

Reception of Ministers Committee

In the three years from January 2006 to December 2008, the Committee considered 44 applications from Ministers desiring to become ministers of the Uniting Church. Of these, 27 were ministers from overseas churches, mainly but not entirely from churches in the Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational or United/Uniting traditions. A further 15 were from other denominations in Australia. The other 2 were former Uniting Church ministers who had resigned, seeking readmission.

The responsibilities of the Committee are defined in Regulations 2.3.5 and 2.3.8. There is a clear division of responsibility between the Assembly Committee and each Synod's Reception Committee. The Assembly Committee must determine three matters. First, whether the minister requires further education to be equipped to reach the standard of education of Uniting Church ministers, and to be equipped for ministry in the Uniting Church context. Second, whether the minister has been ordained in a manner that the Uniting Church accepts. Third, whether the Minister is in good standing with their current denomination, or was at the time of their last contact with it. It considers documentation that the minister submits, and makes inquiries about matters like the academic standards of institutions where the minister has studied. It does not meet the minister in person.

The responsibility of the Synod Committee is to meet the Minister in person, and to determine the suitability of that minister to be considered for a placement in that Synod. The Synod Committee may require further study or other conditions before acceptance.

In most cases, the Committee can complete its work without unreasonable delay. In a few cases, inquiries have become protracted. Such delays are commonly caused by one of three problems: the lack of a certified transcript of the minister's studies, difficulty in obtaining independent comment on an the standing of an overseas educational institution, and difficulty in establishing the manner of ordination of some overseas churches. The Committee is unhappy when such delays occur, but is aware of the importance of doing its work well for the good of the whole church, and especially of placements where the person may minister.

The regulations provide a process of appeal against the Committee's findings (Reg 2.3.5 (d)), and there has been one such appeal in the last three years. In that case the appeal led to modification of the decision of this committee. The Committee is always open to any submission from a Synod Reception Committee or theological college, if that body judges that our decisions are too stringent, or are unachievable in their context.

The Committee has raised with the General Secretary the need for a certificate to be given to

ministers when the presbytery finally receives them as Uniting Church Ministers. We envisage that the Synod would issue this certificate to the Presbytery when required, with security arrangements like those used for ordination certificates.

The Committee thanks Elliott Forsyth, who concluded his time at the end of 2007. He had been a member for over 25 years, and had contributed especially in the area of educational standards. His place has been taken by Sheila Bellamy, who brings similar expertise. We also thank Pam Kerr, who concluded her term as convener of the Committee at the end of 2007. The Committee is also grateful for the contribution of other former members: Allan Thompson, Alison McRae and Jason Kioa; and has been glad to welcome Douglas Miller and John Evans into its membership.

Rev Dr Douglas Miller
Chairperson

RECEPTION OF MINISTERS COMMITTEE MANDATE

Responsible to: The Standing Committee

Reporting arrangements: The Standing Committee

Mission statement: To fulfil the Assembly's responsibilities in relation to the reception of ministers from other denominations as stated in Constitution clause 38(a) and Regulation 2.3.5.

Mandate: [Regulation 2.3.5(c)]

1. On receipt of a request from a Synod, to determine whether a minister of another denomination satisfies the criteria for eligibility for admission as a minister of the Church.
2. On receipt of a request from a Synod, to determine whether any former minister of the Church satisfies the criteria for eligibility for admission as a minister of the Church (see Regulation 2.3.8).
3. To offer advice to Synods from time to time concerning the criteria for eligibility for admission as a minister of the Church.

General:

The responsibilities of every agency include:

- focusing the activities of the agency on the vision of the Assembly as a whole;
- advising the Assembly and/or the Standing Committee on policy matters within their area of responsibility;
- making policy decisions where the Assembly or the Standing Committee has delegated authority for certain policy areas, either through the agency mandate or by resolution;
- participating in cross-agency projects and teams established from time to time by the Assembly or the Standing Committee.

Power to appoint:

- To establish working groups for special tasks related specifically to the mandate.
- To make recommendations to the Standing Committee to establish other working groups for special tasks related to but not part of the mandate.

Membership of the Reference Committee:

- A chairperson and up to 10 members from within one Synod area, appointed by the Standing Committee;
- Power to co-opt up to two additional persons to ensure appropriate competencies, representation and development of new leadership.

Approved by Standing Committee November 1999