



What is a REGIONALLY RECOGNISED LEADER (RRL)?

Baptists have a tradition in which leadership and oversight – whether pastoral, pioneer or evangelistic - has been exercised not only by those whose primary calling in life is ordained ministry on behalf of the wider union of Baptist churches, but also by those who live out their Christian vocation in a secular context and exercise leadership in a part-time capacity, whether stipended or (more often) voluntary. Previously these have often been designated as ‘Lay Pastors’ but increasingly it is recognised that leadership and oversight while always pastoral may include others of the so-called fivefold gifts of Ephesians 4 gifts and may be directed towards missional groups or contexts beyond a single congregation.

This document aims to introduce you to this leadership ministry; how you prepare for that ministry and how you may receive recognition of your call and gifting from other Baptist Christians. In the church meeting, members recognise and affirm each other’s gifts. It is within the local church that your gift for leadership ministry is first discerned.

The Vision: Grow Healthy Churches in Relationship for Mission

SCBA are committed to the wider Union vision to ‘grow healthy churches in relationship for mission.’ Growing and strengthening Regionally Recognised Leaders is one strategic way of fulfilling this vision. Regionally Recognised Leaders are tested, trained and formed within the Association and will exercise leadership among the churches of the Association. Such leadership will be given more through influence than being structural or as an ‘office-holder’. They would not always have an official role in the structures of their local church (eg elder or deacon) although they might; nor would they have a structural role in the Association. But their gifts, training and formation will make an important contribution to re-imagining and re-shaping for mission among our communities. Regionally Recognised Leaders may take on overall oversight within a congregation, but the general expectation is that they will work alongside and with the oversight of others either within or local to the group or church with which they are involved.

Association Recognition and Process

SCBA are able to recognise and commission such ministry and it is to the Association that your church will commend you. You will find it helpful to ask your Regional Minister for details of the recognition process and training. The Association and College will work together to test the call, and provide training, formation and support. Those seeking to be Regionally Recognised Leaders will need the commendation of their local church and be interviewed by a group set up by the SCBA Pastoral Task Group

Applicants for this recognition will normally have been baptised as believers and will need to be in membership of a Baptist Church for two years.

- The normal process of training and formation will be two years at *Footsteps* (a part-time course which is a partnership between the Association and Regent's Park College), including the written assignments, together with experience and practice gained in the local church and beyond. Prior learning from those within the Association and those moving in from other areas will be judged on a case by case basis. Each person will have a mentor for these two years, either from another local church or sometimes from within, who will help them reflect on the practice and their learning.
- Those seeking to be Regionally Recognised Leaders will complete a *portfolio* (see below) which will combine elements of study, reflection, evidence of competencies and commendation by others.
- SCBA will commend, as appropriate, those who move into other areas, who will then have the opportunity to fit into the categories a different Association might use.
- The Association will offer continued support and encouragement to Regionally Recognised Leaders, and as part of this it will maintain a list. Regionally Recognised Leaders will be expected to engage in ongoing development through being part of a 'Leadership Good Practice Group' and in other ways, as a requirement for the continued commendation of the Association.
- The Association will work with churches who commend such people to be trained and formed, so that their gifts and learning can be used in the ongoing mission of the church.

Steps towards Association recognition

- An inner, personal openness to God's calling for this ministry.
- The testing and confirmation of your call and gift by the local Baptist church of which you are a member.
- An initial testing of your call and potential for this kind of missional ministry by the Association Ministerial Recognition Committee. This first interview, early on in the process, is important. It may prevent years of misdirected time and energy in study, as well as disappointment at the end of the process. It is at this point that a candidate will normally be directed to the two-year SCBA *Footsteps Course* (or an equivalent and approved Baptist College course) which includes the study of Baptist History and Principles.
- At the end of the course and after two years of leadership ministry experience, the final testing of skills and character will be arranged with the local Ministerial Recognition Committee by your Regional Minister. This second interview will be arranged to test skills, calling and character.

Training

Responsibility rests on those who serve as RRLs among God's people to be as well equipped as possible for their ministry. You may be impatient to get on with the work, but taking time now to lay a good foundation will repay you later when busyness tends to squeeze out space for study and when good habits of reading, reflection and devotion are harder to establish.

Personal Growth

It is vital that you develop and nourish your relationship with God. This involves disciplines which enable you to grow and mature as a Christian. These disciplines will include a sustained commitment to the study of the Scriptures and a life of prayer, some arrangement for an ongoing mentoring-type relationship.

In Service Development

There is need for ongoing study, for continuing reflection both upon the word of God and the world, both individually and with the help of a mentor or accompanier. The Association will be able to advise you of helpful courses and conferences to assist in your development as an RRL.

In Summary

The testing and confirmation of your call and gifts will follow the following stages:

- A recognition of your call by your local Baptist Church where you have been in membership for two years. You will normally have been involved in leadership ministry for a two year period before the church can commend you to the Association Ministerial Recognition Committee.
- A first interview will help discern your sense of a call to this ministry and will recommend a course through one of our Baptist Colleges. The Committee will inform the College that you are in the process of recognition. If you are already enrolled on a course, then the Committee will need to ensure that the College understands that you are applying for regional recognition and therefore will ensure that you undertake the necessary assignments. *The Association are looking at potential at this point.*
- After two years experience of leadership ministry and training, you will once again meet with the Association Ministerial Recognition Committee for a second interview. The Committee will use references to help them test the candidate's pastoral ability and will look also at calling, character and spiritual and intellectual development.

Portfolio:

- Application form (copied to Association and College)
- Church commendation
- References
- Association interviews
- 14 written assignments
- Reports from a mentor
- Spiritual journal
- Child protection training
- Two reports from observation of practice (eg leading a group or service, preaching, leading an event)

Competencies and Expectations:

- **Spirituality:** to show a growing personal spirituality which reveals a significant self-awareness and integrates work, church, family and self as life lived in participation with the Triune God.
- **Leadership:** to show ability to offer positive influence in a variety of ways, to work well with others both within and beyond the local church and to help the church to be mission-minded and forward-looking.
- **Theological Reflection:** to show ability to think through issues with care and insight, to make connections between the Bible and life in the ongoing mission of the church, and help others to think in this way.
- **Pastoral Care:** to show ability to listen effectively, to relate to others who are different, for example, culturally, theologically and to offer appropriate care both to those within and without the church

And where appropriate:

- **Worship and Preaching and/or Communicating and Presenting:** to show ability to lead worship in a variety of contexts, to handle the Bible faithfully and preach effectively, recognising the contemporary cultural and mission context. And/or to be able to effectively present to, and communicate with, small and large groups recognising the contemporary cultural and mission context.

If commended by the Association, your name will be added to the Association List of Regionally Recognised Leaders.

Further help

We hope this gives relevant information. Further help and advice will be available from your minister or your Regional Minister, contact details via the SCBA web-site.

