The role of Assistant Pastor

# About the church and its location

Wantage Baptist Church is a growing evangelical fellowship located 15 miles south of Oxford city. Situated in the very centre of an historic market town, the church has an established presence, with key links into the community (for example support to schools, Food Bank and Street Pastors).

Wantage and its closest neighbouring village, Grove, is undergoing significant expansion. 1500 homes will populate the Kingsgrove development west of Wantage. 2500 homes will populate the Wellington Gate development north of Wantage in Grove, which includes a new primary and secondary school. This substantial growth represents key opportunities for evangelism, church growth and planting.

The current membership of Wantage Baptist is around 90, with approximately 120 attendees each Sunday morning. The congregation has a rich diversity of ages and cultures, with around 25 children and young people.

The leadership currently consists of a paid full-time pastor, one lay elder and a team of deacons.

# The needs

As a growing church, we have a diversity of pastoral needs. Those with physical and mental health challenges, those caring for family members, those on low income, those for whom English is a second language, those who are unsure where they will be long-term. We have children and young people, young adults / married couples, and older retired people. The whole church needs encouragement in the faith. In addition, we must seek to reach out to our community with the gospel. That involves both creativity and commitment.

# The role

Our goal is to fulfil ‘the great commission’ (Matthew 28:16-20), which is to *make disciples*. The pastor’s calling is to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2-4), serving as a faithful shepherd of God’s people (Acts 20:28-31, 1 Peter 5:1-4). By this ministry, we will reach the lost and support the saved to continuing growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus (2 Peter 3:18).

# The person

Above all else, we seek a man who reflects a genuine desire to fulfil the two greatest commandments (Matthew 22:37–39) – love for the Lord, and for others. The ministry of the Word takes a variety of forms (preaching, teaching, devotional talks, newsletter messages, 1:1 instruction, etc.). This ministry must be driven by a love for – and knowledge of – the people within the church community. Therefore, we seek someone who has a heart for people, and for their growing union with Christ.

We will be particularly interested in those with ministry experience in a local church context. It would therefore be beneficial if you have completed a ministry trainee type of programme for a year or two, with practical experience in a range of pastoral ministries. The successful appointee will join the eldership team, and therefore share responsibility for the spiritual health and direction of the church.

Joining the team at Wantage Baptist, you will:

* Spend time regularly with the pastor for prayer and support.
* Gain further ministry experience within our church family, whilst taking on oversight of an area of church life (for example: Life Groups, outreach, schools engagement, etc.).
* If gifted, you will preach approximately once a month.
* Support additional teaching opportunities such as Christianity Explored or other practical teaching seminars that we run throughout the year.
* Lead our Sunday meetings on a rota basis.
* Co-lead a mid-week Life Group, with a view to leading one by yourself in due time.
* Lead our worship and prayer meetings on a rota basis.
* Support the pastoral care of church members, in a variety of contexts (including small groups and 1:1).
* Actively support our children’s and youth ministry (depending on your gifting).
* Explore ways to develop our outreach ministry, with the support of the wider eldership.
* Any other duties commensurate with the needs of the church and aptitude of the worker.

The above list is indicative of the kinds of duties and ministries you will be engaged in.

## Requirements

The appointee is required to fulfil all the characteristics described in 1 Timothy 3and Titus 1. This means that his character must be marked by mature godliness, and he must be gifted to teach God’s word (though this does not necessarily mean preaching). As Christ’s under-shepherd, he is expected to treat people in line with the pattern of our Chief Shepherd laid out in 1 Peter 5.

The post holder must be in wholehearted agreement with the church’s constitutional beliefs, doctrinal distinctives and ethos statements. The successful candidate will have at least some ministry experience, whether in the UK or overseas – such as a ministry trainee / apprentice / intern / relay worker with UCCF.

There is a Genuine Occupational Requirement that this role is filled by a man who is an evangelical Christian.  Applications can only be considered from those who are UK citizens or who otherwise have a right to work in the UK.

## Practicalities

This is a full-time position which will include an annual review. It is our hope that the candidate will be expected to start by spring 2025.

The package will include:

* A salary commensurate with the requirements of the role and the qualifications / experience of the appointee.
* Reasonable travel and ministry expenses paid.
* Attendance at the annual FIEC Leaders’ conference paid (including accommodation).

## Our Constitution

The Church accepts:

* the divine inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, and their sole sufficiency as the guide to faith and practice
* the trinity of the Godhead
* the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ
* His resurrection and intercession
* the need for personal faith in the Lord Jesus as Saviour
* the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in redemption and sanctification and the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory.

As a member church of the FIEC (Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches), Wantage Baptist also upholds the FIEC’s ethos statements regarding (1) gospel unity, (2) same-sex marriage and (3) women in ministry. These statements can be found on the FIEC website: <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/fiec-distnctives-our-ethos-statements>

# Appendix 1: Beliefs (Wantage Baptist Church Constitution)

1. the Divine Inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, and their sole sufficiency as the guide to faith and practice
2. the Trinity of the Godhead
3. the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ;
4. His Resurrection and Intercession
5. the need for personal faith in the Lord Jesus as Saviour
6. the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit in Redemption and Sanctification
7. the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ in Glory.

# Appendix 2: Doctrinal distinctives (FIEC)

### 1. God

There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is unchangeable in his holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He is the almighty Creator; Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to his sovereign will for his own glory.

### 2. The Bible

God has revealed himself in the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments alone. Every word was inspired by God through human authors, so that the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the Word of God, without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine. The Bible alone speaks with final authority and is always sufficient for all matters of belief and practice.

### 3. The Human Race

All men and women, being created in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their greatest purpose is to obey, worship and love God. As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted and all men and women are without spiritual life, guilty sinners and hostile to God. Every person is therefore under the just condemnation of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please him.

### 4. The Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father. He taught with authority and all his words are true. On the cross he died in the place of sinners, bearing God’s punishment for their sin, redeeming them by his blood. He rose from the dead and in his resurrection body ascended into heaven where he is exalted as Lord of all. He intercedes for his people in the presence of the Father.

### 5. Salvation

Salvation is entirely a work of God’s grace and cannot be earned or deserved. It has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and is offered to all in the gospel. God in his love forgives sinners whom he calls, granting them repentance and faith. All who believe in Christ are justified by faith alone, adopted into the family of God and receive eternal life.

### 6. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven to glorify Christ and to apply his work of salvation. He convicts sinners, imparts spiritual life and gives a true understanding of the Scriptures. He indwells all believers, brings assurance of salvation and produces increasing likeness to Christ. He builds up the Church and empowers its members for worship, service and mission.

### 7. The Church

The universal Church is the body of which Christ is the head and to which all who are saved belong. It is made visible in local churches, which are congregations of believers who are committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administering of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper; for pastoral care and discipline, and for evangelism. The unity of the body of Christ is expressed within and between churches by mutual love, care and encouragement. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.

### 8. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper have been given to the churches by Christ as visible signs of the gospel. Baptism is a symbol of union with Christ and entry into his Church but does not impart spiritual life. The Lord’s Supper is a commemoration of Christ’s sacrifice offered once for all and involves no change in the bread and wine. All its blessings are received by faith.

### 9. The Future

The Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory. He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness. The wicked will be sent to eternal punishment and the righteous will be welcomed into a life of eternal joy in fellowship with God. God will make all things new and will be glorified forever.

# Appendix 4: Ethos Statements

## Gospel Unity (summary)

Jesus prayed for the unity of his people, and this is an essential element of our witness (John 17v23). We are urged to maintain spiritual unity, in the face of differences of belief and practice which are not essential to the Gospel. Our commitment to unity extends not only within FIEC, but to all who are united to Christ in a variety of church and para-church groups. We look forward to the day when all of God’s people will be united before him in glory.

This spiritual unity is to be expressed amongst all who confess the truth of the Gospel. It is through the Gospel that we are saved and built up in the faith. Jesus’ prayer for unity was for those who would believe in him through the message preached by the apostles (John 17v20). Our Doctrinal Basis affirms that true fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel. The gospel of salvation by grace is so precious to us that we desire to stand together with all who believe and preach it. For the same reason, we cannot express Christian fellowship with those who reject it. The New Testament warns us repeatedly to guard the church against the influence of false teachers who deny the truth. Therefore, we cannot join in partnership in evangelism or activities of Christian fellowship with those who are unable to affirm the essential doctrines of the faith as expressed in the FIEC. **PAGE 3**

Doctrinal Basis and similar statements. We are unable to affiliate formally to groups such as Churches Together which exist to express unity between churches naming Jesus as Lord, but without concern as to whether they hold to the core doctrines of the gospel as expressed in our Doctrinal Basis.

There are many opportunities for us to find common cause with others (both inside and outside the professing church), if these do not compromise our distinctive testimony to the Gospel. For example, we may be able to speak together on moral issues, in defence of our religious liberties, or to work together in acts of practical charity and compassion. Such activities are at the discretion of local church leaders.

## Women In Ministry (summary)

Reflecting upon the biblical data, we can see that the primary leaders and teachers of the church are to be suitably qualified men, which does not include those presenting as male by virtue of gender reassignment.

Teaching, though, is not to be restricted to pastor/teacher/elders. All Christians are to be involved in teaching and encouraging one another. This includes women who are to teach other women (Titus 2:4) and who may well be involved in teaching in other forums. How exactly this works out in practice may well vary from church to church.

To ignore the prohibitions of Scripture is not something we can endorse, nor can we be silent on the issue. Healthy oversight is essential for the welfare of the churches, and we believe the word of God makes it clear that this must be done by suitably gifted and qualified men.

This will mean that churches belonging to the FIEC should not have a woman pastor-teacher or women elders.

## Same Sex Marriage (summary)

1. sexual activity is a gift to be enjoyed only within (heterosexual) marriage and that outside of this setting, it is sinful;
2. marriage involves a man and woman, bound together in covenant relationship – a relationship that cannot be redefined. At the same time, we will always seek to make clear
3. the forgiveness and grace that extend to all repentant sinners – including those for whom sexual sin has formed a major part of their backgrounds.

In line with the above reaffirmations,

1. we will seek to uphold traditional biblical sexual ethics in both our teaching and our practices within our local churches and our Pastors’ Network;
2. none of our churches or accredited pastors would in good conscience be able to perform, bless or host same-sex marriage or wedding ceremonies;
3. recognising that many Christians struggle with sexual temptation (whether same-sex attraction or heterosexual), we will prayerfully foster, within our churches, gracious support of one another in such struggles.