



## Guidelines for Meeting Together

Welcome to the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Synod of Western Australia!

For your guidance in participation in the meeting, we have included a short video on the voting procedures used in the Uniting Church as well as a full copy of the Manual for Meetings which guides our meeting procedures in committees, council, presbyteries, synods and the Assembly.

Here is a brief summary of what to expect when we meet together.

- First, we seek to discern the guidance of the Spirit in response to the Word of God.
- This requires that we build a sense of the community which is created by Christ and sustained by the Spirit – we worship God and we acknowledge one another as important contributors to the Body of Christ. You will notice this in the Order of Business. We have Devotions, Prayers, Bible Studies, group discussions and times of reflection. From time to time, the Moderator may call us to prayer to seek the guidance of the Spirit in difficult discussions.
- We gather together to be informed about the work of the Church and to assist in developing new paths to understand how we might respond to God's call to the Church. We do this through:
  - **Information Sessions** – presentation and clarification of reports. (Note: Each member is encouraged to engage with the writers of reports prior to the Synod if they require further information – this helps with the presentation to the wider body)
  - **Deliberative Sessions** – Here we discuss the matters in the various reports. This may take place through questions from the floor, in table group discussions or, in difficult matters, through a Facilitation Group who attempt to put together all the discussions into a proposal which the Synod may consider. You may well remember the way in which a particularly difficult matter was settled at the very first council of the church in Acts 15.
  - **Decision Session** – This is when we decide on a matter, which may be as simple as agreeing to receive a report to agreeing to a radical new direction for the Church. In the Uniting Church we make every effort to reach decision by consensus, that is, that we come to a common mind about the wisest way forward.

We do this through the use of voting cards – orange (indicating warmth to the proposal, or blue (indicating coolness to the proposal). Yellow cards indicate a question, or request for more information. The Moderator is guided by the showing of cards and will always seek a consensus outcome.

Consensus means that we have agreed on a way forward to which we can all commit our support. It is the mark of true community!

If we are unable to reach consensus, the Moderator might refer the matter to the Business Committee or to a Facilitation Group with the intention of finding a way forward.

Sometimes though, even with the best intentions, the meeting can remain divided on an issue. At that point, the Moderator will call for the decision to be made with Formal Majority. This is a particular process described in Chapter 7 of the Manual for Meetings in which the members debate and eventually vote on an issue to decide a way forward. Even in this process members agree to accept the final decision.

Finally, you are encouraged to diligently read the reports ahead of the meeting. Familiarise yourself with the Order of Business – it has been carefully and prayerfully crafted. And above all, commit yourself to the Lord's purpose at the meeting. Pray much in preparation, much in discussion and much afterwards.

Rev David de Kock – Secretary of Synod

