

# Early Discernment Questionnaire

## How to Use this Questionnaire

God calls people into leadership in every sphere of life, and for some, that call is to pioneer new churches or sites, or perhaps to step into the leadership of an established church (church succession). This questionnaire is designed as an aid for anyone who is wondering whether such leadership might be for them, in two important ways:

### (1) As a tool for prayerful self reflection

As you work through the questionnaire it will clarify for you the characteristics we believe are important for church leaders and help you to consider whether they are reflected in your own life. We don't expect potential planters and leaders to be the "finished article", but we are looking for people who are growing in the right direction.

### (2) As the basis for a conversation with your local church leaders:

If, having taken time to reflect and pray, a desire to continue exploring church planting/leadership remains, the **essential next step is to process this with the leadership of your local church**. This must be either your Senior Pastor, or a leader your Senior Pastor has delegated authority to.

The aim is for you to discern together whether there is "something there" in terms of a call and gifting for church planting/leadership (however embryonic this may be). If there is, you'll also need to discuss how you can intentionally grow your leadership by, for instance, attending Vineyard Leadership College, or taking on more responsibility in your church.

If you and your Senior Pastor are in agreement that church planting is God's call on your life, you will need to fill out a "Church Planting Application Form", and your Senior Pastor a "Senior Pastor Recommendation Form" (all on our [website](#)) so that you can continue your discernment journey.

Alternatively, if you both sense that becoming the new leader of an established church would be a better fit, then check out the Pastoral Successions pages.



**Pastoral Successions might be for you instead**

<https://www.vineyardchurches.org.uk/vision/pastoral-successions/>

# SECTION (A) - Exploring Leadership Calling & Competency

Several years ago, research was carried out amongst leaders across our movement, and the result was a set of observable qualities that were common in nearly all resilient and multiplying leaders. We call these the Five Characteristics of a Pioneering Leader.

Please remember that **we do NOT expect you to measure up well in every area**. If you did, you'd likely already be leading a church! Rather, see it as us painting a picture of the type of leader you might become. Does the journeying in this direction chime with who you and others believe God has made you to be, and does it excite you?

## Vision and calling

*We're looking for a clear sense of God's call on your life, not just to leadership in general, but church leadership specifically. This will have been seen and called out by others, particularly leaders. We also want to see a developing sense of vision for what God is calling you into, as well as an ability to align your lifestyle and decision-making with vision in a consistent way.*

- How do you know that God is calling you to plant or lead a church *specifically* (over and above other forms of ministry or pioneering)?
- If you believe God has called you, what do you feel He might be saying about timing, and your readiness for it, and what have others said?
- How would you articulate your vision for what God's calling you to so far, and what excites you about it?

## Communication

*We're looking for an ability to communicate clearly and with relational and emotional intelligence, in a variety of settings, both those that require pastoral sensitivity and conflict management on the one hand, and those that require vision-casting and teaching on the other.*

- What experience do you have preaching or casting vision? How would you rate your ability in this area, and what have others said?
- What would you say is the greatest strength in how you communicate with people, and what is your greatest weakness?
- Can you point to situations where you have had to have challenging strategic or pastoral conversations, and have managed them well?

## Gathering and Evangelism

*We're looking for an ability to gather people, specifically to spiritual environments that centre on Jesus, and for a clear track record of prioritising engagement with those who don't know Him.*

- How often do you have conversations about Jesus with people who don't know Him?
- Can you point to any examples of building relationships and community outside of church settings, and having drawn these people into overtly Jesus-centred spaces?

- When you think of some of the key events a church leader may need to host - with core leaders, or overtly evangelistic, or social (small and large) - which do you have least experience with? Are there any that would feel daunting to lead?

## Spiritual and Emotional Capacity

*We're looking for spiritual maturity. This should be reflected in a robust array of rhythms and relationships that underpin a commitment to personal discipleship, as well as a proven ability to weather difficult life circumstances with resilience and a commitment to finding Jesus in the midst of adversity. We're looking for a high degree of self awareness, and a track record of choosing to allow difficult circumstances and relational dynamics to shape and refine you.*

- How do you maintain your personal relationship with Jesus through difficult seasons, and in what ways has your relationship with Him grown and changed over recent years?
- How emotionally resilient are you, and what circumstances in life often place the most strain on your resilience? Why?
- Can you point to church relationships - particularly in your leadership - that have been difficult or anxiety-inducing? What have you learned about yourself and your leadership through these, and how have you allowed them to change and refine you?

## Leadership and Multiplication

*We're looking for a commitment to identifying potential in others, investing in them, and releasing leadership to them. We are wanting practical, not theoretical examples, of growing things beyond reliance on you, specifically in Christian ministry settings.*

- How effectively have you been able to identify and call out leadership potential in others in the past? What examples can you point to of this?
- Do you have a track record of training and equipping others to lead, specifically in church contexts? Again, can you point to concrete examples?
- In the Vineyard we sometimes use the initialism IRTDMN (Identify, Recruit, Train, Deploy, Monitor, Nurture). Which of these elements of raising and releasing leaders would you say comes most naturally, and which do you think is holding you back most in your leadership?

## SECTION (B) Discerning the right fit for you

If there is a call and gifting, and you think some form of church leadership may be for you (even if further down the line), you will need to begin prayerfully working through what that might look like. Crucially, whether Vineyard is the best fit for you over and above other church denominations, and whether you are best suited to church planting or succession.

### Are You Vineyard?

*The Vineyard has a set of distinctives which show our personality as a family of churches and inform the way we do things, defining our place in the broader Church.*

*Anyone considering leading others in the Vineyard should consider how rooted and connected they themselves are into wider Vineyard relationships, culture, values and theology. The following list - by no means exhaustive - details some Vineyard distinctives. Take time to consider your responses to each and how naturally they are expressed in your leadership.*

#### Kingdom Theology:

*A "Now But Not Yet" understanding of God's Kingdom, emphasising both the present reality of God's reign and the hope of its full consummation.*

- How well would you say you understand, and could communicate a Biblical basis for, this "now and not yet" tension?
- Can you point to times in your leadership where you have been discouraged by the "not yet" of the Kingdom, but led with hope anyway?

#### Pneumatology:

*A focus on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, expressed in a desire to live "naturally supernatural" lives, where we expect the miraculous in our day to day.*

- "Come Holy Spirit" is one of the key prayers of the Vineyard. How present is this prayer (and the expectant attitude it exemplifies) in your life and ministry?
- How regularly do you pray for signs and wonders?

#### Vineyard Values:

*Core values that guide the movement, including a commitment to faith, community, and service.*

- How confident would you be answering if someone outside the Vineyard asked you what our values are?
- How often do you prioritise environments that allow you to rub shoulders with the wider Vineyard family (spaces such as the Vineyard Leaders' Gathering, DTI, CTLF etc.)?

#### Worship:

*Intimacy and honour in worship, emphasising personal connection with God as we sing to Him, not just about Him.*

- In what ways does your own story reflect the importance of worship in your life and leadership journey?

## Compassion:

*Remembering the poor and marginalised, with a strong emphasis on social justice and outreach.*

- In what ways is your personal life and ministry expressing love and service to “the poor”?

## Planting vs. Succession

You may already have a clear sense that God is calling you to one or the other, but if not, you will need to discern this. There is of course huge overlap between pioneering a new church expression, and taking on the leadership of an existing one, but there are also significant differences. Beginning to think through which would be best suited to your personality and gifting can be a helpful starting point.

The table below represents a broad and general set of distinctions observed between planters and pastors of established churches. Take time to reflect on each of these and give yourself a score on the spectrum between 5 and 0 on either side based on which resonates most with your personality. Think through why this is the case, and note the extent to which your scores lean one way or another.

<b>Planter</b>		<b>Succession Pastor</b>
Starts with a “blank canvas”	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Works with the existing structure of the church
Leads the church plant	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Equips others to lead the church
Trains leaders	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Leads trainers
Evangelises future disciples	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Disciples future evangelists
Preaches from Scripture to clarify vision	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Preaches from Scripture to form maturity
Has limited margin to address deep needs	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	More margin to use the church to help needy people
Needs to be a risk-taker for new opportunities	5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5	Needs to maintain stability in the community

## Next Steps

Again, we are not expecting that anyone will find that they already completely meet the five characteristics of a pioneering leader, embody all our Vineyard distinctives, or have total clarity on whether they're a planter or succession pastor.

Instead, we're expecting that some might be present (variously developed), and that there might be a natural bent towards, and desire to grow in, some of these things. Where that is the case, please don't just leave this as a personal reflective exercise. Contact your Senior Pastor and ask for some time to work out together what your next steps should be.

