

20 Steps: FILLING A MINISTERIAL VACANCY IN A CONGREGATIONAL PLACEMENT

STEP 1

The Presbytery is advised that a placement is to be vacated. This is usually done by the departing minister advising the Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) of acceptance of another Call or an intention to retire.

Ministers are normally required to give three months notice of intention to vacate a placement.

STEP 2

If there has not been recent mission or strategic planning by a congregation, the Presbytery/Mission Network and the Congregation/s jointly conduct a special consultation/mission study to identify the congregation's mission and ministry emphases and goals for the next 3-5 years.

The mission study may be overseen by those who will later be Presbytery representatives on the Joint Nominating Committee (JNC) for the filling of the vacancy (see Step 8).

STEP 3

The report of the consultation/mission study recommends:

- (i) if the placement should be filled, and if so:
- (ii) if the placement will be a presbytery or congregation placement
- (iii) if the placement is to be filled by call of the congregation/s or presbytery
- (iv) which specified ministry may best suit the ministry and mission emphases of the congregation, i.e.
 - Minister of the Word
 - Deacon
 - Pastor
 - Youth Worker
 - Lay Pastor
- (v) if the placement is to be full time or a fractional time component

STEP 4

Those who have conducted the consultation/mission study prepare a placement profile using the Synod pro forma.

The profile needs to include:

- Description of the congregation/s and the community in which it is situated
- Viability of the placement for the next 3-5 year
- Mission directions for the next 3-5 years
- Gifts, qualities and skills sought in the new minister
- Details of the property, including the manse
- Terms of placement (stipend, allowances, leave, etc)

Where it is believed that sufficient mission planning has already taken place Church Council is responsible for preparing the Profile.

STEP 5

The Profile is submitted to the Church Council for approval.

STEP 6

The Church Council forwards the approved profile to Presbytery for consideration by the PRC. The PRC may refer the profile back to the Church Council for revision.

STEP 7

When the PRC is satisfied with the profile, it completes the Presbytery pages and forwards the total profile to the Placements Committee for listing.

STEP 8

A Joint Nominating Committee is established:

- At least two persons appointed by presbytery, one of these as Chairperson
- 2 to 6 persons appointed by a meeting of the congregation/s.

It may be wise for the Congregational Meeting to delegate authority to the Church Council to appoint its members to the JNC. Alternatively, the Church Council may bring recommended names to the Congregation/s.

Quorum for the JNC is four members, with at least one from the presbytery and at least one from the congregation.

STEP 9

The JNC meets to familiarise itself with its responsibilities and processes, and work through the JNC training kit. The JNC operates in a confidential way until there is agreement with a minister as to when confidentiality is no longer required.

STEP 10

The JNC may at any stage suggest to the Placements Committee the names of ministers considered suitable for the placement. A list of Ministers available for placement can be obtained from the Placements Officer.

At any time Ministers may express to the Placements Committee an interest in having their names considered for one or more placements.

STEP 11

The Placements Committee considers the profile and the list of Ministers available for placement, and may recommend up to three Ministers with whom the JNC enters a process of mutual discernment. No minister will be invited to converse with more than two JNCs at the one time

(The Placements Committee has discretion about whether to include name/s submitted by the JNC/PRC and name/s of any Ministers who have expressed interest in the placement.)

STEP 12

Normally, within 48 hours of a meeting of the Placements Committee the Placements Officer will communicate a proposed placement to the Minister named. Immediately after this, the JNC will be notified by their Placements Officer or by their Mission Network Representative.

STEP 13

Presbytery representatives on the Placements Committee will ensure that copies of profiles of Minister and placement are made available to each other. This needs to happen within 7 days of the Placements Committee meeting. Copies of profiles of the proposed Minister(s) should be circulated to all members of JNC but not copied further (and must be collected and shredded when the conversation has concluded).

STEP 14

The church expects that, unless there are exceptional reasons that make the match inappropriate, a proposed conversation between Minister and placement will take place.

In making their discernment, a JNC may have conversations with each recommended Minister before making a decision on any; similarly if the Minister is proposed for more than one placement he/she may have conversation with both JNCs before making a decision on either. At any time a Minister or JNC may decline to proceed with a conversation and must advise the Placements Committee in writing of the reason for doing so.

A decision about whether to proceed to Call shall be made within two months.

STEP 15

When conversations lead to discernment that a Call is appropriate, the JNC and the Minister will negotiate any points of concern, and also the date the new placement will become effective. The Minister and the JNC may agree that it would be appropriate for the Minister to meet other ministers in placement, staff or key leaders. It may be appropriate to seek further advice from the Pastoral Relations Team about this step. The JNC then agrees to proceed to a Call and advises the Minister and the presbytery PRC.

STEP 16

When the JNC, the Minister and the Presbytery (through its PRC) agree to proceed to Call, the JNC recommends to a meeting of the congregation/s that a Call be issued

Similarly, for priority placements and those Ministers entering a first placement within this Synod, the Call is issued by the Placements Committee but only after the congregation involved has had an opportunity to provide advice on the appropriateness of the Call.

STEP 17

Within three days of the decision to issue a Call, a letter of Call is sent by the body issuing the Call. There is a nationally agreed statement which needs to be included (Section 7 of the National Handbook on Placements). The Terms of Placement should also be included. A pro-forma of this document is in the Pastoral Relations section of the Synod website. Feel free to contact the Pastoral Relations Team if more help is required.

STEP 18

The Minister responds in writing within fourteen days and signs agreement to the Terms of Placement. A copy of both is sent to the Pastoral Relations Team Administrator.

STEP 19

The Pastoral Relations Team in consultation with the Minister and the congregation, sets the date of the Induction service.

STEP 20

The Minister takes up responsibilities in the new placement by the 15th day of the month (or the 21st day of the month if an inter-synod move. (NB placements normally date from the first day of a month, but removal leave is granted.)

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