Dear colleague,

Thank you for agreeing to spend time engaging with the pastoral affirmation process. We are sincerely delighted to be working with you to continue to discern God’s call and gifting on your life! As you are aware, the affirmation process has multiple aims:

* Discernment – seeking the shape of God’s call on your life, together with you and your family/ supports
* Assessment – understanding your capacity to undertake pastoral leadership in its various forms (using set standards for character, call, doctrine, capacity, competence, training and capability).
* Education – helping you and your loved one understand the responsibilities, privileges, pitfalls and demands of pastoral leadership.
* Skills Development – providing opportunities for you to develop diverse skill sets (including leadership skills, self-awareness, biblical literacy, clarity around call, and interpersonal functioning).
* Rigour – helping you prepare and develop appropriate professional and personal rigour in training, support, association and accountability for the sake of the community.
* Compliance – assisting you to maintain rigorous attention to biblical, ethical and legal requirements.
* Promoting association – encouraging you and your family with the value and worth of associating together as a wider movement.
* Connection – linking you and your family with ongoing processes and support networks, for continual improvement, encouragement and challenge.

A full pastoral affirmation process involves the following steps:

1. You attend an information session hosted by the Pastoral Affirmation team as we share what is involved.
2. You complete a written self-evaluation online, providing reflections on questions around your visioning capacity, sources of motivation, identity and self-differentiation in ministry, how you tend to relate to others (particularly those with different worldviews and experiences) and build healthy relationships across a variety of settings; how you lead and manage yourself and your own needs; and of course how you exercise your own personal faith and teach, preach, evangelise and build faith communities.
3. We appoint a Regional Affirmation Facilitator (RAF) to support you in this process. They are usually a local contact with links to the Association and the regional ministry network. They will receive a copy of your online reflection so they can continue the discernment process together with you.
4. You continue discernment discussions with supportive others, plus your RAF.
5. **Should you decide to continue after this early discernment stage, you then complete a formal application online. This entails identifying and asking referees to complete online written references on your behalf, as well as completing other forms and questionnaires which are reviewed by the Team Leader for Pastoral Affirmation and/or other AOT members or their representatives.**

This will include completing the Confidential Questionnaire and subsequent discussion with an Association staff member. Only yourself and the staff member will be aware of what you report in this questionnaire. Please be aware that this can be an intense or uncomfortable experience, and your frank and honest answers here will better equip us to support you in your ministry journey. You may choose to have a male or female member of staff sign off on your completed Confidential Questionnaire. All significant incidents or outcomes you note on the Confidential Questionnaire must be noted in your Psychological Assessment with Mindspace (see below).

1. **Should you and we decide to continue the pastoral affirmation process following our receipt of these forms and questionnaires, the application is accepted and you move to interview stage.**
2. Interviews are conducted across three topic areas with three different panels – one focusing on Spiritual Gifts and Ministry Experience, one focusing on Doctrine and Denominational Matters, and one focusing on Personality and Relationship Capacity.
	* 1. The Spiritual Gifts and Ministry experience panel focuses on your understanding and awareness of what gifts are required for ministry in general, and more particularly on your own awareness and use of your gifts in your own ministry contexts.
		2. The Doctrine and Denomination panel focuses on your awareness and opinions about key doctrines and also your familiarity with the needs and requirements of ministry activities and church governance in distinctively Baptist spaces.
		3. The Personality and Relationship Capacity panel (PnRC) focuses on your emotional and relational health and wellbeing; what resilience and resources you have currently; and what resources you will need to develop in order to thrive in ministry. **As part of this element of discernment, we send you to complete a independent psychological assessment with The Mindspace Psychology Clinic in MonaVale which will need to be completed after you submit your application but at least 6 weeks before your interview date.** This is a separate report which only yourself, your spouse (if you are married), and the PNRC panellists will see. It is used to help us gain rapid insight into “what makes you tick”: what your life experiences have been to this point, how God has wired you to perceive and react to the world around you, how these things combine to help you navigate stress, conflict, and communication, what your key leaderships style and strengths are, and what you (and your family) will likely need in order to be sustainable in ministry. **A separate letter is attached, discussing this in more detail, so that you know what to expect.**
3. Following interviews, the AOT meets to discuss each candidate’s application and any recommendations received from each panel for their progress and development. If each panel affirms the your suitability and readiness for ministry, you become a candidate and the AOT Chair will contact you to let you know.
4. Successful candidates then enter a 12-24 month probationary period to continue building up their leadership and personal and spiritual skills and capacity with a series of Leadership Incubators and Readiness for Ministry training days.

If you (or we) discern that long-term pastoral leadership ministry is not the best pathway for you at any point, you are released from the pastoral affirmation process. If you do continue and complete all requirements, then you will be formally affirmed as a Baptist pastor.

Should you have any questions or queries, please feel free to contact our Team Leader, Jenny Casey, at your convenience. There will likely be moments of frustration, thanks to technological issues or life events or human error. We hope, however, that you will find this whole process helpful and supportive. It is our prayer that, through these detailed feedback processes, we will be able to discuss and discern God’s pathway with you, affirm your gifting and capacity, and equip you with the skills you need so you can be successful and sustainable in pastoral ministry.

Blessings,

The Affirmation Oversight Team

Baptist Association of NSW & ACT Churches