

41 Questions to Ask a Potential Church

By Colin Adams / August 29, 2009 / unashamedworkman.wordpress.com

Before being called to pastor [Ballymoney Baptist Church](#), I inevitably faced a raft of questions from its eldership. Beforehand, however, *I also asked the elders* some questions of my own. Since [mentioning this in a prior post](#), I've been emailed several times to forward a copy of those questions to pastor's in the same situation. Here then is a slightly amended list of the questions I asked.

Theological Questions

1. What is the church's statement of faith and how did the church devise it?
2. What has been the most vexed theological question the church has faced? Has there ever been a church split over theology or practice? Why?
3. On the wider scene, what theological trends and strands of false teaching would the elders at Ballymoney be particularly concerned about at the moment?
4. What are the key functions/roles of an elder at Ballymoney?
5. What is the elder's relationship to the pastor? (For example, is the pastor an elder? Do the elders perceive themselves as, in some way, subordinate?)
6. What would the church's position be on the role of women?
7. What is the church's position on the function of charismatic gifts?
8. Is there a different kind of membership for someone differing on secondary issues? Would it ever be considered?
9. What kind of church government structure is practiced? How does it work out in practice?

Ministry-Philosophy Questions

10. What is the process of being baptized and becoming a church member? How is baptism and membership encouraged?
11. What are the expectations laid upon church members?
12. How does the church practice church discipline? (What sort of discipline has been practiced in the past?)
13. Do the elders have any plans for expansion of the building or church planting?

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14. What, if anything, would the elders want to see change or develop in the future? (Each elder might want to answer individually!)
15. Do the church members generally (and happily) follow the lead of the eldership?

16. Can the elders give evidence of an openness to growing in their role? (By eg. reading resources on eldership, attending conferences, having a weekend away with pastor, etc)
17. In what ways (if at all) do you think my young age might affect my reception both in the church and among the eldership?
18. What would be the minimum and maximum expectations be of the frequency of the pastor's preaching? (ie. is one Sunday evening off in preaching a month the minimum acceptable; on the other hand, would preaching every service without fail be deemed unhelpful)
19. What items in the current services are non-negotiable? What other items are deemed acceptable and have been featured in the past? Is the pastor responsible for putting together all orders of service?
20. Is the current practice of communion (format, timing, gap between service and communion) set in stone?
21. What sorts of things do the Ballymoney elders feel the pastor should not be doing with his time?
22. What are the congregational/eldership expectations (these two may be different) regarding pastoral visitation?
23. How often are business meetings conducted? Does the pastor moderate this? Are they productive and generally positive? What is typically discussed?
24. Does the church have a yearly budget and if so, how is it put together?
25. What is the church's attitude and approach to missionaries?
26. Who is responsible for the website and library and how easy would it be for the pastor to make a significant input into each of these areas? (Note: I believe these resources would have some relation to my teaching function as a pastor)
27. Has the church ever had Fellowship Groups? If so, what is the leadership's feeling about their significance?
28. What are the leadership's views concerning counselling?
29. How would you sum up the spiritual health of the congregation in qualitative terms (against measurements like prayer, heart for evangelism, love for one another)?
30. What kind of impact have 'the troubles' and its aftermath had on the Ballymoney congregation?
31. Pardoning the expression, are there any 'sacred cows' in the church?
32. Would the congregation consider adding an additional paid staff member at any point?

Personal Questions

33. Would the elders have any objection to the pastor working from a church office? (My preferred place for sermon prep)
34. What is the view of the elders regarding the pastor resourcing himself? (Conferences; the odd retreat to read & plan, etc)

35. Are there any expenses for things?
36. What is the rationale regarding days off and holidays?
37. Is there any scope for 'preaching away' from Ballymoney? (Note: I would be very cautious about doing much of this, especially early on, however)
38. Do you think it would be relatively easy for a young family to settle into the church/town? What challenges might Nicki and the children face?
39. What role would the pastor's wife be expected to have in the church?
40. What are the schools like in Ballymoney?
41. How easy might it be to buy an affordable house in the Ballymoney area?