

GUIDELINES FOR MINISTERS

If a member of the congregation wishes to candidate for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work, there is only one formally specified task for the local Minister – **to act as one of the candidate's referees.**

Much more fundamentally, however, the Minister needs to bear in mind certain other matters in order to give the best support and advice throughout the whole process, from initial query to post-assessment decision. It will be more difficult to offer support if, from the beginning, there has been unreflective judgement about the enquirer's vocation.

Through the assessment and candidating process the Church seeks to discern a call to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work and the potential for spiritual, personal and intellectual growth. The primary role of the local Minister is support, both during the assessment process, if that is how the individual wishes to proceed following initial discussions and, if necessary, at the end of the candidating process if the Assessment Board decision is not to commend the individual for ministerial training.

It is not in the candidate's long-term interest to be encouraged by the local Minister to candidate before fulfilling the basic requirements of membership and educational qualifications (see 'Candidating and Assessment for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work – pre-assessment criteria'). This does not mean the prospective candidate need be deterred from exploring a sense of vocation but is given a realistic idea of the length of time the candidating process will take. It may be two years or more. If the Minister has any questions about whether the candidate fulfils the basic requirements listed, they should speak with the Synod Moderator (or Candidating Secretary).

The Minister should ensure that family members or those close to the candidate are given an opportunity to be involved and to ask their own questions. People need to consider the profound changes that occur when someone close to them is called to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work. They also need to be reassured that there are as many ways of being the minister's family or close support as there are individuals involved.

It may be that the local Minister discerns a different view of the nature of the call that is heard. There are obvious difficulties in continuing to support someone whose sense of calling you are perceived to have challenged and an appropriate way forward may be to share any reservations with the Moderator.

Be honest with yourself. If you recognise personal doubts about a candidate, it will be in the interests of all if that is acknowledged. If you can do this then it will still be possible to write a report on the candidate's involvement in the local church for candidates for Minister of Word

and Sacraments or neighbourhood for those candidating for Church Related Community Work that will then be read by others who are aware of your position.

Checklist ~

As from General Assembly 2007, the formal assessment process will proceed as follows: Church Meeting decision, Synod decision, the Assessment Board makes the final decisions about forwarding a candidate for training and the Training Board decides the method of training. These decisions are taken after the Assessment Conference interviews and candidates will be informed of the decisions within two weeks of the Conference. The process can be halted at either the Church Meeting or Synod interview stages

- The next step after your initial conversation with the enquirer is to arrange a meeting between the enquirer and the Moderator (or Synod Candidating Secretary where no Moderator is in place). However prior to formal assessment it is necessary to satisfy the pre-assessment criteria so before the meeting with the Moderator.

Check that

- you are aware of the pre-assessment criteria and the assessment process
- the candidate has the information on the pre-assessment assessment and assessment process
- the candidate has been a member of the United Reformed Church for at least two years prior to candidating i.e. before submitting a completed application form
- the candidate conforms to age criteria set by the General Assembly
- the candidate satisfies the minimum educational requirements for ministerial training;
- you have talked with the family or those close to the candidate about the call to ministry;
- you have discussed any concerns about the pre-assessment criteria with the Moderator. Where there is need for preliminary work in order to satisfy the pre-assessment criteria the prospective candidate and Moderator or Synod Candidating Secretary will agree the likely timescale for that individual before formal candidating can take place.
- the candidate is comfortable with the information given by the Moderator or Synod Candidating Secretary,
- the candidate understands the timetable for the pre-assessment and formal candidating process.

If the candidate proceeds to formal assessment:

- accompany the candidate to a meeting of Synod;
- ensure that the Elders and Church Meeting understand their responsibilities;
- set up support for the candidate and family or those close to the candidate;
- send your reference to the Synod Candidating Secretary;
- ensure that the Church Secretary or another Elder has signed and returned the Church Meeting report and recommendation.

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Date of last revision: November 2020*