty to forty churches depending on the pastoral needs being experienced. In the past churches sought the assistance of the Board mainly for the purpose of appointing senior pastors (where there was a pastoral team) or solo pastors (where there was no team). In more recent times increasing numbers of churches are now asking for assistance in the appointment of additional team members. With this level of demand there is a commitment to the constant improvement of resources for churches together with ongoing changes to our modus operandi depending on the needs being communicated. The Board seeks to provide the highest level of service possible in what is certainly one of the most important decisions a church can ever make about its leadership.

While for some there has always been an element of mystery about the operation of the Board, in fact its operation is quite straight forward. The Board undertakes a number of tasks with pastoral search committees in particular:

- Support is offered when an impending pastoral vacancy is notified.
- A moderator is appointed upon request to assist the church through the interim period and to give easily accessed assistance to the pastoral search committee.
- On the basis of information provided by pastors about themselves, suggests lines of inquiry to committees as they ponder the best ways forward.
- Gives particular attention to the vital task of shaping up a pastoral profile as well as identifying the needs of both church and community.

In every respect it is an advisory role only. Each committee is left to make its own decisions and, of course, the church membership itself has the final responsibility for the issue of a call.

There is also a commensurate level of assistance offered to pastors seeking fresh opportunities for ministry. While no guarantees can be offered with respect to outcomes, every effort is made to alert churches to the availability of pastors who have indicated their desire for such a move where their gifts and experience are seen to be appropriate to the needs of a given congregation. The Board depends heavily on information provided by pastors about themselves and makes comprehensive (and confidential) use of information provided by pastors. Most pastors would be surprised by the high level of interest shown by pastoral search committees as they undertake their work. The co-operation of pastors in the provision of resumes is always eagerly sought.

If you are a member of a pastoral search committee, be aware of the energy and enthusiasm of the Board to help you seek the Lord's guidance as you ponder the best way forward for the filling of the pastoral vacancy in your congregation. If you are a pastor feeling that the time may be right to be open to other possibilities in ministry, remember that the Board is there to help you also. Hopefully, as often as is possible, the needs of both pastors and churches can be happily matched in order that the Kingdom may continue to be extended. These resources are offered to you warmly with the assurance of our thoughts and prayers.