

WHEN WILL THE MINISTRY OF PASTOR COMMENCE?

The Regulations for the Ministry of Pastor will become effective on 1 July 2008.

WHAT DO PASTORS DO?

Pastors undertake significant ministries on behalf of the church – sometimes in congregations and sometimes in other settings.

A Pastor may undertake general pastoral and worship responsibilities in a congregation, be a youth worker, an evangelist or a family and children's worker. They may even use these ways of describing themselves and their work. A person will only be described as "Pastor" if that is what their Position Descriptions says. The 11th Assembly report on this ministry described the ministry of Pastor in the following way:

- teaching the beliefs and practices of the Uniting Church; and / or
- pastoral oversight of members of and / or groups operating under the auspices of the Uniting Church; and / or
- leadership of worship of congregations or faith communities of the Uniting Church; and / or
- evangelism or service beyond a gathered congregation but which is exercised under the auspices of the Uniting Church.

WHO CAN BE A PASTOR?

Not everyone who undertakes these important roles in the life and witness of the church will be a Pastor for the purposes of the Regulations.

The Regulations put it this way:

"A person exercises the ministry of Pastor

- 2.14.5** (a) A ministry location shall be designated as an appropriate appointment for the exercise of the ministry of Pastor for the purposes of these Regulations when
- (i) The position description of the role the person undertakes includes one or more of the tasks named in Regulation 2.14.2; and the Presbytery, (or Synod in the case of a Synod appointment, or Assembly in the case of an Assembly appointment) designates that the position description and ministry location are suitable for the exercise of the ministry of Pastor; or
 - (ii) a lay person is appointed to fill an approved placement;

A person is a Pastor, for the purposes of the Regulations, when they exercise a significant ministry that is recognized by the church (ie the Presbytery or the wider church) as being a suitable location for this ministry.

Where a role is involved in the areas mentioned above, and the position is remunerated or involves a significant amount of time then it is likely that the person will be regarded as a Pastor.

To be a Pastor a person must have been a confirmed member or member in association in the Uniting Church for a period of twelve months prior to being appointed to their position.

Persons who are not confirmed members or members in association can be appointed to these positions through the appointment process but they will not be a Pastor for the purposes of the Regulations.

WHY HAVE PASTORS?

The Uniting Church has always taken seriously the need for those people who represent the Church in ministry, and in particular represent us to people outside the life of the UCA, to be suitably qualified and prepared for their ministry. When people exercise ministry in the name

of the whole church, or significant representative ministry on behalf of a local congregation, the church has two duties:

- to ensure that people are not put in places of responsibility that are beyond them; and
- to ensure that people who rely on the ministry that is offered can have confidence that it is up to an appropriate standard both ethically and in terms of competence.

The way the UCA has sought to ensure this in the past has been through recognizing certain ministries as “specified ministries.” These have been both lay and ordained ministries. Over the years since church union the number of specified ministries has increased compared to those that were in place in the uniting churches. There was a risk that as new ministries were established that warranted the churches support in formation, training and oversight that the number would increase even further. Also over the last five to ten years there have been an increasing number of people who are exercising ministries that would traditionally have been the responsibility of persons in the specified ministries, but who were not within that system. This created risks for the people to whom these persons ministered and risks for the church as it failed to properly care for those people and the people to whom they ministered.

The 11th Assembly received and accepted a report that proposed a simplification of the system of lay specified ministries and which seeks to ensure that whoever serves in a significant representative ministry on behalf of the church is in a specified relationship with the church. It will be much less likely now that people will be able to avoid the oversight of presbyteries, the formation and training that is appropriate for their ministry and expectations of continuing education and operating under the Code of Ethics. This will be good for them and for the people with whom they minister.

The aim is to have a simpler, flexible / adaptive and more comprehensive system for the oversight and support of significant representative ministries that are undertaken on behalf of the church.

HOW DOES A PERSON BECOME A PASTOR?

A person is a Pastor by decision of the Presbytery, in the case of persons serving in congregational or presbytery ministries. Other Councils of the church make the determination for ministries exercised within a Synod or Assembly setting.

The decision about whether a person serving in a particular role will be deemed to be a Pastor will normally be made at the time when the position description is approved. In such situations people who make themselves available for the position will know that if they fill this role then the church has certain expectations of them in respect of training and formation, ethics and continuing education appropriate for the position that they hold.

In the initial implementation phase of this ministry there will be quite a number of people who have not been in a specified ministry who will be brought into a specified relationship with the church because the presbytery recognizes the significance of the role they are undertaking.

Any person who is appointed to a position that has previously been designated as a Placement will automatically be under the provisions of the Pastor Regulations.

For many, many years the church has been greatly assisted by having lay persons who make themselves available for full time service to the church as Lay Pastors. While the Specified Ministry of Lay Pastor will close to new applicants at the end of 2007 the church remains open to people offering themselves for full time (or significant time) service, available to the whole church. Processes will be put in place to address recruitment, training and recognition of such people. Persons serving the church in this way will also be known as Pastors.

The third way in which a person might become a Pastor is by moving from one of the existing specified lay ministries that are being discontinued, ie Community Minister, Lay Pastor and Youth Worker.

WHAT WILL BECOME OF PEOPLE WHO ARE PRESENTLY RECOGNIZED AS LAY PASTORS, YOUTH WORKERS AND COMMUNITY MINISTERS?

As mentioned above some persons in these ministries may elect to move into the new specified ministry of Pastor. However this is voluntary and is unlikely to suit many of the people who are presently in these ministries.

Provision has been made for persons serving in these specified ministries to continue in their classification under the following circumstances.

The 11th Assembly, in resolution 06.17, resolved:

- i) to recognise the specified ministries of Youth Worker and Lay Pastor only for those currently in this ministry and who choose to continue under the current regulations until such time as they cease their continuous ministry in the Uniting Church;
- j) to recognise those in the current specified ministry of Community Minister only until the conclusion of their current placement;

Since the 11th Assembly, the Assembly Standing Committee has clarified the way this decision will operate by amending the Regulations that deal with the accreditation of Youth Workers and the recognition of Lay Pastors, respectively.

The amended regulations will say:

Re Youth Workers

ACCREDITATION

2.9.2 (b) Subject to Regulation 2.9.3, the accreditation of a Youth Worker shall continue:

- (i) while the Youth Worker is in a placement;
- (ii) while the Youth Worker is awaiting an initial or new placement; or
- (iii) where the Placements Committee, on the recommendation of the relevant Presbytery, has granted a leave of absence for a defined period for the Youth Worker to undertake a course of study approved by the Placements Committee, or for family or other pastoral reasons, or for other reasons which the Placements Committee considers sufficient.

Re Lay Pastors

WITHDRAWAL OF RECOGNITION

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

2.13.22 The Placements Committee may, on the recommendation of the relevant Presbytery, grant a leave of absence for a defined period for the Lay Pastor to undertake a course of study approved by Committee, or for family or other pastoral reasons, or for other reasons which the placements Committee considers sufficient.

There is also provision in the decision of the 11th Assembly for persons in the discontinued specified ministries to explore with the church whether they have a call to one of the ordained ministries.

Assembly minute 06.17

- g) to request Synods to appoint panels to receive and process applications for ordination from those currently serving in the specified ministries of Lay Pastor, Community Minister and Youth Worker who discern a call to the ordained specified ministries by 31 December 2009;

These panels have been appointed and contact may be made through a synod office, or through a potential applicant's presbytery. Guidelines have been put in place to lead all the participants

through the process from inquiry to acceptance for ordination. These guidelines are provided elsewhere on this site under the title: "Steps in the transition process for persons seeking ordination under the provisions of assembly minute 06.17(g)."

It is important for applicants to know that they must complete all requirements for ordination no later than December 2014.

The Assembly Standing Committee also resolved to

07.13.03 urge Synods to make funds available to give applicants sufficient time to complete the process determined with the Synod Panel, if the applicant is required to take time out of their placement;

Decisions on what support may be required for people in the transition process will be determined by the circumstances of the individuals and the ability of particular synods to provide it.

WHAT TRAINING WILL BE REQUIRED FOR PASTORS?

The key feature of the training for Pastors is that it will be tailored to the demands of the specific ministry that is being undertaken. For example the kind of expertise required of a person providing 10 hours a week support for a youth program will be different for person who is the primary full time pastoral leader in a congregation.

Another key change in the move to the ministry of Pastor is that there will be a deliberate focus on the recognition of prior learning and the capacity to commence the ministry before all the training and formation has been completed. Clearly the person needs to have enough competence and character to begin in the role but the idea is to build on this with agreed learning goals and consistent continuing education.

There are two elements to the competencies that will be required: core competencies and general competencies.

Core competencies means those competencies determined by the Ministerial Education Commission as essential for all persons that exercise the Ministry of Pastor.

General competencies means those competencies determined by the Ministerial Education Commission as essential for all persons exercising a particular ministry role, for example chaplain, youth worker, etc.

The Ministerial Education Commission is the Assembly body that sets national standards for all specified ministries in the UCA. It is presently working on the requirements for the ministry of Pastor. The Core competencies will include awareness of the code of Ethics and Sexual Misconduct Regulations and the Polity and Ethos of the UCA. Programs of study to assist with this will be available before the end of June 2008. A schedule of competencies relevant to particular ministry responsibilities will be developed as soon as possible and made known through the second and third quarters of 2008.

WHAT DO APPOINTING BODIES AND PRESBYTERIES NEED TO KNOW ABOUT APPOINTING PASTORS?

The Regulations remain the main source of information. However Guidelines on the operation of the Regulations have been produced and this information is available on this website. There are also some Appendices to provide appointing bodies with a checklist.

Synod Human Resources units are also recommended as a source of information for the documentation and processes. The synods have co-operated in the production of a kit which will provide templates and other resources to lead appointing bodies through their various responsibilities. Presbyteries will be provided with this kit and they will continue to be available through synod offices.

*Terence Corkin
Assembly General Secretary
April 2008*

DECISIONS OF THE 11TH ASSEMBLY IN RELATION TO THE MINISTRY OF PASTOR

06.17

TASK GROUP ON SPECIFIED MINISTRIES

- a) to receive the report of the Specified Ministries Task Group, "*From time to time, and place to place*";
- b) to establish the specified ministry of Pastor by 1 January 2008;
- c) to request the Assembly Legal Reference Committee to draw up regulations regarding the specified ministry of Pastor for approval by the Assembly Standing Committee;
- d) to request the Ministerial Education Commission to facilitate the preparation of national schedules of competency, associated rules and guidelines for training, formation and continuing education for the specified ministry of Pastor;
- e) to request the Ministerial Education Commission to distribute interim schedules to all presbyteries by 1st July 2007;
- f) to close the specified ministries of Lay Pastor, Community Minister and Accredited Youth Worker to new applications as of 31 December 2007;
- g) to request Synods to appoint panels to receive and process applications for ordination from those currently serving in the specified ministries of Lay Pastor, Community Minister and Youth Worker who discern a call to the ordained specified ministries by 31 December 2009;
- h) to request presbyteries to provide opportunities for those in the specified ministries of Youth Worker, Lay Pastor and Community Minister to be commissioned as Pastors from 1 January 2008 providing they are currently in placement and not seeking ordination;
- i) to recognise the specified ministries of Youth Worker and Lay Pastor only for those currently in this ministry and who choose to continue under the current regulations until such time as they cease their continuous ministry in the Uniting Church;
- j) to recognise those in the current specified ministry of Community Minister only until the conclusion of their current placement;
- k) to request the National Working Group on Worship to prepare a service of commissioning for the specified ministry of Pastor; and
- l) to thank and discharge the Specified Ministries Task Group.

DECISIONS OF THE MARCH 2007 ASC RE THE MINISTRY OF PASTOR

07.13

It was resolved to:

07.13.01

receive the report;

07.13.02

adopt the guidelines for Presbyteries and Synods as amended (Attachment B);

- a) request each Synod to appoint a Synod Transitional Panel;
- b) request the General Secretary to convene a meeting of the convenors of each Synod Panel to meet together with a suitable team by May 31 2007 to
 - i) plan the initial one or two day "Discernment Retreats",
 - ii) plan also the week-long Formation Intensive, and
 - iii) develop a common approach shared by the Synods; and
- c) request that the MEC advise the Standing Committee on the way in which the corpus of skills and insights developed for training for ministry with and by young people will be maintained within the recognised colleges of the UCA, and how appropriate elements may be included in education and training programs for Pastors, Ministers and Deacons;

- 07.13.03 urge Synods to make funds available to give applicants sufficient time to complete the process determined with the Synod Panel, if the applicant is required to take time out of their placement;
- 07.13.04 determine that applicants have a right of appeal against a decision of the Presbytery or the Synod Panel following the procedure in Regulation 2.2.14; and
- 07.13.05 thank and discharge the Task Group.

DECISIONS OF THE JULY 2007 ASC RE THE MINISTRY OF PASTOR

- 07.37.03 (a) amend the regulations as follows:

Re Youth Workers

ACCREDITATION

2.9.2 (a) When a candidate has fulfilled all the requirements for accreditation to the ministry of Youth Worker, including the satisfactory completion of the required course of studies and in the Presbytery's opinion readiness to exercise the ministry of Youth Worker, the Presbytery which had pastoral care and oversight of the candidate during the period of core theological education shall, following consideration of an appraisal from and consultation with the Presbytery in which the candidate exercised ministry in the licensed year, determine whether or not the candidate is to be accredited. The Presbytery shall then arrange for a service of commissioning, such service to be in accordance with a form authorised by the Assembly;

- (b) Subject to Regulation 2.9.3, the accreditation of a Youth Worker shall continue:
 - (i) while the Youth Worker is in a placement;
 - (ii) while the Youth Worker is awaiting an initial or new placement; or
 - (iii) where the Placements Committee, on the recommendation of the relevant Presbytery, has granted a leave of absence for a defined period for the Youth Worker to undertake a course of study approved by the Placements Committee, or for family or other pastoral reasons, or for other reasons which the Placements Committee considers sufficient.

Re Lay Pastors

WITHDRAWAL OF RECOGNITION

2.13.11 The recognition of a Lay Pastor shall cease upon:

- (b) the termination of the placement of, or expiry of a leave of absence granted to, a Lay Pastor where the Lay Pastor does not immediately commence a new placement or other ministry position recognised by a Presbytery;

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

2.13.22 The Placements Committee may, on the recommendation of the relevant Presbytery, grant a leave of absence for a defined period for the Lay Pastor to undertake a course of study approved by Committee, or for family or other pastoral reasons, or for other reasons which the placements Committee considers sufficient.

- b) determine that the effective date shall be 1 January 2008;