



Reflecting on Pastoral Ministry

A Model for Pastoral support in NWBA

Ministry can be a lonely role – unlike many forms of employment, there is seldom any formal structure present through which an individual can reflect on their performance and progress, or for that matter be challenged about aspects of their approach to the task. We often rely on family and partners to offer such feedback which can place an unfair and unnecessary strain on relationships – we strongly urge ministers therefore to seek to establish a deliberate model of reflection and feedback. There are many resources available that offer this, and the approach outlined in this document is just one of those.

Ministers are first encouraged to be pro-active in developing peer relationships, through which reflection and challenge can take place. This might be with one or two Baptist ministers in the area, local ministers from other denominations, or perhaps through a member of NWBA Regional team, local college etc.

Different arrangements will suit different individuals, but crucial their value is the quality of **relationship** that exists – it must be robust enough to allow challenge and constructive criticism, but rooted in a genuine desire for one another's wellbeing. Such relationships tend to take time to develop, and the reflection papers below may not be immediately appropriate.

Reflection Questions

The reflection questions are not intended as a formal document, but rather as a stimulus to help reflect on particular aspects of an individual's ministry. It does not so much focus on "activities" (e.g mission, worship services etc.) but the qualities and skills that are exercised in leading a church in those activities.

Participants are invited to reflect on 6 key aspects of their vocation, 3 relating to the exercise of public ministry and three relating to personal well-being and development.

Leadership
Pastoral Care
Preaching and Teaching

Personal Spirituality
Learning and professional development
Work-Life balance

Two questionnaires, one focussing on "public" skills and the other on "personal", are offered for use alternatively. It is suggested that any individual reflects on each of these every 12 months.

The process culminates with participants reflecting on their overall sense of call, both to ministry in general and in the specific context in which they are currently engaged. This is an important part of the process, research has shown that indiscretion leading to personal difficulty or sometimes leaving ministry, is often preceded by the loss of a sense of call in the months prior. It is hoped by particularly focussing on call we may more effectively "watch over one another"

Using the reflection sheets

When using these with others, it is important to establish whether this is a peer or oversight relationship. In a peer relationship, each will help the other reflect, and it is suggested that meetings are arranged to alternate roles. (i.e. one individual undertakes a personal reflection and then shares outcomes with the other, next time around the opposite happens – while it may be possible for both to do this in one meeting, experience shows that it works better to alternate) In an oversight relationship, one individual (perhaps a more experienced minister) has agreed to offer oversight to the other, so there may not be a need to reciprocate roles.

It is suggested that prior to a meeting, the relevant individual sets aside a morning, afternoon or evening to work through the reflection sheet. This should be preceded by a time of personal prayer and quietness. Choosing an appropriate location and time-slot may well be important if it is to be truly beneficial.

Meeting up

In meeting to reflect on the experience there is no need to work through each answer systematically, but time should be taken to ensure that each element has been the subject of some reflection.

If there are specific courses of action that an individual has determined to pursue as a consequence of reflection, these should be shared. An important role for the "overseer" in such a context is to turn "ideals" into "practicalities". (e.g. if an individual shares "I need to cut down on the number of meetings I attend" the task of their partner might be to challenge "How are you going to do that?" – "What events are you going to drop?" etc.)

The purpose of this is for personal reflection and no formal recording process is involved. While participants might make notes for personal use, they would not be expected to make notes on others. The only exception to this, might be where an individual asked the other to hold them to account to take a certain course of action (e.g undertake a piece of training, drop a particular responsibility). Participants may well need to jot this down as an aide-memoir.

Some useful questions for use when meeting

How are you generally? – What have been the ups and downs of your ministry since we last met?

How did you sense you have developed since you last reflected on these aspects of your ministry?

Are there areas that you feel you need to work on? – What action do you propose to take in the light of this?

In what aspects of your ministry did you sense affirmation?

What do you feel God has been saying to you generally – about your ministry; about your personal spiritual well-being?

How are your personal reflections about ministry etc. confirmed or challenged by what the members of your church say?

What are your personal objectives for the next 6 months?

Self Reflection Exercise 1 – The practice of ministry

Leadership

What do you see as your strengths in this area – where have you seen this evidenced in your ministry?

What are the aspects in which you feel the need for further support and development – what has led you to this conclusion?

How do you seek to reflect Christ's model of servant leadership?

How do you develop and work with others in the leadership task?

How do you feel you have developed since you last reflected on this aspect of your ministry.

Pastoral Care

What are the key features of your approach to pastoral care?

What proportion of your time with people is proactive/reactive?

What do you see as your strengths in this area – where have you seen this evidenced in your ministry?

What are the aspects in which you feel the need for further support and development – what has led you to this conclusion?

How do you feel you have developed since you last reflected on this aspect of your ministry.

Preaching & Teaching

What would you describe as the key objectives/features of your preaching and teaching?

What do you see as your strengths in this area – where have you seen this evidenced in your ministry?

What has been the impact of your preaching and teaching on the congregation? – How do you know?

What are the aspects in which you feel the need for further support and development – what has led you to this conclusion?

Your sense of call

In what ways do your answers to the above confirm/challenge your sense of calling to ministry in general?

And your present situation in particular?

Self Reflection – Exercise 2 – My personal journey

Personal Spirituality

How do you arrange your prayer life, in what ways does it enrich/impact your ministry?

How do you engage with God's Word at a personal level?

In what other ways do you seek to nourish yourself spiritually?

What resources/approaches have you found particularly helpful/unhelpful?

What future steps do you intend to take to sustain/develop your spirituality?

Learning & Professional Development

List any books you have read, courses/conferences attended etc. in the last 12 months – in what way have each of these informed/resourced your ministry.

How have you sought to develop your awareness in the following areas:

Mission in contemporary society

Church life

Biblical Studies & Theology

In what other areas have you sought to develop your knowledge and ability

Work/Life Balance

What is the average length of your working week – is your perception shared by your family?

How much holiday did you take last year – how did you spend it?

What do you do to relax?

Where are the boundaries between your home life/work life – how do you guard them?

What are the principal factors that prevent you from taking time off/leisure?

Do you feel you have got this balance right – do you need to take any steps to redress this?

Your sense of call

In what ways do your answers to the above confirm/challenge your sense of calling to ministry in general?

And your present situation in particular?