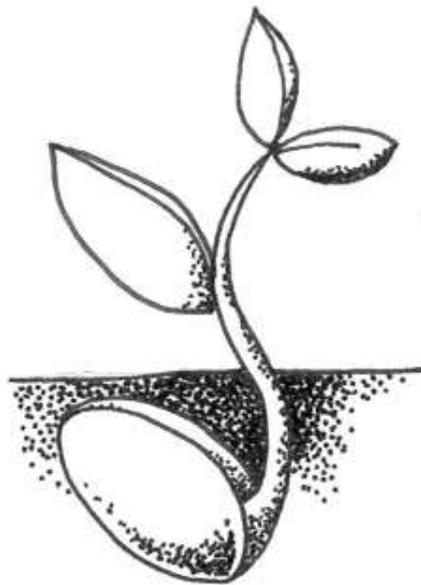


Period of Discernment



An information kit for those wishing to
explore their future ministry



Updated June 2014:
Candidates for Ministries Commission and Commission for Education for
Discipleship and Leadership.
Presbytery of WA

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Overview

At the heart of this process is the understanding that all people who have been baptised are called to discipleship and ministry. This ministry may be expressed:

- within your local congregation or the wider Uniting Church
- in your workplace or the community
- or within one of the specified ministries of the Uniting Church.

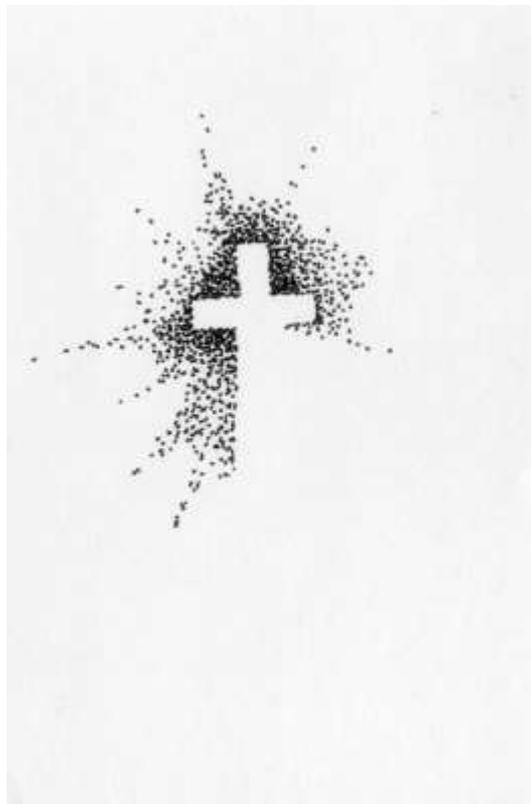
We believe that no ministry is more important or more holy than any other.

The Period of Discernment is a process approved by the National Assembly of the Uniting Church to enable the church and individuals together to discern God's call on their life for future ministry.

Whilst all people considering offering as a candidate for one of the specified ministries of the church have to participate in the Period of Discernment, it is not just for such people. There are no pre-determined outcomes - the Period of Discernment provides an opportunity for all members of the church to clarify God's call on their lives to serve in any number of different areas.

At a number of points during the Period of Discernment process, you will meet with representatives of the church, and together you will seek to discover God's directions for your life.

Those people who are considering offering themselves as a candidate for one of the ordained ministries should read *Candidating as a Minister of the Word or Deacon* on page 30.



STEPS though the Period of Discernment

Step 1

Contact the Chair of the Candidates for Ministries Commission (CMC) of the Presbytery of WA. The Chair of CMC will provide you with this Information Kit which includes a Registration Form for a Period of Discernment (POD). This Kit is also available on line at the Synod of WA website- click on Careers, Candidating for Ministry. Read the information and decide if you wish to engage in a POD.

Fill in the Registration Form (see page 19-20) and attach a brief statement (100 - 200 words) outlining your reasons for wishing to participate in the Period of Discernment. This statement is not an entry test. Rather it will help you clarify your reasons for participating in the POD and what you hope to gain from the experience.

Ask your minister to fill in the section on the Registration Form relating to your membership in the Uniting Church. If there is no minister in placement in your congregation, ask the Church Council Secretary to complete this section.

Any member of the UCA has the right to engage in a POD. Please note that your minister and/or Church Council cannot reject your application to begin a POD.

Step 2

Send your completed Registration Form and statement to the Chair of CMC. The address is on the Registration Form.

CMC will appoint a mentor for your POD. Normally your current congregational minister cannot be your mentor. The role of the mentor is to assist you to discern God's calling and complete the POD according to the guidelines.

CMC will also appoint a CMC Contact Person who will be your main point of contact with CMC during your POD.

Step 3

Once appointed, meet with your mentor to discuss how you will work together. If both agree to go ahead with this relationship, sign the Mentoring Agreement (page 21) and return this to the Chair of CMC. Both you and your mentor need to retain copies of this document.

Then work with your mentor to develop your Discernment Plan for the POD (see pages 22-26). Once the Discernment Plan is completed it should be signed by both you and your mentor and returned to the Chair of CMC. Both you and the mentor also need to retain a copy of the Discernment Plan. This should be submitted to CMC within 6 weeks of your first meeting with your mentor. If CMC believes the Discernment Plan is appropriate, it will be approved and the commencement date for your POD noted.

CMC will request your congregation to acknowledge in a service of worship that you have begun a POD and will ask them to give you their prayerful support. (see page 27)

Your CMC Contact Person will contact you to introduce themselves and to get to know you.

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Step 4

Work through your Period of Discernment, completing your Discernment Plan, meeting with your mentor regularly (at least for an hour per month).

Your CMC Contact Person will contact you about once every two months to see how you are progressing with your POD.

Normally a POD will last for 12 months but in special circumstances your mentor may recommend to CMC that this period be shortened in recognition of your prior learning and/or ministry experience. CMC will determine if the POD can be shortened or not.

A POD may last longer than 12 months, as long as you are making progress towards discerning God's call.

Step 5

During your POD you will collect a portfolio of documents. This may include your journal, liturgies, sermons, class notes, photos, reflections on ministry experience, helpful articles- anything that is of significance to you in your learning.

At the end of your POD, with the assistance of your mentor, prepare a Portfolio Statement, which will summarise your learnings during the POD and what you have discerned about God's call to you. This should be no more than 5 pages in length.

Step 6

Forward your Portfolio Statement to CMC who will arrange to meet with you to discuss your Portfolio Statement, your ministry experience, your learnings and your discernment of God's calling to you.

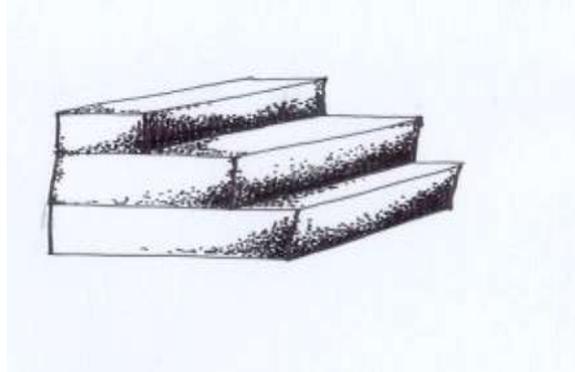
Step 7

CMC will issue a Certificate of completion for your Period of Discernment. This Certificate will be presented to you in a service of worship in your congregation. The CMC Contact Person will normally attend this service.

Step 8

Continue in ongoing ministry and discipleship within or beyond your local congregation. If you and the church have discerned a call to one of the specified ministries you can explore this option by offering yourself as a candidate for ministry through your Presbytery, and proceed through the usual application and selection processes for specified ministries.

Completion of the Period of Discernment does not qualify anyone for direct acceptance as a candidate for a specified ministry - you must still apply and be accepted as a candidate through the normal processes.



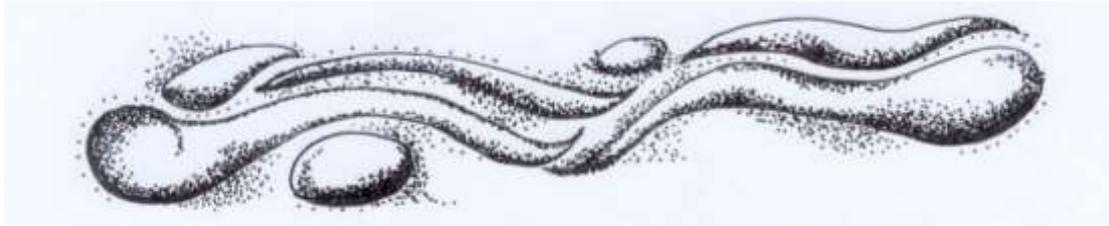
Stewart's story

I had done a number of different types of ministry in the past and didn't feel any particular sense of where my "call" or "niche" was for the future. I entered the POD process just to have a look at what the options might be. The POD process was great as it enabled me to talk to a wide variety of people in different types of ministry. The study and practical components opened up ministry opportunities that I had not considered before and affirmed gifts that I didn't recognise strongly before. I completed my POD with no clear sense of direction for the future, however it provided a strong affirmation that I was in the right place for the time being. Because of the POD process, should I feel a sense of call or desire to change my place of ministry, I think I have a broader, more insightful and positive understanding of what other forms of ministry might entail.

Goals of the Period of Discernment:

- To develop your relationship with God within the church community and your understanding of yourself as a Christian disciple;
- To give you an opportunity to understand the ministry of the church, the variety of ministries within that whole ministry both lay and specified ministries (such as Deacon, Minister of the Word, Pastor and Lay Preacher) and the function, purpose and responsibilities of these ministries;
- To enable both the church and you to discern better your gifts and graces for ministry, and the type of ministry in which these gifts and graces may be expressed;
- To recognise, affirm and build upon skills, knowledge and experience that you bring to the Period of Discernment.

In preparation for undergoing the Period of Discernment, why not reflect on your hopes for the Period of Discernment? (This could form the basis of your first journal entry.)



Key Educational Elements of the Period of Discernment

There are a number of key elements in the Period of Discernment learning process as outlined in the Assembly Guidelines (see page 29). Firstly you will need to prepare a Discernment Plan with a mentor which will include some study, hands on ministry experience and some reflection both with your mentor and personally, for which you will keep a journal.

The way you fulfil these requirements should be discussed with your mentor, and be appropriate to your gifts, the areas of ministry you wish to explore, and to the level of study you wish to be involved in. You will also be required to collect a portfolio which documents your learning about your ministry, gifts and calling during the Period of Discernment. The learning components of the Period of Discernment are outlined below.

1) Meet with a mentor. You are required to meet regularly with a mentor (for at least 2 hours at least once a month) who will help you reflect theologically and integrate your learning and ministry experiences. In some cases, meeting face to face with your mentor may be difficult. You may choose to speak with your mentor on the phone, or use email or Skype or Zoom as your method of communication. As you approach the end of your Period of Discernment, your mentor will also help in the development of your Portfolio Statement. (For specific responsibilities of mentors see page 14- 16.)

2) Field education/ministry experience. You are required to do some local hands-on ministry experience. This will provide an opportunity to exercise ministry under supervision in a local context, with appropriate reflection. You are encouraged to try new things and move out of your comfort zone as you experience new ministries. This may include ministry in a community welfare agency, a neighbouring congregation, a local hospital or aged care facility, a local school, an indigenous or multicultural community or any other ministry opportunity that arises. It can involve taking on leadership of a youth or Bible study group, preparation and leadership of worship, participation in a welfare program or an evangelistic program, or spending a period of time exploring ministry in a rural or remote area. It is important however that in each case you work under the supervision of a more experienced person.

3) Study in ministry and/or mission. There are many ways in which you can complete this requirement. For example

- Undertaking a course in an area of pastoral theology or missiology at Murdoch University.
- Undertaking a course in counselling, social welfare, community development or education at a university or TAFE

- On line course available from Adelaide College of Divinity in a Cert IV Christian Life and Ministry.
- Participating in an event recommended by the Commission for Education for Discipleship and Leadership (CEDAL) which offers practical training in mission and ministry

4) Biblical and/or theological study. It is important that you choose subjects for study at an appropriate level to your background and needs for discernment. There are many ways in which you can complete this requirement. For example

- Undertaking a course such as Introduction to New Testament, Old Testament or Thinking Theologically at Murdoch University.
- Completing a course offered for Lay Preacher training
- Participating in an event recommended by CEDAL in the area of Biblical studies or theology.
- On line course available from Adelaide College of Divinity in a Cert IV Christian Life.

The aim of these three components of learning is to enhance your skills for ministry in addition to helping you explore your giftedness in relation to your call for future ministry.

Note: it is possible to have recognition of prior learning (RPL) for study undertaken in fields listed under 3 and 4 above within 5 years of applying to do the POD. However while participants may be released from some study requirements, it is still expected that they spend a minimum of 6 months working with a mentor.

5) Personal Growth and Spirituality Formation. It is expected that the whole process of the Period of Discernment is one of spiritual formation. This includes not only all components of your Discernment Agreement, but it is expected that you will also reflect seriously on your own worship and prayer life and how that is integrated in everything else you do. Your involvement in the worshipping life of your own congregation is a key element. You are also expected to attend the annual retreat organised by CMC for all those participating in a POD.

It is expected that you will seek and experience some personal growth and spiritual formation as you move through your Period of Discernment. There are many ways you can address these areas:

- participate in a retreat;
- do some guided personal reflection (with or without your mentor);
- trial a program of spiritual disciplines e.g. models of prayer (Augustine & Sadhana);
- become part of an accountability group for spiritual support;
- discuss spirituality with people from a range of other faith backgrounds e.g. orthodox, catholic, charismatic;
- undertake a period of fasting or self-sacrifice or re-examine healthy eating practices;
- participate in an exercise program;
- self-awareness e.g. Myers Briggs or Enneagram or other similar programs
- relationship and communication training.
- exploration of your leadership style

6) Polity of the Uniting Church. During your POD you will be expected to read both the Basis of Union of the Uniting Church and the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice, reflect upon these and discuss them with your mentor. Other topics to discuss with your mentor include the Uniting Church's understanding of baptism, ministry of women and men, consensus decision making, covenanting with indigenous people and being a multicultural church. Also take the opportunity to meet with Deacons, Ministers of the Word, Pastors and Lay Preachers and people in a variety of lay ministries and discuss with them their understanding of their ministry. This will help you to discern your own calling to ministry. If you believe you may be called to one of the ordained ministries (Minister of the Word or Deacon) read and discuss with your mentor the Uniting Church's understanding of Ordination as outlined in the Brief Statement on Ordination available on <https://assembly.uca.org.au/doctrine/item/858-beliefs> Also read the information provided on page 32 of this kit.

7) Journal. You will also be expected to keep a journal as you work through the Period of Discernment. Journaling is a useful spiritual discipline in which you regularly note your learnings, experiences and reflections on your Christian journey. The form this takes is up to you. Your journal may take the form of poems, prayers, accounts of significant experiences or incidents, photos, helpful quotes, drawings - anything that makes an impact on you during your Period of Discernment. Your journal may be part of the material you use to form the basis of your discussions with your mentor, and may be helpful when drawing up your Portfolio Statement as you come to the end of your Period of Discernment. However your journal is your private record - you do not have to share this with anyone. (For help on Journaling see page 17.)

Jenny's story

At the end of November 2000, I sat in church one Sunday evening and felt a restlessness that I wanted to do more for God. I had no idea what I was being called to, so I contacted a friend who was also a minister at my previous church. He suggested a programme to me called the Period of Discernment (POD). This programme included theological study, personal journaling, having a mentor to assist with the whole process and finding a mission/ministry focus within the local church to work with. To me, one of the benefits of this programme was that I remained in my current job and was able to challenge myself within my everyday life. I did not have to remove myself from my "life", just make certain adjustments to meet the goals and aims of the programme. Unfortunately, during my year of discerning, there were many personal hardships that affected my spiritual journey and my ability to discover God's calling on my life. My POD became a test and another form of stress, instead of an opportunity to search deeper and increase my confidence in an all knowing and all powerful God. I can see now that this was a wilderness experience, something that every Christian faces. It was also something vital to my POD. I knew that God was everywhere, but I learnt that I need to let God take control, pray constantly and allow others to support us through difficult times.

At the conclusion of my POD I did not feel a call to a specific ministry, but I learnt that undertaking this programme is not just for those called to be ministers. It's a great time for anyone to look at their spiritual journey, to reflect on where God is in their lives and how to renew and refresh their relationship with Him. I also learnt that it's OK to struggle with our faith and spirituality as this provides us with the opportunity to learn, grow and mature in our Christian journey.



Frequently asked questions

What is the Period of Discernment (POD)? It is an intentional time of study, reflection, and experience guided by a mentor, to discern the call of God on your life.

What the POD is not. The Period of Discernment is not simply a forerunner to candidating for a specified ministry within the Uniting Church in Australia. It is a formalised way for members of the Uniting Church to work through the challenge of discerning God's call on their lives.

Who is it for? Any member, member in association or adherent (in good standing) of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Provided you meet these criteria, anyone can register for the Period of Discernment. You do not need approval from your congregation or presbytery, however your congregation and presbytery have an important part in supporting you during your Period of Discernment.

If you are considering a future in an ordained ministry, working through the Period of Discernment is a requirement prior to offering yourself for candidature.

How do you register? Fill in the Registration Form (pages 19-20) and get either your congregational minister or the secretary of Church Council (in the absence of a minister in placement) to fill in their section. Return the form to Candidates for Ministries Commission (CMC). CMC will appoint your mentor and a CMC Contact Person. In order to complete your registration, you must submit your Mentoring Agreement and Discernment Plan to CMC within 6 weeks of the appointment of your mentor.

What happens if I can't get my Discernment Plan submitted in time? CMC Presbytery may have to adjust your registration date accordingly.

When does the Registration become 'official'? Your registration for the Period of Discernment is 'official' once CMC has appointed a Mentor and CMC have received and approved both your Mentoring Agreement and Discernment Plan.

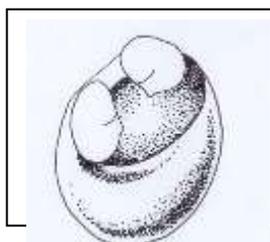
How is the Mentor appointed? As the person registering for the Period of Discernment you may wish to suggest a person you think might be appropriate to guide you in personal and theological reflection and who would be in a position to accept that role. CMC will consider your suggestion but in the end they will appoint someone they believe is appropriate to be your mentor.

Can my congregational minister be my mentor? Normally this is not the case. The POD provides you with the opportunity to develop a relationship with an experienced person in the church who you may not have had contact with before. Your congregational minister will continue to provide pastoral care and nurture for you.

What is the role of the Mentor? The Mentor is one way the Church helps you identify God's call. The Mentor walks alongside you as you work through the Period of Discernment:

- Meeting with you regularly for a minimum of 1 hour per month;
- Helps in the development of your Discernment Plan;
- Monitors your implementation of your Discernment Plan;
- Helps you reflect theologically, and integrate your ministry experience & learning;
- Guides you in development of your Portfolio Statement;
- Notifies CMC when you are ready to complete your Period of Discernment.

Your Mentor should not be a person who may be involved in any future selection process. This is particularly important if you discern a call to specified ministry. (More detail on the role of Mentor is available on page 14- 16)



Can your Mentor be changed? While it is desirable to have the same mentor throughout your Period of Discernment, the Presbytery can appoint another mentor should there be any problems in the relationship.

How do I develop a Discernment Plan? The Discernment Plan will include your vision, goals, resources and timeline for completing your Period of Discernment. Your Discernment Plan should be challenging, but at an appropriate level for you. You may, for instance, want to study at a certificate, diploma or degree level. (For information on how to develop a Discernment Plan see pages 22-24.)

How long does the Period of Discernment take? On average the Period of Discernment takes between 12 and 18 months, however you may work through it over a longer period of time. In certain circumstances, the Presbytery may determine that a shorter time is appropriate.

What's the difference between the journal and the portfolio and the Portfolio Statement? Your journal will be used to record things of a personal nature during your Period of Discernment. It is your private record of experiences, feelings and learnings.

The portfolio will be a collection of documents from your POD including liturgies, sermons, class notes, photos, reflections on ministry experience, helpful articles- anything that is of significance to you in your learning.

Your Portfolio Statement will be a summary of your key learnings through your POD and what you have discerned about God's calling. Your mentor will help you prepare your Portfolio Statement which is presented to CMC at the completion of your Period of Discernment.

Are prior learning and experience taken into account? Yes, provided it is recent (within the last 5 years). However your reflections on this experience and/or learning must be relevant to your present circumstances and you will still be required to work with a mentor for at least 6 months.

How will my Period of Discernment be assessed? The presbytery's responsibility is to provide oversight of the discernment process. There is no pass or fail, rather CMC will have a conversation with you about what you have discerned and may add some wisdom that may be helpful in your future ministry.

When is the Period of Discernment finished? After CMC have met with you to discuss your Portfolio Statement a Certificate of completion of Period of Discernment will be issued by CMC.

It will also be considered finished if the presbytery writes a letter to indicate that little progress has been made and your Period of Discernment should finish.

What if I wish to apply to candidate for a specified ministry? If you have discerned a call to one of the specified ministries such as Deacon, Minister of the Word or Lay Preacher, you will then have to offer yourself as a candidate to CMC. Your Portfolio Statement will then form part of the material you will bring as part of that application process. Completion of the Period of Discernment does not mean you will necessarily be accepted as a candidate for specified ministry. (For more information on candidating for ordained ministry see pages 30-31)

But what if I've already discerned that I'm called to be a minister? The church believes that the call to specified ministry comes both to an individual and through the church. In other words, your convictions are confirmed by other Christians within the life of the church and vice versa. The Period of Discernment provides an opportunity for you and the church together to discern God's call on your life.

What about funding? The Period of Discernment is normally self-funded. You may be eligible for some assistance through Austudy or Abstudy if you enrol for a semester of study as part of the process.

What role does the Presbytery have? The Presbytery has oversight of people engaged in the Period of Discernment. In the case of the Presbytery of WA, it has delegated this responsibility to the Candidates for Ministries Commission (CMC). They will appoint a contact person for people participating in the Period of Discernment. CMC's role during your Period of Discernment includes:

- Holding the registration;
- Appointing the mentor and CMC Contact Person;
- Receiving regular reports from the CMC Contact Person on your progress;
- Determining, after discussing the Portfolio Statement with the participant, that the Period of Discernment is completed;
- Issuing of a Certificate of completion.

What should my Portfolio Statement look like? The Portfolio Statement should be a relatively brief account (no more than 5 pages) and analysis of what you have done during the Period of Discernment and how you have grown during that time. It provides an opportunity to:

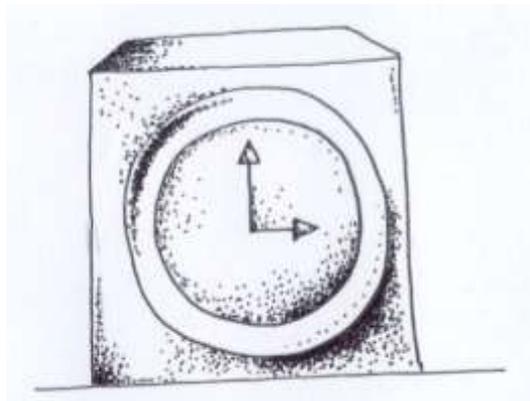
- Outline the variety of ministry experiences, study and spiritual and personal development you have undertaken on your POD and what you have learnt from these.

- Outline feedback you have received from others about your ministry, gifts and calling.
- Reflect on your learnings about your ministry and yourself during the Period of Discernment;
- Reflect on how your understanding of ministry and mission have grown during the POD
- Allow the church, through CMC representatives, to recognise and value these learnings;
- Outline what you have discerned about God's call to you.

The Portfolio Statement should draw on a much larger collection of portfolio material (journal notes, personal reflections, liturgies, prayers, sermon or lesson notes, drawings, reports, photos etc) which you have accumulated during the Period of Discernment. The portfolio should also include reports from colleagues, comments made by your mentor, and evaluation of your ministry. It is a good idea to keep these items together for easy access when needed to develop your Portfolio Statement.

You need not restrict yourself to written Portfolio Statement to document your learning throughout the Period of Discernment. It could, for instance, contain photos of, say, five key events during your ministry experience - the captions could document why these were significant to you. Similarly, a video could feature key elements of your ministry experience - the voiceover providing evaluative comments or theological reflection.

Please note that while the contents of your portfolio are private, your Portfolio Statement is a public document. It will be discussed by CMC and if you decide to candidate for a specified ministry, it will be used in the selection process.



How long will the Period of Discernment take? The POD takes a minimum of 12 months, but can take up to 18 to 24 months. It also requires a significant time commitment up to 10 hours per week. You can reduce the weekly time commitment by extending the time of your POD.

My MENTOR

It was helpful for me to have a woman in full-time ordained ministry as a mentor. In the time I shared with her she was able to help me identify my gifts and affirm my passion. She asked challenging questions that helped me to articulate my faith journey and sense of call. I never felt pressured to have to come to any particular conclusions, she just encouraged me in the process of discovering things for myself and helped me reflect on what I was learning. I was also able to ask her practical questions about how she managed to maintain her marriage, raise children and look after herself while in full time ministry. These were important things for me consider as a woman thinking about future ministry options that be might be long-term or full-time.

Mentoring and the Period of Discernment

The mentor relationship is a vital part of your Period of Discernment. Although you are welcome to nominate a person who you think would be suitable to be your mentor, the Presbytery will appoint the mentor for you.

Here are some guidelines of what can happen in your times together:

- Some of your early meetings you will spend time getting to know each other, and deciding how you can best work together;
- You can pray together and for each other;
- Reflect on the bible and your faith together;
- Explore questions together.

The mentor should question you about your learning, your experiences and what you are observing, and help you reflect theologically on your experiences.

***Me a Mentor?** I was flattered to be asked. Then I wondered what wisdom I had. Mainly, it involved listening and valuing the other. I knew and liked the person who asked me, but I grew to love the person in a totally different way, because I had the rare opportunity to really watch what God was doing in their life and talk about it. Wow! This inspired my faith. I learnt a lot about trying to look at someone else with a pair of “see-like-God” glasses on. It also helped me to be mentored by someone else and to accept that ministry from someone.*

We had to be a bit disciplined about time and goals. Mentoring happened in a variety of ways: person-to-person meetings, phone, letter, email & SMS. The person I was mentoring was also doing a POD - this kept us both accountable and helped give a framework for stuff. The person also ended up candidating for a specified ministry. This involved my doing a bit more research and trying to make sure the portfolio and paperwork were in a form other people would understand - i.e. the Committees and Task Groups that Candidates talk with. I still pray for the person regularly.

Most mentors are ordinary people who are good at caring, communicating and enjoy being with other people. If mentoring for a participant in the Period of Discernment, Mentors should:

- Meet with you, the participant one to one either face to face, on email, on the phone or Skype or Zoom or letter;
- Make themselves available as much as is reasonable to meet with you - at least 1 hour per month, and at other times as needed;
- Help you develop your Discernment Agreement;
- Be a good listener;
- Have wide experience of the Uniting Church;
- Be committed to lay and ordained ministry within the church;
- Willing and able to ask probing, challenging and thoughtful questions;
- Be able to help the participant reflect and integrate their learning and experience personally and theologically;
- Focus the discussion on your relationship with God, and growth in faith and discipleship;
- Help you discern future directions for ministry;
- Be able to help you to explore factors which may help or hinder you in ministry;
- Be willing and able to discuss and explore their faith;
- Be willing to learn themselves, and encourage you to learn;
- Know how to develop rapport with others;
- Be wise encouragers and appropriate affirmers;
- Be trusting and able to maintain confidentiality;
- Help you develop your Portfolio Statement for presentation to CMC;
- Advise you honestly, or seek advice on the steps you might take to follow God's call on your life.



Some guidelines for the relationship:

Where will you meet? It is important to meet somewhere where both parties will feel comfortable and safe and which will allow the conversation to be confidential.

Be careful about physical contact. Most people feel uncomfortable about physical contact until they know the person very well. Let the participant initiate any contact, and make sure you ask before giving them a hug.

Confidentiality. At the very beginning of the relationship establish the expectation of confidentiality, not telling anyone else about the discussions you have.

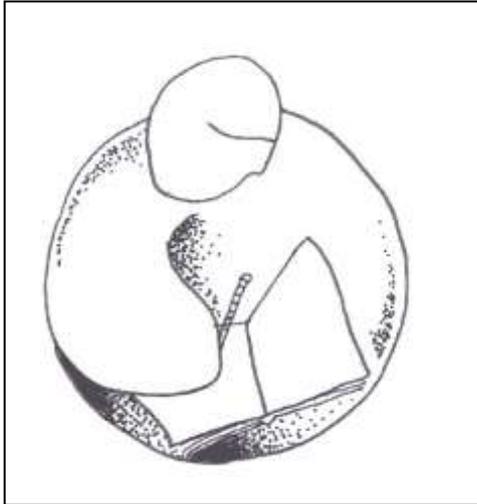
Participant. In order to make the most of the mentoring relationship the person being mentored also needs to bring something to the relationship. You should:

- Be willing to listen, reflect, grow and learn personally and spiritually;
- Be willing to be open, be challenged and explore your faith openly;
- Be trusting and sensitive;
- Take the experience seriously and contribute to the relationship;
- Be willing to meet with your mentor regularly for at least 1 hour per month, and be reliable;
- Be flexible and make yourself available when your mentor is available;
- Be willing to ask for help when needed;
- Show appreciation to your mentor;
- Care for your mentor.

It is the responsibility of the mentor **and** the participant to arrange meeting times and ensure that they happen. The mentor is required to make themselves available as much as is possible within reason, and to offer content and direction for those times. Participants should note that in real life and ministry, you often have to find for yourself those who will support and nurture you. That is, often you have to do the hard work to be supported. Some may do this without being asked, but often not.

The times when mentor and participant meet should be challenging, exciting and even fun. We believe that you will both benefit.

(This resource draws on the work and intellectual property of Cheryl Lawrie.)



Journaling.

Journaling is one of the simplest ways to develop a greater understanding of yourself. Different from traditional diary writing which is more a record of daily events, a journal goes beneath the surface - it can be filled with each day's events and experiences, the emotions you feel and the things that you've learned about yourself, about others and about God. "It enables us to ponder our various experiences and learn from them so we may grow personally and spiritually and our ministry become more credible." (Mallison, 1998) You may discover

hidden - some of them treasures, others dust and memories, sometimes even rubbish. It may be important to share some of these insights and issues with your mentor particularly those things which may affect your future ministry.

A journal is a private record of your life journey which includes the journey of your mind, heart, body, soul and spirit. You may wish to include aspects of your faith, your relationship with God and others. Keeping a journal as part of your Period of Discernment is a means to spiritual and personal growth. It can also be a tool to record issues to ensure that you bring them to mentor sessions for discussion, and a place to record and note progress on short and long term goals throughout the Period of Discernment. Remember that your journal will have material that will assist you when putting together your Portfolio Statement to be presented to CMC at the completion of your Period of Discernment.

A journal may include stories, reflections, notes, prayers, drawings, lists - anything that helps you reflect personally and spiritually on your experiences, observations, feelings and concerns. Your journal can include your ups and downs, challenges, fears, joys, motives, doubts and opportunities.

How do I journal? Literally just go with the flow - don't force anything and don't repress anything. Don't worry about spelling or grammar.

If you are just starting out, make a particular notebook your dedicated journal. Try to write something every day, even just a few lines. If you can't think of anything to write to begin with, just write about your day, what you got out of your daily bible reading or reflection, a place you love, or someone you're concerned for. When writing about any of these things, use "I" language and try to write about the feelings and emotions you associate with these things. Try to be honest - write about both the positive and negative aspects of your life and ministry experiences, your relationship with others and with God. Ask yourself why you might be feeling that way. This might lead to some helpful insights or realisations. The more you journal, the more natural it will feel. As you feel more confident about journaling, begin to use your journal to reflect on your ministry experience, your biblical and ministry education and your relationship with God.

Remember to keep your journal somewhere safe - where it cannot be easily accessed by others. It is important that you feel confident to express yourself with complete honesty in your journal.

Through the processes of journaling you can grow in an awareness of:

- self and self-worth
- ways of relating to others
- areas of personal growth
- acknowledgement & appreciation of different cultures
- some experiences particular to the Uniting Church
- gifts and calling

For more help on journaling see:

- Eremos Institute web site: www.eremos.org.au
- Mallison, J, 1998, Mentoring to develop disciples and leaders, Scripture Union Publishers and Open Book (available for loan at Camden Theological Library, Centre for Ministry).

Journaling has been an invaluable tool for me in clarifying issues in my Christian journey and personal life. It's helped deepen my understanding of myself and my ministry and has also been a great way of helping me overcome obstacles I've had to deal with along the way.

Joanne



UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA
PRESBYTERY OF WA

REGISTRATION FOR THE PERIOD OF DISCERNMENT

An application to the Presbytery ofthrough the
Congregation of for participation in the Period of Discernment.

Completed forms are to returned to Moira Mathie, at moiramathie@gmail.com.

Issued June 2018

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION (refer Uniting Church Privacy Policy)

Surname Given names

Preferred Title (Ms etc) Gender Male Female

Postal Address

..... Postcode

Telephone (daytime) (Evening)

Mobile..... E-mail.....

Occupation

Age Group Under 21 21 to 30 30 to 40 40 to 50 50+

Membership of the Uniting Church in Australia

Baptised member Confirmed member Member-in-Association Adherent

Other (Please specify)

Educational background: [Attach separate page if space is insufficient]

Institution	Year	Description of Award
.....
.....

Are you a permanent resident of Australia? Yes No

Conditions apply (from Dept. of Immigration) to those on student visas or non-residents of Australia.
An overseas student may incur high fees for courses undertaken.

Is English your first language? Yes No

If **No** give your first language and, if known, details of your English competency test scores under the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

.....

Have you ever applied to be a Pastor, Deacon, Minister of the Word or Youth Worker in any church?

No Yes If yes, give details:

.....

Have you commenced/done the Period of Discernment before No Yes

Church roles you've undertaken (say, in last five years)- please attach a statement.

Signature of applicant Date/...../.....

Attach a brief statement (100-200 words) outlining what you hope to achieve as you participate in the Period of Discernment. Ask you congregational minister (or if no minister in placement, the Church Council Secretary) to complete the section below. Then forward this form and your statement to the Candidates for Ministries Commission.

Also, each participant is to have a mentor appointed by the Presbytery. You need someone who has the ability to help in theological reflection and someone with whom you feel comfortable working. If you wish to suggest someone, please write that person's name, address, and daytime phone number, after your brief statement and indicate if you have discussed this possibility with them. Please note that CMC may or may not accept your suggestion.

To be completed by the Minister (or Church Council Secretary):

Person registering:.....is a baptised member/ confirmed member/ member-in-association/adherent (circle one) in good standing of thecongregation.

Phone.....

Name[Print].....Position.....

Signature..... Date

Presbytery Use:

Date registration form received by..... on/...../.....

Mentor.....Address/Phone.....

Discernment Plan submitted and approved Date of commencement/...../.....

Portfolio assessment:

..... by..... Date

Presbytery Person & Role receiving registration

**UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA
 PRESBYTERY of WA
 CANDIDATES FOR MINISTRIES COMMISSION
 MENTORING AGREEMENT FOR THE PERIOD OF DISCERNMENT (POD)**

The purpose of the POD is for the participant to:

- discern God's will
- grow spiritually
- experience the practise of ministry
- engage in academic study
- prepare a Portfolio Statement
- become familiar with the Code of Ethics and the polity of the Uniting Church

The Mentor and the participant enter into a covenant together

- Mentor and participant will work together to foster the participant's vocation
- Mentor and participant will meet together for at least 1 hour per month.
- All conversations between mentor and participant are confidential
- The mentor will not report any information or recommendations to the Candidates for Ministries Commission without the participant's permission
- If the relationship between the participant and mentor breaks down there will be a no fault dissolution of the relationship.

Report to the Candidates for Ministries Commission

The participant will present a Portfolio Statement and attend an interview with the Commission at the conclusion of the Period of Discernment.

Commencement date

Duration of the mentoring program

Frequency of meetings

Maximum length of each meeting

Mentoring activities

WE *AND*

are voluntarily entering into this mutually beneficial relationship. Our relationship will be based on encouragement, constructive comments, mutual trust and respect and a willingness to learn and share. We have discussed the basic principles underlying our mentoring relationship. We agree to a no-fault conclusion of this relationship if necessary.

Participant..... Mentor

Date

NB The principles for Mentoring adopted by the Candidates for Ministries Commission. Presbytery of WA 2006:

- Mentors are appointed by the Commission.
- Members of the Candidates Commission cannot be mentors.
- Mentors cannot be members of a Candidate's home or placement congregation.
- The agreement is to be signed by both parties and returned to CMC, with mentor and participant each retaining a copy.

Developing a Discernment Plan

The Discernment Plan is the record of what is to be undertaken during your Period of Discernment and is the basis on which progress is monitored and assessment of your Period of Discernment is made. You need to develop and submit your Discernment Plan, in consultation with your mentor, to complete your registration for the Period of Discernment.

Your Vision

You will need to begin by preparing a brief statement of your hopes and dreams for the Period of Discernment. What do you want to explore? At the completion of the Period of Discernment how will you have changed? What do you want to achieve?

You may want to jot down some ideas (brainstorm or mind map - whatever is most helpful for you) as they come to you. Gradually work towards those things that are essential for you and develop.

The following are some examples of vision statements drawn from a range of other people.

“Lots of people have spoken to me about the importance of being mentored as a leader. I hope the Period of Discernment will give me the opportunity to learn and establish how mentoring can work for me. I particularly want to use this time to reflect on how others have influenced my current ministry leadership and where I need to seek further input in the future.

Or

“My hope for my Period of Discernment is that I will be able to discern God’s leading for my life and future ministry with the help of the church through my mentor. During my Period of Discernment I hope to understand if God is calling me to ministry beyond my current voluntary congregational roles and secular employment.

I also hope to explore further my faith and how my faith is lived out in the Uniting Church. By the end of my Period of Discernment I would like to be able to understand clearly how my gifts and graces can be used either within the Church or in secular employment.”

Or

“People keep telling me to candidate for Specified Ministry but I have doubts. Does God really want me to turn away from my current path. I hope the Period of Discernment will help me to weigh up the pros and cons of specified ministry. If I stay in lay ministry I hope to understand my role in supporting specified ministries better. If I candidate I want to be sure that I do so for the right reasons and with my eyes open.”

Or

“I really feel the call of God on my life. I know I need training and I am treating the Period of Discernment as an opportunity for preparation and spiritual reflection. I hope that my mentor will be a spiritual friend as I take my first steps in this difficult and challenging journey.”

The Goals for My Period of Discernment

In this section you need to spell out your overall vision of the Period of Discernment into goals (1, 2 or 3 under each heading) that are:

- Specific - clear and precise
- Measurable - e.g. I will meet with my mentor at least once every 4 weeks
- Appropriate - goals must arise out of your vision and be achievable
- Realistic - is it practical, feasible but with some challenges
- Timely - is it right for this time; have you placed it within a realistic time frame.

It might be helpful for you to think about your goals in terms of where you would like to be in 3 - 5 years in terms of your ministry, and explore what opportunities might help you reach that aim.

Once you have developed your goals, you would be wise to talk about them with your mentor along with your vision for the Period of Discernment. With their help you can evaluate the goals and redraft or amend them if necessary.

Steps, Strategies and Resources

Once you have identified and listed your goals for the Period of Discernment, the next step is to set out how you will achieve those goals (strategies). Write each goal at the top of a page, and jot down how you think you can bring your goals into reality.

Once written, check if the strategies actually implement the steps you need to achieve your goals. Also check that you have included all that you need, and if they are in the appropriate order.

Next think about the resources you need to achieve your goals and note these next to your strategies/steps. Resources can include people, time, money, equipment and so on. Think about which resources you already have, how you can obtain those you don't already have. This might lead to you adding more action steps/strategies.

Timeline and Commitment

Finally, use the blank timeline provided dividing your Period of Discernment into weekly sections for 12 - 18 months. Fill out the timeline across the year making sure you include all components such as meetings with mentor, Biblical/theological study, study in ministry & mission, ministry experience, personal growth and spiritual formation and the polity of the Uniting Church. Make sure you spread the components out to keep your time commitments realistic over the 12 months. You may need to do a number of drafts before you get a realistic plan.

Once you're happy with your draft Discernment Agreement ask yourself these questions.

- Does the vision statement really outline what you believe God wants you to explore in your Period of Discernment?
- Will the goals help you achieve your vision?
- Are the goals specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic and timely?
- Will the strategies/steps achieve your goals?

- Do you have, or will you be able to have access to the resources you need?
- Is your timeline realistic?

Finalising the Plan

Discuss your Discernment Plan with your mentor and when you are both happy with it, both sign it and submit it to the *Candidates for Ministries Commission*. Mentor and participant also need to retain a copy of the Discernment Plan.

Discernment Plan

Meeting with my mentor

Goals	Steps [to achieving goals]	Resources [what & where]
1.		
2.		

Biblical and theological study

Goals	Steps [to achieving goals]	Resources [what & where]
1.		
2.		

Study in Ministry & Mission

Goals	Steps	Resources
1.		
2.		

Ministry experience

Goals	Steps	Resources
1.		
2.		

Personal growth and Spiritual Formation

Goals	Steps	Resources
1.		
2.		

Polity of the Uniting Church

Goals	Steps	Resources
1.		
2.		

Timeline for my Period of Discernment

Month	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
First				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
Review				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				

Liturgy to celebrate the beginning of a Period of Discernment

Acknowledgement: this liturgy was created by Habitat Uniting Church and may be used or modified freely.

Preparation: A pot, some earth and some bulbs or seeds are used as signs of new life, depending on the time of year.

Chairperson of congregation, or another appropriate leader of the congregation:

Friends, today we celebrate the faith journey of [name] and commission [him/her] as [she/he] begins a Period of Discernment with the Uniting Church Presbytery of [presbytery name]. The Period of Discernment is a process that enables members together with the church to discern God's call on their life, and to explore in which forms this call to ministry may be expressed. All people are invited to respond to God's love in faith and are called to join in the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ. This ministry may be discerned to be as a lay person within the local congregation, within the community or workplace, or within one of the specified and ordained ministries of the church.

During the coming year, [name] will be supported in developing [her/his] relationship with God, the church community and [his/her] self-understanding as a Christian disciple. Together with the church, [name] will seek to discern [his/her] gifts and graces for ministry and the type of ministry in which these gifts and graces may be expressed. There will be opportunity for biblical and theological study, study in ministry and mission, and field education ministry experience.

[Name] is invited to share [her/his] story

We journey here with [name] in solidarity.
[He/She] is a member of the Body of Christ.

We journey with [name] in hope.

We support [her/his] journey with love and with grace.

[He/She] is standing on a threshold, a doorway, in liminal space.

[Name], are you ready to begin the Period of Discernment?

[Name]: Yes, with God as my Guide I am ready.

[Name], in this period of discernment, and in all things, may you know yourself to be a beloved [son/daughter] of God, growing in faith as a disciple of Jesus Christ, filled with the Holy Spirit as your guide and strength. We surround you with prayer.

Some moments of silence are held, or members of the congregation are invited to offer prayer for [name].

To you, the community of [congregation] Uniting Church, I commend [name] in this period of discernment. Continue to uphold [her/him] in your prayers, encourage [him/her] in [his/her] discernment and support [her/him] by welcoming [her/his] ministry amongst us.

A pot, some earth and some bulbs or seeds are brought forward as signs of new life.

The earth is poured into the pot and the bulbs or seeds pushed deep.

Chairperson of congregation:

Accept this gift, a pot budding with new life and potential.

Even when the journey may seem dark and lonely,

Know that you have the support of this community.

We look forward to witnessing the flowering of your
faith and clarity in ministry.

Amen.

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 (eg. Youth Leader, Elder, Pastoral Carer, Lay Chaplain, Church Councilor)
- Within your normal place of work or within the wider community
- Within one of the specified ministries of the Uniting Church (eg. 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.

* 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 (eg. 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.

- 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 fulfill 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

Candidating to become a Minister of the Word or Deacon

Any person who wishes to offer as a candidate for the ordained ministry, either as a Minister of the Word or Deacon, must first complete a Period of Discernment. However completion of a Period of Discernment does not guarantee acceptance as a candidate for ordained ministry.

If it becomes clear that the participant in a POD is discerning a call to an ordained ministry it is essential that the mentor ensures that they have completed requirements in relation to the polity of the Uniting church. In particular they should have a clear understanding of the Uniting Church's understanding of ordination and of each of the specified ministries and be able to articulate their calling and the gifts and skills they can bring to a particular ministry.

Those who wish to candidate for ordained ministry are reminded of the following UCA regulations

- Applicants must be able to provide evidence that they have been a confirmed member of the Uniting Church for at least 12 months prior to their application.
- Applicants must be able to satisfy the presbytery that they are suitable in character, personality and spiritual maturity and have the capacity to exercise the responsibilities of the ministry for which they are applying.
- Applicants need to provide evidence that they have engaged satisfactorily in a Period of Discernment.
- Applicants must provide evidence that they have satisfactorily completed the final years of secondary education at a level sufficient to secure entrance to a degree course in an Australian university or have educational qualifications which the Assembly believes are equivalent to this.

In addition to these requirements applicants from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds will be asked to provide evidence of their competence in the English Language by undertaking, at their own cost, an International English Language Testing Scheme (IELTS) assessment. Please note that most universities require students to have achieved IELTS band 6 before they can be accepted as students.

Applicants who are not Australian citizens will also be asked to provide evidence of their visa status. Please note that those who are not citizens or holding a Permanent Residency visa may be treated as overseas students by universities and charged at these rates, including upfront payment of fees.

Applicants need to be aware that the Commission on Discipleship and Leadership (CEDAL) of the Presbytery of WA does not cover course fees for candidates. All candidates are expected to apply for assistance under the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) if they are unable to pay fees upfront. Only citizens of Australia are eligible for assistance under HELP.

Applicants are advised to contact Perth Theological Hall prior to candidating to obtain a copy of the latest policy document on financial assistance available to candidates.

While CEDAL is able to provide some financial assistance to candidates it is not able to provide this at a level equivalent to what candidates may have earned in previous employment, or the stipend that they may receive when they are ordained. This means that in becoming a candidate, students may find that they are not able to maintain their current standard of living. Applicants need to have considered the impact of this on themselves and their family prior to candidating.

Application forms to candidate for an ordained ministry can be obtained from the Chair of the Candidates for Ministries Commission. These must be completed by the applicant and then given to their congregational minister, who will forward them to CMC. Please note that the closing date for applications is June 30 of each year, to allow time for CMC to process the application prior to the annual Synod Selection Panel which is held in October.

Upon receipt of the completed application form, CMC will seek a confidential report from your minister, comments from your Church Council and confidential references from at least 3 referees nominated by you. They will then arrange to meet with you to discuss your application. After this meeting CMC will determine whether they support your application going forward to the Synod Selection Panel or not, and prepare a report and recommendations.

Prior to the Selection Panel you will be required to undertake a psychological assessment with a clinical psychologist. The Selection Panel usually meets over a weekend and the process will include group work and interviews related to the following topics.

- Understanding of ordained ministry
- Vocation/motivation
- Ability to undertake ordained ministry
- Ability to undertake the course of studies
- Spiritual maturity
- Character and personality

The focus of the Selection Panel is on discernment of your calling and gifts and the best way for you to express your ministry in the church. After the Selection Panel has completed its deliberations, they will make one of the following decisions.

- Acceptance for the ministry applied for with or without conditions
- Deferral of the application, with or without conditions that must be fulfilled before applying again.
- Acceptance for a ministry other than the one applied for
- Encouragement of the applicant to continue in lay ministry, but rejection of the application.

Applicants can appeal the decision of the Selection Panel within 14 days on procedural grounds. Accepted candidates normally begin the formation program in February of the following year.

Candidating for a Specified Lay Ministry

Currently there are two lay specified ministries in the Uniting Church

- Lay Preacher
- Pastor

Lay Preacher

If you discern a calling to become a Lay Preacher you will need to contact Candidates for Ministries Commission to request an Application Form. A copy of the requirements for preparation for the ministry of Lay Preacher can be found on the following website <https://assembly.uca.org.au/education-for-ministry/resources/ministry-of-lay-preacher> under Standards for Lay Preacher. Under these guidelines you will need to undertake studies and demonstrate your competence in a range of areas as well as participate in formation under the oversight of CMC

Pastor

Currently it is not possible in WA for a person to offer as a candidate for ministry of Pastor. Instead lay people who are appointed to ministerial placements are deemed to be Pastors and are required to be assessed on their knowledge and competencies according to the UCA regulations and Assembly guidelines.

Approved by Commission on Education for Discipleship and Leadership at its meeting on June 5, 2014

It is acknowledged that this Period of Discernment Handbook has been based on work done previously in the Synods of NSW/ACT and Victoria and Tasmania. We thank them for their assistance in the process of developing this handbook.