

# GUIDE TO BEING A MODERATOR



# Serving as a Moderator with London Baptists

When a church enters pastoral vacancy, the ministry of a Moderator can be extremely valuable in supporting the church and offering guidance. Moderators are normally local church pastors who have been released by their church to serve in this way. The experience can be enriching for the Moderator who can exercise a ministry free from the norms and agendas of their own church and experience a different church context, often seeing people flourish over the time of change and leaders grow in confidence.

The role of a moderator varies from church to church, but the main task is to help the Church discern the future as it seeks God's will for its life and witness in the absence of a minister. This more often or not involves assisting the church in seeking a new minister. The Baptist Union has created a number of resources to enable this process, and Regional Ministers normally introduce the church to the process before the moderator is appointed.

You can find more information on the process here ([The Baptist Union of Great Britain : Baptists Together Settlement Guidance for Churches](#))

## Why do churches need a moderator?

A moderator is a key role in helping Baptist Churches through times of transition. A moderator brings to the church:

- Experience and practical wisdom of how churches work
- Knowledge and personal contacts in the Baptist family
- An ability to facilitate and enable rather than direct. The moderator is more of a consultant than a leader
- Courage and skill to challenge without creating antagonism
- Skills in chairing meetings and enabling consensus and participation
- A neutral presence in the church



## Appointing a Moderator

The moderator is appointed by the Church Meeting on the recommendation of the leaders and would not normally be a member of the Church. It is expected that this will be done in collaboration with the Regional Team, and the Regional Minister will help the church find a suitable person. It is important that the moderator is prepared to work with the Regional Team, and approach the settlement process with an understanding of the expectations of both church and association.

As part of the process of the appointment of a moderator, it is important that the church leadership has an exploratory meeting with the Moderator to see if there is an appropriate common understanding and to establish something of the nature of the role and expectations on both sides. The appointment is normally made by the church meeting (in some cases, where trust deeds allow, if the church doesn't appoint a moderator, the association can).

The moderator will usually have an initial meeting or conversation with the Regional Minister outlining the church's recent history and why it is in pastoral vacancy. There may be issues that need to be resolved and the moderator will help with that.

## The Role of a Moderator

The Moderator will, at minimum, chair search committee meetings, and will normally help the church to put together their profile. They often also chair leadership and church meetings, and particularly those ones that relate to the pastoral search. The moderator is not entitled to vote unless they are a member of the church.

You can find more information on putting together a church profile here [The Baptist Union of Great Britain : Baptists Together Guide to Creating a Church Profile](#)

See the moderator tick list for a more comprehensive list of items to consider as you guide the church.



If the moderator has time they may also be able to do some preaching. The moderator may also be able to cover pastoral emergencies, baptisms, weddings and funerals as well as offer pastoral advice and care to the leadership team. While the moderator may also liaise with the Regional Minister about the settlement process, the Church Secretary (or equivalent) should remain the primary contact. Sometimes churches need more help when a Minister leaves and a different kind of moderator – your Regional Minister will discuss this with you – in some instances it might be appropriate to consider an ‘interim minister’ who might work with the church on specific issues in preparation for the future.

As most moderators are already in local pastorate, and will only be able to give limited amount of time to the church, it is the church leadership who take responsibility for the day to day running of the church during a pastoral vacancy. The moderator is expected to advise where needed, but not to take over the role of pastor. Expectations need to be made clear on both sides. The moderator may need to point to further outside help at times.

**Please note, a moderator role is voluntary**, and a moderator should not ask for remuneration from the church. However, the church should expect to pay expenses and appropriate preaching fees, and churches often give a financial gift towards the end of the moderation as a thankyou for the time the moderator has given to the church. A moderator is responsible for including expenses and fees on their own Tax Return.



# Moderator Tick List

## Before and on appointment as moderator

- ✔ Meet with the Regional Minister to discuss what the church might need and to ensure you have a good overview of the settlement process
- ✔ Meet with the Church Leadership and come to a mutual understanding of what you and the church expect before you agree
- ✔ Discuss expenses for you – travel and any other out of pocket expenses, preaching fees
- ✔ Remind the church leaders to take the appointment to the church meeting (you might not have met the church at this point – the leadership recommend you).
- ✔ Familiarise yourself with the way the church is run – ask for a copy of the constitution, names and contact details of key personnel, the latest annual report and anything else that might be helpful.
- ✔ Check the church is OK for keeping things going!




# Moderator Tick List

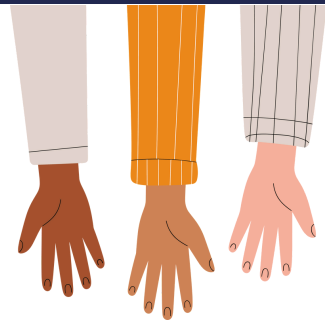
## Settlement

- ✓ Ensure the church is familiar with the settlement process
- ✓ Encourage the church to surround the process in prayer
- ✓ Facilitate or encourage the church to have some sort of vision day to consider what future ministry might look like
- ✓ Help the church form a search committee, ensuring it is representative of the church membership, and includes church leaders (not necessarily all). Decide how the church leadership will be involved in the process if they are not on the search committee.
- ✓ Take the profile to the church meeting to agree
- ✓ The church secretary or search lead should then send the profile to the Regional Minister, along with a signed PVL form (available from RM) who will send this off to ministries.
- ✓ Wait for applications – follow the BU Settlement Guide in how to handle applications.
- ✓ Don't forget to contact your Regional Minister and tell them about applicants and how you are getting on with them – it's good to keep them informed on an ongoing basis, but in particular, around the review dates.

# Search

## Matters of Inclusion



Churches often have “unwritten rules” and prejudices which we only discover in churches after they start the search process.

It is important that the church is aware of the diversity of our ministerial cohort and that they may get applications from:

- Women
- BAME
- Divorcee
- A NAM

And that all these groups should be treated well and with respect. The church members need to be aware of unconscious bias that might exist – the settlement guide contains some information on this.

As part of the London Baptists Response to Project Violet we have created a resource to help churches navigate Women in Ministry and explore a Biblical Argument for Women in Ministry. That resource can be found [here](#).

As part of that resource there is a guide to church meetings, which gives example church meeting activities to help the church work through points of difference and come to a consensus on the church’s stance – you might find that resource helpful beyond the women in ministry question, where there are other differences in theology in the church. There is also an exemplar framework for the Special Church Meeting following the preach with a view. That can be downloaded from the page above.

Please note that the church is able to say they won’t accept applications from women, but that will affect who applies – men as well.



# FAQs

You will have more questions than this, but these are some of the questions the regional team are asked when churches enter settlement.

## ***How might we arrange meetings with candidates?***

When the church first enters the process, you might want to wait until the first review date and look at all profiles together. The search team should look at section A first and ask if the candidate matches up with their profile and also identify where they might want to know more. They then will look at the further information.

Once they have explored the profiles the search committee need to decide if they want to meet the candidate(s). A process of meetings might look like this:

- Initial meeting – you might meet 2 or 3 candidates to start – checking one another out. Is this the kind of person who could be our minister?
- Second meeting – if the answer to the first was possibly, you might want to invite them back to explore some of the conversation further. You could have a meal together and engage in genuine dialogue about expectations and ministry. It might be their spouse might want to come a long and be part of this.
- Preach with a peep – this could be done in conjunction with the second meeting. Invite the minister to preach as a visiting preacher. The church will not know they are a possible candidate. Create opportunities for them to engage with the congregation through after church refreshments or even a meal.





- If there are any more questions to explore, you might want to meet with them again, or meet with the leadership team if they haven't been part of the process so far, or you may want to move directly to a preach with a view. Once at this point the search committee should recommend the minister to the church meeting and share why they are a good candidate.
- The preach with a view is the final "interview" and you must not be pursuing any other candidates at this stage. The minister might come over a weekend and spend time getting to know different groups of people. Food together is good! The preach with a view weekend often includes a question and answer session – it's good if questions are submitted in advance so they can be vetted(!).
- The Preach with a View **must** be followed by a Special Church Meeting soon afterwards where a vote must take place and the candidate informed of the outcome, whether it ends in invitation or not.

## ***How should we encourage churches to treat candidates?***

We should treat all candidates well, whether they end up being our minister or not.

- Keep them informed. Communicate with them every few weeks, even if there is no update.
- Once you have entered into the process with a candidate keep things moving at a reasonable pace (but don't rush it!)
- Look after their physical needs – have they had a long journey? Will they need food/accommodation/space to relax? Ensure that is covered.
- Treat them as individuals in their own right – don't compare them to the previous minister or to you as the moderator – encourage the church to be open to someone they might not expect.
- Think about their families. Normally their spouse would not be included in formal interviews, but they might want to meet the church and leadership team. Ask them how much they want to be involved in the process.

- Encourage discussion and questions from the candidate and become equal partners in a shared dialogue.
- Ensure you call out any bias – whether conscious or unconscious in the search committee.
- Remind the search committee to keep confidentiality within the group – most ministers will be searching without their current church's knowledge.

### ***We know someone who might be good for this post, can we approach them direct?***

Yes you can, but they should still go through the proper process. If they are a Baptist minister they should still apply using the settlement process – they should contact their own Regional Minister and talk to them about the opportunity and putting their profile together.

If they are not a Baptist Minister, you might want to ask them to fill in the form as a Baptist Minister in settlement would so you can compare all candidates equally. Your Regional Minister can provide the candidate with that form and information on the questions asked can be found in the settlement guide. The Regional Team will need to check the church trust deeds to find out whether the church will need a waiver to appoint a non-accredited minister. The church will be responsible for following up references, ensuring they are trained in safeguarding and arranging for a DBS check.

### ***Can the church advertise externally?***

Yes they can, but if you want to do this please talk to your Regional Minister and they will guide you through safer recruitment processes. The church will be responsible for safeguarding and taking up references if you appoint externally.

If you are advertising via the PVL *and* externally you might want your external candidates to apply using the same forms so that you can compare all candidates equally – ask your Regional Minister for guidance.



Ensure the church is clear on whether they will sponsor a work visa application and what the implications of that are. When a church advertises externally then they are very likely to get applications from overseas.

### ***How can I reassure the church about the accreditation status of a minister and what that means?***

Make sure that church knows that the accreditation system means that all ministers are trained, fully vetted, and all immigration, right to work and safeguarding checks have been done. The church does not have to take up references or do a DBS check for an accredited minister, because those references have already been taken up by their Association/BUGB on application for ministry.

Please note that not all accredited ministers are on the accredited ministers list on the Baptist Union website (eg if they have taken a break from ministry or have transferred their accreditation from another country and entered settlement that way). If you are unsure of an applicants status please check with your Regional Minister. They are very unlikely to have access to the PVL if they are unaccredited.

**Thank you for agreeing to help by serving as a moderator. We value your time and the commitment to the life of the London Baptists. We appreciate you!**

