

Policy for Ministry of Pastor in Port Phillip East Presbytery August 2021



The Ministry of Pastor is the way the Uniting Church recognises, supports and brings accountability to lay ministry roles in congregations, Presbyteries, Synods and Assembly.

The Ministry of Pastor is exercised by a lay ministry worker and is site or location specific. This ministry position can be a Placement (approved by Synod Placements Committee as suitable for an ordained Minister of the Word or Deacon or Pastor), a Non-Placement, or a volunteer position, but must be approved by the Presbytery PRC.

At the conclusion of an appointment the person ceases to be a “pastor” but would be eligible to apply for another appointment.

Applicants will be a confirmed member or a member in association with the Uniting Church. They will be assessed to see that they are suitable in character, personality and spiritual maturity as well as having the competence and capacity to exercise the responsibilities of the specific ministry to which they are appointed.

Persons who are accountable to the Church under the Pastor Regulations do not have to be called pastor in their ministry. They may be, for example, part-time or full-time paid Youth Workers, Youth and Family Ministry Workers, Chaplain or Pastoral Assistants in a congregation. Any of these descriptors are appropriate.

Criteria for Ministry of Pastor Roles

For a ministry position to be considered suitable to be recognised as a Ministry of Pastor position *at least* one of the following four criteria must be present (Reg 2.2.2(a)):

1. Teaching the beliefs and practices of the church: and/or
2. Pastoral oversight of members and/or groups operating under the auspices of the church; and/or
3. Leadership of worship in congregations or faith communities of the church; and/or
4. Evangelism or service beyond a gathered congregation but which is exercised under the auspices of the church.

Competencies

Any person considered for a Ministry of Pastor position must demonstrate the two required core competencies: “Work within the doctrine, ethos and polity of the Uniting Church”, and “Work within the Uniting Church Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice”. The Presbytery is able to provide training and assessment in these core competencies. There is usually a probation period during which these core competencies can be demonstrated.

A person being considered for a lay ministry role should be able to demonstrate that they meet most (if not all) of the competencies listed in the position description. The Presbytery is able to provide support for assessment at the time of appointment, as well as ongoing training and assessment for professional development while in the role.

The Role of the Presbytery

Presbytery should be consulted when congregations are planning to appoint people to serve in roles that includes any of the four areas of ministry: teaching, pastoral oversight, worship and evangelism or service beyond the congregation.

Port Phillip East Presbytery's Pastoral Relations Committee makes decisions about suitability of ministry roles for Ministry of Pastor and ensures that good processes for appointment and oversight are in place. The Pastoral Relations Committee approves the commissioning of people in Ministry of Pastor roles.

The Presbytery's Ministry of Pastor Team does the work of checking position descriptions and ensuring consistency with Synod's advice on pay scales. With the oversight of the Presbytery's Mission Leadership Development Committee the Ministry of Pastor team also assist with providing training and assessment for people in Ministry of Pastor roles. The Team also provides ongoing support for people in these roles.

Congregations usually begin by working on desired outlines for ministry, including the development of a position description. The Ministry of Pastor team works with Synod's People and Culture unit to provide templates and resources. They advise on the level of responsibility implied in the role, as well as wording that ensures that aligns with the four criteria. This becomes critical when it comes to levels of accountability, pay rates, allowances, and taxation.

Presbytery is responsible for assessment of core and general competencies, and this can commence within the selection process. The Presbytery also provides oversight of professional development.

The Presbytery normally is involved in commissioning a person as they begin in their role. The Presbytery will be part of the release of pastoral ties when they conclude their time in the position.

Any person commissioned into a ministry position suitable for the Ministry of Pastor will become a member of Presbytery and come under the oversight of the Presbytery. They will be required to undertake Code of Ethics refresher training. They will be expected to have a ministry supervisor and undertake continuing education. The lay ministry agent in a Ministry of Pastor role is also a member of the church council and ministry team at the location they exercise their ministry.