

Ministerial Deployment in Southern Synod -
Full document on the process for Deployment Scoping decisions

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Introduction

1. The URC has well established procedures¹ for handling vacancies and for seeking and issuing a call to ministers. This paper, which describes the proposed way that any vacancy within Southern Synod should be handled in future, draws directly from it.
2. Southern Synod, at its March 2009 meeting, approved the introduction of mission assessment criteria to assist the process of determining pastorate needs and the appropriate deployment response to it. This paper addresses the issues raised by the need to develop policies and procedures which embody those mission assessment criteria, and how the process will work in practice.
3. The process described in this paper reflects the substantial change in Synod structures involving the creation of Synod Area approved at the September 2009 Synod. We continue to have 2 United Areas in Southern Synod, and several ecumenical churches and Covenants, and so the need for ‘ecumenical consultation’ in assessing local deployment arrangements and scoping remains essential where these are involved.

Ministerial deployment is an important Synod responsibility

4. It takes only a moment’s reflection to recognise that deployment of scarce resources within the Synod must reflect an informed, Synod-wide view of priorities and needs. Hence the deployment assessment must take place at Synod level, albeit with significant input of local knowledge from the Synod Areas. The Synod Deployment Group was established, with representation drawn from all areas within the Synod, to develop proposals for a Synod-wide process for deployment of these scarce resources, and then to assist in an ongoing role with the implementation of whatever procedures were then ultimately agreed by Synod. The Synod Deployment Group therefore remains one of the few continuing functions of the whole Synod, following the implementation of the new Synod structure.
5. Scoping Groups will be formed by the Synod Deployment Group with representation drawn from it. Normally two members of the Synod Deployment Group will serve in this way for each scoping assignment and Synod Areas will be asked to provide two people to join the Scoping Group (which will thus normally comprising four people in all) to consider scoping issues relating to a pastorate within that area. The decision of the Scoping Group will be reported to the relevant Synod Area (normally via its Pastoral Committee) as well as to the Synod Deployment Group. Because the Scoping Group is created by the Synod Deployment Group, its decision is that of a Synod-wide body and not of the particular Synod Area. In the diagrammatic summary which follows that decision, if positive, is reflected in the box marked ‘Synod gives concurrence’.

What are the core issues?

6. The following diagrammatic summary shows at a purely conceptual level the various stages of handling a vacancy, as clearly set out in the extant URC Guidance - ‘The

¹ “The Movement of Ministers”

Movement of Ministers”. The diagrammatic summary covers the whole process, although the aspects of particular relevance to the Deployment Sub Committee at this time fall into the first phase - “Preparing to declare a post vacant”.

Preparing to declare a post vacant

Minister receives a call and informs the Pastorate (or approaches retirement date, or becomes seriously unwell and unable to continue, or dies)

Synod gives concurrence (note that this step is not the same thing as deciding that the pastorate will continue to be scoped as previously). The whole scoping review then follows as described in this paper.

Appointment of Interim Moderator(s) by Synod Area Pastoral Committee after consultation with the Synod Moderator

Visit by members of **the Scoping Group**

Visit by members of **the Pastoral Committee of the Synod Area** sometimes with the Synod Moderator

The Scoping decision

Identification of the Pastorate Call Group

Preparation of Pastorate Profile and Summary Profile

Visit by Synod Moderator

Draft Terms of Settlement (including housing arrangements)

Declaration of a Vacant Post by Synod Area Pastoral Committee, who immediately advise the Synod Moderator of their decision

Calling a Minister

Vacancy raised at Synod Moderators' meetings

First visit

Preaching with a View

Deciding on a call including concurrence

Induction Service and Induction period

Appointment of Interim Moderator(s) and the preparation of information to allow the scoping review to occur

7. The Interim Moderator appointment is of great importance. It is a role *requiring objectivity on behalf of the Synod and the URC* generally *and* pastoral care for the pastorate, not a role which should turn the person selected into an advocate for the local pastorate.
8. The Interim Moderator has a responsibility to catalyse or stimulate the preparation by the churches in the Pastorate of their case for scoping. This needs to contain many elements of the document that will (if scoping then occurs) become the Pastorate profile. It also needs to contain sufficient information to allow the Scoping Group (see below) to make their assessment against the mission criteria. Where, as is normal, more than one local church forms a pastorate (including ecumenical groups), then the scoping documentation (and any subsequent pastorate profile) will reflect the combined picture for all local churches in the pastorate. The work underlying that documentation thus has to involve all the churches in the pastorate.
9. It is obviously desirable for all concerned that unnecessary duplication and effort is avoided in assembling the information which the Scoping group will use. So the data that comes to the Scoping Group should be drawn from that already collected for the Synod's 'mapping' exercise and from the Local Ministry and Mission review process, although it is possible that some further data may also be needed
10. As outlined further below, those responsible for assembling the data needed by the scoping group may seek advice and assistance in that task from the pastoral committee of the Synod Area or United Area. Where ecumenical relationships exist the Steering Group will reflect those arrangements.
11. As already indicated, it is important that the Interim Moderator retains objectivity and does not see it as his or her role to undertake the detailed preparation of the scoping case or promote that case. Rather their role is advisory, to help ensure that the preparation of the case by the pastorate is properly undertaken and that it is fairly presented.
12. There is at present no training available for those who are asked to become Interim Moderators. Some have undertaken the role many times and so have gained a great deal of experience. But some have not. We believe that this role is of such importance that it is highly desirable for there to be a short training programme for Interim Moderators arranged to run regularly, covering the whole Synod, and encouraging the exchange of types of experience within a structured framework. As noted further below, we have attach as a short appendix a possible 'fast track' approach to developing a framework for such training, although we recognise fully that responsibility for the provision of training falls outside our terms of reference. However we would be willing to take a lead in trying to get that suggested approach underway, if that support would be helpful.

Scoping

13. As soon as concurrence occurs it is important to begin the process of assessing the future scoping of the pastorate, as this will be a critical factor before any future deployment can be considered. A Scoping Group will be formed, with (normally two of) its members drawn from the Synod's Ministerial Deployment Group and with two

members drawn from the local Synod Area or United Area. The members drawn from the Synod's Ministerial Deployment Group on a particular Scoping Group will not normally come from the area in which the vacancy arises. This is to maximise objectivity of the assessment, because the membership of the Synod Ministerial Deployment Group is itself made up of individuals nominated by all areas within the Synod. Thus each vacancy will give rise to a Scoping Group being formed for that particular situation. Where ecumenical arrangements already exist, the Scoping Group will reflect these arrangements. For example where a pastorate includes a LEP or a constituted Covenant of Churches, the Scoping Group will keep the 'ecumenical deployment' issues in mind when a vacancy of whatever denomination is being considered for future ministry in that pastorate.

14. The Scoping Group is not responsible for developing the Pastorate Profile or Summary Profile or for managing the vacancy or any subsequent call. It is however responsible for evaluating the future scoping of the pastorate and so has direct responsibility for helping Synod determine what level of Ministerial support is appropriate when and if a minister is sought to fill the post.
15. The way in which data needed by the Scoping Group should be assembled has been described already within the section above '*Appointment of Interim Moderator(s)...*', and as amplified in the following section '*Involvement of the Pastoral Committee of Synod Area or United Area*'. Full advantage will be taken of such data already collected as a result of the Southern Synod 'Mapping exercise'.
16. Each Scoping Group will ensure that its assessment is made using that data and the results of its own work against agreed criteria. The proposed criteria are attached to this paper.

Involvement of the Pastoral Committee of Synod Area or United Area

17. The local pastoral committee of the Synod Area or United Area will wish to know the support available to a pastorate facing a vacancy and will also need to understand whether there are specific matters requiring action relating to the local circumstances.
18. A local pastorate may ask the pastoral committee for help with developing and reviewing its documentation before the scoping review (and also any subsequent pastorate profile) before it is finalised and made available to the Scoping Group and others. Given the concerns of some smaller pastorates that some larger local churches may be able to put together documentation which is thought more fluent and impressive, the benefits of such help and review input from local pastoral committees is emphasised.
19. United Areas operate in a way which reflects the differing planning timeframes of those who participate. As a result a United Area does have a degree of autonomy to allocate its resources as it sees fit (within the timescale agreed). At the end of that agreed timescale its resources will be reassessed by all who contribute them.

The Scoping decision - and what happens when a scoping decision is far from clear-cut?

20. It is widely recognised within Southern Synod, that it - along with all other parts of the URC - faces a serious shortage of stipendiary ministers in relation to the scoping

decisions of the past². We must expect therefore that scoping decisions for some pastorates will change, and that the application of the scoping criteria will be central to that decision.

21. The result of such scoping decisions is therefore likely to cause a number of difficult issues to arise immediately. It is not however the wish of Synod that local churches should be left without leadership or access to ministers. So Scoping Groups will be encouraged to present their findings to stimulate questions about whether there are ways in which the churches in the Pastorate can or should develop a very different (and much stronger) case for their scoping. It is to be hoped that the result will be a stimulant for a form of negotiation between all the parties affected. Such a stimulant will sometimes provide a powerful challenge where a scoping decision would otherwise leave one or more local churches without any prospect of calling a minister.
22. Thus the interim findings of the Scoping Group but may be seen as a catalyst for some change in the underlying arrangements and hence the case for scoping. The interim findings of the Scoping Group may well include questions as to whether the existing grouping of churches should be changed (enlarged, or combined) and as to whether ecumenical opportunities and implications have been considered. They may well initiate a further period of negotiation where all involved renew their efforts to seek God's will for the situation, whilst continuing to have regard to Synod's mission criteria. Such negotiations require a balance to be struck between the strategic imperatives (stemming from the shortage of stipendiary resources) and resulting pastoral considerations. The discussion of necessary changes in a pastorate and its approach is therefore a time for great openness and honesty as well as pastoral sensitivity.
23. Before coming to its final decision it is to be expected that a Scoping Group will have carefully considered all the facts available, will have consulted with the full Synod Ministerial Deployment group and will have taken into consideration the broader Synod perspective of similar issues. Thus the scoping decision itself will have been taken with great care.

The ongoing process of managing Deployment decisions

24. With the expectation of declining numbers of stipendiary ministers for the foreseeable future, appropriate deployment of those increasingly scarce resources will become an even more challenging task. Our Synod also has a clear responsibility not to seek to retain a disproportionate share of the scarce denominational resource of stipendiary ministers. The new procedures outlined above, coupled with the application of Mission criteria, are intended to provide a way forward, to meet that challenge. However the Deployment group recognises that all these matters will need to be kept under review in future.

² Where pastorates are fortunate in having available to them some additional ordained ministerial resource (whether part time non-stipendiary ministers or retired ministers) the scoping group will wish to clarify the likely extent of continued availability of that resource in the short and medium term, and will take account of this explicitly within the scoping decision. Similarly, where the Scoping group becomes aware that there is the possibility of such additional resource becoming available in future to a local pastorate, the scoping decision will include explicit description of how that possibility has been reflected. This does not mean that the subsequent handling of the vacancy and the importance of "Call" are thereby short-circuited, but it does mean that those then handling the vacancy will be fully aware of the relevant resource factors that were taken into account in making the scoping decision.

25. The Deployment group is also determined to make its processes and procedures as transparent as possible, so that local churches and Synod Areas may be able to understand what is going on and why.
26. To that end, the Deployment group itself will meet periodically, to hear reports from those of its members who have served or are serving on Scoping Groups, in order to optimise the consistency of approach followed, and to identify lessons or policy issues arising. As this experience with the new process is gained, and lessons are learned from the experience of Scoping groups, the Deployment group will seek to find ways of communicating any key points arising so that all local churches and Synod Areas can remain as fully informed as possible.

Helping a local pastorate to reassess its future

27. The current membership of the URC is well under half of that which existed when the denomination was formed in 1972, yet the number of local URC churches around the UK has not reduced very significantly. Whilst Synod does not wish to encourage the closure of any local church, it recognises that local churches can reach the point where their ability to continue is in serious question, and where the task of those continuing there may well have been completed.
28. Part of the Synod Ministerial Deployment group's work has been to consider what short-term leadership and guidance might be made available to such local churches at a time when their future is being questioned. It has long been the practice in particular situations where short term leadership at local church or pastorate is needed, that a minister has been asked to take on that role. Sometimes that role might best be described as that of a 'locum' providing pastoral care and continuity. Sometimes the interim ministry role requires pastoral healing, perhaps where there has been a breakdown in relationships. The situations in which this type of role has been created vary widely and often have no connection whatsoever with one where the future of that particular local church is being questioned.
29. There are other situations, however, where the future for a pastorate is far from clear, and its members need help to think through what they should do, and sometimes to think very radically. We envisage that the process might lead to a complete revival of activity, or to a substantial realignment of the membership and grouping of the pastorate with that of another, or it might lead to the collective recognition of completion of work for the local church and the transfer of individual membership to another church or some other combination. But effective leadership is needed if that process is to be carried out effectively, both from a pastoral and a strategic point of view.
30. It is important to emphasise that such interim leadership or pastoral facilitation would have to be short term. The role requires sensitivity, for it is not one where an 'outsider' can or should expect to come into a situation and, after analysis, tell the local church what it should do. A key part of the role is to help the members of the local pastorate to identify the issues they should be considering, and then to help them to try and discern God's will as they do so. So the role is one requiring the skills of a facilitator or mediator, not those of a leader with focus on command and control.

31. The skills needed for helping the members of a local church to think through both their own and their local church's future do not have to involve a stipendiary minister, however desirable that might be. Pastoral work does not have to be carried out by an ordained minister of word and sacrament to carry it out either. We have many able lay members who have much experience of helping organisations face and manage change. Many also have clear pastoral gifts. Some of those people are retired and have considerable flexibility in when they may be able to offer their skills.
32. The Synod Ministerial Deployment Group thus hopes to be able to mobilise support for carrying out this role of interim leadership/pastoral facilitation from lay members, and there may in addition be some further support for the role from some existing ministers, whether retired or stipendiary. For this reason the Deployment Group does not consider that the provision of interim leadership/pastoral facilitation needs to further reduce the scarce resource of stipendiary ministry available.

Helping to develop the necessary skills for interim leadership/pastoral facilitation

33. Whilst we anticipate that those carrying out the interim leadership/pastoral facilitation role will bring experience and insight, we recognise that there may nevertheless be a training need because the role is a new one and essentially short term. Such training will have to be developed 'from scratch' although, like Interim Moderator training, it may well be based largely on encouraging the exchange of experience of the role as that experience develops, within a structured framework.
34. We attach as a short Appendix one way in which the training needs might be developed - of course there are other ways too. [Note added in January 2013 – Please see comments at top of the attached Appendix for status of that guidance]. As already noted above, this training responsibility falls outside our terms of reference and more naturally to the training Committee of the Synod, but we remain willing to take a lead in trying to get the approach suggested underway, if that would be helpful.

Appeal against a scoping decision

35. Scoping decisions, will involve a great deal of careful consideration of many complex issues as described above. They will also involve the active participation of two representatives of the local Synod Area as well as the appointed members drawn from the Synod Deployment Group. Hopefully, the decisions so reached, however challenging (or even painful) they might be, will be accepted by all involved. However it is also important that a local pastorate which, after careful thought, concludes that it cannot accept a scoping decision on the ground that the decision making process has been unsound, should feel able to appeal that decision to a body independent of the scoping decision.
36. So it is proposed that any local pastorate which cannot accept the findings of a Scoping Group should have the right to make its appeal known to the Synod Council, sitting as an appeal body. Clearly appropriate arrangements will be needed where ecumenical partnerships are involved.

Southern Synod's process within the wider URC

37. Because of the introduction of mission criteria, Pastorate profiles for scoped Southern Synod posts will have a demonstrable additional element which is not necessarily present in profiles originating in other Synods. So a scoped Pastorate should be encouraged to include in their Pastorate profile reference to the fact that their scoping by Southern Synod means that their Mission commitment and activity has been assessed and found to justify a call.

*Nigel Macdonald
Convenor, Deployment Committee
Tuesday, 2 February 2010*

A possible approach for developing a Training framework

- for Interim Moderators
and also for
- Interim leaders/Pastoral facilitators

NOTED ADDED JANUARY 2013

The thinking behind this suggested approach remains unchanged; however as yet no such arrangements are in place. So please see the contents of this appendix as being aspirational, rather than a clear statement of policy or guidance, as all the rest of the Deployment Policy document is intended to be.

Introduction

There is already a good deal of practical experience within the Synod, held by people who have served as interim moderators. However those holding that experience are generally extremely busy, and no one person's experience is going to be representative of the whole spectrum of experience available. The challenge is to capture and distil that experience and form it to develop a Training framework for Interim Moderators.

Suggested modus operandi: developing a Training Framework for Interim moderators

Two (or possibly three*) people would be asked to form a working group to collect data to enable a Training framework to be developed. The working group would ask those with that experience for help in carrying out an interview survey in which those with experience would be asked to outline the key lessons and principles which they have gained from experience in the role. The working group would be mindful that some with experience of serving as interim Moderators might also have directly relevant experience of the Interim leaders/Pastoral facilitator role (see following section), and hence might be able to contribute insight on that as well.

The working group would also interview a number of other people also directly involved in the process, including candidate ministers, and church secretaries.

The working group would also look to see what other guidance is available at a national level within the URC, and would explore to see whether there is similar material available within other denominations.

From these interviews and their research the working group would then be asked to draw up a suggested framework covering the issues that an Interim moderator would need to consider. The aim would be that once the proposed framework had been identified, training needs would then be identified against that framework. It could be that written material coupled with a thorough session arranged to facilitate sharing of experience would be considered sufficient, or it might be that a training session covering the whole framework would be considered necessary, taking place once or twice a year.

As their thinking on the suggested framework developed to the stage whether they could put forward a draft, it would be reviewed by the Moderator and two individuals selected by him as having sound experience of as many aspects of the task as possible. Their comments and suggestions would then be taken account of by the working group as it moved to finalise their work.

The working group would be asked to complete the whole of their work within a timescale of eight months

* If three people are asked to do this work, one might be the Training Officer. Ideally this would be the same grouping as form the working group to develop a training Framework for Interim Moderators

Suggested modus operandi: Training Framework for Interim leaders/Pastoral facilitators

Two (or possibly three*) people would be asked to form a working group to collect data to enable a Training framework to be developed. The working group would seek advice on who might have relevant experience and would then contact them asking them to share that experience by taking part in an interview survey. As with the survey in connection with developing a framework for Interim Moderators above, those with experience would be asked to outline the key lessons and principles which they have gained from experience in the role.

The working group would also interview a number of other people who have direct experience of being participants in the process, including church secretaries and elders.

As noted above the working group would be aware that some interviewed in connection with the development of a training framework for Interim Moderators might also have directly relevant experience of the Interim leaders/Pastoral facilitator role. They would seek to embody that experience within their overall findings in this second study.

The working group would also look to see whether there is any guidance available at a national level within the URC, and would explore to see whether there is appropriate material available within other denominations.

As with the Interim Moderator framework project, the working group would then be asked to draw up a suggested framework based on their interviews and research covering the issues that an Interim leaders/Pastoral facilitator would need to consider. As previously the aim would be that once the proposed framework had been identified, training needs would then be identified against that framework. It is quite likely that a training session covering the whole framework could be considered necessary, at which some with practical experience for the role would also take part, and that such a training session would occur once or twice a year and perhaps more frequently in the early stage of the development of this role..

As their thinking on the suggested framework developed to the stage whether they could put forward a draft, it would be reviewed by the Moderator and two individual selected by him as having sound experience of as many aspects of the task as possible. Their comments and suggestions would then be taken account of by the working group as it moved to finalise their work.

The working group would be asked to complete the whole of their work within a timescale of six months. If the task was covered contemporaneously with the Interim Moderator project a combined timescale of perhaps a year would seem realistic.

Southern Synod Mission Criteria - expanded for Deployment use

Local Church Mission Criteria	Illustrative factors that will be considered in assessing a Local Church's commitment to achieving those Mission Criteria. NB These factors are not an absolute test, and they will evolve and develop with experience in practice. They are illustrated here to assist Local Church's by showing the type of indicator that will assist those charged with Scoping decisions to make their assessment against the Synod approved Mission Criteria
1. This church is outward looking and is actively seeking to reach new people for Jesus Christ	List examples and activities of this type undertaken, with percentage of membership attending them, whether directly involved in evangelism or simply aimed at building relationships.
2. This church is committed to encouraging and enabling people to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ	List examples and activities of this type undertaken, with percentage of membership involved in them. Where members of the congregation have been accepted into authorised URC ministries (or other recognised ministries) in the last ten years, please give details.
3. This church is committed to caring for people of all ages both inside and outside its own community	List examples and activities of this type undertaken, with indication of age groups to which any such activities are directed. List also percentage of membership taking part in these activities.
4. This church provides relevant, inspiring and engaging worship which is accessible to all people including those new to church life	Please indicate how this is being addressed, and the steps taken to help your worship be accessible to people new to church life. Information about Youth Work and Children's ministry will be helpful too.
5. This church is committed to serving its local community through a variety of programmes and activities	As well as listing examples and activities of this type undertaken, with percentage of membership involved in them, it would be helpful to see what efforts have been made to assess whether there are parts of the community locally which no local church is serving.
6. This church is committed to resourcing its life and mission through its personnel, finances and buildings	<p>Numbers of members³ in the local church and the pastorate⁴ Changes in membership⁵ - new members in last 5 years and average number of hatches/ matches/ dispatches in a year. Number of people regularly attending worship on Sundays⁶. Age ranges of membership (please provide an analysis).</p> <p>Information to help make an assessment of whether there are other trained clergy resources available in the community able and willing to assist the work of the local church.</p>

³ There is no absolute number of members in a pastorate that will trigger a scoping, because of the importance of the Mission criteria. But it would be mistaken to say that numbers are completely irrelevant.

⁴ It is worth noting that if one divides the number of stipends available into the numbers of members in the Synod, individual Ministers would be serving an average pastorate size of around 160 to 180 members, although there can be special considerations, such as rural and inner city factors, that must also be taken into account.

⁵ For most local churches membership provides the best indication of those who are regularly committed to supporting the church (rather than membership plus those more loosely associated). However, if your local church holds the view that some other measure as well as membership should be considered, please include it as well.

⁶ Where this figure is significantly different from the number of members, it may be helpful to add comment if the reasons are known.

		<p>Information to help the financial viability of the local church or pastorate to support the mission and ministry this year and for the foreseeable future (say 3 to 5 years) including information about the M&M contribution</p> <p>An assessment of whether the local church has been able to maintain adequate and appropriate buildings and facilities which comply with present legislation and where applicable are available for a diverse set of uses and a range of users (please give examples). It would also be helpful to indicate whether the premises are attractive to newcomers, or not.</p>
7.	This church is committed to the wider church of God through the United Reformed Church nationally, ecumenical relationships and the world church	<p>Give details of the ecumenical relationships which already exist, and of where the local church is actively involved in seeking to work through ecumenical partnerships. Other examples may include service, attendance and/or participation and financial commitment aspects if not covered elsewhere. An assessment of the potential that exists for creating and/or developing such relationships would also be helpful, where this is appropriate. It will also be helpful to understand the type and number of other churches serving the same community.</p>
8.	This church is committed to addressing issues of justice, peace and the environment	<p>Give examples, where the local church is responding positively to such issues.</p>
9.	This church is committed to regularly reviewing its life and mission in light of the above criteria always seeking the prompting and guidance of the Holy Spirit	<p>Describe current and recent mission initiatives and in doing so highlight the main innovations in the congregation's work over the last five years and any plans for the immediate future. Provide information to show how the local church's mission purposes are <i>targeted</i> appropriately, along with an explanation of how the local church seeks new opportunities for mission, through regular re-evaluation of priorities. Information showing that the local church and the pastorate is alert to what others are doing, and is adopting best practice and apply their experience will also be helpful.</p> <p>As well as reviewing its priorities regularly and planning effectively, it will be helpful to explain how the local church and the pastorate is organised to ensure its mission priorities lead to action (hence please explain the regular internal arrangements which ensure the ongoing activities of the local church implement the agreed priorities, which themselves reflect the agreed mission purposes).</p>
		<p>Those conducting the scoping review will of course <u>also</u> want to know of any special pastoral considerations relating to the local church and the pastorate which ought to be taken into account in the scoping assessment</p>