

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA



GUIDELINES ON PROCEDURES

FOR THE

APPOINTMENT OF PASTORS

2008

(Issued May 1 2008)

PREFACE

The 11th Assembly (Brisbane 2006) resolved to simplify the lay Specified Ministries of the Church. The decision was taken to discontinue the Specified Ministries of Community Minister, Lay Pastor and Youth Worker and to introduce the new Specified Ministry of Pastor.

Pastor is a lay ministry of the Church. It is a role where a person exercises a significant ministry on behalf of the Church in one or more of the following areas:

- a) teaching the beliefs and practices of the Church; and / or
- b) pastoral oversight of members and / or groups operating under the auspices of the Uniting Church; and / or
- c) leadership of worship in congregations or faith communities of the Church; and / or
- d) evangelism or service beyond a gathered congregation but which is exercised under the auspices of the Uniting Church;

and where the Presbytery designates the ministry location as appropriate for a Pastor.

The Ministry of Pastor is not intended to cover all the significant ministries undertaken by laypersons in the life of the church. However it is broader than the traditional lay Specified Ministries in the range of people who will be designated Pastor for the purposes of the Regulations.

Persons who are accountable to the Church under the Pastor Regulations do not have to be called Pastor in their ministry. They may be, for example, part time or full time paid youth workers, pastoral assistants in a congregation or chaplains. Any of these descriptors are appropriate. People exercising ministries that have been designated by the church as "Pastor" shall be identified by their position description, eg chaplain, youth worker, etc and not automatically as "Pastor." The important thing is that whatever they are called, such people are in a relationship of accountability with the Church.

The purpose of these Guidelines is to help guide people through what may be unfamiliar territory in a way that enables the processes of the church to be understood, effective and appreciated.

The primary document to guide the recognition, appointment and oversight of Pastors is the Regulations. However it is helpful to offer guidance so that the Regulations are applied consistently. These Guidelines do not address all the Regulations related to Pastors but only those that are connected with the appointment phase of the process.

Lay people offering significant leadership in our congregations and other settings has been an increasing feature of the life of the UCA. When people exercise a ministry that is seen in the community as representative of the whole church it is appropriate for the Church, through its Regulations, to express its expectations of these ministry agents.

The aim of the Regulations on the Ministry of Pastor is to offer support to people in key ministries and to give confidence to the wider community that people who exercise ministries on behalf of the UCA are competent for the roles to which they have been appointed.

Grace and Peace,



Terence Corkin
Assembly General Secretary

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SECTION 1:

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines should be read in conjunction with UCA Regulations 2.14.1 – 2.14.17.

Fundamentally the appointment of a Pastor is an exercise in discerning the will of God in relation to a person's vocation and the mission of the Church. Everyone involved in the process should exercise sensitivity, openness and act prayerfully. This is a listening and discerning process.

1.2 DEFINITIONS

In these Guidelines, terms are used in the following way:

- **Pastor** means a person so designated and commissioned by a Presbytery (see Regulations 2.14.5, 2.14.11 and 2.14.12) for the exercise of one or more of the roles described in Regulation 2.14.2.
- **Appointment** means the ministry location in which the Pastor exercises their ministry and the process through which they are employed in that role.
- **Employing Body** means the congregation or other recognised body within the life of the Church that is responsible for the remuneration and / or oversight of a Pastor.
- **Appointing Body** means a group acting on behalf of the employing body in the process of recruitment, selection and offering of employment to a Pastor.
- **Placement** means an approved placement [Reg 2.7.1(a)(i)] in a Congregation or other body wherein ministry is exercised.
- **Presbytery** means the regional Council of the Church with oversight of the Ministers and Congregations within its bounds. Where Presbytery is used in these Guidelines read Synod and Assembly in the case of Synod and Assembly appointments.

- **Competencies**

Core competencies means those competencies determined by the Ministerial Education Commission as essential for all persons that exercise the Ministry of Pastor.

General competencies means those competencies determined by the Ministerial Education Commission as essential for all persons exercising a particular ministry role, for example chaplain, youth worker, etc.

SECTION 2:

IDENTIFYING A MINISTRY AS SUITABLE FOR A PASTOR

**2.1 DECISION TO
CREATE A POSITION**

At the earliest opportunity when it is known that it is intended to create a position that has the characteristics described in Regulation 2.14.2 the employing body shall contact the Presbytery (see Regulation 2.14.3).

The employing body shall be guided by the requirements of the Presbytery but shall submit a Position Description, the proposed terms of employment and such other documentation, as the Presbytery requires.

The decision as to whether a ministry location shall be designated as a Pastor appointment is for the Presbytery to make. However it is helpful if Congregations and Agencies have some sense of when the positions they create might be designated as Pastor for the purposes of the Regulations. Examples of positions that would normally fall into this category are youth workers, lay pastoral assistants and chaplains. However volunteers such as Scripture teachers, hospital visitors and worship leaders will not normally fall under these Regulations. Lay Ministry teams are becoming increasingly widespread. It is important that support and oversight be provided to people in these roles. However it is not expected that the Pastor regulations will be the way of doing this for people in these situations.

**2.2 PRESBYTERY
DECISION ABOUT
THE POSITION**

The Presbytery shall determine whether the position is one where the person occupying it should be a Pastor for the purposes of the Regulations.

In reaching its decision the Presbytery shall take into account whether the person will exercise some or all of the responsibilities outlined in Regulation 2.14.2; is filling a designated placement (Regulation 2.14.5 (a) (ii)); whether the person is remunerated; and whether there is a clear process of advertising, interview, appointment and accountability.

Pastors may be volunteers so the absence of remuneration does not settle the question. However the presence of remuneration would be a strong indicator, all other things being present, that the person appointed to the position should be regarded as a Pastor.

When a Presbytery agrees to the appointment of a layperson to fill an approved placement the layperson shall automatically be designated as a Pastor. If a location is deemed appropriate for the exercise of one of the Church's Specified Ministries (which is what approving a Placement means) then other persons appointed to that approved placement should also be in a specified relationship with the Church.

**2.3 SUBSEQUENT
ACTIONS BY THE
PRESBYTERY**

When a Presbytery determines that a position is suitable for the exercise of the Ministry of Pastor the Presbytery shall ensure that the appointing body makes clear to all applicants for the position that it is a condition of employment that they shall be subject to the Pastor Regulations.

The Presbytery is entitled to appoint a person to any nominating or appointing group for an appointment to a Congregation or Presbytery position (Regulation 3.4.4(k)).

SECTION 3:

DESIGNATION AS A PASTOR

INTRODUCTION

There are two ways in which a person is designated a Pastor for the purposes of the Regulations.

1. They are appointed to a position that has been designated as suitable for a Pastor (see Guideline 2.2), and
2. By being recognised by a synod as suitable and being appointed through the Placements Committee of the Synod (see Regulation 2.14.6).

3.1 DOCUMENTATION

The roles being undertaken by Pastors are important ministries in the life of the Church and those who fill them need to exhibit not only the skills necessary but also the gifts and graces appropriate for a representative of the Church. See Regulations 2.14.7 – 2.14.9 for the inquiries that appointing bodies should make.

SECTION 4:

THE APPOINTMENT OF A PASTOR

4.1 BEST HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTICE

Employing bodies should consult with their synod about appropriate human resources practices and procedures. It is anticipated that there will be a Handbook available to guide appointing bodies through their part of the process.

4.2 TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The appointing body in consultation with the Presbytery shall establish the remuneration, terms and conditions of employment for Pastors. Reference shall be given to relevant legislation, decisions of the Church, awards and community standards.

It should not be assumed that Pastors appointed to approved placements shall receive the same terms and conditions as other Specified Ministers. This is something that has to be determined on a case by case basis.

4.3 THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The appointing body appoints a nominating committee to conduct the interviews and recommend an appointment. The Presbytery has the prerogative to have a person on the nominating committee for any Pastor position (Regulation 3.4.4(k)).

4.4 APPOINTING PEOPLE WHO CANNOT BECOME PASTORS

One of the conditions for being recognised as a Pastor is that a person be a confirmed member or member in association of the Uniting Church for at least twelve months at the time of appointment (see Regulation 2.14.11 (a)).

There will be a number of situations where it is appropriate to appoint a person who has not been a member of the UCA for twelve months. It will be for the appointing body to determine what weight it wishes to place on membership of the UCA for a particular position. For example it may be seen as very significant for a person in a key pastoral and leadership role in a congregation and less relevant for a 10 hour a week worker or a chaplain in an aged care facility.

Where a person is appointed who will not be subject to the Pastor Regulations because they are not a member or member in association of the Uniting Church then it is a requirement that the letter of offer indicate that they shall have to demonstrate competency in the core competencies and to be subject to the Code of Ethics and the Church's Sexual Misconduct Regulations, as well as continuing education that is appropriate for the ministry they are to exercise.

Normal employment practice allows for the provision of a three month probation period in a letter of offer. This should be standard practice in all appointment letters.

4.5 ASSESSING CORE COMPETENCIES

The Presbytery is to assess, before appointment, whether a person can demonstrate the core competencies. This responsibility may be fulfilled through the Presbytery person appointed to the nominating committee. If the core competencies are not demonstrated then an assessment should be undertaken as soon as possible after appointment so that preparation to enable demonstration of the core competencies can commence as soon as possible.

4.6 PROBATION

The Presbytery may grant permission for a person to be appointed subject to them being able to satisfactorily demonstrate the core competencies by the end of the probation period (see Regulation 2.14.9 (b)).

SECTION 5:

RECOGNITION OF PASTORS

The Presbytery shall commission a Pastor when they have satisfactorily demonstrated all the requirements (see Regulation 2.14.11) and in accordance with a service approved by the Assembly (see Regulation 2.14.12).

SECTION 6:

COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT

As a condition of their employment Pastors are required to develop the competencies that are appropriate to the position to which they have been appointed.

If the Presbytery has determined that the successful applicant has not yet demonstrated the Core Competencies these shall be the first focus for the person's competency development.

Applicants who cannot demonstrate competency in the Core Competency areas shall undertake a program of learning in these areas provided by bodies approved by the MEC for this purpose. (MEC Rules for the Ministry of Pastor). The programs do not necessarily have to be delivered by the approved bodies, for example a Presbytery may choose to conduct group sessions, but the programs must be prepared by approved bodies.

The Presbytery will satisfy itself as to the competency of the Pastor in relation to the schedule of General Competencies prepared by the Ministerial Education Commission (MEC). The General Competencies shall be linked to the particular role being undertaken by the Pastor.

After appointment, the Presbytery will assess the competencies of the Pastor against the schedule produced by the MEC and develop a learning agreement, as appropriate, with the Pastor to develop the competencies that are still to be demonstrated.

The amount of time that can be expected of a Pastor for developing competencies and training, and the rate at which competencies will be developed, will need to be proportionate to the number of hours being worked by the Pastor. For example a full time ministry agent will be expected to complete any continuing education in General Competencies more promptly than a ten hour a week worker.

In assessing competencies recognition for prior learning shall be granted.

Presbyteries have a responsibility to know the learning agreement of Pastors and to ensure that it is undertaken in a timely manner.

Presbyteries are to advise the Synod Ministerial Education Board annually of each Pastor's learning agreement and progress and provide feedback concerning the assessment and supervision of Pastors (MEC Rules for the Ministry of Pastor).

Once all the relevant competencies have been achieved then this process is concluded. However it is hoped that Presbyteries will continue to encourage Pastors in ongoing education and training.