



GUIDELINES FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS

A church intending to seek a minister should inform the Trustees through the Trustee contact, or if he/she is not available, the General Secretary.

It will be helpful for the church prayerfully to work through the paper 'The Preparatory Work of the Local Church in Seeking a Minister' at this stage, before any approaches are made to individuals, or advertisements placed. This document helps the fellowship to set out the local church profile and vision before examining the requirements of the minister's job. It will clarify the descriptions which will be needed for submitting adverts, or approaches to agencies such as Christian Vocations.¹ The retiring/previous minister ought not to be involved in the process, unless this is felt necessary by the Trustees.

People interested in the vacancy will usually submit a cv, giving some details of their Christian service. Agencies will often provide several names with a brief resume of each person's experience. The local leaders, with the Trustees' help, should prepare a short list of two or three possible candidates, who will then be asked by the General Secretary to complete the Connexional Application Form. Each candidate will be sent a copy of The Scheme and will be informed of the need to assent in writing to the 15 Articles if appointed.² When the Connexional Application Form is returned the General Secretary will take up references and will also answer any queries candidates might have about the Connexion and its requirements.

While this is happening local leaders may wish to meet candidates informally at this early stage, and some have found it helpful to make initial enquiries about them from personal contacts, or ask for tapes of sermons preached in their present situations. Then the church leaders should prayerfully choose their preferred candidate and arrange a more formal interview, with a visit to see the church and the local situation (including the Manse, if this is going to be occupied by the minister). It is important that the church considers one person at a time, and approaches an alternative person only once it has been decided to discontinue consideration of the first person, and so on. (It is a courtesy that candidates are kept informed and that the sifting is done as quickly as is possible.)

If the interview is satisfactory, the leaders will invite the candidate to preach with a view to eventually inviting him to become the minister. After he has preached on this first occasion the leaders should meet to decide whether to proceed further. The next step would then be

¹ Church leaders should be aware that discrimination on account of age, ethnic origin, or other factors is illegal. It is important that the Church has decided and duly minuted before this stage the fact if a woman may or may not be considered. There is a Connexional policy about sexual orientation and divorced persons and ministry.

² The Application form states that an Enhanced Disclosure from CRB for work with children and vulnerable adults will be required before the appointment is confirmed.



to arrange to meet with the candidate again to discuss in outline the conditions of service, etc, should the appointment be made.

If there is general agreement at this point the candidate should be invited to preach a second time, and the church informed of the situation. After this second preach a church meeting should be called, with the local leaders making a recommendation before a church decision is taken.³

If the church decides to vote in favour, they should write to the candidate offering a call to the position, subject to appointment by the Trustees.

The last stage is the formal interview with the Trustees, who will make the decision to appoint or not. Normally the decision will be made at a quarterly Trustees' meeting, but in certain circumstances (eg if it would necessitate a long delay) the General Secretary might make alternative arrangements. When the decision has been made it will be communicated to the candidate and the church by the General Secretary, and the new appointee will sign his assent to the Articles.

The Terms and Conditions of Service document should be completed and signed by the minister, the church representative and the Trustees' representative, and all parties hold a signed copy.

Additional Comments

There must be flexibility in these procedures, for example, where a candidate is already well known to the church or has service within the Connexion, though the local church leaders and congregation should give adequate time to consider the candidate alongside others.

By keeping the Trustees involved in the process the likelihood that they will not agree with the church at the final stage is minimized. Past experience has shown that difficulties over appointments often have been where the church leaders have not consulted Trustees at an early enough stage.

Following the appointment, the church leaders should plan the date and details of the Induction Service with the Trustee responsible and the new minister. The outline in the Handbook of Services, *'Together in the Lord'*, page 95, should be used as a guide. The Act of Induction should be performed by a Minister of the Connexion or by a person appointed by the Trustees.

³ The percentage agreement for an appointment is set by the local constitution. (Ideally at least 75% should be in favour.)