

PART-TIME PLACEMENTS POLICY

There are circumstances in which a part-time ministry placement can be a good opportunity for both enriching the mission of the congregation and also enabling a ministry agent to exercise their vocation within restricted hours.

There are some special considerations surrounding a request for a part-time placement which go beyond a desire for maintenance ministry. For example it may be that a congregation is committed to funding other mission activities rather than a full time ministry agent, or is small in number but has a niche mission focus relevant to the local area.

Some difficulties also apply to part-time placements. The majority of ministers need full-time or near full-time work, with security of accommodation and income; the most suitable minister may not be available to work part-time. Where congregations are dwindling in numbers and resources, one option is simply to cut back on ministry time; this is not usually missionally sustainable.

The Sydney Central Coast Presbytery PRC will undertake to be a catalyst for part-time placements that are mission oriented, that have a clear ministry focus, and have a plan which clearly demonstrates the steps towards fulfilment of the mission goals.

Some helpful initial questions to explore ministry focus and mission goals include:

- If your church disappeared what would the local community miss?
- What other congregations are close to yours, and what differentiates you from them (think about both UC and other denominations)?
- Are there other resources already in the zone that could help you to achieve and live out your mission (e.g. groups, studies, programs, chaplains)?

It is necessary that the congregation first engages with their zone, especially neighbouring congregations, to identify firstly how their mission focus fits into the zone's mission, and secondly if there are opportunities for collaboration within the zone. The PRC will be interested to review suggested scenarios for collaboration, and provision of same is a requirement of the application for a part-time ministry agent.

A clear mission strategy is required plus a clear job description with tasks prioritised and the mission focus identified. Members of a congregation requesting a part-time placement must be able to agree upon their expectations of the ministry agent and the job description. A pertinent example is that Sunday service work should be on a pro-rata basis: a 50% ministry placement should only be responsible for 50% of Sundays, in order to allow adequate time for the full range of other ministerial duties. There must also be a realisation that there are times when the ministry agent

will be unavailable because of other responsibilities, and that achievement of mission goals will take longer than with a full time placement.

It is fundamental that clear boundaries be set within the part-time placement regarding ministry agent availability. Responsibilities for ministry agent and the congregation need to be clearly stated, and hours/units per week to be apportioned appropriately.

To assist with these considerations a congregation will be asked for detailed responses to the following questions:

1. What is your reason for a part-time placement?
2. What is the congregation's vision for the future?
3. What is your mission strategy to achieve this?
4. How do you see part-time placement enhancing the worship, witness and service of the church? List and describe five ways.
5. What possibilities for collaboration within the zone have you discovered? List and describe three options.
6. Have you created a clear and achievable job description for a part-time placement, nominating the main focus for the ministry agent and listing the top priorities?
7. How will the Church Council continue to communicate the job description and expectations of the role of the ministry agent to the congregation, who may have other expectations?
8. How are you equipping the lay people in the congregation to work with their part-time minister in the life, worship, witness and service of the church?
9. Is the congregation prepared for the achievement of mission goals to take some time?
10. How will the congregation deal with emergencies when they occur in the ministry agent's non-placement time?
11. How will the congregation respect that the ministry agent can't drop their other roles (e.g. parent, carer, study, other paid work) at short notice?

If a congregation wishes to apply for a part-time placement these questions will need to be considered extensively and in detail in its application to ensure that, should a part-time placement be approved, it has a clear sense of direction and mission in order to fulfil our presbytery mission of: *A world transformed by vibrant, Christ-centred congregations.*