

# 1. Life without a pastor

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**Many churches would like to have a Pastor, Minister or Christian worker, but this has not proved possible. Factors might include a shortage of finance or accommodation issues or a lack of suitable people. While it may not be appropriate to stop seeking a pastor, you should also consider alternatives and the following suggestions may help:**

## **1. Review your expectations**

Are you being unrealistic is your desire for a pastor? Do you really have the resources to adequately support? There are some churches who expect to find the perfect pastor and have developed a list of expectations that will never be realised. Would you ever consider a leader like Paul who tells the Corinthian church that he would rather boast in his weaknesses? (2 Corinthians 12:9)

## **2. Develop a team approach to ministry.**

Identifying and sharing the key tasks that would have been the responsibilities of a Pastor will result in greater participation by people in the church. The Lord equips the body to do the work He wants it to do. Necessary gifts may already exist but are underused.

## **3. Establish a consistent pattern of preaching and leading worship.**

You want your most gifted people ministering regularly. They need to come to know the congregation and not simply arrive, speak and depart. There is little evidence of church growth where there is a succession of drive-in preachers. Consistency is vital for those unused to attending church or may be considering settling in your church.

## **4. Seek the support of another likeminded church.**

Churches belong to Christ and we are part of a wider body. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness but may open the door to resources being shared. Requesting an informal discussion with church leaders is a good starting point. You will never discover if help may be available, without asking.

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### **5. Consider a part time or bi-vocational pastor**

Patterns of paid ministry are changing. Within the Church of England only one third of licensed clergy receive a stipend. It is surely more effective to have someone working faithfully one day each week than to have no pastor at all. They will provide a focal point for the church and community, working to enable the ministry of others - a key component of a pastor's role according to Ephesians 4:12. As God blesses the church it may be possible to increase the time available and financial commitment.

### **6. Look carefully at those within the existing orbit of your church.**

Is there someone who shows the qualities of character and gifting that could result in effective ministry? You may have a visiting preacher well-loved by those in your church, who could offer more assistance if asked. Returning missionaries may sometimes be able to assist.

### **7. Consider growing your own pastor**

There may be a young person already in your church, who in time could become your pastor. They will have the advantage of knowing your people and geographical area. A careful assessment of their circumstances and training requirements will be required.

### **8. Don't give up on finding a pastor**

You may never have a pastor unless you are prayerful, persistent and sacrificial in your current giving. While looking at the character and gifting of a potential pastor, be careful not to reject someone solely on the grounds of their age.