



Guidelines for ACA UCA cooperation in congregational activity

Introduction

The document *Weaving a New Cloth*, agreed by both the Anglican Church of Australia (Synod 2014) and the Uniting Church in Australia (Assembly 2015) outlines the Biblical and Theological vision for cooperation between the two denominations in various ways.

This document provides guidelines for 3 levels of cooperation: Sharing a church building, hospitality in worship and joint congregations. There are other ways in which congregations can work together in mission and ministry that can also be encouraged.

Any initiatives towards significant cooperation affecting the life of a congregation also affect the wider church, so the Bishop and Presbytery should be consulted early on.

Bishops, archdeacons, presbytery ministers/officers, and appropriate members of other traditions, are encouraged to meet together to establish a pastoral process, to initiate and oversee co-operative work, and to consult as to the most appropriate form of ministry that can be offered collaboratively between each church within the confines of budget, personnel limitations and church order, and to consider the deployment and location of clergy.

General ministry considerations

The Uniting Church in Australia recognises the orders of the Anglican Church. The Anglican Church of Australia does not currently recognise Uniting Church orders and neither the dioceses nor the Province of Victoria have the power to change this. The document *Protocol for Clearance for Ministry* should be referred to in the process of ensuring that ministers/priests have good standing according to the relevant professional ethical requirements.

Anglican and Uniting clergy customarily admit to communion baptised and communicant members in good standing of churches which confess the doctrine of the Trinity. Individual Anglicans and Uniting Church members have the freedom to attend other churches and, if those churches permit, to receive Holy Communion. However, the individual consciences of those who feel unable to receive communion from someone of a different tradition should be respected.

The Anglican Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia seek at all times to show respect for the order and protocol of each other's churches. Members of each church should, for the sake of co-operation and good relations, acquaint themselves with the courtesies appropriate in various circumstances.

When in doubt about the best method and person to contact, the following should be consulted on any matter concerning the Uniting Church:

- a) on local matters, the local minister
- b) on other matters, the presbytery minister

The following should be consulted on any matter concerning the Anglican Church:

- a) on local matters, the parish priest
- b) on other matters, the diocesan registry

Forms of cooperation – overview

	Ministry	Property
Shared building	Each congregation worships separately with their own priest/minister.	Hire agreement noting safe ministry arrangements
Hospitality in worship (Host and Guest arrangement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be short term, long term or alternating • Agreement of local minister/priest, Church/Parish Councils and Presbytery/Bishop • Clarity around provision of pastoral care ministry • Protocols for Holy Communion • Guest congregation maintaining identity and links with own denomination (led by Presbytery or Bishop) • Members of guest denomination have minimal rights and responsibilities 	One denomination retains responsibility
Joint Congregation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorandum of Understanding. • Responsibilities and boundaries for the exercise of ministry by the minister/priest • Responsibility for standards for ministry, safe ministry and inclusion falls to the denomination of the Minister/Priest. Codes of Conduct (or equivalent) of both denominations apply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One denomination (“Host”) owns the Church building. • MOU regarding at a minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint management committee • Finances, insurance and property management • Appointment and tenure of Minister/Priest • Review • Dispute resolution • Procedures for dissolution • ESM and OHS compliance fall to property owner.
Mission Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent of both churches in accordance within the scope of the Mission Initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host congregation retains responsibility

Sharing a church building – further details

Where a congregation of one denomination meets to worship in the building of another denomination, but does not otherwise regularly share in ministry or worship, a hire agreement is required. Templates can be found on the Anglican and Uniting Church websites. These agreements should include reference to child safety requirements, and should also include attention to matters of furnishing and/or storage. This does not preclude occasional sharing in worship.

Hospitality in worship – further details

1. Ministry

- a. May be short term, long term or alternating.
- b. Agreement of local minister/priest, Church/Parish Councils and Presbytery/Bishop.
Where a congregation of the Uniting Church is to be offered ongoing hospitality by the Anglican Church, the consent of the bishop is required to formalise the arrangement. The agreement of the parish council/vestry is required, and the goodwill of the congregation should also be sought.

Likewise, where an Anglican congregation is offered ongoing hospitality by a Uniting Church congregation, the agreement of the Uniting Church congregation, church council and presbytery must be sought.
- c. Clarity around provision of pastoral care ministry
The agreement above should provide clarity as to the provision of pastoral care for members of the Guest congregation.
- d. Protocols for Holy Communion
See [Protocols for Holy Communion](#) below.
- e. Guest congregation maintaining identity and links with own denomination (led by Presbytery or Bishop)
Every effort should be made to ensure that such congregations maintain their links with their own church.

Some means of regular access by members of the congregation to the sacramental ministry and traditions of their own church should be provided. It is the responsibility of the bishop and the presbytery to ensure that a pastoral and sacramental ministry in their own tradition will be available to such congregations. The bishop's ministry in this regard will normally be exercised through the archdeacons.
- f. Members of guest denomination have minimal rights and responsibilities
In some cases, a congregation of the Anglican Church or the Uniting Church may be expected to provide hospitality to individuals or even whole congregations of the other church on an ongoing basis.

The Uniting Church permits members of other churches to hold "membership-in-association" of the Uniting Church. This enables members of other churches to

participate in some decision-making bodies and other privileges of membership of the Uniting Church.

The Anglican Church may involve the members of other churches in decision-making bodies such as vestries, parish councils and diocesan synod in an informal or non-voting capacity.

2. Property

All property matters remain the responsibility of the Host congregation, noting any relevant policies and procedures within the host denomination.

Joint congregations – further details

1. Introduction

Joint congregations are established when an Anglican congregation and a Uniting Church congregation, acting with the authority of their respective churches, co-operate to form one worshipping congregation with two ecclesial traditions. Each congregation will retain its separate identity, membership and links (spiritual, doctrinal, sacramental, liturgical and financial) to the parent churches according to the provisions and degree of collaboration, but sharing resources such as church building and ministry, and uniting in local mission.

2. Establishment

Approvals for the establishment of a Joint Congregation, both in principle and at the point of a formal Memorandum of Understanding, require the approvals of:

- (a) Anglican: The Bishop, the Parish/Vestry meeting, a meeting of the parishioners. Approval for the use of Anglican property would need to be given by the Bishop and Diocesan Council.
- (b) Uniting: The Presbytery (or its Standing Committee for 'in principle approval'), the Church Council and a meeting of the Congregation.
- (c) Any incumbent ministers/priests need to be included in the process.

3. Sensitivity to traditions, laws and customs

Care and sensitivity to the pastoral, ecclesial and theological implications of joint congregations is needed by all those involved. Within these congregations it is desirable that members of both churches retain the identity and ethos of their own denomination, deepening their understanding of its theological, spiritual, and liturgical traditions, while learning from the traditions of the other denomination.

Likewise, care should be taken to be aware of and to observe the particular traditions and customs of each church as far as possible in order to foster in joint congregations their continuing sense of identity and membership of their respective churches. Such congregations may well be challenged to examine many practices and to try to discern the significance of their various traditions.

In the case of rules and law in force in the Anglican Church and Uniting Church, care should be taken to respect such law and to recognise that the congregation remains under the authority of its parent churches.

Baptism should normally be conducted through the ministry of the congregant's parent church. Confirmation for Anglican members must be conducted by a Bishop.

4. Celebration of Holy Communion

See [Protocols for Holy Communion](#) below.

5. Memorandum of Understanding

A Memorandum of Understanding should include, but not be limited to:

- Provision of ministry
- Maintaining separate rolls
- Property and Finance
- Joint Management Committee
- Review provisions

Protocols for Holy Communion

Among the differing traditions in the respective churches are differences of practice in the celebration of the Eucharist. Congregations will have particular expectations and traditions.

Theological congruity would be a valuable discussion point in any cooperating arrangement.

Anglican celebrations of Holy Communion normally use a common cup and fermented wine, and may use individual wafers. Uniting Church celebrations of Holy Communion often include individual cups and unfermented wine or grape juice. It is important to be sensitive to matters including the reverent disposal of unused bread/wafers and wine.

Ordained Anglican and Uniting Church ministers are able to preside at Holy Communion in accordance with the provisions of the Joint Congregation Agreement. A lay person, even if authorised to preside by the Uniting Church, would not be able to provide communion for Anglican members, therefore it would be inappropriate for a lay person to offer communion in a joint service of worship.