



PROCEDURES FOR FILLING A VACANCY

This document has been prepared by the Ministry & Mission Committee to outline the steps to be followed by a congregation when calling a new minister.

1. When a presbytery agrees to allow a minister to leave, it will:
 - a. determine the date on which the congregation becomes vacant; and
 - b. appoint another minister to take charge of the congregation as its Interim-Moderator.
2. The Presbytery Clerk will issue an Edict of Vacancy to be read to the congregation on at least one Sunday as soon as possible after the vacancy. (The Code II 6.36)
3. As soon as possible after the date of vacancy the Interim-Moderator will meet with the session and call a congregational meeting which must be held within the first six weeks after the edict of vacancy has been read.
4. Prior to the congregational meeting the session must meet to revise the roll of communicants and adherents and the rolls are formally attested by the Session Clerk. The persons listed on the roll of communicants are the only persons permitted to participate in the election of a minister and to sign a call. The persons listed on the roll of adherents may sign the form of concurrence in a call.
5. Prior to the meeting of the congregation the Committee of Management meets to determine the terms of call which it will recommend to the congregation. The Terms of Call Form is obtained from the office of the Ministry and Mission Committee and is completed by the Committee of Management and the Session Clerk prior to the Congregational Meeting. (To download a copy of this form, go to www.mmpcnsw.org.au, click on Forms and Procedures, then click on Procedure for Calling a Minister.) Four copies of this form must be completed.
6. At the congregational meeting called to deal with the matters associated with the vacancy:
 - a. the Session Clerk reports that the rolls of communicants and adherents have been revised, and
 - b. the office bearers of the Committee of Management report on the finances of the congregation and submit to the congregation the proposed terms of call.
 - c. The congregation then approves the terms of call or refers them back to the Committee of Management for further consideration.
7. When the congregational meeting approves the terms of call the Session Clerk records the extract minute of the meeting on the Terms of Call Form. Three copies of this form together with the attested rolls of communicants and adherents are then forwarded to the Presbytery Clerk without delay.

If the congregation is not prepared to proceed to a call at this meeting, it appoints a Selection Committee consisting of members of the Session and as many communicant members as the congregation shall deem necessary to represent the various interests of the pastoral charge.

8. The Selection Committee meets as soon as possible to select the name or names of the ministers or licentiates which it is willing to submit to the congregation.

In its work the Selection Committee may:

- a. list the qualifications desired in a minister of the pastoral charge,
- b. appoint some of the members of the selection committee to visit a congregation to hear a minister,
- c. invite a minister to visit the congregation and meet with the selection committee and/or preach and conduct a service, or
- d. make its own enquires regarding ministers who may be willing to consider a call.

Please note: Only the Interim-Moderator and Session Clerk are permitted to enter into correspondence with any minister or licentiate. Ministers and licentiates are not permitted to enter into negotiations with any members of the congregation.

9. It is improper for a selection Committee to ask the Interim-Moderator or Session Clerk to speak with more than one minister at a time in regard to the filling of a vacancy.

10. When the Selection Committee is prepared to submit to the congregation the name of a minister or licentiate it requests the Session to call a meeting of the congregation for the purpose of ascertaining the measure of unanimity in regard to a call and if deemed desirable of proceeding to a call.

11. At the congregational meeting:

- a. the Interim-Moderator announces the purpose of the meeting (as in the previous paragraph),
- b. a report is received from the Selection Committee and questions are invited,
- c. a vote is taken on a motion "that the congregation is prepared to proceed to a call", and
- d. if the motion is approved, a blank call form is read and, after prayer, the Interim-Moderator calls for the chairperson of the Selection Committee to propose the name of the Committee's nominee.

It is the sole prerogative of the Selection Committee to make nominations of a minister or ministers it considers suitable to be called and there is no provision for the presentation of any other nomination. A nomination may not be made "from the floor."

Please note: The name proposed must be that of a duly accredited minister or licentiate of the Presbyterian church of Australia.

- The motion that "the congregation insert the name of _____ in a call" must be moved and seconded by communicant members.
- Voting is normally by show of hands, however the interim moderator may direct, or any 5 communicants may require, that the vote be taken by division, by calling of the roll of communicants or by ballot.
- As previously indicated, only communicant members may vote on the election of a minister.
- If the motion is not approved, the selection committee continues its work.

12. The Interim-Moderator will announce the result of the election, the name of the elected minister will be inserted in the Form of Call and, at the end of the meeting, the communicants will be invited to sign the form of call while adherents will be invited to sign the form of concurrence.

13. Up to three commissioners including an elder must be appointed to take charge of the forms of call and forms of concurrence.

14. Each sheet must be attested by one of the commissioners as having been signed in their presence. Until the call has been signed by at least three fifths (60%) of the communicants, it cannot be considered by the Presbytery.
15. During the period of the vacancy the Interim-Moderator reports to the Presbytery on:
 - a. steps taken to fill the vacancy
 - b. the holding of services and provision of ordinances and conduct of pastoral work.

PLEASE NOTE

1. Approval of Terms of Call expires after twelve months. (The Code II 6.08)
2. Under certain conditions Terms of Call and the Call may be submitted to the same meeting of the presbytery. (The Code II 6.07)
3. Under certain conditions the presbytery may appoint an Interim-Moderator Designate who is empowered to take certain steps necessary for the filling of the vacancy prior to the date of vacancy. (The Code II 5.44)
4. Where there are two or more congregations and committees of management the congregations and committees of management should meet together to determine all the matters related to the vacancy. (The Code II 1.30 and 2.07)

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