



PRC Tool Kit

**A Tool Kit for Councils,
Committees and
Groups**

Prepared by Presbytery eLM Ministers
equipping Leadership for Mission

Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

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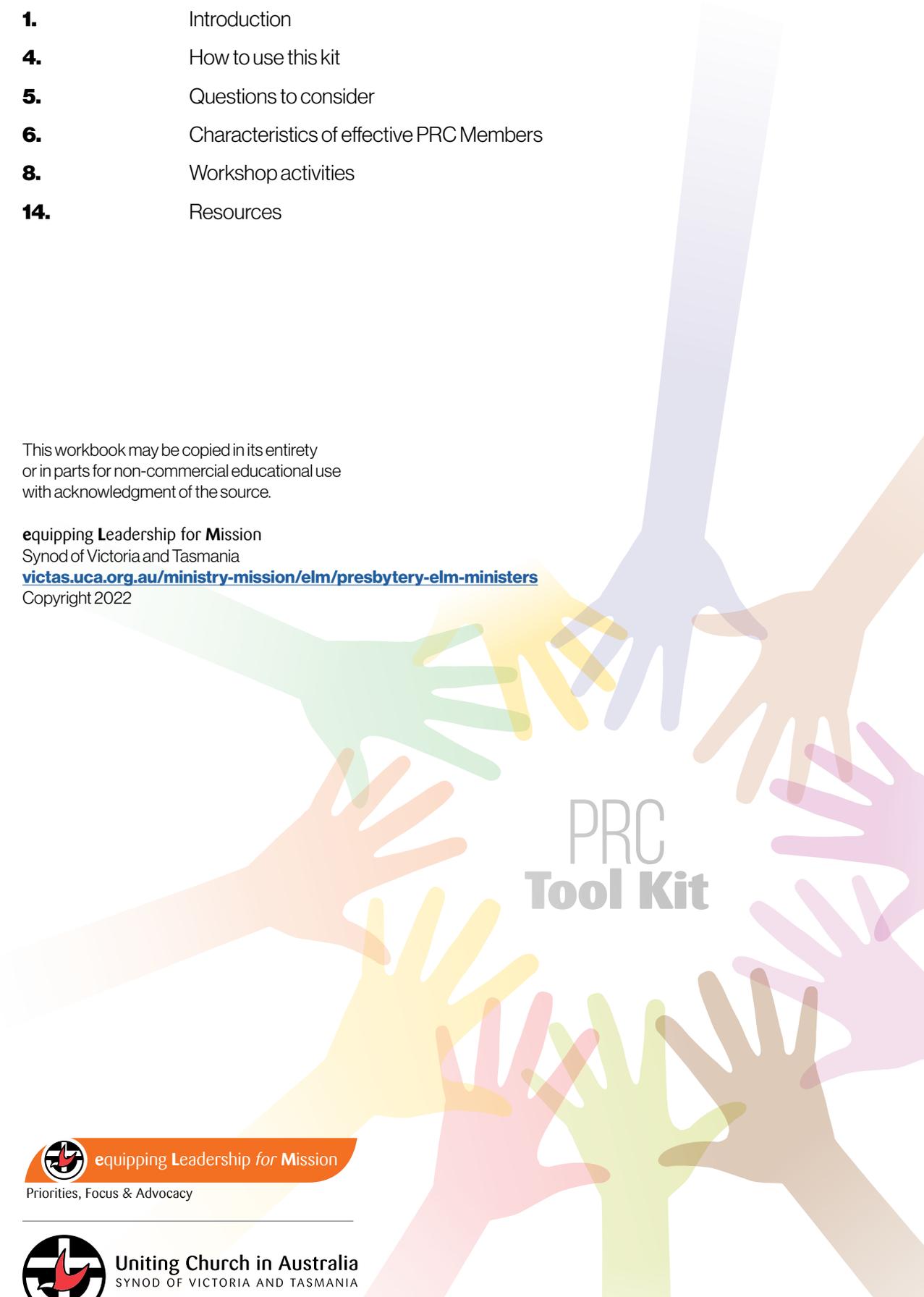
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equipping Leadership for Mission
Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

victas.uca.org.au/ministry-mission/elm/presbytery-elm-ministers

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PRC Tool Kit



Introduction to the Pastoral Relation Committee Tool Kit

As a new or ongoing member of the Pastoral Relations Committee [PRC] of your presbytery you are thanked and appreciated. The PRC is a committee within the presbytery that offers an opportunity to be part of a team of PRC members that are responsible for a variety of activities within the church. Members of PRC, like all of our committees, need to be able to work as part of a team. This is essential for the good ordering of the committee and ultimately the church. PRCs at times can be responsible for some difficult and challenging decisions. These decisions are often made on the advice and in consultation with the Presbytery Minister Pastoral Care [PMPC]. You may have been in a situation where you have accompanied the PMPC on a difficult pastoral visit and wondering what you have to contribute to this discussion. The fact that you have been nominated and accepted to be part of PRC suggests that you are considered to be the right person for the task: back yourself and believe in yourself!

This PRC tool kit is designed to give you a greater understanding of the role of PRC and some skills training that can be helpful in your role as a PRC member.

Included in the kit are:

- The role and responsibilities of PRC as recognised in the Constitution and Regulations of the Uniting Church in Australia.
- Notes on conversations and power in difficult situations.
- Workshop ideas that enable participants to gain practical experience in communication skills.
- The use of “I” statements as an aid to greater communication.
- Ten role play/scenario situations.

Some options in how to use this kit:

- Spend some time in each meeting engaging with a part of the exercises. e.g. you might spend some time with the role plays or the “I” statements.
- Come together as a PRC as an educational gathering to work through the exercises.

This resource should be used in conjunction with the [“Meeting Together Well”](#) resource.

Above all we hope that you find this PRC Tool Kit a helpful aid to making your PRC confident and understanding of their role and the meetings are fulfilling for all members.



How to use this tool kit

- Create a time in a regular PRC meeting to do one or more of the activities.
- Or a half or full day workshop.
- Choose a facilitator to guide you through the activities.
- Allow plenty of time for discussion.

Leaders Notes

It is important that all participants feel safe.

Set the chairs in a circle.

Create a centre focus. e.g. a small table, candle, cross, Bible, symbol of your congregation / PRC, etc

Gathering Ritual Prayer or Meditation

Begin the session with a gathering ritual.

(See page 6 Section 3 "The Body of Christ" in [Meeting Together Workbook](#))

Creating a safe space

Creating a safe space. This involves ensuring that people are treated fairly and that the dignity of all parties is respected

Establish ground rules. This could include a time limit for meeting and time limits for speaking.

Consider: Spaces on zoom meetings, regular breaks, negotiation about small groups, permission to leave, conflict of Interest people may be asked to go into the waiting room, having a co-host who is not the chair or the secretary to manage, teach basic skills, and in hybrid meetings the chair may need to check with both on-line and in real life are reaching consensus.

Questions to consider in creating a safe space for the meeting:

- What do you need to attend to be fully present to, to be yourself in this meeting? (Silent reflection)
- What do you require from the other PRC members for this to be a productive meeting?

Write the answers to question 2 on a white board for all to see. Each member of the group may be asked to agree to these as guidelines for the meeting.

Community Building:

Choose one of the Community Building Ideas in the [Meeting Together Kit \(17 pg 24\)](#)

Decision Making Processes:

A three stage process for decision making can assist with creating a safe process for meetings. This can be done in a single meeting, or over several gatherings:

- Information sharing - Information is shared, clarification is sought, and requests for additional information may be made.
- Deliberation - Discussion of perspectives, further options, and refining proposed decisions. This clarification may be done in small groups.
- Decision making - Using a formal decision making process that is agreed by the group, normally a consensus process.

(For more details, see the [UCA Manual for Meetings](#))

Questions to consider

See workshop suggestions

- What gifts and graces do I bring to my presbytery's PRC?
- What are my thoughts and feelings prior to each meeting?
- Am I equipped to be fully present to each discussion in the meeting?
- How do I cope in difficult meetings and situations?
- What is my response to difficult meetings and situations?

Some basic guidelines to consider during and post the meeting

- Check with participants that there is agreement for why the meeting is happening.
- Check if we are seeking a solution.
- Active listening is required. This involves affirming what has been said and checking what you have heard.
- Make "I" statements. Focus on the individuals feelings and responses. E.g. – when x happened, I felt...
- If a solution is sought for an issue, brainstorming solutions can be helpful.
- What are all the perspectives that may need to be considered? Think about the consequences of the decision you have made and how this effects different people involved. What are the viewpoints involved? Is there a better solution for them? How can you prepare them? Who do you need to follow up?
- How do we maintain privacy for the parties involved while working through the councils of the church?
- Do we expect conflict based on these decisions? How will we manage the conflicts?
- How has this been resolved elsewhere? Other presbyteries? Other congregations facing similar issues?
- Seek a plan for going forward. Seek agreement and commitment to enacting the plan.
- Make a time to evaluate how things have gone.

Process for an Intervention Meeting

- Choose a setting appropriately neutral for the task.
- Create a safe space.
- Arrange the seating in an inclusive way. eg. a circle.
- Arrange for two members of PRC to attend the meeting (one member to be note taker).
- Inform the minister/congregation member/church council the reason for the meeting.
- Begin the meeting in prayer.
- Listen, listen, listen!
- Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak to the concern.
- At the conclusion of the meeting decide on agreed next steps and a future meeting date.



Characteristics of effective PRC Members

For prospective members

Do you have a love of the church and her people?

Do you have a concern pastorally for the care of congregations and ministers within the Presbytery?

Do you like to be part of a discerning community?

Do you have a willingness to dig deeper into the issues facing the presbytery in our modern times?

The Pastoral Relations Committee has responsibility for the care and oversight of congregations and ministry agents within the Presbytery. The Pastoral Relations Committee also works with congregations, ministers and other ministry agents on matters relating to ministry positions, placements and vacancies. This Committee meets monthly, and occasionally has additional meetings when required. See Regulations 3.7.3 membership & responsibilities.

The skills identified as being important for the Pastoral Relations Committee are these:

- Ability to work as a team person;
- Appreciation of both presbytery and congregational issues.
- Experience in the life of the Uniting Church;
- Ongoing awareness of the practical mission priorities of the Presbytery;
- Able to maintain strict confidentiality;
- A Self-Awareness;
- A willingness to participate or engage;
- A willingness to learn and grow as a person;
- Willingness to participate in task group and sub-committee, and understanding of the various ministries of the Uniting Church.
- Specialists can be called into add extra-skills into the PRC discernment.

An effective PRC requires a range of skills amongst its members collectively.

An awareness of the ways in which the Presbytery is:

- Called to support both congregations and ministers;
- Called to engage actively in conversations about complex issues;

If your answer is yes to all and any of these questions then the PRC (Pastoral relations Committee) may be the place to exercise your gifts and graces for ministry.

For more information about the role of PRC contact the chair of your PRC or the Presbytery Minister, Pastoral Care.

The work of the PRC

What types of conversations may you have as a PRC member?

Often there are many types of conversation as part of PRC work:

- The difficult conversation between PRC and a minister/congregational leader/congregational group.
- A facilitated or mediated conversation between two or more people where tension exists.
- Joint Nominating Committee conversation.

- Life and Witness conversations.
- Extension of placement /Vitality of Call.
- Suitability for placement.
- Supporting the chairperson in managing complaints.
- The Confidential Matters Register. (CMR)

If tension has become out-and-out conflict a PRC may need to consider more qualified people with mediation skills.

Risky assumptions:

- We assume we have been understood by others.
- We assume that we can understand others if we just listen hard enough.
- We assume other people perceive the world the same way that we do.
- We assume that other people attach the same meanings to words that we do.
- We assume that other people will have the same reactions to things that we do.

There are many easily accessed resources on the internet that can assist with basic do/do not guides for working in these spaces.

Poor Behaviour

There are many types of poor behaviour.

Not all poor behaviour is bullying. A definition of bullying is repeated behaviours or comments that make you feel unsafe. If it is agreed that the behaviour is bullying, advice may be needed from the Culture of Safety unit.

Where the poor behaviour is sexual misconduct, advice must be sought from the Synod Culture of Safety unit.

There are many places where poor behaviour can occur in the church. The Assembly has produced a Code of Conduct for Lay People. PRC's should be familiar with this and ensure that it is part of the culture of all of the Presbyteries congregations.

The Synod Culture of Safety unit is always a go to contact when we are in uncertain waters. The Culture of Safety unit can be found by [clicking here](#)

See Poor Behaviour in the [Meeting Together](#) and do some discernment about the types of poor behaviours.

Understanding Power

PRCs will regularly deal with Congregational leaders that exercise power in a variety of ways. It is helpful for PRCs to be aware of the different types of Power.

Pilgrim College/eLM regularly offers Leadership courses. While not all PRC members are able to attend a full course, PRCs could seek to have a workshop that is facilitated through eLM that can help a PRCs to be more equipped to understand the different uses of power it might encounter.

See [Manual for Meetings](#) & [Meeting Together](#)

Workshop Activities

Leaders and committee member notes

Method	Equipment/Time
<p>Introduce yourself.</p> <p>Setting Group Guidelines. What are the groups expectations of behaviour?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name something this group does not know about you. Ask each participant to name for a guide line. Facilitator writes guidelines up for all to see. The group must agree on the guidelines. <p>x 10 minutes</p>
<p>Choose an image that represents your feeling to being on PRC. Share with the person next to you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Photos supplied in the kit. <p>x 20 minutes</p>
<p>What role do you understand the PRC has within the presbytery?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In groups of three write down your understanding of PRC. One thought per Post It Note. Place your notes on wall when finished. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post It Notes. Pens. <p>x 20 minutes</p>
<p>Individually read groups thoughts of the role of PRC. Cluster the Post It notes into similar themes.</p>	<p>x 20 minutes</p>
<p>Checking out the Regulations printed in this resource.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do the regulations say about the role of PRC. How did you do? Give yourselves a score out of 10. Check in: What did you notice? 	<p>Hand out or one for each participant. Responsibilities of PRC.</p> <p>x 20 minutes</p>
Break x 15 minutes	
Skill Development	
<p>Listening Skills.</p> <p>With a partner. Choose person A and person B. Person A is going to talk for 1 minute on a topic. Person b is going to talk for 1 minute on a different topic.</p> <p>Discussion: Safe space.</p>	<p>Time keeper.</p> <p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (PA) What I had for breakfast. (PB) What is under my bed. (PA) Apples. (PB) Cleaning the house. (PA & B) How would you go about difficulty conversation? (PA & B) What does a safe space mean for you. How would you establish a safe space in a meeting? <p>Notice: What is it like to talk/listen uninterrupted?</p>
<p>Introduction to "I" Statements.</p>	<p>See "I" statements training resource Pg 10.</p>
<p>Managing Bad Behaviours.</p>	<p>"Code of Conduct for Lay leaders".</p>

PRC and The Regulations:

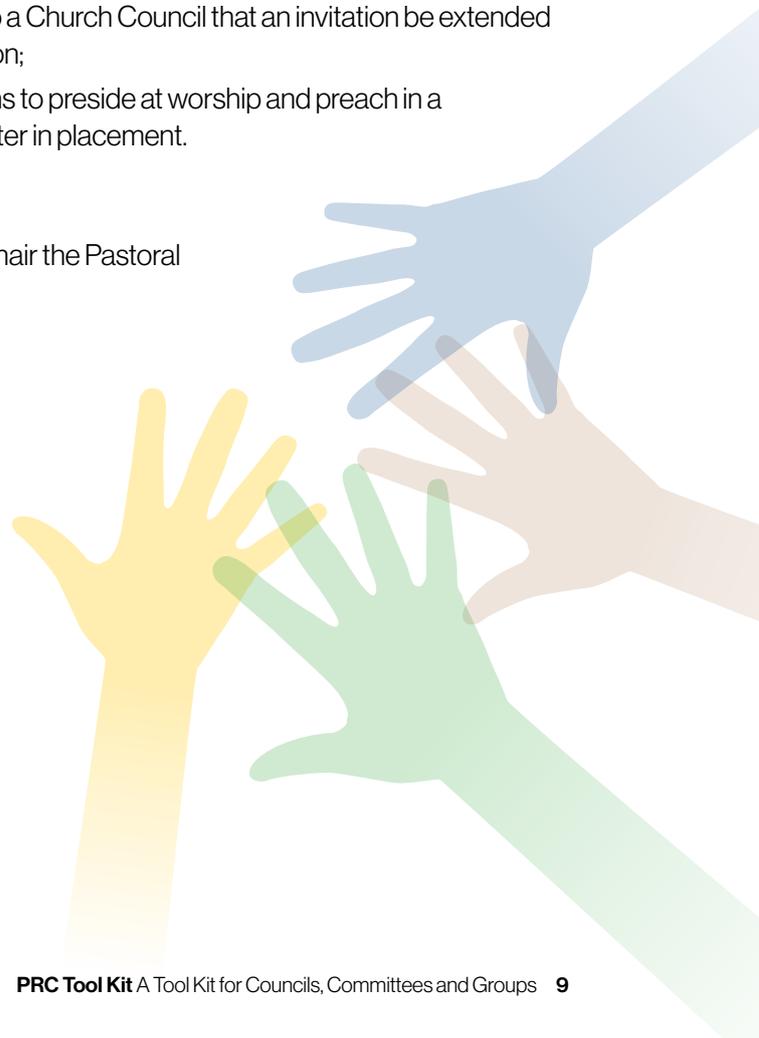
PRC is one of the few mandated committees in the UCA regulations. As such it has a suite of responsibilities set out in Regulation 3.7.3.

Responsibilities

- (b) The responsibilities of the Pastoral Relations Committee shall include:
- (i) overseeing on behalf of the Presbytery the pastoral relations between the Ministers, Lay Pastors, Youth Workers, Community Ministers and Pastors and Congregations within the Presbytery;
 - (ii) being accessible to Ministers, Lay Pastors, Youth Workers, Community Ministers and Pastors and Congregational representatives for the purpose of giving counsel on matters relating to pastoral relationships and responsibilities;
 - (iii) counselling Ministers, Lay Pastors, Youth Workers, Community Ministers and Pastors for their encouragement and enrichment in the fulfillment of their ministries, including reference to the Code of Ethics;
 - (iv) providing such reports as may be required by the Presbytery, with due regard to the confidentiality of information given to the Committee;
 - (v) conferring with Ministers, Lay Pastors, Youth Workers, Community Ministers, Pastors and Congregations to ascertain relevant information in all cases where changes in placement or appointment are involved and advising the Presbytery regarding those matters;
 - (vi) dealing with matters relating to the placement or appointment of Ministers, Lay Pastors, Youth Workers, Community Minister and Pastors as may be delegated to it;
 - (vii) dealing with complaints as set out in the Regulations on Church Discipline;
 - (viii) making provision for the appropriate pastoral support and accountability of Ministers, Lay Pastors, Youth Workers, Community Ministers and Pastors in active service who are not in approved placements;
 - (ix) reviewing the list of Ministers, Lay Pastors or Youth Workers under its care who are awaiting placement with a view to assisting them either to return to active service or to make other appropriate vocational decisions or suggesting to a Church Council that an invitation be extended to the Minister to become a Minister-in-Association;
 - (x) determining the manner of appointment of persons to preside at worship and preach in a Congregation during times when there is no Minister in placement.

Chairperson

- (c) The Presbytery shall appoint one of its members to chair the Pastoral Relations Committee.



“I” Statements.

Question: When someone needs to tell you something you are doing is not suiting them, what ways of communicating that would annoy you?

Being attacked.

Being blamed.

Not giving reasons.

Being told what to do.

“I” statements are a way of minimising the above reactions as much as possible. In situations where we are challenged, we have a choice between a knee jerk **reacting** or “I” statement **responding**.

Use an “I” statement when:

- you experience a strong emotional response to a situation.
- you are irritated or annoyed by another person or by something that has happened.
- you are wanting to tell another person what you think of their behaviour, or what you do not want them to do.

The aim of the “I” statement is to make a **clear, clean, concise** statements of **your experience of an event or incident** in ways that another person or group of people will hear and not need to become defensive.

The parts of an “I” statement intro and index are:

When ...	(neutral description)
I feel ...	(no blame)
Because I ...	(Your problem)
Or what I'd like is that I ...	(no expectation)

Exploring “I” statements a bit further

When ... is simply a statement of fact. And as such must not have any blaming, emotive words or judgement attached to it. The situation that you find, difficult, bad or offensive may not be understood this way by the person. A neutral description is easier to be understood as valid rather than being judgemental about it.

I feel ... uses a word or a few words on your feeling response. Often you will be feeling angry, frustrated, overwhelmed, pressured, excluded, not listened to. You may use “feeling” to describe an action you will take: “I feel like withdrawing”, “I feel like I want to end this partnership”. This is ok; the important thing is that your response is about you and your feelings.

N.B. The feeling is owned by the person making the statement. Implies no blaming, or shaming of the other person. They did not make you feel this way. This is your response.

Your feelings are always validated because they are your feelings.

The final part of the statement styles why you feel that way. (your problem) and / or the outcome you desire. Of course, you may state this but there is no guarantee that the person will do it! Here it is important to have no expectation that the other person will change their behaviour. Hence the statement: “what I would like is that I....” this statement gives the other person an understanding of what the best outcome would be for you.

Like anything new, your statements may sound overformal. You are invited to to practice making “I statements” in time you will find your own style of a more comfortable way of making these statements with neutral descriptions and no blame and not demanding that the person does it your way.

Some examples:

A clean, clear, concise "I" statement:

"When you start talking before I finish my sentence I feel frustrated and what I'd like is to complete what I want to say"

An unclear "I" statement:

"When you interrupt me, you make me angry with you and you had better stop it or else!"

The point of the "I" statement is that the focus is on you and how the situation impacts you and what you want to be able to do. It is ok to use only part of the "I statement" e.g. I feel frustrated or "I'd like to complete what I want to say"

An exercise:

- Find a partner.
- Person One chooses a pet hate. e.g. Untidy house, tooth paste cap left off the tube.
- Person two makes an "I" statement that is an accusation and angry in response to person ones pet hate.
- Person two reframes their "I" statement to a non-judgemental "I" statement.
- Swap over and repeat the exercise.
- Take time at the end to notice that difference. (You might like to discuss thoughts, feelings, body language.)

*Material supplied from the Conflict Resolution network of NSW.
Trainers' manual 8th edition. (1993)
Written by: Helena Cornelius, Shoshana Faire and Sonya Hall.*



Scenarios

Scenario 1

John is the minister in a Cluster of congregations. He offers great worship and his preaching is widely acknowledged to be one of his strengths. John has a passion for Mission and seeks to continually inspire his congregations to be more engaged. John can be polarising in his zeal. This has led to conflict between John and some members of some congregations. PRC is contacted by both John and members of his congregations expressing difficulty in the relationship. It is clear that both minister and church members are hurt and bruised. What steps might PRC take?

Scenario 2

Matilda is a CALD minister. She has struggled to find a placement, but is called to a placement that has a good energy, engages well in the local community and shows a lot of potential. Matilda, and her husband, take up the placement. Very early there are challenges for Matilda and congregation. There is a disconnect in their expectations and it seems that Matilda's husband exercises significant influence with Matilda in her ministry engagements and decisions. The Church Council wants the placement to work, but there are challenges both parties are struggling to work through. The Church Council asks PRC for help.

Scenario 3

Michelle is the minister in a cluster of congregations. She is in a team ministry with two other ministers and the Cluster has a Cluster Council that oversees finance and property issues of the Cluster. Michelle has issues with the business approach used to run the cluster and finds herself in conflict with the Cluster leaders. The Cluster leaders are unsure how to work with Michelle and ask the PRC for help.

Scenario 4

A minister coming to the conclusion of his placement is having difficulty in acknowledging his retirement. PRC is tasked with engaging with the minister with the aim of helping her come to terms with retirement.

Scenario 5

Peter is a minister with a track record of difficulty in his placements, with two previous placements concluding early. Peter is again experiencing difficulty and his Church Council seeks advice from the PRC. The PRC determines to run a Life and Witness consultation (LWC). The leadership of the LWC is organised and a process agreed on when the PRC is notified that Peter has been placed on sick leave with serious mental health issues. Both the placement and the PRC recognise the urgency of getting the LWC underway and the LWC proceeds while Peter is on sick leave, effectively sidelining him. Decisions are made and a course of action is determined as Peter resumes from sick leave. Everyone agrees this process did not go well. What might the PRC have done differently? What resources might it have called on?

Scenario 6

We can not find a Fijian speaking minister for a congregation. The congregation has a lay leader Tevi who is willing to lead worship every week. Tevi is unfamiliar with UCA structure and is untrained as a worship leader. He preaches against women in leadership.



Scenario 7

Two congregations are preparing to share a minister for the next 5 years. One congregation has gentle leaders, who consult widely before coming to a decision. The second congregation has directive personalities who are task oriented and want the decision made quickly. The Presbytery Minister Pastoral Care asks the question how does s/he manage the process to bring the congregations together?

Scenario 8

A Mission study of a congregation reveals that the congregation are barely engaging in any mission. They spend all their time managing their own building and grounds. Their worship is traditional. The congregation size is 14 people. A nearby congregation is known for their missional outreach, however, they cannot afford a minister. They can afford a Full-Time minister. Does the PRC allow them to proceed to call? PRC observes that this is the perfect time to act, but getting the congregations working together could take a minimum of 6+ months, possibly requiring a second mission study for the neighbouring congregation.

Scenario 9

Congregation Big Town has had their last three ministers leave early. Now they are applying for their next minister. A concern has been raised about the treatment of ministers leading to early departures. How does PRC respond to this concern?

Scenario 10

A retired Minister with a reputation as a strong leader in the wider Uniting Church has been made chairperson of a Church Council and is leading the council in making decision, to the detriment of the new minister in placement. The new minister asks the Presbytery Minister for help. PRC now discern what action should be taken.



Resources

The following resources are available at:
the Assembly Resources web page ucaassembly.recollect.net.au

[Manual for Meetings](#)

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Code of Ethics](#)

Culture of Safety (UCA VicTas Synod)
03 9116 1434 | cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au
victas.uca.org.au/resources/ministry-and-people/culture-of-safety/

The Bethel Centre
59 Doncaster Road Balwyn North 3104
03 9859 8700 | support@bethelcentre.com.au
www.bethelcentre.com.au

[Meeting Together: A workbook for Committees, Councils and Groups](#)

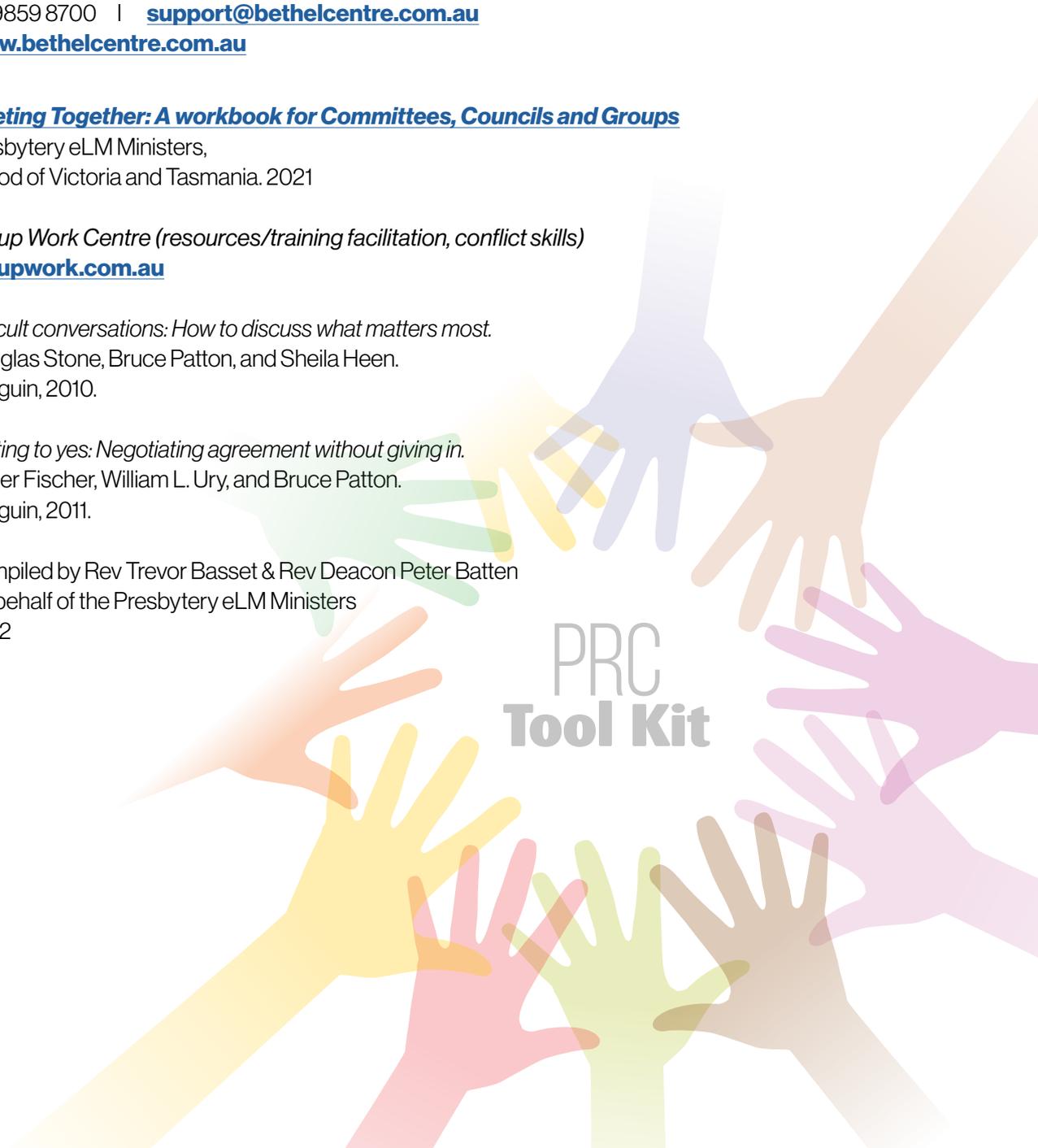
Presbytery eLM Ministers,
Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. 2021

Group Work Centre (resources/training facilitation, conflict skills)
groupwork.com.au

Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most.
Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen.
Penguin, 2010.

Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in.
Roger Fischer, William L. Ury, and Bruce Patton.
Penguin, 2011.

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On behalf of the Presbytery eLM Ministers
2022



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