

Vital Ministry in the Uniting Church

*Positive, encouraging performance appraisal of ministers
for healthy ministry engagement*

Guidelines for Ministry Consultations



**uniting
church**

in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

Acknowledgements

These Guidelines were developed under the auspices of the Standing Committee of the Synod of NSW and the ACT. The work was overseen by the Placements Committee through a small Task Group (Rev. Chris Udy, Rev. Duncan MacLeod, Ms Roxanne Harris, Rev. Jane Fry and Rev. Graham Perry). The Task Group would like to acknowledge with appreciation the extraordinary work of Graham Perry in developing and refining this Vital Ministry consultation process.

Status

NSW/ACT Placements Committee Policy Day, Dec. 09 2015

VITAL MINISTRY PAPER

Note that this paper is designed to enhance ministry and to support presbyteries:

198/15PC Resolved

That the Placements Committee

endorse the Vital Ministry process and request that the Synod Associate Secretary provide it to PRCs and encourage them to adopt and apply it as a resource.

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Vital Ministry in the Uniting Church

Introduction: Positive, Encouraging Performance Appraisal

Vital Ministry is an appraisal process for UCA specified ministers based on the assumption that ‘all ministers are responsible to God for the ministry entrusted to them and accountable to the Church through the Presbytery for the way in which that ministry is exercised’ (Reg. 2.9.1).

Ministry is a gift and trust for which each individual holds account. Accountability includes a preparedness to grow and develop on the basis of experience and the learning that accompanies it. Presbytery oversight, therefore, is about affirmation and encouragement as well as challenge and, if necessary, correction.

Vital Ministry derives from the shared responsibility for ministry in which the Presbytery offers a ministry of both affirmation and accountability. It provides an opportunity for Minister, Presbytery and congregational leaders to look back and reflect on what has happened over the last period of ministry and, informed by that, to look forward to plan, anticipate and develop a vision for what lies ahead.

Vital Ministry is also concerned for the wellbeing of ministry agents. Recent research into the wellbeing of Australian clergy¹ recognises the need for positive ministry appraisal:

Occupational stress has been recognised as a critical issue among religious workers ... [However] since the early to mid-1980s, the focus has exclusively been on burnout, with no published studies to date exploring work engagement – the positive antipode of burnout. Work engagement is a state of positive work motivation characterised by vigour, dedication, and healthy absorption in work. (Bickerton, 2012 p. 1).

Rather than focusing on preventing burnout by reducing workload, Bickerton identifies the need for positive work engagement through increased motivating factors.

The ideal for Christian work is not simply avoiding burnout, but rather to be motivated and have energy for the work at hand... Our results indicate that job and spiritual resources are what drive this engaged state in ministry. (Bickerton, 2012 p. 4).

Consequently, the first practical implication of his study is:

- 1) The key to well-being at work is to build both job and spiritual resources; it is not simply a matter of reducing demands or symptoms of burnout. (Bickerton, 2012 p. 5).

THE AIM of this project of the Synod of NSW and the ACT is to develop an effective system of *Performance Appraisal* for Uniting Church ministers, in order to enhance work engagement and provide work and spiritual resources for the calling they follow. ‘Performance Appraisal’ is part of Human Resources jargon which may raise the eyebrows of some ministers, who associate it negatively with secular employment conditions and quantitative KPIs. However, many church members will recognise the value of the Performance Appraisal process from their own workplaces, including in industry, professions and trades. Rather than becoming anxious about ‘performance’ in a ministry placement, this project will focus on the positive affirmation of the costly, difficult calling to ministry and the opportunities for rewarding spiritual and personal growth it offers.

¹ Grant Bickerton, Doctoral Research: ‘Engagement and Burnout from Occupational Stress: A Study of Religious Workers.’ Summary document accessed: *Well-Being in Ministry Results Overview* (UWS [undated] 2012)

Previous ministry consultation process: 'Vitality of Call'

The periodic 'Vitality of Call' consultation (VOC) as commonly used in the Synod of NSW/ACT was designed to affirm at significant moments that the Christian community believes that a minister's calling to a placement remains clear and vital, resulting in the continuation of the placement.

What is a 'Call'? In lieu of a long theological discussion of the nature of vocation, the Assembly's *National Handbook of Procedures for the Placement of Ministers* offers this definition:

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. (Uniting Church Assembly: 2006, 1.2)

The Call of God to a particular ministry is neither a simple matter of direct revelation nor of good strategic planning, but of perception, consideration, discernment, decision and response, all in the context of careful (faithful) prayer. It is a matter for both individual ministers and councils of the church; and it is *temporal*, being subject to the conditions of life and to change and renewal over time. That period of time has in fact been 'discerned' by councils of the Church to be between five and ten years, with possible extensions of up to five years at a time! In other words, the call of God is mediated in space and time by the Body of Christ, faithfully seeking the guidance of the Spirit.²

However, the Vitality of Call process has been timed to check on ministry vitality at the specific moments when a minister needs to consider a move to a new placement (usually in the fourth and seventh years). This can mean the consultation is principally focused on the secondary question, 'What next? Stay or go?' rather than addressing the more important primary issue: What will enhance ministry skills, effectiveness and work satisfaction in this or any other placement?

The VOC conversation can therefore become overly subjective, asking about attitudes, feelings, experiences, but ignoring the setting and assessment of achievable and measurable goals. For practical reasons it may also be held in conjunction with a Life and Witness Consultation of the congregation itself, risking confusion of the vocation and motivation of the minister with the mission plans and direction of the placement.

To enhance work engagement and provide motivating guidance for ministry, issues such as the following need to be addressed:

- How can we adequately meet 'ministry appraisal' criteria, including the needs of clergy, congregation and the Church for accurate information and motivating affirmation?
- What forms of workplace performance appraisal could be adapted to ministry, and how can they be applied in a Presbytery environment without professional HR help?
- To what extent should ministry appraisal focus on 'subjective' and 'objective' aspects?
- What objective indicators or goals are appropriate for ministry?
- How are qualitative and quantitative indicators to be measured and interpreted?
- What things define a minister's sense of satisfaction and purpose in ministry?
- How are outcomes used to enhance work engagement, personal and professional growth and mutual ministry within a placement?
- What 'successes' do the UCA and other churches offer us from which we can learn?

² This is not however an argument for the plenary verbal inspiration of the Regulations of the UCA.

A Revisioned Process: Vital Ministry

The Vital Ministry program is an attempt to develop the Vitality of Call process into a more effective tool of ongoing, regular ministry appraisal and enhancement, both during a placement and when considering endings and new beginnings. Vital Ministry aims to offer:

- an affirming appraisal of the exercise of ministry with a view to developing the minister's *work engagement*: a state of positive work motivation characterised by vigour, dedication, and healthy absorption in work
- a means of discernment of a minister's gifts and skills in ministry, and where they have led to success in planned and unplanned exercise of ministry
- a positive critical analysis of the placement's signs of vitality and growth
- mission-focused answers to the questions: What ministries are most effective? How do we know? What activities waste time and energy or breed disappointment and frustration?
- a focus on spirituality: what resources, both inner and communal, does the minister have, share, or need in order to engage fully with the nature of the ministry of Jesus Christ?
- identification of ongoing educational, training and personal needs for present and future ministry
- an aid to the sustainability of ministers' vocation and ministry practice
- timely assistance when ministry is no longer vital
- a predictable and regular process that can be managed without professional HR help or excessive consultation team preparation.

Vital Ministry has two stages:

1. The initial **Affirmation of Call** is made six months into a new placement. Strictly speaking, this first consultation is the only one to test the wisdom of *calling* this minister to this particular placement, and the *vitality* of that call. The Affirmation of Call marks the end of what in other workplaces might be a 'probation' period, when the appointment to a position (or 'call to this ministry') is upheld – or, perhaps, found not to be a suitable match.
2. The second stage includes all subsequent **Vital Ministry** consultations. Using the Assembly's definition:
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...
we can accept that in the discernment and oversight of the church, God's call now can be taken as a given, until time or circumstances require a fresh discernment. Each subsequent ministry consultation will then be an appraisal, not of God's call, but of the vitality of *ministry* as it is being exercised. Human Resource departments usually assess professional workers on an annual basis; this would tax most Presbyteries' capacity. Without HR, however, it is not unreasonable to plan for a Vital Ministry consultation every two years. The focus of these consultations may change during the placement, including sometimes considering a change of ministry; but they are always focused on enhancing the quality of ministry expressed in positive work engagement.

Stage 1: From JNC to Affirmation of Call

The Affirmation of Call, six months into a new ministry placement, adapts and replaces the current Fourth Month Consultation

The JNC process

- a. According to current practice, a Joint Nominating Committee is formed from members of Presbytery and members of the placement seeking a minister. The Presbytery is responsible for convening the JNC and ensuring all standards are met and procedures are followed.
- b. Candidates for the ministry are found, conversations held, and the process of discernment is followed until a call is issued to a minister and accepted.

1. A call to a placement triggers the following actions:

- a. [Terms of Placement](#) (TOP) including the normal requirements of Synod and additional requirements of the Presbytery are drawn up, discussed and signed;
- b. copies of the TOP are sent to the Minister, church or agency council, PRC or Synod body, Associate Secretary;
- c. A Synod Induction Pack (work in progress) is issued to the minister and secretary / Church Council / executive of the calling placement.
 - i. Ministers' benefits and important information
 - ii. Contact details for helpful people in Synod and in the new placement
 - iii. Additional information for the congregation: tips for welcoming the minister and family
 - iv. Details of coming 6 month Affirmation of Call

2. Presbytery appoints a Liaison Person

- a. The **Liaison Person** will represent the Presbytery through the initial six months of the placement. The Liaison Person may be the Convenor of the JNC, or the Presbytery Minister, or a minister in a nearby congregation, or another capable member of the calling presbytery's PRC or of the calling agency.
- b. The Liaison Person will maintain supportive contact with the minister throughout the process, from the issuing of a Call to the Affirmation of Call.

3. Before the placement commences:

- a. Liaison Person maintains contact with the minister, placement leaders, and PRC to oversee the transition. The LP doesn't need to organise everything, but to keep a helpful eye on behalf of PRC on how the settling-in and new ministry proceeds.
- b. The Liaison Person, in consultation with PRC and the placement, will negotiate and set the date of the Induction or Commissioning, and at the same time set a date and venue for Affirmation of Call, to be held 6 months after the placement commences.

4. When placement commences:

- a. Liaison Person keeps regular contact with the minister during the first six months. This could be by phone or face to face or both: contact should be at least monthly.
- b. The aim is to be helpful; to welcome the minister to the new Presbytery or Agency; to offer any necessary pastoral care; to be sensitive to issues of welfare and to detect and act upon any problems emerging.
- c. If transitional problems emerge (accommodation, stipend, family issues, etc.), the Liaison Person will take the initiative to support the minister, to keep Presbytery informed, and where possible to work for resolution.

5. Affirmation of Call: Six months into Placement ([see program below](#))

As described above, the Affirmation of Call aims to discern that this placement is a 'good match' of the minister's gifts, skills and calling with the missional plans and pastoral needs of the placement.

Representatives of the Presbytery, the Placement, colleagues and the minister will consult together to discern the emerging directions for this ministry.

The expected outcome will be an affirmation that this ministry is a genuine call of God, through the church, to this ministry; and some helpful comments to the minister and placement on the course to steer and resources needed until the next Vital Ministry consultation in about 18 months' time. A possible alternative outcome is that this is not a good match, and the church's pastoral processes should be initiated to find creative solutions.

6. Feedback

The feedback phase has been sorely neglected for very understandable reasons, but it is probably the most helpful part of the whole process, being a concrete tool for affirmation of call or perhaps a catalyst to seek new directions in ministry. It also provides for all parties a record of achievements, outcomes and decisions for future reference.

Reports of the process will be made to the PRC, the placement council and the minister. Critical or confidential information may not necessarily be included in written reports, as long as it is dealt with appropriately and not ignored. Other reporting processes may be required from time to time in different ministry settings and should be attended to.

People undertaking a POD or training for the ministry of Pastor have been in recent years required or encouraged to compile a Portfolio as part of the process of discernment and oversight. A Portfolio may be a very useful tool for all ministers in placement to develop, for the purpose of effective ministry appraisal and professional development.

- a. All data and conclusions must be recorded clearly and copies kept by minister and Presbytery.
- b. The Minister's portfolio may become a record (akin to a C.V.) of plans, achievements, experience, reports on continuing education and ministry engagement. It could helpfully include samples of ministry activities, some analysis and reflections, for use in future placement conversations. The Minister could take the opportunity to share and discuss the portfolio with their supervisor, Church Council, Presbytery Minister and other relevant people.
- c. PRC completes a written report with findings and recommendations and identifies who will follow up on these points (e.g. the Presbytery Minister) in a conversation soon after the consultation, and again around the 12 months mark as a means of facilitating the minister's Annual Report to Presbytery.
- d. Presbytery declares that the Call has been affirmed and thanks and discharges the JNC and Liaison Person.
- e. If the call is not affirmed, existing procedures may be invoked or assistance sought to counsel the minister and placement leaders about the most constructive way forward.

The Affirmation of Call Process *6 months into placement*

Who is involved?

Presbytery appoints the consultation team, usually through the PRC, and each Presbytery must determine the appropriate people to participate in the consultation. The members should include:

- Presbytery-appointed JNC Liaison Person;
- At least one other person appointed by the PRC, who is not from the congregation or placement.
- Three to four members of the congregation appointed by the Church Council or placement board, including at least some Church Councillors or other key leaders);
The minister should choose one of the congregational members of the Consultation Team. If the minister has reason to challenge any of the appointed names, the PRC or Liaison Person will need to work with the minister and Church Council to discern the validity of the challenge and to find a satisfactory group of representatives of the congregation;
- Where possible, a representative of the minister's colleagues in ministry within that region of the Presbytery or Agency;
- The Minister in placement;
- The Minister's partner should be invited to participate in at least part of the consultation. The partner may prefer to join the group, to have a private conversation with a member of the team, or not to engage in the process at all.
- Other people in specified ministry in the placement, especially if their work falls under the Minister's oversight, should be interviewed separately by the Presbytery representatives of the Team.

Care should be taken to include people who have pastoral skills, and sensitivity to the content of the congregation's long-range mission plan.

The simplest process may be to reconvene the Presbytery and congregational members of the JNC who negotiated the placement.

Non-Congregational placements: Synod, Assembly and Agencies may need to consider who will fill these roles, and confirm their appointment with the Presbytery.

Where and When?

- The consultation should **not** take place in the minister's residence. The minister's home needs to be a safe place and is not the appropriate venue for professional workplace appraisals.
- A shared meal has a place in the process in creating a good environment for conversation. However some aspects of this process are decidedly work-focused, and a working space with whiteboard, etc., may be more helpful. Use discretion; divide the time and focus.
- Limit sessions to 90 mins at a time with any individual or group, with worship and reflection.

Role of the Placement members in the process:

- Stimulate the Process: the congregation or agency should record the date of the Affirmation of Call, then take the initiative to call the AOC and invite the Presbytery to participate.
- Model effective, open, professional and communal processes of discernment, discussion and affirmation.
- Provide the space and equipment for effective consultation and communication.
- Extend genuine hospitality to the people in the process, including refreshments and warmth of welcome and a compassionate, pastoral attitude.

Role of the Minister in the process:

- Prepare thoroughly, including:
 - prayerfully discussing transitional issues with relevant people: Liaison Person, church leaders, Supervisor, spouse, etc.;
 - preparing and copying a ministry portfolio and relevant resources for the group;
 - ensuring adequate time is set aside for the process reflection and follow-up. The AOC should not be seen as a distraction from ministry, but as part of the effective work of ministry.
- Embrace the process as an opportunity for affirmation and assistance in ministry.

Role of the Presbytery members in the process:

- Take seriously the oversight of ministry for the wellbeing of the minister and placement and the effective mission of the church
- Provide all relevant up-to-date material to guide participants in the process
- Model effective, open, professional and communal processes of discernment, discussion and affirmation
- Provide the space and equipment for effective consultation and communication, including requests for private/confidential comments
- Report effectively and fairly to all stakeholders, with pastoral sensitivity to critical, confidential or controversial findings
- Ensure follow-up processes are clearly identified.

1. Expectations vs. reality of placement:

- Issues of transition: how has the move into this new placement been for you and your family?
- What are you pleased with in this new place?
- What ministry have people thanked you for?
- What are you disappointed with or concerned about?
- How are you reporting and giving feedback to your placement at this time?

2. Support and Connection

- Ministry support: what arrangements are you making for supervision and support networks?
- How has supervision helped you/supported you in establishing yourself in this new Placement?
Is the supervision the sort of supervision that will be effective in this Placement?
- Continuing education plans:
Overall plan for your professional development?
what skill or knowledge gaps do you need to fill?
What will give you energy and skills?
- Presbytery:
Besides attending meetings, what contribution can you make to the life and mission of the Presbytery from this point on?
- What support do you foresee you will need from Presbytery and how will you seek it?

3. Resources for ministry

- What further resources and support will you need, in order to meet the pastoral and mission objectives of this placement?
 - Education / training
 - Supervision / support
 - Office and practical support
 - Other... (Please specify)

4. Specific details of the first 6 months:

Compare the Placement Profile with your experience:

- How many people are REALLY in the congregation?
Who is counting?
- Profile of the activities of the church:
what groups and programs are running, where is the minister expected/needed to be, discuss service times/ styles, governance meetings, commitments.
- Portfolio:
Provide examples and samples of what has gone well so far in this ministry: sermons, studies, pastoral care, community engagements, new activities, changes.
- What contact have you made within the community – schools, council, local organisations?
- Pastoral contact with church members: what is your pastoral strategy for getting to know people?
- Given it is still early days, what new initiatives have you introduced so far? What opportunities are emerging for new ministry and what are your plans? What have you offered that is fresh or different? Give some concrete examples of your 'passion' for ministry that you have been able put into practice.
- How is your ministry being received?

5. Relationships:

Describe the quality of your relationships with:

- Colleagues in ministry
- Office Bearers and Church leaders
- Other people

6. Vocation:

- Do you believe you will be able to fulfil your calling and express your gifts in this placement?
Why / why not?

Is the Profile accurate or misleading?

What is the real state of the placement?

Content of Affirmation of Call: QUESTIONS FOR THE PLACEMENT	Comments
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1. Expectations vs. reality of placement:

- Is the congregation willingly meeting its commitment to welcome and support the minister and family? Please describe how.
- Are you aware of any areas of dissatisfaction or dispute? What is being done to resolve these?
- What positive signs are appearing so far in this new ministry?
- What things might be troubling or concerning the congregation at this time?
What are people saying in the car park?
- How are you giving feedback to the minister at this time?
- Does the Church Council know, agree to and respect the minister's responsibilities in regards to:
 - Presbytery commitments
 - Supervision
 - Required training requirements (Ethical Ministry, Safe Church, Ordinand expectations)
 - Continuing Education
 - Regular time off?
- Are there aspects of these responsibilities that are proving to be challenging to the congregation?
 -

2. Resources for ministry

- What further resources and support do you foresee the minister will need to help you meet your pastoral and mission objectives? Please be specific.
 - Education / training:
 - Support of the members:
 - Office and practical support:
 - Other...

3. Specific details on congregational mission / minister's 'job description' and actual workload

- Is the minister's workload in line with the stated mission objectives of the congregation, as they were described in the congregational Profile?
- Does the congregation know what the minister does during the week? What activities are using most of the minister's time?
- What further information would the Church Council need in order to draw up a reasonably accurate and achievable Job Description for this ministry in this place at this time?
- Given it is still early days, what new initiatives has the minister introduced or planned with the congregation so far? How is this ministry being received by the members? Who is responding with new involvement?

4. Relationships

- Who is minister's elder/carer?
- What are their responsibilities and how do they carry them out?
- What is your observation of the minister's collegiate relationships with Church Council and other people with whom s\he is in ministry?

Affirmation of Call | Sample Report

Rev. NAME

XXX Uniting Church

Consultation at ppp, DATE

Report to PRC | ABC Presbytery

Placement summary and details:

Terms of Placement comments

This Vital Ministry consultation was held on

Presbytery participants were ...

Representing the congregation were ...

Apology from...

Individual conversations were also held with colleagues:

The Panel met first with NAME for about two hours, then with the congregational reps for a similar period, then with N + N + N for about [20 minutes] each.

Summary of Observations

Considered Conclusions of the Panel

Recommendations:

1. that PRC receive this report and thank the team members;
2. that the call of God to Rev. NNN to ministry in the XXX Uniting Church be affirmed and upheld;
3. that the PRC encourage NNN
 - a. to seek a new Professional Supervisor and make arrangements for regular meetings;
 - b. to think through her needs in continuing Education for the next few years and complete a Continuing Education plan;
 - c. to report on both these things in her Annual Report to be submitted in the fourth quarter of this year.
4. That the PRC schedule a Vital Ministry consultation for MONTH (18 months hence).

Stage 2: Vital Ministry :

Ministry Appraisal for motivation and work engagement

It was noted above (p.3) that holding Vitality of Call consultations only in the fourth and seventh years of a ten-year placement tends to address the ‘what next – stay or go?’ question, rather than offering ways to “enhance ministry skills, effectiveness and work satisfaction in this or any other placement”. How can ministry appraisal be revised to provide ongoing broader enhancement of work engagement? The secular HR industry refers to this process (rather threateningly) as a ‘Performance Review’, usually held on an annual basis. These are often tied to a worker’s chance of promotion, bonuses or salary increases, or even ongoing employment. A more positive description is ‘Ministry Appraisal’, noting that appraisals may be both affirming and critical, but always seek constructive ways to affirm ministry strengths and grow undeveloped areas.

Implications of regular ‘ministry appraisal’

- **Frequency:** three year intervals are too far apart for effective oversight. In three years an unasked question or unhelpful pattern can become a full-blown problem. On the other hand, 12-monthly reviews come around very quickly, and few Presbyteries are equipped to manage that frequency. Two yearly is probably a plausible and effective timeframe.

	Affirm- ation of Call	Vital Ministry	VM	VM	VM	VM	VM	VM
2 year process	0.5 yr (foundational placement issues and directions)	2 yrs (i.e. 18 months after AOC)	4 yrs (attention to continuation of placement)	6 yrs	8 yrs (ie. in 9 th year) (attention to continuation of placement)	10 yrs henceforth attending to changing situation	12 yrs (attention to continuation of placement)	14 yrs (Exit VM? / attention to continuation of placement)

Some helpful tools

- **Annual Report:** Preparing an annual report in accordance with Regulation 2.2.1 (c) which covers the necessary areas of appraisal can also be tied to the Vital Ministry process in such a way that it does not add to the workload, but helps to focus the minister’s reflection on ministry and provide material for the consultants to consider.
- **Self-evaluation tools:** a great number of these exist online or in the published literature. Some may be adapted from other workplaces. Some people keep a portfolio of ministry activity with samples of work, sermons, planning, events.
- **Ministry Leadership Profile:** Ministers are responsible to keep their Profile up-to-date and a current version must be lodged with ACOMP after the fourth year in any placement, regardless of whether a move is being sought. A Vital Ministry consultation is a good opportunity to review and revise the Ministry Profile.
- **Continuing education and Supervision:** reflection on practice is vitally important and the insight of others should be sought and used appropriately. Reviewing one’s own journals and notebooks may assist in reflection.
- **One size does not fit all:** Any tool will be most helpful when creatively adapted to the needs of the particular ministry placement.

Vital Ministry appraisal: key questions

In extending the sample questions below, vitality could and should be checked in such areas as:

- clarity of mission priorities held and pursued
- theological and spiritual values and practices
- quality and effectiveness of proclamation, teaching and discipling
- skills in managing change and fostering innovation
- leadership style and effectiveness
- vision casting, team building, mission planning and execution
- pastoral and communication skills, relationships with others
- other areas specific to the placement

Vital Ministry will also need to engage the thoughts and experience of those with whom the minister is serving: members of the congregation, colleagues, possibly family members and other pertinent people, to ask:

- From the placement's perspective, is there a vitality in this ministry relationship which makes it viable for the future?
- How can strengths be utilised and problems addressed?
- What changes may need to be made for the health of the placement and minister, by either the placement or the minister?

Reporting and feedback

- Good reporting depends on good notes from the meeting(s)
- Reporting indicates that the minister and members have been heard clearly, and attention given to what has been said.
- Reports should first be sent to the members of the team and to the minister for checking of accuracy. The minister's comments should be considered and alterations made if they are fair. If the minister takes exception to something in the report, steps should be taken to resolve the issue before the report is lodged with PRC. No report containing nasty surprises or bombshells should ever be submitted to PRC, congregation or minister before those issues have been identified and pastorally worked through with the appropriate people, in person.
- A factual report should be made to the PRC with Recommendations for the PRC to make to the minister and / or placement leadership.
- The PRC should immediately set dates and people for follow-up within a reasonably timeframe.
- More complex outcomes may be better dealt with personally than through the sending of letters and emails.
- The Minister may be requested, before or after the consultation, to submit an updated Profile to the PRC. A clear timeframe should be stated and kept for that line of reporting.

A [sample Report](#) is included below.

Suggested questions for the Minister and Placement are listed below. The consultation should not, however, proceed as a checklist of questions, but rather as a pastoral conversation. The Vital Ministry team should of course reflect in advance on the principal issues of each consultation and use these or other questions and lines of inquiry as best fit the situation.

QUESTIONS FOR THE MINISTER

1. Reality Check

How are you feeling at this stage in your ministry:

- in this placement?
- in ministry in general?
- Are you still committed to the calling you answered in your ordination and induction/commissioning?
- What ministry do people particularly thank you for?
- What are you disappointed with or concerned about?

2. From your Annual Report

What things in your day-to-day ministry can be measured or accounted for objectively?

Are you exercising ministry in accordance with the requirements of the Uniting Church as expressed in the Regulations and Code of Ethics and Ministerial Conduct, including professional conduct, participation in the councils of the church, self-care, continuing education and supervision?

Take some time to discuss these things with the panel. Be prepared to describe and evaluate your own effectiveness in the core roles of your ministry – preaching, teaching the gospel, pastoral care, worship leading, community engagement, missional leadership, vision casting, spiritual counsel, etc.

3. Vocation and Discipleship

Are you still 'keeping the faith'?

- Is your personal faith in God – expressed through discipleship of Jesus Christ lived out in the Spirit – vital and sustaining?
- Can you express your own faith, spirituality and passions in this placement?
- How is your sense of and relationship with God growing, changing, developing?
- Are you guided by a clear vision of ministry, a sense of purpose for the people you serve? Do you have realistic, achievable and faithful goals for ministry in this place? Are you starting to feel the call to a new form of ministry?

4. Self-Care, Connection, Enhancement

Ministry support

- Describe your support networks and engagement in Professional Supervision.
- Can you give one or two examples of how supervision has helped you/supported you in ministry?
- Is it time to consider changing supervisors to bring a different lens to your ministry practice?

Continuing education

- Discuss your professional development/continuing education program.
What skill or knowledge gaps do you need to fill?
What will give you energy and skills?
Is your program meeting real ministry enhancement, or personal interests only?

Presbytery

- Besides attending meetings, what contribution do you make to the life and mission of the Presbytery?
- What support do you seek and receive from Presbytery?

Describe the quality of your relationships with:

- Colleagues in ministry
- Office Bearers and Church leaders
- Other people ... ?

5. Vital Ministry Practice

- List up to three projects over the past two years which you consider to be proceeding successfully. Be prepared to discuss one or two with the panel.
- Identify one or more projects that have not worked. What prevented their implementation? What have you learnt from this? What is helping or hindering the professional exercise of your ministry?
- Are you offering the ministry this placement most needs? How do you know? What else could you do?
- Where are the fault lines in this place? What points of conflict or disagreement make ministry hard? How do you cope? How could the situation be improved?
- Am I willing and able to meet the legitimate expectations of my placement, as they have been formally set down and informally developed along the way?

6. Personal

- What are the costs of ministry here? How much are you willing and able to bear? What extra resources do you need of education, training or personal support?
- How does this placement suit or challenge the needs of you and your family? What external factors influence the continuation of your ministry here, to stay or to seek to move on?
- How strong, now, is your sense of call to ministry? – to this ministry? – to another ministry? What do you sense about your future calling? How can you prepare for that?
- What personal goals are you working towards, and how do they affect your sense of vitality here?

7. Resources for ministry

- What further resources and support will you need, in order to meet the pastoral and mission objectives of this placement?
 - Education / training
 - Supervision / support
 - Office and practical support
 - Other... (Please specify)

8. Vocation:

- Do you believe your ministry in this placement has a continuing vitality, to the benefit of your people and your own growth in Christ?
- At this point in time, do you have a sense of the future of your placement and ministry?

VITAL MINISTRY APPRAISAL
at regular intervals in ministry
QUESTIONS FOR THE PLACEMENT

Comments

1. *Expectations vs. reality of placement:*

- Is the congregation willingly meeting its commitment to support the minister and family? Please describe how.
- Are you aware of any areas of dissatisfaction or dispute? What is being done to resolve these?
- What are the minister's greatest strengths in ministry?
- What things might be troubling or concerning the congregation?
What are people saying in the car park?
- How are you giving regular feedback to the minister at this time?
- Does the Church Council know, agree to and respect the minister's responsibilities in regards to:
 - Presbytery commitments
 - Supervision
 - Required training requirements (Ethical Ministry, Safe Church, Ordinand expectations)
 - Continuing Education
 - Regular time off?
- Are there aspects of these responsibilities that are proving to be challenging to the congregation?

2. *Specific details on congregational mission / minister's 'job description' and actual workload*

- What are the congregation's mission objectives?
Where are these documented?
How long ago was mission planning last done?
- Is the minister's workload in line with the objectives?
- Does the congregation know what the minister does during the week? What activities are using most of the minister's time?
- What further information would the Church Council need in order to draw up a reasonably accurate and achievable Job Description for this ministry in this place at this time?

3. From the minister's Annual Report

Read through the Minister's Annual Report, provided in preparation for this Vital Ministry consultation.

- What did you learn/realise?
- What surprises you?
- What concerns you?
- Where do you think the minister's exercise of ministry needs to be enhanced/supported/alterd to meet the needs of the placement as you understand them?

4. Resources for ministry

- What further resources and support might the minister need to help you meet your pastoral and mission objectives? Please be specific.
 - Education / training:
 - Support of the members:
 - Office and practical support:
- Other...

5. Congregation's Agenda

What do the congregational members and leaders wish to bring to the attention of the Vital ministry panel?

-

- ***Relationships***

- Who works closest with the minister on a day-to-day basis to exercise the responsibilities of a congregation?
- Who is minister's elder/carer?
- What are their responsibilities and how do they carry them out?
- What is your observation of the minister's collegiate relationships with Church Council and other people with whom s\he is in ministry?

6. Vocation:

- Do you believe your minister has a **Vital Ministry** in this particular placement, to the benefit of your people and their mission?
- At this point in time, do you have a sense of the future of this ministry here?

Vital Ministry | Sample Report to PRC

Positive, encouraging performance appraisal of ministers for healthy ministry engagement

Rev. NAME, XYZ Uniting Church

Consultation at the XYZ Uniting Church, Friday 12th Never, 2022

Placement summary and details, commencement date, projected conclusion:

Terms of Placement, changing or stable:

This Vital Ministry consultation was held on:

Presbytery participants were N, M, O

Representing the congregation were A, B, C

Apologies received from:

Individual conversations were also held with colleagues D, E, F

The Panel met first with NAME for about two hours, then with the congregational reps for a similar period, then with ,,,,,, for about 20 minutes each.

Summary of Observations

-
-

Considered Conclusions of the Panel

-
-

Recommendations:

That the XXX Presbytery PRC:

5. receive this report and thank the team members for their efforts;
6. convey their thanks to God and appreciation to Rev. NAME for his/her faithful ministry in PLACEMENT XYZ;
7. RECOMMEND to the minister...:
8. RECOMMEND to the placement...:
9. ALERT THE SYNOD to the following anomaly...:
10. REQUEST person NNN to follow up with the minister on the outcomes of these resolutions before the second-next meeting of the PRC and report back at that meeting.
11. Note in the PRC database that the minister's next Vital Ministry consultation will take place [in 2 years] when the following issues will need to be considered... [eg. extension, closure.]

TERMS OF PLACEMENT: Minister of the Word or Deacon, Synod and the Presbytery of ...

SYNOD REQUIREMENTS

In calling [MINISTER] to placement in [CONGREGATION(s) / PRESBYTERY], as conveyed in a letter dated [dd/MM/yyyy] to which this document is attached, the following are the agreed Terms of Placement to which the Minister and Placement commit themselves together in mutual ministry.

The terms set out below have the approval of the Sydney North Presbytery, and it is understood that it will be possible, with prayerful consideration, to consult together and ask the Presbytery to approve such changes as may become necessary or desirable from time to time.

1. Placement
 - a. Full time or limited placement.
 - b. If limited, please provide details of the nature in which placement is limited (e.g. amount of time, duration, other (percentages must be expressed in increments of 5).
2. Date of commencement:
3. **Remuneration** will be paid in accordance with Category (____) of the schedule of stipend and allowances as determined by the Synod from time to time.
4. **Residence:** (Delete A or B as appropriate)
 - a. A rent-free residence will be provided, and a description of the residence is attached.
Attention is drawn to:
 - i. the Synod's standards normally applicable to Ministerial residences.
 - ii. the requirement of the placement to provide: floor coverings; window furnishings; light fittings; refrigerator; washing machine; television antenna; study desk; chairs; shelving; filing cabinet.
 - b. An allowance/benefit in lieu of residence will be paid at an initial rate of \$ _____ per annum. Where appropriate the placement will provide or contribute to the cost of service for a mobile phone.
5. **Superannuation Matters** (Delete A or B as appropriate)
 - a. Beneficiary Fund: The Placement will pay contributions to the Beneficiary Fund at the rate required (or at the appropriate percentage of the full rate in the case of limited placement).
 - b. Lay Staff Superannuation (Pastor or similar): The Placement will pay contributions to the Lay Staff Superannuation Fund at the rate required (or at the appropriate percentage of the full rate in the case of limited placement).
 - c. The Superannuation Fund nominated by the Minister/Appointed Person.
In all instances contributions will be deducted from the remuneration and paid as required.
6. **Ministerial Support Funds:** The Placement will pay contributions to the Ministerial Support Funds at the rate required (or at the appropriate percentage of the full rate in the case of limited placement).
7. **Home Endowment Fund:** The Placement will deduct contributions from the remuneration and remit them as required.
8. **Other Allowances/Benefits:** (e.g. professional supervision costs, books, CD Rom, software, telephone (personal STD IDD), excess water). Resource allowance is 2% of stipend.
9. **Leave:** Annual Leave shall be thirty days per annum. Other leave shall be taken in accordance with the provisions of Synod as set out in the By-Laws.
10. Any understandings that have been reached about how the ministerial responsibilities are to be shared or the responsibilities and/or time commitments for which the minister is called (i.e. specific job description).

PRESBYTERY GUIDELINES (Sample used in Sydney North Presbytery)

In addition to the standard NSW Synod Terms of Placement the Sydney North Presbytery places the following expectations upon all congregations and ministers in congregational placements. Presbytery can give guidance in matters that may be unclear, including computers and communications needs.

1. **Regional Ministry Teams:** From 2010, all ministers will join [SNP Regional Ministry Teams](http://www.sydneynorth.nsw.uca.org.au/people/pastoral-relations-committee) [link at <http://www.sydneynorth.nsw.uca.org.au/people/pastoral-relations-committee>] to share the opportunities and needs of the churches in a local Presbytery sub-region. Participation at meetings is expected of every Minister in specified placements, including ordained ministers and pastors (and chaplains where appropriate). Teams will meet 4-5 times a year.
2. **Ministry Responsibilities to the Wider Church:** Ministers commit themselves in their Ordination and Induction vows to accept the oversight and encouragement of the Presbytery and to be involved in its life, including attendance at Presbytery meetings. Every person in placement is considered as an agent of and a resource to the whole church, which may include Synod, Assembly or ecumenical responsibilities. This commitment is widely accepted as at least 10% of a Minister's working hours. Sydney North has not set a fixed proportion of time.

The **Minister** will be willing and available to share in the ministry, mission and administration of the Presbytery and wider church, as gifted.

The **Placement** should understand and accept the responsibility of each Minister to participate in the mission of the church beyond the bounds of the placement.

The **Presbytery** will respect appropriate boundaries and negotiate with the placement any excessive demands that may be made upon a minister.

3. **Supervision and Continuing Education:** The Presbytery expects every minister in placement to observe the Assembly requirements in regard to Supervision and Continuing Education.
 - a. **Continuing Education:** Ministers will complete a Continuing Education Covenant and submit this annually to the Presbytery and to their Church Council or placement supervisory board. As a part of their Continuing Education, all ministers in placement will attend any professional development, polity and ethics awareness courses required by the Assembly, Synod and Presbytery from time to time.
 - b. **Supervision:** Ministers will undertake regular Supervision as required of ordained ministers in the Uniting Church in Australia by the Assembly (Reg. 3.1.3(a)(ii)). The Minister in Placement will complete the Presbytery Supervision report annually and submit it to PRC and the Church Council. The Placement should support and encourage the Minister's participation in supervision, and contributes to the cost of supervision through the Resource Allowance (see Synod Terms of Placement, #8 above.)
 - c. **Ministry Retreat:** As part of ministry and as an extension of their Professional Supervision, ministers are expected to reflect on their ministry through participation in a guided retreat. Attendance at the annual Presbytery Retreat or an approved equivalent is an expectation of all Ministers in the Presbytery. Supervision and retreat time is an important part of ministry, and is included in the Minister's working hours, not Study Leave or Annual Leave.
4. **Leave – 'Sundays Off':** The Presbytery interprets the Minister's annual recreational leave entitlements of 30 days [By-Laws 12.3.3 and 12.3.6] to include four Sundays, and study leave to include two Sundays without worship or other responsibilities in their placement. In addition to these six Sundays, the Presbytery will grant to Ministers an additional two Sundays per annum, where they are not required to lead or participate in worship within their placement. These are intended to make it possible for the Minister to have family or personal time in lieu of the gazetted long weekends which the rest of the community enjoys. These two Sundays are not to be taken consecutively nor in conjunction with annual leave, and may not

be accumulated. It is the responsibility of the Church Council to record all leave and report annually to the PRC on leave taken and balance due.

5. **Communications:** The placement needs to provide the Minister with adequate telecommunications facilities, including mobile phone (see Synod requirements) and broadband internet access. The placement will:
 - a. meet the standing cost of the phone connections in the residence and church;
 - b. ensure that both the residence and the church office are 'broadband enabled' (a modest, once-only setup cost);
 - c. provide a broadband service in the minister's principal working office (either church or residence), including hardware and ISP;
 - d. pay at least that proportion of the landline and mobile phone costs incurred in ministerial duties. A call log and/or dedicated church mobile phone plan may help monitor usage.
 - e. The placement may meet other needs by negotiation with the minister.
6. **Computer:** A personal computer (desktop or laptop) is now an essential tool for the exercise of ministerial duties. The placement needs to ensure that a suitable computer system is available to the minister (not shared with others) in their principal working office. As many ministers will have particular preferences, or prefer to buy their own computer, the placement and minister should negotiate how this requirement will be met.

Placements should note that most computers will need to be replaced or significantly upgraded every three years. Presbytery recommends that a budget of \$1500 over three years be allocated for the minister's computer costs. The placement may choose to leave the purchase to the minister's discretion, by adding this amount to the minister's Resource Allowance.

Signed:

•

Church Council Secretary

Minister

Date:

Date:

A signed copy to be forwarded to the Synod Associate Secretary and a copy retained by each of the Minister, Congregation and Presbytery.