



Committee for Discipline

<i>Chairperson</i>	Rev Ken Devereux
<i>Convenor</i>	Rev Ruth Vertigan
<i>Members elected by Synod</i>	Dr Neville Barber
	Rev John McKane
	Rev Alan Thompson (Vic/Tas Synod)

“Discipline” tends to have a disturbing, heavy handed connotation that does not sit comfortably with the church’s commitment to being a body of Christian believers who are living lovingly towards God, towards one another and towards others beyond the church.

None-the-less, the Bible repeatedly calls God’s people to standards of behaviour which are just, right, honourable and appropriate for individuals, leaders and communities which seek to live by the values of the kingdom of God.

In an era where the media, Royal Commissions and public opinion are quick to seize on any real or perceived misconduct or inappropriate behaviour for a person, leader or organisation it is timely for us to exercise high diligence in respect of the conduct that is rightly expected of us as members, leaders, ministers or designated bodies of the Church. This is not primarily out of fear of being caught out and publicly scrutinised, but rather out of a desire to honour God and the Lord of the Church alongside our desire to truly love our neighbour at all times.

Hence, it is important for everyone in the Uniting Church to seek to live faithfully and to promote healthy interpersonal interactions and communal relationships. Elders, Church Councils, Ministers, Presbyteries, Synods and the national Assembly all have formal or inferred responsibilities to build, maintain and monitor healthy Christian conduct. Discipline is vital for sports players, bankers and Christians. Let’s exercise it positively, together.

The Synod Committee for Discipline has particular responsibilities with regard to certain complaints against a Minister – which includes Deacons, Ministers of the Word, Community Ministers, Lay Pastors, Pastors, Presbytery Ministers, Youth Workers, Synod Secretary, Moderator, Assembly General Secretary or President as well as ministers of another denomination serving in a placement. (See Regulations 5.1.1-2; and section 5.7)

The Committee encourages all of these leaders in the church to refresh themselves of their Code of Conduct as well as the Basis of Union. There is a wide variety of resources to promote positive ministerial ethics and safe and healthy relationships in ministry and the exercise of power and influence, and everyone is encouraged to keep growing in these areas of personal and collective understanding. The Commission for Education for Discipleship and Leadership (CEDAL) offers programs to equip us through learning opportunities and resource people along with the Presbytery’s Thrive Committee (formerly SMPC) and the broad ranging work of the Pastoral Relations Committee. The Synod staff and its various bodies also contribute to other aspects or oversight or compliance. As part of this, Ethical Ministry Workshops (EMWs) for active ministry agents are now being delivered by the Synod’s Culture of Safety Team (formerly known as ‘Safe Church’) with Cindy Gorton coordinating.

The Committee for Discipline has not been called to act upon any referral during this year.

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