

5. Procedures for Lay Workers

There are opportunities for people who have not been ordained to serve a local church through a paid or unpaid appointment. Such ministries belong to the people of God and are recognised by the wider church. There is now a wide diversity in how ministry is undertaken and these regulations can only provide a broad outline. Titles such as lay minister, lay worker, lay pastor may be used, but care should be taken to consult about the titles with all local church partners. The special circumstance of Local Shared Ministry is considered in section 6.

5.1 OVERSIGHT

- 5.1.1 The Coordinating Partner has responsibility for oversight of lay ministry within the local church.
- 5.1.2 A lay worker may be appointed by a Participating Partner or the local church.
- 5.1.3 The views of the Participating Partners must be taken into account when developing lay ministry. The local church cannot over-rule the regulations of the Partner Churches.
- 5.1.4 “Lay Ministry” includes all those with pastoral or leadership responsibilities; lay supply, youth ministry, family ministry and other lay ministry positions.

5.2 TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

- 5.2.1 There is no usual term for appointments to lay ministry, but it is generally accepted that such positions should be regularly reviewed, with the involvement of partners and the local church.
- 5.2.2 As an employee, all **paid** lay ministry positions should be agreed with a clearly worded employment agreement and job description. When employing anyone, the local church council must comply with all employment legislation as required. Lay Ministers are no different from other paid employees in this regard. Voluntary positions would benefit by having a clear job description.
- 5.2.3 Before confirming an appointment, checks should be made into the character of the appointee, including a police check. Police vetting checks are a mandatory requirement of all Church Partners, and can be obtained through the national church offices.
- 5.2.4 All lay ministers should sign a Code of Ethics – using either one from the partner churches or the UCANZ Code of Ethics.

5.3 PAYMENT

- 5.3.1 Each lay ministry position should be paid according to the individual employment agreement that has been signed. Partner church offices are able to assist local churches to set up employment agreements.
- 5.3.2 Where ministry is conducted only by voluntary service, consideration should be given for assistance with books, travel and/or accommodation, and reimbursement of reasonable costs.

5.4 DISCIPLINE

- 5.4.1 All lay people are under the discipline of the Church – in the first instance the local church council is responsible in consultation with and under the guidance of the Coordinating Partner.
- 5.4.2 Any complaints of illegal activities should be notified to the Coordinating Partner authorities and to the police.
- 5.4.3 Complaints about sexual impropriety, financial irregularities, inappropriate behaviour, breaches of church discipline or ethical standards, or failures of ministry, should be notified to the Coordinating Partner authorities. This is especially important if there are possible implications for liability insurance. Complaints can be laid by individuals or by groups (eg local church council).

5.5 CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

There is not a common approach among the Partner Churches to the celebration of communion and this matter must be treated with respect and care.

- 5.5.1 The Congregational Union and Christian Churches allow for members of the local church to administer communion if they are so appointed by the local church.
- 5.5.2 The Presbyterian and Methodist Churches allow for the authorisation of appropriate lay people to celebrate communion – especially where there is difficulty in obtaining ordained ministers.
- 5.5.3 The Anglican Church has affirmed the tradition of Bishops and priests only presiding at communion and in a Cooperative Venture with Anglican participation this must be accounted for.

5.6 OTHER EMPLOYEES

- 5.6.1 When employing anyone, the local church council must comply with all employment legislation as required. Non-ministry employees may include church secretaries, cleaners, finance, or maintenance workers.
- 5.6.2 Care must be taken to identify any conflict of interests that may arise in terms of employment – such interest should be declared and those involved may step aside from decisions.
- 5.6.3 Any potential liabilities with respect to employees should be referred, as soon as possible, to the administration of the Coordinating Partner.

5.7 VOLUNTEERS

- 5.7.1 The Local Church Council must also take responsibility for the health and safety of any volunteers working or visiting any church owned property.
- 5.7.2 Care should be taken to ensure that the work load or obligations taken on by volunteers are not too onerous.
- 5.7.3 Volunteers working with children and young people should be of reputable character. Police vetting checks are required for anyone working directly with children and young people. Police vetting checks are a mandatory requirement of all Church Partners, and can be obtained

through the national church offices. This includes, but is not limited to, Sunday School teachers, Youth Groups leaders and assistants, etc.