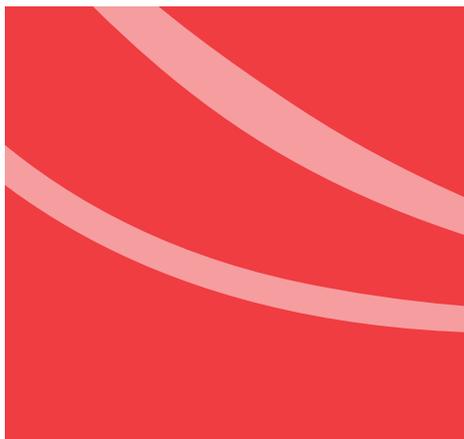




Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

SEEKING ORDINATION FAQs





What is a Candidate?

Someone preparing for ordained ministry as a Minister of the Word or Deacon within an accredited teaching college of the Uniting Church.

What does the Uniting Church mean by a 'Call of God'?

God calls individuals to serve in many different ways. The Call of God for the Church, and individuals comprising it, is a call to use our gifts, talents and skills in the service of others as part of our worship and active discipleship. In a more specific sense, it is the call of God of an individual to a particular use of their gifts, talents and skills or to a particular vocation. All Christians are called to service and ministry.

What is ordained ministry?

Ordination is the 'setting apart' of baptised women and men, called by God as discerned by the Church, to serve as Deacons and Ministers of the Word. The Synod Selection Panel shares in the responsibility of discerning whether people may be called to ordained ministry.

What is the difference between a Minister of the Word and a Deacon?

Both are ordained by the Church, with the Minister of the Word primarily serving a gathered community, that is a congregation; and serving them through preaching, teaching, pastoral care and the presiding at the sacraments (Holy Communion and baptism).

A Deacon is an ordained minister who primarily serves beyond the congregational setting in contexts of mission and evangelism, for example in chaplaincy (prisons, hospitals, schools) and community services.

What is the difference between a Pastor and a Minister?

In the Uniting Church, a Pastor is a lay person recognised and equipped for ministry within a particular location, for a specific ministry for a specific time. A Pastor undertakes training for their role as they exercise that ministry. Once that particular ministry has finished, the individual is no longer recognised as a Pastor.

A Minister is an ordained person in the Uniting Church who is exercising a life-long calling and available to be called to exercise ministry across the Church. This person undertakes an initial Formation Program and then is required to undertake continuing education throughout their ministry practice.

Who isn't allowed to be a Minister?

There are no barriers to becoming a Minister on the grounds of race, gender, marital status or sexuality, however there is an assessment of a person's suitability. Personal expressions and behaviours that are deemed unethical and inappropriate may be taken into account.

What do I need to have done before applying to become a candidate – the Period of Discernment?

As part of that discernment process, it is expected all applicants will have participated in a Period of Discernment under the guidance of the presbytery. The Period of Discernment is a discipleship opportunity through which an individual and the Church explore the directions of ministry, discipleship and vocation that may be possible and suitable for the gifts and talents of the individual.

If you have participated in a Period of Discernment and continue to feel a call to





ordained ministry, you should contact your congregational Minister who will inform the presbytery of your desire to apply for candidature. If you do not have a minister in your congregation, then you are to contact your presbytery directly and inform them that you wish to apply for candidature.

What is the process involved?

A person contemplating applying for candidature must be a member of the Uniting Church and have been a member for at least 12 months. The process involves discernment with you in partnership with your local UCA congregation, the presbytery and the Synod Selection Committee. This process is a prayerful engagement with you, in testing your understanding and the strength of your call and the discernment of the UCA in supporting that call.

Once you have informed your Minister and presbytery that you wish to apply, the presbytery will give to you an application form for you to complete. This form includes questions about your faith, your sense of call, your previous study and life experiences. This application will then be sent to the presbytery. Your Minister will also send a confidential reference about you to the presbytery.

The Church Council of your congregation will meet with you and discuss your sense of call to ministry and complete a form indicating their level of support.

The presbytery committee will then meet you and discuss your sense of call, your spiritual maturity and your faith and suitability for ministry. The presbytery then formally decides as to the level of support for your application.

If the support is high you are asked to prepare for attendance at the Synod Selection Conference.

One important component is to immediately arrange an appointment for a psychological

assessment. Appropriate psychologists can be contacted by sending an email to selection@ctm.uca.edu.au

Why do I need a psychological test?

Ministry is a demanding vocation and requires a well-balanced, mature spirit. The psychological test is to ensure you have the best chance to fulfil the responsibilities of ministry. The test is a recruitment assessment and is not available on completion, although a summary report may be produced on request. The Church pays for the psychological assessment, but the information is not kept by the Church, beyond the initial Selection Conference.

What and when is the Selection Conference?

The Synod Selection Conference is held in Melbourne, usually in September or October. The Conference is held for two-to-three days and comprises a number of conversations and activities, framed by worship and prayer, with opportunities for engagement with other applicants, panellists and chaplains. The panel members include individuals from your own presbytery and the wider church.

At the conclusion of the Conference, the panel members decide on whether each applicant is accepted or encouraged to pursue other ministries or vocations.

What if I disagree with the Selection Conference decision?

It is appropriate to discuss your concerns with your mentor/support person or a person from your presbytery. There is an appeals process available.

What are the expectations of being a candidate?

Candidates are expected to participate





in an intentional program of preparation for the ordained ministry. Previous skills, experiences and theological education all influence the amount of time and the style of formation.

The content and style of the Formation Program for an individual is discerned by the Formation Conversation, which is held with the individual after he/she has been accepted as a candidate (usually in November).

How long is the Formation Program?

The Formation Conversation will explore the possible length and content of the Formation Program, whether it be part-time or full-time; the amount of formal theological education to be undertaken; and other elements. The Formation Conversation and a formation panel is held regularly during the candidate's time to discern progress and whether other elements of formation are necessary.

Do I have to be in Melbourne?

For those able to attend Pilgrim Theological College in Melbourne, the Formation Program takes place face-to-face in a weekly program. Those who live in regional Victoria or Tasmania may have a regional Formation Program developed located in their presbytery.

What formal study is required?

Candidates are to engage in tertiary level theological education in the core areas of biblical, theological and missional study, as well as engaging in study of the history and core traditions of faith. Previous theological study will be recognised, however study within the Uniting Church context is a primary aspect of the formation and may require some further study for those who already have theological qualifications from other traditions.

Do I get any help financially?

Candidates (through a means test) may be eligible for education financial assistance. A candidate with no major assets or alternative income may receive a bursary (equivalent to 1/3 of a UCA Minister's stipend – approximately \$25,000) plus housing assistance if appropriate. Candidates with dependent children also receive extra modest financial support.

What if English is not my first language?

Theological Study within the University of Divinity (through which candidates study) requires a certain level of English proficiency to engage in the study. The required level needs to be attained before coming to the Selection Conference. An individual who is accepted at the Selection Conference to become a candidate cannot enter the Formation Program until the required level of English is achieved.

What if I have more questions?

Speak to your Minister or presbytery. If the questions are about the Selection Conference then send an email to selection@ctm.uca.edu.au

