



## Discerning practices

In seeking to honour God, we naturally wish to discover his purposes for us both individually and corporately. As a Pastoral Search Advisory Group, churches and pastors come to us with what is often a heightened desire to *hear well*. As we get to know churches and pastors in these times, we have the opportunity to observe practices that engender good discernment processes. It is our desire as a Pastoral Search Advisory Group that the following will result in helping the Board have full confidence in the pastoral recommendations we make to local churches as well as assisting our pastors.

### Discernment practices

What are the practices that we look for in pastors who come to Pastoral Search Advisory Group that enable them to move through the discernment process with freedom and liberty? Below are suggestions we would suggest both increase the general wellbeing of pastors and are very helpful when working through a change in ministry call/assignment:

#### General Rhythm

Self:

- Regular times spent in God's Word and in prayer;
- Intentional times of retreat.

Peer:

- Accountability to others for your responses, responsibilities and personal holiness;
- The invitation for others to speak truthfully and honestly about the suitability of a ministry call/assignment, assessment of how you are going and the things God is teaching you in a current role.

Coach/mentor:

- Scheduled input from a coach/mentor in areas of personal growth, self-awareness and ministry competency.

Church:

- Times of review and reflection regarding your ministry call/assignment (e.g. at 12 months, 3 years and 5 years).

#### Discernment surrounding a new ministry call/assignment

Peer:

- Objective feedback from peers regarding suitability of the new ministry call/assignment.

Coach/mentor:

- Support for and objective feedback from coach/mentor regarding suitability of the new ministry call/assignment.

Church:

- It may be appropriate to seek affirmation from a handful of trusted people in your current church leadership to consider or enter a formal discernment process in considering a new ministry call/assignment. *Please note that a high level of wisdom and care needs to be exercised around doing this.*

Spouse:

- Involvement of spouse in considering a new ministry call/assignment and ensuring their support and acceptance.

**Questions to consider when evaluating the suitability of a new ministry call/assignment**

- Is there a difficulty with your current ministry role? If so, what does your coach/peers/spouse indicate as to the appropriateness of a new ministry call/assignment?
- Consider your tenure – do you believe you have achieved what God wanted you to do during this time?
- Do you have peace about pursuing this new ministry call/assignment?
- Is there a strong sense of urgency to take up this new call/assignment? If yes, who or what is driving the urgency?
- Do you see your gifting/shape as a solution to the challenges faced by the church in this new ministry call/assignment?
- Who do you need to talk to so that you are going into any new ministry call/assignment with a complete understanding of what it will require of you?

**Implications**

If you are a pastor coming to the Pastoral Search Advisory Group seeking to be considered for a potential ministry call/ assignment, you will see that there is a section in the application process (Pastor info proforma document) that encourages you to articulate and reflect on how you understand God’s Spirit to be leading you into a new pastoral call at this time.

There is no obligation for pastors to have all of the discernment practices (as outlined above) in place, however those who do so will generally find that when it comes to a time of discernment, it will assist both the Pastoral Search Advisory Group and yourself regarding a determination of a potential ministry call/assignment.

Pastoral Search Advisory Group  
Baptist Union of Victoria