



**Uniting Church in Australia**  
**Ethical Guidelines for Members and**  
**Adherents of the Uniting Church in Australia.**  
**June 1999**

This document consists of two sections. Page one is a concise list of ethical principles for congregations. The remainder of the document is a more detailed reflection on these principles for study and discussion.

**Statement of Ethical Principles for congregations**  
**of the Uniting Church in Australia**

The Uniting Church seeks to be a Christian community which develops its life around worship, prayer, witness, biblical study, pastoral care, deep friendships and mutual accountability.

Membership of the Uniting Church in Australia is open to all who are baptised in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Membership is about a relationship with other members both individually and collectively. Members, as part of a congregation, promise to participate in God's mission to the world, witnessing to Christ in word and deed as their gifts equip them and as recognised by the Church. As members we are encouraged to exhibit the fruits of the spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self control (Galatians 5). Such participation is characterised by:

- commitment to God;
- participation in worship;
- faithful study of the Bible;
- ethical Christian conduct within the community;
- commitment to, and respect for, the polity of the Uniting Church;
- participation in, and respect for, the councils and agencies of the Uniting Church;
- sharing and communicating information from councils and agencies of the Church;
- willingness to use and share individual gifts and skills;
- accountable, honest and non-abusive relationships;
- confidentiality;
- right relationships<sup>1</sup>;
- sharing resources.

As a Christian community, if we speak of the power and wonder of faith in God without love, the community means nothing. Therefore a Christian community's faith and action shall be nurtured by love that never ends; that is faithful and kind; that does not insist on its own way; love which is not resentful but rejoices in the truth (1 Corinthians 13). It is this love which informs our belief that each member and adherent of the community has the right to:

- be listened to attentively and sensitively;
- have personal and sensitive information treated with confidentiality;
- a relationship with their Minister who fulfils the expectations of the Code of Ethics;
- receive ministry which responds to their needs and not the needs of the carer;
- participate in ministry and work which recognises the giftedness of each person, with access to sufficient training;
- participate in a safe ethical community where questions, fears, celebrations, vulnerability's or breaches of ethical behaviour may be named;
- informed referrals to other professionals or agencies where there are limitations to the community's or individual's skills.

<sup>1</sup> A Right Relationship recognises the personhood, power and value of each individual to that community. The Characteristics of a right relationship are listed in section 4(b) on page 8.

## Ethical Guidelines for our Church community. Guidelines, Study Guide and Discussion Starters.

These Ethical Guidelines are to be applied within the context of the Constitution and Regulations of the Uniting Church in Australia, recognising the values and teachings by which the Church lives.

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 *In Baptism we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, made members of the body of Christ, and called to his ministry in the world*  
(Service of Baptism, Uniting in Worship, 1998).
- 1.2 *The Uniting Church seeks to be a Christian community where members are led into a deeper commitment of faith and service to Jesus Christ in whom they were baptised* (Basis of Union, paragraph 12). *As part of this commitment it acknowledges that God has provided each person with gifts and a place for these gifts to be used within the body of Christ* (Basis of Union, paragraph 13). *The Uniting Church invites each person to participate in God's mission to the world, witnessing to Christ in word and deed.*
- 1.3 *The Christian Community develops its life around worship, prayer, witness, study, pastoral care, deep friendships and mutual accountability. For this reason it is a deeply intimate community.*
- 1.4 *In order to sustain the church as a place of Christian Community, each member or adherent has a responsibility to respect the boundaries of relationships within the community, and to exercise their power responsibly, in a way that reflects mutuality, grace and right relationships. Such relationships should be characterised by the love, care and compassion that was embodied in Jesus Christ.*
- 1.5 *As members and adherents of the Uniting Church we have responsibility to carry out our ministry, relationships and work in a caring and accountable manner.*



### Questions to reflect on:

- ❖ What are the expectations that you have of your congregation as a Christian Community?
- ❖ Reflect on how you participate in your local Church community. What do you value? What would you change? Are there attitudes or actions within this community that you wish to change?



### Discussion Starters for your community:

- ❖ Considering the qualities of Christian Community, reflect on your own congregation. How are these qualities expressed in your local experience?
- ❖ What situations can you give that are examples of this?
- ❖ What is the thing that you value most about being part of the Uniting Church? What is the thing that challenges you most about being a member?



### Bible Links:

You may like to use some of these passages to assist you in your discussion as a community, or in your personal reflection.

Romans 6: 1-14

1 Corinthians 12: 12-26

Acts 2: 37-47



### Ideas and Resources to assist discussion:

- ✓ Uniting in Worship – Service of Baptism
- ✓ Basis of Union of the UCA
- ✓ Commentaries on the Basis of Union (there are a number to choose from)
- ✓ Uniting Education, Belonging Kit, 1998.

### Case Study Reflection:

Reflect on your local Church community – How do you help new people who come to your community to understand how you are “church” in this place?

# Membership

## 2. Membership

- (a) *Membership of the Uniting Church in Australia is open to all who are baptised in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*
- (b) *Membership draws us into a local community of faith and into a relationship with all members and councils of the Uniting Church in Australia. These relationships require commitment, nurture, discipline and participation. They are nurtured in a community of faith where fellowship is sustained through prayer and confession; in baptism and the Lord's Supper; and in mutual sharing of the gospel and through service. (see Reg 3.1.1(b)(x)).*
- (c) *Members promise to participate in God's mission to the world, witnessing to Christ in word and deed as their gifts lead them and as recognised by the Church. As members we are encouraged to live by the fruit of the Spirit, exhibiting love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self control (Galatians 5). This Spirit is evident in our commitment to living as a Christian Community.*

### How do you become a member of the Uniting Church in Australia?



Talk with your local Minister or Elder. They will arrange a time to talk with you further about membership – this might happen as part of a small group talking about membership or confirmation and may include some study.

When you and the Minister/Elder agree, they will make a recommendation to the local Church Council that you be welcomed as a member of the Uniting Church.

In a service of worship after this recommendation has been approved, you will be invited to make a commitment to become part of the Uniting Church through either a service of confirmation or transfer of membership.



### Questions to reflect on:

- ❖ Are you a member of the Uniting Church in Australia?
- ❖ What values, beliefs or attitudes help you identify that you are a member of the UCA?
- ❖ How do you participate as a member of the Uniting Church?



### Discussion Starters for your community:

- ❖ Invite each member of the group to share what they understand membership in the Uniting Church means. Share about your expectations of members of the Church.



### Bible Links:

Read Galatians 5 - Where are these fruits of the spirit found within your local community?

### Case Study Reflection

Gill had been attending Pearson Uniting Church for six months. As a child she had attended an Anglican Church, but this is her first experience of "church" as an adult. Gill has decided that she wants to become a member of the congregation but is unclear of the expectations and time commitments that would bring. What would you tell her?



### Ideas and Resources to assist discussion:

- ✓ The Belonging Kit, Uniting Education, 1998.
- ✓ Service of Confirmation and Transfer of Membership.



### Questions to reflect on:

- ❖ What Councils of the Church have you experienced?
- ❖ How does your local Church Council communicate decisions?
- ❖ What are some of the decisions that your congregation has made recently?



### Discussion Starters for your community:

- ❖ Who attends Presbytery or Synod meetings from your congregation? Invite them to share their experience of these councils of the Church.
- ❖ What are the expectations that you have of Church decision-makers?

#### Information Box

##### Councils of the Uniting Church

The Uniting Church is governed by a series of inter-related councils. These include the congregation, one church council, presbytery, synod and Assembly. Within these councils there are different committees, agencies or groups who take responsibility for different functions of the Church's life.

More information about the councils of the Uniting Church can be found in the Basis of Union, UCA Regulations and the Manual for Meetings. You can also talk with your minister or elder.

## 3. Conduct within a Christian community

### 3.1 Formal Relationships

- (a) *Members and adherents will work within the polity of the Uniting Church as described in the Basis of Union, Constitution and Regulations, respecting the rights and responsibilities of those who share membership and leadership in the Uniting Church, both lay and ordained.*
- (b) *All members will recognise the ministry and giftedness of all persons within the community, both women and men, and the responsibility of the community to allow opportunities for the exercise of these gifts.*

### 3.2 Relationships with Church Councils

- (a) *Decisions and meetings take place in the context of supportive and open communities. We have a responsibility to share together in the decision making of the Church. (Manual for Meetings)*
- (b) *Each member and adherent has a responsibility to respect the guidance and decisions of the councils of the church.*
- (c) *Members are encouraged to participate fully in their local Church Councils, Presbytery and in the wider work of the church as their gifts are recognised by the Church.*



### Bible Links

You may like to use some of these passages to assist you in your discussion as a community, or in your personal reflection.

1 Corinthians 13  
Romans 13:1-7  
Ephesians 4 :1- 5:2

### Case Study Reflection

*These case studies are for use in group settings. Please ensure debriefing when completing these reflections. (Possible solutions can be found at the end of this document)*

1. Using the Consensus model outlined within the Manual for Meetings, discuss the proposal "That this congregation should sell all its property built prior to 1977 to spend on developing a soup kitchen". Remember to debrief your experience at the conclusion.
2. At a recent meeting of the Assembly, the Assembly passed a resolution that egg sandwiches may never be served at Uniting Church functions. Half of your congregation agrees with this proposal, the other half disagrees. How do you deal with this in your congregation?
3. As secretary to the Church Council you receive a discussion paper from a Synod Board on the use of confetti in marriage services. You do not agree with the church spending time discussing this issue. Do you recycle the discussion paper (throw it in the bin), acknowledge its receipt to the council but allow no discussion, or table the document and allow the council to decide how to respond?

## Conduct within the Christian Community

### 3.3 Teaching

(a) *The Uniting Church acknowledges that God has never left the Church without faithful and scholarly interpretations of Scripture, or without those who have reflected deeply upon, and acted trustingly in obedience to the Living Word. (Basis of Union; Paragraph 11). The church and its members seek to be ready to live by:*

- *proclaiming and responding to the gospel of Jesus Christ as witnessed to in the Scriptures;*
- *honouring the teachings and traditions of the church;*
- *adherence to the Basis of Union.*

(b) *The Uniting Church acknowledges that there are many ways to understand the Bible, and encourages its members to engage in study of the Bible in openness to the Holy Spirit and drawing on scholarly resources.*

### 3.4 Competence

*Members have a responsibility to participate actively in the life of the church, reflecting the gifts which God has bestowed on them and as they are encouraged by the Church. This responsibility includes participating in ongoing opportunities for learning which assist the ministry of the community. Members shall not misrepresent their giftedness or competence, or use their gifts or position in a manner that damages the community or members of the community.*



### Questions to reflect on:

- ❖ Where do you receive your teaching within the Church?
- ❖ What are some of the different kinds of ways of reading the Bible that you have heard?
- ❖ What Bible resources has your congregation used in the past two years?



### Discussion Starters for your community:

- ❖ Identify the range of approaches to the Bible within your local community. How do you respect the difference in your local community?
- ❖ How is spiritual and scholarly study encouraged in your congregation?
- ❖ How do you encourage competence in the leadership of your congregation?
- ❖ What encouragement do you give to members of the congregation to access learning opportunities?



### Bible Links:

2 Timothy 3:10 – 4:8  
Genesis 18:1-15  
Mark 4: 10-20



### Ideas and Resources to assist discussion:

- ✓ Staff from the Theological College in your Synod – they are often willing to visit.
- ✓ Assembly Task Group on Understanding the Bible.
- ✓ Coolamon College Study Material
- ✓ Theology and Discipleship (Agency of the Assembly)

### Case Study Reflection

1. How do we acknowledge the diversity of opinions within our community when we study the Bible?
2. How do we study the Bible in appropriate ways?
3. When Craig accepted his appointment to St Jude congregation he was told by the secretary of the Church Council that the congregation had three groups: "those who believed in a literal interpretation of the Bible; those who believed in a contextual understanding of the Bible; and those who were unsure what the fuss was about as long as we believe in Jesus." Craig was intentional whenever he preached to outline the diversity of ways in which a passage might be heard and that it is faith and actions which are vital to God, not our "understanding". After three months Craig called a special congregational meeting to discuss the issue of biblical interpretation and teaching within the congregation. How would you proceed with this meeting? What are the issues? How might they be heard and responded to?

### Information Box

Power is the effectiveness or ability or capacity to act or perform effectively. Power can be used creatively for the good of the community or it can be manipulated to abuse the community or an individual. We all have power, and must choose the way that we use that power.

### Discussion Starters for your community:



- ❖ Identify the positive and negative ways that power is used in your community. Discuss how this impacts on the nature of your community.
- ❖ How does appropriate use of power assist in clear communication within your congregation?
- ❖ Who are the vulnerable groups within your congregation? How do you relate to these groups?



### Bible Links

Luke 22:47 –23:25  
James 3:13-18  
Genesis 22:1-14

### 3.5 Use of power in communities

- (a) *Power exists in all relationships and people can be vulnerable in all relationships. Members and adherents shall not use this power in a manner which is abusive.*
- (b) *A Christian community shall be sensitive to the needs and vulnerability of the children and young people with whom they work.*
- (c) *A Christian community shall be sensitive to the needs of, and ways of relating to, people of different cultures within their congregation and local community.*
- (d) *Members and adherents have a responsibility to be accountable in the roles that they fulfil. Such accountability may occur through supervision, mentoring or spiritual direction depending on the circumstance. The purpose of these relationships is to maintain the boundaries within the community, and ensure the maintenance of right relationships within the community.*



### Questions to reflect on:

- ❖ What decisions are you able to make or share in making within the life of your congregation?
- ❖ Do you think of this as having power?
- ❖ Where have you experienced power both positively and negatively in your life?

### Case Study Reflection

1. Your congregation is discussing purchasing new Bibles for the church. The conversation has involved looking at funding for this project, and the version of the Bible that will be bought. An older woman in the congregation has said that she will donate 150 Bibles for use in the Church provided the congregation agrees to purchase the King James Version. How will you address issues of power within this situation?
2. At your congregational meeting a discussion was taking place about whether Eucharist (Communion) should be served in the pews or whether on alternate times it might be served at the front of the church. Mr Brown, an elderly and respected man in the congregation, was a supporter of pew sitting however he spoke to the meeting about the need to listen to the changing needs of the congregation and the need to look at new ways of being church. He suggested a trial of the suggestion for six months and for a further conversation after this time. The meeting agreed. How is this a creative and effective way of using power?
3. Your congregation is about to call a new minister. As the Joint Nominating Committee however you cannot decide between two candidates. The committee is split. The Chairperson of the elders says she can only live with one of the applicants. While she is only one vote she tithes to the congregation over a third of its annual income. How does the committee name these issues of power and enable consensus to be reached?

## Conduct within a Christian Community

### 3.6 Confidentiality and talking with each other

- (a) Confidentiality is not about secrecy, rather it is about not sharing information that has been given to you in confidence. It is an assurance that written and spoken information is protected from being shared with **unauthorised** persons, or for a purpose other than that for which it was collected. Confidentiality is an important principle to be upheld within a Christian community. A right relationship will respect the confidentiality of the relationship.
- (b) As a community of faith we have a responsibility to share information appropriately. We particularly need to ensure that all members of the community have access to information that keeps them appropriately informed of the life and witness of that community.
- (c) Gossip does not assist the development of safe Christian community. Care should be taken in our conversations and relationships that gossip is not encouraged.
- (d) Our communication is enhanced when we listen to each other with honesty and respect, and where we are clear about our expectations. (Manual for meetings)



#### Bible Links

John 4:1-42  
Matthew 5: 1-12  
Micah 6: 6-8  
1 Thessalonians 5: 12-28



#### Questions to reflect on:

- ❖ How do you know when to share information and when to keep it confidential?
- ❖ Have you ever had your confidence broken? How did you feel? How did you restore the relationship?



#### Discussion Starters for your community:

- ❖ How is information shared in your congregation? How do you ensure that people are aware of the work of the community/congregation, and informed about decisions?
- ❖ Identify where confidentiality is expected in your congregation. Reflect on your own experience, when do you expect confidentiality?



#### Ideas and Resources to assist discussion

- ✓ Manual for Meetings
- ✓ Conflict Resolution Network
- ✓ Uniting Education
- ✓ Why not invite a local lawyer or social worker to talk with you about confidentiality

#### Information Box

Confidentiality is not about keeping all things secret. Sometimes we keep information from people because it enables us to maintain our power. It is important that within the Church community we ensure that information is shared that allows all members to participate in the life of the Church, and to access other resources and information. This is particularly important within the councils of the Church.

#### Case Study Reflection

1. The pastoral care task group of the local church council meets each month to reflect on the pastoral care that has been undertaken in the previous four weeks. One of the elders has raised the issue of confidentiality. How do the elders decide what to share with the other members of the council and when to share it?
2. You have recently visited a member of the congregation who shared with you a difficult and painful experience; you are unclear who you should tell. You go to tell the minister by saying "I have a friend". Before you can finish the sentence the Minister says "Did you ask your friend if there was anyone that they wanted their story shared with"? What do you do?
3. "You are the coordinator of the Kids Club. At last week's congregational meeting when the budget was presented you asked for an allocation to be made in the congregational budget for children's ministry and were told that all the money has already been allocated for this year." What are the issues within this scenario for the sharing of information with members of the congregation and for learning about the decision making process?

## Information Box:

A particular relationship refers to a close personal relationships between a minister/pastoral carer and another person. Particular relationships are only possible where there is no pastoral relationship with the other person. (Interim Code of Ethics 1998).



## Questions to reflect on:

- ❖ Think about relationships that you value. What are the factors that mean you value these?
- ❖ What steps do you take to be clear about the expectations you have of relationships that you are in?
- ❖ How do you maintain boundaries in relationships which are personal or professional?

## Discussion Starters for your community:



- ❖ Think about the diversity of relationships within your community. How are boundaries maintained within these relationships?
- ❖ How are the boundaries of the pastoral relationship maintained within your community?
- ❖ How do you support people who are entering particular relationships within your community?



## Bible Links:

Romans 12  
Ephesians 4: 1-16  
Song of Solomon 2:8-17



## Ideas and Resources to assist discussion:

Material in *Uniting Sexuality and Faith*, 1997 includes a lot of material for discussion about Christian relationships.

## 4. Relationships

- (a) *As an expression of our faithfulness in God, there is a commitment for the friendships within a Christian community to be based on an ethic of right relationship. This recognises the personhood, power and value of each individual in that community. Right relationships are essential in building a faith community, where friendships are encouraged and nurtured within the life of the community.*
- (b) *Christian community involves a variety of relationships, including some intimate or close personal relationships. Right relationships within Christian community are characterised by:*
  - \* *telling the truth*
  - \* *honesty, reflecting a commitment to justice and truth*
  - \* *trust, reflecting commitment to the relationship*
  - \* *faithfulness to the relationship*
  - \* *equality and mutuality*
  - \* *commitment to risking being vulnerable*
  - \* *the presence of both freedom from and responsibility to the relationship*
  - \* *willingness to set limits, and have self control (clear and negotiated boundaries within the relationship)*
  - \* *commitment to clear and open communication*
- (c) *As members of the Uniting Church we are invited to express our relationships in a manner that expresses:*
  - \* *commitment to God;*
  - \* *commitment to the call of the Church to be a faithful community;*
  - \* *the respectful nature of the relationship; and ensures:*
  - \* *respect for others;*
  - \* *the non-abusive use of power;*
  - \* *that clear boundaries are recognised and observed.*
- (d) *All members of the community have a responsibility to ensure that the way their relationships develop within the community is consistent with the life, purpose and needs of that community.*
- (e) *Pastoral care is an integral part of community life. As such those providing pastoral care should not exploit the integrity and trust of relationships within the community.*
- (f) *"A Relationship of Responsibility is a relationship of a member/adherent with another individual in any circumstance where the member/adherent is in a designated position of leadership or responsibility with associated or perceived power in relation to that person" (Policies for the Prevention of sexual misconduct).*
- (g) *Particular intimate relationships are only appropriate when the member or adherent is not pastorally or professionally responsible for the other person.*

## Case Study Reflection

1. As the local church council, the Minister comes to you to say that she is exploring an intimate relationship with a member of the congregation. What questions would you ask? How would you respond practically and pastorally?
2. A number of young people at your congregation are beginning intimate relationships. What supports and material might you provide as a community to support them in this new life stage?

### 5. Gifts and Fees

- (a) *Sharing is an important part of community life. There is a responsibility for the community to ensure that the giving and receiving of gifts disadvantages no member of the community.*
- (b) *Members have a responsibility to participate in the mission of the church through the sharing of gifts and tithing. Giving is not about power but about our corporate responsibility to the life of the Church*



**Bible links:**  
Matthew 13  
Luke 19:11-27



### Questions for reflection

- ❖ How do you decide how much money to tithe to the work of the Church?
- ❖ How do you respond to receiving generous or unexpected gifts? What informs this?



### Discussion Starters for your community

- ❖ How does your congregation discuss/or approach planned giving?
- ❖ What fees are associated with services provided by your local congregation?

### Case Study Discussion

1. Your congregation is in the process of electing members to the local Church Council. One of the current elders has suggested that only those who have committed to planned giving should be nominated for election. How do you respond to this issue?
2. One of the older members of your congregation approaches you to talk about making a bequest to the Uniting Church in their will. They want to discuss whether they should identify a particular issue, and how to go about that. What steps would you take to assist them?



### Questions to reflect on:

- ❖ Have you ever been encouraged to break the law? Would you ever consciously do this?
- ❖ Would you ever support civil disobedience in your local community?



### Discussion Starters for your community

- ❖ How would your congregation respond to a member who is involved in legal action? How would you support this person?
- ❖ How would your congregation decide whether to be involved in civil disobedience to make a point about a justice issue? eg. Participation in an illegal demonstration.

### 6. Legal Issues

*It is unethical for members and adherents deliberately break, or encourage another to break, the civil or criminal law, including industrial law. The only exception would be in incidences of political resistance or civil disobedience. It is unethical to break or bend the law for "the good of the church".*



**Bible links**  
Luke 20:20-26  
Exodus 20

### Case Study Reflection

Your congregation has agreed to employ a lay pastoral assistant two mornings a week. The Synod has advised the award wage that should be paid. A debate has arisen within the congregation about the cost and whether it would be appropriate to pay below award wage. How do you resolve this issue? What resources might you access? What are the legal ramifications of this? What are some of the ethical and pastoral issues here?

## Expectations

### 7. *Expectation of those who are part of the Uniting Church community.*

*As a Christian community, if we speak of the power and wonder of faith in God without love, the community means nothing. Therefore a Christian community's faith and action shall be nurtured by love that never ends, that is faithful and kind; that does not insist on its own way; love which is not resentful but rejoices in the truth (1 Corinthians 13). It is this love which informs our belief that each member and adherent of the community has the right to:*

- *be listened to attentively and sensitively.*
- *have personal and sensitive information treated with confidentiality,*
- *have a pastoral or professional relationship, which will not be oriented to the personal, sexual, political or religious interests of the carer.*
- *participate in ministry and work which recognises the giftedness of each person, with access to sufficient training.*
- *participate in a safe community, where questions, fear, celebrations, vulnerability or breaches of ethical behaviour may be named.*
- *informed referrals to other professionals or agencies where there are limitations to the community's or individual's skills.*



#### **Idea!**

Your congregation may like to have a covenant service where you commit to being a safe community to explore faith in Jesus Christ.

## Breach of Ethical Guidelines



### Questions to reflect on:

- ❖ How would you name the expectations that you have of your Church community?
- ❖ Where have you experienced the love expressed in 1 Corinthians 13?



### Discussion Starters for your community

- ❖ As a congregation, review the list of rights. How are these expressed within your community?
- ❖ What are the trade marks or components of a "safe" community - that is a community that is free from abuse; where people can ask questions and explore what it means to have faith in Jesus Christ?
- ❖ How are issues raised within your congregation?



#### **Bible links**

1 Corinthians 13  
Isaiah 11:1-5  
Romans 8

#### **Case Study Reflection:**

A congregation holds a meeting to establish a mission statement for the congregation within the new Church structures. How might this mission statement reflect the rights and needs of members of the community?



### Questions to reflect on:

- ❖ How do you respond when a community or individual acts in a way that is damaging to the community?



### Discussion Starters for your community

- ❖ As a congregation, how would you respond to a breach of ethics within your congregation?
- ❖ How do we hold each other to account for our actions within a Christian community?

#### **Case Study Reflection**

1. An elder within the congregation is advising others to stop their tithing until the UCA ceases the ordination of women. How do you respond?
2. An allegation of sexual harassment has been made against a Sunday school teacher. What steps do you take?

### 8. Breach of Ethical Guidelines

*A Breach of the Ethical Guidelines refers to any violation of the requirements or principles of these guidelines.*

*The Regulations of the Uniting Church (Regulation 7.2.1-7.2.6) provide for the discipline of the members of the Church. The Church Council is the body responsible for holding members accountable for their conduct within the community.*



#### **Bible Links:**

Amos 5:18-24  
Ephesians 4:1-6  
John 17:15-23

## **Suggested possible outcomes of Case Study Reflections**

**Below are some possible outcomes for the scenarios used throughout this document. They are not definitive and you may be able to think of many other ways of responding. These are provided as a guide only for those using this document.**

### **Page 2**

You might like to invite different people to talk about how they have experienced being a member of the church community. What is valued? How does this help us in the way that we welcome others?

The Church Life Survey also provides some useful information about expectations of “newcomers” to the Church community.

### **Page 3**

This could involve conversations about your own or others experiences of membership. Reading through the Basis of Union or other resources which talk about the obligations of membership.

### **Page 4**

#### ***Scenario 1***

You may find it helpful to work through a process of learning about the principles of consensus before you endeavour this. Why do we use consensus? How does it help us in our decision making? Many synods have resources available to help people in using or learning about the consensus process.

#### ***Scenario 2***

The purpose of this statement is to encourage conversation about how we deal with conflict and conversation within our local community. Spend time reflecting on how you as a church or community deal with conflict or differing opinions amongst the membership.

#### ***Scenario 3***

The purpose of this scenario is to talk about our expectations in sharing information. It is often tempting to avoid an issue, or decide that something is not important, when others may find it useful. Often the church runs of information overload. Talk about how you can deal with this effectively, without limiting access to information for others.

### **Page 5**

#### ***Scenario 1 and 2***

The purpose of these questions is to encourage us to think about the diversity, which has always existed within our church community and the way that we have dealt with this. From the time of Christ, members of the Church have interpreted or understood faith differently. Encourage conversation about this.

#### ***Scenario 3***

Think about a process that could be used to encourage open conversation. Setting ground rules. Being clear about the purpose of the conversation. Making sure that you have a process for the meeting and the process is clear to others. Having a facilitator. Staying with the topic at hand and not other issues. You will be able to think of many more as well.

### **Page 6**

#### ***Scenario 1***

We often use our power to influence the way that decisions are made – this is not a process of changing this but talking about ways of identifying when such power is inhibiting the decision making of a congregation and finding ways to move forward. There are usually many solutions to an issue – don’t be frightened to call a power bluff if you can find an alternative way forward.

#### ***Scenario 2***

Power is also an important way of getting things done. Creative use of power enables a process to move forward; offers alternatives; builds up others; encourages conversations; stays with the process which has been set.

## **Page 6 continued**

### ***Scenario 3***

Money is often used within the church to maintain power. One of the keys to this situation is about naming the purpose, power and roles which exist within a congregation.

## **Page 7**

### ***Scenario 1 and 2***

Issues about confidentiality relate to:

who needs to know the information; for what purpose is it being told; for what purpose did you receive it; do you know its validity; have you sought permission to share it; can you ask the question without providing all the information; are there other ways to deal with this situation.

The critical issue is to be aware and do the best as you are able to maintain the integrity of the information and yourself. The other critical issue is that we have a responsibility to protect the privacy of those people we care for.

### ***Scenario 3***

Again this is about sharing information appropriately. This is about how we learn to access the structures of the church and who helps? It is about ensuring that all members of the congregation are aware of the decision making process. Maybe you have strategies within your congregation for addressing this.

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### ***Scenario 1***

See Interim Code of Ethics for Ministers

Ask questions about whether both parties are clear that this is no longer a pastoral relationship.

Ensure that pastoral care is available for the Minister, the other person and their family.

Prepare a strategy for address issues that may arise.

Talk with the Presbytery Minister, or Chairperson of the Pastoral Relations Committee.

### ***Scenario 2***

Provide a support group.

Provide education material.

Take this into consideration when planning social events.

Support those in the same age group who are not in relationships.

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Money is always an issue but we also have a commitment both legally and ethically to those we employ. Award wages are based on what is believed to be a fair and just payment for that service and gift. When we choose to act differently, not only are we legally irresponsible, we do not value those we employ and the service that they provide. Most employees already work beyond what is required, by paying less we come close to abusing the relationship.

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### ***Scenario 1***

Initially this is a matter for the Elders to respond to under Regulation 7.2.

Where this is difficult they may seek the advice and support of the Presbytery through the Presbytery Chairperson. In addition there will be a need to address the pastoral issue which might arise as a result of such an incident.

### ***Scenario 2***

The UCA Policies for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct includes a process for dealing with such a complaint. People in your presbytery have been trained to assist you with this. Contact the Presbytery Chairperson as soon as this comes to your notice.

Take the time to find out about the disciplinary processes of the Uniting Church – there are many people who can provide information about the above documents. Talk with your Presbytery or Synod for more information.