



# Presbytery of Ballymena

# Hand Book

Please retain for reference

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## Presbytery of Ballymena

### Handbook

May 2013

This handbook is intended as a general guide to Presbytery structures and procedures and to some issues which may affect Ministers, Elders, Licentiates, Deaconesses and others within congregations. It also includes some information on matters which may arise from time to time in congregational life.

It should not be regarded as an authoritative document and Ministers and others should refer to "The Code", and appropriate General Assembly Guidelines for more detailed information.

The information contained herein, together with amendments and updates, will appear on the Presbytery website in due course.

If you are unsure about procedures please do not hesitate to contact either myself or the Deputy Clerk for advice.

Two copies of this hand book will be provided for each congregation. One for the use of Kirk Session and Congregational Committee and one for the Minister for the time being. Ministers, on leaving a congregation, should leave the Handbook for their successor.

*Joseph Andrews*  
(Clerk)

## CHURCH COURTS

In the Presbyterian Church spiritual oversight is exercised by Elders (Presbyters) acting together in Church Courts. These are as follows:-

(i) **Kirk Session:** The Kirk Session is the Court of the Congregation and consists of the Minister and those elected by the Congregation and Ordained and Installed (or co-opted) to the office of the Eldership by the Presbytery.

(ii) **Presbytery:** Congregations are grouped into twenty one Presbyteries. Each Congregation is represented in Presbytery by a Ruling Elder commissioned by the Kirk Session.

(iv) **General Assembly:** The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland comprises all the Congregations of the denomination, each being represented by a Ruling Elder commissioned by the Kirk Session.

Each Kirk Session may commission **one** Representative Elder to Presbytery and General Assembly. Commission Forms should be forwarded to the respective Clerks as requested. Elders anent Associate or Assistant Ministers are appointed by Presbytery.

## PRESBYTERY MEMBERSHIP

There are 31 Congregations within the bounds of the Ballymena Presbytery. There are 3 "Linked Charges" thus making 28 Ministers in active service. There are also a number of Ministers Emeritus.

**The Moderator** of Presbytery is appointed annually in the month of March usually on the basis of a rota of seniority of service within Presbytery.

**The Clerk** is appointed by Presbytery and holds office at the pleasure of the Court.

**The membership of Presbytery** is made up as follows:-

- (i) All ministers of Congregations, Ministers Emeritus.
- (ii) Associate Ministers, Ordained Assistant Ministers, College Professors, Forces Chaplains, Ministers in Special Work, Missionary Elders.
- (iii) A Representative Elder from each Congregation commissioned by the Kirk Session.
- (iv) Corresponding Elders commissioned in relation to Associate Ministers, Ordained Assistant Ministers or other "Special category" Ministers.
- (v) Ex-officio members of the General Assembly.

**Others**, while not voting members, are invited to: "Sit and deliberate" (i.e. take a full part in discussion but cannot vote when decisions are being made, nor be present if and when Presbytery decides to deal with matters "In private session"). These include:-

- (i) Deaconesses who are serving in Congregations of the Presbytery. (306.3)
- (ii) P.W.A. representatives appointed by the P.W. Link Committee.
- (iii) Licentiates working in Congregations of the Presbytery.
- (iv) Ministers Without Charge under the care of Presbytery.

## PRESBYTERY COMMISSIONS

In order to facilitate the various aspects of the work of Presbytery Commissions are appointed to act on its behalf. A Commission has full Presbytery powers and can issue on any matter assigned to it. Its Findings (i.e. decisions or reports) are reported to Presbytery.

### Commission on Congregations

The Commission on Congregations is appointed to deal with any matters relating to proposals by Union Commission for the union, linkage, amalgamation or dissolution of a congregation of congregations within Presbytery.

### Vacancy Commissions

Vacancy Commissions are appointed to oversee, together with the Kirk Session, the work of Congregations which have no Minister and to supervise the process of filling the vacant Pulpit. The Vacancy Convener is also the Interim Moderator of the Kirk Session. The Convener is appointed by Presbytery. The Vacancy Commission consists of a number of Ministers of Presbytery together with their Representative Elders.

### Oversight Commission

In June 2012, Ballymena Presbytery agreed to replace the Consultation Process and teams with a new Oversight Commission, to continue to oversee the congregations within its boundaries. The purpose of the Oversight visit is to consider, with the congregation, the structures and ministry that aim to see Christ's Kingdom advance through the work of every congregation

The Oversight Commission plans to conduct an in-depth visit every ten years, and a less formal review every five years. Questionnaires will be sent, with guidelines, at the appropriate times. The Oversight Commission will meet with the Minister(s), Session and Committee, and (where appropriate) the Deaconess. The Oversight Commission will consist of three ministers (plus Representative Elders), one person from the Presbytery Property Committee, one person from the Presbytery Finance Committee and two PW Reps/Deaconesses. The Moderator and the Clerk of Presbytery are ex-officio members. The Commission has the authority to adjust the composition of the Oversight Commission as it deems necessary.

After the ten-year visit, a report will be produced by the Commission and made available to the congregation on an *agreed* Sunday. A report will also be sent to the congregation following the five-year review.

Presbytery agreed that the Oversight Commission has the right to revise the questions in the questionnaires if it considers it advantageous to do so.

### **Summary of Process**

- Convener Sends Forms to Congregation
- Form to be returned to Union Commission
- Forms to be returned to Convener
- Meeting with Committee, Session and Minister<sup>1</sup>
- Congregation's Presentation
- Report Finalised
- Report to Presbytery
- Report to Congregation

### **Ten Year Oversight Visit**

The focus of the Oversight Visit is to ensure that the congregation is committed to the work of Christ's Kingdom in its community and beyond. The Commission is to listen to the leaders as they reflect on what the Lord has been doing through them; help guide the leaders as they grapple with and engage in the challenges they face; encourage the leaders in the evidence of Kingdom growth; ensure that the structures of congregational life are in place to continue to fulfil the Great Commission; and, if necessary, give direction in areas where there are recognised failings in the congregation's life and witness.

#### **A. Dates**

The Convener is to arrange dates with the congregation and Commission as early in the process as possible. The Commission member who oversees the Minister is to arrange a private interview with the minister in advance of the meeting with Committee, Session and Minister.

#### **B. Questionnaire**

The full set of questions will be sent to the congregation for consideration and response according to the timetable set out above. This is to be sent in paper and electronic format, with separate sections that can be forwarded to the appropriate people. The expectation is that answers are returned electronically. The Convener is to ensure that all members of the Commission have copies of the answers.

#### **C. Meetings**

Each Oversight Visit will require five meetings between the Commission and the representatives of the congregation:

- i. Private meeting between appointed Commission Member and Minister, to consider the Additional Questions to the Minister.
- ii. Full Commission with Committee, Session and Minister to question, probe and encourage according to the answers in the appropriate sections. It is anticipated that each section should take from 30 – 45 minutes. The suggested Timetable would be Commission meet to review the questionnaire at 7pm, then meet Committee at 7.30pm; Session at 8.30pm; Minister at 9.30pm. The Commission Member assigned to each of the groups should chair the corresponding meeting. The Minister **ought not** to be present at the meetings with Committee and Session.
- iii. Full Commission with the congregation, to observe the congregation's Celebration of God's Grace in Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry and Mission. (ii and iii will require separate evenings in the case of a double charge.)

- iv. Full Commission with the congregation's Office-bearers to give them a preview of the Finding
- v. Commission Member (who had written the section on the minister) to deliver the finding to the congregation on the agreed Sunday, and to lead worship.

#### **D. Finding/Report**

This will be Presbytery's considered report on the information gleaned from the meetings with the congregation, and should include sections on the minister(s), leadership, congregation and structures. The member of Commission with responsibility for the minister is responsible for collating the Finding in preparation for the meeting with the congregation's representatives, and for delivering it to the congregation. Should matters arise from the private interview with the minister, the Commission has the authority to investigate further, and may write a separate report addressed to the minister.

#### **E. Follow-up**

It is anticipated that most matters will be covered by the five-year review. If any matter requires more immediate attention, or closer oversight, the Commission shall report this to Presbytery, who may retain that Commission for an agreed time or function.

The Convener is further asked to keep two records of the completed forms, and the Findings produced by the Commission (in accordance with the Data Protection Act). One should be filed by Congregation, to maintain a record of each congregation's developing ministry. The other should be filed by questionnaire, and reviewed periodically, to consider common themes and issues that may require attention at Presbytery level.

#### **Five Year Review**

- A shorter set of questions will be sent to the congregation for consideration and response, to ensure that congregational structures are satisfactory and that the work and witness of the congregation is progressing.
- It is anticipated that two meetings will be scheduled – a private meeting with the minister, and a meeting with Committee, Session and Minister.
- A short report will be brought to Presbytery and sent to the congregation.
- The same team will oversee the 10 and 5 year contact between Presbytery and congregation.
- The Five-Year Review Questionnaire, currently agreed by Presbytery, ought to be reviewed in the light of the experience gained from the Ten Year procedure.
- It is recognised that the composition of the Oversight Commission, and the leadership of the congregation may change between the two reviews, and this must be considered at the appropriate time.

Presbytery may carry out a “**Special Visitation**” (Code: Par: 246 [2] ) of a congregation when it considers it necessary.

**Ad Hoc Commissions** may be appointed by Presbytery to deal with particular matters assigned to them from time to time.

### **PRESBYTERY AGENTS AND COMMITTEES**

**Presbytery Agents and Committees** are appointed to foster particular aspects of the work and witness of the Church both within the Congregations of Presbytery and in the local community; to liaise with the Agents and Committees of the General Assembly; and to communicate relevant information in each direction. Most of the Presbytery Agents act as Conveners of the Committees of Presbytery to which such matters are assigned.

#### **Remits of Presbytery Committees**

##### **Business:**

To license and regulate all business to be transacted by Presbytery.

To act as a Standing Commission of Presbytery to transact business when there is no regular meeting of Presbytery, or, when urgent response or action is required.

To assist the business of Presbytery by the submission of recommendations regarding appointments, arrangements, etc.

To review existing unions of congregations, the need for changes therein, or the formation of new unions.

To consider appointments of Ministers to other than congregational work and the need for, or employment of, additional ministerial or pastoral staff in congregations, or the formation of “Group Ministries” to deal with specific aspects of work in Presbytery.

**Christian Training:**

To administer the Ministerial Development Programme and provide training for members of Presbytery (Ministers, Elders and Others) which will better equip them to fulfil their ministry in the Church and society.  
To plan and provide for the nurturing and development of Church leaders by means of training courses, seminars, practical workshops, etc.  
To report and comment on communications from the General Assembly's Board of Studies and Christian Training.

**Divine Healing:**

To emphasise the importance of the application of the grace and power of Christ to the whole person in physical and psychological as well as spiritual healing.  
To provide a ministry of caring and support for those suffering in body, mind or spirit.  
To provide teaching and information through literature, seminars, conferences and other special meetings in conjunction with the General Assembly's Divine Healing Committee.  
To provide Services of Healing for the benefit of all the Congregations of Presbytery.  
To report and comment on communications from the General Assembly relating to Divine Healing.

**Evangelism:**

To promote and resource evangelistic outreach through the Word and under the power of the Holy Spirit at all levels of Congregational life so that the Church of Jesus Christ will grow both numerically and spiritually, and have an increasing impact upon the community in which we live and serve.  
To stimulate special evangelistic projects involving the whole Presbytery of groups of Congregations within Presbytery (e.g. literature distribution or community-centred outreach).  
To facilitate, in conjunction with the Inter Church Relations Committee, inter denominational evangelistic projects.  
To facilitate the development of the Presbytery and Congregational Mission Plans.  
To report and comment on communications from the Assembly's Board of Mission in Ireland and to liaise with its Director of Congregational Life.

**Finance:**

To inspect the Annual Statistical returns of all congregations.  
To raise and disburse the necessary finances (through the Presbytery Incidental Fund) for the effective conduct of Presbytery business.  
To provide and maintain the equipment required for the effective conduct of Presbytery business.

**Inter Church Relations:**

To maintain the Biblical and Reformed witness of the Church in all inter-church (ecumenical) enterprises whether at local or central level.  
To seek to encourage relationships with other Reformed denominations and fellowships within Presbytery bounds.  
To seek to foster mutual understanding and respect amongst all Christian Churches and Fellowships so as to facilitate inter-church evangelical witness and outreach to the whole community and especially to those with no Church attachment.  
To deal with community issues which cross Denominational divisions in the effort to reduce religious sectarianism and community conflict.  
To nurture concerns for Biblical peace and peacemaking.  
To report and comment on communications from the General Assembly's Church Relations Committee and the General Board's Peace and Peacemaking Panel.

**Overseas Mission:**

To promote interest in:-  
The Overseas Mission of the PCI.  
Missionaries from our local Congregations working with other Agencies.  
To encourage prayer and support throughout the Congregations.  
To encourage others to become Missionaries.  
To report and comment on communications from the General Assembly's Overseas Board.

**Pastoral Panel:**

To meet any personal pastoral concerns which may arise prior to them becoming judicial and/or procedural issues.  
To offer support to Ministers, Manse Families and others in relation to any pastoral issues raised during a Presbytery Oversight Review.

To be available for informal contact with both ministers and elders at an early stage whenever an issue of wider pastoral concern appears to be arising within a congregation.

To provide pastoral support for Ministers, their spouses and families, as and when required

### **Schools and Colleges Ministry:**

To ensure that ministers and their congregations are making the best use of the opportunities they have to exert a Christian influence and be closely involved with our local schools and further education college by:

a. maintaining and focusing on the Bible as God's standard for faith and practice in today's world by encouraging and supporting:

(i) ministers in their work in schools,

(ii) the teaching staff in presenting Biblical truth.

b. reviewing annually the involvement of congregations in the local school through teaching RE classes, taking assemblies, financial support, volunteers, board of governors, PTAs etc. and, where necessary, encouraging further involvement

c. supporting transferor representatives on boards of governors.

d. encouraging and supporting the work of the SU E3 worker and their District Management Team (DMT)."

### **Social Witness:**

To present the Biblical viewpoint on matters of local social concern.

To report changes in Government social legislation or policy which affects the local community.

To promote Christian values through literature, Conferences, etc., as desired by Presbytery.

To assist Presbytery in presenting its views on social concerns to the appropriate caring agencies and public authorities

To recommend strategies for areas of local social need.

To report and comment on communications from the Assembly's Social Witness Board.

### **Strategy for Mission:**

To review the work of the Presbytery Committees twice annually and report to Presbytery.

To assist in co-ordinating the work of the Presbytery Committees, stimulate vision and facilitate action.

To identify moral and spiritual issues of concern to the witness of the Gospel both in the Congregations and the community, and to provide for our people, from Presbytery, comment, advice, guidance, or, action as appropriate.

### **Students:**

To provide all available information to those enquiring about becoming candidates for the Ministry.

To interview those who wish to become Candidates and report to Presbytery.

To hear pieces of trial or other work by those completing their studies and preparing for Licence.

To maintain close personal and pastoral contact with Students throughout their training.

### **Youth and Children's Ministry:**

To monitor the work of Sunday schools and Bible Classes throughout Presbytery especially with regard to the nature and the content of the courses being used.

To monitor and supplement the Youth Work being done in the congregations.

To encourage and support the work of teachers and leaders by providing opportunities for training.

To encourage evangelism and discipleship among the young people of Presbytery.

To bring young people of presbytery together in Youth Rallies, week-end camps etc.

To encourage young people to participate in summer and other outreach activities.

To inculcate the doctrines, practices and traditions of Presbyterianism in the young people of Presbytery.

To report and comment on communications from the General Assembly's Board of Youth and Children's Ministry.

## **EDUCATION BOARD**

The Education Board is a permanent body of trustees elected annually by Presbytery which administers all properties, bequests and investments held in trust by them for Congregations of Presbytery. By vesting property, etc. in the Board, Congregations may avoid the necessity of electing individual Trustees from time to time, and may have the benefit of the advice and services of the Board in regard to matters legal and financial.

## **APPOINTMENT OF ADDITIONAL PASTORAL PERSONNEL**

The Kirk Session should note that, as it is the employer, it is its responsibility to ensure that job descriptions, appointment and termination procedures are in conformity with all relevant Church and employment legislation. Kirk Session should have regard to all General Assembly Guidelines and should seek advice on same, from the Union Commission's Convener of Additional Appointments at an early stage in the procedure. Reference should be made to the Union Commission Guidelines for Congregations and Presbyteries regarding the Employment of Additional Pastoral Personnel (March 2011 and updated June 2012)

- (1) [a] Kirk Session generates a job description and personnel specification etc in consultation with "Peninsula".  
[b] The job description, including evidence of approval by Peninsula, is submitted to Presbytery for approval.
- (2) [a] Presbytery should:
  - In the case of a new request, ensure that all documentation is presented to them before giving their approval for the post. This will include a request for approval of a new APP post form (Appendix C in UC Guidelines, signed by the Moderator or Clerk of Session), a job description, a personnel specification, the terms and conditions, a draft advert and final confirmation of Peninsula approval.
  - In the case of a request for an extension to an existing post, ensure that all the documentation is presented to them three months prior to the ending of the present contract. This will include a request for an extension of an existing APP post form (Appendix D in UC Guidelines, signed by the Moderator or Clerk of Session), any changes to the job description, the terms and conditions and final Peninsula approval for these changes.
  - Ensure that the appointment is in agreement with the Congregation's Mission Plan and / or with Presbytery's recommendations through its Consultation with the congregation.
  - Consider that while the job description is drawn up by the Kirk Session, Presbytery should ensure that it is satisfied with its general terms.
  - Ensure that the congregation has the resources to meet the financial commitment of the post or that appropriate funding is in place. This may include looking at the congregation's accounts.
  - Inform the APP Committee and the Union Commission if a congregation is augmented in which case a Board of Mission in Ireland report is then required. Presbytery should ensure that the congregation make contact with BMI in order that this can take place.
- (3) Kirk Session forwards Job Description and evidence of approval by Peninsula to the Union Commission's Convener of Additional Appointments.
- (4) Kirk Session, with the approval of the Minister, selects a candidate for appointment.

**NB:**

- Permission to create the post stands for one year. If the post is not created in that time permission then lapses.
- When an employee leaves an APP post permission must be sought from Presbytery and Union Commission for creation of a new post, even if terms and conditions remain unchanged.
- Most APP posts are for a fixed period, usually one to three years. When the period of the term is coming to conclusion and Kirk Session or Presbytery (whichever is the employer) wish to extend the post then approval must be sought from the Union Commission through the APP Committee on the appropriate form.

## **ELECTION OF RULING ELDERS**

### **(a) Procedure for electing Ruling Elders**

1. Kirk Session decides time for election (177.1.) and method to be used (178.).
2. Permission of Presbytery obtained for election (177.2).
3. Appointment of Presbytery Commission to oversee election (177.2). The Commission will normally comprise the Moderator, Clerk, two other Ministers plus corresponding elders and will include the Minister and Representative Elder of the Congregation holding the election of Elders on the Commission, though they shall not function as part of the Commission during the meetings with Elder's Elect. (04/10/2011)

4. Method of procedure to be explained (177.3.b.).
5. List of Qualified Voters drawn up by Kirk Session (176.2.a.).
  - (a) Announcement to Congregation of drawing up of Voters' List (176.2.b.[i]. Appendix. 6A).
    - (i) Pars.175 and 176.2.c &d. and to be read to the Congregation. (177.3.b)
    - (ii) Pars. 30 and 31 to be read to the Congregation. (177.3.a)
  - (b) Voters' List to be made available for inspection on two successive Sabbaths (176.2.a.)
  - (c) One week from first publication allowed for lodgement or claims or objections (176.2.c.).
  - (d) Completed List certified and copy lodged with the Clerk of Presbytery (176.2.e.).
6. Congregation to be addressed on Qualifications and Duties of the Eldership.
7. Election to proceed for two Sundays by chosen method (178).
8. After counting of votes the list of those selected to be read to Congregation on two successive Sabbaths (179.1.).
9. One week allowed from the second reading for objections (179.2).
10. Meeting of Congregation to confirm the election and Call of New Ruling Elders: To be held not less than three weeks from first reading of list of those selected (179.3). The names of those selected to be read and voted on individually (179.4).

## **(b) Conferrals with and Training of Ruling Elders**

**1. Initial Meeting with Elders elect:** Following the election, representatives of the Commission will meet with the Minister first and then the elders-elect to inquire from the Minister what training will be given and to explain to the elders-elect the vows they will be asked to make at the ordination service and the procedure that will be followed.

This is in part fulfilment of the Code 180(1) and it serves to remind the elders-elect that Presbytery is to be involved in their preparation for ordination. The Commission will also draw to their attention that any elder-elect may withdraw at any stage if he or she no longer believes the eldership is right for them.

(a) Why hold a meeting like this?

(i) To fulfil requirements of the Code

- 177(2) The decision of the Session shall be reported to the Presbytery for authorisation to proceed with the election and for the appointment of a commission to discharge the duties of the Presbytery in the matter.
- 180(1) The name of every ruling elder elect shall be reported to the appointed Presbytery commission, who shall confer with him respecting his acquaintance with divine truth, his personal faith, and his sense of the responsibilities and duties of the office.
- 180(3) The Presbytery commission, being satisfied on these matters, shall report thereon to Presbytery or shall themselves proceed to ordain those approved, if this lie within the terms of their appointment.

(ii) To highlight the relationship between Congregation and Presbytery

- 69(1) The Presbytery is the body primarily responsible for corporate oversight of the Congregations and causes assigned to it by the General Assembly, and of the Ministers and elders connected with it, and the advancement of Christ's kingdom generally within its bounds.

(iii) Presbytery's desire to do things better

(b) What could be covered on this evening?

The paragraph above (in point 3) refers to meeting with the Minister first of all to inquire what training will be given – its contents, who is delivering it, etc. At the subsequent meeting with the elders elect, three areas should be covered:

(i) The vows:

Firstly, on your personal sense of calling:

*So far as you know your own heart, are zeal for the glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and desire for the salvation of souls and the upbuilding of the Church, your chief motives in entering upon the office of ruling elder to which you have been called?*

Comment: This is concerned with our motives in becoming an elder in the Church. In this question we're asking the new elders: "Why do you want to be an elder?" Some people want

to become leaders of an organisation because they want people to look up to them and to speak well of them. They're concerned about their own name and their own glory. But when we enter into the office of the eldership we shouldn't be seeking our own glory, but the glory of God; elders are people who love the name of the Lord Jesus and not their own name; and they're people who love the Church and want to see it built up.

Secondly, three questions on the Rule of Faith and Standards of the Church:

*Do you believe the Word of God as set forth in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice?*

*Comment: This is about ensuring the elders believe that the Bible is God's word so that they will want to uphold it and submit to it.*

*Do you accept the Westminster Confession of Faith, as described in the Statement from the Code, read by the Clerk, to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God; as such do you acknowledge it as the confession of your faith; and do you accept the Catechisms compiled by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster and received as the Catechisms of this Church?*

*Are you resolved, through God's grace, firmly and constantly to adhere to the fundamental doctrines of the faith set forth in the said Confession and Catechisms so long as you remain an elder of this Church?*

Comment: There are two things that will ruin the Church. One is when the leaders of the Church don't believe the Bible. The other is where the leaders of the Church are divided over what the Bible teaches. So these two questions are about ensuring that our elders agree with one another over what the Bible teaches. Different denominations will disagree and, in a sense, that's fine and understandable: that's what makes us different. But when the leaders of one particular Church begin to disagree over what they should believe and teach, then the Church will be ruined. And so every elder is asked: "Before you become an elder, do you agree with what this Church believes the Bible teaches?" Those things are summarised by the WCF and Catechisms.

Finally, two questions on the discharge of your duties as a ruling elder in this Church:

*Do you believe the Presbyterian form of Church government to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God; and do you promise to adhere to and to support it, and to yield submission in the Lord to the courts of this Church?*

Comment: The courts of the Church are the Kirk Session, the Presbytery and the General Assembly. The Assembly has oversight over every Presbytery and a Presbytery has oversight over every Congregation within its bounds. So, if there's a dispute in this Congregation, the Presbytery has the right to intervene in order to sort it out. This question therefore ensures that new elders understand and accept that we do not exist on our own. We cannot do whatever we please. We are responsible to the wider Church and must answer to the wider Church for what we do.

*Do you pledge yourself as a member of Kirk Session to work together with the Minister in the oversight and government of this Congregation, for the upbuilding of God's people in spiritual fruitfulness and holy concord, and for the extension of Christ's Kingdom?*

Comment: It's interesting that one of the qualifications Paul gives for elders in 1 Timothy is that they should not be quarrelsome. When the Session meets, we don't want elders who are arguing constantly and fighting with one another and who are never willing to accept that someone else might be right. So, we need elders who are the kind of people who are able to work together with others to build up the Church and to extend Christ's kingdom.

(ii) The Procedures

Go over the procedure with the elders and the questions they'll be asked at the conferral before ordination.

(iii) Important Reminder

Draw to their attention that any elder-elect may withdraw at any stage if he or she no longer believes the eldership is right for them.

**2. Training:** The training will be held to fulfil the Code 180(2). It is recommended that the 'Prepared to Lead' course be used and it is strongly recommended that the six sessions should be spread over at least six weeks.

**3. Conferral with Elders-elect:** Following the training and at least one month before the ordination service, the Commission will meet with the Minister first and then the elders elect to confer with them in accordance with the Code 180(1).

(a) The questions for the meeting with the Minister will be as follows:

*(i) Have the minimum six lessons required in the Code been fulfilled?*

*(ii) What system of instruction has been followed for the Confession of Faith and for the duties and responsibilities of the eldership?*

*(iii) Have any problems arisen in regard to matters either of doctrine or practice in respect of which the Commission might be of help?*

*(iv) Have the elders-elect considered the prescribed questions to be put to them at their ordination?*

(b) Having allowed the elders-elect to introduce themselves, the questions for the meeting with each elder-elect will be as follows:

*(i) Having been elected by the Congregation and having completed your training, can you please tell us what you are most looking forward to and what gives you the greatest concern in entering this office?*

*(ii) Since we affirm that the Word of God as set forth in the Scriptures is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, can you please tell us briefly what place the Scriptures have in your own life? (Prescribed Question II)*

*(iii) Are you satisfied that you are sufficiently acquainted with the substance of the Confession of Faith as to be able to subscribe it as the confession of your faith? (Prescribed Question III+IV)*

*(iv) Is there any matter of doctrine or practice arising from your reading of the Confession of Faith on which you feel you would need or like further guidance or help? (Prescribed Question III+IV)*

*(v) The duty of ruling elders is to work together with the Minister in the spiritual oversight and government of the Congregation (Code Par 30). How will you seek to discharge this duty?*

*(vi) By their calling, ruling elders share with the Minister the responsibility for practical witness both in the Congregation and in the wider world (Code Par 30). How do you hope to fulfil this responsibility?*

*(vii) The Kirk Session is responsible for admission to both sacraments. What challenges do you think this raises for you and have you any concerns about your role in this aspect of the Session's work? (Code Par 39(2))*

*(viii) Are you familiar with the prescribed questions which will be put to you at your Ordination and are you ready to answer them?*

14. The Commission, being satisfied on these matters, will arrange for the ordination service to be held (Code Par 180(3)).

N.B. 1. It is recommended that permission of Presbytery for an Election of Ruling Elders should be sought well in advance of the proposed date of the Ordination Service in order to allow adequate opportunity for the above procedures to be effected smoothly.

2. When the conferral takes place in the Church of the Moderator, another Minister of the Commission should preside.

### **ORDINATION AND, OR, INSTALLATION OF RULING ELDERS**

Please note that this is a Presbytery Service. The Moderator of Presbytery should conduct the service and members of the Commission should be seated together throughout. Any request to vary the Order of Service should be addressed to the Presbytery Commission. (Instructions re formula of subscription)

The Congregation should stand while the Commission enters and leaves the Meeting House.

Announcements + Welcome\* (\* May be done by the minister of the Congregation who then hands over to the Moderator as this service is conducted by Presbytery. Alternatively announcements may be included at #)

Invocation

Praise

Prayer

Scripture Reading

Scriptural Warrant for the Eldership

Announcements#

Offering for The Students Bursary Fund

Praise

Constitution of Presbytery (Moderator) [if not already constituted prior to the service]

Declaration of Presbytery (Moderator)

Standards of the Church including the Rule of Faith (Clerk)

Questions to Elders-elect

Subscription to the Confession of Faith (Kirk Session Minute Book):

**“I believe the Westminster Confession of Faith, as described in the Code, Chapter 1, paragraphs 12-14, to be founded on and agreeable to the Word of God, and as such I subscribe it as the confession of my faith.”**

(Congregation to stand and remain standing until after the next praise)

Prayer and Act of Ordination and, or, Installation

(Not less than three nor more than seven to lay on hands)

Aaronic Blessing

Right Hand of Fellowship (Moderator)

Praise

Charge to Elders and People

Praise

Benediction (Moderator)

### **CO-OPTION OF RULING ELDERS**

1. Kirk Session decides that it want to co-opt an individual who must be certified as a ruling elder from one congregation to another.
2. The approval of Presbytery is sought. The name of the individual must be disclosed to Presbytery at this time.
3. A meeting of the qualified voters of the congregation is held.[181.2]
  - If the vote in favour of co-option is unanimous, the person will subscribe the Westminster Confession of Faith in the Session Minute Book. Upon this he may act as a member of Kirk Session without the necessity for installation.[181.3]
  - If the meeting is not unanimous then call a further meeting of Qualified Voters which requires a two thirds majority to approve the Session proceeding with co-option. [181.2]
4. Kirk Session reports to Presbytery the fact that the co-opted elder has subscribed the Westminster Confession of Faith. [181.3]

### **ELDER EMERITUS**

An Elder Emeritus is a person who has reached the age of 65, or is in special circumstances, and who retires from, rather than resigns from the duties of the Eldership.

- The Elder notifies Kirk Session of his intention to retire and seek Elder Emeritus Status.
- His letter of resignation is forwarded to Presbytery together with a letter from the Kirk Session requesting that the status of Elder Emeritus be granted.

### **RESIGNATION OF A RULING ELDER**

#### **Resignation from the Office of the Eldership in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland**

- The Elder writes to the Clerk of Presbytery tendering his resignation from the Office of the Eldership in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (33.4).
- Presbytery decides on the matter.

#### **Resignation from the Duties of the Eldership in a Congregation**

- The Elder writes to the Clerk of Presbytery tendering his resignation from the Duties of the Eldership in the Congregation (33.4).
- On accepting his resignation Presbytery shall place his name on the roll of elders without charge. After his name has been on a roll of elders without charge an elder shall be deemed to have resigned from the office of eldership, unless otherwise resolved by Presbytery.

**NB:** The letter of resignation should be submitted to Presbytery and not the Kirk Session. Kirk Session should transmit promptly and such letter received by it.

### **LICENSING OF PROBATIONERS**

Please note that this is a Presbytery Service. The Moderator of Presbytery should conduct the service and members of the Commission should be seated together throughout. Any request to vary the Order of Service should be addressed to the Presbytery Commission. The Congregation should stand while the Commission enters and leaves the Meeting House.

Announcements + Welcome\* (\* May be done by the minister of the Congregation who then hands over to the Moderator as this service is conducted by Presbytery. Alternatively announcements may be included at #)

Invocation

Praise

Prayer

Scripture Reading

Announcements#

Offering (for Students' Bursary Fund)

Praise

Constitution of Presbytery (Moderator) [if not already constituted prior to the service]

Declaration of Presbytery (Moderator)

Standards of the Church, including the Rule of Faith (Clerk)

Questions to Candidate

Subscription to Westminster Confession of Faith (Presbytery Minute Book)

(Congregation stands and remains standing until after the next praise)

Prayer of Licensing

Aaronic Blessing

Declaration of Licensing

Praise

Charge to Licentiate

Praise

Benediction

### **VACANCY PROCEDURES**

1. Convener and Commission appointed by Presbytery (190.1.)
2. Convener's Fee and Pulpit Supply Fee fixed by Presbytery (190.2-3.)
3. Pulpit declared vacant by Convener
4. Union Commission Forms completed by Session and Committee (191.1-2.)
5. Representatives of Session and Committee appointed to meet Union Commission
6. Union Commission Forms submitted to Presbytery for approval.
7. Union Commission forms submitted to Union Commission.
8. "Leave to Call" granted by Union Commission (191. 2-4)
9. List of Qualified Voters drawn up by Kirk Session (176.2.a, 192.2, 176.3.a. ). (Can also be done in tandem with 4+5. It needs to be ready before proceeding to 10)
  - (a) Announcement to Congregation of drawing up of Voters' List (176.2.b.[i]. Appendix. 6A).
  - (b) Pars.175 and 176.2.c &d. to be read to the Congregation.
  - (c) Voters' List to be made available for inspection on two successive Sabbaths (176.2.a.)
  - (d) One week from first publication allowed for lodgement or claims or objections (176.2.c.).

(e) Completed List certified and copy lodged with the Clerk of Presbytery (176. 2. e; 3. b+c)

10. Kirk Session considers method of hearing of Candidates (194.4a)
  - [a] Candidates preach in the congregation OR
  - [b] Candidates heard through a Hearing Committee.
11. If [b] is recommended call a Meeting of Congregation to appoint Hearing Committee, at which the Vacancy Commission shall be present. (194.4.b.)
  - (a) Notice given on two successive Sundays (45.1+2)
  - (b)
    - (i) Meeting constituted with prayer
    - (ii) Read code pars. 194.1,3,4.a.b.c, 5.
    - (iii) Opportunity given for questions or comments from Congregation.
    - (iv) Select Hearing Committee by secret ballot
    - (v) Decision by meeting:-
      - [a] The Hearing Committee reports to a Congregational meeting OR
      - [b] The Hearing Committee is instructed to recommend a sole nominee to preach in the congregation.
  - (v) Meeting closed with the Benediction
12. Kirk Session invites members of the congregation to submit names of for consideration. (194.5)
- 13.. Kirk Session considers names submitted by members of congregation, plus any other names suggested by Kirk Session. (194.3; 194.6)
14. Kirk Session authorises Convener to contact certain ministers.
15. Convener reports back to Kirk Session.
16. Kirk Session invites as many ministers as it wishes to attend for interview. Session should have regard to the General Assembly Guidelines (G.A. Minutes: 1988, p 69)
17. Kirk Session draws up list of "Candidates" for hearing. (Maximum 4). (194.6)
18. Presbytery Commission meets to approve the names agreed in 10. (192.3; 194.6)
19. List submitted to General Assembly Clerk who may add up to 2 names drawn from those who have applied on official forms, but whose names have not been included on the Kirk Session's list. (194.7.a-d)
20. Hearing of Candidates by chosen method. **N.B.** Note 193.8(d) if Candidates are preaching in Church.

### **MEETING TO CALL A MINISTER**

1. Meeting of Congregation to decide on Call, at which the Vacancy Commission shall be present, (195.1.)
  - (a) Notice on two successive Sundays (195.1-2. Appendix 6B)
2. Meeting constituted with prayer
3. Report of hearing Committee (if any)
4. Opportunity given for questions or comments from Congregation
5. Decision to proceed: The Presiding minister shall ascertain whether Congregation wishes to make out a Call to a candidate. Requires a simple majority vote either by a show of hands or secret ballot. (195.3.)
6. Vote on eligible Candidate(s).
  - (a) If only one name is proposed and seconded a vote be taken and if the Candidate receives the requisite majority he shall be declared elected. (195.6.)
  - (b) Should more than one candidate be proposed and seconded a secret ballot shall be taken and repeated as necessary until only one candidate remains (195.7)
  - (c) A secret ballot shall be taken on this candidate, and if he fails to gain the requisite majority, it may be taken on the other candidates, or any other eligible minister. (195.8)
  - (d) No call shall be issued unless a candidate obtains at least two thirds of the votes cast. (195.9)

7. Meeting closed with the benediction
8. Call certified and available for signing at the meeting and following Sunday (195.6.)
9. Call to be sustained by Presbytery.
10. Arrangements for Installation Service by Presbytery to be made in consultation with Moderator and Clerk.  
*N.B. Minutes of all meetings to be kept by Convener in Vacancy Procedures Book  
 Minutes of Kirk Session and Congregational Meetings to be kept in Session Minute Book by Session Clerk.  
 Vacancy Procedures Book to be lodged with Clerk of Presbytery on the conclusion of vacancy.*

### **SUSTAINING A CALL**

- 1. When a Call has been made out by a Congregation of this Presbytery** it has to be sustained before being transmitted to the Presbytery from which the recipient has been called.
  - (a) The Vacancy Convener, or Minister, of the Congregation concerned, will table the Call and one or two Congregational representatives may speak in support of it.
  - (b) Presbytery sustains the Call and forwards it to the recipient's Presbytery (196.7.)
- 2. When a Call has been made out to a member of this Presbytery** and has been sustained by the Presbytery from which the Call has come, it has to be presented using the following procedure.
  - (a) A deputation from the Congregation(s) which made out the Call is received and welcomed by the Moderator.
  - (b) The Call is tabled and checked to be in order.
  - (c) The Convener and one or two members of the deputation are invited to speak in support of the Call.
  - (d) It is proposed and seconded that the call be placed in the Minister's hands and that he be furnished with Credentials to the receiving Presbytery.
  - (e) Opportunity is given to members of Presbytery to express appreciation and good wishes to the departing colleague.
  - (f) The Moderator presents the Call and the Credentials.
  - (g) The recipient accepts the Call and replies.
  - (h) The Moderator concludes with prayer and invites the Deputation to leave.

### **ORDINATION AND, OR, INSTALLATION OF A MINISTER**

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Announcements + Welcome \* (\* May be done by the minister of the Congregation who then hands over to the Moderator as this service is conducted by Presbytery. Alternatively announcements may be included at #)

Invocation

Praise

Prayer

Scripture Reading

Sermon on the Church

Announcements#

Offering for The Students Bursary Fund

Dedication of Offering

Praise

Constitution of Presbytery (Moderator) [if not already constituted prior to the service]

Declaration of Presbytery (Moderator)

Standards of the Church including the Rule of Faith (Clerk)

Questions to Minister-elect

Subscription to the Confession of Faith in Presbytery Minute Book

(Congregation to stand and remain standing until after the next praise)

Prayer and Act of Ordination and, or, Installation

(Not less than three nor more than seven to lay on hands)

Aaronic Blessing

Right Hand of Fellowship (Moderator)

Praise  
Charge to Minister and People  
Praise  
Benediction (Moderator)

### **MINISTERS' ANNUAL LEAVE ENTITLEMENT (GA Reports 2012 p 96)**

The annual holiday entitlement for Ministers in Pastoral Charges

- (a) Six weeks, including a maximum of six Sundays and inclusive of all statutory holiday entitlement. (This gives flexibility to Ministers by not requiring leave to be taken on the actual day of public holidays but, if desired, enabling it to be taken out of the total annual holiday entitlement.)
- (b) One week In-Service Training
- (c) One week sabbatical Leave

### **PROTRACTED ILLNESS GUIDELINES (GA Reports 2012 p 96-97)**

- A. As a result of protracted illness, a Minister, Associate Minister, Ordained Assistant or Licentiate (hereafter referred to as 'Ministers') shall be paid in respect of the first twelve months an amount equivalent to the full salary due to them. No payments under the scheme shall be made to any Minister for more than 12 months in any 24 month period.
- B. Each case of protracted illness shall be reviewed so that a decision can be made at the end of twelve months absence from duties provided that (a) absence has been continuous, or (b) absence or absences have been of significant duration or recurring over the twelve-month period, as interpreted by the Union Commission, after consultation with Presbytery.
- C. In the case of continuous absence the Convener of the Commission shall, in consultation with Presbytery, have the authority to initiate review procedures previous to the end of the twelve-month period.
- D. Persons under review may be required to attend for medical examination by independent medical practitioners appointed by the Commission.
- E. The Commission, in consultation with Presbytery and the Board of Finance and Personnel, shall have the authority to advise Presbytery to loose from his/her charge any Minister on the grounds of medical incapacity, after consultation with the Kirk Session and Congregational Committee.
- F. Application may be made for a grant to meet the cost of pulpit supplies in accordance with the rules for the time being of the Sick Supply Fund.
- G. Medical evidence must be supplied to the Financial Secretary in all cases of illness of more than seven days duration. Failure to submit such evidence could mean loss of benefit.
- H. Any invalidity or other state benefit reclaimed by a Minister should be paid over to the Financial Secretary to be forwarded to the Congregation to be applied towards meeting expenses of the period of illness. A Minister serving more than one Congregation will be asked to nominate the Treasurer to whom payment is to be made.
- I. Presbytery may make arrangements for reasonable deductions in ministerial expenses during the period of illness to assist with pulpit supplies or other additional expenditure occasioned by a Minister's incapacity; the amount of the reduction to be determined by Presbytery with the approval of the Union Commission.
- J. Specifically, with regard to Licentiates and Ordained Assistants, during medically certified illness:
  - (i) Licentiates and Ordained Assistants shall be entitled to the full appropriate salary due to them for up to 12 months (see section (a) above).
  - (ii) The costs shall be met as follows:
    - 1-3 months: no change in the arrangements in place.
    - 4-12 months: salary, full housing allowance and employer's national insurance contributions to be paid by C.M.F. Expenses, paid by C.M.F., may be reduced by the Union Commission.
  - (iii) Each case of absence from work shall be reviewed at the end of 12 months, or at the date of eligibility for Call, in consultation with the Board of Christian Training, as appropriate, provided that:
    - absence from work has been continuous;
    - absence or absences have been of significant duration, or recurring, as interpreted by the Commission.

- (iv) In cases of significant absence from work the Convener of the Commission shall have authority to institute consultation, and may require a medical examination by a practitioner appointed by the Commission before the end of 12 months or before the date of eligibility for Call.
- (v) The Commission shall have authority to recommend the termination of a Licentiates Assistantship in accordance with the terms of the Guideline E above relating to Ministers.

## **RETIREMENT OF A MINISTER**

### **Retirement at 65:**

- Complete "Application for Leave to Retire" Form
- Send Form to the Clerk of Presbytery.
- Presbytery grants leave to retire.

### **Retirement at 64:**

- Complete "Application for Leave to Retire" Form
- Call a meeting of the Congregation to approve the retirement
- Send Form to the Clerk of Presbytery.
- Presbytery forwards the form to the Committee on Pensions and Assessments for submission to the General Assembly before the retirement date.
- Remember to act in good time. For example if you wish to retire in May aged 64, your application should have been submitted to the General Assembly of the previous June .

### **Retirement on grounds of ill Health:**

- Complete "Application for Leave to Retire" Form
- Call a meeting of the Congregation to approve the retirement
- Send the Form plus supporting medical documentation to the Clerk of Presbytery.
- Presbytery checks the details and forwards the form to the Committee on Pensions and Assessments for its approval.

## **ELECTION OF CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEE**

1. Kirk Session decides which **ONE** of the following methods will be used (183+185)
  - (1) Convene a meeting of the voting members and elect qualified persons at such meeting. **OR**
  - (2) Ask the voting members to send a list containing the required number of names of qualified persons; and the persons having the highest number of votes shall be deemed elected. **OR**
  - (3) Print a list of all qualified persons, stating on it how many persons are to be elected. Circulate the list amongst the voters with instructions to mark the names of those for whom they vote; and the persons having the highest number of votes shall be deemed elected. **OR**
  - (4) On two successive Sundays the congregation shall be informed that an election of qualified persons for the Congregational Committee is to take place and voting members are invited to propose, in writing, for the consideration of the Kirk Session any qualified member or members. The Kirk Session, having considered the proposals received, and having obtained the consent of those selected, shall read the list of those selected to the congregation on two successive Sundays. On a subsequent day fixed by the Kirk Session there shall be held an official meeting of the congregation to confirm the appointment of the new members of the Congregational Committee. The names of those selected shall be presented individually to the meeting. A poll of the voters shall be taken and if two-thirds who vote be in favour he shall be declared elected.
2. Voters List drawn up (176.1)
3. Election of Committee by chosen method.

## **TRUSTEES**

### **Number and Duties**

Congregational trustees are appointed to receive and hold the property of the congregation upon trust for the congregation and subject to its directions, so far as those directions comply with the terms of such trust and with the provisions of the Code. (53.a) A congregation may appoint the Presbytery Education Board as its

trustees, but where this is not possible the congregation may proceed to appoint individual trustees. (241.a)  
Each congregation, with its own trustees, should have a minimum of three. (241).

### **Appointment of Trustees**

Trustees may only be appointed at a meeting of the Congregation, called by the Kirk Session, and convened for that purpose. (36.3, 46.g, 242.1)

- If the land is unregistered land in Northern Ireland lodge a memorial of the memorandum of appointment of trustees with Registry of Deeds.
- If the land is registered land in Northern Ireland, register the title of the new trustees the Land Registry.

### **Removal of Trustees**

Trustees may only be removed, or their resignation received, at a meeting of the Congregation, called by the Kirk Session, and convened for that purpose. (36.3, 46.g, 241.c+d)

- Unless the trustee is being removed because he has ceased to be a member of the congregation, the approval of Presbytery should be sought prior to the meeting.

## **STRUCTURAL ALTERATIONS**

The site and plans of all new buildings proposed to be erected on congregational property and of all proposed demolition, structural alterations of or structural alterations to existing buildings thereon (including all proposals and designs for memorials, windows, artificial lighting and for seating and furnishings requisite for public worship) and the installation of all audio-visual equipment requires the permission of the Church Architecture Committee and Presbytery.

### **Procedure:-**

1. The Congregational Committee decides on a project.
2. A Congregational Meeting agrees in principle to the draft plans.
3. Plans are submitted to the Church Architecture Committee. This should be done **before** planning approval (if required) is sought.
4. Plans are submitted to the Convener of the Presbytery property Committee.
5. Once Church Architecture Committee approval has been received, plans should be submitted to the Presbytery for approval. Submission of plans, to the Clerk, should include the dates on which the project was approved by the Congregation and the Church Architecture Committee.

In all situations where augmentation or incremental grant is being paid to the minister of a congregation the Presbytery shall consult with the Union Commission and obtain the Commission's consent before authorising any project.

(Please note that Presbytery permission is the **final** stage of the approval procedure and must be obtained before commencement of work.)

## **LETTING OF A MANSE**

### **Vacancy**

During a vacancy a Manse may be let for a short period.

Please note the following:-

- (a) confirmation must be obtained that the deeds have been checked and that there are no restrictive clauses that would prohibit such a rental;
- (b) a full survey of the vacant Manse, as required by Union Commission, should be done prior to any tenants moving into the Manse. The Convener of the Vacancy Commission should have the opportunity to inspect the property between rentals;
- (c) a proper legal leasing agreement should be drawn up by the Congregational Committee, and Presbytery should be satisfied that this agreement in order;
- (d) permission is required from Presbytery and the Union Commission;
- (e) permission for letting will be granted for a specified period of time, and then if necessary be subject to further permission from the Presbytery and Union Commission. (Generally rental is for a period of up to one year and that the rental agreement is formally drawn up and signed. It is wise that afterwards the renewal be upon a monthly basis in case the Manse would be needed to house the new minister.)

### **Redundant Manse**

Where a redundant manse is let:-

- (a) the trustees are under obligation to ensure that a realistic rent is charged, which can be reviewed at least annually and where the tenant is responsible for the payment of rates;
- (b) A proper legal leasing agreement should be drawn up by the Congregational Committee;
- (c) permission sought from Presbytery and Union Commission.
- (d) disbursement of proceeds from a manse letting should be in accordance with the Union Commission guidelines (currently 25% for each of the following, stipend, ministerial expenses, upkeep of other manse in the union, and maintenance of the fabric of the redundant manse).

**NB:** In all cases where a Manse is to be let contact should be made with the Clerk of Presbytery and the Convener of the Union Commission's Manses Committee.

## **BEQUESTS**

When a bequest is received:

(1) A "Notification of Bequest" Form should be completed by the minister, and sent to the Clerk of Presbytery, showing:

- the name and address of the testator/ testatrix
- the date of death
- the date of probate
- the terms of the bequest

*As these forms have to be kept it is important that ministers use the actual (A5 format) form provided by the Clerk of Presbytery.*

(2) Details of the bequest, together with a statement of the purpose to which it is to be devoted, should be entered in the Kirk Session Minute Book.

## **MARRIAGE**

A minister should only officiate at a marriage if at least one of the people concerned has sufficient connection with a congregation in order to ensure that meaningful pastoral care can be offered. If the officiating minister is not the minister of that congregation, he/she should only conduct the marriage with the consent of the congregation's minister. The minister of the congregation should ensure that adequate marriage preparation is offered to the couple.

Ballymena Presbytery recommends that Ministers be encouraged to normally conduct marriage ceremonies in Church buildings, unless there are exceptional or special circumstances, in which case the matter should be referred to the Presbytery Marriage Reference Group.

No marriage ceremony may proceed without a "Marriage Schedule", application for which should be made by the couple to the local Council Office, prior to the date of the marriage.

The officiating minister should ensure that the Schedule is signed by the parties married, the witnesses and himself subsequent to the conclusion of the Marriage ceremony.

A permanent record should be kept of all marriages in a book held by each congregation (Record of Marriages book). Any marriage conducted outside the church building should also be entered in the book of the appropriate congregation.

A minister should not celebrate marriage on Sunday.

A minister should not join in marriage a member of the Church with one holding beliefs or having a Church membership incompatible with the Christian witness of the Protestant Reformation, until careful instruction has been given in the doctrines and obligations of our evangelical faith or until other conditions approved by the General Assembly's Committee on Marriage and the Family have been observed.

It is strongly recommended that a minister does not join in marriage a person who has been divorced, except in circumstances recognised by the Committee on Marriage and the Family as justifying such action. In the case of a divorced minister wishing to remain in office after re-marriage the approval of Presbytery shall be obtained.

## **DEACONESS**

## **Recruitment**

- An individual seeking to apply as a candidate for the office of deaconess should do so on the Form provided by the Board of Mission in Ireland.
- Kirk Session and Presbytery are required to support the application

## **Appointment**

- A congregation wishing to apply for the services of a Deaconess should make application on the Form provided by the Board of Mission in Ireland.
- Presbytery is required to support the application.
- The Board of Mission in Ireland, following consultation with the Congregation, calls a Deaconess to the congregational appointment.
- The Call is sustained by Presbytery.
- Presbytery conducts a Service of Commissioning and /or Induction.

## **COMMISSIONING AND / OR INDUCTION OF A DEACONESS**

Please note that this is a Presbytery Service. The Moderator of Presbytery should conduct the service and members of the Commission should be seated together throughout. Any request to vary the Order of Service should be addressed to the Presbytery Commission. The Congregation should stand while the Commission enters and leaves the Meeting House.

Announcements + Welcome \* (\* May be done by the minister of the Congregation who then hands over to the Moderator as this service is conducted by Presbytery. Alternatively announcements may be included at #)

Invocation

Praise

Prayer

Scripture Reading

Sermon

Announcements#

Offering

Praise

Constitution of Presbytery

Presentation of Deaconess (*Representative of the supervising Board or Agency*)

Declaration of Presbytery

Standards of the Church including the Rule of Faith

Questions to Deaconess

Statement of Commissioning and / or Induction

Prayer of Commissioning and / or Induction

The Aaronic Blessing

Right Hand of Fellowship

Presentation of Badge

Praise

Charge to Deaconess and people

Praise

Benediction

## **General**

In the event of a vacancy in the pastorate of a congregation in which deaconess is serving, one month's notice offering resignation shall be given upon the installation of a new minister though, upon the request of minister and Session and with the consent of the deaconess, the appointment may be renewed by the Board of Mission in Ireland.

An appointment as a deaconess may, after twelve months' service, be terminated by mutual agreement, or by two months' notice given by the deaconess, the minister of the congregation, or the Session, subject to the approval of the Presbytery and of the Board of Mission in Ireland.

The normal retirement age of a deaconess shall be 65 but her appointment may be extended on an annual basis with the approval of the Board of Mission in Ireland.

