



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

SYNOD SELECTION PANEL

Information for
**APPLICANTS &
PRESBYTERY
SUPPORT PERSONS**
January 2023

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Preface

Congratulations on beginning the process of applying to become a candidate for Ministry with the Uniting Church in Australia.

With this Handbook you will have received a letter from your Presbytery and the Application Form which needs to be completed.

In addition you will need to submit the following documents:

- Certified copies of academic results
- Statement of your personal reflections on ministry
- Statement on the UCA Code of Ethics and ministry practice
- The Period of Discernment Statement of Participation that you received from your Presbytery
- The Period of Discernment Learning Agreement
- National Police check
- Recent photo (attached to your application form).

It is very important that you ensure that all these documents are attached to the application form before it is given to the Presbytery.

Please read through this Handbook thoroughly, as it is designed to assist you in understanding the Selection process.

If you have any questions you should contact your Presbytery contact person.

A note about period of discernment:

Presbyteries should ensure that during their period of discernment (POD), intending candidates demonstrate (i) sufficient variety of ministry experience, including outside their home church, and (ii) an ability to successfully complete bachelor level studies. These are important considerations when the selection panel is discerning an applicant's capacity and call for ministry. For this reason, the Synod Selection Panel needs to see the learning agreement which formed the basis of the applicant's POD.

What does the presbytery need to submit?

The presbytery is responsible for ensuring that the following documents are obtained and attached to the application form before it is sent to the Synod Selection Panel secretariat:

- Report from the applicant's minister
- Church council comments
- Report of the presbytery after interviewing the applicant.

Please also refer to pages 2 and 3 of the *Application to Candidate for Ministry form* for more information about the Presbytery's responsibilities. Presbyteries will be advised in November each year of the Synod selection day dates for the following year.

Please contact Jill Bow, 07 3377 9747, Jillian.Bow@ucaqld.com.au, if you have any questions.

Definitions

Applicant: A person who has applied to become a candidate for the ordained ministry of minister of the word or ministry of deacon.

BCF (Board of Christian Formation): The body appointed by the Queensland Synod to oversee the process of the Synod Selection Panel and the progress of candidates for specified ministries and assesses their readiness for ordination. It assumes the responsibilities of the Ministerial Education Board (Reg 3.7.4.3). The BCF By-laws are part of the consolidated Queensland Synod By-laws available at ucaqld.com.au/administration/governance/governing-rules

Call to ministry: The call of God for the church, and individuals comprising it, to use their gifts and graces, talents and skills in the service of others as part of their worship and active discipleship. In a more specific sense, it is the call of God of an individual to a particular use of their gifts, talents and skills or to a particular vocation. All Christian people are called to ministry. The Synod Selection Panel shares in the responsibility of discerning whether people may be called to ordained ministry.

Candidate: Someone preparing for ordained ministry as a Minister of the Word or Deacon, whose application for candidature has been approved in accordance with Uniting Church in Australia Regulations.

Formation: The intentional process by which a person develops their understandings, gifts, graces and skills in preparation for ministry (both lay and ordained).

Interview team: A sub-group of the Synod Selection Panel, formed for the purpose of interviewing applicants on Synod selection day. Normally an interview team consists of three people and an applicant is interviewed by three different teams, each with a different focus.

Minister/ministry agent: In this booklet, it means Minister of the Word or Deacon.

Period of discernment: A period during which a person will engage with the church to explore a call to ministry (*refer Reg 2.3.1, see Appendix 8*).

Presbytery support person: This person is appointed by the relevant presbytery to accompany an applicant through the interview process on selection day. Each applicant would have their own presbytery support person.

Student: A person undertaking a course of study in a theological college. The term 'student' does not carry any necessary implication of subsequent candidature for ministry.

Synod Selection Panel: Means the selection panel referred to in Regulation 2.3.2.4a (see Appendix 1). Each panel comprises nine persons, and a Synod selection day will involve one, two or three panels operating concurrently, depending on the number of applicants being considered.

Synod Selection Panel secretariat: The group of three persons appointed by the BCF to oversee and manage the selection process. Members of the secretariat guide and assist the panel, but are not members of the panel.

From Period of Discernment to Synod Selection Panel

Here is an outline of the sequences of steps to be followed by the applicant and the presbytery.

- 1 Person completed Period of Discernment and indicates to their minister they wish to proceed to make an application to candidate for a specified ministry.
- 2
 - 2.1 Minister advises presbytery or the designated presbytery committee.
 - 2.2 Presbytery secretary is contacted.
 - 2.3 Person is given, by presbytery secretary or the designated presbytery contact person:
 - 2.3.1 Application form
 - 2.3.2 Letter advising person of process and requirements
 - 2.3.3 Handbook for Applicants and Support Persons
- 3 Person (now referred to as the applicant) fills in application form and returns and other required documents to the presbytery designated contact person.
- 4
 - 4.1 Presbytery contacts the applicant's minister to ask for a report.
 - 4.2 Presbytery contacts the applicant's church council to ask for a comment.
 - 4.3 Presbytery sends a copy of page 5 of the application form to the Synod Selection Panel secretariat. (This is the page containing the applicant's details.) This assists the panel in anticipating the possible number of applicants at the next selection day.
- 5 Presbytery interviews the applicant and makes a recommendation. If the applicant is recommended to Synod Selection Panel, then go to step 6.
- 6 Synod Selection Panel Secretariat sends to the applicant:
 - 6.1 Dates for psychological test
 - 6.2 Dates of Synod selection day
- 7
 - 7.1 Presbytery secretary of designated presbytery contact person forwards the completed application form, with all attachments, to the Synod selection Panel Secretariat prior to the deadline for the next selection day.
 - 7.2 Presbytery appoints their support person for their applicant. Secretariat is advised of these appointments. (See note about presbytery representatives on page 7)
 - 7.3 Presbytery sends to applicant's support person a copy of the Handbook for Applicants and Support Persons and advises them of the date of the Selection Day.
- 8 The applicant, the presbytery representative and the presbytery support person attend Synod selection day for applicant to meet the selection panel, share their call to ministry, and meet with the three interview teams.

NOTE: A medical examination will only be required (at Synod's expense) after an applicant has been accepted as a candidate. No medical examination is needed prior to synod selection day. Applicants are required, as part of the application to complete health disclosure section.

Day at a Glance

What Applicants need to be prepared for.

5 Minute Reflection on Journey and Sense of Call.

At the start of the day we will share in a brief time of worship together. When this concludes each applicant will be invited to speak for five minutes on their Journey and Sense of Call. This will be with everyone present. Be aware, you may be cut-off if this extends beyond five minutes. Ideas to include:

- Talk about your faith journey and how it has led you here today.
- Talk about your call. How and why do you believe God is calling you to ordained ministry?
- How easily have you accepted your call, or have you found yourself struggling with it?

During the day you will take part in three sub-panel discussions, each with 2-3 panellists. The sequence of these sub-panels will vary. You do not need to prepare responses for these questions, these are just the main areas each panel will cover.

Ministry in the Uniting Church

- The distinctiveness of ordained ministry in the church and in the world.
- The changing place of the church in society.
- Key community issues and ethical challenges.

Faith and Spirituality

- Your relationship with the triune God.
- Reflections upon theological study
- Your personal spiritual practices
- Mission and evangelism.

Personal Qualities, Self-Awareness and Care

- Character and personality
 - Interests outside of church
 - Management of conflict
- Reflection upon leadership qualities and your experience of leadership.
- Self-Care and potential
 - Personal situation of family / support networks
 - Practical considerations of moving forward.

Flow chart

This flow chart indicates the steps with reference to the Regulation 2.3.2 (2015). The numbering of the steps is different from the previous page, but the overall process outline is the same.

- 1** After completing a Period of Discernment, the person and the church begin to discern a call to the ordained ministry. 2.3.1 (a)
- 2** Decision conveyed to presbytery, in writing, through the minister of the congregation in which the applicant holds membership. 2.3.2.2(a)
- 3** The Presbytery determines:
The applicant is, and for the 12 months prior to making an application has been, a confirmed member of the Uniting Church in Australia (unless the presbytery decides that exceptional circumstances exist). 2.3.2.1 (a)(i) 2.3.2.1 (b)

The applicant is suitable in character, personality and spiritual maturity and has the capacity to exercise the responsibilities of the specified ministry for which the application is made. 2.3.2.1(a)(ii)

The applicant has engaged satisfactorily in the Period of Discernment and has received a statement of participation in the Period of Discernment from a presbytery. 2.3.2.1(a)(iii)

The applicant has completed the final years of secondary school at a level sufficient to secure entrance to a degree course in an Australian university. (Reg 2.3.2.1 (c) allows for some variation to this requirement, if necessary.) 2.3.2.1(c)(i)
- 4** Presbytery requests:
 - a)** a confidential report from the appropriate minister
 - b)** a comment from the relevant church council
 - c)** a comment from nominated referees and other persons as it sees fit. 2.3.2.3
- 5** Presbytery, or designated committee of presbytery, interviews applicant and shall have regard to :
 - a)** The nature of the services to be performed within the ministry for which the application is made
 - b)** the present qualifications and apparent potential of the applicant
 - c)** the spiritual maturity and motivations of the applicant
 - d)** the applicant's personality and character. 2.3.2.3(b)
- 6** Presbytery, or designated committee of presbytery, may conduct such tests or call for other information as it may require, or as may be required by the selection panel and 2.3.2.3 (a) (iv)

Prepare a report and recommendation to the selection panel 2.3.2.3 (a) (v)
- 7** Presbytery may either:
 - a)** commend applicant to Synod Selection Panel
 - b)** defer commending the applicant to the Synod Selection Panel
 - c)** reject application.

A two thirds majority of members present shall be required to commend the applicant to the selection panel as suitable for candidature. 2.3.2.3 (b)

- 8** When the presbytery resolves to commend the applicant to the selection panel, it shall forward to the secretariat of the Synod Selection Panel its report and resolutions, together with other reports, references and information conveyed to it. 2.3.2.3(c)
- 9** Synod Selection Panel secretariat:
- a)** advises Synod general secretary of application
 - b)** confirms with applicant the dates of Synod Selection Day
 - c)** arranges with applicant to undergo medical and psychological tests as prescribed by the Board of Christian Formation, and receives these reports in a timely manner. (See note about medical tests on page 5.) 2.3.2.4(b)(i)
 - d)** arranges Synod Selection Panel. Each panel will consist of nine members. The panel will be formed into three interview teams. A representative from the applicant's presbytery will be a member of the panel. 2.3.2.4(a)
 - e)** provides Synod Selection Panel members with all relevant documents. 2.3.2.4
- 10** The Synod Selection Panel shall meet with the applicant. 2,3,2.4(b)(iii)
- 11** In considering the application, the Synod Selection Panel shall have regard, among other things, to the:
- spiritual maturity and motivation of the applicant;
 - capacity and assessed potential for leadership;
 - ability and assessed potential for applicant to fulfil the requirements of the course of studies and the specific responsibilities of the specified ministry;
 - appropriate vocational direction in accordance with the applicant's gifts; and
 - character and personality of the applicant. 2.3.2.4(c)
- 12** The selection panel determines the application by:
- acceptance of the applicant for the ministry applied for, with or without any conditions attached to that acceptance; or
 - deferral of the application, with or without any conditions which must be satisfied before further consideration of the application; or
 - acceptance of the applicant for a form of ministry other than that for which application was made; or
 - encouragement of the applicant to continue to exercise a ministry as a lay member of the church, but rejection of the application to serve in one of the specified ministries. 2.3.2.4(d)
- 13** The resolution of the Synod Selection Panel accepting an applicant shall:
- specify the ministry for which the applicant is accepted;
 - specify any conditions (if appropriate) which may be attached to the acceptance; and
 - make recommendations relative to the candidature. 2.3.2.4(e)
- 14** The Synod selection secretariat advises:
- applicant
 - presbytery
 - General Secretary of Synod
 - Board of Christian Formation
 - Trinity College Queensland (if successful)
- of the decision of the Synod Selection Panel.
- 15** Application is lodged with secretary of Synod. (All copies of the application used by the Synod Selection Panel are shredded.)

Introduction

The Role of the Selection Panel

The Synod Selection Panel (SSP) comprises nine people, drawn from different Presbyteries and backgrounds, who meet on Selection day to interview applicants who wish to candidate for ordination. Panel members play a vital role in the prayerful discernment process through which individuals and the Uniting Church seek to listen to God's call for people to enter into the ordained ministries. A selection day may involve one or more panels meeting concurrently, depending on the number of applicants to be considered.

The primary task of the Synod Selection Panel is to determine the appropriateness of applicants for the specified ministries of the Word and Deacon in the Uniting Church.

Part of the task also involves the panel making recommendations regarding possible conditions and timings in relation to when and how suitable candidates should proceed forward in the process.

The panel sits as the penultimate part of a rigorous and prayerful process in seeking to discern God's call to people for ordained ministry.

Under Uniting Church in Australia Regulations (ref. 2.3.2.4; see Appendix 1), the panel has responsibility for assessing the personality and character of each applicant, their leadership potential and their spiritual maturity. This assessment informs their judgement about whether an applicant is suitable as a candidate for one of the specified ministries in the Uniting Church or more suited to a lay ministry.

In forming an assessment, the panel has available to it information from the relevant church council and the presbytery. It also has the results of psychological testing. However, much of the assessment and deliberation takes place through observations and discussion that occur on Synod Selection days where the applicants participate in a range of activities and interviews.

A note for applicants

Meeting the Synod Selection Panel can be a daunting prospect. Remember this is a prayerful process designed to discern God's calling for you in ministry. Enter into the process with prayer and an openness to hearing what God might say to you. You may wish to ask friends or family to pray for you through the day. You may be asked questions about your understanding of ministry in the Uniting Church, the church's place in the world, your view about God, Jesus and the Bible, and your personal qualities. This is not a theological exam. It is an invitation for you to disclose who you are as a person and a Christian, and how you engage with questions of faith and practice.

Early on selection day, you will be asked to share with the panel some highlights of your journey in faith and discipleship which helps explain why you are at this point of offering for ministry. This is to be no longer than five minutes, so please prepare this verbal presentation carefully and respect the time limit.

The Role of the Presbytery Support Person

The Synod Selection Panel appreciates and values the participation and insight of presbytery support persons (PSP). Presbytery support persons who accompany an applicant to the Synod Selection Panel have a complex role.

A presbytery support person will accompany an applicant through the process of the selection day. The presbytery support person will not be asked or be able to participate in interviewing or in making decisions about any other applicant that may also be in attendance on the day.

The presbytery support person's role is to:

Support the applicant on selection day. While the synod selection process is not a job interview, and is about us all working together to discern the will of God for each applicant and the church, it is nonetheless often a time of heightened emotion for the applicant. The presbytery support person is a supportive companion on selection day. It is best if the PSP contacts the applicant prior to selection day to ensure that the applicant understands the process and is prepared (including having prepared a five minute presentation about their sense of call).

Bring information and insight about the applicant from the presbytery. If the presbytery support person is not a member of the presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee or similar group, it may be useful to speak with the chairperson of the group and be briefed on the applicant they are accompanying. There are a number of times the PSP may be called on to share insight or information about an applicant, for example:

- during the individual applicant interviews: There will be three rounds of interviews, in which the PSP and two or three members of the panel will meet with the applicant whom they are accompanying to explore their call and potential readiness to enter into formation for ordained ministry. The PSP will accompany the applicant to each of these three interviews.
- in the panel deliberation and decision making: The PSP will only be part of the discussion relating to the applicant whom they are accompanying.

Participate in the decision making process in relation to the application of the person they are accompanying. After discussing the application and any issues and insight gained throughout the day, the panel will then make a decision on the application using consensus decision making. The PSP will not be a voting member in that process.

Monitor/witness the process on behalf of the presbytery. Whilst part of the PSP's role in the Synod Selection Panel process is to support the applicant, they are not there as an advocate. If the PSP has a close personal connection to the applicant this may create difficulties for them and the applicant. The panel recommends that if the PSP has a close personal connection to the person they are being asked to accompany, that the PSP request that the presbytery replace them with another person.

Maintain pastoral contact with the applicant afterwards. The panel secretariat will contact both the applicant and the presbytery support person as soon as possible and inform them of the outcome. The presbytery support person should then contact the applicant as soon as possible to discuss the outcome. This is especially important if the panel's decision is that the application not proceed at this time. It is the presbytery, not the panel secretariat, that maintains pastoral oversight of the applicant.

Key responsibilities

Synod Selection Panel

Purpose:

To assess applicants seeking to become candidates for ministry and to advise presbytery of the Synod Selection Panel's recommendations with respect to each applicant.

Responsibilities:

A. Assessing applicants

In considering each application, the panel meets with each of the applicants to consider, among other things:

- spiritual maturity and motivation
- capacities and assessed potential for leadership
- ability and assessed potential to fulfil the requirements of the course of studies (where applicable) and the responsibilities of the specified ministry
- the most appropriate vocational direction in accordance to the applicant's gifts character and personality.

B. Determination regarding applicants

The Synod Selection Panel shall determine each application and shall indicate, giving reasons and voting figures, whether it recommends:

- acceptance of the applicant as a candidate for the ministry applied for, with or without any conditions attached to that acceptance
- deferral of the application, with or without any recommended conditions attached to subsequent reapplication
- acceptance of the applicant for a form of ministry other than that which the application was made
- encouragement of the applicant to continue to exercise a ministry as a lay member of the church but rejection of the applicant to service in one of the specified ministries
- Where the applicant is accepted, specify the ministry for which the applicant is accepted and, if appropriate, specify any conditions and/or recommendations relative to the candidature for ministry applied for and refer the candidate to the Board of Christian Formation.

C. Reporting regarding applicants

This is done by the secretariat on behalf of the panel.

The secretariat

The secretariat facilitates and guides the selection panel process through the following tasks:

1. Facilitate the nomination of prospective members of the Synod Selection Panel and recommends to the Board of Christian Formation the appointment of panel members.
2. Provide training for panel members through provision of materials and training days.
3. In preparation for the Synod selection day, the secretariat gathers the necessary information which includes:
 - ensuring all relevant documents for each applicant are available to the panel
 - arranging for psychological assessments and other assessments as may be otherwise required or requested
 - seeking such further information as considered necessary.
4. Make all the required arrangements for the Synod selection days, and guide and support the process and the panel members during these days.
5. On behalf of the panel, inform each applicant, their presbytery support person and their presbytery of the panel's decision as soon as practicable, by phone if possible, followed by written letter with copies to BCF and Trinity College Queensland.

A note about presbytery representatives

The Regulations (2.3.2.4.a) require that presbyteries which have an applicant proceeding through the selection day need to appoint a representative to that Synod Selection Panel.

The Synod Selection Panel secretariat tries to ensure that each panel comprises members from each of the presbyteries. Rather than ask presbyteries to appoint an additional representative when they have an applicant being considered, the relevant presbyteries will be asked that the person from their presbytery chosen to sit on that panel also be their nominated representative under the terms of that Regulation.

The Synod Selection Day

Example program

The selection day will run as follows. Further explanations of some segments are given below.

Venue: Uniting Church Centre, 60 Bayliss St, Auchenflower, QLD 4066

Time	Duration (minutes)	Panel members	Applicants & Presbytery Support Persons
9.00 am	5	Gathering, opening prayer (only for interview panel)	
9.05 am	45	Panel are constituted and preview the applications which they will consider.	9.30 am Arrival in separate room, briefing by secretariat member
9.30 am			
9.50 am	15	Worship and introductions	
10.05 am	25	Panel gathers with applicants for conversations about sharing/exploring their call	
10.30 am	20	Morning Tea	
10.50 am	30	Preparation of interview teams	Continue with morning tea, wait in ante-room
11.20 am	45	Interview round #1	
12.05pm	25	Reflect/assess/prepare	Rest/reflect with support person
12.30 pm	30	Lunch	
1.00 pm	45	Interview round #2	
1.45 pm	10	Reflect/assess/prepare	Rest/reflect with support person
1.55pm	45	Interview round #3	
2.40 pm	5	Interviews conclude, people gather in chapel	
2.45pm	15	Continuation of worship, including Holy Communion. Sending out of applicants.	
3.00 pm	15	Interview teams meet separately for assessment	Presbytery support persons wait
3.15 pm	1 hr 45 mins	Panel meets for assessment and completion of reports. Afternoon tea is provided.	Presbytery support persons are invited to sit in on deliberations about their applicant.
5.00 pm		Conclusion. Secretariat informs applicants and presbytery support persons of decisions by phone.	

- 1 Constituting the selection panel**
Panel members need to ensure they arrive no later than 9:00 am to share in the brief time of combined prayer. Then each panel meets separately and:

 - Elects a chairperson for the day.
 - Discusses the applications they have to consider. They share any questions they have of applicants on the basis of the written materials and psych reports and then determine which sub-panel will ask about each of those questions.

A member of the secretariat will be available at this time, to support the process and to answer any specific questions about the psych report.

During this time, the applicants and presbytery support persons arrive and are met by the members of the secretariat, who brief them on the nature of the day and the program and discuss some of the expectations.
- 2 Welcoming applicants and worshipping together**
The applicants and presbytery support persons are welcomed. There is a brief time of worship followed by introductions.
- 3 Sharing of call**
Each panel moves to a separate meeting area with their applicants and the presbytery support persons. Each applicant will be invited to present something about their faith journey and call to ministry for a maximum of five minutes. These presentations may be followed by some exploration of the stories shared. The purpose of this time is to allow all panel members to share a common experience and understanding of each applicant's call to ministry as a basis for the subsequent team interviews.
- 4 Morning tea break**
The morning tea break allows all panel members to mix informally with all the applicants. Panel members may choose to spend more time with applicants whom they will be interviewing, but they should try to meet some of the other applicants as well.
- 5 Final preparation for individual applicant interviews**
Following morning tea, the interview teams re-gather to briefly discuss any further issues about each applicant they will be meeting with, and the interview approach they will take (e.g. identifying key questions to ask the applicant, who will ask what questions, any issues of cultural sensitivity, etc.).

Meanwhile, the applicants meet with their presbytery support person.
- 6 Individual applicant interviews**
Each interview team meets each applicant for one 45 minute period. Each interview team has a different focus for their questions (see next section on interview focus questions). If a panel has three applicants, each interview team will meet a different applicant for each of these time slots. If there fewer than three applicants, each interview team will have one or two 'spares' in these time slots.
- 7 Lunch break**
It is not the intention that the interview process continues with applicants over lunch. Given the intensity of the rest of the day for panel members and applicants, it is good to keep this break and conversations informal.
- 8 Worship with Holy Communion, and sending out of applicants**
This concluding worship is really a continuation of opening worship. Everybody gathers for Holy Communion and prayer and sending out of the applicants. The applicants then leave. Presbytery support persons are asked to stay for the panel deliberations
- 9 Interview teams assessment**
The interview teams meet separately to discuss their assessment of each applicant they have interviewed. They fill out a first draft of the Interview Report which will be presented to the panel. Presbytery support persons are not part of this discussion.

10 Panel meeting to assess the applicants

The three interview teams reconvene to form a whole panel, along with a member of the Secretariat. Each application is discussed in turn, starting with the interview teams presenting their comments and evaluation. This provides a basis for the panel's collective discussion and final decision. The presbytery support persons only attend the discussion about the applicant whom they are supporting: they can offer information and comment only if the panel asks, and they have no vote.

The panel have four options for each applicant.

- accept their nomination, with or without conditions,
- defer their nomination, with or without conditions,
- accept their nomination into a different ministry than that applied for,
- encourage them to continue in lay ministry, but reject their application.

The panel will make a summary statement of feedback and advice for each applicant.

If there are any conditions placed on either acceptance or deferral then the panel will specify what the applicant must do to satisfy those conditions, and how they will demonstrate that the conditions have been satisfied.

11 Concluding the panel meeting

The presbytery support person departs after their applicant has been voted upon. When all of the applicants have been assessed and voted upon, and all the presbytery support persons have left, the members of the panels and the secretariat debrief the proceedings of the day.

The secretariat undertakes the necessary communication.

Panel members leave any documents for the secretariat to destroy.

A note about appeals

The Regulations (2.3.2.5.a) allow for an applicant to appeal against a decision of the Synod Selection Panel "only on the grounds that correct procedures have not been followed in accordance with the Regulations".

For this reason, panel members should ensure that they are familiar with the Regulations' requirements for the process of decision-making. (See Appendix 1).

Privacy

Privacy policy information for applicants

As an applicant for a specified ministry within the Uniting Church, you will be asked to supply information in a number of ways. The Synod's Board of Christian Formation recognises that an individual's privacy is very important to them and that individuals have a right to control their personal information. The board acknowledges that when an individual provides personal information about themselves to another party it is an act of trust. In response, the board takes the process of upholding an individual's privacy very seriously.

When people apply to be a candidate for a specified ministry, the Board of Christian Formation, through the Synod Selection Panel secretariat, collects the following information:

- your personal details
- your educational history
- your employment background
- your involvement in the life of the church and of the community
- your faith journey
- your sense of God's call
- your experience of the Period of Discernment
- your understanding of the Uniting Church and of ministry within the church.

We will also request information from the following people:

- your minister
- your church council
- your presbytery
- your referees.

In addition, you will be asked to make yourself available for:

- a psychological test
- a police check
- a medical test (if you are accepted as a candidate, with Synod paying the cost).

A report of the psychological test will be provided to the panel secretariat. You are required to forward a copy of your police check report to the panel secretariat.

The information is gathered in order to assist the panel to discern the will of God for you as you seek to fulfil your ministry. Confidentiality is observed when statements (written and oral) are made on the clear understanding that they will be shared only with those who "need to know", and not with others. This means that statements and information made in reports, references, interviews, etc., during the selection process will be made known only to those directly involved with the process and not to any persons or bodies external to that process. These statements and information will be processed by the members of the panel secretariat and will be copied for the members of the panel who will conduct your interview.

It is the responsibility of the reporting body to inform you, in a caring and constructive way, of the contents of reports, references and recommendations made about you.

If you wish to access any personal information held about you, or want to find out more about the board's privacy policy, please contact the Synod Selection Panel secretariat via the Synod office: 07 3377 9777 or email reception@ucaqld.com.au.

Information type	Source	Accessed by	Use	Applicant access	Storage and disposal
Report from presbytery	Presbytery	Synod Selection Panel	To discern God's call. To identify evidence of God being active in the applicant's life and of the applicant's attentiveness to God. To assess suitability for specified ministry. To identify gifts for ministry which are applicable to the specified ministry for which the person is applying. To inform further reporting.	Presbytery advises the applicant of contents of report. Applicant may make a written request to the Presbytery Chairperson to access report.	Original held by Secretary of Synod. Copies to panel members. Copies destroyed after interview.
Psychological report	Psychologist nominated by Synod	Synod Selection Panel	Used as one part of the process. May be used to raise questions to help identify any underlying problems (i.e. psychological problems which may be a barrier in future ministry) before continuing on the process. If the results indicate some psychopathology, it does not mean that the applicant will be rejected. It does mean that there may be more questions, further exploration, and possible referrals for extra support.	Written report given to applicant by psychologist. Appointment to discuss the report must be made with the psychologist. Psychologist can deny access to report if there is a serious threat to the life or health of the client or any other individual or if it will have an unreasonable impact on the privacy of other persons.	Original held by Secretary of Synod. Test materials and copy of report held by Psychologist in locked cabinet and then destroyed as per the Australian Psychological Society guidelines. Copies to panel members. Copies destroyed after interview.
Police report	Applicant	Synod Selection Panel	To assess applicant's history in relation to Police records and their suitability for ministry in accordance with the Regulations.	Applicant requests report from Qld Police Service and forwards to panel	Copy held by Secretary of Synod. Copies to panel members. Copies destroyed after interviews.
Interview team report	Synod interview team	Synod Selection Panel Secretariat	To write letters informing of decision of Interview Team. Letters sent to Applicant, General Secretary, Presbytery Secretary and, if successful Trinity Theological College	Written application to Secretary of Synod	Original held by Secretary of Synod.



Appendices

The following appendices may be useful reference material to assist in preparation for synod selection day.

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Appendix 1

Assembly regulations relating to Synod Selection Panel

SELECTION PANEL OF CANDIDATES FOR MINISTER

Reg. 2.3.2.4

- a) Each application for candidature shall be considered by a selection panel comprising the members appointed by the Ministerial Education Board pursuant to Regulation 3.7.4.3(c)(iii)(3), and a representative appointed by the applicant's Presbytery. A Presbytery may appoint a different representative in relation to each application for candidature from the Presbytery.
Duties:
 - b) The selection panel shall have before it all relevant documents and:
 - i) arrange for medical, psychological and other assessments;
 - ii) seek further information as it considers necessary;
 - iii) meet with the applicants; and
 - iv) determine the outcome of applications forwarded by Presbyteries.
 - c) In considering the applications before it, the selection panel shall have regard, among other things, to:
 - i) the spiritual maturity and motivation of each applicant;
 - ii) the capacities and assessed potential for leadership of each applicant;
 - iii) the ability and assessed potential of each applicant to fulfil the requirements of the course of studies (where applicable) and the responsibilities of the specified ministry;
 - iv) the most appropriate vocational direction for each applicant in accordance with the applicant's gifts; and
 - v) the character and personality of the applicant.
 - d) The selection panel shall determine the application by:
 - i) acceptance of the applicant as a candidate for the ministry applied for, with or without any conditions attached to that acceptance, or
 - ii) deferral of the application, with or without any conditions which must be satisfied before further consideration of the application; or
 - iii) acceptance of the applicant for a form of ministry other than that for which application was made, or
 - iv) encouragement of the applicant to continue to exercise a ministry as a lay member of the Church but rejection of the application to serve in one of the specified ministries, and shall inform the applicant and the Presbytery of its decision.
 - e) The resolution of the selection panel accepting an applicant shall:
 - i) specify the ministry for which the applicant is accepted as a candidate and, if appropriate, specify any conditions which may attach to the acceptance, and make recommendations relative to the candidature; and
 - ii) refer the candidate to the Ministerial Education Board.

RIGHT OF APPEAL AGAINST A DECISION OF THE PRESBYTERY OR THE SELECTION PANEL

2.3.2.5

- a) An applicant may appeal against a decision made pursuant to Regulation 2.3.2.3(b), or 2.3.2.4(d)(ii), (iii) or (iv), only on the ground that correct procedures have not been followed in accordance with the Regulations.
- b) The appeal is to be made within 14 days of receipt of the communication of the decision. The appeal shall be lodged with the General Secretary in writing.
- c) The Synod Standing Committee shall appoint an appeal committee of three persons to determine the matter. The appeal committee shall consult with the applicant and the Presbytery and, when appropriate, the selection panel. The appeal committee shall then either dismiss the appeal or require the Presbytery or the selection panel to reconsider the application. A decision of the appeal committee shall be final.

Appendix 2

Uniting Church in Australia statements, policy and regulations relating to items that must be affirmed by applicants

BAPTISM (*Basis of Union, Paragraph 7*)

The Uniting Church acknowledges that Christ incorporates people into his body by Baptism. In this way Christ enables them to participate in his own baptism, which was accomplished once on behalf of all in his death and burial, and which was made available to all when, risen and ascended, he poured out the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Baptism into Christ's body initiates people into Christ's life and mission in the world, so that they are united in one fellowship of love, service, suffering and joy, in one family of the Father of all in heaven and earth, and in the power of the one Spirit. The Uniting Church will baptize those who confess the Christian faith, and children who are presented for baptism and for whose instruction and nourishment in the faith the Church takes responsibility.

MUTUALITY IN ORDAINED MINISTRY/COLLEGIATE MINISTRIES (Regulations)

2.11.2

Where within any one pastoral charge more than one Minister is placed to share the ministerial responsibilities,

- d) they shall be recognised as colleagues of equal standing;
- e) for the better fulfilment of the mission of the Church, the better use of gifts and graces of the Ministers and the better ordering of the life of the pastoral charge, specified responsibilities may from time to time be allocated to a particular Minister, as determined either
 - iii) by the Ministers serving in the pastoral charge, with the approval of the Church Council; or
 - iv) by the Church council, with the approval of the Ministers serving in the pastoral charge.

In the event of disagreement, then either the Church Council or any of the Ministers may refer the matter to the Presbytery which shall investigate and determine any or all of the matters in question. Any arrangements made at the time of the commencement of the placement of the Ministers shall be taken into account in any determinations made under this Regulation.

ORDINATION OF MEN AND WOMEN (Regulations)

2.2.1 (a)

Within the ministry of the whole Church, Jesus Christ calls men and women to proclamation of the gospel in word and deed through the ministry of the Word and the ministry of Deacon.

MINISTRY OF THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD (*Basis of Union*, Paragraph 13)

The Uniting Church affirms that every member of the Church is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant. It acknowledges with thanksgiving that the one Spirit has endowed the members of Christ's Church with a diversity of gifts, and that there is no gift without its corresponding service: all ministries have a part in the ministry of Christ. The Uniting Church, at the time of union, will recognise and accept the ministries of those who have been called to any task or responsibility in the uniting Churches. The Uniting Church will thereafter provide for the exercise by men and women of the gifts God bestows upon them, and will order its life in response to God's call to enter more fully into mission.

MINISTRY OF THE WHOLE PEOPLE OF GOD (Constitution, Paragraph 12.)

Recognising that ministry is a function of the whole Church to which all baptised persons are called, provision shall be made by Congregations, Presbyteries and Synods for the development and exercise of the gifts of all members. Provision shall also be made by the Assembly for the selection, education, training and setting apart of persons for forms of ministry specified by the Assembly.

Appendix 3

A brief statement on ordination

Source: <https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/501>

1. Baptism: the foundation of all Christian ministry

Baptism is Christ's gift.
It is the sign by which the Spirit of God
joins people to Jesus Christ
and incorporates them into his body, the Church.

Thus, claimed by God
we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit
that we may live as witnesses to Jesus Christ,
share his ministry in the world and grow to maturity,
awaiting with hope the day of our Lord Jesus.
(‘The Meaning of Baptism’ in ‘The Service of Baptism’, *Uniting in Worship* 2, 2005, p. 74)

Not only a sign of personal renewal in Christ, baptism incorporates people into the life of the body of Christ, the Christian community, the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. The Christian life is inherently communal and missional. Through baptism into the communion of the Spirit, we are caught up into the mission of the triune God in the world:

God in Christ has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation. The Church's call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself (*Basis of Union*, 1992 ed., para. 3).

All Christians participate in the ministry of Christ. It is our vocation: ‘every member of the Church is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant. .. the one Spirit has endowed the members of Christ's Church with a diversity of gifts, and ... there is no gift without its corresponding service’ (*Basis of Union*, 1992 ed., para. 13).

Some members are recognised ‘through the guidance of the Holy Spirit’ by the Church as ‘women and men called of God to preach the Gospel, to lead the people in worship, to care for the flock, to share in government and to serve those in need in the world’ (para. 14). This process of discernment and setting apart is concerned with the ordering of the Church's life ‘in response to God's call to enter more fully into mission’ (para. 13).

2. Ordination: set apart for a new relationship

The Uniting Church recognises the responsibility and freedom which belong to councils to acknowledge gifts among members for the fulfilment of particular functions. The Uniting Church sees in pastoral care exercised personally on behalf of the Church an expression of the fact that God always deals personally with people, would have God's loving care known among people, and would have individual members take upon themselves the form of a servant (*Basis of Union*, 1992 ed., para. 16).

Ordination is the ‘setting apart’ of baptised women and men, called by God as discerned by the Church, to serve as deacons and ministers of the Word (*Basis of Union*, 1992 ed., para. 14(a)). The importance of ordination for the Uniting Church can be seen in the special care with which the *Basis of Union* addresses the liturgical requirements for ordination:

The Presbytery will ordain by prayer and the laying on of hands in the presence of a worshipping congregation. In this act of ordination the Church praises the ascended Christ for conferring gifts

upon men and women. It recognises Christ's call of the individual to be his minister; it prays for the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to equip the minister for that service. By the participation in the act of ordination of those already ordained, the Church bears witness to God's faithfulness and declares the hope by which it lives. In company with other Christians the Uniting Church will seek for a renewed understanding of the way in which the congregation participates in ordination and of the significance of ordination in the life of the Church. (*Basis of Union*, 1992 ed., para. 14(a))

Ordained ministers exercise their ministry as part of the ministry of the whole people of God, the body of Christ. However, they have a particular relationship to other parts of the body of Christ:

Ordination places the minister in a new relation to others in the community, as a designated leader who is authorised to be such. The person is given a new status in the community, not in terms of hierarchical advantage, but in its proper sense of a new 'standing place', in the same way in which marriage places two people into a new relationship with each other which will never be the same again. The new place in which the married couple stand with regard to each other is thus called their 'marital status', which should imply not a new hierarchy between them, but a new set of responsibilities and privileges in relation to one another. Nor does the couple's marital status remove them from the world, but places them in a new relation to other people because of their relationship to each other. Similarly, ordination does not place a minister 'over' the rest of the community, but in a new status within it (*Ordination and Ministry in The Uniting Church in Australia*, 1994, Part 3, para. 6)

The new relationship recognised and established by ordination is normally for life, and the Uniting Church maintains that this new relationship is with the whole Church catholic, not just within the Uniting Church. In the service of ordination, the presbytery ordains a person as a deacon/minister of the Word 'in the Church of Jesus Christ'. And at the Declaration of Ordination, the liturgy says that 'In the name of Jesus Christ, the sovereign Head of the Church', and by the presbytery's authority,

NNN is now a deacon/minister of the Word in the Church of God.

With this new relationship come particular responsibilities. In the *Basis of Union*, these particular responsibilities are described in this way:

These will preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments and exercise pastoral care so that all may be equipped for their particular ministries, thus maintaining the apostolic witness to Christ in the Church (1992 ed., para. 14 (a)).

The threefold task of preaching the Gospel, administering the sacraments and exercising pastoral care is specifically the responsibility to promote and maintain the Church as the missional community it is called to be—a place where every baptised Christian may find themselves in the ministry of Christ which is the mission of God in and for the world; and where new people may be enfolded through baptism. Ordained ministers have a particular role in not only the formation of individual Christians or groups of Christians, but of the body of Christ as a whole. They have a particular responsibility to work for the integrity of the body of Christ: the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church. (This is not just the local congregation, nor even just the Uniting Church, but the whole Christian church.)

The ministry of the ordained is a representative ministry. It is ministry exercised 'personally on behalf of the Church' (*Basis of Union*, 1992 ed., para. 16), the body of Christ. Ministers exercise their responsibility to Christ and the Church by representing Christ to the people and the people to Christ. This representative ministry involves focussing, modelling, supervising, shepherding, enabling, and empowering the general ministry of the Church. In seeking to safeguard the apostolic faith and unity of the Church, ordained ministers are called to:

- embody the Church's essential nature in the exercise of the ministries of word, sacraments and service;
- bring the apostolic tradition of the church into a new context, requiring a thoroughgoing task of interpretation of that received tradition in the setting in which the Church is placed;
- set forth God's true and living Word in their own life and teaching; and
- equip members of the Church for their ministries.

The ordained ministry of the Uniting Church consists of two offices: the ministry of the Word and the ministry of deacon. Both these ministries have a responsibility to safeguard the apostolic faith through

preaching the Gospel, administering the sacraments and exercising pastoral care. This threefold task mirrors the threefold nature of the call of the Christian life as expressed by the *Basis of Union* 'worship, witness and service' (para. 1). Each of these ordained ministries has a different focus. Ministers of the Word have a particular responsibility for safeguarding the unity of the body of Christ for 'reconciling and gathering'; and Deacons, for the church's participation in God's mission in and for the world for 'dispersing and reforming' (*Ordination and Ministry in The Uniting Church in Australia*, 1994, Part 3, para. 80).

In the Uniting Church, it is the Presbytery that has the particular responsibility for oversight of the ordination of ministers. The chairperson of the presbytery presides, and at least two ministers and two lay people must take part in the act of ordination. Only members of the presbytery, or associated members of other presbyteries, may take part in the laying on of hands. This provision demonstrates the seriousness of the role of oversight in maintaining and handing on the apostolic ministry of the Church. The participation of faithful church members among those who lay hands in ordination affirms the understanding that ministry is not only maintained and passed on by those already ordained, but by the community of the body of Christ.

Part of being in the new relationship that ordination establishes is being accountable to the Uniting Church in some specific ways. Ministers are under the discipline of a presbytery; they are not freelancers, and cannot perform official functions without the authorisation of presbytery, given in their induction.

Is ordination just a functional issue given that we need order and leadership in the Church? Or, in ordination, is a person somehow changed in themselves and given a new authority? This has been a perennial discussion. For the Uniting Church, it is instead being called by Christ, as discerned by the Church, into a new relationship of general responsibility within the Church, in order that all may be equipped for their particular ministries. It follows that an instrumental understanding of ministry is inadequate; 'doing the job' of a minister cannot be reduced to mere performance without reference to substantive spiritual relationships. Discernment of a call by God through the Church is essential to decisions concerning ordination.

3. Commissioning: recognising particular tasks.

Not all 'specified ministries' in the Uniting Church are ordained ministries. Lay specified ministries are 'commissioned ministries'. Individuals are commissioned for a specific task, a specific role, a specific project, for a specific time in a specific place. Elders are commissioned by the congregation for the work and witness of the congregation. Lay Preachers are commissioned by the Presbytery for the specific task of reflecting on God's Word for our lives from a lay perspective (i.e., from the perspective of one whose vocation is lived out beyond the gathered Church). They often preach in a number of different congregations. Pastors will be commissioned for specific appointments designated by the Presbytery for a specific role or project. They offer leadership that draws a particular group or particular individuals into responsive participation in the mission of God, the ministry of Christ.

Insofar as a commissioned pastor or a lay preacher may be given responsibilities in the preaching of the Word, in presiding at the sacraments and serving and seeking justice, they may be said to be participating to a degree in the changed relationship that ordination conveys. However, there are two critical differences: firstly, this person will usually be limited geographically and in time in the practice of ministry, by the terms of appointment; secondly, the Uniting Church does not claim that this person is in a new relationship with the whole Church catholic. The commissioning is into a limited ministry within the Uniting Church only.

4. Formation and discernment of ministries

Formation is the process of finding our place in the ministry of Christ which is the mission of God in and for the world. That process is a continuing one: a journey. Formation is a part of the journey of the Christian life begun in baptism into the life, death and resurrection of Christ and of Christ's continuing ministry.

Preparation for baptism, confirmation or another reaffirmation of Baptism is formation. The 2003 Assembly instituted the 'Becoming Disciples' process which recognises the need for such formation and encourages congregations to help people enter intentionally into it. 'Becoming Disciples' is a process for members (and potential members) to grow together in faith, discover their particular gifts among the wide diversity of gifts the Holy Spirit gives, and be encouraged to develop the form of their service or ministry most appropriate to their gifts.

Formation does not cease after Baptism. It continues in the ongoing Christian life of worship, witness and service.

Ordained ministry presumes a life-long and continual formation in the body of Christ. The Church needs ordained ministers who learn to love and understand the body of Christ and its ministry in the world over lifetimes. The Church must be satisfied that a candidate for ordination demonstrates the commitment and character that is required for such a lifelong call to this ministry with particular responsibilities.

The call of the Church to be an ordained minister is a call to represent the living tradition of the Church, the universal nature of the Church, the oneness of the Church, and the mission of the Church. This is not only about leadership, or authority given for the ordering of the Church, or courses taken, it is a process in which the person re-evaluates their life in terms of the call of Christ.

The Christian Church has always tested and prepared ministerial candidates, and evaluated them for character and spiritual maturity. In the Uniting Church, the process of becoming ordained is a time both of the Church's testing of a person's calling and gifts, and of the person testing if God is calling her/him to enter the diaconate or the ministry of the Word. This process is often referred to as the formation of ministers. It is a partnership between the candidate for ministry and the Church which seeks to enable the candidate to find her or his place in the ministry of the Church. In the Uniting Church, the process of becoming ordained consists of several stages:

- Selection: an applicant meets with committees and panels appointed by congregation, presbytery and synod;
- Education and formation as determined by the Ministerial Education Commission;
- The receiving of a call to a placement;
- Ordination by prayer and the laying on of hands;
- Taking up the ministry in a particular placement.

Further, continuing education for ministry (CEM) is required of persons in ordained ministries.

This process underscores the importance of ordination through a protracted period of testing and training. The Church does not take it for granted that a person will be ordained, and there is no 'right' to ordination.

5. Statements by the Assembly

Statement on Ordination (1982)

* Report on Ministry (1991)

* Ordination and Ministry (1994)

* Affirmations on Ordination (1997)

* Sacramental Protocols (1997)

* The Church and its Ministry (2004)

(* indicates statements contained in Bos, R. and Thompson, G., *Theology for Pilgrims: Selected Theological Documents of the Uniting Church in Australia*, Uniting Church Press, 2008)

Appendix 4

Uniting Church vows for ordination

The following vows are part of the liturgy for ordination from the National Assembly Worship website, November 2009 (and as amended by Assembly Standing Committee, July 2013)

Minister of Deacon

THE CHARGE

The chairperson delivers the Charge in these words:

N, in the name of Jesus Christ, the only Head of the Church, we are here to ordain you as a deacon by prayer and the laying on of hands.

As a deacon, you are called to receive the witness to Christ in the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and to proclaim from them the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

You will announce the good news of God in Christ to those beyond the community of faith, stand alongside those who suffer, and work for justice and peace in the world.

Taking Christ the Servant as your example, you are called to be a faithful pastor of God's people, equipping them for their ministry and mission, leading them in worship, witness and service, and working with them in building up the body of Christ. You are called to strive for peace and unity among all Christian people, especially among those whom you serve.

You are entrusted to preside at the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, instituted by our Lord as signs and seals of the gospel; you will celebrate these sacraments with the people of God.

You will receive the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as safeguarding and witnessing to the faith of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, and use them in worship and instruction.

Learning from the Confessional Documents of the Uniting Church in Australia, you will diligently teach Christ's people, reminding them of the centrality of the person and work of Jesus Christ and the grace which justifies them through faith.

You will affirm and commit yourself to the covenant made between the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and the Uniting Church and accept the obligation to serve both First and Second peoples.

Relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, you will be diligent in the study of the Bible, you will seek to live a holy and disciplined life and be faithful in prayer.

THE QUESTIONS

The ordinand stands. The chairperson says:

In this ordination,
the Uniting Church in Australia acts and speaks
within the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
God in Christ acts and speaks
through all that the Church does in obedience to God's will.
God gives you grace and authority
for this ministry.
Therefore, that we may know
that you desire to receive this ministry of Christ
through the gift of the Holy Spirit,
we ask you these questions:

Do you confess anew Jesus Christ as Lord?

I do.

Do you believe that you are truly called
by God and the Church
to the office and work of a deacon?

I do.

Do you embrace the faith and unity of the holy,
catholic and apostolic Church,
as set forth in the scriptures of the Old and New
Testaments,
expressed in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds
and described in the *Basis of Union*?

I do.

Do you affirm and commit yourself to the covenant
made between the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress and the Uniting Church and
accept the obligation to serve both First and Second
peoples?

I do.

In your life and work within the Uniting Church
will you be guided by its *Basis of Union*,
and will you submit yourself to the Church's
discipline?

With God's help, I will.

May the One
who has given you the will to do these things
give you the grace to perform them;
that the work which God has begun in you
may be brought to fulfilment.

The people say:

**Faithful is God,
who has called you and who will not fail you.**

Minister of the Word

THE CHARGE

The chairperson delivers the Charge in these words:

N, in the name of Jesus Christ, the only Head of the Church, we are here to ordain you as a minister of the Word by prayer and the laying on of hands.

As a minister of the Word, you are called to receive the witness to Christ in the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and to proclaim from them the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed. You are entrusted to preside at the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, instituted by our Lord as signs and seals of the gospel and his gift to the Church; you will celebrate these sacraments with the people of God.

Taking Christ the Good Shepherd as your example, you are called to lead God's people in worship, witness and service; to equip them for their ministry and mission; and to work with them in building up the body of Christ. You are called to strive for peace and unity among all Christian people, especially among those with whom you serve.

You will receive the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds as safeguarding and witnessing to the faith of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, and use them in worship and instruction.

Learning from the Confessional Documents of the Uniting Church in Australia, you will diligently teach Christ's people, reminding them of the centrality of the person and work of Jesus Christ and the grace which justifies them through faith.

You will announce the good news of God in Christ to those beyond the community of faith, stand alongside those who suffer, and work for justice and peace in the world.

You will affirm and commit yourself to the covenant made between the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and the Uniting Church and accept the obligation to serve both First and Second peoples.

Relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, you will be diligent in the study of the Bible, you will seek to live a holy and disciplined life and be faithful in prayer.

THE QUESTIONS

The ordinand stands. The chairperson says:

In this ordination,
the Uniting Church in Australia acts and speaks
within the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
God in Christ acts and speaks
through all that the Church does in obedience to
God's will.
God gives you grace and authority
for this ministry.

Therefore, that we may know
that you desire to receive this ministry of Christ
through the gift of the Holy Spirit,
we ask you these questions:

Do you confess anew Jesus Christ as Lord?

I do.

Do you believe that you are truly called
by God and the Church
to the office and work of a minister of the Word?

I do.

Do you embrace the faith and unity of the holy,
catholic and apostolic Church,
as set forth in the scriptures of the Old and New
Testaments,
expressed in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds
and described in the *Basis of Union*?

I do.

Do you affirm and commit yourself to the covenant
made between the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress and the Uniting Church and
accept the obligation to serve both First and Second
peoples?

I do.

In your life and work within the Uniting Church
will you be guided by its *Basis of Union*,
and will you submit yourself to the Church's
discipline?

With God's help, I will.

May the One
who has given you the will to do these things
give you the grace to perform them;
that the work which God has begun in you
may be brought to fulfilment.

The people say:

**Faithful is God,
who has called you and who will not fail you.**

Appendix 5

Assembly guidelines for the Period of Discernment

A gift for the whole church

“Recognising that discernment of call to ministry belongs to the life of all Christian communities, the Period of Discernment is a gift which provides opportunity for any member of the Uniting Church to explore a call to a particular form of ministry.”

At the heart of this process is the understanding that all who have been baptized are called into the ministry of Jesus Christ. The essence of the Period of Discernment is to discern where that ministry lies. It is not simply a process to be completed prior to entry into the ordained ministry.

That ministry might be:

- Within the local congregation, faith community or church agency (e.g. youth leader, elder, pastoral carer, lay chaplain, church councillor);
- Within your normal place of work or within the wider community;
- Within one of the specified ministries of the Uniting Church (e.g. Deacon, Minister of the Word, lay preacher or pastor).

Goals for the Period of Discernment

The Period of Discernment aims to:

- 1.1** develop the participant’s relationship with God and understanding of themselves as a disciple;
- 1.2** give the participant opportunity to understand God’s ministry and mission in the church and the world, the variety of ministries within that ministry, and the nature, function and responsibilities of these ministries;
- 1.3** recognize, affirm and build upon the skills, knowledge and experience that the participant brings to the Period of Discernment and ministry within the church;
- 1.4** enable both the church and the participant to discern confidently the person’s gifts and graces for ministry, and the type of ministry in which these may be expressed in the life of the church and the wider community.

Criteria for participation

- 2.1** Any member, member in association or adherent in good standing in a congregation or faith community of the Uniting Church in Australia may participate in the Period of Discernment.
- 2.2** Those persons considering application to one of the specified ministries of the church should note the membership requirements in Regulations.

Registration

- 3.1** Individuals register for participation in the Period of Discernment through their Minister or Church Council with the person or committee appointed by their Presbytery to co-ordinate the process.
- 3.2** Church Councils may affirm the registration but may not reject a registration.

3.3 Registration may occur at any time of the year.

3.4 The Presbytery, in consultation with the applicant, appoints a mentor to work with the applicant throughout the Period of Discernment.

3.5 In consultation with the mentor, the participant develops a discernment plan or learning agreement. This may also involve consultation with the Presbytery Coordinator and other relevant educational bodies. The discernment plan is lodged with the Presbytery.

3.6 The Period of Discernment begins with the appointment of a mentor.

3.7 The Period of Discernment will normally be one year in duration. However, variations to the duration of the Period of Discernment may be made at the discretion of the Presbytery in recognition of a participant's prior learning and/or ministry experience.

The mentor

A mentor should be a person who can guide the participant through this time of discernment by listening, affirming and supporting, and asking questions that will clarify the issues and explore options.

4.1 The mentor will normally be a person with no involvement in a future selection process, to avoid any potential conflict of interest in the future.

4.2 Mentors are required to have recognized training in the role. The synod and Congress Ministerial Education Boards are responsible for providing this training.

4.3 Ideally, a participant should have the same mentor throughout the Period of Discernment. However, if problems arise in the relationship between the participant and the mentor, the Presbytery Coordinator should be advised in order to help resolve the situation. This may include appointing another mentor.

4.4 In the event that a participant discerns a call to a specified ministry, it may be desirable that the same mentor accompany them through the process of candidature.

4.5 The specific responsibilities of the mentor are to:

- guide the participant in developing a discernment plan;
- meet regularly with the participant (a minimum of two hours per month);
- monitor the implementation of the discernment plan;
- help the participant reflect theologically and integrate learning and ministry experiences;
- guide the participant in the development of their portfolio*;
- keep the Presbytery informed about the progress of the participant throughout the Period of Discernment;
- notify the Presbytery that the participant is ready to present their portfolio, and engage with the participant and the Presbytery in the discernment of the ministry to which the participant feels called.

Discernment process

5.1 The development of the process for the Period of Discernment is the responsibility of the Synod and

Congress Ministerial Education Boards.

5.2 In addition to those outcomes listed under Goals, the discernment plan for the Period of Discernment seeks to achieve:

- opportunity to engage in biblical and/or theological study (a minimum of two semester subjects);
- opportunity to engage in particular areas of study or ministry and mission, such as ministry with young people, Church Planting, Eldership, Emerging Church etc (a minimum of two elective areas through course work, workshops or similar, each equivalent to 40 – 50 hours);
- ministry experience, together with appropriate reflection, in a local context. It is desirable that this experience be in areas of ministry beyond the participant's experience to date;
- ministry experience through exposure to a broad range of ministries (this is an alternative option);
- awareness of the church's polity, and its policy on ministry ethics, including prevention of sexual misconduct.

5.3 The level at which the subjects are taken should normally be appropriate to the participant's background and discernment goals. However, participants testing a call to a specified ministry should fulfil the study requirements at Diploma or Certificate level as a minimum.

5.4 Individual Synods may add other components to the process if these contribute to the desired outcomes for the Period of Discernment.

Recognition of prior learning and/or experience

6.1 The recognition of prior learning and experience is a significant aspect of the process. If a participant has recently (i.e. in the last five years) completed identifiable study components or ministry experience that meet the goals or outcomes of the Period of Discernment, such experience may be credited and the participant released from some requirements at the discretion of the presbytery;

6.2 Participants who are released from the study and/or ministry experience requirements will normally spend six months working with a mentor to reflect on and integrate their prior learning with their new experiences and knowledge;

6.3 Some participants come to the formal Period of Discernment having already undergone significant discernment through individual reflection but without the intentional and formal involvement of the Church. A period of discernment then provides the process by which the Church discerns, affirms and begins to test a call to ministry.

6.4 All participants will demonstrate through the presentation of a portfolio how the requirements of the Period of Discernment have been met.

Presentation of the portfolio *

7.1 After the Period of Discernment, the participant will present his or her portfolio to appropriate persons as determined by the Presbytery and the mentor. Together they will reflect on the ministry directions discerned;

7.2 The emphasis of the presentation will be on what the participant and mentor have discerned and on demonstrating whether the specific goals of the discernment plan have been achieved;

7.3 After the Period of Discernment the Presbytery will issue a Statement of Completion for the Period of Discernment. The purpose of such a statement is not to determine that the person has discerned a call to a particular ministry, but to indicate the areas of study and fieldwork completed.

Further discernment

8.1 After the completion of the Period of Discernment a participant who has discerned gifts for congregational or vocational ministries may, with the assistance of the mentor, explore ways of expressing that ministry within an appropriate context.

8.2 After the completion of the Period of Discernment a participant who has discerned a call to one of the specified ministries of the Uniting Church may, with the support of the Presbytery, apply to become a candidate for one of these ministries. (In this case, the portfolio and the Statement of Completion of the Period of Discernment may form part of the material the applicant brings to the selection process.)

Approved by the Assembly Standing Committee, November 2008

* The portfolio is a short account and analysis of what has been the experience and growth during the Period of Discernment. It draws on a much larger collection of material (e.g. diary notes, personal reflections, journal, sermon notes, reports to church councils, photographs) which is the participant's personal archive. Further explanation about the portfolio can be found in the manual *Your resource for the Period of Discernment*, available from Parkin-Wesley College, Adelaide.

Appendix 6

Key paragraphs from the *Basis of Union*

Panel members are encouraged to read the full text of the *Basis of Union* with a view to thinking about how it provides insight into the task of seeking to discern those who may be called to ordained ministry. The following are just a few of the paragraphs that specifically refer to ministry (both lay and ordained).

12. MEMBERS

The Uniting Church recognises and accepts as members all who are recognised as members of the uniting Churches at the time of union. Thereafter membership is open to all who are baptized into the Holy Catholic Church in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Uniting Church will seek ways in which the baptized may have confirmed to them the promises of God, and be led to deeper commitment

to the faith and service into which they have been baptized. To this end the Uniting Church commits itself to undertake, with other Christians, to explore and develop the relation of baptism to confirmation and to participation in the Holy Communion.

13. GIFTS AND MINISTRIES

The Uniting Church affirms that every member of the Church is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant. It acknowledges with thanksgiving that the one Spirit has endowed the members of Christ's Church with a diversity of gifts, and that there is no gift without its corresponding service: all ministries have a part in the ministry of Christ. The Uniting Church, at the time of union, will recognise and accept the ministries of those who have been called to any task or responsibility in the uniting Churches. The Uniting Church will thereafter provide for the exercise by men and women of the gifts God bestows upon them, and will order its life in response to God's call to enter more fully into mission.

14. MINISTERS, ELDERS, DEACONESSES AND LAY PREACHERS

The Uniting Church, from inception, will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to recognise among its members women and men called of God to preach the Gospel, to lead the people in worship, to care for the flock, to share in government and to serve those in need in the world.

To this end:

- a) The Uniting Church recognises and accepts as ministers of the Word all who have held such office in any of the uniting Churches, and who, being in good standing in one of those Churches at the time of union, adhere to the *Basis of Union*. This adherence and acceptance may take place at the time of union or at a later date. Since the Church lives by the power of the Word, it is assured that God, who has never failed to provide witness to that Word, will, through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, call and set apart members of the Church to be ministers of the Word. These will preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments and exercise pastoral care so that all may be equipped for their particular ministries, thus maintaining the apostolic witness to Christ in the Church. Such members will be called Ministers and their setting apart will be known as Ordination. The Presbytery will ordain by prayer and the laying on of hands in the presence of a worshipping congregation. In this act of ordination the Church praises the ascended Christ for conferring gifts upon men and women. It recognises Christ's call of the individual to be his minister; it prays for the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to equip the minister for that service. By the participation in the act of ordination of those already ordained, the Church bears witness to God's faithfulness and declares the hope by which it lives. In company with other Christians the Uniting Church will seek for a renewed understanding of the way in which the congregation participates in ordination and

of the significance of ordination in the life of the Church.

- b) The Uniting Church recognises and accepts as elders or leaders those who at the time of union hold the office of elder, deacon or leader appointed to exercise spiritual oversight, and who, being in good standing in any of the uniting Churches at the time of union, adhere to the *Basis of Union*. It will seek to recognise in the congregation those endowed by the Spirit with gifts fitting them for rule and oversight. Such members will be called Elders or Leaders.
- c) The Uniting Church recognises and accepts as deaconesses those who at the time of union are deaconesses in good standing in any of the uniting Churches and who adhere to the *Basis of Union*. It believes that the Holy Spirit will continue to call women to share in this way in the varied services and witness of the Church, and it will make provision for this. Such members will be called Deaconesses.

The Uniting Church recognises that at the time of union many seek a renewal of the diaconate in which women and men offer their time and talents, representatively and on behalf of God's people, in the service of humanity in the face of changing needs. The Uniting Church will so order its life that it remains open to the possibility that God may call men and women into such a renewed diaconate: in these circumstances it may decide to call them Deacons and Deaconesses, whether the service is within or beyond the life of the congregation.

- d) The Uniting Church recognises and accepts as lay preachers those who at the time of union are accredited lay preachers (local preachers) in any of the uniting Churches and who adhere to the *Basis of Union*. It will seek to recognise those endowed with the gift of the Spirit for this task, will provide for their training, and 'will gladly wait upon that fuller understanding of the obedience of Christians which should flow from their ministry. Such members will be called Lay Preachers.

In the above sub-paragraphs the phrase "adhere to the *Basis of Union*" is understood as willingness to live and work within the faith and unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church as that way is described in this Basis. Such adherence allows for difference of opinion in matters which do not enter into the substance of the faith.

The Uniting Church recognises that the type and duration of ministries to which women and men are called vary from time to time and place to place, and that in particular it comes into being in a period of reconsideration of traditional forms of the ministry, and of renewed participation of all the people of God in the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, the building up of the fellowship in mutual love, in commitment to Christ's mission, and in service of the world for which he died.

Appendix 7

Other relevant Uniting Church in Australia regulations

PERIOD OF DISCERNMENT

2.3.1

- a) Any member of the Church may engage in a period of discernment subject to and in accordance with the guidelines approved by the Assembly Standing Committee (on the advice of the Ministerial Education Commission). The purpose is to enable the member and the Church together to discern the nature of the ministry to which God may be calling the member.
- b) A member of the Church who is considering making application for candidature to either of the two ordained ministries shall engage in a period of discernment.

2.3.2 PROCESS FOR CANDIDATURE FOR A MINISTER QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED OF AN APPLICANT FOR CANDIDATURE

2.3.2.1

- a) An applicant for candidature as a Minister shall satisfy the Presbytery:
 - i) that the applicant is, and for the period of twelve months prior to making an application under Regulation 2.3.2.2 has been, a confirmed member of the Church;
 - ii) that the applicant is suitable in character, personality and spiritual maturity and has the capacity to exercise the responsibilities of the specific ministry for which application is made; and
 - iii) that the applicant has engaged satisfactorily in the period of discernment.
- b) The Presbytery may waive the 12 month requirement in (a)(i) in exceptional circumstances.
- c) An applicant for candidature as a Minister shall, in addition to the requirements of paragraph (a), satisfy the Presbytery:
 - i) that the applicant has satisfactorily completed the final years of secondary education at a level sufficient to secure entrance to a degree course in an Australian University; or
 - ii) that the applicant has educational qualifications acceptable to the Assembly as equivalent thereto; provided that any applicant who cannot so satisfy the Presbytery may be permitted to proceed with the application upon condition that prior to final determination of the application by the Synod selection panel under Regulation 2.3.2.4, an academic qualification referred to in sub-paragraphs (c)(i) and (c)(ii) is obtained or the applicant undertakes and satisfactorily completes a pre-candidature course of education which complies with the standards prescribed from time to time by the Ministerial Education Commission and for which course credit may, where appropriate, be given in the course of training for the specific ministry.

APPLICATION FOR CANDIDATURE FOR MINISTER

2.3.2.2

- a) Any person seeking to become a candidate shall make written application to the Presbytery through the Minister of the Congregation (or through the appropriate member of the ministerial team in the Congregation) in which the applicant holds membership and shall make available to the Presbytery such additional information and material as is prescribed under these Regulations or as may be required by the Presbytery or by the Ministerial Education Board, including information on the applicant's participation in the period of discernment.

- b) An application may be lodged at any time prior to the commencement of a course of study or during a course of study or subsequent to a course of study, provided that any candidate must fulfil or have fulfilled the pre-requisites for and the demands of the course of study as set out in these Regulations.
- c) Acceptance as a student of a theological college neither presupposes nor precludes subsequent acceptance as a candidate.
- d) Acceptance as a candidate does not preclude subsequent acceptance for service in one of the other specified ministries of the Church.
- e) Any former certificated candidate of the Church may apply to a Presbytery for readmission as a candidate, in which case Regulations 2.3.1 to 2.3.2.5 shall apply.

PRESBYTERY RESPONSIBILITIES IN SELECTION OF CANDIDATES FOR MINISTER 2.3.2.3

- a) As soon as possible following receipt of an application the Presbytery shall request a confidential report from the appropriate Minister and shall seek comment from the Church Council where the applicant's membership is held and other referees, and shall then consider the application in accordance with the Regulations.

The Presbytery or a designated committee of the Presbytery shall:

- i) receive the application together with the confidential report of the Minister and the comments of the Church Council;
 - ii) consider the references submitted by the nominated referees and by other persons as it sees fit;
 - iii) interview the applicant;
 - iv) conduct such other tests or call for such other information as it may require or as may be required by the selection panel; and
 - v) prepare a report and recommendation to the selection panel.
- b) In considering its report and recommendation under Regulation 2.3.2.3(a)(v) the Presbytery or Presbytery committee shall satisfy itself regarding the matters mentioned in Regulation 2.3.2.1, and have regard, among other things, to:
 - i) the nature of the services to be performed within the ministry for which application is made;
 - ii) the present qualifications and apparent potential of the applicant;
 - iii) the spiritual maturity and motivations of the applicant; and
 - iv) the applicant's personality and character.

A two-thirds majority of members present shall be required to commend the applicant to the Synod selection panel as suitable for candidature. Alternatively, the Presbytery may defer such commendation or may reject the application.

- c) Where the Presbytery resolves to commend the applicant to the selection panel, the Presbytery shall forward to the selection panel its report and resolutions together with other reports, references and information conveyed to it in accordance with Regulation 2.3.2.2 and 2.3.2.3.

3.7.4.3 MINISTERIAL EDUCATION BOARD

Responsibilities

3.7.4.3

- c) The responsibilities of the Ministerial Educational Board shall include the following: ...
 - (iii) either separately or in co-operation with the Synod or agency of the Church: ...
 - (3) appointing members of selection panels other than the Presbytery representatives and making facilities available for the proper and professional appraisal of applicants for the ministries of the Church; ...

Appendix 8

The Synod Selection Day - 1 Applicant

Example program

The selection day will run as follows. Further explanations of some segments are given below.

Venue: Uniting Church Centre, 60 Bayliss St, Auchenflower Qld.

If only 1 applicant Program and Timings

TIME	DUR.	PANEL MEMBERS	APPLICANTS AND PRESBYTERY SUPPORT PERSONS
09:00	5	Gathering, opening prayer	9:15 Applicant and Support person arrive, briefing by Secretariat member
09:05	45	Panel is constituted and preview the application	
09:20			
09:20	15	Worship and introductions	
09:40	10	Panel gathers with applicant for conversation about sharing/exploring their call	
09:50	15	Morning tea	
10:05	30	Preparation of Interview Teams	Continue morning tea, wait in ante-room
10:30	45	Interview round #1	
11:15	5	Reflect / assess / prepare	Rest / reflect with support person
11:20	45	Interview round #2	
12:15	30	Lunch	
12:45	45	Interview round #3	
1:30	5	Interviews conclude, people gather in chapel	
1:40	15	Continuation of worship, including Holy Communion. Sending out of applicant.	
2:00	15	Interview teams meet separately for assessment	Presbytery Support Person waits
2:15	45	Panel meets for assessment and completion of reports. Afternoon tea is provided.	Presbytery Support Persons are invited to sit in on deliberations about their applicant
3:00		Conclusion. Secretariat informs applicant and Presbytery Support Person by phone of decision.	



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

Uniting Church Centre

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