

**XVII. READERSHIP ACT (ACT XVII 1992) (AS AMENDED BY ACTS XII 2003, IV 2005, VI 2006, VI 2007, XIV 2012, XII 2014, XIII 2018, V 2019, XVII 2020 AND XV 2022)**  
*Edinburgh, 18th May 1992, Session 4.*

The General Assembly enact and ordain as follows:-

**Definition**

A Reader is a person who has been set apart by a Presbytery to an office which qualifies him or her to carry out duties within the Church of Scotland which are principally concerned with the ministry of the Word and the conduct of public worship.

**1. Application and acceptance as a candidate**

- (a) The provisions of sections 2, 4, 5(1), 5(2) and 5(3), 6A and 6B and 7-10 of the Selection and Training for Full-Time Ministry Act (Act X 2004), and (in respect of decisions in terms of (c)(iv) below) the appeals process referred to therein, shall be followed *mutatis mutandis* by any person wishing to apply for recognition as a candidate for the readership.
- (b) An application cannot be accepted from any person less than 18 years old. No upper age limit shall apply to application for acceptance for training.
- (c) A Local Review, established as described in section 5(4) of Act X 2004 *mutatis mutandis*, will arrive at one of the following written determinations:
  - (i) That the applicant is suitable to commence training as a candidate for the readership;
  - (ii) That the applicant should undergo a further period of discernment before a decision in terms of sub-paragraph (i) can be made;
  - (iii) That the applicant is not ready to commence training as a candidate for the readership; or
  - (iv) That the applicant is not suitable to be a candidate for the readership.
- (d) An individual whose application is successful will be known as a candidate for the readership.
- (e) An applicant who is accepted as a candidate for the readership shall, following Local Review, undergo a medical check and a Disclosure Scotland check in the form prescribed by the Forum and may only proceed if these checks are, in the opinion of the Forum, satisfactory. There shall be no appeal against the Forum's decisions on these matters.
- (f) A decision in terms of section 1(c)(iii) or (iv) shall be subject to the right of appeal set out in section 10 of this Act and section 6B of Act X 2004.

**2. Training of Candidates**

- (a) Each candidate must complete the training described in this section within five years from the date on which he or she becomes a candidate. Failure to complete the course on time will normally result in the loss of status as a candidate for the readership. The requirements shall consist of the academic course described in sub-section (b), the conference programme described in sub-section (c), and the placements described in sub-section (d).
- (b)
  - (i) The academic course shall consist of a Certificate of Higher Education from any institution which may be approved from time to time by the Faith Nurture Forum. The course and its constituent modules shall be approved

by the Forum. Candidates may undertake their course by distance learning where that is offered by the academic institution. An individual may commence the academic course before becoming a candidate, but must complete the course successfully before being set apart as a reader.

- (ii) When a candidate already has relevant training or education, the Faith Nurture Forum shall have power to give credit for it and to prescribe whatever additional training may be necessary. This further training shall be drawn from the courses or modules referred to in paragraph (b)(i) above.
- (c) A conference programme shall be organised and provided by the Faith Nurture Forum for those recognised as candidates in terms of section 1 above. The content of each conference shall be determined by the Forum, and the programme shall include such training in Safeguarding and Child Protection issues as shall from time to time be required by the General Assembly. Attendance at all sessions of all conferences shall be mandatory.
- (d) Each candidate shall, in the course of his or her candidature, complete (to the satisfaction of his or her Presbytery in consultation with the Faith Nurture Forum) two training placements in congregations other than the congregation in which the candidate is a communicant member. The placements shall be chosen and arranged by the Presbytery.
- (e) The Presbytery shall appoint for each candidate a regent, who may be a member of a support group organised locally for the candidate, and who shall be responsible for the Presbytery's pastoral care of the candidate for the duration of his or her course.
- (f) Before completing the course, and during the second training placement, each candidate must pass a Final Preaching Assessment, demonstrating skills in the conduct of worship to the satisfaction of (i) a representative of the Faith Nurture Forum, (ii) a representative of the Presbytery and (iii) the supervisor of that placement. The candidate may be assessed on more than one occasion, if necessary, to fulfil the requirement.
- (g) Upon fulfilment of all the requirements in sub-sections (b)-(d) and (f), the appointee of the Faith Nurture Forum shall report to the Presbytery that the course has been completed and convey the Forum's recommendation to the Presbytery. The Presbytery shall make such further enquiry as it wishes, and shall interview the candidate. It shall decide in terms of one of the following resolutions:
  - (i) That the candidate be set apart as a reader in terms of section 3 below;
  - (ii) That the candidate complete a probationary period as determined by the Presbytery, giving attention to specified aspects of the readership, before a further decision is made in terms of this sub-section; or
  - (iii) That the candidate be not set apart.

These decisions shall be subject to the right of appeal set out in section 10.

**3. Admission to the Office of Reader**

Persons who have completed the approved course of training shall be admitted to the office of Reader by Presbytery upon giving satisfactory answers to the following questions:-

- (i) Do you believe in one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and do you confess the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour?
- (ii) Do you believe the Word of God, which is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to be the supreme rule of faith and life?
- (iii) Do you believe the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith contained in the Confession of Faith of this Church?
- (iv) Do you acknowledge the Presbyterian government of this Church to be agreeable to the Word of God; and do you promise to be subject to this Presbytery, or to any other Presbytery within whose bounds you may reside, and to the General Assembly?
- (v) Do you promise to seek the unity and peace of this Church, to uphold the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline thereof, and to cherish a spirit of love towards all your brothers and sisters in the Lord?
- (vi) Are not zeal for the glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and a desire for the salvation of all people, so far as you know your own heart, your great motives and chief inducements to enter into the office of Reader?
- (vii) Do you engage in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ to live a godly and circumspect life; and faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully to discharge the duties of Reader, seeking in all things the advancement of the Kingdom of God?

After these questions have been answered satisfactorily, the Formula, which is the same as for ministers, shall be signed and the person shall be admitted to the office of Reader.

**4. Duties of Readers**

It shall be competent for a Reader set apart in the terms of this Act to

- (a) provide occasional pulpit supply in terms of Act II, 2000
- (b) be attached to a charge within the bound of the Presbytery. In such an attachment the Reader may be invited to
  - conduct services within the charge subject to the approval of the Parish Minister or Interim Moderator and the Presbytery after consultation with the Kirk Session
  - act as chaplain to residential accommodation or hospital with the approval of the Parish Minister or Interim Moderator and the Presbytery and where appropriate the Faith Nurture Forum
  - conduct funeral services with the approval of the Parish Minister or Interim Moderator and the consent of the family concerned
  - conduct school assemblies at the invitation of the appropriate school authority and with the concurrence of the School Chaplain, or Parish Minister or Interim Moderator, where there is no Chaplain

- perform any other duty which the Parish Minister or Interim Moderator may assign to the Reader which is principally concerned with the conduct of worship but which may include related pastoral work.
- (c) Any arrangement made under section 4 (b) of this Act shall be for an initial period of no more than three years and shall be reviewed annually by the Presbytery.
- (d) A Reader set apart in the terms of any Act of the General Assembly prior to this Act may normally only provide occasional pulpit supply. Nevertheless, a Presbytery may, after consultation and agreement with interested parties and with concurrence of the Faith Nurture Forum permit such a Reader to carry out duties under section 4 (b) of this Act.
- (e) Any Reader of the Church of Scotland is authorised to conduct public worship anywhere within the church.

#### 5. **Remuneration**

- (a) A Reader who provides occasional pulpit supply shall be entitled to the appropriate fee as laid down by the regulations of the General Assembly.
- (b) A Reader who is attached to a congregation, or to linked congregations, shall be paid such fees as are agreed by the Presbytery in consultation with the Kirk Session or Kirk Sessions and the Faith Nurture Forum. Such fees shall be reviewed and agreed annually by Presbytery.
- (c) A Reader who is attached to a congregation, or to linked congregations, shall be paid travelling expenses at the rate approved by the General Assembly for pulpit supply.
- (d) A Reader who acts as a chaplain shall be paid such fees and expenses, if any, as may be agreed by the Presbytery and the body making the appointment. Any such arrangement shall be made prior to the Presbytery agreeing to the appointment.
- (e) A Reader performing any other duty approved by Presbytery for which fees, expenses, or other remuneration are not paid shall be reimbursed by the Presbytery for out of pocket expenses and for travelling expenses at the rate approved by the General Assembly for pulpit supply.

#### 6. **Supervision**

- (a) Each Presbytery shall maintain and revise annually a Roll of Readers under its supervision.
- (b) A Reader shall have the choice of being on the Roll of Readers of the Presbytery in which they reside or the one in which they have their congregational membership. A Reader shall only be on the Roll of one Presbytery at a time. A Reader may choose to remove their name from the Roll of Readers at any time.
- (c) Presbyteries shall send the names and contact details of those whom it admits to the office of Reader, and those whom it removes from its Roll of Readers, to the Faith Nurture Forum and the Editor of the Year Book no later than 30th June in each year.
- (d) On leaving the Roll of Readers of one Presbytery, and seeking to be transferred to the supervision of another Presbytery, a Reader shall, on request to the Presbytery Clerk, receive a certificate of status, valid for a period of one year. He or she may lodge this certificate with the Clerk of the Presbytery in which they wish to be enrolled. Once enrolled by the new Presbytery, the Reader's name

- shall be added to the Roll of Readers of the latter Presbytery, whose Clerk shall notify the Faith Nurture Forum and the Editor of the Year Book.
- (e) Presbytery shall invite all Readers on its Roll, giving one month's notice, to appear annually at a Presbytery meeting in recognition of their ministry. All Readers on a Presbytery's Roll shall be invited to be corresponding members of that Presbytery.
  - (f) A Reader shall be advised by Presbytery that they risk being removed from its Roll of Readers if they do not, without good cause, appear before Presbytery as referred to in subsection 6(e) above. In the event of a Reader not attending Presbytery without good cause for two consecutive years, they should be invited to engage in a supportive conversation to ascertain reasons. In the event that this does not result in a positive outcome within 6 months, the Reader will be removed from the Roll and advised accordingly.
  - (g) Presbytery shall undertake the regular review of each Reader, not less than once every two years, and shall support their continuing development in the Readership. Presbyteries shall consult with Faith Nurture Forum on the resourcing of the above.
  - (h) Presbytery, shall, before making any appointment of a Reader in the terms of section 4(b) of this Act, satisfy itself that the Reader is an enrolled Reader in terms of this Act.

**7. Transfer to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament**

*This section was deleted by Act V 2019.*

**8. Admission of Readers from other Churches**

Readers, and individuals with equivalent status in other Churches, may be admitted to the readership of the Church of Scotland upon becoming communicant members of this Church, and the following procedure shall be followed:

- (a) The person wishing to transfer ("the applicant") shall intimate to the Presbytery in which he or she resides, and to the Faith Nurture Forum, his or her intention to apply for recognition as a reader.
- (b) The Faith Nurture Forum shall determine whether the applicant's status is recognised by the Church of Scotland, and may use only that ground to refuse to accept an application. The Faith Nurture Forum's decision on this is final.
- (c) The Faith Nurture Forum shall specify in each case what written materials are required in support of the application: these shall always include an application form; a criminal record check and declaration; and references (including one from the minister of the Church of Scotland congregation of which the applicant is a member, and one from the previous denomination confirming status and whether the applicant is in good standing).
- (d) The Faith Nurture Forum shall establish an Assessment Panel and that Panel shall carry out an assessment in the form of (i) an interview with a psychologist and (ii) an interview with two national assessors.
- (e) A report from the Panel shall be sent to the Faith Nurture Forum, and shall contain recommendations relating to approval of the application and any training requirements to be imposed. The Faith Nurture Forum shall make a final determination of the training requirements that shall be imposed, and convey that determination and its overall recommendation to the Presbytery and to the applicant.

- (f) The Presbytery shall resolve whether to admit the applicant to the status of reader in the Church of Scotland, adopting without amendment the training requirements determined by the Faith Nurture Forum. The Presbytery shall arrange for a service of admission of the reader as soon as any requirements have been completed to the satisfaction of the Faith Nurture Forum.
- (g) These decisions shall be subject to the right of appeal set out in section 10 of this Act and section 6B of Act X 2004.

9. **Repeal**

Act XXVIII 1974 and Act XIV 1978 are hereby repealed.

10. **Appeals**

An appeal in terms of section 1, 2, 6 or 8 of this Act shall be heard by the Ministries Appeal Panel in terms of the Ministries Appeal Panel Act (Act VI 2007) and may be taken on one or more of the following grounds: (a) that there were irregularities in the process, (b) that the final decision was influenced by incorrect material fact, or (c) that the process was conducted contrary to the principles of natural justice. Notification of the intention to appeal shall be sent to the Faith Nurture Forum and to the Principal Clerk within 14 days of the date upon which the decision was intimated to the applicant or candidate, as the case may be (“the appellant”). At the Appeal Hearing the appellant shall be entitled to appear either online or in person, as determined by the Faith Nurture Forum, and to address the Panel. The appellant may be accompanied by a companion, who shall not be entitled to speak to the Panel, but who may confer with the appellant.