

### Advertising

Congregations may advertise only if they are seeking a lay person or a Minister of the Word or Deacon outside the Qld Synod or the Uniting Church.

If the JNC wishes to advertise, permission is to be sought from the Placements Committee through the Presbytery representative. The JNC needs to provide a rationale for the request to advertise.

When bodies advertise, applicants are directed to make enquiries to the Chairperson of the JNC but applications are to be sent to the Secretary, Synod Placements Committee, PO Box 674, Brisbane, Qld 4001.

Before conversations commence with applicants the Secretary of the Synod Placements Committee will check if the person is in a strategic location, and whether they are free to apply for the position. A check will also be made to ensure the person is in good standing in their synod or denomination.

All those applicants who are free and in good standing will be forwarded to the JNC.

## **The Uniting Church in Australia**



### **Guidelines for Joint Nominating Committees**

### **for the Placement of People in Specified Ministries**

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Advertising a vacancy

*Thank you for the commitment you have made to the search for your next minister. It is our prayer that this will be both a learning and prayer-filled time for you.*

*Placements Committee  
Qld Synod  
2008*

## Definitions

**Call** to a placement gives effect to the perceived will of God as expressed by a decision of a Council or Councils of the Church and by the response of the Minister concerned. After careful consideration and prayer, the Minister discerns therein an expression of the will of God in relation to ministry at that time.

**Congregation(s)** means a Congregation or cluster of Congregations or other grouping approved by the Presbytery.

**Conversation** means the process of seeking the will of God. The purpose of the conversation is to identify **for all involved** how the gifts and graces, skills and abilities of the Minister would contribute to the priorities of the placement identified in the mission study and placement profile. Given this understanding, it is important to note that such a conversation is different from a job interview in a secular setting.

**Joint Nominating Committee** is made up of two representatives from the Presbytery, one of whom will be designated by the Presbytery as chairperson and one of whom will preferably be a member of the Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee, and between 2 and 6 representatives from the congregation or other body. Four members shall constitute a quorum where one of those four is a Presbytery representative.

**Minister** includes Minister of the Word, Deacon, Lay Pastor, Ministry Intern, person accredited to the specified ministry of Youth Worker or person eligible for commissioning to the specified ministries of Youth Worker or Lay Pastor.

**Placement** means an approved placement [Reg 2.7.1(a)(i)] in a Congregation or other body wherein ministry is exercised.

**Profile** means the Synod-approved profile (Minister and Placement) available from your Synod Office, or from Synod websites.

## Additional Information on Conversations

(Taken from National Handbook p. 7)

The Joint Nominating Committee is not free to initiate approaches to Ministers, and shall have conversations only with those Ministers whose names are recommended to it by the Placements Committee. Similarly, Ministers shall have conversations only with those Joint Nominating Committees recommended to them by the Placements Committee.

- (i) Conversation may include formal and informal 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
- (ii) 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
- (iii) The Joint Nominating Committee makes contact as soon as possible with each recommended Minister, and may have conversations with each recommended Minister before making a decision on any; similarly, Ministers may have conversations with each Joint Nominating Committee before making a decision on any
- (iv) 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
- (v) At any subsequent time after the initial contact a Minister or a Joint Nominating Committee may decline to proceed with a conversation and advises 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.
- (vi) 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.

## Introduction

Welcome to the Joint Nominating Committee and your place in the process of finding a minister for a congregation or agency. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the National Handbook of Procedures for the Placement of Ministers (2006).

Within the Uniting Church we use a **call process** for the placement of people in specified ministry roles. The process is designed to ensure that all involved – representatives of congregations, agencies, presbyteries and those in specified ministries – seek to discern the call of God for ministers and congregations or agencies. This is a listening and discerning process and therefore it is important that it is conducted in a spirit of conversation, sensitivity, openness and prayer.

Given that the minister is not an employee of the congregation, a **conversation**, rather than an interview is a more effective way to assist all parties as they seek to discern the call of God. A minister is called to exercise their ministry together with the Church Council and the congregation and therefore it is essential that sufficient time is taken to move beyond talking about the ideal into an honest exploration of what is real for both minister and congregation.

A conversation between the minister and the JNC encourages open and honest sharing within a relationship where trust and respect are extended and received. A conversation is more likely to elicit a realistic picture of expectations and capacity to meet those expectations for all involved in what will become a covenant relationship. It is highly likely that more than one conversation will be needed for all parties to reach an understanding that congregation or agency and minister have a future together.

### What happens when a vacancy occurs?

The first step towards calling a new minister is a Mission Study or Consultation conducted by the Presbytery. The Mission Study or Consultation seeks to identify the nature and style of leadership which is needed for the next phase of the congregation's life. It also gathers the necessary data for the congregation profile. The church council oversees the development of the congregational profile. This profile is given to prospective ministers, informing them of the life of the congregation. The profile must be completed before approval is given for the vacancy to be filled. The congregation's completed profile is submitted to the Presbytery for endorsement and then forwarded to the Synod Placements Committee for its consideration. Only then are names of ministers referred from the Placements Committee to the JNC for conversations.<sup>1</sup>

When a Presbytery approves the filling of a vacancy it appoints two people to be on the JNC, together with 4-6 people from the congregation or agency; one the Presbytery representatives will be the Chairperson of the JNC. Meetings of the JNC must have at least one of the Presbytery representatives in attendance.

The Placements Committee will advise the Chairperson of the JNC of the name/s of ministers it is recommending to them for conversations with a view to discerning a call.

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<sup>1</sup> This paragraph refers particularly to a vacancy in a congregation. A vacancy in an agency would also require consultation or review of some kind together with the development of a position description prior to commencing the search for a new ministry agent.

### 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?"

### What happens when the JNC discerns a call?

If the JNC and the minister discern that a call to the placement is appropriate and should proceed the JNC seeks the endorsement of the Congregation(s) as soon as possible and notifies the Placements Committee, through the Presbytery Minister, of the outcome of the Congregation meeting(s).

If the Congregation does not agree to the call then the matter is referred back to the JNC.

If the Congregation agrees to the call being issued a letter of call is sent within three days of the decision being made by the body issuing the call. The call document is generated by the Presbytery. It is sent first to the congregation for signing and then to the Synod office for the final signatures. The Synod office sends the documents to the person being called.

### When the role of the JNC is finished

As a member of the JNC you may have invested a great deal of time and energy in the search for a new minister. It will be important that you take time together to debrief after the process ends.

### The Conversation: discerning God's call together

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 congregation.
4. Outline the proposed shape of the conversation (recognising that it is a conversation and God may well take it in another direction).
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. Invite the minister/s to share something of their faith journey, their passions and their learnings in ministry. Ask them about their leadership style and how they work with others.
7. Set a time limit for your time together.
8. At the end of the conversation be clear about the next steps for you and the minister.
9. 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.

### The role of the Chairperson

1. Read the current National Handbook of Procedures for the Placement of Ministers together with the relevant regulations (2.7.1 – 2.7.22 in 2004 edition).
2. If the Mission Study or Consultation has not already occurred ask the Presbytery Minister when and how it will happen and, if considered appropriate, plan to attend.
3. Contact the Church council Secretary to ask if the JNC has been appointed. (See *Definitions* for membership of JNC).
4. Contact the minister/s who have been recommended to the congregation as soon as possible after receiving their profiles. **It is critical that unnecessary delays are avoided.**
5. Convene the first meeting of the JNC (Handbook 2.4). This may occur before any names are provided from Placements. Items on the agenda for this first meeting will include:
  - a. explain process;
  - b. stress confidentiality;
  - c. explain that this is a process of shared discernment and therefore the framework will be one of conversation and not interview;
  - d. set dates for future meetings to ensure there are no unnecessary delays in the process;
  - e. review the congregation's profile and priorities – clarify thinking e.g. "what do we mean by 'Leadership of Worship'?";
  - f. review the profile of the minister/s recommended to the JNC by the Placements Committee;
  - g. discuss giftings and priorities held in common and those where there are differences;
  - h. identify what areas you would like to explore **in conversation** with the minister and how you might do this;

- i. plan to provide a generous, safe and hospitable space for conversation with the minister/s.
6. Maintain appropriate contact with other ministers in the placement and the Church Council Chairperson in order to extend to them the courtesy of keeping them appropriately informed.
7. Recognise that the role of Chairperson is about:
- a. guiding the process not determining the outcome;
  - b. ensuring that the correct process is followed;
  - c. taking adequate care without slowing the process;
  - d. ensuring the minister/s who are in conversation with the JNC are aware of what is happening at all times;
  - e. representing the wider church and its interests in this particular placement.
8. Following initial conversations, at the point where it appears a call is emerging, the following issues need to be explored:
- a. expectations about travel and car allowance;
  - b. resource allowance;
  - c. whether there is office support, how much and what type;
  - d. whether there is an office at the church for the minister;
  - e. whether there will be assistance with mobile phone, computer and internet access;
  - f. how wedding and funeral fees are handled;
  - g. who pays for stationery relating to weddings;
  - h. where the minister will live;
  - i. expectations about timing of annual or study leave;
  - j. who will pay for supervision – presbytery, congregation or minister;

- k. Whether the minister has commitments as a chaplain (e.g. police or armed forces, how this will be integrated into the workload of the minister and if there is payment for this ministry whether the payment goes to the congregation or the minister.

#### The Role of the Joint Nominating Committee in Conversation with a Minister

1. Hold a meeting of the JNC prior to any conversations with a minister/s.
2. Clarify your understanding of the priorities in the congregation profile.
3. Agree on the primary areas of ministry you want to explore with the minister (these will usually be the high priorities from your profile).
4. Review the minister's profile looking at where giftings and priorities are similar and where they are different.
5. Ensure confidentiality is maintained at all times.
6. Discuss how you will meet with the minister: where, when, hospitality, how you will ensure it is a conversation and not an interview.
7. 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.
8. Use questions which invite the minister to share their past experiences as well as their hopes and dreams.
9. 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.
10. Plan to provide a tour of the area and the facilities if that is appropriate.
11. Choose a member of the JNC to keep a record of attendance and decisions made, giving due regard to issues of confidentiality.