

Ministry Development Programme: Responses to Feedback and Questions

The Leadership Sub-committee would like to thank everyone who took the time to consider the proposal for a Ministry Development Programme and provide comment. Over the past few weeks there has been much discussion following the release of the summary document. The responses to the feedback received have been grouped by subject below.

Theology, Law and the Book of Order

Is this a change in Presbyterian policy?

No. The Book of Order requires that presbyteries take responsibility for ensuring that ministers are being supported in their ministry, are receiving supervision, taking advantage of training for ministry formation. Likewise, successive General Assemblies have agreed that there is a need to develop a system that will facilitate these activities in a more cohesive way (Refer reports of the Doctrine Committee, 1998; Mission Resource Team, 2000 and 2002; Equipping the Leadership Policy Group 2004; School of Ministry Review Team 2006).

Why have reviews and the good standing certificate been joined together?

At the 2006 General Assembly it was agreed that a certification process be developed that was based, at least in part, on continuing ministry formation. The ministry review process is the mechanism the Leadership Sub-committee has adopted to facilitate continuing ministry formation (refer notice of motion 06.030, 2006 General Assembly).

Why is there no right of appeal?

Once a ministry review has concluded, the reviewer, minister and the minister's mentor will consider the findings and agree on the content of the report. The parish's agreement will also be sought where a recommendation for training has been made. So in practice the report will not be finalized until all parties agree. If, however, an individual misuses the report or publishes its findings without authorization then a complaint may be brought against that person under chapter 15 of the Book of Order. If the concern is with the review itself, or the reviewer, the minister is given the opportunity to raise this with the moderator of presbytery when they meet a month after the review.

This diminishes the role of presbytery.

On the contrary, the ministry development programme increases presbytery's role in supporting the development of its ministers. The good news is that the workload will be spread more evenly between the presbytery, the parish, the Assembly Office and Knox Centre ensuring greater access to support and development for all ministers.

Doesn't this change the covenant between a minister and parish to a contract?

This programme will not change the nature of the covenant between a minister and a parish. Likewise, ministers have always been responsible to the presbytery that sustains their call in a particular parish.

This has implications under the employment laws of New Zealand.

Ministers of religion are not covered by the Employment Relations Act 2000 (refer Conditions of Service Manual section 2.1). Disputes between ministers and parishes or ministers and presbyteries are handled according to the provisions of chapter 14 of the Book of Order. However, anyone who has observed or been involved with a presbytery commission would most likely consider this a less than ideal way to manage disagreements between a minister and parish – especially when it centres on competing mission visions for the parish or the parish leadership not understanding the minister's need for support.

What happened to life-long ordination?

Ordination is given by God and remains for life. Good standing however is a term that is used to describe the competence of a minister and confirms their conduct is worthy of the office.

What happens if a congregation thinks a minister is in good standing but the assessors don't? Why not stick with how it is now?

Firstly, 'assessors' are not a part of the ministry development programme. Trained reviewers facilitate a discussion with the minister, their mentor and leadership team and then make recommendations about how the minister may best be supported in ministry reviews. Parish reviews are still conducted by members of presbytery. In neither review are the parties asked whether a minister 'should be' in good standing.

Likewise, good standing applications will be processed at the Assembly Office but the responsibility to ensure a minister is in good standing lies with the presbytery, as it does now.

Good standing will be determined on whether a minister has met certain requirements – including participating in regular reviews and fulfilling any training they have agreed to. This objective evaluation differs quite significantly from the current process which is subjective and risky. For one minister 'good standing' means they hold a current (less than three years' old) police check and are not the subject of a disciplinary process. Meanwhile a minister in a neighbouring parish may receive a good standing letter with no checks at all.

What about theological diversity?

The competency framework was developed in 2004 from the servant-leader model. Whilst work has been done to make the descriptors of the competencies more user-friendly the competencies themselves have not changed or

diminished. The framework has been designed to incorporate a wide range of theological perspectives whilst encouraging the development of theological reflection in ministers, and ministers facilitating this in others.

Supervision

The Leadership Sub-committee would like to clarify the role of supervisors in ministry reviews:

- It is recommended that ministers bring a mentor into the review.
 - The mentor will receive a copy of the final review report as agreed to by all parties.
 - The role of the mentor will differ, depending on the needs of the minister. Some ministers may bring a mentor as an advocate or support person, whilst others may continue to work with their mentor on areas identified as needing development between reviews.
 - Supervisors will not be asked to 'report' on ministers for either reviews or the certificate of good standing.
 - Supervisors may already be asked, by presbytery, to confirm whether or not a minister is receiving supervision, how often, and whether the minister is committed to the process.
 - Supervisors may not disclose to anyone, including presbytery, the content of discussions between the supervisor and the minister without the minister's permission unless the supervisor is convinced that the minister may cause harm to themselves or someone else. This is a standard protocol for supervision, counseling and therapy.
 - All parties to a review may make a recommendation to a minister that a specific issue is dealt with in the course of their supervision. However, due to the confidential nature of supervision, neither the minister nor the supervisor is required to disclose whether this takes place.
 - The CAIRA programme is recognized by the Presbyterian Church as being a very good supervision programme. However, the Presbyterian Church does not have a policy on the types of supervision programmes that should be used.
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Stipend and Seniority Allowance

This was another area of particular concern, which is addressed here:

- There is no intention, nor has there ever been, to reduce a minister's income if they do not hold a certificate of good standing.
- Ministers who do not have a current certificate of good standing may not advance to the next level of seniority allowance (or begin to receive it where they currently do not).
- Once a minister gains a good standing certificate they will then start receiving or advance to the next level of seniority allowance.

Ministers Emeriti

It is not the Leadership Sub-committee's intention to treat retired ministers, or those who are soon to retire, unfairly. Therefore the proposal has been amended accordingly:

- Ministers who have retired or retire before General Assembly 2008 will remain on the marriage celebrant register and may continue to use Glen Innis.
 - Ministers who retire within the implementation period will hold a provisional certificate of good standing and will retire with the status of minister emeriti and enjoy the privileges of those already retired.
 - Those ministers who retire after the implementation period and hold a current certificate of good standing will retire with the status of ministers emeriti. They will remain on the marriage celebrant register and may use Glen Innis.
 - Those ministers who retire after the implementation period who do not hold a current certificate of good standing will not hold the status of ministers emeriti and may not remain on the marriage celebrant register or use Glen Innis.
 - Ministers emeriti who wish to return to parish ministry (over and above stated supply of three months or less) will be issued a provisional certificate of good standing and will have two years to obtain a full certificate of good standing.
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The Process

I would like to avoid a prescriptive process.

Agreed! That is why the Leadership Sub-committee is proposing a review process that is flexible enough to review a wide range of ministers and ministry contexts. The intent of ministry reviews in particular is to describe where the minister is at and how they can best be supported rather than impose a sterile set of key performance indicators that may be completely irrelevant.

I'm in kindred service? How can I achieve a certificate in good standing?

Ministers in kindred service will be able to satisfy the requirement to participate in regular ministry reviews by supplying a reference from their employer confirming they are in a development programme that addresses the competencies in the ministry development framework. Parish reviews will not be a requirement for ministers in kindred service for obvious reasons.

What about ministers in Union or Co-operating appointments?

Presbyterian ministers in a uniting or co-operating parish under Presbyterian oversight will be required to participate in reviews. The only difference will be that a representative from the local JRC will also participate. Parish reviews will continue to be administered by the JRC.

Presbyterian ministers under the oversight of another denomination will be required to supply a reference as per a minister in kindred service. Parish reviews will continue to be administered by the JRC.

The immediate implementation is too harsh.

The requirement for ministers to undertake continuing development is already in place. Under this proposal ministers will have two years from March 2009 to undertake a ministry review and five years from October 2008 to apply for a good standing certificate. Given that most ministers will meet at least some of the requirements of good standing already this is especially generous.

How does this fit with part-timers?

Initial reviews are expected to take up to three days, but this is only a guideline. This estimate includes the time spent by the reviewer collecting information and writing up the final report – activities where the minister may not necessarily be present. Nor do the days have to be consecutive. Where a part-time minister is employed elsewhere, it is expected that the review activities requiring the minister would occur on the days/times they would normally serve the parish.

Will training be mandatory? What about continuing ministry formation points (CMF)?

Training has always been a requirement for ordained ministers. The difference here is that ministers are able to make a more informed decision about the types of courses they might consider attending. It should also be remembered that any recommendation for training must be agreed to by all parties. Under this proposal continuing ministry formation points will disappear. The intention is to bring in a more dynamic system that provides training when and where it is needed rather than ministers having to wait for their points to accrue.

This is too expensive.

The Leadership Sub-committee has strived to ensure that reviews and training are as cost effective as possible. At most, parishes will need to budget for \$900.00 every two years. However this should be balanced against the funds that parishes have already committed for continuing ministry formation training, so the actual increase is \$480.00 over the first two years which will then decrease as the minister becomes more familiar with the review process. The other option would be to spread the cost of reviews and training nationally through Assembly Assessment but this could potentially be even more costly for smaller parishes. Parish reviews are free.

The Reviewers**How will reviewers be selected?**

The Leadership Sub-committee intends to consult widely with presbyteries and synods on the selection of reviewers. Each person selected will need to meet the person specification developed for the role of reviewer and undergo regular training and moderation in order to remain a reviewer. Although the proposal is for 30 reviewers this does not prevent individuals or groups paying for other

people to undergo the reviewer training. They will still be required to maintain the same level of competence as the selected reviewers.

What about lay people as reviewers?

The Leadership Sub-committee agrees that there are many lay people within the Presbyterian Church who would make excellent reviewers. However what is most important to the Sub-committee is that the people undertaking reviews understand the challenges faced by ministers. It is our view that most ministers would feel that other ministers would understand them best.

Amorangi, LOMs, LMTs and Elders

What about reviews for other forms of ministry?

Ministry reviews have been developed for both National and Local Ordained Ministers. Local Ministry Teams already have training plans and review processes in place. The Leadership Sub-committee is working with Te Aka Puaho to adapt ministry reviews for Amorangi.

What about reviews for elders?

The Leadership Sub-committee has developed this programme at the request of the General Assembly which asked for a system of developing and acknowledging the good standing of ordained ministers. Elders will continue to receive feedback as part of the parish review process. However that is not to say that ministry reviews could not be adapted for elders in the future.

Will the certificate of good standing affect lay people's status on the marriage celebrant register?

No. The criteria for registration as a marriage celebrant differ for ministers and lay people. Lay people are only added to the register in the absence of ordained ministers – for example a vacant charge. Once that vacancy has been filled the lay person is removed from the register.

A full copy of the Ministry Development Programme, including the revised report, is available on the Presbyterian Church's website www.presbyterian.org.nz.