

<b>SLOUGH BAPTIST CHURCH POLICY</b>	<b>Testing of Calling</b>
<b>POLICY NUMBER: SBCP-01/28</b>	



<b>Primary Responsibility:</b>	Elders
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<b>Issued:</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> June 2015
<b>Status:</b>	Final
<b>Review every:</b>	5 years
<b>Next review date:</b>	May 2020

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### Context

This “testing of calling” describes the process between when a person approaches the church expressing a sense of calling and when the church formally supports that person.

It is not intended to imply that God only calls people privately, or that the church does nothing unless and until somebody says ‘I’m called’. There will be times when the Holy Spirit guides the church as a body to set people apart for a particular work, or when folk within the church recognise particular gifting and nominate people to take on roles.

The aim of this “testing of calling” process is to discern whether the person has a real calling, which involves us as a community working out what God wants and responding to it in this situation. Equally, the process aims to support the individual throughout - whether the call is confirmed or not.

### First contact - foundations

The person who feels called has an informal meeting with two people from the Church Council or Mission Links team. This will include praying together

The purpose of this discussion is for the candidate to explain how they feel called, and for the leadership to explain the way the church proceeds.

The outcome will be to decide jointly whether to continue to the formal process.

### Formal interview – focus, fit and funding

This interview is conducted by two or more people from the eldership and the Church Council or Mission Links team. Again, this will involve prayer.

The interview assesses focus - whether the calling is clear and specific. If the candidate has not already got an agency or missionary society in mind, then this interview will recommend contacting appropriate organisations.

The interview also assesses the way the person's SHAPE (Spiritual gifting, Heart, Abilities, Personality & Experiences) fits with their calling. Where there are gaps, training or further experience will be advised.

Thirdly, the interview will need to understand what sort of support the candidate will require from the church in terms of funding, and will encourage them to build a support group within the church.

The outcome will be to decide whether to propose to the church members that we support this calling, or whether to wait, for example to wait until more information is available or until more personal development has taken place.

### **The Members' meeting – full support**

At this stage, the people who conducted the formal interview will propose to the membership that the church should support the person in their calling. This will involve presenting information about the person and their calling and the type of support required. There should be time for questions and time for prayer. The meeting should take a formal vote that the church recognises the calling and commits to support the person in that calling.

Similar to previous stages, the outcome may instead be to recommend further preparation before the church commits support.

### **Wider implications**

This start-point assumes an understanding of how God calls, so the teaching of the church needs to include this.

It also assumes that those who approach the leadership to explore a sense of calling are already fully committed Christians and church members or associates. So it is predicated on encouraging people to become members.

The whole process will be made smoother if the church's teaching and discipleship programmes are effective in equipping Christ's people for works of service. That way, we will be less likely to have to recommend more training or experience.

The leadership of the church should also be encouraging and challenging members where appropriate toward serving God in other places, not just within Slough Baptist Church. There is also a role for the Mission Links team in this respect, to present the needs and opportunities for service.