

Policy

Guidelines for Assessing Readiness to Return to Ministry

Purpose

Pastors may leave congregation-based ministry for periods of time during their years of pastoral ministry. The aim of this document is to assist Ministry Support and Development (MSD) in the assessment of a pastor's readiness to return to this type of ministry.

Reasons for time away from congregational/pastoral ministry may include:

- time spent ministering in non-congregational based ministry
- time out for rest and reflection
- worn out/burnt out
- loss of faith
- inappropriate behaviour
- unresolved conflict
- family issues
- financial issues
- asked /required to leave
- unavailability of appropriate ministry
- pastoral gifts and personal suitability
- the 'fit' was wrong
- call – uncertainty/loss /called out of or to something
- sabbatical /study

Process

1. When circumstances suggest that a return to church based ministry may be desired or possible, regional ministers or MSD team members are to arrange to meet the individual (and spouse if married) to outline the process and to listen to the pastor's story.
2. The interviewer/s report to MSD team on the meeting outcomes.
3. If both parties agreed to continue the process, the initial interviewer arranges a second interview at a mutually convenient date, providing the pastor with the Return to Ministry Self-Reflection Guide (Pastoral Care Resource Tool 4 - attached) outlining the type of questions to be asked prior to the interview.
4. This interview is conducted with the pastor (and spouse if married) with at least two church representatives drawn from members of MSD, regional ministers, Pastoral Development Taskforce or other qualified people (eg consultancy team members). Representatives should include a gender balance.
5. The second interview (with spouse) takes place where outlined questions are discussed. Issues required to be addressed include:
 - accreditation or re-accreditation
 - marriage enrichment recommended (as appropriate)
 - emotional health assessment by professional (recommended)
 - general health check (recommended to all)
6. Following the interview, the pastor is required to renew or update his or her Pastoral Profile (Pastoral Care Resource Tool 5). This practical exercise assists pastors to articulate ministry values and strengths. It will also help Pastoral Development Taskforce facilitate a healthy match to any churches looking for people to serve on their ministry teams.
7. Following the second interview, the interviewers are required to reference the individual's readiness by speaking with the pastor of the church where they have most recently been

attending, or a mentor or spiritual director.

8. If ready to return to pastoral ministry, and needing to apply for accreditation or re-accreditation, the pastor is then referred to the Committee for Ministry.
9. If the individual is NOT thought to yet be ready to return to a ministry position, a third meeting (with spouse) is arranged to advise the pastor of the outcome. Permission is to be sought from the individual to inform their own pastor of the recommendation to facilitate pastoral care and support.