



Uniting Church in Australia

PRESBYTERY OF TASMANIA

Presbytery policy on visiting preachers, speakers and worship leaders

Based on the Policy and Guidelines of the UCA Presbytery of The Downs, Queensland, dated 3/10/2017.

1. Purpose and overview

Policy and Guidelines for congregations without a Minister in placement for the engagement of visiting preachers and speakers who are not accredited Uniting Church preachers.¹

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Uniting Church congregations and faith communities within the Presbytery of Tasmania, and to all activities and programs under the auspices of the Presbytery.

3. Policy statement

The Uniting Church in Australia, Presbytery of Tasmania (the Presbytery) is committed to assisting congregations and faith communities to thrive, and to utilise their resource for God's mission.

The Presbytery is also committed to keeping children safe, and providing environments that are safe for all.

POLICY STATEMENT: Where a congregation is not served by a Minister who can oversee the quality and appropriateness of visiting preachers or speakers, the Presbytery wishes to support Church Councils, Elders, lay ministry teams and faith community leaders by providing guidelines by which they may engage and guide visiting preachers or speakers.

The Constitution and Regulations of the Uniting Church in Australia (2018 edition) include:

- a. the exercise by the Minister in placement of oversight of "... other persons to preside at worship and/or preach within the pastoral charge in which the Minister is in placement." (Reg 2.2.1(a)(iii)), and
- b. the responsibility of the Church Council in "assisting the Minister(s) in the conduct of worship and in the administration of the sacraments" (3.1.2(b)(iv)) and "determining the time and place of services of public worship" (3.1.2(b)(v)).

¹ For the purpose of this policy "accredited Uniting Church preachers and speakers" includes UCA Ministers, Pastors and commissioned Lay Preachers who are in good standing with the Uniting Church Presbytery of Tasmania.

In the Presbytery of Tasmania, oversight of congregations that do not have a Minister in placement is the responsibility of the Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC). In the first instance, any enquiries concerning the approval of a person or persons suitable to lead worship, preach or speak should be directed to the PRC which will approve or seek further information if required.

4. Principles

- a. Visiting preachers and speakers need to be aware of their obligations to respect the core values and beliefs of the Uniting Church as described in the *Basis of Union* in order to preach or speak in a Uniting Church setting, or when representing the Uniting Church. The Uniting Church's *Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice* and the *Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders* provide a basis for discussion concerning the accountabilities of those who speak, teach and preach in the Uniting Church.
- b. Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice section 3.3 Teaching:
Ministers have a responsibility to represent accurately the teachings of the Scriptures and of the Church. When teaching, preaching or leading worship, Ministers have an obligation to present the gospel of Jesus Christ, guided by the witness to Christ in the Scripture, to take seriously the tradition of faith and worship of the church catholic; and to share that faith in the language and forms of the particular worshipping community and to address its issues.
In particular, Ministers shall:
 - (a) live out the vision of the *Basis of Union*;
 - (b) faithfully represent the meanings of biblical passages;
 - (c) accurately represent the degree to which experts in a discipline support their views;
 - (d) accurately represent opposing views;
 - (e) uphold the theological and liturgical tradition of the Church;
 - (f) be guided by the decisions of the Assembly;
 - (g) be open to challenge and correction from colleagues.
- c. Visiting preachers and speakers are entitled to promote their organisation, mission or chaplaincy but not within the context of preaching a sermon ('proclamation of the Word', see *Uniting in Worship 2* and *Ordered Liberty in Worship for UiW2*). A sermon includes reflection on biblical passages and shares good news for today, which could be communicated by the visiting speaker or another (local) person.
- d. Visiting preachers and speakers must not proselytise for their denomination or seek to influence members to leave the Uniting Church.
- e. Visiting preachers and speakers who attend on behalf of an organisation must show the credentials of their sponsoring body which recognise the preacher or speaker is qualified to act and speak on their behalf, and are in good standing with that organisation.
- f. Congregations who invite a visiting preacher or speaker from another denomination are asked as a matter of course to have the person sign a *Statement of Agreement* to work within the ethos of the Uniting Church. For a minister of the Uniting Church from another Synod, or a Christian minister from another denomination, the PRC Chairperson will confirm if the minister is in good standing through the Uniting Church Synod office.
- g. Completed *Statements of Agreement* will be kept by the Church Council, and will be renewed every two years if the preacher or speaker is invited regularly. A *Statement of Agreement* is included in these Guidelines (below).
- h. Records of attendances of visiting preachers and speakers shall be recorded in the minutes of Church Council meetings.

5. Guidelines

a. Agreement between preacher/speaker and Church Council:

Visiting preachers and speakers are required to sign an agreement to work within the core values and beliefs of the UCA as described in the Basis of Union and the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice. They agree not proselytise for the purposes of their own denomination or present their own views on topics contrary to the teaching of the Uniting Church in Australia.

b. WWVP Registration:

Visiting preachers and speakers should be advised that it is the policy of this Presbytery and the Synod, and required by law, to obtain and hold a current Working With Vulnerable People registration (or the equivalent from their jurisdiction), and to adhere to the *Keeping Children Safe* policies of the Synod (see <https://ucavictas.org.au/keepingchildrensafe/>).

c. Preaching Responsibilities:

The visiting preacher or speaker is responsible for their address, and may be asked to lead other elements of the service, or to organise the whole service of worship. Where possible, members of the host congregation should participate by leading elements of the service of worship.

d. Sacraments:

Only presiders authorised by the Presbytery are permitted to preside at the Sacraments.

e. Costs of Visiting Preachers:

Travel cost reimbursement is at the relevant *Ad hoc travelling allowance* set by the Synod, based on whether the preacher is not in business or employment (see *Summary of Ministry Provisions and Charges*, Section 2, <https://victas.uca.org.au/resources/terms-of-placement-committee/>).

f. Resolution of any Concerns

If any concerns are raised at or by the speaker or preacher's involvement in worship and/or preaching, these should be addressed with the person in the first instance by the local leadership of the congregation. If the matter cannot be resolved, the congregation should refer this to the Presbytery's Pastoral Relations Committee.

g. Understanding the Ethos of the Uniting Church

Information about the ethos of the Uniting Church should be given to visiting preachers and speakers prior to signing of the *Statement of Agreement*. A summary document "About the Uniting Church in Australia" is included below.

6. Resources:

The following resources are available either in print version or digital means:

- a. [The Basis of Union \(1992\)](#)
- b. [Code of Ethics for Ministry Practice \(2012\)](#)
- c. [Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders \(2016\)](#)
- d. [Statement to the Nation \(1977\)](#)
- e. [Basis of Union, Constitution and Regulations \(2019\)](#)
- f. Summary document: "About the Uniting Church in Australia" (see below)

7. Document control

Review cycle: This document will be subject to formal review every 2 years, after an initial review following the first year.

Next review date: March 2022, then March 2024.

Policy Manager: The Chairperson of the Pastoral Relations Committee is responsible for the management and maintenance of this document.

Approver: Pastoral Relations Committee

Document management: Any minor changes made between review periods should be reflected in the following table, however, only changes of a material nature will require formal review and approval by the approver between formal review periods.

Version	Date	Updated by	Summary of changes	Approval date
1.1	February 2021	PM-Pastoral Care / SLM	Initial version approved by Pastoral Relations Committee	2/2/2021
1.2	September 2021	PRC	Updated version approved by Pastoral Relations Committee	7/9/2021



**Statement of Agreement
for visiting preachers and speakers
in the Uniting Church Presbytery of Tasmania**

Name of Uniting Church congregation	
Contact person for congregation	
Contact details for visiting preacher or speaker	

Visiting preacher / speaker:

Name of visiting preacher or speaker	
WWVP registration number	
WWVP expiry date	

Agreement by visiting preacher / speaker

I have been invited by the congregation to participate in worship services as a visiting preacher or speaker, and have been provided with the relevant policy, principles and guidelines.

I agree to abide by the ethos of the Uniting Church as described in the Basis of Union, to adhere to the *Keeping Children Safe* policies of the Synod, and to work within the relevant sections of the Uniting Church's *Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice* and the *Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders*.

I will not proselytise for the purposes of my own denomination/organisation or seek to proselytise my own views should they be contrary to UCA core values, beliefs and teaching.

Signatures:

Visiting preacher or speaker: name & date	
Leader on behalf of Congregation: name & date	

The congregation shall keep a record of the signed Statement of Agreement and dates of these engagements shall be recorded in the Church Council minutes.

Statements of Agreement shall be renewed every two (2) years.

About the Uniting Church in Australia

Adapted by the Presbytery of The Downs, Queensland, from the UCA Assembly page "[About the Uniting Church in Australia](#)"

The Uniting Church came into being on 22 June 1977, after three denominations – the Congregational Union in Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia, and the Presbyterian Church of Australia – joined together.

Even though our congregations can be vastly different, each is a community in which people seek to follow Jesus, learn about God, share their faith, care for each other, serve the local community and seek to live faithfully and with real joy.

OUR BELIEFS

The Uniting Church's beliefs are drawn from the Bible and from the Apostles' and Nicene creeds. The Church also heeds the Reformation Witness in the Scots Confession of Faith (1647), the Savoy Declaration (1658), and the preaching of John Wesley in his Forty Four Sermons (1793). It affirms the place of ongoing theological, literary, historical and scientific study. The UCA's [Basis of Union](#) brings together aspects of these writings and traditions and sets out the church's way of living and being.

The Uniting Church confidently believes that through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God brings us into right relationship with God, whereby in faith we can:

- live in a close, loving, personal, dynamic relationship with the living God;
- participate in the worshipping, caring and serving community of Christians;
- receive God's gifts so that life can be what God means it to be - loving, purposeful, joyful, eternal; and
- tell others of this good news and live it out in acts of compassion, service and justice in the community.

Ecumenism remains a vital aspect in all of the Church's life and work - in local congregations, national commitments to work together with other churches, and relationships and partnerships with churches of various denominations in Asia and the Pacific.

OUR CALLING

As a people journeying together we affirm our calling under God:

- to preach Christ the risen crucified one and confess him as Lord;
- to bear witness to the unity of faith and life in Christ, rising above cultural, economic, national and racial boundaries;
- to engage in fearless prophetic ministry in relation to social evils which deny God's active will for justice and peace;
- to act with God alongside the oppressed, the hurt and the poor;
- to accept responsibility for wise use and conservation of finite resources of this earth for the benefit of all;
- to recognise, treasure and use the gifts of the Spirit given to all God's people for ministering; and
- to live a creative, adventurous life of faith, characterised by openness, flexibility, hope and joy.²

OUR FAITH IN ACTION

The Uniting Church's commitment to love of God and neighbour has sometimes drawn it into controversial situations. It has long taken a role in the political arena, encouraging moral, social and ethical integrity. The Uniting Church has been at the forefront of Aboriginal rights issues including the Native Title debate and reconciliation. It has taken a stand on environmental issues and supports the equality and dignity of marginalised people such as ethnic minorities, disabled people and homosexual people. It is a multicultural church, striving to treat people on an equal basis, and seeking to give a voice to the poor, outcast and needy.

However only some of the Uniting Church's discipling is viewed in public. Much of its role is to stand alongside the individual, inside and outside the church. Its congregations nurture spiritual, social and educational growth. Lay people are encouraged in leadership roles, including preaching of the Word and leading of congregational worship.

² Based on the [Statement to the Nation 1977](#) made by the inaugural Assembly.

OUR JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Our social justice advocacy work and community welfare services express our belief that God is committed to life now. It is our response to the Bible's call to care for and protect the marginalised and vulnerable. Issues addressed include the environment, the rights and dignity of asylum seekers, the treatment and care of prisoners, inadequate gambling legislation, religious intolerance, multi- and cross-cultural issues, fair employment practices and much more.

The UCA is also the largest non-government provider of community services in Australia. We achieve this through our community services arm, UnitingCare. This is an umbrella of more than 400 agencies, institutions, and parish missions throughout Australia. Areas of service include aged care, children, youth and family, disability, employment, emergency relief, drug and alcohol, youth homelessness and suicide.

A key component of our justice work is the UCA's efforts to bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians together and to support the Indigenous community generally. Reconciliation, land rights and Indigenous leadership training are just some of the activities in which we are engaged.

We do this primarily through the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). Established in 1985 as the Indigenous arm of the UCA, the UAICC is dedicated to seeking the spiritual, physical, social, mental and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous Australians.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS - UNITINGWORLD

With the understanding that God loves all people equally and works in and through all God's people, the Uniting Church's approach to world mission centres on partnerships that are mutually transforming. Our International Partnerships agency is called UnitingWorld, connecting people and church communities to partner in God's mission. UnitingWorld's vision is to see transformed communities where people honour God, experiencing hope and well being as they live free of poverty and injustice.

UnitingWorld works with partner churches in Australia and throughout the Pacific, Asia and Africa. Relief and Development projects include health, education, livelihood development and partnering women for change.

In the spirit of uniting we:

- are committed to dialogue and cooperation with other churches and to participation in state and national ecumenical bodies and international bodies such as the World Council of Churches;
- are willing to explore the implications of being in a community with people of many faiths and what this means for the way we express and share our faith;
- accept women and men as equals in ministry, including ordained ministries, and encourage women in leadership;
- embrace diversity and are open to discuss controversial issues and what it means to be inclusive of all people and to respect differences; and
- involve all people in oversight and governance, seeking to make decisions together rather than being hierarchical.
- The Uniting Church constantly seeks to affirm its biblical and theological understanding that "Christians in Australia are called to bear witness to a unity of faith and life in Christ which transcends cultural and economic, national and racial boundaries" (Basis of Union, para. 2).
- While our congregations can be vastly different, each aims to embrace all people and unite them with each other and with God. This is expressed in part in our having an open table for Holy Communion to which all baptised people are invited, welcoming children for baptism and being willing to marry those who are divorced.

Our congregations are communities in which people seek to follow Jesus, learn about God, share their faith, care for each other, serve the local community and seek to live faithfully and with real joy. This is the kind of engaging church to which we belong.