

XVII. READERSHIP ACT (AS AMENDED BY ACT XII 2003, IV 2005, VI 2006, VI 2007, XIV 2012, XII 2014 AND XIII 2018)

Edinburgh, 18th May 1992, Session 4.

The General Assembly enact and ordain as follows:-

Definition

A Reader is a person who has been set apart by a Presbytery to an office which qualifies him or her to carry out duties within the Church of Scotland which are principally concerned with the ministry of the Word and the conduct of public worship.

1. Application and acceptance of candidature

- (a) The provisions of sections 2, 4, and 5(1), (2) and (5) of Act X 2004 anent Selection and Training for the Full-time Ministry and Eligibility for Ordination, and (in respect of decisions in terms of (c)(iv) below) the appeals process referred to therein, shall be followed *mutatis mutandis* by any person wishing to apply for recognition as a candidate for the readership.
- (b) An application cannot be accepted from any person less than 17 years old. No upper age limit shall apply to application for acceptance for training. Applicants may, at the discretion of the Committee, be required to undergo a medical examination to demonstrate their fitness to undertake training for ministry.
- (c) A Local Review, established as described in section 5(3) of Act X 2004 *mutatis mutandis*, will arrive at one of the following written determinations:
 - (i) That the applicant is suitable to commence training as a candidate for the readership;
 - (ii) That the applicant should undergo a further period of discernment before a decision in terms of sub-paragraph (i) can be made;
 - (iii) That the applicant is not ready to commence training as a candidate for the readership; or
 - (iv) That the applicant is not suitable to be a candidate for the readership.
- (d) Any applicant in respect of whom a decision is made in terms of sub-paragraph (c)(iii) above may apply to undertake up to two further periods of discernment.
- (e) An individual whose application is successful will be known as a candidate for the readership.

2. Training of Candidates

- (a) Each candidate must complete the training described in this section within five years from the date on which he or she becomes a candidate. Failure to complete the course on time will normally result in the loss of status as a candidate for the readership. The requirements shall consist of the academic course described in sub-section (b), the conference programme described in sub-section (c), and the placements described in sub-section (d).
- (b) (i) The academic course shall consist of a Certificate of Higher Education from any institution which may be approved from time to time by the Ministries Council. The course and its constituent modules shall be approved by the Council. Candidates may undertake their course by distance learning where that is offered by the academic institution. An individual may commence the academic course before becoming a

candidate, but must complete the course successfully before being set apart as a reader.

- (ii) When a candidate already has relevant training or education, the Ministries Council shall have power to give credit for it and to prescribe whatever additional training may be necessary. This further training shall be drawn from the courses or modules referred to in paragraph (b)(i) above.
- (c) A conference programme shall be organised and provided by the Ministries Council for those recognised as candidates in terms of section 1 above. The content of each conference shall be determined by the Council, and the programme shall include such training in Safeguarding and Child Protection issues as shall from time to time be required by the General Assembly. Attendance at all sessions of all conferences shall be mandatory.
- (d) Each candidate shall, in the course of his or her candidature, complete (to the satisfaction of his or her Presbytery in consultation with the Ministries Council) two training placements in congregations other than the congregation in which the candidate is a communicant member. The placements shall be chosen and arranged by the Presbytery.
- (e) The Presbytery shall appoint for each candidate a regent, who may be a member of a support group organised locally for the candidate, and who shall be responsible for the Presbytery's pastoral care of the candidate for the duration of his or her course.
- (f) Before completing the course, and during the second training placement, each candidate must pass a Final Preaching Assessment, demonstrating skills in the conduct of worship to the satisfaction of (i) a representative of the Ministries Council's Candidate Supervision Committee, (ii) a representative of the Presbytery and (iii) the supervisor of that placement. The candidate may be assessed on more than one occasion, if necessary, to fulfil the requirement.
- (g) Upon fulfilment of all the requirements in sub-sections (b)-(d) and (f), the appointee of the Candidate Supervision Committee shall report to the Presbytery that the course has been completed and convey the Committee's recommendation to the Presbytery. The Presbytery shall make such further enquiry as it wishes, and shall interview the candidate. It shall decide in terms of one of the following resolutions:
 - (i) That the candidate be set apart as a reader in terms of section 3 below;
 - (ii) That the candidate complete a probationary period as determined by the Presbytery, giving attention to specified aspects of the readership, before a further decision is made in terms of this sub-section; or
 - (iii) That the candidate be not set apart.

These decisions shall be subject to the normal rights of appeal [this may soon be caught by new appeal mechanisms for Council decisions, see elsewhere].

3. **Admission to the Office of Reader**

Persons who have completed the approved course of training shall be admitted to the office of Reader by Presbytery upon giving satisfactory answers to the following questions:-

- (i) Do you believe in one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and do you confess the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour?
- (ii) Do you believe the Word of God, which is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to be the supreme rule of faith and life?
- (iii) Do you believe the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith contained in the Confession of Faith of this Church?
- (iv) Do you acknowledge the Presbyterian government of this Church to be agreeable to the Word of God; and do you promise to be subject to this Presbytery, or to any other Presbytery within whose bounds you may reside, and to the General Assembly?
- (v) Do you promise to seek the unity and peace of this Church, to uphold the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline thereof, and to cherish a spirit of love towards all your brothers and sisters in the Lord?
- (vi) Are not zeal for the glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and a desire for the salvation of all people, so far as you know your own heart, your great motives and chief inducements to enter into the office of Reader?
- (vii) Do you engage in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ to live a godly and circumspect life; and faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully to discharge the duties of Reader, seeking in all things the advancement of the Kingdom of God?

After these questions have been answered satisfactorily, the Formula, which is the same as for ministers, shall be signed and the person shall be admitted to the office of Reader.

4. **Duties of Readers**

It shall be competent for a Reader set apart in the terms of this Act to

- (a) provide occasional pulpit supply in terms of Act II, 2000
- (b) be attached to a charge within the bound of the Presbytery. In such an attachment the Reader may be invited to
 - conduct services within the charge subject to the approval of the Parish Minister or Interim Moderator and the Presbytery after consultation with the Kirk Session
 - act as chaplain to residential accommodation or hospital with the approval of the Parish Minister or Interim Moderator and the Presbytery and where appropriate the Ministries Council
 - conduct funeral services with the approval of the Parish Minister or Interim Moderator and the consent of the family concerned
 - conduct school assemblies at the invitation of the appropriate school authority and with the concurrence of the School Chaplain, or Parish Minister or Interim Moderator, where there is no Chaplain
 - perform any other duty which the Parish Minister or Interim Moderator may assign to the Reader which is principally concerned with the conduct of worship but which may include related pastoral work.

- (c) Any arrangement made under Section 4 (b) of this Act shall be for an initial period of no more than three years and shall be reviewed annually by the Presbytery.
- (d) A Reader set apart in the terms of any Act of the General Assembly prior to this Act may normally only provide occasional pulpit supply. Nevertheless, a Presbytery may, after consultation and agreement with interested parties and with concurrence of the Ministries Council permit such a Reader to carry out duties under section 4 (b) of this Act.
- (e) Any Reader of the Church of Scotland is authorised to conduct public worship anywhere within the church.

5. **Remuneration**

- (a) A Reader who provides occasional pulpit supply shall be entitled to the appropriate fee as laid down by the regulations of the General Assembly.
- (b) A Reader who is attached to a congregation, or to linked congregations, shall be paid such fees as are agreed by the Presbytery in consultation with the Kirk Session or Kirk Sessions and the Ministries Council. Such fees shall be reviewed and agreed annually by Presbytery.
- (c) A Reader who is attached to a congregation, or to linked congregations, shall be paid travelling expenses at the rate approved by the General Assembly for pulpit supply.
- (d) A Reader who acts as a chaplain shall be paid such fees and expenses, if any, as may be agreed by the Presbytery and the body making the appointment. Any such arrangement shall be made prior to the Presbytery agreeing to the appointment.
- (e) A Reader performing any other duty approved by Presbytery for which fees, expenses, or other remuneration are not paid shall be reimbursed by the Presbytery for out of pocket expenses and for travelling expenses at the rate approved by the General Assembly for pulpit supply.

6. **Superintendence**

- (a) Superintendence of Readers shall be exercised by Presbyteries. Each Presbytery shall maintain and revise annually a Roll of Readers under its supervision.
- (b) Readers shall appear annually before their Presbytery and shall attend at least once in every three years in-service training approved by the Ministries Council.
- (c) Readers set apart after May 31 2012 will participate in a biennial cycle of personal appraisal linked to engagement in ongoing learning and development, to be resourced by the Ministries Council. The Council will provide training for appraisers and Readers in consultation with Presbyteries. Those set apart prior to the above date are also strongly encouraged to participate in such a cycle.
- (d) Any Reader failing to appear before Presbytery without good cause, or failing to fulfil the in-service training requirement without good cause, shall be removed from the Roll of Readers and advised accordingly.
- (e) Presbyteries shall send the names and addresses of those whom it admits to the office of Reader, and those whom it removes from its Roll of Readers, to the Ministries Council and the Editor of the Year Book.
- (f) On leaving the bounds of a Presbytery, a Reader shall, on request, receive a certificate of status, valid for a period of one year, which he or she may lodge

with the Presbytery within whose bounds he or she becomes resident. The Reader's name shall then be added to the Readers' Roll of the latter Presbytery whose Clerk shall notify the Ministries Council and the Editor of the Year Book.

- (g) Before making any appointment, in the terms of Section 4 (b) of this Act, of a Reader whom it has not itself set apart, a Presbytery shall satisfy itself that the Reader is eligible in the terms of this Act.

7. Transfer to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament

- (a) The provisions of the Selection and Training for Full-time Ministry Act (Act X 2004) shall apply to any Reader wishing to transfer to the full-time Ministry of Word and Sacrament and the provisions of the Ordained Local Ministry Act (Act IX 2011) shall apply to any Reader wishing to transfer to the Ordained Local Ministry; in all cases the Ministries Council shall determine the nature, content and duration of the academic course and practical training to be followed by a Candidate. The term "Reader" in this section 7(a) shall be construed to include a Reader in service, a Reader in training and a retired Reader.
- (b) *This section deleted by Act XIII 2018.*
- (c) No Reader who has been not accepted as a candidate in training for either the Ordained Local Ministry or full-time Ministry of Word and Sacrament on three or more occasions may apply for transfer to the full-time Ministry of Word and Sacrament or the Ordained Local Ministry.

8. Admission of Readers from other Churches

Readers, and individuals with equivalent status in other Churches, may be admitted to the readership of the Church of Scotland upon becoming communicant members of this Church, and the following procedure shall be followed:

- (a) The person wishing to transfer ("the applicant") shall intimate to the Presbytery in which he or she resides, and to the Assessment Scheme Committee, his or her intention to apply for recognition as a reader. The Presbytery shall appoint one of its members to represent it in the admission process, and the representative shall undertake such training for the role as the Ministries Council shall from time to time require.
- (b) The Assessment Scheme Committee shall determine whether the applicant's status is recognised by the Church of Scotland, and may use only that ground to refuse to accept an application. The decision shall be subject to the appeals process specified in paragraph (g) below.
- (c) The Assessment Scheme Committee shall specify in each case what written materials are required in support of the application: these shall always include an application form; Scottish Criminal Records Office disclosure form and declaration; and references (including one from the minister of the Church of Scotland congregation of which the applicant is a member, and one from the previous denomination confirming status and whether the applicant is in good standing).
- (d) The Assessment Scheme Committee shall establish a Review Panel consisting of one representative of the Committee and the Presbytery representative referred to in paragraph (a) above. The Panel shall interview the applicant, with a member of the staff of the Ministries Council present.

- (e) A report from the Panel shall be sent to the Assessment Scheme Committee, and shall contain recommendations relating to approval of the application and any training requirements to be imposed. The Assessment Scheme Committee shall make a final determination of the training requirements that shall be imposed, and convey that determination and its overall recommendation to the Presbytery and to the applicant.
- (f) The Presbytery shall resolve whether to admit the applicant to the status of reader in the Church of Scotland, adopting without amendment the training requirements determined by the Assessment Scheme Committee. The Presbytery shall arrange for a service of admission of the reader as soon as any requirements have been completed to the satisfaction of the Ministries Council.
- (g) The appeals process in respect of this section shall be as follows:
 - (i) Appeals against decisions of the Assessment Scheme Committee in respect of recognition of status (para (b)) or training requirements (para (e)) shall be heard by the Appeals Committee of the Ministries Council (or any successor body), which shall have power to determine the question finally.
 - (ii) Appeals against the decision of the Presbytery (para (f)) shall be heard by the Appeals Committee of the Commission of Assembly in terms of the Appeals Act (Act I 2014).

9. **Repeal**

Act XXVIII 1974 and Act XIV 1978 are hereby repealed.

10. **Appeals**

Appeals against decisions of the Ministries Council in terms of sections 1, 2 and 9 of this Act shall be subject to the provisions of Act VI 2007 anent the Ministries Appeals Panel.