



Discussion Paper

Retired Pastors and Interim Opportunities

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Introduction

*Oh, the joys of those who do not
follow the advice of the wicked,
or stand around with sinners,
or join in with mockers.*

*² But they delight in the law of the Lord,
meditating on it day and night.*

*³ They are like trees planted along the riverbank,
bearing fruit each season.
Their leaves never wither,
and they prosper in all they do.*

Psalm 1:1-3

The Psalmist speaks positively of those who remain grounded in God and likens them to a tree that continually and deeply draws water from a flowing stream, that continues to bear fruit in season. And don't miss it: their leaves never wither; they prosper in all they do. This is an apt picture to frame this discussion paper.

When talking with pastors approaching retirement age, many of those conversations end up with statements like, *"I'm not retiring...I'm retreading!"* This reflects the truth that the call to ministry does not cease simply because vocational ministry may. Many retiring ministers are looking for ways to reinvigorate and reinvent themselves in ministry for their final season of celebration. There is no ageism when it comes to God's call upon a person's life.

Not only so, it is sometimes said that when a person of good age passes, a library dies. Similarly, when a person with a lifetime of faithful Pastoral service retires, a whole resource is literally pensioned off and there is little chance of passing on corporate knowledge. That investment is lost to the cause of Christ and the Baptist Movement.

The Conversation so far

On Feb 14th 2022 Angelo Giovas, Rhys McFadden, Geoff Armitage, Ron Linning and David Elvery met to discuss the opportunity present among our Queensland Baptist Churches for Pastors with a lifetime of ministry experience to continue to serve and bless the Queensland Baptist movement beyond the limitation of their vocational ministry life.

The central focus of our discussion, *"how can Queensland Baptists gain the most benefit from the availability of a team of retired ministers functioning as Ministers at Large to value add, increase resilience, come alongside churches without a pastor to coach, mentor and equip, give weary pastors a well-deserved break and contribute in any other way by standing in the gap!"*

The topics raised so far included (not in any order):

- How to make the most of each opportunity to value add given each circumstance will be different?

- Is there clarity around outcomes are being pursued? In other words, *“what does a win look like?”*
- How do we ascertain “the need”?
- What is the best way to pass on “Corporate Knowledge?”
- What shape would it look like? 2 week interims 4 times a year or a block of 2 months intensive or perhaps a mixture?
- Is there any training required?
- What resources need to be developed?
- What resources will support Pastors suffering burn out or ministry misery? Develop a specialised retreat/recovery process? – this element is outside the brief of this initiative but important to note so this initiative is seen to be connected to other elements of the Church Health Group.
- What is the line of reporting and support on the occasion a difficult “stone” is turned over? How should this be resolved?
- How can pastors be best prepared for retirement? Workshops? Intensives?
- How do we as a denomination celebrate the ministries of senior ministers and develop a culture of honour?
- What next steps need to be considered to release retiring and retired ministers from their Vocational Ministry into their Denominational Minister at Large role? Development of strategy, structure, support, discussion forums and timeline?
- Are there any other questions to be engaged to make this dream a reality?

The purpose of this discussion paper is to raise these and other questions to frame a discussion so that a strategy can be defined and developed that will capitalise on the availability of ministers *“whose leaf will not wither, who prosper in all they do.”*

Our Vision for the future

Our initial conversations revealed a real opportunity for us to be strategic with our interim ministries. We desire to develop a system whereby we can identify the needs that local churches have for interim ministries and identify interims to fill the needs.

The need for interims might arise due to

- The absence of an established pastor who is taking long service leave, Sabbatical leave or even stress leave
- A transition between pastorates, where a church is without a pastor for a time
- An identified need in a church that could benefit from additional expertise and experience

In the past general interims have just sought to fill gaps. But we believe we can do more than that. We desire that general interims become more intentional and provide value to every church in which they minister. Intentional Interim Ministry is a subset of interim ministry which is very focussed and aims to provide a specialised service to a church that is stuck or needs to identify its future pathway. But similarly, we desire to build a team of general interims which have identified specialised experience that can be offered to local

churches to support and develop capacity within them in areas like administration, prayer, specific ministries, evangelism, discipleship, etc.

Next Steps.

To further this conversation, we are planning to gather interested pastors in Quarter 2, 2022. We want to develop a system whereby we can

- identify needs in local churches,
- build and maintain a pool of available interims,
- identify specialty expertise from within this pool and
- match available interims to current needs.

We believe this is a huge opportunity within our movement and look forward to developing this system during 2022.

You are most welcome to join this discussion ... If interested, please contact David Elvery, the Director of Pastoral Services on david.elvery@qb.org.au

Possible Model for Interim Ministry System

