



Placements Committee

Purpose

To provide guidance to ministry agents of the Queensland Synod on how they may participate in the placements process.

Scope

Ministry agents may only engage in discernment conversations with Joint Nominating Committees with the approval of the Placements Committee. In the Queensland Synod this approval occurs in two ways.

The placement of a Minister is for an undefined term, although subject to the following conditions:

- (i) It shall not be concluded within the first five years, (or for those in their first placement, three years) except in accordance with Regulation 2.10.1.
- (ii) It shall not exceed ten years, except in accordance with Regulation 2.6.8 (for congregational placements) or in accordance with the process for extensions beyond the tenth year for non-congregational placements.

Pastors appointed to an approved placement are appointed for an initial period of four years, with a review after the first year. This initial appointment may be extended for a further two periods of three years each.

Ministers may consider a change of placement before their names are included on the available for placements list only where Placements Committee approval has been sought and obtained. In such matters the Placements Committee acts only on the advice of the Minister's Presbytery.

For special reasons, a placement may wish to approach a Minister who is not eligible for call. The Presbytery or agency wishing to approach the Minister must request permission from the Placements Committee. The Placements Committee must consult with the Minister's Presbytery, after which it may or may not grant permission for the Minister to be recommended to a Joint Nominating Committee (Regulation 2.6.2 (d)).

A Minister who wishes to have their name made available to Placements Committees in other Synods should first advise their Presbytery Minister. After doing this, the Minister will request the Secretary of the Placements Committee to make their profile available. The profile will be forwarded together with a Good Standing Statement.

Ministerial profiles

Ministers who are eligible for call shall ensure that the Placements Committee has an up-to-date ministerial profile (Regulation 2.6.2 (e)). Profiles will only be accepted by the Placements Committee after they have been endorsed by the Minister's Presbytery. Each Presbytery may determine according to their own processes how profiles are endorsed.



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Any special needs related to placement should be included on the Minister's profile. However, any particulars of a confidential nature could be provided separately to the Presbytery Minister or Secretary of the Placements Committee.

Ministers may change their profile at any time, provided that modified profiles are endorsed by the Presbytery.

Ministers may express interest to the Presbytery Minister or Secretary of the Placements Committee in having their names considered for one or more placements.

The Placements Committee may recommend a ministry agent for no more than two placements at any one time.

Profiles are confidential documents. Where a ministry agent chooses to make themselves available for a new placement their profile will be included on a confidential website, available to all Placements Committee members and JNC members who have chosen the decentralised process. Otherwise, the ministerial profile will be made available to those JNCs for which the ministry agent is proposed by the Placements Committee.

Decentralised process

1. A Minister who is actively seeking a new placement will update their personal profile and submit it to their Presbytery, with a request that they be noted as actively seeking. The Presbytery will add comments and forward it to the Secretary of the Placements Committee.
2. The Secretary will:
 - a. arrange for the profile to be presented to the next meeting of the Placements Committee
 - b. arrange for the profile to be placed in the database of personal profiles to be accessed by JNCs opting for the decentralised process
 - c. provide access for the Minister to the database of placement profiles and position descriptions.
3. At any stage after receiving access to the database, the Minister may request a conversation with up to two vacant placements.
4. Acting on the delegated power of the Placements Committee, the Secretary of the Placements Committee will give approval to conversations being initiated with the potential matches, provided that for each minister:
 - a. The minister is not currently involved in conversations with another placement.
 - b. The minister is at least in the third year of their first placement, or the fifth year of any subsequent placement.
 - c. The JNC is not currently involved in conversations with other ministers.
 - d. The minister has not had significant participation in that congregation during the past ten years, for instance:



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- i. through a period of supply ministry
- ii. where the minister has served in a ministry location in that congregation
- iii. where the minister has been a member of the congregation.

Where these criteria are not satisfied, the secretary will refer the request to a meeting of the Placements Committee for discernment about recommending the minister's name to the JNC.

5. If the secretary of the Placements Committee receives requests from more than three ministers to enter into discernment conversations with a JNC, and all ministers are eligible, the secretary will forward all expressions of interest to the member of the Placements Committee responsible for the placement to prepare a short list of no more than three names.
6. The church expects that, unless there are exceptional reasons that make the match inappropriate, a proposed conversation between minister and placement will take place.
7. Prior to the first meeting of the JNC with the minister, the minister and JNC will exchange written statements that outline how each discerns the connecting points between the profiles. A suggested template is attached.

Centralised process

1. At each meeting of the Placements Committee, all ministers who are eligible for call (i.e. in the third or subsequent year of their first placement, or fifth or subsequent year of any other placement) will be considered for placement vacancies.
2. The Placements Committee will consider placing a minister's name alongside a placement where it believes that the minister and the placement are a potential match.
3. The Placements Committee will not place a minister's name alongside a placement where that minister or placement are currently engaged in discernment conversations.
4. The Placements Committee will discern the appropriateness of giving a minister's name to a placement in circumstances where:
 - a. the minister has previously served in a placement in that congregation, whether ordained or lay;
 - b. the minister has had significant participation in that congregation during the past ten years, for instance:
 - i. through a period of supply ministry
 - ii. where the minister has served in a ministry location in that congregation
 - iii. where the minister has been a member of the congregation.
5. Within 48 hours of a meeting of the Placements Committee each minister whose name has been given to a Joint Nominating Committee (JNC) will receive the placement

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profile and a letter from the secretary of the Placements Committee explaining why the Placements Committee is proposing their name for a conversation.

6. Ministers are encouraged to prayerfully accept the Placements Committee's initial discernment as an expression of the collective wisdom of the church.
7. A minister whose name has been given to a JNC will be contacted by the JNC within a few days, and invited to a first conversation. Unless there are very clear personal or ministry reasons why the proposal is totally inappropriate, ministers should agree to this first conversation. It is preferable for the conversation to be face-to-face however distance may dictate that the initial conversation is by telephone or video conference.

Preparation for the discernment conversation

In the Uniting Church we use the phrase “conversation” when we refer to the meeting/s of a JNC and minister. This word should best be understood as a critical and focused engagement where both the minister and the members of the JNC are actively exploring possibilities for future ministry. As such, ministers must prepare thoroughly for the discernment conversation by reading and praying about the placement profile and placement in general, prior to meeting to share in the discernment conversation.

When doing this, the minister should consider the placement's profile and identify points of similarity and difference. In preparation the minister could also consider:

- how their values, theological stance and philosophy of mission align with the congregation or agency
- what is important to them in their next phase of ministry and how this may happen in this placement
- the leadership needs of the placement and their style of leadership
- the potential to contribute to the directions in ministry and mission the placement is taking
- the balance between working within their area of passion and other areas of ministry.

Because of the time limits required by Regulation 2.6.6 (l) (i.e. a JNC decision within two months of receiving the name) this initial conversation should take place at the earliest mutual convenience. Normally this will be face to face, but if the placement is a long distance from the minister the initial conversation may be by telephone or skype. The minister can expect reimbursement from the placement for any travel costs.

The minister may have conversation with each JNC to whom their name is given before making a decision on any. JNCs may therefore need patience as the minister participates in a series of discernment conversations. The minister may choose to have a second conversation with one or more of the JNCs under consideration.

A minister will not be able to enter into a conversation with other JNCs until they have completed all conversations with all JNCs to whom their name was originally given.

All contact and conversation between a minister and the placement is conducted through the chair of the JNC, and with the utmost confidentiality until such time as both parties are agreed that confidentiality is no longer required.

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Within two months, the JNC will advise the minister if it wishes either to proceed to call or to discontinue the conversations.

The minister may withdraw from further conversation at any time. However, it is necessary for the minister to give the reasons in writing to the secretary of the Placements Committee. Similarly JNCs are required to give reasons in writing if they choose to withdraw from conversation. This information is a helpful resource when the Placements Committee considers any future proposals for either the minister or the placement.

If the conversations lead to a decision to proceed to a call, the minister should feel free to raise any issues outstanding from earlier conversations. Before a decision to call, the parties should have resolved any themes and issues arising from the discernment conversations and clarified roles and expectations in the placement.

The member of the Placements Committee from the minister's Presbytery will maintain a continuing interest in the progress of conversations. Their assistance should be sought if any difficulties are being experienced.

If the conversations lead to a decision to issue a call, the minister is advised to consult with the Presbytery Minister or other suitable person as to the timing and method of advice to the church council and/or congregation or other body with which the minister is currently related. No formal advice to the minister's current Presbytery is required until the call has been accepted. Ideally, a letter accepting the call and a letter advising the Presbytery would be sent at the same time.

Ministers concluding a placement are required to give a minimum of three months' notice (from the date of acceptance of the call) (Regulation 2.7.2 (b)). The Presbytery (or the PRC if authority has been delegated) has authority to shorten the period of notice if there are exceptional circumstances detailed in writing either by the minister or the Presbytery into which the minister has been called (Regulation 2.10.1 (a)). A non-congregational placement may be terminated at any time by the body responsible for the placement (Regulation 2.10.1 (h)).

In ordinary circumstances, it is entirely inappropriate that a departing minister or any previous minister of that placement become involved in the placement of a successor in any way. Such a minister is not therefore a member of the Joint Nominating Committee and does not attend any meeting at which arrangements for a new placement are discussed. Where due to the departing minister's new role (e.g. Presbytery Minister) it is necessary for them to be involved in arrangements for a new placement, they are to declare their conflict of interest.

References and related documents

Uniting Church in Australia Regulations

Conflicts Policy POL-0002

Exchange of priorities document template



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Revisions and reviews

#	Date	Reason	Author/reviewer	Approved
1	8 Jan 18	Review and update previous documentation	D Fender, Ass Gen Sec	D Fender, Ass Gen Sec