



Marks of Ministry

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Introduction

The Marks of Ministry describe the characteristics we wish to observe and affirm in all those accredited by the Baptist Union as ministers.

The Ignite Report, received by the Baptist Union Council in March 2016, reviewed all aspects of ministry across the Baptist family. It asked what forms of ministry and what support for ministry would best help us pursue the Union's vision to 'grow healthy churches in relationship for God's mission.' It recognised the need for ministry that is flexible and multi-faceted. Some ministers will occupy the traditional position of pastor and teacher within a church. Others are evangelists or pioneers working primarily with those outside church membership. Others are children's, youth and families' workers. Still others are chaplains in health, education, prison, work, leisure, or the armed forces. With such a breadth of ministry contexts, defining ministry in the language of expected competencies becomes unmanageably complex.

Instead, we define ministry by a set of characteristics that all accredited ministers, regardless of their setting, are expected to exhibit. These are called the **Marks of Ministry**. Our Baptist colleges seek to nurture and hone these marks in ministers-in-training and newly accredited ministers during their initial ministerial formation. We further expect to see the marks expressed by ministers throughout their ministry, sustained by continuing ministerial development. Though they might be demonstrated in quite diverse ways as ministry operates in different contexts, they are marks that will nonetheless be present. This focus on the character of those called to ministry is not new, but sits within the long tradition of virtue ethics.

In addition to the Marks of Ministry, we have developed the **Marks of Calling**. These are used during our selection processes as a means of testing those who believe God is calling them to ministry. Again, they describe the character and behaviours we wish to observe in those beginning the journey towards Baptist ministry rather than a list of expected skills.

Measuring ministry in this way does not of course diminish the need for ministers to develop certain **Competencies** as being is not disconnected from doing. Though some competencies will be common to all ministers, no single minister is competent in every area. Because of the variety of ministry contexts, ministers should consider which competencies are relevant for their particular setting. In training, the colleges will steer students towards gaining the appropriate set of skills. Students will then be assessed against them. Once accredited, ministers can use the list of competencies to consider whether new skills are required as their ministry progress.

Though accredited ministers are expected to exhibit the marks of ministry, we also commend them to those who are not accredited, yet who serve our churches as minister.

Finally, there is a particular requirement on those ministers whose position means that they are observed by other ministers. Ministers who carry this translocal responsibility might be part of our Regional Association teams, Baptist Colleges, or BUGB Specialist Teams. Or they may occupy significant positions temporarily or alongside their primary, local ministry role. For example, as a member or chair of a trustee board of an Association or College, or as a member of Council or a roundtable, or as a district minister (where these exist), or as moderator of a Baptist committee or forum. For these ministers, we have developed the **Marks of Translocal Leadership**, which spell out their duty to pay special attention to the inclusion, equitable treatment and encouragement of other ministers.

1. The Marks of Ministry

The characteristics, capabilities and motivations we wish to observe and affirm in all those accredited by the Baptist Union as ministers.

All believers are disciples, learners, followers of Jesus Christ. The call to engage in a particular form of ministry such as Baptist ministry is a call from God to a specialised form of discipleship. This brings with it a particular responsibility to oversee and enable the discipleship of others. Ministers are called to model discipleship, *indicating* by their life and example the path of Christian discipleship which God calls all believers to follow. They are also called to *activate* other disciples to play their part in making an active contribution to the mission of God.

A person demonstrating the Marks of Ministry is:

Mature as a disciple of Christ

Accountable to others

Relational in approach to leadership

Kingdom-focused

Servant-hearted and sacrificial

Once these marks are established during ministerial formation, they remain the characteristics we wish to see in the ongoing ministry of our accredited ministers. They form a useful basis for each minister to review their ministry as part of their continuing ministerial development.

The five Marks of Ministry can be expanded to include the following areas as examples.

Mature as a disciple of Christ

- Deepening relationship with Christ and clear love for God
- Rooted in scripture
- Practising spiritual disciplines
- Living an authentic life
- Continuing sense of call to Baptist ministry
- A resilient faith which copes with the reality of ministry
- Clear self-identity; reflective and open to constructive criticism

Accountable to others

- Intentional accountability to develop as a disciple of Christ and as a Baptist minister
- Engaging in peer support, watching over and walking with one another
- Committed to continuing ministerial development and training

- Accountable to the local church
- Accountable to and supportive of the wider Baptist family
- Providing oversight and accountability for others

Relational in approach to leadership

- Good level of self-awareness and personal understanding
- Collaborative approach
- Inspirer, encourager and enabler of others
- Good interpersonal skills
- Ability to bring about transition and change
- Team builder
- Valuing and responding appropriately to diversity and difference
- Working with others beyond the local church

Kingdom-focused

- Resident theologian or “God thinker”
- Drawing others into an awareness of God’s presence
- Committed to engaging in the mission of God in a post-Christian context
- Building/maintaining authentic and diverse communities of faith
- Ability to read context to see opportunities, challenges and potential
- Willing to take risks and move beyond the familiar where necessary
- Holy discontent with the status quo, leading to action
- Heart for justice and a prophetic voice
- Representing the church in wider society

Servant-hearted and sacrificial

- Modelling Christ-like godly leadership
- Humble
- Faithful
- Generous spirit
- Exhibiting grace in trying situations

2. The Marks of Calling

The characteristics and behaviours looked for by the association and national ministerial recognition committees in those who apply to train for Baptist ministry.

Our colleges will build on these during ministerial training and formation.

1. **Clear evidence of a call to Baptist Ministry that originates from God.** This will be supported by personal testimony and attested to by other mature Christians who know the candidate well. We should expect a balance between a person's clear confidence in their calling and a realism about the implications of such a call. This is likely to involve some degree of personal struggle. We would expect evidence that this sense of call is the result of more than human aspiration and is being obediently explored even in the face of other work and life options.
2. **A personal maturity and deepening of a candidate's relationship with Christ.** We would expect candidates to have a growing Christ-likeness. They should show themselves to be people of prayer who seek to 'dwell richly' in the Word of God and allow it to shape their lives. They should be able to share the story of those events, experiences, disciplines and relationships that have deepened their own personal faith and walk with God.
3. **A clear sense that God's purposes matter more to a candidate than personal goals and aspirations.** To some degree this is apparent in the fact that candidates see themselves as following a call rather than pursuing a career. However, this should be confirmed by their Christian journey: they may be leaders, but they should also demonstrate themselves as those who put the interests of others before their own. This may mean that they are willing to pursue a part-time or bi-vocational path. They should be able to articulate how a sense of God's purposes and sovereignty, the needs of God's people, and the disciplines of being part of a Christian community have shaped their discipleship and service. They should provide examples of servanthood and humility in their stories. They should explain how their faith is worked out within their family life and friendships and whether they model a good work/life balance.
4. **A proven ability and adequate humility to listen and learn.** A pre-requisite for formation is the ability to apply experience and learning to new situations. Servant leaders are those who can demonstrate that they still have much to learn. They should respect and evaluate the views of others and show grace in the face of opposition and difference. We should expect evidence in both church and work life that they have been open to and influenced by the thinking and insights of others. They should recognise their own limitations and be willing to expand their boundaries.
5. **Tenacity and character in the face of disappointment and struggle.** Suitability for ministry is not only tested in a context of success, but also of struggle. We expect

some evidence of remaining personally committed in the face of disappointment or the routine and mundane. We expect candidates to be able to encourage and re-motivate others. This needs to be tinged with realism. Candidates should demonstrate empathy and engagement with the struggles of others and not try to impose enthusiasm in the face of genuine difficulty and distress.

6. **A sense of belonging to the Body of Christ in all its diversity.** We should expect ministers and leaders to come from a wide range of ethnic, gender, socio-economic and other backgrounds. Though shaped by their own life experience and worldview, they should show they value and include people who are different from themselves. They should not display prejudice and inappropriate value judgements in their perceptions and interactions with people. We should expect them to welcome difference and diversity as an opportunity to grow and learn from others. They should demonstrate a commitment to work collaboratively in covenant relationship with others within Baptists Together.
7. **Clear evidence that a candidate is someone whom others naturally trust and follow.** This will usually be evidenced by the candidate holding a reasonably senior and responsible role within the sending church. If this is absent, there should be clear and understandable reasons why. The candidate's reasons should be confirmed by others who can attest to the reality of the situation. There may be evidence of this quality being seen in other aspects of a person's life, and indeed we should expect some degree of consistency between working, social and community contexts. Whilst demonstrating that they win the trust of others, the candidate must exhibit the character that makes them worthy of it, and show that they do not abuse it when granted.
8. **An individual with measurable leadership potential.** While opportunities for leadership may have been limited, we should reasonably expect some existing contexts where candidates have demonstrated leadership potential. This will largely be evidenced by their interactions with other people. This will include: Self-awareness of the impact of their actions and attitudes on others and of their own shortcomings and negative traits; the ability to enthuse, inspire and excite others; having a vision for change and some sense of how this could be achieved; the ability to influence, co-ordinate, pull together and bring out the best in others; a sense of God's vision and purpose as distinct from human aspiration and ideals.
9. **A growing ability to communicate.** We would expect candidates to communicate what it means to follow Christ through their lives. But they should also be able to articulate their faith, the gospel and their understanding of scripture through some combination of preaching, speaking, conversation, writing, music, art, creative media and so on. The means of communication will depend on their setting and gifting.
10. **Fruits of ministry in the here and now.** While recognising that we are assessing people at a preliminary stage, it seems reasonable to expect that there will be some evidence of effective ministry already present. We look for the fruits of a person's

existing contributions in the life of God's people. Using the model of Ephesians 5, we might expect at least one expression of this ministry to be:

- Others becoming followers of Christ through their influence.
- Others learning and growing in Christ through their influence.
- Others supported and strengthened in situations of struggle and vulnerability through their intervention.
- A ministry that extends beyond their own local church.
- The development of a new prophetic reality inspired by gospel convictions.
- Pioneering new gospel and kingdom contexts.

3. Competencies

The competencies we wish ministers to obtain according to the needs of their ministry setting.

While we measure fitness to minister primarily by the Marks of Ministry, we recognise the need for ministers to gain a range of competencies relevant to their ministry. There are some competencies that should be common to all ministers. But there is also flexibility such that each individual is expected to obtain the range of competencies that best fits the type of ministry to which they are called. During ministerial formation in the college and NAMs years, the required competencies for each person are determined by the college staff as appropriate. The final assessment of whether a minister-in-training should be accredited will be determined against both the Marks of Ministry and the appropriate competencies.

The range of competencies¹ are as follows:

- The ability to study, understand and communicate the beliefs, practices, story and Scriptures of the Christian faith, within and beyond the congregation, and to live a life of Christian discipleship and witness consistent with that understanding.
- The ability to understand Baptist history, principles and practices, and to encourage the church to live in accordance with the vision and culture of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.
- The ability to communicate clearly in public and private settings, within and beyond the congregation, including small groups, written material and preaching.
- The ability to offer servant leadership of the congregation/mission initiative in such a way that the ministry of the whole church/organisation is developed, establishing good relationships with others both within the church/organisation and beyond, especially in the areas of conflict resolution and the management of change and emphasising the need for good team working skills.
- The ability to offer high levels of informed and compassionate pastoral care and support to individuals, within and beyond the congregation/organisation, and in particular to know the limits of what might be achieved and when to refer to others.
- The ability to lead a church or organisation in its mission, both participating in that mission personally, and enabling others to do so, with the particular ability to advocate for the Christian faith and lead people to Christ.

¹ These competencies are based on the missional reworked version from 2012 with the addition of the final competence, and expansion of the safeguarding competence.

This includes:

- The ability to keep apprised of societal change, to reflect theologically on these and to develop appropriate missional responses.
 - The ability to read and exegete local communities, neighbourhoods and networks and to discern relevant forms of missional engagement and partnership opportunities.
 - The ability to recognise any gap between the congregation/organisation and the wider culture and where appropriate to take action to close this gap. Some 'gaps' may be commensurate with gospel values, and should be maintained.
 - The ability to recognise fresh opportunities for the congregation/organisation to engage in missional activities, including the planting of new congregations.
- The ability to develop and maintain a spirituality that will sustain a life-long ministry, together with an ability to continue to develop personal growth and life-long learning.
- The ability to manage self, workload and the strengthening of significant other relationships, within and beyond the congregation/organisation, in order to maintain a balance of ministry and life.
- The ability to lead others in public worship, to administer the sacraments and to offer apt liturgical resources to others beyond the congregation/organisation.
- The ability effectively to use basic IT resources and media.
- The ability to welcome, affirm and include others in the life of the church in order to lead a just and inclusive church, in particular to promote racial and gender justice and care for creation.
- The ability to manage safeguarding policies for both children and adults-at-risk, establishing good practice in these areas, and promoting policies that counter domestic violence. This includes the requirement to have undertaken BUGB safeguarding level 2 and 3 training with an approved BU trainer.
- The ability to exercise ministry and engage in mission in a secular, multi-faith and multi-cultural environment and to understand ministry in an ecumenical environment.
- The ability to work within the governance requirements of charities and the regulations which apply to them.

4. Marks of Translocal Leadership

The particular emphases in behaviour we wish to observe in ministers serving in a translocal role.

While we hope that all ministers exhibit the behaviours listed below, translocal ministers have a particular responsibility as they facilitate, chair or moderate a space, to pay attention to the inclusion, equitable treatment and encouragement of other ministers.

Expanding on the Marks of Ministry explained above, those exhibiting the Marks of Translocal Leadership:

- seek equitable participation in groups they lead or share in;
- make space for quieter voices to be heard;
- are mindful of differences in power and influence among those they work with;
- ensure they do not act out of prejudice based on who a person is;
- are prepared to be challenged regarding their language or actions;
- do their best to understand the concerns of others about their practice or approach;
- are quick to apologise when they have been at fault;
- are willing to name and challenge discriminatory language and actions;
- speak directly to those they feel have acted poorly;
- advocate for those they sense are being excluded;
- respectfully hold different positions in tension.

When observers notice that translocal leaders do not exhibit these characteristics, they raise it with the translocal leader directly if practical. Failing this, they raise it with the translocal leader's line manager or accountable body.



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