

Policy on the Accountability of Pastors

(Adopted 16 May 2010, amended 11 September 2016)

1. PREAMBLE

2. Pastors of the Open Icon Baptist Church are people whom the church believes to have been called and gifted by the Lord of the Church to share in a ministry of spiritual leadership in word, sacrament and pastoral care. This ministry is exercised in consultation and cooperation with other designated pastoral leaders. Our pastors are accountable:

- 2.1. to the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ;
- 2.2. to the Meeting of the Church Members, gathered to discern the mind of Christ;
- 2.3. and to the congregation's Visiting Pastoral Overseers.

3. PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

The Statement of Understanding signed by our pastors will clearly indicate that our pastors are duty-bound to understand:

- 3.1. the responsibilities in being a pastoral leader as outlined in the Baptist Union of Victoria Duty of Care policy, and to work within the policy guidelines expressed therein.
- 3.2. the Baptist Union of Victoria Code of Ethics, and to sign and lodge with the BUV a pledge to abide by the standards of ethical behaviour described in the Code.

4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Baptist Union provides a professional development process for pastors. Participation in it is a compulsory requirement for those who wish their pastoral ministry to be recognised and accredited by the BUV, but since churches are free to employ people who are not recognised or accredited by the BUV, it is up to each church to decide whether or not to require it of their pastors.

- 4.1. The Statement of Understanding signed by our pastors will clearly indicate that our pastors are required to maintain their accreditation as pastors with the Baptist Union of Victoria.

5. SUPERVISION

Professional supervision is a movement that developed in the counselling professions and has been adapted for pastoral ministry over the last few decades. It consists of the pastor meeting regularly with another experienced pastor, normally trained in the skills of supervision, to discuss casework and other professional issues in a structured way. The purpose is to assist pastors to reflect on and learn from their experience and so continue to develop greater competence in their care of the people to whom they minister. In this context, "supervision" does not imply a hierarchical chain of command or responsibility. Rather, it involves a relationship of voluntary accountability that is more like the relationship a person has with a mentor or a counsellor. The supervisor does not have a relationship with the congregation, and there is usually an understanding that the discussions are confidential.

- 5.1. The Statement of Understanding signed by our pastors will clearly indicate that our pastors are expected to maintain a relationship of professional supervision and voluntary accountability with an appropriate pastoral supervisor outside the congregation.

- 5.2. Our pastors are expected to meet with their supervisors at least eight times per year.
- 5.3. Our pastors are expected to ask their supervisors to provide a brief “audit” statement to the congregation on an annual basis, indicating how many times they have met during the preceding year and indicating:
 - that there are no issues which are causing the supervisor to doubt that the pastor can be trusted to operate safely and ethically in their ministry;

OR

 - the number of issues of concern that have emerged and the dates on which the pastor was advised to make these concerns known to the congregation or its leadership group.
- 5.4. The church will pay any fees charged for the required supervision

6. MINISTRY REVIEWS

- 6.1. The Statement of Understanding signed by our pastors will clearly indicate that an annual review of the pastor’s ministry should be conducted assessing the pastoral profile, the relationship between the pastor and church, and the relationships between the pastors.
- 6.2. The Leadership Group (or current equivalent) should initiate the annual review of each pastor’s ministry, either conducting it themselves, or delegating it to a task group.
- 6.3. Most annual reviews can employ brief prepared questionnaires seeking feedback from any members of the congregation who wish to contribute, and from the pastor, and then prepare a report in consultation with one of our Visiting Pastoral Overseers.
- 6.4. The group conducting the review is encouraged to seek and adapt any available annual review materials from the BUV or other suitable sources.
- 6.5. When completed, the review report and its implications are to be discussed between the pastor and the review group and/or the Visiting Pastoral Overseer before being published to the congregation with any recommendations.
- 6.6. Once every five to six years, a more comprehensive review should be conducted, usually in conjunction with a wider review of the church and its ministries.