

Ministerial Credentialing in the Baptist Churches of New Zealand

ABSTRACT

New Zealand Baptists have taken a variety of approaches to their ministry. The nature of ordination has been a contested issue. For most of the twentieth century a system of denominational accreditation operated, to ensure the smooth movement of ministers between congregations. In the 1990s a registration model was adopted, requiring ongoing supervision and development. This essay examines the history of these changes and assesses the impact of the registration system.

The history of the Baptist churches in New Zealand extends back only one and a half centuries, with the first church being founded in Nelson in 1851. Decimus Dolomore was the first Baptist minister to arrive in New Zealand after being called by the Nelson Church in its founding year. Dolomore had been ordained in Yorkshire, England in 1847.

However, in contrast to Nelson, with its ordained minister from the old country, many of the early Baptist churches were led by the laymen who planted them. Up until the formation of the Baptist Union of New Zealand in 1882, eighteen of these untrained laymen had pastoral responsibility of churches. Of these eighteen, seven had gained legal recognition as officiating ministers for marriage purposes.¹ However, at the

1 P. Tonson, *A handful of grain: The history of the Baptist Union of New Zealand* Vol 1 (Wellington: Johnston Press, 1982), 18.

time of the formation of the Union in that year, only two were still serving as pastors.

In addition to the lay-pastors, other ministers arrived from overseas, chiefly from England, but also from Australia. By 1882 thirty-seven had arrived, but only fifteen of these remained in ministry at the time of the first conference of churches in that year. Most served only short terms. Twenty-one of the thirty-seven had pastorates of less than three years, with the experienced pastors faring better than those who were newly trained.²

To meet the demand for more ministers, a Students' Committee was formed in 1886 to oversee the indigenous training of ministers.³ The Committee selected ministry students to be trained and placed each under an experienced minister in a university town. Such students received their formal theological education chiefly through the Knox Theological Hall (Presbyterian) in Dunedin. This system continued up until the establishment of the denomination's Baptist Theological College in Auckland in 1926. In that same year the category of "probationary minister" was introduced in the annual listing of ministers. This referred to those who had completed their formal training at the new theological college and were now doing further studies while in church placements, but were yet to prove the full validity of their ministry.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, while it was the common practice for Baptist ministers in New Zealand to be ordained, Charles Haddon Spurgeon's views held considerable sway. He believed that an ordination ceremony was to be avoided, as a true minister needed only to be commissioned

2 Tonson 25.

3 J.A. Clifford, *A handful of grain: The history of the Baptist Union of New Zealand* Vol II (Wellington: Johnston Press, 1982), 32.

from God. Spurgeon was esteemed very highly in New Zealand, and his son Thomas Spurgeon was minister at the prestigious Auckland Baptist Tabernacle, a church which had considerable influence on both the denomination and the city during this period.

Accreditation began among New Zealand Baptists in the 1890s.⁴ It arose out of a need to be able to commend to other Baptist churches and the community in general some men and women as being suitable for ministry. This commendation was based on several grounds: The call of God, the call of a local church, a full theological education, and a period of probationary ministry in which the minister demonstrated proven giftedness and competence. Although accreditation provided a list of qualified ministers, in a denomination with an autonomous church structure there remained a difficulty in matching available ministers to churches and vacant churches to ministers. To help with this process a Board of Introduction and Consultation was formed in 1901.⁵

While accreditation was the norm, there was always a group of ministers who were not accredited. These were listed as home missionaries and required to embark upon a course of training to gain full ministerial status. The 1907 yearbook listed thirty-five accredited ministers, five home missionaries and one student. The home missionaries were lay pastors of small churches who had become full-time pastors but who had little formal theological training.

By 1951 the list of accredited ministers and home missionaries had increased to eighty-three. However, in the

4 Lindsay Jones, *Defining the Role of a Pastor in a New Zealand Baptist Church*. (unpublished Research Project, Melbourne College of Divinity, 1998), 18.

5 Clifford 104.

listing of churches, thirteen ministers were marked with an asterisk to indicate that they were neither on the list of accredited ministers nor that of home missionaries. The autonomous and congregational nature of Baptist churches meant that a local church could call any minister of its choice, regardless of whether the person was on the official list or had received any formal training.

The category of home missionary lasted until 1969. The term gradually disappeared from use after this date. David Metcalfe was the last minister in the denomination to be given this description. He was eventually given full ministry accreditation in recognition of his service with South Sea Evangelical Mission.

In 1971 a new style of listing was prepared for the yearbook which included the following categories:

1. Accredited ministers and deaconesses
2. Probationary ministers and deaconesses
3. Ministers in retirement
4. Accredited ministers without necessary occupational qualifications
5. Accredited deaconesses without necessary occupational qualifications
6. Accredited social workers
7. Pastors and accredited workers not otherwise listed

The new listings had come about as a result of much debate by Union Council. Three particular incidents sparked the debate as to what kind of minister could be on the accredited list.⁶ The first was the request from Dr E P Y Simpson that he remain on the list. Dr Simpson had pastored two New Zealand Baptist churches, but his ministry at the time of the request was entirely in the United States of America as a Professor of Church History. The second case was that of a Christian

6 Recollection of Rev Angus MacLeod.

Education worker who sought to be listed in the *Yearbook*, whilst maintaining that he was not a pastor. Thirdly, there was a request by an accredited minister to remain on the list, though he was working full time in an itinerant faith healing ministry in New Zealand and overseas.

Beyond the discussion about particular cases, there was a widespread desire not to discriminate between ministers who had been trained at the Theological College and those who had not. To this end the dinner for ministers who were graduates of the Baptist Theological College, which had been a feature at the annual Assembly, was discontinued.

The 1971 yearbook showed seven names in the category 'pastors and accredited workers not otherwise listed.' The following year the wording was changed to 'pastors and other workers not elsewhere listed' and included fifteen names. By 1983 the list had grown to fifty-three and by 1993 to 124. By 1997, the last year of accreditation, the list was titled simply 'other pastoral workers' and now included 181 names. This exceeded by four the number on the accredited ministers listed in the same year.

As the figures show there has been an enormous change, especially over the last thirty years, in the way New Zealand Baptist churches have understood ministry. It is necessary now to examine the influences that brought about this change. The greatest of these influences were the ecumenical movement, the English Dakin/Payne debate, and the charismatic renewal.

Through the 1950s and 1960s there was a world-wide ecumenical mood. Many were seeking initiatives toward church unity or church union. On the New Zealand scene this ecumenical mood increased the pressure among Baptists to conform to a view of ministry held by other denominations. In particular E (Ted) Roberts-Thomson, the principal of the New Zealand Baptist Theological College from 1953 to 1961, sought to move the denomination in this direction. In 1956, he

wrote in his doctoral thesis for the Melbourne College of Divinity:

Ecumenical contacts of Baptists, particularly in Faith and Order Conferences, are making them think deeply about these matters again. The result is that they are beginning to see that ordination is of far more importance than many are prepared to admit. It is doubtful if they will ever go so far as to agree with those of the Catholic tradition that ordination confers grace whereby a man (sic) is enabled to do what he could not do before. But they are beginning to see that ordination must be set on a higher level than has been held by them for a long time.⁷

In propounding the ecumenical view, Roberts-Thomson had the support of other New Zealand Baptist leaders including Lawrence A North, Ewen Simpson and James Crozier. His view however, remained the minority view among New Zealand Baptist ministers at the time.

English Baptist thinking about ministry in the twentieth century was dominated by the writings of Arthur Dakin and Ernest A Payne. While principal of Bristol Baptist College, Dakin was requested by the heads of other Baptist theological colleges in Britain, to write a book that set out the generally held views of the denomination about church and ministry. Dakin published *The Baptist view of the church and ministry* in 1944. In it he maintained that the only true ordination is by the

7 E. Roberts-Thomson, *Baptists and the ecumenical movement* (Thesis presented for the Doctor of Divinity degree: MCD, 1956), 384. Part of this was rewritten and published under the title *With hands outstretched* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1962). He adds to the paragraph quoted above, 'All this means that they are being conditioned for a more serious consideration of this matter along with those of other traditions, and there is coming a closer approximation to that higher viewpoint held outside Baptist ranks.' (67).

Spirit of God,⁸ and that the church in recognising such ordination confers no status. What the church does do, he argues, is acknowledge a ministry function. Further, said Dakin:

there is no sense in which a man (sic) can claim to be a Baptist minister when he is not the head of a Baptist church. He may of course still have his name on the Baptist Union list of those who are regarded as qualified to exercise the office, but that is a different thing. There is actually no minister without ministering.⁹

Ernest Payne, General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, responded to Dakin in his *Fellowship of Believers* published in 1952. He called Dakin's book, 'provocative but not very happily named'¹⁰ and went on to argue that beyond ministry in the local church a pastor possessed some ministry responsibility that belonged to the Baptist Union. A minister, according to Payne, may still be regarded as such even if not in a local church position. For instance, he argued, those who are involved in training pastors or doing mission work should still be considered ministers.

The debate between Dakin and Payne carried over to New Zealand, and at Union Council meetings in the early 1960s the issues they raised were keenly argued by N R Wood, Foster Sherburd and others.¹¹ N R Wood particularly stated that Baptists were quite distinct from other denominations when it came to their theology of ministry. He held that once ministers ceased to hold pastoral positions, they ceased to be ministers. He was also of the opinion that the task of administering the

8 A Dakin, *The Baptist View of the Church and Ministry* (London: Baptist Union Publication Dept, 1944), 48.

9 Dakin, *The Baptist View of the Church and Ministry*, 44f.

10 Ernest A Payne, *The fellowship of believers* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1952), 13.

11 Recollection of Rev Angus MacLeod and Dr Stan Edgar.

ordinances (sacraments) belonged to the church, and was only delegated to ministers.

The biggest change in regard to the understanding of the ministry came, however, with the arrival of the charismatic movement in the 1970s. Over a period of a decade the charismatic movement impacted, and substantially changed, almost every church in the Baptist Union of New Zealand. For many there was a fresh realisation that each believer had gifts for ministry.

Before this time a church service would be typically planned and run by one minister with musical accompaniment supplied by an organist. The opportunities for lay participation in a worship service were largely limited to those who belonged to the choir, were soloists, lay readers of scripture, or could bring a testimony in the evening gospel service. With the charismatic renewal ministry was no longer seen as the domain of an employed minister. It became the exception, rather than the rule, for the pastor to lead the worship during Sunday services. Typically, there would be a lay worship leader, who was part of a worship team, with many musicians and participants. There had, of course, always been much lay participation in areas such as Bible Class, Sunday School and Boys' and Girls' Brigades, but these roles were seen as quite distinct from the minister's one.

Along with the charismatic movement came the establishment of a plethora of home groups. These groups often operated as mini-churches with worship, prayer, bible reading, teaching and even communion, similar to what would be included in a Sunday morning worship service, but conducted usually by lay people.

While Baptist churches had always been congregational, the charismatic movement had the effect of democratising the churches in a new way. Among Baptists it had always been believed that the minister possessed no exclusive function

because of his or her role, but in practice it was rare for lay people to preach, baptise, officiate communion or dedicate children. Now it seemed that almost anybody could perform these ministry functions. The exclusive status of the minister was lost. People from within a congregation were now not only leading services, where they had not before, but more and more of them were being asked to enter the paid employment of the church. It was common now to have ministry teams which could be made up variously of part-time workers as well as full-time workers, some remunerated and some not. The additional staff usually had no theological education. Courses for such people were usually on the job, and of a practical rather than a theological nature.

Along with this, came questions about accreditation. If ministry was essentially a matter of God's gifting, why should those who were functioning as ministers not be accredited, whether they had had theological training or not?

Up until this time, the list of those considered for accreditation was restricted to ministers who had completed a full course of theological study at the Baptist Theological College (or had done equivalent theological training elsewhere), and had then gone on and fulfilled the requirements of a set probationary period, usually of two years.

Those challenging the system cited the example of Tom Frew, an Irish immigrant, who had a nationally known and recognised evangelistic ministry. Tom had been pastor of the Otorohanga Baptist Church before becoming an itinerant evangelist. It was argued that surely after so many years of successful and proven ministry, he deserved to be granted ministerial accreditation along with other ministers, despite the fact that he had no formal theological training.

This argument won the day, and at the Baptist Assembly in 1984, amendments were made to the criteria for accreditation to allow consideration not only of those who had completed a full

Baptist Theological College course but also of ministers in two additional categories. The first included those who had done a course of theological or ministry training in some other institution and had then gone on to complete any extra requirements the Accreditation Board deemed necessary, including a set probationary period. The second category was for those who had been in a position of full-time pastoral ministry for at least seven years, were not less than thirty-five years of age, and had satisfied the Accreditation Board that their previous training, experience, effectiveness and competence were the equivalent of that expected under the other categories.

In a sense, this was the thin end of the wedge. The way was now opened for church workers of all kinds to apply for accreditation on the basis of function. As time went on, more and more applications for accreditation were made under the additional categories, and the Accreditation Board felt that it needed clearer guidelines for making its decisions.

At the same time pressure was mounting for some on-going review process. As former General Superintendent, Stan Edgar noted in a 1986 paper: 'For accreditation to be meaningful there needs to be some realistic reassessment from time to time. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a denomination structured as ours is, to make the necessary reassessments.'¹²

Through the three decades at the close of the twentieth century denominational leaders revisited the issues of ordination and ministry recognition at frequent intervals. Many reports and papers are included in Union Council minutes through this period. A significant reappraisal occurred in 1986

12 Stan Edgar, *Baptists and Ordination* (Unpublished paper, 1986). This paper formed a background to much of the debate among ministers and at Union Council meetings.

with papers being written for the Council's deliberations by Brian Smith, Stan Edgar, Tom Cadman and Brian Meadows.

Major changes were continuing to take place in ministry. The number of people who were involved in part-time ministry increased steadily, as did the number of lay people performing ministry functions. Also taking place was specialisation in ministry. Previously the minister had been seen as preacher, pastoral care-giver and leader. A person was accredited on the basis that they could sustain the role of sole pastor. The idea was that accreditation recommended a person to the denomination as a competent general practice pastor. Now however, the prevalence of team ministries began to put strains on the old structures.

In 1993 Brian Cochran, a youth pastor at Murrays Bay Baptist Church, was granted accreditation even though he was functioning in a specialised role. Other changes in ministry were also taking place. Because each local Baptist church is autonomous, there is no denominational control over the call of a minister. More and more churches were calling ministers that were neither accredited nor theologically trained. In addition, those commencing ministry were sensing the call to serve at a greater age. Even among ministry trainees entering the Theological College, ministry was seldom a first career. Previously it was usual for ministers to see their call as a life-time one. Now terms of ministry service were becoming shorter, and even among graduates from a full term of training at theological college the drop-out rate after just a few years in ministry was high.

Towards the end of the twentieth century the New Zealand government eased its immigration policy. Many of the new immigrants came to New Zealand already having strong Christian backgrounds, particularly those from the Pacific Islands and Korea. This, coupled with the increasing secularisation of New Zealand Pakeha society, meant that the

face of the church was changing rapidly. A large number of ethnic Baptist ministries were springing up and these generally carried the ethos of the foreign culture of their participants. This brought new pressures to bear upon the system of ministry credentialing as some of these cultures viewed ministry recognition very much in terms of status.

With all of these changes accreditation continued to remain the system of ministry recognition among New Zealand Baptists. It was by means of accreditation that New Zealand Baptists distinguished those whom they deemed to be acceptable to minister within the wider family of churches. Each year the newly accredited pastors were recognised in a ceremony at the denominational assembly. Usually this was preceded by an ordination service in the local church, with representatives of the Baptist Union and the local Baptist Association attending. The Union kept, and published annually, a separate list of accredited ministers. All this was to change however with the introduction of the new process of registration in 1996.

By the 1990s the mood was towards on-the-job ministry training and a desire to emphasise the need for on-going training for all ministers.

However, for those ministers who were accredited the tradition was that virtually no further demands were made of them by the denomination. There was no policy to require pastors to keep skills at an acceptable level. Neither was there any supervision required for ministers after they had graduated from their probationary stage.

In 1993 the Assembly Council produced a discussion paper on accreditation in which a renewable form of accreditation was suggested. It addressed the issue of the relationship between ministry competence and the accredited minister list, and suggested that being on the accredited list of ministers in no

way ensured competence. The paper recommended that both some accountability, and on-going training were necessary.

At the same time the system of accreditation as it stood was becoming more and more difficult to operate. The Accreditation Board was being forced to make decisions that seemed increasingly subjective. At the 1994 Baptist Assembly the Assembly Council was asked to do a review of accreditation and come back with a recommendation. A Review Committee consisting of Ian Brown, Peter Browning, Trevor Donnell, Paul Grimmer, Royce Luck and Brian Smith was set up.

The first report

The review committee examined many models and sought to develop others. A first draft proposal was produced in June 1995.¹³ This paper was circulated among a broad spectrum of leaders and churches. It sought to address the basic theological issues that stood behind Baptists' recognition of pastors. Three principles were enumerated:

Ministry belongs to the whole people of God

Ministry is function not status

Ministry is defined by the body of believers, not by others

From the basis of these principles, practical proposals were made. The need for ministers to have training and oversight to maintain competence was stressed. In part, the practical matters relating to the continued education of pastors, in this first draft, were based on the system used by the Royal New Zealand College of General Medical Practitioners at the time. A points system was proposed whereby Continuing Ministry Formation points were credited against a minister's name for taking advantage of training, supervision and evaluation

13 NZBRHS Archive, Carey Baptist College, Auckland, B1.191.

opportunities. It was proposed that a list of ministers, together with their total accrued Continuing Ministry Formation points would be published in the yearbook each year. A maximum of 500 points could be attained over a five-year period. Each following year the points gained six years before would be dropped off the total and replaced by the current year's points.

Response was mixed. While some aspects of the report were endorsed, it did not receive widespread support. This lack of acceptance forced the committee to go back to the fundamental issues and to ask the question: 'Why should the Baptist Union be involved *at all* in approving the ministry in local churches?' Its conclusion was that the Union needed to be involved to ensure that the family of churches had better pastors.

During 1996 the Review Committee worked on a new proposal. A draft of the new proposal was circulated to a pilot group of thirty-five ministers and leaders. As a result of feedback from the pilot group some alterations were made and the Committee were encouraged to produce a second report.

The second report

In May 1996 a second detailed draft proposal was produced by the Accreditation Review Committee.¹⁴ This proposal, while retaining the same theological pre-suppositions, was somewhat simpler and more streamlined. Gone from this proposal were the Continuing Ministry Formation points. This second report highlighted the difference between the old system and what was proposed in the new by suggesting a name change from 'accreditation' to 'registration.' With registration came the recommendation that New Zealand Baptist ministry

14 NZBRHS Archive, Carey Baptist College, Auckland, B1.191.

credentialing cease to be a once in a life time event and become renewable every two years.

This draft was mailed out to all Baptist ministers, and all church secretaries. Responses were sought from churches and ministers. Thirty-five written responses were made over the following three months. Twenty-one of these were in support of the proposal, five were opposed and the remainder had elements of both support and opposition.

The most comprehensive of the responses came from three Baptist Ministers' Associations, each of which had met to discuss the proposal. With one exception, the issues raised were largely pragmatic in nature. Questions were asked such as:

Is the period of review too short?

What will be the nature of the review?

If there is to be de-registration, who decides, and is there to be an appeal process?

Could a checklist be made for pastors to perform a self-evaluation?

Should churches be reviewed too?

Each of the ministers' groups picked up the short-coming of the proposal's suggestion that all ministers should either have *or be* a mentor. Ten respondents in all made the point that even mentors need mentors. One group raised the theological issue of ordination: What is it? Is it for life? Is it different from accreditation?

Review of accreditation for ministers

As a result of these two reports, the Assembly Council brought a paper called *Review of accreditation for ministers* to the Baptist Assembly in Rotorua in November 1996. This paper became the basis of the following motion:

That the proposals outlined in the Assembly discussion paper Review of Accreditation for ministers be accepted for implementation for two years with a review at Assembly 1998.

The 1996 Assembly paper was introduced by a note from the Assembly Council explaining that the accreditation system they were seeking to replace, "does not have the requisite in-built personal and external disciplines for the on-going formation and education required for the effective practice of ministry, therefore a new framework for encouraging quality in ministry is desirable."¹⁵

The three theological principles outlined in the first report were then re-affirmed. The paper expressed the need for all in pastoral ministry to recognise the call of God, and respond with a commitment to be equipped, relate and be accountable. To achieve this, it was proposed that accreditation be replaced with registration.

Registration would be renewable every two years and make two requirements of ministers. The first of these was a Ministry Development Agreement to be negotiated between a pastor and the Baptist Union, in consultation with the church where the pastor was serving. Eleven sample agreements were published as an appendix to the paper. The second requirement was a biennial evaluation.

As well as the motion to implement the proposals, a further motion was put so that the relevant clauses of the constitution of the Baptist Union of New Zealand (XIV The Ministry 33-40) could be suspended for two years and then re-written to allow for the new process to be adopted. An amendment was moved seeking to add the articles of faith from the Baptist Union constitution to the motion about registration. This amendment was put to the vote and lost. The two motions concerning registration were then put and both were passed.

15 'Review of accreditation for ministers', Baptist Churches of New Zealand Assembly Council Report to Assembly 1996, 1.

Rules for registration

The rules for registration seek to acknowledge equally the place of the local church, the Union of churches and the pastor in the registration process. Although registration lowered the hurdle to get on the main listing of ministers, it put a biennial hurdle to be jumped to remain on it. Previously nothing was required of a minister once accredited. Short of a major moral lapse ministers usually remained on the accredited list regardless of whether they had remained in ministry or even retained their Christian faith. Where removals did occur they were often quite arbitrary.

Once accreditation had ceased, the only option for those seeking the denomination's credentials was to apply for registration. Several of the early applicants were those that were well out of the norm for applying under the old accreditation rules. Included also were applications from some who had not been accepted for accreditation under the old system.

It was determined early that some appeal group was necessary, should there be dispute over the Registration Coordinator's interpretation of the rules. The Assembly Council appointed such a group under the chairmanship of John Irvine. The Committee consists of four people. This group performs the valuable function of handling any applicant who wishes to take issue with decisions of the Registration Coordinator, who otherwise runs the scheme on a day to day basis.

Those who had been accredited under the old system were deemed to have retained their accreditation. This was to honour the understanding of the original accreditation, that is, that it was life-long. However, the accredited ministers were also granted automatic registration for the first three years of the new system. They were then encouraged to apply, on the same basis as other applicants, for the renewable registration.

Without any compulsion to do this, forty-seven percent¹⁶ of the accredited ministers were registered by the year following the expiry of their automatic registration. The next year the number who had come on to the scheme represented fifty-five percent of those accredited, and this percentage has continued to increase.

The review of the registration scheme came up at the New Plymouth Assembly of November 1998. The rules for registration, as they stood at July 1998, were circulated to all delegates. On this occasion there was considerable support for the scheme and the Assembly accepted registration as the new system of ministry recognition.

Accountability

The desirability of having some scheme for the oversight of Baptist ministers had long been recognised. In the early 1980s Dr Stan Edgar, who was at the time General Superintendent of the Baptist Churches of New Zealand, set up in each district, a senior pastor as an area mentor for the other ministers in the area. The scheme operated for a short time, but failed due to a lack of on-going commitment and follow up, and the unwillingness of some of the mentoring pastors to persevere with it.

Now, with the introduction of registration, ministers are required, at time of application, to set in place accountability meetings that take place at least once every two months. There are four accountability options to choose from.

The most commonly chosen option (59.5%) is that of **mentor**. (See figure 1.) This is the broadest category of the

¹⁶ These figures are calculated from the Baptist Churches of New Zealand yearbooks 1999/2000 and 2000/2001.

options. For the purposes of registration, a mentor is defined as another minister, usually older and more experienced, who is willing to pass his or her wisdom and values on to another. The mentor may be a minister of any denomination, and may be a person now retired from ministry.

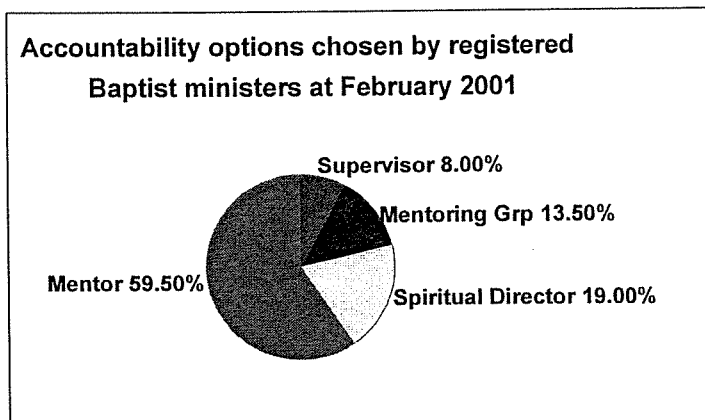


Figure 1

Alternatively applicants may form a **mentoring group**(13.5%). This is a group of three or more ministers who meet regularly together for the purpose of sharing and mutual accountability. A local Ministers' Association can be considered as a mentoring group only if it meets at least once every two months specifically for the task of mutual mentoring. Some mentoring groups also include ministers' spouses.

Another option is that of **spiritual director** (19%). A spiritual director is defined as someone professionally trained, qualified in spiritual direction and supervised themselves. With few exceptions, such persons are registered as spiritual directors with the Association of Christian Spiritual Directors.

The exceptions are those who are recognised by their denomination in this role.

The final option is that of **supervisor** (8%). A supervisor is defined as someone who is professionally trained and qualified in supervision, supervised themselves and recognised by one of the reputable counselling organisations¹⁷ or by their denomination. Because of a desire to maintain professional standards, and vulnerability to malpractice suits, this option is particularly recommended to those involved in a counselling ministry. Relationship Services, New Zealand's major provider of relationship counselling, has made its nation-wide network of supervisors available to Baptist ministers.

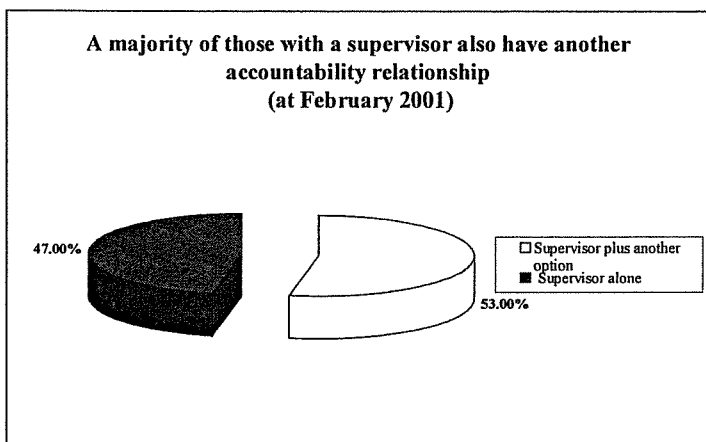


Figure 2

17 Primarily The New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists, The New Zealand Association of Counsellors and The New Zealand Association of Christian Counsellors.

Many ministers have sought to have more than one of the accountability options. They may have, for example, both a supervisor and a mentor. As at February 2001, 10.5% of ministers had more than one. The figure is particularly noteworthy among those that have a supervisor, 53% of whom have one of the other options as well. (See figure 2.)

The popularity of the mentor option is partly explained by the accessibility of suitable mentors, but it is also dependent on cost. Usually no financial payment is involved in a mentoring relationship. However, the charge for spiritual direction in 2000 was typically about \$35 per session, and professional supervision costs started at around the \$60 mark.

When it comes to registration renewal, each two years a check is made that the meetings have taken place and that the minister has been prepared to confront the personal and ministry issues that have arisen.

On-going study

The other requirement brought in by the registration process is on-going study. Whereas previously theological education was seen as something that a person did in preparation for ministry, prior to taking a pastoral appointment, registration changed all that. The new idea was that a seamless, career-long education would develop. In the normal process a person would do a primary full-time theological education course, followed by an on-the-job two year new ministers' course, before proceeding to set biennial study programmes and goals.

Because many had been called to ministry without a prior theological education, the desire was to have some mechanism to allow these ministers to also receive the benefits and equipping of pastoral education.

With an application for registration each minister is required to present a study programme for the following two years. An

assessment is made by the church, evaluating the minister's strengths as well as outlining areas where further development would be helpful. After dialogue with the leadership of the church, a minister is asked to define study topics which would be helpful for his or her growth. This is then outlined in a learning plan that is to be both measurable and specific. What is looked for is a study programme that relates to the applicant's particular ministry work be it, for example, rural ministry, geriatric care, youth ministry or preaching.

The proposed study programme is sent to the Baptist National Resource Centre along with the application for registration. At this stage the Registration Coordinator may suggest amendments or accept the plan as submitted. It is then signed off as an agreement between the applicant and the Baptist Union.

The hope is that over a period of time the scheme can be used to guide ministers into a balance of different areas of study, rather than just having them examine the areas that they already have an interest in. To this end the application form for registration states:

The aim is for a fully rounded learning programme that covers all aspects of the applicant's ministry. For example, if the applicant had a learning theme of 'leadership' for the last agreement, it is unlikely that more of the same would be acceptable. It would be better to have a new agreement with a study theme of 'communication' or 'pastoral care.'¹⁸

Through this on-going study programme, each minister is encouraged to be equipped to the best of his or her ability by means of training and sharpening of ministry skills.

¹⁸ From application form *Reg 7, Biennial Ministry Development Agreement Review*.

Registration renewal

Each two years a minister's registration must be renewed. The process is quite simple. Largely as a result of there not being anyone willing to take responsibility for the evaluation process,¹⁹ it was decided the renewal should be directed by the applicant. Each applicant is required to have a single interview with another registered or retired Baptist minister. The interview is to cover three things. First, it seeks to review the progress made towards the learning goals in the previous ministry development agreement. Then there is some discussion of the goals for the next agreement. Finally, the interviewer seeks to make sure that necessary support structures are in place for the applicant. In addition to this interview, the applicant's mentor, spiritual director or supervisor is required to sign a form stating that the planned meetings with them have taken place and that the applicant has been prepared to face growth and ministry issues.

Statistics from the first four years

The 2000/2001 yearbook showed a total of 411 people employed in pastoral ministry among the Baptist Churches of New Zealand. In July 2001, after four years of the new credentialing system, 222 of these, or 54% were registered. Of these 149 held full registration and 73 were provisionally registered. Those on the fully registered list had either been previously accredited (under the old system of ministerial credentialing), or had been through a two-year provisional registration. A comparison can be made between the number

19 It was initially suggested that the Regional Superintendents could oversee this process, but it was later felt that they were not in a position to take any extra work-load.

participating in the old accreditation scheme with those in the new scheme by looking at the last yearbook before registration was introduced (see figure 3.) The 1996/1997 yearbook showed a total of 367 ministers employed by the Baptist Churches of New Zealand, 176, or 48%, of whom were accredited.

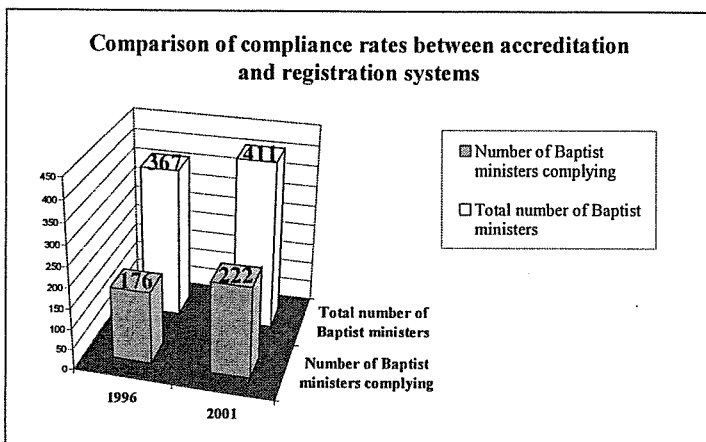


Figure 3

The introduction of registration as the means of ministerial credentialing for New Zealand Baptist churches represents a thorough review, which took place over many years. This review was not just of the system, but of the theology behind it. However, it has come at a time when there is a low sense of denominational belonging, and compliance figures suggest that the new process has been met with indifference by many ministers.

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