

Reformed Church of Canberra

Minister Information Pack

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CHRISTIAN REFORMED
CHURCHES OF AUSTRALIA

Reformed Church of Canberra

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www.reformed.org.au

15 November 2022

The Reformed Church of Canberra has a vacancy for a Minister of the Word and Sacraments.

Attached is an information pack for this position.

If you have any inquiries or would like to discuss this with an elder of our church, please do not hesitate to contact the Chair of the Minister Search Committee, David Coleman, at david.coleman@reformed.org.au

Thank you for your consideration.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "D. Coleman".

David Coleman

Elder, Chair of Minister Search Committee

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Job description

The Reformed Church of Canberra (RCC) is seeking to fill the position of Minister of the Word and Sacraments to lead the congregation alongside its elders and deacons.

Our church consists of around 100 members and believes in the teaching the Bible as the authoritative Word of God and adheres to the Reformed confessional standards (the Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession of Faith (WCF) including its Larger and Shorter Catechisms). We hold to a Reformed form of church government, according to our Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) Church Order.

We have worship services each Lord's Day - morning and evening - as well as Sunday School, Catechism classes, Bible study groups, a prayer meeting, a young adults group, a ladies outreach (Coffee & Craft), and other ministry activities.

Role

The Church Order of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia sets out the function and duties of a Minister of the Word and Sacraments. Relevant articles are listed below:

- *Article 11 – Function of the Minister of the Word and Sacraments*

The calling of a Minister of the Word and Sacraments is to proclaim, explain and apply Holy Scripture in order to gather in and build up the members of the Church of Jesus Christ.

- *Article 12 – Ministers in Regular Service*

A minister serving as pastor of a congregation shall:

- preach the Word;
- lead the congregation in prayer;
- administer the sacraments;
- solemnise marriages;
- perform other pastoral duties as defined by the session;
- share in all the tasks performed by session. (See Articles 23, 31)

- *Article 23 - Tasks of the Elders*

With the minister(s) of the church, the elders shall:

- be examples to the congregation in all things;
- oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the congregation and fellow office bearers;
- faithfully provide pastoral care for the congregation; (See Arts 66.b, c)
- supervise all aspects of the worship services;
- supervise the catechising of the youth; (See Art 65.b)
- equip and encourage God's people in evangelism and other works of service; (See Art 74)
- administer the sacraments (but only) in special circumstances;
- guard the sacredness of the offices;
- see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.

The CRCA Church Order can be viewed at <https://crca.org.au/crca-resources/synod-resources/church-order-2018>

Selection Criteria

Essential

1. Has the character and qualities of a man suited for the role of overseer as outlined in the letters to Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 3:1-7 & Titus 1:6-9) and is known for his maturity of faith and Christian character.
2. Is able to teach and preach biblically as a Minister of the Word and Sacraments.
3. Is able to wholeheartedly subscribe to, and is committed to teaching from, our Reformed confessional standards, being aware that our church constitution also commits us to a full acceptance of the Westminster Confession of Faith (and its catechisms).
4. Is sensitive to Session's adoption of particular choices within the Church Order [see detail below under *Confessional & Church Order Distinctives*, p8].
5. Has tertiary qualifications from a Reformed seminary or theological college, or theological training deemed to be equivalent.
6. Is presently a member of good standing in a local church.
7. Is eligible for, and willing to obtain, an ACT Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) card.

Desirable

8. Demonstrates an emphasis on expository preaching, allied to practical application in the lives of the congregation.
9. Is able to participate, and take a lead role, in pastoral visitation and counselling.
10. Demonstrates an ability to build healthy personal, professional and pastoral relationships; manage conflict and negotiate difficult relationships.

Our church

Denomination

We are a church which is federated as a member of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA), a denomination which is part of the Presbyterian/Reformed family of churches world-wide. As a denomination, we have existed in Australia since 1950.

We believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word. Our understanding of key Christian doctrines is summarised in the three ecumenical creeds (Apostles', Nicene, Athanasian) and in the Reformed confessions: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort, and the Westminster Confession of Faith and associated catechisms. The CRCA includes about 50 congregations across Australia established since 1951 in almost every state and territory. More information is available from the CRCA website: www.crca.org.au.

Our congregation

Our local church in Rivett was established in 1975. We conduct a number of activities in keeping with our official 'purpose' to promote the worship of God and to preach God's Word. At the centre of our life as a church are our gatherings for worship. We meet to worship with the specific purpose of praising God and listening to His voice as He speaks to us through the Bible.

Across the 29 families and 21 singles in our congregation, there are 78 communicant members and 18 baptised members (as of September 2022). We also have a number of regular visitors in each worship service.

There is a wide spread of ages, but an increasing number of older congregation members.

Our congregation has a significant number of tertiary trained people. It is becoming increasingly multicultural in make-up. Members come from a range of church backgrounds which includes Presbyterian, Anglican, and other Protestant denominations. Being located in the nation's capital affords opportunities for outreach in the political sphere, including members of Parliament and through the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) which has its headquarters here. We also have a strong association with two of our local Christian schools.

Activities

Worship Services

Most of our members are regular in their weekly attendance at worship. Evening services are relatively well attended, with typically up to half of the congregation represented. A small number have attended from other churches which do not provide evening services.

In terms of the spectrum of worship and its liturgical structure, our services are mainly conservative and simple in form (so, traditionally Reformed in nature). The reading of Scripture and preaching of the Word are central. Most of the songs of praise are taken from the CRCA Book of Worship, with frequent reference to its psalmody. These have been supplemented by other selections such as from the former CRCNA Psalter Hymnal, together with a small number of other hymns and songs approved by Session. We have recently established a Music Committee which is tasked to assess new songs for use in public worship and review existing material, as well as enhance musical accompaniment where possible.

An Elder (or occasionally a mature male member) often reads a background passage to the text, and sometimes leads in congregational prayer. On occasion the Elder may lead a larger part of the service.

We have adopted the ESV for use in public worship services.

Our practice in regard to musical accompaniment in worship is based on the principle that it is to accompany the congregation in the singing of the Lord's praises. It should not verge on "performance". Such accompaniment is provided by organ and/or piano, and sometimes with another instrument (e.g. flute).

Our singing is with good heart and volume, a blessing which we have experienced over the years. We sing together before both services for about five minutes prior to the formal worship begins. We do not have amplified singers leading the congregation during the service.

Parents are encouraged to have their children with them in worship services. While there is no organized activity for children during the time of the services, the adjacent hall is available as a creche area with video and sound relayed from the worship service.

Offerings for the local work and other designated causes are collected as part of the worship service.

Sacraments

The Lord's Supper is celebrated monthly, alternating between morning and evening services. We have one table, and use individual cups of wine and grape juice: the communicants wait until the elements have been distributed and then eat and drink together. When the minister is absent, typically a retired minister or a licensed preacher administers the Lord's Supper.

The week before a Lord's Supper service, a preparatory statement is read, exhorting communicants to 'examine themselves'. Before the service commences in which the Lord's Supper is to be celebrated, the Duty Elder of Service makes a statement, which explains especially for visitors the scriptural requirements for participation, warning against inappropriate participation, and offering a warm welcome to all who qualify.

Baptism of children is available when at least one of the parents is a professing Christian and member of the congregation. Members are encouraged to present their covenant children for baptism as early as practicable.

Prayer Meeting

A regular weekly prayer meeting has been held in the church premises since the mid-80's (on a Thursday evening). It has been consistently attended by a core group of members, and our Minister has usually been present, taking his part in the rostered male leadership.

Bible Studies

It has been the practice in Canberra for many years to have a Bible study in parallel with Sunday School and Catechism Class, on the Lord's Day during school terms, prior to the morning worship service.

There are a few other Bible Studies or groups that meet during the week. Some members of the congregation are also involved with cross-denominational Bible Study Fellowship groups. Session has encouraged regular participation by all members in a Bible study group, but with mixed success.

Youth

Sunday School and Catechism classes take place before morning worship services during school term. There are currently two Sunday School classes and a junior Catechism class.

The Junior Catechism class is led by one of the elders: children of 12 years of age and older work through the Heidelberg Catechism over the course of 2-3 years. Session would like to have a Senior Catechism class aimed at 15-18 year olds which ideally would be taught by the Minister using one of our confessional standards. This would prepare young people so that they may pursue communicant membership from a sound grounding in the Reformed Faith.

Young Adults Group is for young people aged approximately 18-25+ and includes some attending school/college, some in work and some taking on university/TAFE study. It meets weekly, typically on Friday evenings, to share a meal and for fellowship and teaching.

Community Outreach

The Coffee & Craft group has been meeting in the church complex on Friday mornings, twice per month during school terms, for many years. It has been advertised and promoted in local newspapers, and attracts a variety of attendees, about half from the community. Some of our ladies take turns to give a short talk focused on a relevant Scripture text or theme.

Session recently set up a small Community Outreach Working Group which will be advising Session on possible activities for congregational engagement.

We occasionally host a Creation Ministries International speaker and associated book table when a suitable speaker is available. Other ministries have been hosted from time to time.

Financial Health

The church has remained financially stable and healthy for many years. We continue to receive sufficient tithes & offerings. We have cash reserves and are presently debt free, having repaid all loans on our buildings and manse. We have been blessed to be able to make regular contributions to the wider work of the Kingdom, particularly Reformed missions.

Leadership

Session is at present (2022) composed of 5 Elders and 2 Deacons. The Reformed Church of Canberra has always held to the view that church office, both Elder and Deacon, is open only to men, and this is expressed in the church's constitution (Article 13(3)).

Session is usually chaired by an Elder other than the Minister.

Session draws in various ways on the experience and availability of men who have been office-bearers in previous years. This "wider session" of non-serving office-bearers occasionally meets, with the Session, on an ad hoc basis for consultation on issues of strategic importance to the congregation, including seeking to call another Minister. Non-serving elders also may be asked to assist in pastoral visits.

Confessional & Church Order Distinctives

There are a number of issues relating to the application of the confessions or the Church Order that our congregation has had to address over the years, which distinguish our congregation within the denomination in the following ways:

- Commitment to a finished revelation - a 'closed canon' (as per WCF Chapter 1);
- Corporate worship is in line with traditional Reformed/Presbyterian liturgies;
- Session is composed of all three offices, i.e. Ministers of the Word, the Elders and the Deacons;
- Church office - ministers, elders or deacons - is only open to suitably qualified male members;
- Continuing commitment to the assembling of the congregation for both morning and evening worship services on the Lord's Day;
- Continuing commitment to welcoming to the Lord's Supper only those who have made Public Profession of Faith.

Compensation package

A generous remuneration package will be negotiated with the successful applicant which will be in line with CRCA Synodical guidelines. This will include the payment of an additional 15% superannuation contribution. A large (4 bedroom+study+library) family manse is available as part of the package. A vehicle allowance is payable or a vehicle can be provided. A tax-free book allowance will also be included.

Applying

The starting date is negotiable, though we are looking to fill the vacancy as soon as appropriate with a suitable man.

Please submit a written application to the position, providing the following:

- your contact details,
- your Curriculum Vitae or resume, and
- an explanation of why you are interested and suited to the position, in as many or as few words as you consider appropriate.

Submit applications to: session_clerk@reformed.org.au

Questions

Some questions are provided below for personal reflection and that shortlisted candidates may be asked to respond to at an interview. You may also wish to briefly reflect on some of these in the broader context of your application for the position.

1. What nourishes your faith in Christ? How do you minister to your immediate family ie. wife, children?
2. In your way of thinking, what would a gospel driven ministry look like?
3. How would you seek to see unbelievers brought into the kingdom, in a church in which you are ministering?
4. What is your understanding of Genesis Chapters 1-11 and the implications it has for the modern day?
5. How does your understanding of the doctrine of the covenant affect your teaching and practice on the matter of Christian education for covenant children?
6. What interests you in ministering in Canberra, Australia? How familiar are you with the spiritual landscape of Australia, and what are your impressions of it?