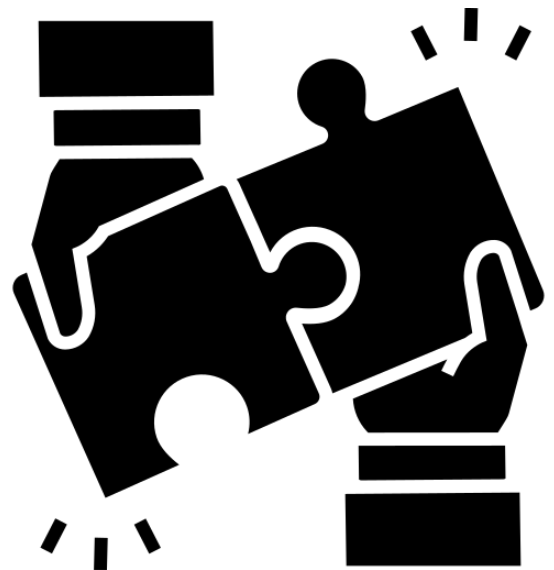


Mission Partnership Call Process

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Introduction

This document outlines the Call Process for Stipendiary Ministry to Mission Partnerships within Eastern Synod.

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 Mission Partnership Vacancy

- 1.1 When a vacancy arises, the Pastoral Committee will appoint an Interim Moderator. It will be for the Interim Moderator to establish a Call Group usually made up an elder from each of the churches within the Mission Partnership. Some flexibility as to the makeup of the Call Group may be necessary depending on context. The Interim Moderator will oversee this as appropriate.
- 1.2 The Interim Moderator will arrange a meeting with the Call Group with the Synod Moderator and/or Pastoral Convenor (*Movement of Ministers – Appendix*) to:
 - Explain the process of the movement of ministers.
 - Discuss the mission needs of the Mission Partnership churches.
 - Clarify any issues that may have arisen for the Call Group regarding the Call Process.
 - Clarify any issues around Terms of Settlement (based on a draft supplied by the Synod Moderator) and housing issues/manse provision, so that 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. (*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. (e.g. two thresholds to be reached: overall, 80%, and each church, 60%.)
- 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. These need to be collated into one document which opens with the profile of the Mission Partnership as a whole. The Call Group will also produce a summary profile for the Moderators Meeting. (*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, the Pastoral Committee will be invited to formally declare the vacancy.

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 Mission Partnership. 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 Mission Partnership churches and their communities.
 - An opportunity to view/discuss manse provision.
 - A meeting both formal and informal (including food) with the Call Group.
 - An informal meeting with the leadership team of the Mission Partnership e.g. a further URC Minister; Minister of another denomination; CRCW; Local Church Leaders etc.
 - Time for the Candidate along with the Interim Moderator to "reflect together" on the Call. This meeting will also provide an opportunity to discuss the draft Terms of Settlement.
 - If required, overnight accommodation should be offered at a reasonably priced hotel / B&B.
- 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 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 Mission Partnership the Candidate will lead worship at one or two of the churches.
 - Depending upon the geographical size of the Mission Partnership there should be the opportunity for one or two social gatherings for the Candidate and the churches to meet together informally.
 - The Call Group will organise and oversee the programme under the guidance and direction of the Interim Moderator.

- If required, overnight accommodation should be offered for the candidate and their family at a reasonably priced hotel / B&B.
- 2.7 The decision on whether to extend a Call or not to the Candidate (*Movement of Ministers Appendix 12*) will be taken by Mission Partnership Church Members at a Combined Church Meeting, voting by the required percentage agreed at the start of the process to offer a Call. The Church Meeting should be chaired by the Interim Moderator but in no circumstances an existing Minister of the Mission Partnership.
 - 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 and the Call Group in conjunction with the churches. It would seem sensible to look for a central location within the Mission Partnership, 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 option**, as this provides the best forum for a discussion that reflects the needs of the Mission Partnership Churches and the gifts of the Candidate.
 - 2.10 If for some reason it is not practical to hold a Combined Church Meeting, there needs to be a discussion between the Interim Moderator and the Moderator and/or Pastoral Convenor – to agree that individual Church Meetings can take place. They should be chaired by the Interim Moderator, or a deputy as agreed with Moderator and/or Pastoral Convenor, 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 or their deputy, 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 them of the percentage of votes cast. The Candidate will inform the Interim Moderator of their response.
 - 2.13 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.
 - 2.14 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 Moderator and Pastoral Convenor as soon as possible, with a request for concurrence from both the sending and receiving Synod again in writing.
 - 2.15 The Interim Moderator will work with the Mission Partnership, 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 a process of induction to the Synod / Mission Partnership.
 - 2.16 The Mission Partnership need to ensure all works and decoration are done in good time before the new Minister arrives.

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 Mission Partnership looking to call ministry.
- 3.4 Mission Partnerships 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. (See Appendix 1 draft Interim Moderator agreement)
- 3.6 The core responsibility of the role is to oversee the process for the introduction of a candidate. *Involvement in meetings, therefore, is primarily with the Call Group. Attendance of the Interim Moderator when the issue of the vacancy is on the agenda of Elders/Church Meeting should only be at crucial points if at all.* 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 the Pastoral Committee and reviewed by them annually for the duration of the appointment. *This will also be the case if other people are appointed to support local churches during the vacancy.*
- 3.7 The following are a guideline to the responsibilities of the role of Interim Moderator:
 - a) *Chairing Call Group Meetings.*
 - b) Chairing all meetings with prospective ministers.
 - c) Providing a mutual link between the Mission Partnership and the Synod.
 - d) Providing a mutual link between the Synod Moderator and the Mission Partnership.
 - e) Providing a mutual link between the prospective minister and the Mission Partnership.
 - f) Aiding the drafting and negotiating of Terms of Settlement including housing provision. (Based on a draft supplied by the Synod Moderator.)
 - 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 Mission Partnership 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:
- 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 to 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.

Appendix 1 draft Interim Moderator agreement

Name of church:

Church contact:

Name of Interim Moderator:

The Interim Moderator will commit to leading the church as they explore their profile with a view to talking with the Synod Pastoral Committee about what ministry can be offered in the future, and in what way this will fit in with the principles of mission partnerships that have been agreed by synod and are now being used as our deployment strategy.

Beyond this crucial role, the Interim Moderator is able to commit to the following:

list here the commitments that are offered, for example:

- chairing meetings (church and/or elders).
- overseeing the work of the Elders.
- meeting with the church secretary to discuss the needs and life of the church.
- possible worship leading – how often?
- possible pastoral work - i.e. funerals and home communions. Please specify what and how often.
- anything else that may be specific to this church's needs.

The Synod will commit to:

- make the appointment as termed 'Interim Moderator'.
- explain the appointment to the Church and obtain its agreement to the appointment.
- review after 12 months.
- support/advise as required.
- anything else that may be specific to this piece of work.

The church commits to:

- honour the expectations and limitations of the commitment.
- cover agreed expenses that are incurred in this work. These will be claimed and paid as follows: *(enter here the process for the payment of expenses)*
- anything else that may be specific to this piece of work.

agreed on:

by the interim moderator (name and sign):

on behalf of the church meeting (name and sign):

on behalf of the Synod Pastoral Committee (name and sign):