

GUIDELINES FOR PERSONS, PRESBYTERIES AND SYNODS INVOLVED IN TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR PERSONS IN THE SPECIFIED MINISTRIES EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY OF ORDINATION

INTRODUCTION

A person seeking to transition from a lay specified ministry to Minister of the Word or Deacon will not need to do a Period of Discernment, or follow the normal process to candidate for ordination. Rather each person recognised in one of the Specified Ministries (which will no longer be available for new candidates as from Dec 31st 2008) will need to approach the Presbytery before the end of 2009 to determine their future course of action, whether seeking ordination as a Minister of the Word or Deacon, remaining in their specified ministry, applying for a new placement in the new specified ministry of Pastor, or continuing in some other aspect of the one ministry of God's baptised people.

STEPS IN THE PROCESS

1. All Lay Pastors, Community Ministers or Accredited Youth Workers will be invited to attend a one or two day "Discernment Retreat" offered by the Synod Transition Panel to be established as part of the implementation of these guidelines. The Discernment Retreat will provide an opportunity to explore the question "Am I called to ordained ministry?", and will provide information to clarify the process involved in the transition.
2. A Lay Pastor, Community Minister or Accredited Youth Worker [the Applicant], discerning the call to one of the ordained ministries will apply to the Presbytery to be accepted into the transition process.
3. On receipt of the application the presbytery will
 - a) discern with the Applicant the nature of the ministry to which the Applicant is called; and
 - b) consider the matter in terms of qualifications required of an Applicant for Minister of the Word or Deacon as set out in Regulation 2.2.2.(a).(i)&(ii) for accepting a person into the transition process. If the Applicant is accepted the Presbytery will appoint one person to journey with the Applicant, and another person to represent the Presbytery and be accountable to the Presbytery.
4. The Applicant will work with the Presbytery appointee to develop a portfolio to be presented to the Synod Transitional Panel. The portfolio will provide the necessary information for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Recognition of Previous Experience (RPE), and should include:
 - concise autobiographical narrative
 - summary of educational and vocational goals
 - sense of call, and hopes for future ministry
 - detailed account of learning, including:
 - work experience;
 - formal learning experience (e.g. academic transcripts);
 - informal learning experience (e.g. supervised or personal reflection programs)
 - life experience.

Any Applicant who has had their position re-assessed in the past due to previous Assembly decisions should carefully note the dates at which this happened, and give a brief account of the process for their application.

5. The Synod Transitional Panel will fulfill the responsibilities of the Synod Selection Panel as set out in 2.2.10,11,12.
- If the Applicant is accepted as a candidate the Synod Transitional Panel will work with Presbyteries to develop an appropriate transition program for each Applicant. The Panel will consist of four persons:
- a Convenor;
 - a Person to help with the discernment of Call to Ordination (as it is understood within the Uniting Church in Australia);
 - a person who can assist with the assessment of RPE; and
 - an advisor from the faculty of the theological college or the Synod's Ministerial Education Board who can assist with the assessment of RPL.

The Panel will work with the Applicant to develop an appropriate program of formation for Ordained Ministry, which will take into account existing Skill and Academic Training, Recognition of Prior Learning, ministry experience and personal skills. The formation program will include an opportunity for reflection on and preparation for the Ordained Ministry being applied for, and may also include further study.

It is noted that many in the specified ministries have already completed equivalent theological degrees to those required for ordination. Where this is not the case both Recognition of Prior Learning, and Recognition of Prior Experience will be given weight when developing the formation program. In any case a period of Transition exceeding one year would be seen to be the exception rather than the rule.

Applicants have the right to appeal against a decision of the Presbytery or the Synod Transitional Panel following the procedure in Regulation 2.2.14.

It is recommended that the MEB or Theological College in each Synod be requested to provide a week-long Formation Intensive (including Church, Ministry and Sacraments) during 2007 and 2008, and that most Applicants will be asked to attend by the Synod Transitional Panel.

The Synod Transitional Panel will work through with each Applicant the implications of the proposed program of formation in terms of impact on placement responsibilities and cost. It will work with the Presbytery to identify a group to mentor and support the Applicant as s/he considers and prepares for ordination; and work with the Presbytery on any other matters that may be helpful in the process.

The Synod Transitional Panel will be responsible to determine the outcome of each application. When the Synod Transitional Panel has agreed that the Applicant has completed the study and formation required in consultation with the Ministerial Education Commission, the Presbytery will be informed that the candidate has satisfactorily met all conditions required for ordination. The Synod Transitional Panel will recommend to the appropriate Presbytery that a person is ready to be ordained. The Synod Transitional Panel may also recommend that an Applicant not proceed to ordination, but continue in another aspect of leadership and service.