

Placements Committee

Purpose

To describe the role, responsibility and membership of a Joint Nominating Committee. For a vacancy to be filled a Joint Nominating Committee is required to be appointed.

Scope

This process applies to all Joint Nominating Committees created in relation to vacancies in approved vacancies within the bounds of the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Membership

For a placement to be filled by call of a Congregation (regulation 2.6.6 (c)):

- at least two persons appointed by the Presbytery, one of whom is to be appointed by the Presbytery as Chairperson, and preferably at least one of whom is a member of the Pastoral Relations Committee; and
- two to six persons appointed by the Congregation(s) or other body/ies. In special circumstances the Presbytery may authorise up to ten persons being appointed. Special circumstances may include:
 - a large number of congregations comprising the placement
 - the size and complexity of the placement
 - other factors considered important to the Presbytery.

Meetings of the JNC must have at least one of the Presbytery representatives and one of the congregational representatives in attendance. At least half the members of the committee must be present to form a quorum.

For a placement to be filled by call of a Presbytery (regulation 2.6.6 (e)):

- Up to eight members,
- Other persons, with involvement or interest in the particular ministry;
- The majority of members must be members of the Presbytery.

For a placement known as Presbytery Minister/Officer (Regulation 2.6.6 (f)):

- Up to eight members appointed by the Presbytery;
- Two persons appointed by the Placements Committee, one of whom is not a serving Presbytery Minister.

For a chaplaincy placement (half time or greater) to be filled by call of the Synod (Regulation 2.6.7 and by law Q3.7.10):

- A number of people determined by the Synod Chaplaincy Commission, including representatives of the Presbytery and the agency. At least one member is to be a serving chaplain.

For a chaplaincy placement (less than half time) to be filled by call of the Synod (Regulation 2.6.7 and by law Q3.7.10):

Placements Committee

- A number of people determined by the agency in which the chaplain will perform their ministry, including representatives of the Presbytery and the agency. At least one member is to be a serving chaplain.

For a placement as a candidate educator within Trinity College Queensland (By law Q3.5.3):

- a person who is to be the committee's chairperson;
- the General Secretary, or his or her nominee;
- a member of the Placements Committee;
- the Director of Education for Ministry, or his or her nominee;
- a candidate educator of the college;
- if the BCF's chairperson deems it necessary, the chairperson may appoint another person to be a member of the joint nominating committee who has relevant expertise in the context of the vacant position.

The choice of members for the JNC is highly important. In considering who should be appointed, consideration should be given to ensuring a complementary mix of the Committee that includes:

- spiritual, emotional and relational maturity;
- understanding of the nature, ministry, and mission of the placement;
- knowledge of the problems and possibilities of the placement;
- strategic, logical and creative thinking;
- strong communication skills, including listening to what is said and unsaid and to express own opinion.

Members of the JNC should not be chosen for reasons such as:

- a reward for loyalty to the church or because they expect to be chosen
- their status in the church or community
- to ensure representatives from interest groups within the placement
- to convert them and cultivate their interest in the church.

Consideration should be given to the appropriateness as to whether potential colleagues will be members of a Joint Nominating Committee. Ordinarily, it would not be appropriate for potential colleagues in a congregation to be part of a Joint Nominating Committee. Where a potential colleague will be under the particular authority of the minister, they must not be part of the Joint Nominating Committee. However, where a potential colleague will have particular authority over a minister, it might be considered appropriate. The JNC should consider whether a minister should meet with other potential colleagues at some stage prior to the JNC making a recommendation.

Once a JNC has been formed, consideration should be given to some form of public commissioning by prayer.



Placements Committee

Confidentiality

The deliberations of the Joint Nominating Committee are to be kept strictly confidential. This means that discussions and documents relating to the work of the Joint Nominating Committee are not discussed with any person outside the Joint Nominating Committee or the Placements Committee. Discussions relating to the work of the JNC are only discussed with other Joint Nominating Committee members during properly convened meetings of the JNC.

The Joint Nominating Committee may agree to release general information about the progress of the process. Only the person designated by the Joint Nominating Committee should share this information. This should never include any information that may allow others to identify the ministers who have been, or will be, engaged in conversation.

Process

The process is not a job interview but a focussed and directed conversation. The intent of the Regulations is to enable both the Congregation(s) and the Minister(s) in question to fully explore the strengths, weaknesses and possibilities of each other. In order to achieve this, open honesty and confidentiality is absolutely necessary. We need to emphasise that the conversation process is not a formal interview. All parties involved must be given sufficient time to discuss all issues which arise.

Joint Nominating Committees are not free to approach Ministers directly. In the same way, Ministers are not free to approach Joint Nominating Committees directly. Conversations may only occur where the Placements Committee have given approval. Where the Placements Committee have given approval, contact between the Minister and the JNC should only occur through the Chair, unless the JNC agrees otherwise.

First meeting

The first meeting of the JNC is the time to:

1. Watch and reflect on the JNC training material;
2. clarify expectations and roles of the JNC Chair and members;
3. Review and clarify your understanding of the placement profile and the priorities for ministry identified within it;
4. Decide whether you will pursue the optional dual track placement process, see General process with dual track for more information.

Prior to meeting with the minister

1. Hold a meeting of the JNC prior to any conversations with a minister/s.
2. Agree on the primary areas of ministry you want to explore with the minister (these will usually be the high priorities from the profile).
3. Review the minister's profile looking at where giftings and priorities are similar and where they are different (if the decentralised process was chosen this will already have been completed through the letter of introduction. In this case, you will need to review the letter of introduction provided by the minister).
4. Ensure confidentiality is maintained at all times.



Placements Committee

5. Discuss how you will meet with the minister: where, when, hospitality, how you will ensure it is a conversation and not an interview.
6. Identify what questions you might ask to open up the conversation and what questions you will need to ask to 'fill in the gaps' in the minister's profile.
7. Use questions which invite the minister to share their past experiences as well as their hopes and dreams.
8. Consider sending the questions to the minister prior to your conversation together. This will provide them with additional time to consider how they might respond. You are more likely to gain additional and more helpful information this way.
9. Plan to provide a tour of the area and the facilities, if that is appropriate.
10. Choose a member of the JNC to keep a record of attendance and decisions made, giving due regard to issues of confidentiality.

Meeting with the minister

The Joint Nominating Committee makes contact as soon as possible with each recommended Minister, and may have discernment conversations with each recommended Minister before making a decision on any; similarly, Ministers may have discernment conversations with each Joint Nominating Committee before making a decision on any.

When meeting for a discernment conversation JNC members and the minister/s should intentionally be focussed on seeking possibilities for future ministry. A starting point for conversations should be the similarities and differences highlighted in the congregational and personal profiles. Further areas of exploration will emerge from this point. Conversations may include formal discussions, mutual visits and informal gatherings. While there is no expectation that the Minister's spouse (where appropriate) will attend, mutual consideration should be given to whether and to what degree the Minister's spouse may be involved in these conversations.

While there is no obligation on either the Joint Nominating Committee or a Minister to proceed to call, each is to take into account that the recommendations emerge from the collective wisdom of the Church, and at least an initial conversation is expected to take place with the minister/s.

1. Provide hospitality and model God's welcoming grace. You may like to think about sharing a meal before you share in a more formal conversation. This is a great way to get to know one another.
2. Make sure the setting ensures confidentiality: meet in a place where others will not wander in unexpectedly. Choose a place which is safe, welcoming and private.
3. Introduce each other, sharing something of each person's involvement in the ministry setting.
4. Outline the proposed shape of the conversation (recognising that it is a conversation and God may well take it in another direction). During the time together, the minister should share his/her faith story, ministry strengths, weaknesses, and expectations



Placements Committee

of/in ministry. The Joint Nominating Committee should also provide a brief outline of the history of the life, witness, service, mission priorities and hopes of the ministry context.

5. Ensure there is space and time for the minister to ask questions during the conversation rather than leaving it to the end. Remember this is a mutual process of discernment.
6. Ask other questions, or explore areas of interest, that the JNC have prepared in advance.
7. Some helpful probing questions when the minister shares an experience of ministry:
 - “What did you do in that situation?”
 - “Can you take us through the steps you followed?”
 - “What feedback did you get?”
 - “What was the outcome?”
 - “What did you learn?”
 - “What would you do differently next time?”
 - “How did you feel about that?”
8. Set a time limit for your time together.
9. At the end of the conversation be clear about the next steps for you and the minister. Good communication and common courtesy require that a Joint Nominating Committee keep each recommended Minister informed about their progress at all stages of their deliberations. While names are not revealed, it is important to indicate if other conversations are underway
10. Offer to cover the costs of the visit. Where distance is an issue it may be appropriate to have a first conversation using teleconferencing or video-conferencing facilities. However, experience tells us that a telephone/video conference is never as helpful as a face-to-face conversation.

After the conversation

After the meeting the JNC and the Minister reflect on what happened, clarifying memories of the experience.

The Joint Nominating Committee discuss their reactions, impressions and attitudes, seeking God's will for a decision. Ensure that important issues are not overlooked.

It may be appropriate for either the Joint Nominating Committee or the minister to request a second conversation.

Without breaking the confidentiality of the JNC process, the JNC should also discuss the ways and means by which they will provide updates to the congregation, or another body who will issue a call.

The Joint Nominating Committee makes its decision and, if the minister concerned and the Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee agree to proceed to call, forwards a recommendation to the Congregation(s)' Meeting which shall meet as soon as practical.



Placements Committee

At any subsequent time after the initial contact a Minister or a Joint Nominating Committee may decline to proceed with a conversation and advise the Placements Committee in writing of their reasons for doing so. This is to assist the Placements Committee in any further consideration of the needs of the minister or placement.

Joint Nominating Committees should not discriminate on grounds such as gender, marital status, ethnic background, age, disability. Churches are not necessarily exempt from Commonwealth and State Anti-Discrimination legislation.

Members of the Joint Nominating Committee have invested a great deal of time and energy in the search for a new minister. It will be important that the JNC take time together to debrief after the process ends.

References & Related Documents

Uniting Church in Australia Regulations

General Placements Process