

GUIDELINES FOR CANDIDATES



You may be reading this because you have been to an Enquirers' Conference, or had a chat with your local Minister, in which case you have already begun to test that sense that God is calling you to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work.

On the other hand you may have picked up this leaflet at a Synod event because you have already heard the call but have yet to share that with anyone else.

Whatever your situation, now is a good time to think about the series of conversations and interviews - in which you will share if you decide to test your call.

You will talk to the local Minister, Synod Moderator or Synod Candidating officer your candidacy will need to be approved by your local Church and Synod, then you will attend an Assessment Conference where the final decision on whether you will be sent for training will be taken.

The different Councils of the Church are all represented in the process. The whole Church is involved for, as a Minister or Church Related Community Worker, you will not exist in isolation from other Church members. This is a testing time, in more ways than one. The purpose of the conversations and interviews is to seek God's will and calling in your life, not to interview you for a job.

You will need to complete an application form, submit a reflective account of a Church Meeting, and Synod Council and provide personal references.

By involving the whole Church the interviewing process takes quite a long time. Please expect the time from first talking to your Minister to the commencement of training, if that is the outcome, to take up to two years or more. Frustration sets in when there is an unrealistic expectation about the speed of the process. Anxiety is often the result of not having information about the timescale. (Ask those advising you for the deadlines for paperwork and dates of meetings, even those you do not attend.)

The need to gain academic qualifications or have experience of the United Reformed Church may delay your transition to formal candidating (see - 'Candidating and Assessment for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments'). However do not be deterred if you do not meet all the requirements from the beginning; it should not prevent your local church and Synod from offering guidance and support. Share your sense of call with your Minister and Moderator.

The end of every candidating experience should be positive whether or not it confirms a call to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work. God may be calling you to use your particular gifts in a different way. Your local Church and Synod will help you realise what that is to be.

The attached checklist guides you through the process

Checklist

- If you are reading this as a first stage, now is the time to speak to your Minister.
- Now is also the time to talk to those close to you who will be affected by your candidature. If you become a candidate, and subsequently a student, their lives will be changed long before you receive a call to a local church or accredited CRCW project. There is no prescribed pattern of involvement for your partner these days but a willingness to support a person in ministry and share that person with others to a considerable degree is important to establish from the outset. Make sure that those close to you have an opportunity to talk to the Minister and representatives of the Synod as well.
- In your initial enquiries, that is during meetings with the Moderator or Synod Candidating officer, check that you :-
 - meet the pre-assessment criteria of :
 - membership of the United Reformed Church for at least two years prior to candidating;
 - know, and satisfy, the age criteria set by the General Assembly;
 - know the minimum educational requirements prior to ministerial training;
 - understand the timetable for the pre-assessment and 'formal assessment ' process. (See Candidating and Assessment for the ministries of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work.)
- Before the formal candidating process begins check you have:
 - filled in an application form;
 - supplied names of referees to the Synod Candidating secretary;
 - understood, accept and are committed to the Schedule for ordination or commissioning and the Basis of Union;
 - be aware of the Guidelines on Conduct and Behaviour for Ministers of Word and Sacraments/Church Related Community Workers;
 - attended a Church Meeting, and Synod and supplied reflective accounts of Church and Synod Meetings attended;
 - completed the form relating to disclosure of criminal convictions and court order.

If you are candidating for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments you need to have conducted on at least one service and preached one sermon, assessed on behalf of the Synod.

If you are candidating for Church Related Community Work you need to visit at least one CRCW accredited project. You also need to prepare a 10 minute presentation **for the Assessment Conference** on the ways our faith can produce the actions that make a positive difference to people and their communities.

The Church Meeting interview and recommendation may be concurrent with the writing of reflective accounts, preparing the service or visiting a Church Related Community Work Project

Do you:-

know if your family or those close to you have been given all the information and support they need,
know what support is in place for you during the candidating process and after?

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Guidelines for writing the reflective accounts which candidates for training for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work are asked to supply.

Before going to your interviews arranged by the Synod, you have to supply a reflective account of Church Meetings attended. You will also attend the Synod and be asked to write a reflective account of that meeting as part of the whole candidating process. The following guidelines are intended to help you to do this. 300-500 words is a reasonable length for such an account.

1. A reflective account is not simply a description of everything that occurred at a Church meeting or Synod. Such an account might be described as narrative. It is not reflective.
2. It will need to identify what seemed to you to be the most important aspects. These are likely to include the major agenda items; but they may also include, for example, the worship with which the meeting probably started and ended, the nature and size of the attendance, and the fellowship structure within which the meeting took place. A reflective account should not attempt to cover every aspect of the meeting.
3. In preparing your reflective account, you may like to consider the following questions:
 - Did members of the Church Meeting /Synod seem to be seeking the will of God, or simply trying to persuade others of the rightness of their own point of view? Did they listen to those whose opinion was different?
 - Was the meeting significantly different from comparable meetings of other bodies you've been to? If so, how?
 - Did the meeting reflect an inward-looking, defensive Church, preferring to concentrate on business matters; or a Church anxious to relate its faith to contemporary society?
 - Did those attending the meeting seem happy and comfortable to be there? Or did some seem to be isolated or anxious? What about you?
 - Was there a reasonable balance amongst those attending, in terms of age, gender and ethnicity? If not, why not?

Some questions for a CRCW candidate to consider

Community Work Experience

- What type of Community Work are you currently involved in and/or have you been involved with?
- Where, how long, what were/are the roles and responsibilities?
- Have you ever supervised, managed and supported other workers or volunteers?
- Have you passed on your skills, experience, knowledge and understanding to others?
- Have you ever delivered training (informal or formal)?
- How do you encourage people to think about and become involved in a variety of issues?
- How do you involve people in groups, centres, projects and organisations?

Awareness, Knowledge and Understanding

- How will you bring your experience and values to your work and how do you understand the role that these play?
- What do you feel are the particular skills and personal qualities that will enable you to work with the community? Do you know your own strengths and weaknesses?
- Are you able to organise yourself and set priorities and to share these co-operatively?
- Are you able to develop ways of making themselves accountable to the community?
- Are you able to develop a support structure?
- Do you welcome positive challenging supervision as a process of self-development?
- Are you aware of your need to re-appraise values and to extend your own learning?
- Do you know when you are not the appropriate person to be working within groups or with a particular individual?
- Are you aware of (have you had experience of) discrimination and oppression and are you particularly open to challenge from oppressed groups?

- How do you work with people who have different viewpoints to you? Are you open to challenge, have you challenge others?
- Within conflict situations, what was your role? How did you or others handle it?
- Do you understand how others may view you – Are you aware of how others see you?
- Do you understand how learning will affect their practice in the community
- Can you identify future learning needs