



MEETING Together

**A Workbook for Councils,
Committees and
Groups**

Prepared by Presbytery eLM ministers
equipping Leadership for Mission

Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Index

3. Introduction
4. How to use this Workbook
6. Meeting together
8. New Testament understandings of Church
9. Appropriate behaviour in meetings
11. Poor behaviour in meetings
12. Poor behaviours within and across cultures
13. The role of the church
14. Standards of behaviour
15. Elements of right relationship
17. A community seeking to discern the Spirit
18. The Chairperson's or Facilitator's role
19. Decision-making in the Uniting Church
20. A Safe Place
21. Conflicts of interest
23. How do we make vibrant, healthy meetings?
24. Community-building Ideas
26. End of meeting
27. Resources



MEETING
Together

This workbook may be copied in its entirety or in parts for non-commercial educational use with acknowledgment of the source.

equipping Leadership for Mission
Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
victas.uca.org.au
Copyright 2022



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

1. Introduction

This Workbook is a resource to help committees and teams have healthy and worthwhile meetings for the sake of God's work through us – not only in what we do, but in the kind of community we are. We believe that meetings can be rewarding, enjoyable and worthwhile, whether the issues that we face together are large or small.

The Uniting Church has distinctive ways of meeting – how we organise, how we communicate and make decisions. Some ways are obvious, others more subtle. Whether you are a leader, committee member, chairperson or other officer bearer, this workbook is for you. Whether you are in a fellowship group, a church council, a congregational meeting, or a presbytery committee, this workbook is for you. It is a self-help guide for church teams.

This workbook can help to build the capacity in our members to meet and work together well, to respect and listen to one another, and to value each person's voice. We will look at the Scriptures and what we believe, the Basis of Union, the Manual for Meetings, and other resources. These resources are an invitation to pause from what we do, and to have conversations about *why* and *how* we meet. What is distinctive about our gatherings because we meet as the people of God in the ethos of the Uniting Church?

What Uniting Church convictions and habits shape our meetings in positive ways? How can our meetings shift the focus from ourselves towards where the Spirit is calling us?

The workbook has been prepared by the Synod's presbytery eLM ministers working with eLM staff. It is based in our experiences of working with congregations as ministers, members, councillors and consultants. We hope that both new and experienced church leaders may draw on this resource to guide and inform your meetings together.



2. How to use this Workbook

This is a toolkit. You can use all or parts of it with different groups at different times. It is also a complete resource that you can work through in sequence.

The workbook is divided into easy-to-follow sections. At the end of each section are questions for personal and group reflection with opportunity for people to discuss and note down ideas. Leaders are encouraged to identify practical steps to help improve the quality of meetings in your church.

Worship and community-building are important aspects of every meeting. This workbook provides ways to include these in creative and meaningful ways.

Ministers and Congregational Leaders

Look over the materials. Discuss how you might use them in your groups. Who might benefit from these resources? What will help people feel that they are in a safe environment for conversation? How might you prepare to raise concerns about problem behaviours in committees?

Talk about what the resources say about your own leadership. What do they affirm? Where do they challenge you?

Church Councils, Congregations and Committees

The resources may be used with the Church Council over several meetings, allowing time for reflection and culture change. How might you plan time for this? Who would lead the meetings? The toolkit can be used as part of a retreat at the start of the year, offering a new start for the year ahead.

If you have sub-committees, you can organise training sessions for convenors and key leaders.

Fellowship groups might gain value from exploring parts of this workbook each time they meet.

Smaller congregations may see this as a learning opportunity for the whole congregation.

Presbyteries

Presbyteries are invited to plan how best to share the resources with congregational leaders. This may include a launch at a presbytery meeting followed by a training session for ministers and church council chairpersons. The presbytery might also recommend this workbook for particular congregations or groups. In some situations, external facilitation by the presbytery may be important.

A positive meeting is grounded in a healthy community. Meeting well is about our being as much as our doing. The workbook is a set of tools which are part of a bigger task – to constantly build up the people of God as a community of faith who serve the mission of God. We hope that each section gives opportunities for growing together as a community who encourage, respect and learn from one another in faith, hope and love.

Group Processes

We find it easy to talk about positive ideas, attitudes and behaviours. It is much more difficult to talk about negative or harmful issues, attitudes and behaviours. Discussing matters with the whole group can simply reinforce any existing negative behaviours. An opinionated person says, "We don't have that problem here!" and everyone else stays silent. Sensitive issues require a thoughtful approach. The more sensitive the issue, the more important it is to invite personal reflection or small group sharing before discussion in a large group.

Here are some suggestions.

Personal Reflection

Create time for this when

- the issue is sensitive, and people need to gather their thoughts
- people are reflecting on their personal attitudes, behaviours or memories
- when people are asked to imagine something new or different
- when there is a need for a personal prayerful response

This is also useful when you want to invite people to write down personal responses.

Small Groups

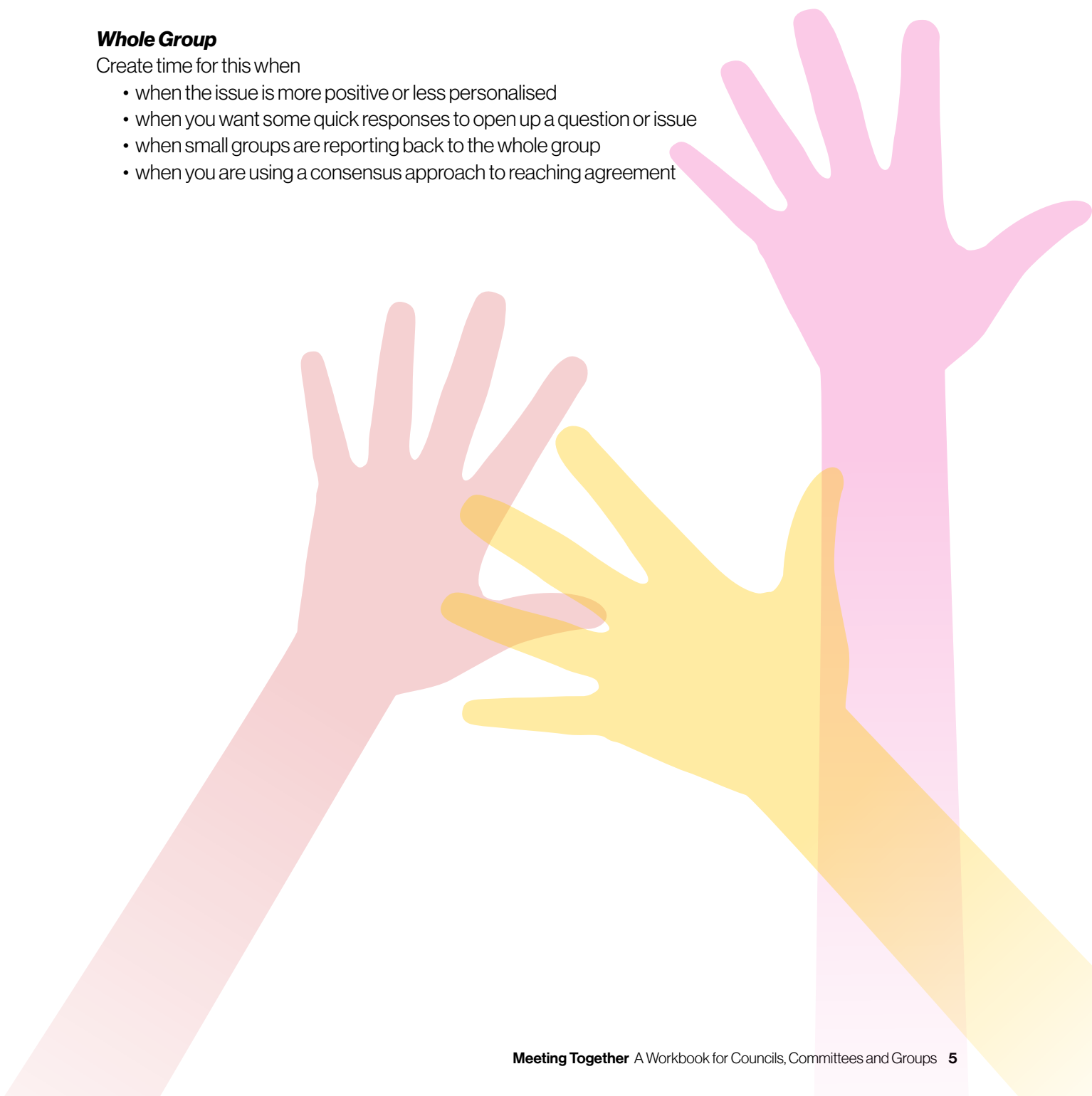
Create time for this when

- you want to allow each person to have an equal voice
- you want to allow everyone enough time to speak
- you want people to collectively generate new ideas

Whole Group

Create time for this when

- when the issue is more positive or less personalised
- when you want some quick responses to open up a question or issue
- when small groups are reporting back to the whole group
- when you are using a consensus approach to reaching agreement



3. Meeting Together

We meet as the Body of Christ

What are we doing when we meet together as Christians? We are told by Jesus that “where two or more gather in my name, I will be with you” (Matt 18:20). If we are all members of the Body of Christ, when we gather together we give expression to the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12). When we meet, we also remember Christ in our worship. We re-member the body of Christ in our gathering together – the members reconnect as one body. Christ’s presence through the Spirit makes our gathering a holy embodiment.

Group Reflection

What does the image the Body of Christ say to you about why and how we meet?

As a body, we are mutually dependent on every member. If we do not have the wisdom of other cultures, then we may not have a leg to stand on. If we do not have people with disabilities as leaders in our church, then we are missing part of ourselves. If we do not hear the voices of women, we are missing our ears. If we have no young people in the church, then we may lack vision. If we do not have children in our midst, we may have lost heart.

Personal and Group Reflection

Whose voices are least represented in your meetings? Why might this be the case?

We meet as people of power

“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but gives a spirit of love, power and self-discipline” (2 Tim 1:7). When we meet, we practice what we believe. Our behaviour says something about power. The passage reminds us that we are not called to make decisions out of fear. Our choices are to be made in love. We have God-given power, and this is to be balanced by self-discipline. We need to be mindful to make room for the voices of those less powerful.

We have a God whose power was revealed in Jesus Christ in love and servanthood rather than domination or control. As the body of Christ, we too are called to exercise power in loving service. To do this involves recognising our power, controlling unhelpful behaviours and exercising self-discipline. We are all human. Sometimes we need to say sorry and seek to do better.

Personal Reflection

What sorts of power do I have in meetings? (Tick all that apply)

- Elected representative
- Talents
- Experience
- Office-bearer
- Leadership role
- Age
- Male privilege
- Good speaker
- I know things
- Spiritual gifts
- White privilege
- Charisma
- Educated
- Work experience
- Empathy
- Other



Manual for Meetings Read Section 1.1.

4. New Testament understandings of church

While following Christ involves our personal choices, Christian faith is a corporate response of sharing the beliefs of the past and the present faith community. The term *ecclesia* or church refers to those called out to be a **community of God's new creation**.

Jesus is the servant leader of our community. Jesus tells us that he came to serve and not be served (Matt 20:28). He commands the church to be the servant of all (Matt 20:25-26). We are called to be a **servant community**. In many ways this is a strength of the Uniting Church. We have many dedicated and hardworking servants who are not looking for praise, just the opportunity to serve as Christ has gifted them.

We also understand ourselves to be a community of the Spirit. **We are called to be transformed by the Spirit**, rather than conforming to the society around us (Rom 12:2). The Spirit bestows diverse gifts on the faithful (1 Cor 12:4-6). "The UCA affirms that every member of the Church... has no gift without its corresponding service" (Basis of Union, paragraph 13).

When we use these gifts as part of building up the church (Eph 4:11-13), we see God's reconciling love in action in the world. We have a foretaste of God's reign here on earth. Together we pray that the values of God's kingdom will transform our lives and practices with God's love. In the same way, we pray for transformation of our meetings and decision-making processes to reflect the Way of Jesus.

Group Reflection

How is your council or meeting a community of God's new creation? Or a servant community?
As a group write ideas on a whiteboard.

Sharing in Pairs

What are your gifts and corresponding service?

Manual for Meetings Read Section 1.2.

5. Appropriate behaviour in meetings

The meeting began with devotions. The Bible reading was related to the life of the church in that place and time. There were prayers for the meeting ahead, calling on God's Spirit to help the group discern. Everyone participated in a community-building activity that had us all laughing together. We all learned something new about each other.

Because we knew each other and had grown closer as a group, we were considerate and respectful of one another. The Chairperson guided the meeting to help everyone listen to one another. The Chairperson worked to understand the common mind of the meeting. We shared our thoughts, ideas, dreams and visions. We voiced our opinions, attitudes, values and feelings. All members felt equally valued. Every person was open and able to contribute to the meeting. We developed a set of goals for the work ahead. There was effective and accurate communication among all members. Members received clear and accurate written reports from the wider councils of the church. We valued the inter-conciliar nature of the Uniting Church.

Leadership functions were distributed among group members who then coached each other in our roles. We offered to correct one another's mistakes without blame. People were gracious to one another. This led to widespread participation in the life and leadership of the church. We developed a high level of trust and acceptance. Members valued, affirmed and supported each another. Together we adopted group standards which promoted individual responsibility and accountability in achieving goals. We worked as a team to improve our interpersonal skills.

Decisions were made with the support of as many members as possible. We drew on people's expertise and knowledge to reach solutions. The meeting sought to make decisions by consensus. People often showed yellow cards to ask relevant questions. When people disagreed, they showed blue cards. The Chairperson asked each person in turn to speak, and we listened respectfully. Together we managed to amend the proposal. People indicated agreement with orange cards. When making tough decisions we paused to pray for wisdom. When decision-making went for a long time, we took a break to refresh ourselves.

Group Activity

List the positive behaviours described in the meeting above.

continued

Appropriate behaviour in meetings continued

Personal Reflection

Do I feel valued and find it easy to contribute in meetings?

What helps me to contribute well in meetings

What are some barriers to my full participation?



Manual for Meetings Read Sections 1.3 and 2.1

6. Poor behaviours in meetings

The meeting started late again as several people walked in ten minutes after start time. Devotions was a quickie since no one had bothered to prepare anything. The Chairperson skipped the community-building since we had started late. Besides, there was too much on the agenda. The meeting was run like a business. A couple at the back of the room started talking over the top of the Chairperson, making it hard for the older members to hear, but no one said anything.

The Minister's proposal was shouted down by the Treasurer, saying there was no money to even consider it. A small group within the council quickly agreed. The Treasurer raised his voice again, critical of the minister's ideas. Nobody said anything about this poor behaviour because that is "just the way he is." People were obviously used to ignoring his outbursts. The Chairperson noted that the younger members on the council quite liked the Minister's idea. However, they seemed too scared to speak up now. A female CALD member whispered an idea to her neighbour, but was told in a harsh tone, "Not now!" In the end, the proposal was not passed.

There was a spirit of negativity throughout the whole meeting. The Treasurer's report was long and complex. It recommended that an honorarium be paid to him annually. The proposal was passed without any questions. Next, the Chairperson addressed a breach of confidentiality that had occurred since the last meeting. Members of the congregation had apparently been gossiping about certain decisions. Allegations were made by the Chairperson about where the leak had come from. The Council Executive exchanged knowing glances with each other. The rest of the council members felt left out. After this, there was no time for the Worship or Mission reports. These were postponed to the next meeting. We went home. No-one slept well that night. Our youth representative did not attend the next few meetings. Later in the year they resigned, saying there was a clash with another commitment.

Group Activity

List the poor behaviours described in the meeting above.

How might consensus decision making have helped this process?

What aspects of your meetings sometimes feel like a business?

Manual for Meetings Read Sections 1.5 and 1.6.

7. Poor behaviours within and across cultures

What is considered normal behaviour in some cultures and traditions may be seen as inappropriate or even oppressive within the Uniting Church. This is the complexity of cultural differences.

Some cultures hold their minister in high regard. Their opinion is the law and the lay people should just fall into line. However, in the Uniting Church we seek the wisdom and contribution of all members of a group.

Some cultures hold older people in esteem and it goes unobserved when they devalue youth. Young people who are experienced and skilled might be unable to achieve leadership positions within their own cultural traditions. By contrast, Anglo congregations may place a higher value on youth and see the elderly as having little worthwhile to contribute.

Bad behaviours might take different forms in different cultures. Young CALD women speak about being told to be silent. They can feel patronised by being told that they don't understand what is going on in the meeting.

People from CALD backgrounds also experience being treated as though they are much younger than they are. Other people may fail to recognise their maturity in faith.

A multicultural congregation may have all Anglo leaders. Congregation members need to ask, 'What has allowed this pattern to develop? Why is there systemic racism in our church?'

Group Reflection

What forms of poor behaviour have you observed within and across cultures?

How can your church make pathways for people of other cultures to take up leadership in the church?

8. The role of the church

What does it mean to be the people of God when we know that things are not going well in our committees? We know it is difficult to name and address poor behaviour. Putting up with poor behaviour stifles our meetings, creates resentment, and often results in lack of good decision-making.

As a church we have a responsibility to deal appropriately with divisive behaviour. We are called to work against forces that divide people in the church and in society. This is a response to God's call of reconciliation made possible in Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:16 - 21; Basis of Union, paragraph 3). We share in Christ's ministry of healing and wholeness for all people.

As Christians, we are called to recognise and speak out against all forms of abusive, violent, and predatory behaviour within the church and within ourselves. People who misuse power may infiltrate the Church for their own purposes. The church needs to pastor both the abused and abusers, always working for justice and healing.

The Spirit calls Christians to acknowledge and repent of their sinfulness and participate in the radical call of the gospel to renewal. God's love enables us to seek to forgive when we are hurt by others and also when we have hurt others. Forgiving and being forgiven is how we grow in love. Repenting and taking responsibility for our wrong actions and poor behaviour is a path to healing.

Within the Church community, we offer an environment of wholeness and nurture where people may trust and respect one another. The church seeks to model right relationships and genuine friendships. The quality of our community life is an expression of the gospel and a foretaste of communion between people and God. This is who we are as the Body of Christ - people who show to one another the love that is founded in Christ's love for us.

Small Group Reflection (groups of three)

How do our meetings demonstrate Christ's love?

What does our meeting need to remove in order to protect others?

Manual for Meetings Read Section 1.7 and 1.8.

9. Standards of behaviour

What qualities do we seek when appointing people to roles within the church?

Often people are elected for church leadership because they are seen as positive role models – to have good ethics, spiritual gifts for ministry, and are committed in their own faith journey.

The UCA expects high standards of behaviour from its designated leaders. In requiring maturity of faith and the qualities of Christian friendship and love – right relationship characteristics – we are asking a great deal of our leaders. People often fail to live up to high expectations, however we continue to strive to reflect the best possible practices. The Uniting Church also expects high professional standards of its leaders in pastoral matters because these positions carry considerable power. Hence the Church provides clear and effective guidelines and procedures for good functioning. Ministers have a Code of Ethics to adhere to and lay people have a Code of Conduct; both are national resources approved by the UCA Assembly. (See Resources section).

Group Discussion

What criteria or qualities are most important in seeking our leaders?

How do our selection processes reflect this?

Personal Reflection

What do I need to help me be a better leader in the church?

Manual for Meetings Read Sections 1.3 and 2.2

10. Elements of right relationship

To live as Christians is to seek the elements of right relationship in everything we do. These values and attitudes underpin our close relationships and can also guide our meetings. We recognise that people have not always experience models of right relationship. These elements need to be taught by community so that all can experience the love of Christ through our interactions with one another.

<p>Honesty Honesty is an important component of truth and justice in friendships. Honesty involves being open to the expression of feelings and thoughts of others. Dishonesty and secrecy cause distrust of leaders.</p>	<p>Freedom and responsibility: The linking of freedom and responsibility is part of our vision of a new people in Christ. We hope to find both elements in our relationships with one another. God has given us freedom and we give it to one another. Good friendship allows each person to grow and retain their individuality.</p>	<p>Communication Good communication is two-way. Skills need to be learnt and practiced to enrich our understandings of each other and to resolve conflicts. Communication across cultures requires patience and a desire to listen.</p>
<p>Trust God is the one we can trust absolutely. Knowing that we can trust God helps us to be more trustworthy and to trust others. This is at the heart of our understanding of covenant. Good friendships are built on and sustained by trust. As trust increases, people become more honest and vulnerable with each other. A breakdown of trust is difficult to heal.</p>	<p>Vulnerability Jesus Christ is supreme model of someone becoming vulnerable and giving themselves for the sake of others. He is God's gift to the world. In Christian community we seek the same qualities.</p>	<p>Communion Communion is a sacrament; it is also a way of being. We are united in Christ. We are one in the Spirit. We are a people bound by God's purpose. Our integrity as individuals begins with seeing ourselves within God's community.</p>
<p>Faithfulness Faithfulness is a key element in God's covenant with God's people. It is one of the 'fruits of the Spirit' (Gal 5). Our ability to be faithful in relationships is possible because of God's faithfulness to us. We learn how to be faithful and how to sustain commitments with our community.</p>	<p>Setting Limits and Self-Control The incarnation of Jesus Christ involved the self-limiting of God. Christ's example invites us to set limits on our own needs and behaviours, exercising self-control for the sake of the other and the community.</p>	<p>Boundary Setting Good leadership means setting boundaries on behaviours and holding each other to account. Good boundaries involve both limits and responsibility. Boundary-setting is also important for self-care. We are called to be open to challenge from the community of faith regarding our boundary-keeping.</p>
<p>Equality and Mutuality Jesus is our model. He treated all people with respect, holding them to be equally loved, respected, and judged by God. Paul also affirmed our equal standing in Christ (Gal 3:28). Equality produces mutual dependence and empowerment. Equality involves the absence of domination and double standards</p>	<p>Warmth of Relationship In community we desire to enjoy being together and to be known well by others. Affection nurtures relationships. While expressions of affection may vary according to culture, they embody deep needs within us all.</p>	<p>NOTE: These boxes may be copied and cut out for discussion. Place them in a pile and choose one at a time or give each person a card. Talk about why this is important and give examples.</p>



continued

Elements of right relationship continued

Small Group Reflection (groups of three)

Which of these elements of right relationship are most important to me and why?



Personal Reflection

Which elements are missing from our meetings?

11. A community seeking to discern the Spirit

When a Council of the Church makes decisions, it is aiming to discern the guidance of the Spirit in response to the Word of God.

“The Uniting Church acknowledges that Christ alone is supreme in His Church, and that he might speak to it through any of its councils. It is the task of every council to wait upon God’s Word, and to obey God’s will in the matters allocated to its oversight.”

(Basis of Union, paragraph 15)

When a meeting discerns the will of God, they are visionary. The processes we use to create community and communicate in our meetings can assist in the discernment process: they help us to be open to the Spirit. In our meetings, we at times struggle through pain and difficulty together. We also experience the joy of open and honest communication. As committees and communities, we find solidarity in our brokenness and in our common identity with God.

Small Group Reflection

In our meetings, how do we seek the guidance of the Spirit?

When have I experienced people sharing dreams and visions that seem inspired by God’s Spirit?

12. The Chairperson's or Facilitator's role

The chairperson's or facilitator's role is to lead in a manner which assists the council to discern the will of God. The chairperson seeks to meet the needs and purposes of the Council and also its members. Often a good chairperson withholds their opinion on issues in order to mediate a good discussion. If a chairperson wants to speak to an issue, they need to allow someone else to be the chairperson for that discussion. When a chairperson has a conflict of interest, they should also stay out of the discussion.

Small Group Reflection

When have I witnessed good and poor chairing or facilitation? What did it look like?

Please use examples from other groups or the wider church.

How can the Chairperson help seek to discern the Spirit?

Manual for Meetings Read Sections 2.2 and 4.6.

13. Decision-making in the Uniting Church

The Uniting Church has developed the Consensus model of making decisions because it best helps us to hear all people's voices as we discern where the Spirit is leading. The process invites us to equally value people's thoughts, ideas and feelings. Community is strengthened as members are open to each other's insights and feelings. Consensus decision-making is an invitation to take the time to hear and reflect, to consider the importance of decisions and not just their apparent urgency.

The consensus cards are not a Yes and No vote. Instead, they are tools of discernment. Sometimes in meetings, we might not know how close we are to a consensus. The chairperson can test whether the meeting is ready to move to a decision by inviting people to display their orange or blue cards. 'Are we warm to this idea? or cool?'

The chairperson will wait until they have seen every card displayed by members. This indicates that we are not moving on until we do more work to seek consensus. The process helps people to feel that they are included and that their opinion is valued.

The Consensus model provides space for discernment. Pausing for prayer is always a helpful step. Sometimes you may have made a tough decision and you can affirm the Council for its hard work. At times you may break for a cuppa and fellowship time, allowing people to refresh and regroup. Christian community may develop in these breaks as members of a group informally share the friendship they have in Christ.

Small Group Reflection

How does our meeting process help us to express our thoughts, feelings and viewpoints?

Where have I seen consensus decision-making used well? What was helpful?

Manual for Meetings Read Section 4.1.

14. A Safe Place

A safe place is one in which people feel accepted and valued, where they feel free to express themselves and not be judged or criticised. A safe place encourages full participation. Ultimately, we aim to create a safe place for all who attend our meetings. Safety is relative, it is rarely absolute. People will feel more safe or less safe depending on circumstances. Safety is perceived differently by different genders and cultures. Here is a summary to help you assess your meeting.

A safe place is one where we are

- 1. Discerning God's will**
- 2. Seeking to be in right relationship with each other**
- 3. Being open to different opinions**
- 4. Affirming that all ideas have value**
- 5. Affirming and supporting people**
- 6. Encouraging respectful, accurate, two-way communication**
- 7. Working co-operatively**
- 8. Encouraging widespread participation**
- 9. Acknowledging both insights and feelings**
- 10. Considering expertise and knowledge**

Personal Reflection

To what extent I feel safe in these ways in meetings?

Small Group Reflection

If you see others feel uncomfortable in a meeting, how may you help them?

15. Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts of interest can arise when people involved in a decision (or their relatives) have a vested interest in its outcome. This might be through financial advantage, personal self-interest, reputation, their role (including ministry agents), and family considerations. Conflicts of interest may occur within meetings or outside of meetings.

Here are some examples.

The Church Council is meeting to discuss whether to sponsor Jane to attend a leadership conference. Jane may explain the circumstances but should then abstain from the decision-making.

A retired minister takes a position of office in their home congregation. In this role they choose to undermine the incumbent minister to enhance their personal standing in the congregation.

A minister temporarily takes on the role of Chairperson of the congregation. The minister is effectively reporting to themselves. The minister as Chairperson would have difficulty being objective about any matters related to their ministry.

The Chairperson of the Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committee runs a consultation in a local congregation. There is a complaint about the consultation from the congregation to the Pastoral Relations Committee. The Chairperson would need to step aside for this discussion and let someone else chair the meeting. Perhaps the Chairperson should not be involved in such a consultation in order to remain impartial.

The Church Council is discussing the use of a significant donation of money from one of the church families, and a close relative is on the Council. The family have very particular views on how the money should be spent. The Council member with the familial interest should stand down from the discussion. They may be asked to leave the meeting for a short time.

Two family members are both Church office-bearers. Mrs. Smith (wife), as church secretary repeatedly requests personal expense reimbursement from Mr. Smith (husband), the church treasurer.

Family members should not be placed into roles and positions where they have clear conflicts of interest as these may lead to unethical decision-making. In large churches the best practice would be to seek another person for a role. In a small congregation the best practice might be to appoint a second signatory to the bank account, a person without the family connections.

Potential conflicts of interest are best declared near the beginning of a meeting. Then when an agenda item is up for discussion, the chairperson will help the meeting to determine whether the member may contribute.

continued

Conflicts of Interest continued

Small Group Discussion

When have I seen people declare conflicts of interest in meetings? How has this been dealt with?

*When have I seen potential conflicts of interest in our meetings?
What does this look or sound like?*

How can we prevent conflicts of interest in future meetings?

16. How do we make vibrant, healthy meetings?

Right relationships are essential for building community. This is not simply a private matter between individuals. It is the responsibility of the whole community to provide an environment which encourages and nurtures good friendships - right relationships.

The Uniting Church's Manual for Meetings encourages every decision-making group to spend 20% of each meeting in worship and community building. We often start meetings with a short devotion. How often do we also take time to learn more about each other? Start your meetings with worship and community building activities so you continue to grow to know and trust each other more.

This workbook can be used in meetings to help you self-assess how you are going as a group. Take a section of the workbook and ask questions of each other. Ask what it would mean to act out the positive attitudes expressed in the Scriptures within your meetings.

If you are observing serious issues in your council meetings, you may consider some training in governance and the UCA Code of Conduct for lay people. If you need a facilitator to run this training, approach your presbytery's Education or Pastoral Relations Committee.

Consensus decision-making reflects strongly how we are distinctive as a Uniting Church. This is a crucial tool for fostering processes of listening and discerning the will of God together. Talk together about how well you are following the consensus decision-making process and how you can strengthen your practices. As a council or committee, you are encouraged to make or renew your commitment to Consensus decision-making.

Manual for Meetings Read Sections 1.4 and 1.5.



17. Community-building Ideas

At the start of the meeting

1. The Body

Worship

Reflect on 1 Corinthians 12.

Ask: *If you were a part of the body, which part would you be? And why?*

2. Fruits of the Spirit

Worship

Read Galatians 5:22. Bring Bibles with different translations. Look at how the fruit are sometimes translated differently. Invite people to contemplate a particular fruit and how they see it expressed in the life of Jesus.

Community Building

Break into groups of two or three. Ask people to reflect on what fruits they see in the lives of those in their group. Invite them to encourage each other with the following words:

"I see in you the fruit of the Spirit of _____ when you ..."

Love	Joy
Peace	Gentleness/Humility
Goodness	Kindness
Gentleness	Patience
Faithfulness	

3. Gifts

Prepare a gift box with a mirror inside.

Tell everyone that Christ's presence can be seen in this box. Pass the box from person to person with the following words "I discern in you the spiritual gift of (choose from the list below) _____ when you serve the church by _____."

The person who received the box looks inside. Keeping the secret to themselves, they then pass the box to the next person with the above sentence.

Knowledge of the Bible	Healing
Prayer	Service or Helping
Music ministry	Preaching
Teaching	Care
Prophecy	Tongues
Wisdom	Mercy
Discernment	Faith
Hospitality	Leadership
Apostleship	Giving
Grace	

4. Cultural Bingo

This icebreaker works well for bringing together people from differing cultures. Everyone is given a sheet of paper with 25 squares printed on it (5 x 5). Each square contains a description of a personal characteristic. Examples: someone wearing blue socks, someone who has been to Beijing, someone who eats with their hands, someone who grew up on a farm, someone who rides a bicycle, someone who has a pet, etc.

Participants walk around the room and get signatures for each square. In doing so, they get to know each other in a fun way. The aim is to try to fill up all the squares. Option: The person who gets the most signatures (or the first person to get them all) wins.

5. Name Game

The Name Game is a great way to start off group introductions because it helps everyone to remember each other's names. To play, have everyone form a circle. The first person must say their name, preceded by a word that describes them and begins with the same letter. The next person repeats the first person's description and name before saying their own, the third person says the first two people's descriptions and names before saying their own. For example, the fourth person would say "Hi, Darling Daniel, Crazy Carla and Responsible Ron; I am Serious Silas."

6. Truth and Lies

Sit everyone in a circle facing one another. Have each person come up with three facts about themselves and one lie. The lie should be realistic instead of extravagant. Go around the circle and have each person state the three facts and a lie in a random order, without revealing which is the lie. After someone shares, the others must guess which is the lie.

7. Fun Fact or "Australian Story"

This game is based on the Johari Window. If you don't know what that is, that's fine. Instead introduce it like this. "You have been selected to feature on the TV show Australian Story. What is one fun fact about you that most viewers will not know about you?"

8. Conversation Starter Cards.

This activity is best done in groups around tables. Collect a range of varied photos or pictures. Put a suitable conversation-starter question on the back (see below for examples). The photos can be (a) dealt to people, (b) spread on the table face up or (c) placed in a stack face up. Depending on (a), (b) or (c), people take turns to share their card/image or choose a card/image and then answer the question on the back.

Examples:

- What's important to teach younger generation?
- Who is the most interesting person you've met?
- How do you show your love for someone?
- How do you feel about getting older?
- What do you dream about _____?
- The most inspiring person I know is....
- How would your best friend describe you?
- What makes you laugh?
- Where do you call home?
- What did you want to be when you grew up?
- What new skill would you like to learn?
- What's the biggest prize you've won?
- What do you think you will be doing five years from now?

Make up your own questions.

18. End of Meeting:

Give each other verbal encouragement awards for the ways in which they have contributed positively to the meeting. Try to match each positive value/attitude to a good meeting outcome. Be as creative as you like. Each member may take a turn to give another member an award.

For example: "I give a persistence award to our chairperson for navigating the whole meeting well."

I give a persistence award to ...

I give an encouragement award to ...

I give a collaboration award to ...

I give a good listener award to ...

I give a good work award to ...

I give a courage award to ...

I give a service award to ...

I give a stewardship award to ...

19. Resources

Assembly Resources are available at
ucaassembly.recollect.net.au

[Manual for Meetings](#)

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Code of Ethics](#)

Lacuna: Space for God Kit:
www.ctmresourcing.org.au/?rf=kw&kw=lacuna



MEETING
Together



MEETING Together

CTM.Reception@victas.uca.org.au