

## Australian Baptist Church Culture Instrument

Dear Church Leader,

One of the features of Baptist church ecclesiology is the concept of “the autonomy of the local church.” This does not mean Baptist churches should be *independent*. Baptist churches have generally chosen to associate and collaborate for mutual benefit. But it does mean that each local church has the right, indeed the duty, to operate under the direct Lordship of Christ. This means that each local church has the right to operate in its own, hopefully contextually relevant, way. This distinctive means that local Baptist churches demonstrate a beautiful diversity while still falling under the banner of being a “Baptist” church.

Although this “beautiful diversity” gives Baptist churches the flexibility to minister effectively in a wide range of contexts, it does present, at least, one challenge. When churches are looking to call pastors from outside their own membership, they are faced with the difficult challenge of seeking to identify “church-pastor fit.” Because Baptist Church diversity is so multi-faceted sometimes we do not realise that there is a philosophical difference between our church and an incoming pastor until it is too late. Usually, both the church and the pastor will affirm that there is no “right” or “wrong” position on any issue of Baptist ecclesial diversity, but the difference can sometimes produce uncomfortable outcomes and hinder the effectiveness of the pastor in a given church.

This “Church Culture Instrument” is aimed at helping avoid these awkward situations. A range of Baptists from across Australia have together worked out a range of “dimensions” of Baptist Church cultures in Australia. These “dimensions” are an attempt to quantify the diversity that exists in Baptist churches and amongst Baptist pastors. It helps churches to identify “where they stand” on a range of matters and to check the compatibility of their stance with that of a potential pastor.

The instrument “forces” you to choose from two “competing values” for the 30 dimensions identified by the panel of experts. You will sometimes find the choice difficult to make because you will be wanting to say, “Both!” However, for the purpose of this exercise, please just choose the option that *best describes* your church, even though it may not do so perfectly.

Your prospective pastor will also be given the same list of dimensions and make the same choices hopefully giving some useful information to inform your discerning of God’s will during the pastoral search process.

**Leader’s Name :** \_\_\_\_\_

For each of the dimensions of Baptist Church culture described below, please choose the competing value which best describes your church:

### 1. Style of Worship

- Contemporary - more relevant to the culture in which we live using recently released songs in a more informal atmosphere.
- Traditional - drawing more on the traditions of Baptist worship using older songs in a more formal atmosphere.

### 2. Preaching Purpose

- Evangelistic - generally proclaiming the Gospel at every opportunity with a view to people becoming Christians.
- Teaching/Pastoral - generally preaching biblical passages and principles so that Christians are nurtured in their faith.

### 3. Use of Gifts

- Charismatic - generally accepting all of the Scriptural gifts as relevant for today and encouraging their use in church worship, mission and/or day-to-day life.
- Non-charismatic - generally not using the “signs and wonders” gifts in church worship, mission and/or day-to-day life.

### 4. Worship Service Target

- Non-believers - a greater emphasis on planning services that are appealing and relevant to people who do not yet have a commitment to following Jesus.
- Believers - a greater emphasis on planning services to nurture Christians.

### 5. Authority / Leadership

- Pastors/Elders - the eldership (pastors/deacons/council/board) make the major decisions and set the direction of the church.
- Congregation - the congregation makes the major decisions and sets the direction of the church.

### 6. Importance of Membership

- Essential - to be involved in the leadership or major decision-making of the church a person must be in membership.
- Optional - membership of the church is more or less inconsequential.

### 7. Method of Discipline

- Formal - church discipline is handled in a systematic and formal way with clear church processes.
- Informal - church discipline is *ad hoc* and usually private depending on the situation and circumstances.

### 8. Discipling and Equipping

- Directed - nurture primarily involves structured programs with higher levels of formality and accountability.
- Non-directed - spiritual growth and development primarily occurs informally.

### 9. Development of Relationships

- Structured, formal and intentional - people are strongly encouraged into small groups and other incorporation and fellowship programs.
- Non-structured, informal and natural - people can choose whether to informally develop relationships or remain anonymous in the body.

### 10. Buildings and Facilities

- Modest - expenditure on facilities should be kept to the absolute minimum needed for the development of the work.
- Excellent - expenditure on facilities should be sufficient to provide for beautiful and comfortable facilities in keeping with or better than other community facilities.

### 11. Ministry Target

- Non-churched - more resources are put into reaching and meeting the needs of those who do not attend the church.
- Church family - more resources are put into healing, nurturing, helping and equipping the church family.

## 12. Method of Evangelism

- Programs - the church places greater focus on running ministries that will draw people towards God and help them follow Jesus.
- Personal - the church places greater focus on equipping believers to share their faith and encourage their friends, workmates, and family to follow Jesus.

## 13. Evangelistic Target

- Homogenous - we need to target a particular group in our community/culture which we can reach most effectively.
- Heterogeneous - our church family and those who are converted need to represent the diversity in our community.

## 14. Aim of Evangelism

- Salvation - our main purpose is to share the gospel and help people establish a relationship with Jesus.
- Wholeness - our main purpose is to serve people and set them free - spiritually, economically, relationally, physically.

## 15. Focus of Evangelism

- Local - we should put most of our resources and effort into reaching the local community in which God has placed us.
- Non-local - most of our resources and effort should go into mission beyond our local community.

## 16. Orientation

- People - Our church is a very personal place. Members are very close and share a large portion of their lives with one another.
- Task - Our church is very focused on outcomes. Getting the mission done and seeing the effect of our activity is important.

## 17. Organisation

- Organised - Our church is very organised. Policies and procedures govern what we typically do.
- Flexible - Our church is a very flexible organization. Members are willing to try new things and take risks.

## 18. Unifying Influence

- Vision driven - the church is driven by a clear vision with goals and strategies.
- Culture driven - the church is driven by a strong set of common values which may or may not be explicitly described.

## 19. Role of Pastor

- Equipper - the pastor and any ministry staff are to equip the people who, in turn, do the ministry of the church.
- Minister - the pastor and any ministry staff do the ministry of the church.

## 20. Role of Women

- Complementarian - a woman's role in the church is more limited compared to a male, in that, she may sometimes not be enabled to lead, preach or teach, especially when men are present.
- Egalitarian/equalitarian - a woman can do anything that a man can do which includes preaching, teaching and leading.

## 21. Progress

- Liminal – churches should generally be changing and adapting.
- Steady – churches should generally be maintaining the status quo.

## 22. Online presence

- Important – genuine ministry happens during online church services and social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are strongly utilised.
- Unimportant – online church services are not very important or just for advertising and social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are not strongly utilised.

## 23. Sermon series

- Expository – preachers generally work slowly through the books of the Bible.
- Topical – preachers generally choose topics relevant to the congregation.

## 24. Sermons and small groups

- Aligned – the sermons and small group Bible studies are generally aligned.
- Unaligned – the sermons and small group Bible studies are not generally aligned.

## 25. Politics

- Right leaning - the majority are socially conservative, generally focussing on issues like sexual ethics.
- Left leaning - the majority are socially progressive, generally focussing on issues like the environment and refugees.

## 26. Social justice

- Advocacy - the church generally includes political action as part of its mission.
- Avoidance - the church does not generally engage in political issues.

## 27. Cultural diversity

- Multicultural - the church seeks to celebrate diverse cultures and languages, including in the worship services.
- Monocultural - the church does not manifest much cultural diversity.

## 28. Worship standards

- Participation – generally everyone is welcome to participate “up front” in the worship services regardless of their competence.
- Excellence – generally only those who have demonstrated gifting and commitment are involved “up front” in the worship services.

## 29. Ministry to children

- Integrated – Children are intentionally included in most of the activities of the church including the worship services.
- Separated – Children are generally engaged in a separate children’s or youth activities.

## 30. Denominational affiliation

- Strongly affiliated – the church has a strong sense of association with the state Baptist union.
- Loosely affiliated – the church has a weak sense of association with the state Baptist Union.