



GOVERNING WITH UNITING IN MIND

**Growing leaders of courage, curiosity and compassion
through exceptional school directorship**

Overview & orientation

Why this resource?

Governance in schools isn't just about oversight or ticking boxes—and perhaps it never really was. In Uniting Church-associated schools, the role of a board often sits in a curious overlap: faith, trust, strategic oversight, and the slow memory of community. This resource emerged from living in that overlap—from the moments where things didn't quite fit the template, but still held weight.

Here's the invitation: What if we explored what makes governance exceptional by looking at it through the seven shared characteristics that have come to shape the culture of Uniting Church-associated schools? This series doesn't offer a clean model or a tidy set of answers. Instead, it offers tension, reflection, and just enough provocation to stir honest conversation.

How it works

There are eight short resources in this series. This one gives you the framework. The other seven each take a Uniting Church characteristic and invite you to view 10 core governance facets through that particular lens. It's not a formula. It's a reframing— not radical, but enough to shift the centre of gravity.

Each two-pager is designed for occasional use—maybe four or five times a year.

You might try one:

- as a 20–40 minute warm-up or wind-down at a board or council meeting
- during a strategy off-site or visioning session
- or even when something weighty is being asked of your leadership, and the usual conversation tools feel thin

The ten facets of exceptional governance

These 10 facets are ideas about exceptional governance that have surfaced across time—from long listening, messy discernment, and the accumulated wisdom of school boards navigating complex terrain. Especially within the independent and Uniting Church school space, certain patterns just kept reappearing—signposts of what helps governance thrive, and what tends to erode it.

- **Role clarity** – Knowing what is governing and what is managing (and if we've blurred the lines between them).
- **Strategic vision** – Seeing beyond the horizon, while remembering what grounds us.
- **Board composition** – Who shows up to the table—and what they bring beyond their resume.
- **Financial stewardship** – Letting resources serve purpose, not dictate it.
- **Risk management** – Paying attention to what's truly at stake—not just what's insurable.



- **Succession and leadership** – Planning with enough foresight to evolve, not replicate.
- **Transparency and accountability** – Practising openness in a way that builds, not just reports, trust.
- **Stakeholder engagement** – Staying open to how the community sees us—even when it makes us uncomfortable, or when the feedback touches something tender or unresolved.
- **Community partnership** – Holding relationships that are mutual—not just useful to us, but meaningful to those we’re in relationship with.
- **Board effectiveness** – Checking in on how we’re functioning while there’s still room to adapt—before patterns get stuck or consequences become irreversible.

The seven UCA characteristics

- Engaging with First Peoples
- Spiritual development and well-being
- Listening and collaborative decision-making
- Embracing diversity of faiths, cultures, and languages
- Justice for All Peoples and the Environment
- Addressing difficult topics with courage
- Celebrating equality and the value of all people

There’s a *Governing with Uniting in Mind* resource for each of these characteristics. Start where your board or council feels most curious—or maybe just where the conversation feels stuck. Sometimes, that’s where the best reflection begins.

