

## A CELL REVIEW PROCESS AND STRUCTURE

### Order for Baptist Ministry

One practical way of integrating the desire to remain true to the values of the dream in our relating and discipleship, (and also to walk with and watch over one another in the specifics of being called to – and sometimes tempted away from – Christian ministry) is through regular meetings together in cell to examine our lives in an honest and open way. This might comprise:

- Hospitable gathering;
- At cell meetings regularly set the scene for our way of being together by reading aloud *The Dream* near the beginning of the meeting;
- Say together the Daily Office soon after; and allotting sufficient time to
- the Review, which could comprise reading out a reminder of one core area of Christian ministry, followed by a reminder of the general review questions.

Eg 'Committed to being faithful in Christian ministry we particularly ponder the following area of our calling...' (*reading out the introduction for and one question from one of the five categories of review questions listed below*)....

'As we do so we remember that God may be speaking to us in an area not addressed by this question, and overall we are asking ourselves

o In what part of my life and experience is God particularly addressing me at the moment?

o What part of my life am I keeping away from God's gaze and word at the moment?'

*How it might work:* For a cell that meets every 4-6 weeks, with five main areas on a continuous cycle, each area would be entered into once or twice a year and the whole cycle of specific 'questions' within 2-3 years. For a cell that meets on a flexible pattern with longer but fewer meetings a year (eg to accommodate the geographical distance of cell members) it might be possible to consider more than one area within the space of a longer meeting. In any case, for every cell, it would be important to engage with the two questions about the Cell/OBM ('E') at least once a year in order to reflect on the way the cell is functioning and also to enable consideration of the nature of each cell member's call with regard to OBM.

So, taking an average, once-every-6-weeks cell: 'Mid January's' cell considers A1, 'Late Feb' – B1, 'Mid April' – C1, 'Late May' -D1, 'Mid July'- E1 and 2, 'Early Sept' –A2, 'Mid Oct' – B2, 'Late Nov' – C2 etc.

A. **Ministry Vows:** *A review based around the content of ordination vows*

A1. I promised to *'serve and pastor the people of God with gentle nurture and faithful teaching'*: How would I assess my current practice of setting *before them the whole counsel of God*' sharing the Word in season and out of season?

A2. I promised to *'make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'*: In what ways am I attempting to heal divisions or disagreements within the church rather than exploiting them to my own advantage?

A3. I promised to *'pray for the coming kingdom of God'*: In what ways presently am I promoting a commitment to peace, justice, forgiveness, and love?

A4. I promised to *'follow Christ wherever he leads'*: In what respects at present am I aware of the Lord's prompting; are there instances where I might be resisting his calling or leading?

**B. Ministry Pitfalls:** *A review of some temptations and distractions that go with the calling to minister*

B1. I affirmed my faith in *'one God, Father Son and Holy Spirit'* and in *'Jesus Christ as... Saviour and Lord'*: in what areas am I struggling with aspects of my faith?

B2. I promised to *'live a life of holiness and prayer'*: In what area might my commitment be challenged or compromised by temptations to appear *'relevant'* or *'spectacular'* and to what degree is prayer the determining rhythm of my life?

B3. I promised to watch over God's people *'in humility and patience'*: in what respects might I be guilty of *'lording it over them'*?

B4. I am called *'to leave self behind'*: in what areas might I be exercising ministry as a mask for that which is self-seeking or self-serving?

**C. Spiritual and Personal Resources:** *A review of the practice of prayerful and accompanied attentiveness both to God and to what I most need*

C1. How full or empty is my spiritual, emotional, and intellectual *'fuel tank'* or *'well'* at this time? Is there anything I need less of, or to drop? Is there anything I need more of, or to start, (or re-start)?

C2. What and who are enabling me to be attentive to God at this time and with whom can I reflect on aspects of ministry and leadership?

C3. In what ways am I sharing in being attentive to God for and with my church and community?

C4. To what extent am I experiencing any creeping acedia – a spiritual apathy or carelessness, a lack of care or refusal to grow expressed in either unreflective activism, or a lethargic pottering-round withdrawal?

**D. Personal Discipleship:** *A review of life as a disciple rather than simply as a minister*

D1. How am I honouring and dealing gently with members of my family; are there tensions in these personal relationships that I need to address with humility and repentance?

D2. Are there friendships or relationships that are distracting me from my walk of discipleship rather than enhancing and encouraging it?

D3. To what extent am I wrestling with inappropriate sexual, racial, gender or disability responses at present?

D4. Are there areas where I am struggling financially or materially: to what degree are such challenges undermining a trustful discipleship?

**E. Cell and OBM:** *A time to explore the process and meaning of involvement with OBM, perhaps including a reminder of the vows or intent and commitment before using the following prompts:*

E1. How does my commitment to this cell, in prayer and in meeting together, have appropriate precedence in my life?

E2. In our commitment together as cell for what am I grateful and what might we need to do differently?

E3. What is the level of my commitment to the wider Order for Baptist Ministry? How important do I consider participation in Convocation?

E4a. Am I being called to deepen my commitment to the Order by taking vows as a full member of the OBM community?

E4b. If I have already made vows as a full member of the Order, in what ways are those vows being fulfilled?

Quotations taken from *Gathering for Worship: Patterns and Prayers for the Community of Disciples*, ed. Christopher J Ellis & Myra Blyth for The Baptist Union of Great Britain (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2005).