

Vital Ministry Consultation Handbook

*ministers in placement from the third year onwards*

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# key resources linked in this document

[Vital Ministry](http://sccpresbytery.org.au/ministers/)

[synod resources](https://nswact.uca.org.au/about-us/secretariat/advisory-committee-on-ministerial-placements/)

[report to PRC](https://www.dropbox.com/s/wcz53vqhbs67prh/Vital%20Ministry%20Report%20v.2.docx?dl=0)

Vital Ministry

Positive, encouraging appraisal for healthy ministry engagement

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| Vital Ministry Consultations | Vital Ministry is a tool designed to meet a variety of needs of the church and its ministers for:  in-depth reflection, objective appraisal and oversight of ministry practice;  honest and disciplined accountability to governing bodies and colleagues for the exercise of ministry;  collegiate encouragement and support;  ongoing discernment of vocational direction.  It enables a Presbytery through the Pastoral Relations Committee to exercise its responsibilities for oversight, counsel, encouragment and enrichment of ministers [Reg. 3.1.3 (a); 3.7.3 (b); 5.4.2 (a-b)].  “Performance appraisal” or “review” is a commonplace of the contem­porary workforce. While ministers benefit from appraisal and professional development, HR models do not easily fit the realities of ministry, where KPIs are difficult to discern and position descriptions may be fluid or absent. The fact that (ordained) ministers are not ‘employees’ but enter a covenant with Presbytery and placement adds further nuance.  Over a two-year cycle Vital Ministry focusses on what is needed here and now for enhanced ministry effectiveness. The desired outcome will be appraisal and affirmation of what is ‘vital’ in this ministry and some helpful insights into areas that are open for improvement and enhancement. |  |
| The purpose of a Vital Ministry ConsultationAims of Vital Ministry | Vital Ministry offers:  an affirming, collegial appraisal of each minister’s practice of ministry with a view to developing and sustaining healthy work engagement;  a means of discerning where a minister’s gifts and skills have led to success in planned and unplanned exercise of ministry  a positive critical analysis of the signs of vitality and growth  evidence-based answers to the questions: What ministries are most effective? How do we know? What activities waste time and energy or breed disappointment and frustration?  a focus on spirituality: what resources, both personal and communal, does the minister have, share, or need in order to engage fully with the nature of the ministry of Jesus Christ?  identification of ongoing educational, training and personal needs for present and future ministry  an aid to the sustainability of ministers’ vocation and ministry practice including timely assistance when ministry is no longer vital  a predictable and regular process that can be managed without professional HR help or excessive consultation team preparation. |  |
| Reporting to the Minister | The Regulations cited above give the PRC a specific responsibility to counsel and encourage *ministers*. Presbytery also oversees the mission of congregations through the Life and Witness process, though the two are not intrinsically related. Unlike in business, the appraisal of ministers is separate from that of placements, as both are accountable in different ways to the Presbytery. The outcome of a Vital Ministry consultation is therefore a Report from the PRC to the minister, not to the placement.  Obviously, ministers, placements and Presbytery should communicate with transparency. Wherever possible, Reporting to ministers should be in a form which can be shared with the placement leaders. Private or confidential counsel should be communicated in person. Likewise, while PRC may require ministers to respond in certain ways, any recommendations to a placement arising from a ViM consultation should be *requested* rather than *required*. | Vital Ministry is principally directed towards the minister Use wisdom and care in sharing confidential findings |

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| Who is involved?Consultation Team: | Presbytery appoints the consultation team, normally through the PRC.  Discernment should be used to find suitably skilled and helpful members.  The members should include:   * **Two or three persons appointed by the PRC**, not connected with the placement. Care should be taken to balance diversity and affinity in gender, age and culture. The Presbytery Minister (or equivalent officer) may participate in all or some Vital Ministry consultations. Another minister of the same order as the minister under review, or in a comparable placement, is helpful. A sensitive and skilled lay person from a nearby congregation will be an asset. One of these persons will be appointed by the PRC as Convenor. * **In a congregational setting:** Three to six members of the congregation appointed by the Church Council or placement board, including at least some Church Councillors or other key leaders). Care should be taken to include people who regularly engage with the minister’s work; have pastoral skills and sensitivity; and are aware of the congregation’s mission plan.  The minister should be given the option to choose one of the congregational members of the Consultation Team if she or he so desires. If the minister has reason to challenge any of the appointed names, the PRC will need to work with the minister and Church Council to understand the reasons for the challenge and to find a satisfactory group of representatives of the congregation. * **In a non-congregational setting:** Schools, Synod or Assembly roles, Chaplaincies and other placements will need to discern who will fill these roles, and confirm their appointment with the Presbytery. They are more likely to be co-workers than ‘recipients’ of ministry. | WHO:2-3 Presbytery appointed members inc. Convenor3-6 placement members1 Minister’s choiceThe Minister(Minister’s partner)Colleagues in specified ministry |
| Conversation Partners: | The Team should make specific appointments to consult with:   * The Minister in placement. * Specified ministry Colleagues in a team (MoW, Deacon, Pastor) * Other people in ministry in the placement, especially if their work falls under the Minister’s oversight. These may include specified lay preachers, key ministry, pastoral or administrative staff if they work closely with or under the minister. It is important to offer each one the chance of a private conversation, but if they prefer, they may meet with the team as a group. * The Minister’s partner should be invited to participate in at least part of the consultation. The partner may choose to join the group, to have a private conversation with a team member, or not to engage at all. | Exercise discernment on who should be interviewed and the weighting of time given. |
| Where and When? | * The consultation should **not** take place in the minister’s residence. The minister’s home needs to be a safe place and is not the appropriate venue for professional workplace appraisals. * A shared meal can have a place in the process, in creating a good environment for conversation. However the ViM process is work-focused, catering can be distracting, and a working space with whiteboard, etc., may be more helpful. Use discretion; divide the time and focus. * Limit sessions to 90 mins at a time with any individual or group, including worship and reflection. | Venue: usually the church, school, agency office |
| A Sample Timetable may look something like this: | 4 pm Meeting with the Minister: Church Office (about 90 mins)  5:30 Family ministry pastor: Church Office (about 35 mins)  6:15 Break for dinner and conversation:   soup and rolls provided by the congregation  7 pm Meeting with the placement members:  Church meeting room, 50 mins  7:50 Minister joins us again for sharing, feedback, affirmation  8:15 Close in prayer | Times will vary depending on availability of people and numbert of groups to meet with. The process may be carried over several days. It is most helpful to meet with the minister before meeting with the other participants. |
| Role of the Placement members in the process: | This is your mission, your congregation, your ministry agent. Be proactive and responsible for the process and the outcomes.   * Be ready to participate willingly in the process. Model effective, open, professional and communal processes of discernment, discussion and affirmation. * Provide the space and equipment for effective communication. * Provide key documents: current Mission Plan, Annual Report, minister’s Terms of Placement, leave records, etc. * Extend genuine hospitality to the people in the process, including refreshments and warmth of welcome and a compassionate, pastoral attitude. If the meetings cover an afternoon and evening, some hot food will be very welcome. | It is the Congregation’s role to be hospitable:venue set-upwelcomerefreshmentsbe positive and proactive |
| Role of the Minister in the process: | Prepare thoroughly, including:   * Reflect beforehand on the questions to be covered; written notes are helpful in identifying fruitful themes for discussion * Review your last ViM; your recent Annual Reports; Ministry Leadership Profile; position description, TOP, Mission Plan, supervision notes, journal. * Ensure adequate time is set aside for the process, preparation, reflection and follow-up. Vital Ministry is not a distraction from ministry, but as part of the effective work of reflection and accountability in ministry. * USE this time well: embrace the process as an opportunity for affirmation and assistance in ministry and to build a constructive relationship with colleagues and congregants. | Presbytery and Placement want you to be the most faithful, effective minister you can be. Work with this. |
| Role of the Presbytery members in the process: | * Take seriously the oversight of ministry for the wellbeing of the minister and placement and the effective mission of the church * Provide all relevant up-to-date material to guide participants in the process * Model effective, open, professional and conciliar processes of discernment, discussion and affirmation * Ensure the time and space is suitable for effective consultation, including responding to private/confidential comments * Report effectively and fairly to all stakeholders, with pastoral sensitivity to critical, confidential or controversial findings * Ensure follow-up processes are clearly identified, assigned, dated and carried out. | ALWAYS CHECK for the most up-to-date version of resources on the Presbytery or Synod website<Your Link Here> |
| Some helpful tools | * [[**Annual Report on Ministry**](https://www.dropbox.com/s/rd0uquxt03g246c/Annual%20Reporting%20on%20Ministry.docx?dl=0)](http://sccpresbytery.org.au/ministers/) (ARM): The ARM helps review the year in a concrete, objective way, allowing space for self-reflection on priorities, achievements, disappointments and professional practice. If more than a few months old, it should be reviewed and shared with the Consultation team as a guide to what things take most energy in this ministry. * [**Ministry Leadership Profile**](https://nswact.uca.org.au/about-us/secretariat/advisory-committee-on-ministerial-placements/)**:** Ministers are responsible to keep their Profile up-to-date and a current version must be lodged with ACOMP after the fourth year in any placement. One outcome of Vital Ministry should be to update and lodge a Ministry Profile with PRC and ACOMP. * **Portfolio:** A Portfolio may be a very useful tool for ministers in placement to develop, for the purpose of effective ministry appraisal and professional development. The Minister’s portfolio may become a record of achievements, plans, experience, Reports on continuing education and ministry engagement. It could include samples of ministry activities, some analysis and reflections, for use in future placement conversations. The Minister could take the opportunity to share and discuss the portfolio with their supervisor, Church Council, Presbytery Minister and other relevant people. * **Self-evaluation tools:** many of these exist online or in the published literature. Some may be adapted from other workplaces. * **Continuing education and Supervision:** Ministers are “reflective practitioners. The insight of others should be sought and valued. Reviewing one’s own journals and notebooks may assist in reflection. * **One size does not fit all:** Any tool will be most helpful when creatively adapted to the needs of the ministry placement and person. |  |
| Reporting and FollowupWriting a ReportChecking the detailsReport to PRCPRC reports | A Report of the VIM will be made to the PRC using the [**standard Template.**](https://www.dropbox.com/s/wcz53vqhbs67prh/Vital%20Ministry%20Report%20v.2.docx?dl=0)  The Report will be written by Presbytery members of the Vital Ministry Team, usually its Convenor. However, the Report should reflect the views of all participants in the consultation. If impressions or conclusions of members were considerably divergent, the Report will need to reflect this honestly and with care and accuracy.  **IMPORTANT NOTE:** **The VIM panel must NOT send a draft Report to the placement.** The panel’s Report is directed to the PRC which officially communicates to the minister and placement. PRC may choose to alter the form of recommendations, or add or remove comments. Congregations may be misled by draft recommendations which are then changed by PRC.  Personal, critical or confidential information should not be included in written Reports, which can remain ‘on the record’ long after issues have been resolved. Any such issues must be dealt with appropriately and not ignored. Direct personal follow-up may be required from time to time and should be diligently attended to by PRC. Serious matters kept ‘on the record’ for future reference should be maintained by PRC in an suitably secure manner.  The Consultation Report will be shared, in this order:   1. **The VIM Team Convenor** drafts the Report and checks details **with the** **Presbytery-appointed members** of the team. *Ask: does this reflect what we heard from the minister and placement members?* 2. **The VIM Team Convenor** then sends the Draft Report **to the minister**. The minister should check the Draft Report for accuracy and fairness and may wish to consult the Convenor on any matters of concern in these areas. The minister must not expect to be in full agreement with the Report, but that his or her views were accurately recorded and fairly expressed. *Ask: Does this fairly reflect what I (the minister) said to the Team?*  If the minister and panel cannot agree on facts, this should be clearly indicated in the Report and a solution discussed by PRC and minister. 3. **The VIM Convenor** then sends the Report **to the PRC**.  The PRC will discuss the implications of the Report and agree on the final recommendations, which thus become resolutions of Presbytery. PRC may adopt the draft or any other recommendations for the minister by virtue of its role in ‘counselling ministers’ (Reg. 3.7.3.b).  If satisfied that the Report adequately fulfills the terms of the consultation, the PRC formally receives it and agrees upon or amends the recommendations. The Report is now a resolution of the PRC. 4. **PRC will send the full Final Report to the Minister,** noting any recom­mendations for the minister’s ministry practice. The minister may wish to follow up with the PRC. Any recommendations for action should be made with a timeframe and a person responsible for follow-up. 5. **PRC will send a formal letter to the placement**, noting the outcomes and any recommendations which concern the Placement, with due sensitivity to any material which may affect the relationship of placement and minister. The full Report should not be shared with the placement, except by the minister should they choose to do so. 6. **The PRC** should, when framing recommendations, agree on a **follow-up person, process and timeframe**.   Who: the Convenor, if willing and suitable; or Presbytery Minister, or a PRC member, or a neighbouring minister.  When: A timeframe is always helpful for setting and meeting expectations, eg: commence with a new supervisor, *within six weeks;* PRC to follow-up *in two months.*  How: What needs to be done, how it is assessed, resourced, facilitated; what process will we follow? E.g: Find a supervisor with the help of the Presbytery Minister; undertake a course approved by the Synod; repair the manse roof as quickly as possible in consultation with the Presbytery property committee. | [**[CLICK FOR REPORT TEMPLATE](https://www.dropbox.com/s/wcz53vqhbs67prh/Vital%20Ministry%20Report%20v.2.docx?dl=0)**](https://www.dropbox.com/s/78epxcqriex20lc/Vital%20Ministry%20Report%20to%20PRC.docx?dl=0)Report remains confidential until the PRC delivers the final version to the placementDON’T send a Report to the placement: that is PRC’s responsibility. |
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Vital Ministry

NAME OF MINISTER: PLACEMENT: START DATE: enter a date

DATE(S) OF AOC CONSULTATION: enter a date LOCATION:

PARTICIPANTS (Presbytery and Placement):

DOCUMENTS PROVIDED:

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| VITAL MINISTRY QUESTIONS FOR THE MINISTER | Comments |
| 1. Brief Reality Check:   How are you feeling at this stage:   * approaching this conversation? * in ministry in this placement? * in ministry in general?   What ministry do people particularly thank you for?  What are you disappointed with or concerned about?  What particular issues would be most helpful for you to focus on in this Vital Ministry consultation? *(NB other issues will be addressed)*  What things have become apparent to you in your last Annual Report?  What things did panel members notice in reading the Report?  Briefly discuss these things with the panel. |  |
| 1. Discipleship, Spirituality and Vocation   Are you still ‘keeping the faith’?   * What keeps your personal faith in God (as a disciple of Jesus Christ living in the Spirit) – vital and sustaining? * How, when and where do you pray, study the scriptures and examine your own heart and soul? * How do you model a prayerful, faithful, disciplined life within this placement? * How has your relationship with God grown and developed over the last two years? Where are the struggles and the fruit?   What tells *you* that God is still leading you in this place?   * Do you have realistic, achievable and relevant goals for ministry here? * At this point in time, do you have a sense of the future direction of your ministry? | Comments |
| 1. Resources for ministry   What further resources and support will you need, in order to meet the pastoral and mission objectives of this placement?   * Education / training * Supervision / support * Office and practical support * Other… (Please specify) |  |
| 1. Vital Ministry Practice   What are your three main gifts or strengths in the practice of ministry?  How are you effectively expressing and using these gifts?       What ministry skills need enhancement? How are you working on this?       List up to three projects over the past two years which you consider to be proceeding successfully. Be prepared to discuss one or two with the panel.       Identify one or more projects that have not worked.  What happened? What have you learnt from this?  What is helping or hindering?   * Where are the fault lines in this place? * What points of conflict or disagreement make ministry hard? * How are you working to be part of the solution?   Are you able to meet the expect­ations of this placement, as they have been agreed and developed along the way? | Comments |
| 1. Missional Leadership   What training have you undertaken to develop your skills, style and effectiveness as a leader in mission? How’s it working for you?   * **Vision casting:** Do you lead your congregation or assist your agency in articulating an inspiring vision for the life of the church? How? * **Team building:** Who do your work with in this ministry? How do you identify, engage, develop and equip church members or team colleagues for their ministries? * **Mission planning:** How do you exercise your responsibility for ensuring that the placement’s mission objectives are regularly reviewed, renewed and resourced? When? * **Pastoral skills and relationships:** How do you attend to the quality of relationships with your leaders and members to build trust, passion, confidence and willing engagement with the mission of the church? | Comments |
| 1. Skills in managing change and fostering innovation  * Are you confident that you have an adequate understanding of the theory, methods and urgent need for change in the Church? * Do you feel competent to lead change in your placement? * How do you minister to those who find necessary change threatening or challenging? |  |
| 1. Transformative proclamation, teaching, discipling  * Do you have a plan and strategy for reaching, engaging and nurturing new believers into faith and discipleship? * Do you have a strategy for mentoring disciples into leaders? * How do you keep your preaching and teaching focused on a transformative relationship with Christ, no matter who is present? * [ How do you relate this question to your Chaplaincy role? ] |  |
| 1. Self-care, connection, enhancement   Ministry support  Describe your Professional Supervision arrangements.  What is the quality of your relationships with Colleagues in ministry, office bearers, Church leaders and others?  Continuing education  Discuss your continuing education program.  What skill or knowledge gaps do you need to fill?  What will give you energy and skills?  Is your program meeting ministry needs, or personal interests?  Presbytery  Besides attending meetings, what contribution do you make to the life and mission of the Presbytery?  What support do you seek and receive from Presbytery? | Comments |
| 1. Personal   What are the costs of ministry here? How much are you willing and able to bear? What extra resources do you need of education, training or personal support?  How does this placement suit or challenge the needs of your family? What external factors may influence the duration of your ministry here?  What personal goals are you working towards, and how do they affect your sense of vitality here? |  |
| 1. Vocation:   Do you believe your ministry in this placement has a continuing vitality, to the benefit of your people and your own growth in Christ? |  |

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| VITAL MINISTRY QUESTIONS FOR THE PLACEMENT | Comments |
| 1. Who is in the room?   Presbytery members introduce themselves  Participants introduce themselves and:  name the area(s) of ministry they share in with the minister;  each name two strengths of the minister from those particular areas. Convenor should make a list of these affirmations.  After all have shared: are there any other strengths we should add?   1. Reality check:   Describe the relationship between the placement and the minister and her/his family. |  |
| 1. Placement’s Agenda   What do the congregational members or placement representatives and colleagues wish to bring to the attention of the Vital Ministry panel? |  |

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| CONGREGATIONAL PLACEMENT | CHAPLAINCIES & OTHER PLACEMENTS SEE BELOW | #19 |
| 1. Specific details on congregational mission / minister’s ‘job description’ and actual workload   What are the congregation’s mission objectives? Where are these documented?  How long ago was mission planning last done?  Is the minister’s workload in line with the objectives?  Does the congregation know what the minister does during the week? What activities are using most of the minister’s time?  Is the placement leadership aware of and reconciled to the minister’s required ministry commitments to Presbytery and the wider church?  How do you encourage and allow time and resources for your minister to reflect on ministry and refresh skills and motivation? | Comments |
| 1. From the minister’s Annual Report   Read through the Minister’s Annual Report, provided in preparation for this Vital Ministry consultation.  What did you learn/realise?  What surprises you?  What concerns you?  Where do you think the minister’s exercise of ministry needs to be enhanced/supported/altered to meet the needs of the placement as you understand them? |  |
| 1. Resources for ministry   What further resources and support might the minister need to help you meet your pastoral and mission objectives? Please be specific.  Education / training:  Support of the members:  Office and practical support:  Other… | Comments |
| 1. Relationships   Who works closest with the minister on a day-to-day basis to exercise the responsibilities of a congregation?  Who is minister’s elder/carer? How do they care for the minister?  What is your observation of the minister’s collegiate relationships with Church Council and other people with whom she/he is in ministry? |  |
| 1. Vocation:   Do you believe your minister has a Vital Ministry in this particular placement, to the benefit of your people and their mission?  At this point in time, do you have a sense of the future of this ministry here? |  |

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| AGENCIES, CHAPLAINCIES AND OTHER PLACEMENTS (Synod, Assembly, Presbytery, Uniting, Schools, etc.) | *Different questions will probably apply from those relating to congregational ministry. Panels should use their discernment to follow the most helpful leads.* |
| 1. Position description, workload and ministry effectiveness   What are the placement’s ministry or mission objectives?  Are these clearly spelled out and regularly reviewed?  How are Chaplains/Ministers involved in the review or restructure of ministry aims in this agency of the church?  Are the minister’s working priorities in line with the objectives?  What activities are using most of the minister’s time?  Is there adequate opportunity for the minister to contribute at a high-functioning, strategic level?  Is the placement leadership aware of and supportive of the minister’s required ministry commitments to Presbytery and the wider church?  How do you encourage and allow time and resources for your chaplain or minister to reflect on ministry and refresh their skills and motivation? |  |
| 1. From the minister’s Annual Report   How does the minister report to the agency on their work, including through their Annual Report to the Presbytery?  What have you learned/realised from recent reports?  What surprises you? What concerns you?  Where do you think the minister’s exercise of ministry needs to be enhanced/supported/altered to meet the needs of the placement as you understand them?   1. Resources for ministry   What further resources and support might the minister need to help meet your ministry and mission objectives? Please be specific.  Education / training:  Support from others:  Office and practical support:  Other…? |  |
| 1. Relationships   Who works closest with the chaplain/minister on a day-to-day basis? Describe your observations of that relationship.  Who gives immediate pastoral and supervisory oversight to the chaplain/minister? Describe that relationship.  What is your observation of the minister’s collegiate relationships with senior staff, management and other people alongside whom she/he exercises ministry? |  |
| 1. Vocation:   Do you believe your minister has a Vital Ministry in this particular placement, to the benefit of the agency and its mission?  At this point in time, do you have a sense of the future of this ministry here? |  |

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| VITAL MINISTRY QUESTIONS FOR COLLEAGUES | Comments |
| 1. Who is in the room?   Presbytery members introduce themselves;  Colleagues introduce themselves and describe the area(s) of ministry they share in with the minister. |  |
| 1. Placement’s Agenda 2. What are the Minister’s greatest gifts and strengths in ministry here? (Give examples of accomplishments, work well done, signs of leadership and growth, etc.) 3. Are there any obstacles you can identify to their ministry work – structural, personal, strategic, resources needed, etc? 4. Are you satisfied with the form of relationship you and the Minister have in this ministry – professional; personal; openness; etc. 5. Is there any specific issue you wish to raise? 6. What might the PRC/Presbytery do to help the Minister and this team be their best in the next phase of ministry here? |  |

# Sample Report to PRC