



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



Period of Discernment

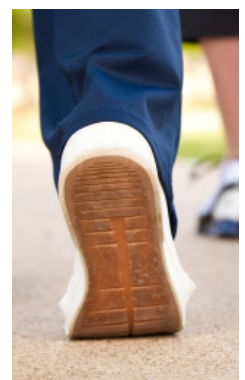
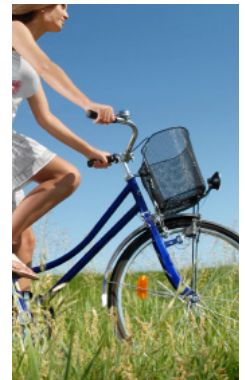
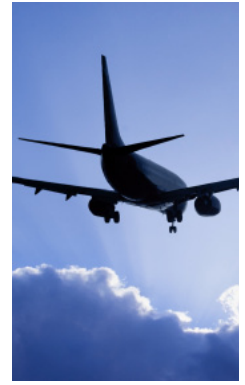
An information kit for
those wishing to explore
ministry in the church
and the
whole world





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Overview

Discernment is about discovering the will of God, sensing the movements of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and identifying a sense of call to participate in God's mission to the world in and through Jesus Christ. To God in Christ all people are called to respond in faith¹. Each of us must be in touch with the Spirit of God at work in us². Although the Bible and the Church together carry much wisdom and gives us the general outlines for our individual and communal life in Christ, each person has their own unique personal vocation to live.

Within the wider community of the Uniting Church and in the particular language of the Basis of Union, The Uniting Church affirms that every member of the Church is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant. It acknowledges with thanksgiving that the one Spirit has endowed the members of Christ's Church with a diversity of gifts, and that there is no gift without its corresponding service: all ministries have a part in the ministry of Christ.³

At the heart of the discernment process is the understanding that discipleship and ministry is a calling on all people who have been baptised. This ministry may be expressed:

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

The church believes that each ministry is as important as any other. The Period of Discernment (POD) is a process approved by the National Assembly in 1997 to enable the church and individuals together, to discern God's call on their life for future ministry and where our individual ministry lies.

There are no pre-determined outcomes from the Period of Discernment: it 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. Whilst open to all interested people, anyone considering offering as a candidate for one of the ordained ministries of the church is required to participate in the Period of Discernment. Those people considering one of the specified ministries should read 'Candidating for Specified Ministry' on Page 25 prior to registering for the Period of Discernment.

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. This information kit provides an outline of the Period of Discernment, and references to other resources that you will find useful in your journey of discernment and discipleship.

¹ Basis of Union, Paragraph 3

² 'Weeds Among the Wheat, Discernment: Where Prayer & Action Meet', Thomas H Green, SJ

³ Basis of Union, Paragraph 13

Steps through the Period of Discernment

step 1 Talk to your Minister or Church Council about your desire to explore the ministries of the church in relation to your discipleship. They will discuss this PoD resource with you. It is hoped that your congregation and presbytery will be keen to support you as you work through the PoD.



step 2 Fill out the registration form in the PoD resource and ask your Minister or Church Council to endorse it. Send your PoD registration form to the presbytery secretary. You will need to attach a brief statement (100 – 200 words) outlining your reasons for applying 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. The secretary will pass your registration on to the PoD contact person in your presbytery.

step 3 Your presbytery has a committee responsible for ministry formation, and will appoint a mentor who has received training in the PoD and in mentoring. Your PoD effectively commences when the mentor is appointed. Work with your mentor to develop your Discernment Plan and Timeline and submit it to the Ministry Formation Committee to complete your registration. Provided the Discernment Plan is submitted within 6 weeks of your initial registration date (that is the date your presbytery appoints your mentor), your original registration date will be valid.

step 4 Once the presbytery committee has given you the go ahead you can commence your PoD.

step 5 At the conclusion of the PoD you will be asked to submit a portfolio to the presbytery committee that clearly states whether or how you have achieved the goals set out in your Discernment Plan. Therefore, it is critical that you have carefully documented your discernment journey by maintaining a file of things like journal entries, notes, photos, reflections, prayers, sermons, etc.

step 6 Another critical PoD resource is a regular meeting (at least 2 hours once a month) with your mentor to discuss your discernment discoveries, challenges and overall progress.

step 7 As you and your mentor agree that your Period of Discernment is coming to an end, collate the components of your portfolio before reviewing the completed portfolio with your mentor. Send the portfolio to the presbytery committee in preparation for a meeting at which what you have achieved and discerned during your PoD will be explored.

step 8 Your presbytery will issue a certificate of completion for your Period of Discernment.

step 9 Continue 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 will need to 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.)

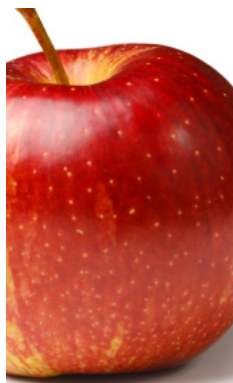
The Lay Leadership Educator at the CTM is available to provide you with assistance through the Period of Discernment, particularly if you need help with the process or have questions about the educational components.

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 develop your understanding of the ministries of the Uniting Church (such as Youth Worker, Deacon and 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 better discern your gifts and graces for ministry, and the type of ministry in which they 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 a Period of Discernment, why not reflect on your particular hopes for this journey? 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 process as outlined in the Assembly Guidelines (page 15). 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 will 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 prepare a portfolio which documents your learning about your ministry during the Period of Discernment.



The aim of the formal learning components (2-4) is to enhance your skills for ministry, develop your capacity to integrate study and practice, and help explore your giftedness in relation to your call to future ministry. Selecting areas of study and practical ministry that are outside your previous experience will be beneficial to enhancing your growth and development.

The learning components of the Period of Discernment are outlined below:

1) Meet with a mentor

In addition to the three formal learning components below, you are required to meet regularly with a mentor (normally 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 as your method of communication. As you approach the end of your Period of Discernment your mentor will also help with the final compilation of your portfolio. (For specific responsibilities of mentors see page 9.)

2) Field education/ministry experience

You are required to undertake some local hands-on ministry experience. This will provide an opportunity to exercise ministry under supervision in a local context, with appropriate reflection. It may include ministry in a community welfare agency, ministry within a neighbouring congregation, visiting a local hospital or aged care facility, or undertaking a Practicum unit offered by an appropriate educational facility or agency.

3) Some elective study in ministry and/or mission

This study may be undertaken through a number of educational facilities. Some additional options for study in this area include a unit of study with a practical component in ministry, mission or pastoral theology. This might include an Special Religious Education (SRE) course, eldership training, Seasons of the Spirit, social welfare training, counselling, pastoral care, or retreat leadership.

Ask yourself:

- How do these connect with ministry and mission?
- How might God use this training, skills and ministry situation?

Note: it is possible to have recognition of prior learning for study undertaken within 5 years of applying to do the PoD. However while participants may be released from some requirements of the PoD, it is still expected that they spend an agreed period of time working with a mentor, as specified by the presbytery committee.

4) Biblical and/or theological study

This study may be done through one or more of the following educational bodies:

- The Centre for Theology and Ministry (CTM) and the United Faculty of Theology (UFT), both located in Parkville
- Uniting Church Theological Colleges or lay education centres
- Nungalinga College in Darwin or Yalga Binbi College in Townsville (for indigenous Australians)
- Universities
- Bible study programs e.g. Kerygma, Disciple, Know Your Bible.

Note: the Lay Leadership Educator at the CTM can provide guidance for your studies, including the educational facility or agency most appropriate for you.

5) 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 the learnings, experiences and reflections on your Christian journey. The form this journaling takes is up to you, and could include poems, prayers, accounts of significant experiences or incidents, 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 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 11.

6) Spiritual 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 Plan, but it is expected that you will also reflect seriously on your own worship and prayer life and how it is integrated into everything you do. Your involvement in the worshipping life of your own congregation is a key element.

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.

Planning a Period of Discernment

1) Personal Growth & Spiritual Formation

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 could address these areas:



- participate in a retreat;
- attend an Emmaus walk;
- do some guided personal reflection (with or without your mentor);
- trial a program of spiritual disciplines, e.g. explore models of prayer (see <http://ctm.uca.edu.au/page/uphold-one-another-prayer>);
- 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;
- increase self awareness e.g. Myers Briggs or other similar programs
- relationship and communication training.

2) Mentoring

Central to the PoD process is the relationship between the person undergoing the Period of Discernment and their mentor. Your presbytery appoints a mentor for every person engaged in the PoD. The mentor's responsibilities are described in more detail in the following section.

3) Field education/ministry experience – hands on experience

This gives the opportunity to exercise ministry under supervision in a local context followed by reflection on the experience. This could be part of a practicum or field education at the CTM.

4) Biblical and/or theological study

The level at which subjects for study are taken will be appropriate to your background and needs for discernment.

For instance, you may study at a Diploma level, however if you wish to progress to an ordained ministry, you could consider studying at Bachelor level.

5) Elective study in ministry & mission

In ministry and/or mission - a practical component such as pastoral theology, ministry and mission, or conferences on specific ministry areas or accredited workshops.

Mentoring and the Period of Discernment

The mentor relationship is a vital part of your Period of Discernment. Although you may suggest a person who you think would be suitable to be your mentor, the presbytery will appoint the mentor for you.



Here are some guidelines around what may happen in your times together:

- during some of your early meetings spend time getting to know each other, and discussing appropriate boundaries in mentoring and ministry
- pray together and for each other
- study the bible together
- explore questions together.

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

Most mentors are ordinary people who are good at caring, communicating and enjoy being with other people.

When mentoring a participant in the Period of Discernment, mentors will:

- meet with you one to one either face-to-face, by email, on the phone or even by fax or letter;
- be available to meet with you as much as is reasonable – at least 2 hours once per month, and at other times as needed;
- help develop your Discernment Plan;
- be a good listener;
- have wide experience of the Uniting Church;
- be committed to lay and ordained ministry within the church;
- be willing and able to ask probing, challenging and thoughtful questions;
- be able to help you reflect and integrate your 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 your faith;
- be willing to learn themselves, and encourage you

to learn;

- know how to develop rapport with others;
- be a wise encourager and an appropriate affirmer;
- be trusting and able to maintain confidentiality;
- help you develop your portfolio statement for presentation to the presbytery representative;
- advise you honestly, or seek advice on the steps you might take to follow God's call on your life.

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.

Some guidelines for the mentoring relationship

Mentor

Where will you meet? It is important to meet somewhere where both parties will feel comfortable and safe, for example a café or public park. While both parties may have the best intentions for this relationship, other people must see this as being the case too.



Be careful about physical contact. Most people feel uncomfortable about physical contact until they know the person very well. Make sure appropriate boundaries are discussed before any physical contact is initiated.

Confidentiality is important. At the very beginning of the relationship establish mutual expectations of confidentiality, including what may be discussed outside the mentoring relationship, and with whom.

Some mentoring partners decide to write a contract or covenant which expresses the commitment to meet regularly, including agreements on confidentiality about what is discussed.

Think about whether you want to do this.

Mentoree

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

- be willing to listen, reflect, grow and learn personally and spiritually
- be willing to be open, 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 2 hours 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
- respect your mentor

It is the responsibility of the mentor and the mentoree 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 will note that

in real life and ministry, you often have to find for yourself those who will support and nurture you. Sustaining yourself in ministry will involve some intentional work to ensure you are well supported.

The times when mentor and participant meet will be challenging, exciting and even fun. Both mentor and mentoree benefit from an effective mentoring relationship.

Acknowledgements

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

For more helpful information on mentoring, the following publications are recommended:

- Lawrie, C, 1998. *Me... a Mentor*. JBCE, Melbourne
- Lawrie, C, 1998. *Ministry of Mentor*, JBCE Melbourne
- Mallison, J, 1998. *Mentoring: to develop disciples and leaders*. Lidcombe, NSW

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 have 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 insights and issues that would otherwise remain 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 might affect your future ministry.

A journal is a private record of your life journey which includes the journey of your heart, mind, body, soul and spirit. You may wish to include aspects of your faith, your relationship with God and others. Keeping your 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 mentoring sessions for discussion, and a place to record and note progress on short or long term goals throughout the 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, or create a new document on your computer. 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.

Privacy

While your journal is private, you should also expect to use some material from your journal in discussions with your mentor, and as source material for your portfolio. It will be your choice what material to share, and with whom, but your Period of Discernment will be much richer if you are able to share deep discoveries and illuminating learning with both your mentor and your presbytery.

Additional Resources

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.

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.

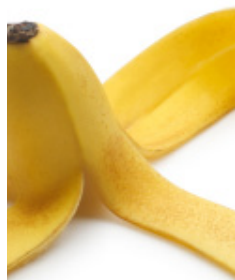
Joanne

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.

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 play an important part in supporting you during the 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?

Through your presbytery secretary after speaking with your congregational minister (or church council in the absence of a minister in settlement). The presbytery secretary will pass your registration on immediately to your presbytery's contact person who will appoint your mentor.

In order to complete your registration, you must submit your Discernment Plan to the presbytery committee within 6 weeks of the appointment of your mentor.

What happens if I can't get my Discernment Plan submitted in time?

The 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 the presbytery has appointed a mentor and you have completed and submitted your Discernment Plan.

How is the mentor arranged?

As the person registering for the Period of Discernment you may wish to nominate 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. However the mentor is appointed by your presbytery, and if you do not know of an appropriate person the presbytery will appoint one 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:

- Meets with you regularly for a minimum of 2 hours per month;
- Helps in the development of your discernment plan;
- Monitors your implementation of the Discernment Plan;
- Helps you reflect theologically and integrate your ministry experience and learning;
- Guides you in development of your portfolio;
- Keeps the presbytery informed of your progress;
- Notifies the presbytery PoD coordinator 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 a specified ministry.

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. You should work with your mentor to develop your Discernment Plan. If help is required in forming your Discernment Plan please contact the Lay Leadership Educator at the CTM.

● How long does the Period of Discernment take?

On average the Period of Discernment takes about 12 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?

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 communicate your discernment journey, and will primarily contain your reflections, both personal and theological, on your learning and ministry experience. The portfolio will be presented to presbytery at the completion of your Period of Discernment.

While your journal is private, you should also expect to use some material from your journal in discussions with your mentor, and as source material for your portfolio. It will be your choice what material to share, and with whom, but your Period of Discernment will be much richer if you are able to share deep discoveries and illuminating learning with both your mentor and your presbytery

● 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. While participants may be released from some requirements of the PoD, it is still expected that they spend an agreed period of time working with a mentor, as specified by the presbytery committee.

● How will my Period of Discernment be assessed?

The presbytery's responsibility is to provide oversight of the discernment process. Presbytery will therefore appoint a committee to listen to what you have discerned during your PoD. There is no pass or fail, rather the presbytery committee 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 consideration of your portfolio and discussion with you and your mentor, a Statement of Completion may be issued indicating the areas of study and ministry experience completed. Alternatively the presbytery committee may advise areas for further development.

The PoD will also be considered finished if the presbytery writes a letter to indicate that little progress has been made and your Period of Discernment needs to conclude.

● What if I wish to apply to become a candidate for a specified ministry?

If you have discerned a call to one of the specified ministries, Deacon, Minister of the Word, Lay Preacher, or Pastor you may offer yourself as a candidate to the Church through your presbytery. Your portfolio will then form part of the material you will bring to that application process. Completion of the Period of Discernment does not mean you will necessarily be accepted as a candidate for one of the specified ministries.

● But what if I've already discerned that I'm called to be a minister?

The church believes that the call to a 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 an intensive semester of study as part of the process. A limited amount of grant funding may be available through your own congregation, the presbytery or synod.

● What role does the presbytery have?

The presbytery has oversight of people engaged in the Period of Discernment. Each presbytery appoints a contact person for people enquiring about the Period of Discernment. The presbytery's roles during your Period of Discernment include:

- Holding the registration;
- Appointing the mentor;
- Determining, after consultation with the mentor and the participant, that the Period of Discernment is completed;
- Issuing a Statement of Completion.

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.

What should my portfolio statement look like?

The portfolio statement should be a relatively brief account (no more than 5 pages) and reflection on what you have done during the Period of Discernment and how you have grown during that time.

It provides an opportunity to:

- Document your learnings about your ministry and yourself during the Period of Discernment;
- Allow the church, through the presbytery representatives, to recognise and value these learnings;
- Outline your sense of call.

The portfolio statement should draw on a much larger collection of material (journal notes, personal reflections, sermon or lesson notes, drawings, reports, photos etc) which you have accumulated during the Period of Discernment. It is a good idea to keep these items together for easy access when needed to form the portfolio.

The portfolio will show clearly the variety of tasks undertaken and what you with others have learned about the directions of your ministry. It should also provide evidence of this from a number of different sources, for example, reports from colleagues, accounts of your field/ministry experience and evaluation summaries and should be a reflective document rather than merely a list of tasks or achievements. It should link your understanding of ministry and mission to the tasks you undertook during the Period of Discernment.

You need not restrict yourself to written portfolios 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 form part of the evaluative process. Similarly, a video could feature key elements of your ministry experience – the voiceover providing evaluative comments or theological reflection.

For further information on the portfolio see the Assembly Resource for the Period of Discernment. Your presbytery may have a copy of this resource you can borrow.

How long will the Period of Discernment take?

The PoD takes a minimum of 12 months, spending up to 12 hours per week. However it is often completed after a longer period of time (average of 12 – 18 months). An example of the PoD commitment at 12 hours per week:

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Biblical/Theological study | 3 hours per week |
| Ministry/Mission study | 3 hours per week |
| Field experience | 3 hours per week |
| Mentor session | varies |
| Personal reflection | 1.5 hours per week |

You should note that weekly study classes typically require about the same amount of time again for personal reading and completing assignments. So taking a study course in Biblical/theological study plus another in ministry/mission study would likely require 6 additional hours of readings and assignments per week. You could reduce your weekly time commitment to the Period of Discernment by taking only one unit of study per semester, thus reducing the time needed by 3 hours per week.

For more detail about requirements see the PoD resources provided by the Assembly or contact the Lay Leadership Educator at the CTM.



Assembly guidelines for the Period of Discernment

Approved by the Assembly Standing Committee, November 2008

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 (e.g. Youth Leader, Elder, Pastoral Carer, Lay Chaplain, Church Councillor)
- within your normal place of work or within the wider community
- within one of the specified ministries of the Uniting Church (e.g. Deacon, Minister of the Word, Lay Preacher or Pastor)

Goals for the Period of Discernment

The Period of Discernment aims to:

- develop the participant's relationship with God and understanding of themselves as a disciple;
- 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;
- recognise, affirm and build upon the skills, knowledge and experience that the participant brings to the Period of Discernment and ministry within the church;
- 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

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.

Those persons considering application to one of the specified ministries of the church should note the membership requirements in Regulations.

Registration

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.

Church Councils may affirm the registration but may not reject a registration. Registration may occur at any time of the year.

The presbytery, in consultation with the applicant, appoints a mentor to work with the applicant throughout the Period of Discernment. In consultation with the mentor, the participant develops a Discernment Plan. This may also involve consultation with the Presbytery Coordinator and other relevant educational bodies. The discernment plan is lodged with the Presbytery. The Period of Discernment begins with the appointment of a mentor. 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.

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.

Mentors are required to have recognised training in the role. The Ministerial Education Boards of the synods and Congress are responsible for providing this training.

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.

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.

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

The development of the process for the Period of Discernment is the responsibility of the Synod and Congress Ministerial Education Boards.

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 of ministry and mission, such as ministry with young people, church planting, eldership, or emerging church (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 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 fulfil the study requirements at Diploma or Certificate level as a minimum.

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

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.

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.

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.

All participants will demonstrate through the presentation of a portfolio how the requirements of the Period of Discernment have been met.

Developing a Portfolio

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 (e.g. 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 Centre for Theology & Ministry, Parkville.

Presentation of the Portfolio

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;

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.

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

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.

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.)

<http://assembly.uca.org.au/images/resources/papers/podguidelines.pdf>



The Discernment Plan

Introduction

The Discernment Plan (sometimes referred to as a Learning Agreement) 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. The format shown in the sample Discernment Plan is the one that should be used for developing your own Discernment Plan. You need to develop and submit your plan to complete your registration for the Period of Discernment.



The following are examples of what you might include in your Discernment Plan. They are drawn from a number of people's own Discernment Plans in order to give an idea of the breadth of possibilities available to you in your Period of Discernment. Although these do give a range of educational and ministry examples, these are by no means exhaustive. Why not discuss other possibilities for education and ministry with your mentor to develop the most appropriate Discernment Plan for you?

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.

Samples

“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

“My vision is to seek God’s intention for my life through prayer, regular reading of the bible, regular worship, personal reflection and discussion with family, friends and people involved in different aspects of ministry in the Uniting Church.”

Or

“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.

At the end of the Period of Discernment I would like to have a 3 – 5 year plan for my future ministry.”

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. I’m hoping my learning agreement will help me get started in developing skills for a lifelong ministry.”

The Goals for your 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 educational options 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.

The following are some examples of goals of a Period of Discernment to get you started with some ideas.

Sample Goals for the Period of Discernment

Biblical and/or theological study

- *To gain a better understanding of the Bible as a whole*

Or

- *Take one subject at United Faculty of Theology in Biblical or theological studies.*
- *Develop a better understanding of sacraments within the Uniting Church and the role of the Minister in this area*

Elective Study in ministry & mission

- *To develop an understanding of the specified ministry areas*
- *To learn about the mission of a congregation by participating in a presbytery Consultation Team*

Or

- *To better understand pastoral ministry*
- *To explore my potential within a pastoral ministry*

Ministry Experience

- *To visit, reflect on, and evaluate five areas of ministry available within the Uniting Church, taking in both lay and ordained ministries*

Or

- *To work alongside a person engaged in a specified ministry for a period (say one day per week for 3 months), reflect on the experience in my journal and with my mentor*

Personal Growth

- *To attend a spiritual retreat weekend to reflect on my sense of call, and my faith journey*
- *To explore how best to care for myself in my future ministry*

Or

- *To use journaling to reflect regularly on my learning and experiences throughout the Period of Discernment*

Spiritual Formation

- *Develop my prayer life*
- *Spend time at least once per month with my mentor*

Or

- *Identify and spend time with a person actively involved in ministry*
- *Intentionally reflect on these ministry experiences with my mentor*

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. Write each goal at the top of a page, and note how you think you can bring your goals into reality - these action steps are strategies.

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

A Sample Discernment Plan

| Areas | Goals | Steps | Resources |
|---|---|---|--|
| Biblical &/or theological study | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> complete one unit in Biblical study | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify appropriate course | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> course information \$ cost of course |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> join a Bible study group for 12 months | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify suitable bible study group in local area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> study guide commitment by group members to work with you for 12 months |
| Elective study in ministry & mission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to better understand pastoral ministry to explore my potential within a pastoral ministry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> enrol in Cert IV in Pastoral Ministry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PCI course information \$ cost of course commitment of 3 hours for 27 weeks |
| Ministry Experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to visit, reflect on & evaluate the specified ministries of the Uniting Church (Youth Worker, Deacon and Minister of the Word, Pastor and Lay Preacher) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify people in ministry in a range of areas both lay & ordained | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> commitment of ministry agents to participate time to reflect on experiences weekly journaling time monthly mentor session |
| Personal Growth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to attend a spiritual retreat use journaling to reflect regularly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify retreat at a suitable time/ place journaling & reflection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$ for retreat fees schedule time for regular journaling |
| Spiritual formation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop my prayer life meet once per month with mentor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> schedule time daily for prayer schedule time with mentor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> prayer journal or prayer workbook commitment from mentor |

Timeline and Commitment

Finally, draw up a page (or use the blank timeline copied from this document) dividing into weekly sections for 12 – 18 months of your Period of Discernment. Fill out the timeline making sure you include all five components included in your period of discernment (i.e. Biblical/theological study, elective study in ministry & mission, ministry experience, personal growth and spiritual formation). You may want to do a number of drafts. Make sure you spread the components out to keep your time commitments realistic.

It is expected that at least 12 months (sometimes longer) will be required, anticipating a commitment of up to 8-12 hours per week.

Once you're happy with your draft Discernment Plan ask yourself the following questions. Evaluate your Discernment Plan one last time in the light of the answers:

- 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?



Period of Discernment and candidating for the specified ministries

The Uniting Church has several specified ministries, both ordained and lay:

| Ordained ministries | Lay ministries |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Ministry of the Word | Ministry of Pastor |
| Ministry of Deacon | Ministry of Lay Preacher |

People in specified ministries represent the Uniting Church in various church and public contexts, and so are required to meet standards in assessment, training, formation, supervision, ethics and the practice of ministry.

In the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, applications for the ministries of Word and Deacon are determined by the Synod Selection Conference. Under the current Regulations, a person wishing to offer themselves as a candidate for one of the specified ordained ministries must complete a Period of Discernment before they can apply. The applicant must also gain the formal approval of their church council and presbytery before their application proceeds to the Synod Selection Committee.

For more information see the page <http://ctm.uca.edu.au/PathwaysToOrdination>.

Applications for the ministry of Pastor follow one of two paths under Regulations 2.14.6 of the Uniting Church, commonly termed 'Path A' and 'Path B'. A person may make application for the ministry of Pastor by

- (a) applying for a ministry appointment that is designated ... as appropriate for the exercise of the ministry of Pastor; or
- (b) offering to serve the church in an approved placement, through a written application to the Synod.

The Synod Pastor Committee determines applications through regulation 2.14.6.(b). Completion of a Period of Discernment is not required, but is advised as being beneficial for the discernment of both the applicant and the Church.

For more information see the page <http://ctm.uca.edu.au/Pastor>.

Applicants for the ministry of Lay Preacher apply through their local congregation and presbytery, and undergo theological and practical training before accreditation. Completion of a Period of Discernment is not required, but is advised as being beneficial for the discernment of both the applicant and the Church.

For more information see the page <http://ctm.uca.edu.au/LayPreaching>.

Presbyteries may have individuals who undertake the Period of Discernment and upon completion will wish to explore the possibility of applying for one of the Specified Ministries. Because of this, the Presbytery Coordinator for the Period of Discernment together with the participant's Mentor will need to ensure that the development of the portfolio reflects that move towards application to any of the specified ministries.



The Synod Selection Committee expects that a number of areas will be fully explored through the Period of Discernment prior to the applicant attending a Synod Selection Conference. Many of the resources needed for this exploration are found in *Your Resource for the Period of Discernment* available from your presbytery. These are:

1. The applicant's understanding of, and willingness to accept:
 - (a) the Uniting Church's position on Baptism: See the Readings in Your Resource for Period of Discernment
 - (b) the Uniting Church position on the ordination or accreditation of women and men. [See Readings 2 & 6: Basis of Union and Ministry in the Uniting Church in Australia]; and the Supplementary Readings* for the Statement on Ordination & Accreditation.
 - (c) the various specified ministries of the Uniting Church. Information about these ministries are available through the Centre for Theology & Ministry. Applicants are expected to be aware of the nature and expressions of each of the specified ministries, not just the one for which the applicant is applying.
 - (d) the ministry of the whole people of God [See Reading 6: Basis of Union, Para 13 and Para 14];
 - (e) the consensus model of meetings and decision-making [see Supplementary Readings "A Manual for Meetings in the Uniting Church"..] It is recommended and expected that those undertaking a Period of Discernment attend a Presbytery [or other] meeting which uses the consensus model for decision-making.
 - (f) the Uniting Church's position on being faithful in a pastoral relationship [Readings 3 & 4 of Your Resource for Period of Discernment, is about Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice, and for dealing with a complaint of sexual misconduct.

Reflection on this ought to be done with the Mentor.

2. The applicant's awareness of his or her own style of leadership and the leadership style of others from the specified ministry for which the applicant is applying.

Those completing the Period of Discernment with a view to responding to a call to a specified ministry, will need to demonstrate in their portfolio an awareness of leadership styles in a congregational setting.

3. Through the processes of journaling and guided reflection the applicant should gain an awareness of:
 - self and self worth
 - ways of relating to others
 - areas of personal growth
 - acknowledgement & appreciation of the different cultures
 - some experiences particular to the Uniting Church.
 - areas known to require more intentional intervention

Presbyteries are asked to:

- A. Hold two copies of *Your Resource for Period of Discernment*
- B. Direct potential applicants to the particular contacts below depending on their areas of interest in ministry, and on the presbytery's preliminary sense of call to specified forms of ministry.



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.

*Responses of the congregation are shown below in **bold**.*



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 of as a Christian disciple. Together with 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, some 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.

Further information

Additional Assembly Resources for the Period of Discernment

The Uniting Church Assembly publishes *Your Resource for the Period of Discernment*, a two-volume resource which presbyteries are encouraged to make available to people involved in the Period of Discernment.



Volume 1 includes much of the same content as in this information kit.

Volume 2 includes a range of resource readings including

- *Guidelines for the Period of Discernment*, Uniting Church Assembly Standing Committee (2008)
- *Report of the Task Group on the Review of Ministerial Education*, Uniting Church Assembly (1997)
- *Code of ethics and ministry practice for Ministers in the Uniting Church in Australia*, Uniting Church Assembly (2009)
- *Policy for dealing with a complaint of sexual misconduct made against a member, adherent or volunteer of the Uniting Church in Australia and for providing a safe faith community*, Uniting Church Assembly (1998)
- *Preparing a Personal Rule of Life*, Rob Bos (1998)
- *Basis of Union*, Uniting Church Assembly (1992)
- *Ministry in the Uniting Church in Australia*, Uniting Church Assembly (1991).

Your Resource for the Period of Discernment is around 190 pages and is available (in a ring binder) through Uniting College for Leadership and Theology, South Australia, at a cost of \$50 plus postage. Contact info@unitingcollege.org.au or (08) 8416 8420.

Online Resources

This information kit and links to further information are available online from the webpage:

<http://ctm.uca.edu.au/page/period-discernment>

Linked information includes additional resources for the Period of Discernment, reports on the ministries of the Uniting Church, and policies for leaders within the Uniting Church.

Centre for Theology and Ministry (CTM)

Within the Synod of VicTas the Period of Discernment is resourced from the Centre for Theology and Ministry:

29 College Crescent, Parkville, VIC 3052

Phone: 03 9340 8800

Fax: 03 9340 8805

<http://ctm.uca.edu.au/>

Lay Education

The Lay Leadership Educator is able to offer advice on the Period of Discernment, Lay Ministry Intensives and other resources and education opportunities for lay members of the church.

Lay Leadership Educator Rohan Pryor, (03) 9340 8816, rohan.pryor@ctm.uca.edu.au

Spiritual Formation

The ongoing spiritual formation of church members, lay and ordained, has always been an important aspect of the life of the church. In our baptism, we are reminded of our new birth in the life of the Spirit. The ongoing work of God the Creator forms us inwardly as disciples of Jesus Christ. The people of God continue to be formed spiritually.

Exploration, development and articulation of Christian spiritual practice is vital in fostering dialogue with the growing interest in spirituality in Australian popular culture.

The training and formation process of each of the specified ministries provide some support for spiritual formation and spiritual direction.

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA
 MINISTERIAL EDUCATION COMMISSION
 REGISTRATION FOR THE PERIOD OF DISCERNMENT



Uniting Church in Australia
 SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

An application to the Presbytery of.....
 through the congregation of.....
 for participation in the Period of Discernment.

Return completed form to:

The Secretary, Presbytery of

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION (refer Uniting Church Privacy Policy)

Surname Given names

Preferred Title (Ms etc) Gender Male Female

Postal Address
 Post code.....

Telephone (daytime)..... (Evening)

Mobile Occupation

E-mail.....

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 Department of Immigration) to those on student visas or non-residents of Australia. An overseas student on a Visitor or Temporary Visa must be informed about the new ESOS Act.

Is English your first language? Yes No

If No give your first language and, if known, details of your English competency test scores.

.....

Have you ever applied to be a Pastor, Deacon, or Minister of the Word in any church? Yes No

If yes, give details:

.....

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

Church roles you've undertaken (say, in last five years).....

.....

.....

Signature of applicantDate/...../.....

Attach a brief statement (100-200 words) outlining what you hope to achieve as you participate in the Period of Discernment. Give your application to your minister or Church Council for endorsement and forwarding to the presbytery secretary. Also, each participant is to have a mentor appointed by the Presbytery. You need someone who has the ability to help in theological reflection with whom you feel comfortable working with. If you wish to suggest someone, please write that person's name, address, and daytime phone number, after your brief statement. Tell us if you have discussed this possibility with the person.

**To be completed by the Minister
(or approved person):**

Person registering:
.....

is a member/ member-in-association/adherent
(circle one)

in good standing of the
.....congregation.

I am aware of, and support this application

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
.....
.....

Blank Discernment Plan

Biblical and theological study

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

Elective study in Ministry & Mission

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

Ministry experience

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

Personal growth

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

Spiritual growth and formation

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

Period of Discernment timeline

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



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