

CANDIDATING AND PRE-ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE FOR THE MINISTRIES OF WORD AND SACRAMENTS AND CHURCH RELATED COMMUNITY WORK

In 1996 the General Assembly adopted the proposals for the assessment of candidates for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments which resulted from three years widespread consultation throughout the United Reformed Church and are set out in Criteria for Assessment for Ministry of Word and Sacraments. Since 2000 these have also applied to candidates for Church Related Community Work. The objects of the assessment of candidates are:

- To explore the sense of call
- To recognise individual qualities
- To identify the potential to acquire further skills and knowledge through training

The Candidating and Assessment information material includes:

- the list of pre-assessment criteria
- the areas to be addressed throughout the Assessment process

There are also guidelines on Candidating and Assessment for:

- Candidates
- Ministers
- Moderators
- Synod Candidating officers
- Church meetings
- Synods

THE ENQUIRY STAGE

Meeting with Minister or Interim Moderator

This is informal and exploratory

Meeting with Synod Moderator/or Moderator's deputy

This is informal and informative. However, the Moderator has a responsibility to check that the potential candidate fulfils the basic age, membership and educational criteria agreed by General Assembly. If a candidate does not meet any or all of the criteria the Moderator should discuss

what steps could be taken in order for the candidate to satisfy the criteria or what other forms of service the candidate might be encouraged to offer to the Church.

Enquirers Event

At any point during this stage of the process the potential candidate should be encouraged to attend an Enquirers Event. These are held twice a year and give the enquirer the opportunity to meet with those exercising ministry as well as to ask questions of the Secretary for Ministries.

Pre-Assessment Criteria

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.

All prospective candidates and those who interview them must know which criteria have to be met before the formal process of assessment can begin.

The prospective candidate needs to:

- have been in membership of the United Reformed Church for at least two years prior to candidating;
- conform to the age criteria applied in 2006 following the General Assembly resolution 1997 (the lower age criteria relate to training – 18 for Ministry of Word and Sacraments, 21 for Church Related Community work. Candidates may begin the process before this lower age and young candidates should not be discouraged. The upper age criteria require application before a candidate's 53rd birthday for stipendiary service. There is no upper age criteria for non-stipendiary service;
- in the case of candidates for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments, have had a report written, on at least one service conducted and one sermon preached by an assessor appointed by Synod;
- in the case of candidates for Church Related Community Work, have experience of some form of community work. At the Assessment Conference these candidates will be asked to make a 10 minute presentation on their understanding of CRCW answering the question 'In what ways can our faith produce the actions that make a positive difference to people and their communities?'
- understand, accept and be committed to the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church in particular the ordination and commissioning promises and the statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church and;
- have attended Church Meeting and Synod;
- supply a reflective account of Church Meeting and Synod attended;
- satisfy the required medical examination indicating fitness for training and ordained or commissioned ministry;

- complete the form relating to disclosure of criminal convictions and court orders.

In addition, prospective candidates must show they are able to undertake the academic aspects of ministerial training. The minimum requirements will be those agreed from time to time by General Assembly on the advice of the Education for Learning Committee. In order to be accepted as a candidate for training for both Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary ministry, the candidate will need to have reached the following educational standard:

- a) GCSE (Grade 9-4)or Scottish National 5 certificate (Grades A-C) in English Language or the equivalent (IELTS 6.5) as an essential prerequisite.
- b) Plus one of the following:
 - i) 2 'A' Level's;
 - ii) 2 Scottish 'Highers';
 - iii) A degree from a UK University, or equivalent;
 - iv) 120 first degree credits from the Open University or other UK University working on a modular system;
 - v) An advanced GNVQ, involving a substantial quantity of discursive work (Level 3 and above);
 - vi) A successful completion of the two foundation years of the Training for Learning and Serving course including the successful completion of the essay option. The agreed standard for successful completion is an average mark of 50% for six assignments (in essay format) of the Foundation Course, marked on the access scale, with all essays having achieved the pass mark of 40%.
 - vii) A successful completion of the two-year Foundation Award in Theology, Mission and Ministry with the University of Durham through Luther King House. Please speak with the Secretary for Education and Learning for further information;
 - viii) Such professional qualifications or experience of life and work as, in the opinion of the Education and Learning Training Board, is of equivalent standard and provides a suitable foundation for training.

This pre-assessment phase needs to be undertaken carefully and unhurriedly and may take two or more years. The need to fulfil the pre-assessment criteria should not prevent prospective candidates from enquiring about the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work and beginning to explore their sense of calling.

Support and co-operation from the local Church, and Synod should begin from the time of the initial enquiry. The pre- assessment phase is a time of growth which can be encouraged in several ways e.g. Synods can arrange opportunities for prospective candidates to "shadow" one or more ministers.

The Synod Moderator/or their deputy is responsible for checking and confirming that the pre-Assessment Criteria have been satisfied before the formal assessment process begins with the Church Meeting commendation and report.

Areas that will be discussed throughout Assessment

This is a long list but everything in it is important in a life of Ministry. These criteria should be kept in mind by everyone involved in the assessment process and explored in depth at the Church Meeting, Synod and Assessment Board interviews. The emphasis should be not on what is already known but on self-awareness and the desire and potential to learn more.

Faith

- their Christian journey,
- their devotional life,
- their sense of call to the ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work,
- how their understanding of the Bible and the Christian faith is developing,
- their awareness of their own doctrinal position,
- their acceptance of the diversity of positions held within the United Reformed Church.

Ministry of Word and Sacraments

- their acceptance of the importance of worship, including all-age worship, preaching and the sacraments
- their understanding of ministry and of the promises to be made at ordination,
- their awareness of the variety of ministerial situations and their willingness to serve in any of these,
- their understanding of, and response to, the expectations placed on ministers,
- their awareness of the attitudes and skills needed in pastoral care.

Personal Development and Character

- their concern for all creation,
- their sense of the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ and their experience of the Spirit's enabling and sanctifying power,
- how they reflect on the implications of ministry in the context of all their significant relationships,
- their personal history and their ability to reflect on the way their experiences have influenced them,
- their response to any situation in which they have faced risk or difficulty,
- how they handle conflict,
- their level of self awareness, desire to grow towards human wholeness and their ability to learn from their own and others' beliefs and experience,
- how they value people, including those from whom they perceive they are different,
- their potential to become competent in written and spoken communication,
- their awareness of their own training and development needs,
- their ability and willingness to respond positively to ministerial education and training,
- how they organise and prioritise their present work and leisure time and their ability to relax,
- their understanding of different styles of leadership and where each is most suitable.

The Community of the Church

- Their reflective account of the Church, and Synod meetings they have attended,
- their understanding and knowledge of the wider Reformed tradition;
- their awareness of local ecumenical relationships and regional/national ecumenical initiatives;
- their understanding of the ministry and mission of the whole people of God, with particular reference to their present church community.

The Church in the World

- their understanding of the mission of the Church and how their ministry could contribute to it,
- their understanding of issues in society and how the Church might respond to them,
- their understanding of the relationship between Church, local and wider, and society.

Once the pre-assessment criteria have been met the Synod Moderator/or Moderator's deputy will pass the enquirer's name to the Candidating Secretary. The Candidating Secretary will then send the application form and other paperwork to the enquirer. It is at this point that the formal candidating process begins.

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