

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST MACHAR
Scottish Charity SC008157

VACANCY PROCEDURE – ROLE OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE

1. Election of Committee

The Congregation will elect from the list of members and adherents a Committee of 13 persons. Once elected, a meeting of the Committee will be convened by the Interim Moderator when they will elect their own Chairman and Secretary. At that meeting they will also receive from the Kirk Session the Ministerial Profile, setting out the key characteristics of the kind of minister we think we are looking for, along with the Parish Profile, describing the make up and issues facing the congregation and the community.

2. Membership of Committee

As will be stressed throughout this note, this is not an appointment of the Kirk Session. While I would expect there to be several elders on it, it is important that the Committee covers as many of the activities of the church as possible and reflects the congregation in terms of age profile, gender and other characteristics. So everyone has an interest!

3. Work of the Committee

Once elected, the Committee runs itself. It appoints its Chairman and Clerk and arranges as many meetings as it requires. The Committee is responsible to the Congregation not the Session and its task is defined as to find a suitable and qualified candidate to nominate to the congregation. It should not share with the Session any confidential matters, nor should it provide a progress report.

When the Committee has agreed on a candidate, the nomination of that candidate will be intimated to the Session and the Presbytery. This is just for procedural reasons. The Presbytery Clerk will check the candidate's qualifications etc, while the Session merely has to arrange a service at which the candidate will "preach for the vacancy". At the end of the service, the Session will arrange for the congregation to vote on whether or not to accept the nomination. Assuming that they do, the Committee's work is done. If they do not accept the recommendation, a new Committee is appointed and they start again!

4. Procedure

The Committee works in many respects just like a Selection Committee for any senior post. Advertisements would be expected to be placed in Life and Work and elsewhere. How that is done and where adverts are lodged is entirely a matter for Committee.

Direct approaches can be made to ministers about whom Committee members have received favourable reports and who may be interested. This is quite common but care should be taken and further guidelines will be issued to the Committee in due course,

Applications would be invited in the standard way, against a timetable to be determined by the Committee. They follow through on references etc and in due course select a short list to be interviewed.

5. Hearing Candidates Preach

An important part of the selection process is the hearing of candidates in their own pulpits as far as possible. In normal times, one might expect to receive a number of applications of interest and before deciding whether or not to short list them, the practice would be to send two or three members of the Committee to go and hear them in their own churches, anonymously and without notice, to form a view on the candidate and to report back to the rest of the Committee. On average therefore a member of the Committee might be expected to travel to other parts of the country to hear ministers on perhaps one or two occasions. The lucky ones might get Inverurie; the short straw might take them to Stranraer!

It may be that by the time the Committee has reached that stage, "normal service" will be resumed. But if not, the Church of Scotland has put in place guidelines for hearing candidates by live link or recorded preaching. Details will be shared with the Committee in due course

6. Short List Interviews and Nomination.

This stage is fairly self-explanatory and needs to involve the whole Committee. The structure of interview is a matter for the Committee. All such interviews need not take place on the same day but all should, obviously, follow the same structure.

And then a nomination is made!

7. Conclusion

These notes are purely for information at this stage so that anyone interested in proposing someone or standing themselves might have some idea of what is involved. I hope they are useful. More guidance on many of the subjects covered will be available later.

Alan Grant
Session Clerk