

Process for the Call of a Minister to a Resource Church and Resource Area Churches



Introduction

This document outlines the Call Process for Stipendiary Ministry to a Resource Church and Resource Area Churches. It was approved by OMCG on the 15th June 2021

The Movement of Ministers document 2020 produced by the Ministries Committee, is referenced, where more detailed explanations may be helpful as the process moves forward.

1 Preparing to declare a Resource Church & Resource Area Vacancy

- 1.1 When a vacancy arises, the Ordained Ministry and Churches Group (OMCG) will appoint an Interim Moderator. It will be for the Interim Moderator to establish a Call Group usually made up of four representatives from the Resource Church and one representative from each of the Area Churches. (These will usually be Elders) Some flexibility as to the make up of the Call Group may be necessary depending on context. The Interim Moderator will oversee this as appropriate.
- 1.2 The Interim Moderator in conjunction with the Synod Moderator will arrange a meeting with the Call Group (*Movement of Ministers - Appendix 1*) to:
 - Explain the process of the movement of ministers,
 - Discuss the mission needs of the Resource and Area churches
 - Clarify any issues that may have arisen for the Call Group regarding the Call Process.

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- Clarify any issues around Terms of Settlement and housing issues/manse provision, so details can be provided in the full profile.
 - Consider whether any preliminary work around “transition issues” with the churches is required as part of preparing for the declaration of a vacancy. This issue may be of greater importance as more churches are potentially coming together to offer Area ministry (*Movement of Ministers Appendix 2*)
 - Agree the percentage of votes required by the Combined Church Meeting for a Call to be offered to the prospective candidate.
- 1.3 With the support of the Interim Moderator, church profiles will be written and agreed by each church and shared with the Call Group. The Call Group will also produce a summary profile. (*Movement of Ministers Appendix 3 & 4*)
- 1.4 The Call Group and Synod will agree a draft Terms of Settlement for negotiation with a prospective minister. Synod needs to confirm the suitability of the manse. Changes to the manse (or housing allowance) to accommodate a particular minister should be made prior to induction. (*Movement of Ministers Appendix 5*)
- 1.5 Once these processes are complete, OMCG will be invited to formally declare the vacancy. At this point they will also consider the appropriateness of appointing, from among their number, a Synod Representative to assist the Interim Moderator in overseeing the Call Process from this point onwards.
- 1.6 The decision by OMCG to appoint a Synod Representative will be determined, after a discussion between the Synod Moderator and Interim Moderator following the Initial Call Group meeting.

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2 Seeking and Issuing a Call

- 2.1 When the vacancy has been declared, the Synod Moderator will share the information regarding the vacancy with the Synod Moderators' Meeting using the summary profile. The Synod Moderator will continue to coordinate this part of the process until a candidate/s are identified as wishing to proceed to an introduction to the Area. Name/s will then be shared with the Interim Moderator.
- 2.2 The Call Group will receive via the Interim Moderator, profiles of the candidate/s (*Movement of Ministers Appendix 10*) and decide whether to invite a/the candidate to an Initial Meeting. If an invitation is offered and accepted an Initial Meeting should generally take place over two days. (*Movement of Ministers Appendix 8*)
- 2.3 The Initial Meeting will provide the following to assist with this discernment process:
- An opportunity for the candidate to tour the Resource and Area churches and their communities.
 - An opportunity to view/discuss manse provision.
 - A meeting both formal and informal (including food) with the Call Group.
 - Time for the Candidate along with the Interim Moderator/Synod Representative to “reflect together” on the Call. This meeting will also provide an opportunity to discuss the draft Terms of Settlement.
- 2.4 The Initial Meeting between the prospective candidate and the Call Group is pivotal to discerning how and whether the Call should move forward, both from the point of view of the Candidate and the churches. It would be difficult and maybe deemed inappropriate to proceed beyond the Initial Meeting with a prospective Candidate, if there was a

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significant divergence of views within the Call Group about whether to proceed.

- 2.5 If the Call Group invites and the prospective Candidate accepts the invitation to “preach with a view,” it will take place over a weekend.
- 2.6 The outline of the “preach with a view” weekend should broadly follow the format outlined below:
 - Depending upon the geographical size of the Area the Candidate will lead worship at the Resource Church and one of the Area Churches.
 - There should be the opportunity for two social gatherings for the Candidate and the churches to meet together informally. (Ideally geographically at both ends of the Area)
 - The Call Group will organise and oversee the programme under the guidance and direction of the Interim Moderator/Synod Representative.
- 2.7 The decision on whether to extend a Call or not to the Candidate (*Movement of Ministers Appendix 12*) will be taken by Resource and Area Church Members at a Combined Church Meeting, voting by the required percentage agreed at the start of the process to offer a Call.
- 2.8 The Church Meeting should take place as soon as possible following the Candidate’s “preach with a view” weekend. This will require some flexibility being exercised between the Interim Moderator/Synod Representative and the Call Group in conjunction with the churches. It would seem sensible to look for a central location within the Area, that is “neutral” but accessible for Church Members.
- 2.9 Holding a Combined Church Meeting enables discernment to take place through prayer and discussion ***and should always be the preferred***

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option, as this provides the best forum for a discussion that reflects the needs of the Resource and Area Churches and the gifts of the Candidate.

- 2.10 If for some reason it is not practical to hold a Combined Church Meeting - following discussions with the Interim Moderator/Synod Representative - individual Church Meetings can take place. They should be chaired by the Interim Moderator or Synod Representative and still be held as soon as practically possible following the “preach with a view” weekend.
- 2.11 If individual Church Meetings are held, the votes should be sealed, given to the Interim Moderator/Synod Representative, and combined with the votes from the other meetings. This is a Combined Church Meeting decision, so no individual Church Meeting votes should be separately revealed.
- 2.12 The decision regarding the Call will be notified to the Candidate by the Interim Moderator who will inform him/her of the percentage of votes cast. The Candidate will inform the Interim Moderator of his/her response.
- 2.13 The Minister will normally have a current Disclosure and Barring Certificate /Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme disclosure as these are issued every five years. The Ministries Office at Church House will be able to advise in respect of this.
- 2.14 The Candidate’s decision regarding the Call, will be communicated to the churches by the Church Secretaries on the Sunday following the Candidate’s decision.
- 2.15 If the Call is accepted by the Candidate, it remains provisional until Synod concurrence is given in writing. Email correspondence is sufficient. A provisional acceptance should therefore be communicated to the Synod Clerk as soon as possible, with a request for concurrence again in writing.

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- 2.16 The Interim Moderator will work with the Area, Synod Officers, newly called Minister and Synod Moderator to co-ordinate the preparation of the Ordination/Induction Service, which is held under the authority of the Synod. The Interim Moderator may also work with the incoming Minister on an induction process.

3 The Role of the Interim Moderator in the Call Process

- 3.1 It is important that the role of the Interim Moderator is set out clearly at the start of the Call Process. The Movement of Ministers document from the URC Ministries Committee details the role in Section 4 but it is perhaps useful to make some general points to accompany this document.
- 3.2 An Interim Moderator appointment is a Synod appointment and is the link between the churches seeking a Call, the Synod, and the Synod Moderator.
- 3.3 It is important the Interim Moderator is seen as neutral - someone outside the local situation and sensitive to the needs of the Area looking to call ministry.
- 3.4 Areas are encouraged to accept the Interim Moderator appointment offered unless there are significant reasons for the appointment to be declined (i.e. possible conflict of interest where neutrality could not be maintained). Resources are scarce and there is not an endless pool of people to fill this important ministry.
- 3.5 Best practice is for clearly defined terms of service to be agreed by all parties at the beginning of the appointment. An appointment for a year initially may be helpful to keep an overview of the vacancy and any issues that arise.

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- 3.6 The core responsibility of the role is to oversee the process for the introduction of a candidate. Involvement in meetings, therefore, only requires the attendance of the Interim Moderator when the issue of the vacancy is on the agenda of Elders/Church Meeting. Other responsibilities pertaining to the role may be negotiated beyond this but should be carefully agreed and documented at the start of the appointment, agreed by OMCG and reviewed by them annually for the duration of the appointment.
- 3.7 The following are a guideline to the responsibilities of the role of Interim Moderator.
- a Chairing Elders/Church Meetings where the calling of a Minister is discussed.
 - b Chairing all meetings with prospective ministers.
 - c Providing a mutual link between the Area and the Synod.
 - d Providing a mutual link between the Synod Moderator and the Area
 - e Providing a mutual link between the prospective minister and the Area.
 - f Aiding the drafting and negotiating of Terms of Settlement including housing provision.
 - g Encouraging consideration of any relevant issues as a new minister is sought. The URC draws particular attention to the Equal Opportunities Policy.
 - h Informing both prospective ministers and Area Call Group and Synod Moderator of any decisions.
 - i Overseeing and coordinating the planning of the Ordination/Induction service in consultation with the Synod Moderator and future minister.
- 3.8 The scope and range of issues an Interim Moderator may need to consider when exercising this ministry is:

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- a Discernment regarding the nature of their leadership. It can help to reflect on such matters as the sense of “bereavement” that the loss of a minister might bring. Anxiety about a time without a minister and underlying conflicts that may have arisen during the previous period of ministry. This may also be a time recognise and develop hidden gifts within the Eldership and Membership of the local congregation.

- b Consideration of this time of transition for the church/es. This is not just a waiting time; the church/es can still develop and grow. The leadership of the Interim Moderator can enable and encourage this. By doing so, the church/es can develop a vision for the future.

- c Support an in-depth appraisal and discernment for ministry which may be essential for the future. This may need some time to reach a fruitful outcome.

- d Helping candidates through the process and reflecting on it with them whether or not a call is issued.