

VITALITY OF CALL

What is a Vitality Of Call?

The Purpose of vitality of call consultation is to help a Minister, congregation/s and Presbytery discern together whether there is still a good match between the minister and the congregation at this particular point of time and into the future. This consultation is a disciplined reflection upon the vitality of a call.

When should a Consultation be initiated and by whom?

1. The consultation may take place at the initiative of the PRC in the ninth year of a placement.
2. This consultation may be held in conjunction with a regular “*Consultation into the Life and Witness of a Congregation*” should the two fall due at about the same time. (Reg 3.1.4)
3. A minister may seek a consultation at any time.
4. A Presbytery may initiate a *Vitality of Call and Covenant Consultation* at any time

This document pertains to the process when a Vitality of Call and Covenant Consultation is required by the Presbytery. It is particularly framed for a congregational setting.

The Consultation is a Presbytery initiative aimed at assisting the Minister, Church Council (with reference to the Congregation) and the Presbytery in ascertaining the will of God for the continuing placement of the Minister. Therefore all three groups should be involved.

The Consultation considers the placement in the light of the current Congregational Profile and each participant contributes in an open and honest way. Some reference to the old profile may be helpful, particularly if the emphasis or direction of the Congregation/s has changed significantly in the intervening years.

The Consultation team shall normally include:

- A consultation leader appointed by the Presbytery
- No more than two additional Presbytery representatives
- Three Church Councillors. Normally at least one of these would be the Chairperson of the Church Council (or his/her delegate), one an elder, and one a nominee of the Minister. (Where it is a non Congregation/s placement some other appropriate persons would be appointed.)

Can a Vitality of Call take place at the same time as a Consultation/Partnered Appraisal?

This consultation may be held in conjunction with a regular "Congregation Consultation" should the two fall due at about the same time.

What meetings take place?

A meeting with the minister.

A meeting with other team members (if appropriate)

A meeting with the three Congregational Members.

A Debriefing meeting with all involved.

What is the team looking for?

The Presbytery is primarily interested in whether there are strategic and missional reasons why the placement should continue. The minister may be a good pastor and a nice person who preaches well and is well liked but they are not of themselves reasons for the placement to continue. What are the "vital" reasons for both the minister and the congregation that the placement should continue?

What are the possible outcomes?

Three options are available to the Church Council as it acts on behalf of the Congregation/s in this matter: **(See Appendix B)**

(a) To pass a resolution which affirms the ongoing ministry of the Minister in that place and includes some reference to a length of time that such a ministry might be seen to continue.

(b) To express a view that the Council has no clear leading from the Lord on this matter and encourages the Minister to continue to seek the will of God for her/his future ministry.

(c) To express to the Presbytery its view that the Placement be brought to a close [Regulation 2.7.8(c)(ii)].

The Church Council Secretary notifies the Presbytery of the resolution passed at its meeting. This is done before the end of the second year in ordinand placements, before the end of the fourth year in other placements and similarly in subsequent consultations.

Where the Church Council declines to express a view that the placement should continue, the Minister might be encouraged by Presbytery (PRC) to have his/her name communicated to ACCOMP that they are actively seeking placement.

Where it is clear that the Congregation/s, and perhaps other parties, are desirous of the placement coming to a close, the Presbytery then has the responsibility to do all it can to assist the Minister to find a new placement and the Congregation/s to find a new minister.

Where a Minister has been seeking a placement for some time due to this process, no new placement effected and Presbytery considers that continuance of the placement is deleterious to the mission of the Congregation/s, it may terminate the placement according to Regulations.

How is the report made?

The presbytery representatives prepare a confidential report for the Pastoral Relations Committee of the presbytery. The particular focus of the report is on perceptions regarding the "vitality of the call" which exists between Minister and Congregation/s. The Minister indicates, and has recorded, his/her view on the ongoing vitality of the call. This may or may not agree with the Church Council.

The Pastoral Relations Committee will then report to the Church Council and the Church Council should then make a resolution using one of the three outcomes listed above .

The resolution passed by the Congregation/s Church Council should be communicated to the Presbytery within three months of the consultation. The presbytery's Pastoral Relations would be responsible to determine what follow-up action was appropriate.

Alan Robinson
2 February 2015