



**uniting
church**
in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

Exploring the Role of the Joint Nominating Committee

Procedure	Exploring the Role of the Joint Nominating Committee
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Introduction

Welcome to the Joint Nominating Committee (JNC) and your place in the process of finding a minister for a congregation. This is a vital discernment task done through prayer, reliance on the Holy Spirit, trust in the wisdom and care of the wider church, and co-operation with other people.

The Basis of Union says that the Congregation is the visible embodiment in one place of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping, witnessing and serving as a fellowship of the Spirit in Christ (Paragraph 15). In other words, the congregation is the heart of the church's life, where God's people gather to be a community of faithful disciples, who also recognise that they are part of a church that stretches well beyond the local community.

People in Specified Ministries (i.e. Minister of the Word, Deacon, Pastor) are called to provide leadership in congregations as God's people seek to express their life in worship, mutual care, learning, faith sharing and compassion and justice.

The Placements process seeks to allow members of congregations, representatives of the presbyteries and those in specified ministries, to explore together what God may be saying about how minister and congregation can share in ministry together. It requires prayerful consideration so that a careful determination can be made by the councils of the church.

The Process and Role of the JNC

Appendix A outlines the steps to be followed in the Placements process. You may want to have a quick look to familiarise yourself with the process. You may return to the diagram at various times as you read this material.

When a Minister leaves, the Presbytery is responsible to:

- i. Appoint a team to carry out a Mission Study in the congregation(s). The Mission Study will:
 - determine if the vacancy is to be filled,
 - recommend who will make the placement and who will call the Minister (congregation or presbytery)
 - recommend which specified ministry (Minister of the Word, Deacon, or Pastor) may be appropriate.
 - recommend whether the placement be full-time or limited (either in hours or length of appointment)
- ii. Appoint the JNC.

The JNC shall consist of two Presbytery members appointed by the PRC (one of whom should be from the PRC or who can readily report to the PRC), one of whom shall be chairperson - and two to six people appointed by the congregation. There must be a presbytery representative and a congregational appointee at each meeting. The congregational representatives should be able to represent the experiences and issues before a broad part of the congregation and not just some parts. Ministers who will continue to serve in the congregation should not be on the JNC, but opportunities should be made to allow them to be involved (this will be referred to later).

Before you begin, ensure that your JNC has been properly appointed, that the Chairperson has been appointed correctly, and that each meeting has a quorum.

The placements process involves a series of conversations which seek to explore God's will. While it is possible to have alternates for the congregational representatives (so that the process is not unnecessarily delayed), this is generally discouraged because it is difficult for people to come in and out of such discernment conversations without disrupting the relationships that are being explored.

The JNC

The JNC has two tasks:

- i. to assist with the preparation of the Congregational Profile if this has not been done by the Presbytery.
- ii. to seek a Minister who can be recommended to the placement for call.

Preparing the Profile

The Presbytery will determine whether those responsible for the Mission Study or the JNC will develop the profile, drawing on the Mission Study. The steps below assume the JNC will develop the profile, but these steps might also be used by another group.

The steps might be:

1. When the JNC meets for the first time, there needs to be space for prayer, for people to get to know each other and to share what they hope will be the outcome from the process.
2. A brainstorming session about the profile and what information needs to be in the profile. A small group may be given the task of drafting the profile before the second meeting.
3. One of the issues will be: 'What category of Minister do you want?' Appendix B discusses the differences between the various ministries.
4. The second meeting finalises the profile.
5. Once the JNC has agreed on the profile, it is taken to the Church Council for endorsement. Given that it is the Congregation which must issue a call, it would be wise for the Church Council to give the congregation a chance to comment on the profile.
6. The Presbytery then approves the profile, completes the Presbytery page, and forwards it to the Placements Committee.
7. When the Presbytery approves the profile, it should provide the JNC with the list of Ministers Available for Placement, so that the JNC can make suggestions to ACOMP.
8. ACOMP declares that there can be a placement, and begins the process of proposing names. Please note that:
 - JNC's can suggest as many names as they like;
 - ACOMP may propose up to three names at a time, but it can be one or two;
 - JNC's are asked to take **ALL** proposals very seriously and to provide written reasons if they decide not to have a conversation; and,
 - this is not a job interview or a competition, but a process of discernment. This can be done as easily with one name as two. There will be no 'topping up' (i.e. providing a further name while conversations are occurring).
9. A JNC may decide at any stage that they wish to advertise.

Discernment: seeking the right person.

1. When the chairperson of the JNC receives the proposed names from ACOMP they should have a preliminary chat with the Ministers to ensure that they are willing to speak with the JNC. (Should either the JNC or the minister decide not to proceed at any stage, they have a responsibility to inform ACOMP in writing as to the reasons). The other party should also be informed, preferably in a way that might assist them in future conversations.
2. The JNC meets to consider the profiles and discuss the sort of questions it may wish to raise in an initial phone contact. The JNC should begin with the assumption that they will talk with the Minister at this stage, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so. People (from the JNC) are delegated to conduct the initial conversation.
3. Initial conversation, probably by phone.
4. The JNC meets to receive a report of the initial conversation, and to determine if it wishes to proceed further. If they wish to enter more serious conversations, it is appropriate to seek comment from referees at this point (it may be worth asking some of the same questions you wish to ask the Minister). While it may be tempting to ring up a 'good friend' in the Minister's congregation, this is inappropriate and may cause great difficulty for the Minister. One of the issues that should be raised in the next conversation is how free the JNC is to seek other information and the level of continuing confidentiality the Minister requires.
5. Prior to the conversation the JNC needs to determine what issues it wishes to raise and how they will be raised. Remember, this is not a job interview. It is an attempt by both parties to explore together what God desires for them. It may be good to begin with a meal so that you can get to know each other better before the more formal conversation.

The areas you may wish to cover might include:

- Allowing the person to speak about their own life and sense of call to ministry.
- Strengths and work areas.
- Where they see their ministry heading. The JNC might share where it sees its ministry heading and the gifts it believes it needs in those offering ministry leadership.
- Leadership style and how they work with lay people or with other Ministers / staff.
- How the Minister exercises pastoral care.
- Their general theological position.
- Their understanding of worship
- Their understanding of sacraments (including the baptism of children) or pastoral services (funerals, weddings).

While there are some things that you may be curious about, it is not necessarily appropriate for you to ask, at least not without a clear indication as to why the question is important to ministry within the congregation. Suggestions include:

- questions about the role the Minister's spouse will play in the congregation.
- a question about the Minister's views on sexuality. If people ask this question it needs to be clear how it relates to views of ministry, for JNC members to be willing to share their own views, and to face questions about how representative their views are of the congregation.

Neither the JNC nor the Minister should feel the need to make any decisions during this

meeting. People need space for prayer and reflection and to talk to trusted support people.

The Placements Committee expects that a report will be provided **within two months** as to whether there is likely to be a match or not. While ACOMP will grant extensions to allow negotiations to be completed, people are encouraged to keep the process moving.

6. Without revealing names, the JNC should keep the congregation informed of what is happening. If the conversation suggests that there may be a match, the JNC needs to determine in what ways the Minister will meet the congregation (e.g. who – some or all members, informal or formal, in worship/ preaching or not).
7. After meeting the congregation, and after space to reflect on the previous meeting, the parties should meet again if it appears that there may be a call emerging. During this meeting it is appropriate to discuss the terms of placement. Issues to be discussed might include:
 - expectations about travel / car allowance and resource allowance
 - is office support available and, if so, how much and covering what areas of work?
 - will there be assistance with mobile phone, computer, internet access?
 - does the Minister or the congregation receive wedding and funeral fees?
 - who will cover the cost of wedding stationery?
 - Housing arrangements
 - is there an office at the church?
 - what are the expectations about the timing of annual and study leave?
 - does the Minister have commitments as a chaplain (e.g. police or armed forces)? How will this be integrated into the workload of the Minister? Who will receive any payments for this ministry?
8. The JNC and Minister determine whether a match has emerged. If so, and the Presbytery is agreeable, a recommendation is made to the congregation. Assuming the agreement of the congregation, a call is issued. The call is issued by the Secretary of the congregation (unless it is a call to an Exit student or a Priority Placement, in which case the call is issued by the Associate Secretary on behalf of the Placements Committee). The Minister signs the call and sends one copy to the congregation and one to the Placements Committee. The congregation should inform the Presbytery.
9. The JNC should take time to debrief after the process. It may plan:
 - to meet with the Minister after a year to seek how both their hopes are finding expression.
 - to speak to the Presbytery about any role they may have in the 4th month consultation.

JNC's need to bear in mind that, having invested a great deal in getting a new Minister, they may feel particularly responsible for how things develop. JNC members often become the Minister's harshest critics if things don't work out. Plan ways to help you reflect on this possibility and to allow you to keep things in perspective.

It is to be hoped that being part of a JNC will be a significant and rewarding experience.

Intercultural Awareness and JNC Conversations

That there are as many different cultures as there are nations and races in the world, and that different customs, behaviors, and patterns of thought have evolved in each of these environments, is easy to understand on a theoretical level. But meeting a person from another culture in real life, and trying to see how that person's attitudes and behavior relate to his or her cultural background is challenging. In addition, the human tendency to make instantaneous judgments of others, provides ample opportunity for misinterpretations to arise.

Joint Nominating Committee (JNC) conversations can be stressful experiences. So when you're a member of a JNC involved in having conversations, it is important to be sensitive to the feelings of the person with whom you are having the conversations. You want to put the person at ease as you mutually engage in the process of discerning the will of God.

Presenting oneself in a conversation such as this is not easy for anyone. There are even further dynamics at play, however, when the majority of JNC members of the JNC belong to one ethno-cultural group and the person you are having the conversation with belongs to another.

Put Yourself in the Other Person's Shoes

An interculturally aware JNC will try to look at the process from the perspective of the other person, as in this composite example:

I am a minister originally from Indonesia having conversations with a JNC from an Anglo congregation. In attempting to communicate who I am in English, which is my third language, I am aware that some members of the JNC might have difficulties with my accent, as much as I have difficulties with some of theirs.

I am trying my best not to be anxious at the thought of talking about myself with a group of individuals with whom I have no prior relationship, but I will accommodate this Western practice and hope that I will not be perceived as being evasive or vague. I am also aware that I don't do eye contact easily. We have been taught by our parents not to have eye contact too much while having conversation. It is related to politeness and respect. When we talk to the one whose status is higher than us (for example parents, where parents are considered as having higher status than their children), it is better for us not to have too much eye contact. It will be considered as challenging. But I am aware that it's important for the Anglo-Australians and nowadays I am more comfortable with eye contact.

I have learned not to cringe when a man in the circle crosses his legs and shows me the soles of his shoes or to be offended by the apparent disinterest of a woman who knits while I am speaking. I am in their culture, and I will accommodate to what they do and need.

Understanding and Accommodating Host

A culturally aware JNC is committed to the principle of mutual understanding and accommodation. As the group in control of the conversation process and format, it is good to do as much as possible to narrow the cultural gap so that the person is less anxious and intimidated, and more able to accurately communicate his/her character and gifts and graces. It is helpful and sensible to try to learn about the culture of the person with whom you are in conversation.

However it is important to know, for example, that no two Chinese are alike. A Chinese from Singapore is very different from a Chinese from China. They might look alike or share some common cultural values but their outlooks and approach to life are very different. In the same way, a second generation Tongan is different from a first generation Tongan, and therefore has a different way of relating to you as a JNC than a recent migrant from Tonga. A commitment to mutual accommodation and understanding requires an adaptive and flexible approach to conversations rather than adherence to a formulaic, rigid model. A church that has declared a commitment to being and becoming a Multicultural Church needs to be culturally sensitive and aware of its diversity.

Here are some suggestions that the JNC could use to build bridges across the cultural divide and to empower the person you are having conversation with and help him/her to be less anxious:

Preparation

Ensure that as many members of the JNC as possible know about the culture of the person you are having conversation with. For example culture-specific sensitivities like:

- formal greeting
- eye contact
- the meanings of silence and pauses
- posture toward hierarchy and authority
- the meaning of gift-giving
- the meaning of intonation in speech
- how agreement and disagreement is expressed
- gestures to avoid

Be careful and sensitive about the kind of personal questions that could put the person 'on the spot' regarding, for example, their personal circumstances or feelings. It might be helpful to provide some of the questions that will be asked in advance so the person is less pressured to think on the spot in a language that is not their first language.

Representation in JNC

If possible ensure that the interviewing group is also racially and culturally diverse.

Again if possible the JNC chairperson should ensure that at least one person present at the conversation is from the same ethno-linguistic community of the person the JNC is having conversation with.

Language and Accent

- Members of the JNC might need to speak slowly and plainly for conversations with those who may not have advanced English fluency.
- Communicate that you consider the person's ability to speak more than one language to be a valuable asset.
- Differently accented English is not a problem to be overcome. It should be obvious that in a multicultural church there will be multiple accents. The person's accent does not nullify the gifts and graces that the person has.

Conversation Process

Begin the conversation with an informal social time for personal connection. Providing refreshments before the official conversation begins might help to ease nerves and begin to build relationship.

Acknowledge at the beginning of the conversation your awareness that this is an intercultural encounter, and that both parties should feel free to ask questions for clarification, if needed.

Confirm the conversation as a 'space' that seeks to honour cultural differences by inviting a member of the group to open with prayer in a language other than English, and/or by offering a prayer in English that asks God to bless their intercultural time together.

Proceed in a fashion that facilitates deep listening in a safe space:

- be attentive to the other person,
- don't rush,
- communicate a comfort with silence and pauses,
- communicate affirmation and encouragement with your body language,
- show interest but don't pry,
- laugh together as much as possible (but never at anyone else's expense).

Guidelines for Asking Questions

There is a tendency in the Western way of thinking to view the gathering of information as the primary purpose of a conversation.

While some of this information is 'personal' in nature, all of it is 'of the person.' Hence, what and how a person thinks, believes, functions, relates, and knows speaks of their very heart and soul. This heart is something a multicultural church seeks to honour and to protect. It recognizes that for the person coming from a non-Western culture, the conversation may not primarily be about information gathering as it is about establishing a relationship.

A JNC member may ask a question that is intended to give information that will help them 'get to know' the person but meanwhile, he/she may be withdrawing from the JNC because he/she is experiencing those questions as too direct, too personal, or too prying.

When Asking Questions, Consider the Following:

Be aware that the issue of 'saving face' is always present, regardless of the person's cultural heritage. Do whatever you can to avoid making the person feel overly self-conscious or forced to answer questions that would embarrass him/her.

Be aware that too broad an opening question can not only make it difficult to know where to start, but may immediately cross the uncomfortable boundary of sharing personal information. 'Tell us about yourself' is too broad. 'Tell us about your experience as it relates to this ministry' would be an improvement.

Similarly, as the final question of an interview, it is common to ask, 'Do you have any questions you'd like to ask us?' In many cultures, to ask questions is to be seen to not know what one should know. 'Is there anything you would like to say to us before the interview ends?' would be an improvement.

Generally speaking, Western thought patterns tend to be abstract in nature. This is not the case in many other cultural traditions, which are story-based and employ concrete images. It is always a good idea, hence, to include 'scenario' or case study questions that will help the person connect to his/her lived experience and lived expertise.

Be aware that some familiar questions such as 'What you are reading these days?', 'What do you do when you aren't working?' or 'What do you do for self-care?' can carry with them some unintended freight of cultural judgment based on assumptions about what kind of books make for worthwhile reading, the appropriate balance between work and recreation, or what constitutes adequate self-care.

One Last Thought

Often at the Placement meetings we have heard feedback from JNCs that the person that they had conversation with wasn't 'engaging enough'. It seems that the person did not ask too many questions and thus interpreted as not 'interested' or 'engaging'. This may be a misinterpretation of the situation. In some cultures again asking a lot of question is regarded as pushy and rude.

It is useful to learn from generalizations about other cultures, but be careful not to use those generalizations to stereotype. Use them rather to understand better and appreciate other multifaceted human beings. Remember that cultural norms may not apply to the behavior of any particular individual. We are all more complicated than any cultural norm could suggest.

Acknowledgement

Adapted from a paper prepared for the VicTas Placements Committee by Rev. Swee-Ann Koh.

JNC Guidelines for Korean Congregations

신임목사 청빙절차(Preparing for a new Placement)

1. 사임 및 작별 (Conclusion)

- 사임 및 송별예배

(Service to Mark the Conclusion of a Placement)

- 공석상태 (vacancy period)

2. 공동청빙위원회(Partnership)

- 교회와 노회가 함께 협력한다

(Presbytery and congregation work and cooperate together)

- 노회의 목회관계위원회에서 2명의 대표(1명은 위원중)를 선임한다

(2 presbytery representatives appointed by the Pastoral Relations Committee of the Presbytery [PRC]; one person should be a member of PRC)

- 공동청빙위원회의 구성은, 위원장은 노회선임된 중 한 사람이 맡되,

6명은 교회에서 선임하고, 2명은 노회에서 선임한다

(A Joint Nominating Committee [JNC] is later formed including 6 members representing the congregation and 2 from the Presbytery. The chairperson of the JNC should be a person representing the PRC)

3. 공동작업에 참여 (Participation)

- 모든 교인이 목회및선교 연구조사에 참여케 한다

(All members of the congregation to be involved in a Mission Study)

- 지난 기간에 대한 회고 (Reflecting on congregation's history)

- 교회의 미래를 위한 기도와 분별기간 (Praying and discerning)

- 소망 및 목적 (Visioning)

- 현재 우리의 모습...교회로서 우리는 누구인가?

(Who are we? ... Who are we becoming as a congregation?)

- 현재 우리의 모습...지역과 관련하여 우리 교회는 무엇인가?

(Who are we? ... Who are we becoming as a community?)

- 현재 우리가 전도 및 선교를 통해 봉사할 사람들은 누구인가?

(Who do we serve/who will we serve in the mission for the community?)

- 미래에 위의 내용들을 위해 어떤 지도자가 필요한가?

(What kind of ministry leadership will help us be/to do this in the future?)

4. 공동청빙위원회를 구성한다 (Joint Nominating Committee formed)

공동청빙위원회는 한인노회에서 선정한 2명과 교회 혹은 해당 청빙기관에서

2~6명의 위원을 선정할 수 있다. 노회에서 선정한 두명 중 한명이 공동청빙 위원회 위원장이 된다. 혹은 교회에서 선정된 청빙위원들

이 사정에 의해 참석할 수 없을 수도 있기에 최대한의 범위내에서 청빙위원을 선정하는 것이 바람직하다. 혹은 공동청빙위원회에 속한 목회자가 청빙심의

대상이 될 경우 공동청빙위원회에 참여할 수 없다.

교회에서 선정될 청빙위원의 대상은 나이와 남녀의 균형을 고려해야 하고,

교회의 목회와 선교방향을 잘 이해하는 사람으로 구성되어야 한다.

교회에서 선정할 위원들에 대해서는 노회와의 사전 대화가 필요하다.

(Joint Nominating Committees comprise at least two persons appointed by the Presbytery and two to six persons appointed by the congregation or other body, and will be chaired by a Presbytery)

nominee. Because, some congregational representatives may be absent from time to time, it is suggested that congregations opt for a number of representatives at the higher end of this scale.

The minister whose replacement is under consideration shall not be a member of the JNC and take no part in placement procedures. It is suggested that the congregation representatives reflect the age, gender balance and ethos of the congregation and be familiar with the mission planning goals of the congregation. Congregational representatives should be chosen on a basis agreed by the congregation(s) in consultation with the Presbytery).

5) 목회 및 선교 연구 조사 결과에 따라 새 목회자에 요구되는 목회 은사와 기술에 따른 목회자 프로파일을 작성한다

(Profile of the congregation and gifts/skills required for the new Minister based on the results of the Mission Study).

6) 신임 목회자를 청빙하는 교회의 시무 조건 내용을 노회 PRC에 신청한다

(Profile submitted for approval by the PRC)

7) 노회의 PRC(목회관계위원회)로부터 인준받는다

(Approval to fill the Placement given)

8) 노회가 주총회 임직위원회에 보고 및 제출한다

(Profile submitted to the Placements Committee.)

9) 주총회 임직위원회가 공동청빙위원회에 가능한 목회자 명단을 추천한다

(Placements Committee issues JNC with List of Ministers)

인터뷰를 위해 공동청빙위원회에 3명까지 소개할 수 있다

(Up to three names offered to the JNC for conversation)

인터뷰 중 필요하면 서로의 이해와 협력을 통해 시무 조건의 재수정을 논할 수 있다 (Conversation leads to negotiation [Terms of Placement])

10) 공동청빙 위원회는 선정된 목회자 이름을 목회관계위원회에 제출하여 승인을 받는다. (The JNC presents the name to the PRC for approval.)

11) 공동청빙위원회가 추천한 목회자 이름을 예의상 교회의회에 알리고 그리고 난후에 그

이름을 공동의회모임에 가져가서 투표하도록 한다

(Name recommended by JNC to church council as a courtesy; then taken by the JNC to a congregation meeting for voting).

12) 결정된 목회자에게 청빙서를 발송한다. (Call to the Minister is issued)

13) 임직 (Placement)

- 신임 목회자의 임직예배를 드린다

(Induction Service for the new Minister)

Placements and the various Ministries of the Church

Introduction

This brief reflection is offered as a way of beginning the conversation about the way the Placements Committee deals with requests to propose people in a specified Ministry to a placement where that Ministry form has not been requested. This commonly arises with Deacons.

What is expected of those in Specified Ministries

Ministers of the Word are called, formed and ordained for the particular task of apostolic leadership, that is, Ministers of the Word are set apart by the church to remind the church of its faith and of what it means to be church. As a person ordained by the wider church, and placed by the Presbytery, the Minister also represents the wider church and reminds the local community of its place within the Body of Christ.

Ministers of the Word are not simply called to fulfil a set of functions, such as presiding at the sacraments, leading worship, preaching, offering pastoral care, being counsellors, providing administrative leadership, teaching or any other function. The 'functions' can be carried out by any number of people. Ministers carry out these functions as part of the way they help the community of faith be faithful to its calling.

If Ministers of the Word act as a focus and symbol for what it means to be church, Deacons are a sign of the church in its mission relationship with the world. Their vocational location is less the church than it is the inter-face of church and wider community.

While Ministers of the Word have 'permanent and public responsibility' for apostolic leadership in the congregation and wider Church, lay Pastors have temporary responsibility for this task within the local congregation. Thus when Lay Pastors are placed in congregations there are raised significant issues about the impact this has on the Presbytery and its role in apostolic oversight (both in terms of one fewer Minister of the Word and increased responsibility for a ministry agent).

The Ministry Intern Phase is a supervised experience of Ministry. The purpose of this phase is to give the Ministry Intern the opportunity to begin to integrate learning from the Core Phase of theological education in a comprehensive ministry context and to continue serious and guided education for Ministry.

The Ministry Intern will exercise all the responsibility and authority of ministry and leadership in the placement. This congregation or agency needs to have sufficient capacity to support and encourage the purposes and goals of the Ministry Intern Phase.

Conclusion

The various ministries are different and not simply interchangeable. To do so is to confuse the nature of those ministries and to change the role of Presbytery in regard to the places where that ministry is exercised.

Before we nominate a person for a Ministry for which they were not formed, we need to speak to the Presbytery and ensure that they are prepared to provide the oversight that is implied in any change of ministry. The congregation needs to be clear about what it means for their life, something that a JNC may not be equipped to do.

Guidelines for Sensitive Conversations related to Candidature, Placements or Sexuality

Part One: The Purpose of this document

1. Since 10th Assembly resolution concerning sexuality and leadership many congregations and presbyteries have sought help in understanding how to handle this issue in the practical setting of speaking with applicants, candidates or Ministers seeking a placement.
2. The aim of this document is:
 - to ensure that congregations and presbyteries, should they wish to take into account the way in which a person expresses their sexuality, are able to make that inquiry in an appropriate way, that reflects the church's understanding of anti-discrimination legislation;
 - to protect Ministers and candidates from disrespectful, inappropriate and harmful types of inquiry
3. This document is offered as a guide to assist JNC's, presbyteries and others to fulfil these aims. It is not compulsory to use the suggested questions but it is expected the principles present in the document will be applied.
4. These guidelines are related to a very small part of the total placement process and conversations. The placement process is seeking to discern whether there is a call upon the life of a person to serve in a particular ministry at a particular time. Any discussion around the way a person expresses their sexuality should be placed within the broader discussions that assist in discerning a call.
5. These guidelines are to be read in conjunction with the church's policy on vilification and harassment:

<http://assembly.uca.org.au/resources/policies-procedures-manuals-guidelines/policy-on-the-prevention-of-vilification-and-harassment-within-the-uca>

Part Two: preparing for the conversation

1. The relevant committee should meet prior to the conversation and think about the layout of the room, how to make people feel welcome and comfortable and who will ask which questions.
2. The person chairing the meeting needs to be aware of when any comments harass a person; or are made or done in a way that intends, or even may, leave a person feeling harassed or vilified. The chairperson should halt the meeting/discussion/interview/ process and address the matter.
3. The purpose of these guidelines is to assist a church body, if it wishes, to discuss with an applicant for candidature, a candidate or a person seeking placement, how the expression of their sexuality may be relevant to the candidature or call under consideration.
4. Placement discussions will cover a wide range of issues including the compatibility of a Minister with a congregation. However the general suitability of a Minister is expressed in their ordination and where the Minister remains in good standing then the nature of the questions raised cannot be in a direction that attempts to prove that the theology of a person makes them unsuitable to be a Minister in the UCA.
5. The questioning cannot be such as to imply that the placement depends upon the Minister accepting or adhering to the stated position of the presbytery or congregation on same gender relationships.

Part Three: the conversation

1. The applicant, candidate or Minister holding a conversation is not required to answer any question that is put to them. This is true for questions in any area of the conversation.
2. Even though the issue of how a person expresses their sexuality might be seen as an important consideration it should not be the only question. The full range of matters relevant to the conversation about ministry should be raised in all situations.
3. A person should be only asked a question once, and is not required to justify their answer. Therefore if a question is asked and the person responds then, apart from a consequential question, the matter should be left to rest.
4. Possible ways to raise the issue of how a person expresses their sexuality:
 - Within the UCA many congregations do not agree with persons in committed same gender relationships being Ministers. Would the way in which you express your sexuality introduce a difficulty for the range of situations in which you might be able to exercise ministry?
 - This congregation has had a number of discussions about sexuality and ministry. Through these discussions it has, at this time, come to this view (quote it). In the light of that view do you believe that your practice of the Christian life will be acceptable within this ministry context?
 - While a previously stated position of a presbytery is not a binding policy we share with you that in the past the presbytery has expressed this opinion (quote it). If the presbytery were to consider a proposal for you to be placed here, and continued to hold its stated position, would this create difficulties for you being accepted for placement by the presbytery?
5. If a Minister who is holding conversations about the possibility of a placement visits a congregation or groups within it, it is not appropriate for that person to be asked about their sexuality in that context. Such questions should be asked in a safe and respectful environment such as the JNC, or in settings that have already been negotiated with, and agreed to by, the Minister; e.g. the Church Council.
6. If a candidate is in attendance at a meeting of the presbytery then the Candidates Committee (or PRC as the case may be) report will be the basis for the presentation of the candidate's application. If there is the potential that personal and contentious matters might be canvassed then so far as possible the Committee should field those questions, in the light of its conversations with the applicant. A presbytery should engage in all its processes in a way that does not harass or vilify persons (or leave them feeling harassed or vilified) who come before it. It should not be too difficult for members of presbytery to advise the Secretary ahead of time of questions that they may wish to ask.

Part Four: the responsibility of committees

1. In the case of candidates the presbytery and Synod Selection Panel is to give consideration to the spiritual maturity and motivation of the applicant and the character and personality of the applicant. [Regulations 2.3.2.3 (b) (iii) & (iv) and 2.3.2.4 (c) (i) & (v)].
2. In the case of a placement discussion the JNC and the PRC (if it has delegated authority from the presbytery) can bring the consideration of a particular person to a close by deciding that the name not be forwarded to the congregation for consideration for a placement. [Regulation 2.6.6 (m)]
3. In coming to their decision the JNC or PRC may take into account a general statement made by a congregation or presbytery on the issue of sexuality and ministry. However notwithstanding the existence of such a statement the JNC or PRC must make its own decision on the suitability of the particular person who is before it for consideration.

4. It is prudent for JNC's and PRC's to keep minutes of their decisions – even in the most basic of terms - in order to make it very clear that they have made a decision on the particular situation before them.
5. There may be pastoral reasons why some feedback should be provided. The amount of detail required will vary in different circumstances. However notwithstanding this valid reason for providing feedback, the committees of the church are not required to publish the reasons for their decisions and should be very circumspect when revealing the factors that were significant in their decision making.

Part Five: the reporting and decision making

1. The recommendation of a Minister to a congregation for a Call requires a clear presentation of the reasons behind the recommendation. This will include the Minister's relevant experience and the points where the needs of the congregation and gifts of the Minister meet. A complete report will also indicate where there is not a neat fit between what the Minister has to bring and the needs of the congregation.
2. If the JNC considers that it is relevant to raise the issue of how a Minister expresses their sexuality at the time a congregation is making its decision then it should raise it in exactly the same terms as the matter was raised and responded to in the conversation.
3. Many congregations choose to vote upon the Call of a Minister by secret ballot. This process is fair to all participants and should generally be encouraged. It is appropriate for a Minister who is considering a Call to receive information on the strength of support, if it is sought.
4. Minutes of the meeting should not record any reasons for the decision but only the outcome of the ballot / decision.

Issued by the Assembly Standing Committee 28 Jan 2005

Latest amendment Nov 2007

20 Steps to a Congregational Placement

STEP 1

The Presbytery is advised that a placement is to be vacated. Ministers are normally required to give three months' notice of intention to vacate a placement.

STEP 2

The Presbytery and the Congregation/s jointly conduct a Mission Study / Consultation to identify the congregation's mission and ministry emphases and goals for the next 3-5 years. The Mission Study is often includes 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 Mission Study / Consultation recommends:

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

STEP 4

Those who have conducted the Mission Study / Consultation 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.)

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 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.

JNC members are given a copy of *Exploring the Role of the JNC*.

STEP 9

The JNC meets to familiarize itself with its responsibilities and processes. 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 list of Ministers Available for Placement is made available to the JNC.

The PRC and/or the JNC may, at any stage, suggest to the Placements Committee the names of ministers considered suitable for the placement.

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 will discern 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

Within 48 hours of a meeting of the Placements Committee, the secretary of the Committee will communicate any proposed placement to the Minister named and notify the JNC chairperson. The Placements Committee secretary will also notify the Minister of the reasons for the proposal/s.

STEP 13

The Placements Committee secretary will ensure that copies of Leadership and Placement profile 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, 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 commence. The Minister and the JNC may agree that it would be appropriate for the Minister to meet the Church Council, or a wider group of members, prior to a decision to proceed to Call. 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. For presbytery placements, the JNC recommends to a presbytery meeting that a Call be issued. However, prior to the presbytery meeting, each congregation involved shall have an opportunity to express their mind on the recommendation.

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.

STEP 18

The Minister responds in writing within fourteen days and informs his/her current presbytery. The Minister signs agreement to the Terms of Placement.

STEP 19

The Presbytery Chairperson, 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 or a move across Bass Strait is involved).

(NB placements normally date from the first day of a month, but removal leave is granted).

Advertising Placements

Making Known Vacant Placements

All placements must be listed with the Placements Committee, and the Committee will normally consider suitable names for each placement. However, for some non-congregational placements, the Placements Committee may be unable to offer names and need to rely on advertising.

The list of current and pending vacancies is regularly published in documents circulated to Ministers, in Insights and on the Synod website. Ministers have the opportunity at any time to express to the Placements Committee an interest in a particular placement. However, as many non-congregational placements may be filled either by a Specified Minister or by a suitably qualified lay person, it is important that a wider field of potential candidates is made aware of the vacancy.

It is in the interests of transparency to advertise such placements.

Vacancies in Congregational Placements

A congregational vacancy can be advertised only with the approval of the Placements Committee. Requests to advertise will be made in writing by the presbytery after consultation with the congregation/s involved. In making such a request, the presbytery must provide reasons why the placement should be advertised. If permission is given, the advertisement should indicate that expressions of interest are to be made to the Secretary of the Placements Committee.

Vacancies in non-congregational Placements

For placements other than those in congregations it is important that the processes followed are fair, transparent, and respect the role of the Placements Committee.

Advertising may take place once the appropriate approval of the profile/position description and Terms of Placement have been received. However, the closing date for expressions of interest should not precede the next scheduled meeting of the Placements Committee.

For non-congregational placements it is recognised that a requirement to await listing by the Placements Committee may lead to unnecessary delays in securing publication in the church press in various states. It is appropriate to always advertise in Insights, whether or not wider press (secular, ecumenical or journals of other synods) is also used. Expressions of interest may be made direct to the JNC or other appropriate local selection panel.

A copy of the advertisement should be sent to the Secretary of the Placements Committee.

Placements Committee actions

The Placements Committee may itself initiate the proposal of a name of a suitable person for an advertised placement. In such circumstances the Placements Committee will invite that person to make a written response to the advertisement. The Placements Committee will also notify the JNC of its action and the reasons why the person has been proposed.

The Church expects that the JNC/Selection Committee will include with those short-listed for interview any Minister who responds positively to a proposal by the Placements Committee.

If the body seeking a non-congregational placement chooses to rely on the processes of the Placements Committee and not advertise, the Placements Committee will take action to ensure that the availability of the placement is widely known, and invite expressions of interest to be made to the Secretary of the Placements Committee.

When bodies advertise, applicants may be directed to make enquiries to the JNC but applications are to be sent to:

Rev. Jane Fry,
Associate Secretary,
PO Box A2178,
Sydney South 1235.

Before interviews take place ACOMP will determine whether the applicants 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.

Each advertisement must include the following statement:

The applicant must hold or be willing to apply for Working with Children Check Clearance.

Only people with the right to work in Australia may apply for this position.

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

Those who respond to advertisements will not be treated as being in a conversation in terms of being able to be nominated to two placements, nor will they be prevented from responding to an advertisement if they have been nominated to other placements.

Congregations are requested to send a copy of the advertisement with the closing date to the Synod Secretariat