

REGISTRATION OF MINISTRIES COMMITTEE MAY 2024

Proposed Deliverance

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.
2. Pass an Act amending the Registration of Ministries Act (Act II 2017, as amended) as set out in Appendix I (*Sections 3, 4 & 5 and Appendix I*).

Report

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 It is seven years since the General Assembly passed the Registration of Ministries Act. The last twelve months have led to consideration of changes which would enhance the operation of the Act, and these are detailed further on in the Report.

1.2. The Committee's main function is to consider applications from Church of Scotland Parish Ministers, who are currently categorised as E or R, who wish to have the status of O, which entitles them to be inducted to a charge. In addition, where ministers are returning from suspension, and wish to transition out of category S (for those who have been suspended) the Committee is required to consider applications from ministers in this category who wish to exercise ministry again. The Registration of Ministries Committee's task is to assess an individual's readiness for parish ministry, and then to specify what steps need to be taken to address any gaps in knowledge, understanding and experience which come to light.

1.3 Over and above this, the Committee also works with Presbyteries to review the names of those for whom it has pastoral responsibility and this exercise takes place each year. Details of the Committee's work can be found at this link <http://bit.ly/3J3jSzg> on the main Church of Scotland website, and the Registration of Ministries Act is accessible at this link <http://bit.ly/3IRoMQ3>.

2. ASSISTANT MINISTERS, PROBATIONERS, AND FAMILIARISATION CANDIDATES

2.1 The season in which the Church finds itself is one where probationers and familiarisation candidates who have satisfactorily completed their training, or familiarisation placement, have not been able to transition into parishes as readily as in the past. In consultation with the Principal Clerk, who sits on the Committee, such ministers who have taken on assistant minister contracts and have been ordained by their Presbytery will be registered as Category E. Subject to their graduate candidate status being affirmed by the Presbytery, or certificate of eligibility still being valid, they will move to be automatically registered as Category O status on induction to a parish. The provisions of section 22A (5) of Act X 2004 on Selection and Training for Full-Time Ministry will still apply, where a Presbytery has renewed such graduate candidate status, on three occasions (i.e. for up to three years) and it would then fall to the individual minister to make application to the Registration of Ministries Committee.

3. LENGTH OF VALIDITY OF REGISTRATION

3.1 For ministers who demit their pastoral charge, whether on grounds of age, or for other reasons, the normal practice thus far is that they retain their Category O registration for a period of three years after demission. The Committee wishes to maintain the integrity of the process, and given that a minister may not have exercised the functions of ministry in that three-year window, proposes that the time for which Category O registration is valid be set at two years rather than three. The detail of this is presented in the amending Act attached as Appendix I.

4. MINISTERS RETURNING FROM SUSPENSION

4.1 One of the first amendments to the Act related to applications for reinstatement from ministers who had been suspended. The Act was amended to introduce the requirement to invite the Recruitment Sub-Committee, as defined in the Safeguarding Act (Act XVI 2018), to comment on the application and to adhere thereafter to the recommendations of that Sub-Committee (s28 (1.4)). In consultation with the Safeguarding Committee, it is felt that this automatic referral into the Recruitment Sub-Committee is not proportionate. However, it should be a requirement that the Safeguarding Service be invited to comment on the application submitted by a minister seeking to return from suspension. It would be for the Safeguarding Service to consider whether the application would require to be referred for consideration by the Recruitment Sub-Committee; and, in cases considered by the Recruitment Sub-Committee, with any arising recommendations from the Recruitment Sub-Committee, the Registration of Ministries Committee would adhere thereafter to any such recommendations. The amending Act attached as Appendix I refers.

5. COMPOSITION OF COMMITTEE

5.1 On three occasions this year, the Committee has found itself to be inquorate, and this has resulted in applications being deferred. In response, the Committee proposes an amendment to the Rules of Procedure currently presented in the Act as Schedule 1, to increase the membership to seven, while retaining the quorum of three, and again this proposed change is outlined in the amending Act attached as Appendix I.

6. MEETINGS SINCE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 2023

6.1 The Committee has met regularly since the General Assembly of 2023, twice in person, and on other occasions in hybrid format. Four applications for Category O registration were granted; three of these were from ministers currently on the Register in this category, but not in a parish, and one was from a graduate candidate seeking Category O registration for the first time. Three applications by ministers seeking to return from suspension were considered. Dates for the Committee's cycle of meetings are published on the Church of Scotland website at the above link, along with an indication of a deadline for submission of applications.

In the name of the Committee

ROBERT HAMILTON, *Convener*
 HILARY MCDUGALL, *Vice-Convener*
 ANGUS R. MATHIESON, *Registrar*

Addendum

Dr Hazel Hastie was appointed as Convener of the Registration of Ministries Committee at the General Assembly of 2021. She resigned shortly before the General Assembly of 2023. Her significant contributions include the redesign of the Application Form for Category O status, as well as leading the Committee in a series of roadshows reported to last year's General Assembly. She was appointed as Clerk to the Presbytery of Edinburgh and West Lothian, having served as Clerk to the Presbytery of Annandale and Eskdale while also serving as Depute Clerk, and Acting Clerk, to the Presbytery of Edinburgh and West Lothian. The Committee is grateful for her wisdom and service and thanks her for her contribution.

ANGUS R. MATHIESON, *Registrar*

Appendix I

[] ACT AMENDING THE REGISTRATION OF MINISTRIES ACT (ACT II 2017) (AS AMENDED)

Edinburgh, [] May 2024, Session []

The General Assembly hereby enact and ordain that the Registration of Ministries Act (Act II 2017), as amended, shall be further amended as follows:

1. Amend section 19 in two places (the introductory paragraph and the penultimate paragraph), in each case by deleting "three" and substituting "two".
2. Amend section 19(v) by deleting "seventy two (72)" and substituting "seventy three (73)" and in one place by deleting "three" and substituting "two".
3. Amend section 20 in one place by deleting "three" and substituting "two"
4. Delete section 28(1)(iv) and substitute:
 "invite the Safeguarding Service, as defined in the Safeguarding Act (Act XVI 2018), to consider the application and if that Service thinks it appropriate, it shall have the Recruitment Sub-Committee (as defined in the said Act) comment on the application; provided always that if the Sub-Committee makes any recommendations, the Service shall report those to the Committee and the Committee shall adhere to them."
5. Amend Schedule 1 paragraphs 3(1) and (2) to increase the number of General Assembly appointed members on the Committee from three to five, so that paragraphs 3(1) and (2) read as follows:
 3. (1) The Committee shall be a committee of **seven** persons, consisting of a Convener, Vice-Convener and **five** other members. One member shall be appointed by the Legal Questions Committee, one by the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team and the other **five** members shall be appointed by the General Assembly on the nomination of the Nomination Committee.
 - (2) The General Assembly shall appoint a Convener and Vice-Convener, both of whom shall be proposed by the Nomination Committee and selected from its own **five** nominees. The **five** nominees proposed by the Nomination Committee shall include one member who is legally qualified, at least one Minister of Word and Sacrament and at least one elder.