

Report of the Task Group to Review Ministerial Education

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Preamble

The Task Group to Review Ministerial Education was established to address two concerns:

- i. The Assembly Development Committee's Review of the Distribution of Resources (carried out from 1991 to 1994) highlighted the significant proportion of church funds dedicated to the training of people in specified ministries, particularly Ministers of the Word. The Committee raised the question as to whether the present system of ministerial education, with colleges and staff in nearly all synods, was the best way to prepare people for ministry, and whether the church could continue this financial commitment.
- ii. A group within the NSW Synod had been asked to consider what changes might be needed to the Regulations to enable the church to facilitate the establishment of new communities of faith in the 1990s and beyond. That group raised concerns about whether the present system of Ministerial Education was providing Ministers with the knowledge and skills needed in a changing world. Particular concern was expressed about the need to focus more consciously on the mission task of the church, and to ensure that Ministers had the skills needed to carry out the ordinary, day-to-day tasks of Ministry.

The concerns of both groups were brought together in the resolution to establish a review of Ministerial Education, the full text of which is found in Appendix 1. The resolution specifically focuses on the education of Ministers of the Word, Deacons and Youth Workers. While the Task Group has not been unmindful of the issues of church resources, it has clearly been more concerned for the issue of mission.

The Assembly Standing Committee appointed the following members of the Task Group:

Charles Biggs (Faculty, SA)
Norma Brown (NSW)
Jenny Byrnes (Vic)
John Roulston (Qld)

Alastair Blake (MEC, SA)
Chris Budden (Convenor, NSW)
Tina Rendell (NSW)
Bernard Thorogood (Secretary, NSW)

The group met on six occasions, each time for a day and a half. The NSW members met on one other occasion to finalise a draft, and there was a telephone conference before the Preliminary Report was released. In responding to its task, the Group has sought to consult as widely as possible.

Each Synod and College was visited by two members early in the Group's life, to gather information and ideas and to gain a better understanding of what was occurring in the colleges. A second round of visits was made to hear responses to the Preliminary Report, which was distributed at the end of June 1996. The Ministerial Education Commission (MEC) shared its experience and the reports of its visitations of the colleges.

The Group invited submissions from people with expertise and fresh experience. Material from the Church Life Survey and from churches in Canada, USA and the UK was received. Many individuals, parishes, presbyteries, Synod officers and boards, colleges and Assembly agencies shared their insights. Attention was given to the Ministerial Formation Journal, and to material from WCC Unit 1: Unity and Renewal - Ecumenical Theological education.

These contributions were greatly valued. They have been noted and this Report bears witness to the effect that the responses have had on our thinking.

At the point it received the Task Group's Report, the ASC requested some changes aimed at clarifying some sections of the report and simplifying the proposals. This task was placed in the hands of four members of the ASC (Charles Biggs, Chris Budden, Gregor Henderson and Carolyn Kitto).

Terms

We use the word '**ministry**' for the ministry of the whole people of God, and '**Minister**' and '**Ministry**' for Ministry of the Word, Deacons and Youth Workers.

We use '**church**' for the whole body of Christian people, '**Church**' in referring to a particular denomination.

When the Report speaks of a year of study, this means the equivalent of a year of study. The study may be carried out over a shorter or longer period, the important outcome being that the person fulfils the goals for that period of study.

DTE - Distance Theological Education

MEC - The Ministerial Education Commission of the Assembly

MEB - The Ministerial Education Boards, or their equivalents, of the Synods

The Task Group has used the term '**Aboriginal and Islander people**' to include Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Island people, and people from other island groups who are accepted into such bodies as the UAICC.

The Task Group wishes to emphasise that **settlement** is not necessarily a parish, but refers to the diversity of options available to people in Ministry.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Terms of Reference of the Task Group covered a broad range of issues. In summary, it asked for:

- (i) an evaluation of present activities and relationships in theological education, the standards of the colleges, and of alternative models for theological education (e.g. DTE, action-reflection apprenticeship).
- (ii) consideration of the number and location of colleges, and of a range of staffing issues.
- (iii) an assessment of the church's capacity to continue to resource Ministerial Education.
- (iv) consideration of issues relating to numbers, selection and assistance for candidates, and the way they are settled after ordination.

Each of these issues has received careful consideration by the Task Group, and there are proposals relating to each one within the report.

The task of evaluating present Ministerial Education (Terms of Reference (a)) was difficult, for reasons which are explained in the Introduction to the report. However, a number of concerns did become clear as the Task Group listened to various groups in the church:

- (i) a belief that Ministers did not always have enough practical skills for daily Ministry, or the capacity to relate their core learnings (e.g. biblical exegesis or studies in Christology) to everyday situations.

- (ii) questions about whether Ministers are being prepared for a post-Christian society where the church needs to be more consciously seeking to express its message in terms understood by unchurched people.
- (iii) concern that Ministers are not always committed to continuing education and the need for ongoing development of the Ministry.
- (iv) the need for more flexibility in what is required so as to take better account of prior learning and experience, and the personal situation of candidates.

The Uniting Church recognises itself as a pilgrim people, always open to renewal. This report is shaped by a perception that significant change in Australian society demands new forms of ministry, and new ways to prepare people for particular Ministries.

In responding to that need, the Report:

- i. describes the vision which should provide the basis and direction, the underlying reason for the church and its Ministry. The first section of the Report explores the mission of God, the mission and ministry of the church, the need for lifelong formation in Christian faith and discipleship, and the need to take seriously the ministry of the whole people of God.
- ii. highlights some of the important features of the context in which the UCA ministers, with particular reference to Aboriginal and Torres Islander people and Multiculturalism; a mission context in transition; a changing educational context; and some particular features of the UCA. Central to this section are comments on the implications for the church of a renewed awareness that we live in a post-Christian society where the church must be more consciously committed to witness to Christ in the wider community.
- iii. suggests what sort of Ministry the church requires as it seeks to live the vision in our context. That is, the Report seeks to indicate what principles should shape the process of Ministerial Education, and what might be the expected outcomes of Ministerial Education.

The report then offers proposals for a way that Ministerial Education could be shaped to best achieve these outcomes. This proposal is really in two parts:

- i. A suggestion relating to the process by which people discern their call to ministry, candidate, undertake core learnings, participate in a period of supervised practice of Ministry, and commit themselves to continuing education. This section covers such issues as time in college, use of DTE and other learning methods, recognition of prior learning, the need for mentoring as part of ongoing learning, and the use of portfolios to show learning. It stresses the need for flexibility.

Included in this section are a few specific suggestions relating to course content, teaching methodology, and continuing education requirements.

- ii. A suggestion as to the extent to which the Assembly should determine the details of the curriculum to be taught in each college.

The Task Group gave a great deal of consideration to the question of change, and the way in which the many parties - MEC, synods, MEBs, Colleges, candidates and various settlement situations - could be involved in such change. To what extent should the church provide very detailed directions regarding courses, etc? Each college has its own particular history, ethos and contribution to Ministerial Education. There is a great deal of debate about what are core areas, and appropriate directions. While it is important that the colleges be responsive to the church, there is always the danger of Ministerial Education being shaped by the latest trend in the church.

The Task Group believed that the best approach was for the church to spell out its vision, and to describe the outcomes it expected from Ministerial Education, and then ask the Colleges to indicate how they will achieve these outcomes.

Crucial to this process is a mechanism that will allow the church to ensure that Colleges are actually meeting the stated goals of the church. At present this is done through the MEC. The Report suggests a slight restructuring of the MEC, and proposes that two members of this Task Group be added to the MEC for the next three years while the new model of Ministerial Education is being implemented.

The Task Group was asked to consider the number and location of Colleges. There were issues such as the resources needed to support Colleges in most synods, the role of the colleges in providing education for non-candidates, the relationship of colleges to universities and other churches, the contribution of colleges staff to the life of the synods, and the upheaval for candidates and their families that would be involved in reducing the number of colleges. The Task Group believes that there is little financial saving to be gained from reducing the number of colleges and that, in general, the disadvantages of fewer colleges outweighs the advantages. On the other hand, there may be advantages in a reconsideration of the location of colleges within a synod.

There are a number of ways that people could prepare for Ministry in this model. On the next page there is a 'typical' example, that might help us to grasp what is possible.

In order to implement the new model, the Task Group offers the following proposals.

1. *in order to be clear about the vision that shapes and gives direction to Ministerial Education, it is proposed that the Assembly affirm that the controlling vision for all education for ministry in the Uniting Church is:*
 - * participation of the whole people of God in the mission of God revealed in Jesus Christ,
 - * the importance of lifelong learning and formation in the Christian life for all people,
 - * the shared ministry of the people of God.

2. *a crucial issue for Ministerial Education is: what sort of Ministers does the church seek at this point in our history? The church needs to be clear about this, both for its own sake and to give guidance to theological colleges. It is proposed that the Assembly affirm the six goals for Ministerial education set out in section 5.1 of the Report, noting that the UCA seeks to form Ministers who:*
 - (i) have a deep faith in Jesus Christ, are committed to growth in their own faith and to a spirituality that will sustain their lives;
 - (ii) have a critical understanding of the nature of ministry and mission, and an appreciation of the importance of a conscious commitment to and participation in the task of mission through worship, witness and service;
 - (iii) have a critical knowledge of the Christian tradition, and are able to help the church shape its future in the light of that tradition;
 - (iv) are equipped to help the church discover its identity and lead the church in mission in a rapidly changing and diverse cultural and social context;
 - (v) have skills for the practice of day-to-day Ministry;
 - (vi) are able to engage the tasks of Ministry with critical imagination, courage, theological judgement and self-reflection;

What this might mean: a 'typical' example

A group of people in a parish were exploring the demands of being the church in a new housing area. They began to wonder about what sort of ministry they should be involved in, and how they can discern God's will for them.

They approached the Synod and sought to be involved in a period of discernment, while remaining in their present employment. Over the next couple of years they did some basic biblical and theological studies, explored some issues that were of particular interest to them, and undertook a period of field education (one person did theirs as evangelism consultant for the parish, and another spent time in a community justice centre). They studied through a mixture of DTE, intensives at the Theological College, and self-directed study. All the time they reflected together about what God and the church wanted them to do.

Jon came to believe that he should become a Deacon, so he candidated. Presbytery arranged an interview, drawing on information provided by the local Minister and Elders Council, and made a recommendation to Synod. Synod Selection Panel made a decision and reported to Presbytery. A significant factor in the decision was the report on the period of discernment, and Jon's reflections on that period.

Having been accepted as a candidate, and having already attained the necessary educational level to enter the second phase, Jon began core studies. He requested the local MEB to reduce the on-campus time to one year, but it was decided that two of the three years of study needed to be on-campus. The year off-campus was completed by DTE (over two years). During the core period he studied biblical, theological, historical, pastoral and liturgical subjects, completed some field education with a couple of community-based groups, gained an awareness of social and cultural issues, gained practical skills in Ministry, and further developed his spiritual life and leadership capacity. Particular emphasis was given to mission, and he spent time exploring his theological understanding of local mission and gaining skills in developing the local congregation's ability to share in such mission.

Jon really enjoyed this time because of the adult learning process, the variety of learning styles (e.g. case studies, action-reflection processes, tutorials and even the occasional lecture), and the outcomes based approach. There was much less emphasis on completing subjects than there was on being able to show that he had attained the expected knowledge, skills and personal growth.

Having completed this period Jon was appointed to work in a community-based church housing project for one year, with 25% of time given to further study. It was a good time to complete the theological degree which had been started during the period of discernment.

Having successfully completed the expected outcomes for this year, ordination followed. This didn't mean that he knew everything there was to know and that study could stop. Learning and growth are lifelong, and there was an expectation that a five-year continuing education contract would be entered into with the community housing group he appointed to. No continuing education, no further appointment, the same as every other person who wishes to do their work properly in a changing world.

Through the whole period of his preparation, Jon really appreciated the support and encouragement of the mentors who journeyed with him. Even after ordination he sought out a mentor, and was thinking about a supervisor.

and who exercise this Ministry within the ministry of the whole people of God.

3. *It is proposed that the Assembly affirm the essential principles set out below, which are detailed in section 6.1 of the Report:*
 - (i) Formation for Ministry involves spiritual formation, vocational formation and personal formation.
 - (ii) Ministry education is a lifelong process.
 - (iii) Ministry education needs to involve appropriate adult education processes.
 - (iv) The discernment of God's call is an ongoing process.
 - (v) Ministerial education needs to occur within an inclusive community.
 - (vi) People bring a wealth of previous experience and learning, and there needs to be recognition of prior learning.
 - (vii) Mentoring is crucial at each stage of preparation for ministry.
 - (viii) Assessment needs to be based on evidence that a person has achieved certain agreed outcomes.
 - (ix) People should receive appropriate recognition for completion of each stage of preparation for ministry.

4. *the Task Group was concerned to develop a more integrated and lifelong model of learning for ministry, of which Ministry was a part, and at the same time to ensure an adequate integration of theory and practice in preparation for Ministry.*

It is proposed that the best way for this to occur is for the Assembly to adopt the four phase framework of education for specified Ministries set out in section 6.2 of the report as the program to be followed in Ministerial Education:

 - * Phase One: A period of discernment
 - * Phase Two: The Core program
 - * Phase Three: The Licensed Year
 - * Phase Four: Continuing Education

5. *A number of things will need to occur to ensure that the proposals for Ministerial education are to implemented. It is proposed that these actions can be taken by the Standing Committee and the MEC.*
 - 5.1 *It is proposed that the Standing Committee be asked to approve the following amendments to Regulations on the advice of the Legal Reference Committee:*
 - i. the method of selection of candidates (Section 10.3), and authorisation of Presbyteries to licence candidates preparing for ordination, to provide oversight as they undertake a year of Ministry and to share in the assessment of their readiness for ordination on completion of that year.
 - ii. additions to Regulation 3.4.4 (the responsibilities of presbyteries), to include the task of Presbyteries regarding the Licensed Year (Section 6.2.3 of Report).
 - iii. amendment to Regulation 2.2 16 to provide for membership of the MEC as set out in Section 12.2 of the Report.
 - iv. those amendments which are necessary to provide that Ministers and Youth Workers be not available for further settlement or appointment if they have not undertaken satisfactory continuing education in the previous five years
 - 5.2 *It is proposed that the Standing Committee be asked to explore the possibility of national co-ordination and/or networking regarding the number of candidates for Minister of Word, Deacon and Youth Worker.*

- 5.3 *the Task Group believes that courses will be developed most appropriately by both entrusting the colleges to indicate the way in which their courses fulfil the critical principles and meet the goals, and by indicating some courses that are necessary. In order to achieve this it is proposed that the MEC be asked to:*
- i. ensure that all Colleges provide a course on the theology and planning of local mission and evangelism, and that this course be compulsory for all candidates.
 - ii. ensure that each theological college indicate to the MEC how the college's developing curriculum, educational methods and variety of courses enables the Church to achieve its goals for Ministerial education, with particular reference to the way people develop their understanding of Scripture as evangelical word, to mission and evangelism, and to the practical skills needed for Ministry. [Section 6.2.2 (b) of Report]
 - iii. ensure that each college continues to develop adult learning processes in the planning and presentation of courses, and enables college staff to extend their skills in adult education principles and processes.
 - iv. explore ways in which the appointment of a Deacon Education Co-ordinator may be made to assist all colleges to prepare annual events and to keep an up-to-date listing of resources, and to report to the Standing Committee (the need for the position to be reviewed after five years by the MEC). [Section 7]
 - v. explore ways in which the appointment of a Youth Worker Education Co-ordinator may be made to assist the colleges and MEBs, and to report to the Standing Committee (the need for the position to be reviewed after five years by the MEC).
 - vi. report to the 2000 Assembly on the changes that have occurred, and what further changes are required.
- 5.4 *It is proposed that, notwithstanding Regulation 2.2.16, the Assembly appoint two members of the Ministerial Education Task Group as additional members of the MEC for the next three years.*
6. *Continuing Education is considered an integral part of Ministry, and Presbyteries have a crucial role in ensuring that Ministers and undertake such education. It is proposed that:*
all Ministers and Youth Workers be required to enter into five year continuing education contracts with their Presbytery or other appointing body, and that no further settlement or appointment be possible if the Minister or Youth Worker has not undertaken satisfactory education in the previous five years.
7. *The Uniting Church is a multicultural church in a multicultural society. There is a need for the church to equip people to better live with and give expression to this reality. It is proposed that:*
synods, MEBs and colleges be asked to implement and further develop a cross-cultural component in ministry education programs, provide field education in multicultural/cross cultural situations, encourage staff to develop an understanding of the issues, offer support and assistance that promotes equity in theological education, and ensure that Faculties reflect the ethnic diversity of the church and community [Section 9]
8. *The Task Group was asked to consider a number of issues relating to the appointment and conditions of staff, the location of Colleges, and the encouragement of postgraduate study. It is proposed that the Assembly recommend to synods and college governing bodies that they adopt the following policies:*

- i. that, wherever possible, the colleges provide education for ministry in an ecumenical context. [Section 10.7]
 - ii. that faculty appointments be made for an initial term of seven years and that following review re-appointments for terms of five years may be made. The review of appointments should keep in mind the university and ecumenical contexts, and the range of expertise available across all the colleges in the UCA. [Section 10.2]
 - iii. that where a loading above basic stipend is offered to teaching staff this should not exceed 15% of stipend, provided housing and other allowances are covered. [Section 10.2]
 - iv. that guidelines for sabbatical leave be in place, and that one of these guidelines is that staff be required to provide a report to the college at the completion of the leave. [Section 10. 2]
 - v. that colleges formally and systematically encourage those who are suitable to undertake postgraduate study, to offer advice about areas of study that may bring benefit for the life and mission of the church and, with the synod, seek funds to assist this study. [Section 10.5]
9. *Support for candidates varies across the synods, although each synod relies heavily on Austudy grants, an issue of some concern to the Task Group in the light of constant government cut-backs in support for such assistance. The church needs to explore other ways of supporting students. The Task Group proposes:*
that the Assembly recommend to synods that they adopt a maximum grant per candidate per annum of 40% of the minimum stipend. [Section 10.3]
10. *Aboriginal and Islander people have had very different experiences since European occupation, depending on their location and the nature of contact. Many have forged new identities which are quite different to those found in traditional cultural situations. This suggests a need for Ministerial education able to respond to diverse experiences and expectations, and for great care in expecting that Nungalinya College can provide basic education for all candidates. As a way of responding to this situation it is proposed that the Assembly:*
request the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress to
- a. assess the character, skills and knowledge which will be needed by Aboriginal and Islander candidates for ministry in each region of the Congress.
 - b. hold discussion with Nungalinya College and other Uniting Church theological colleges about any additional options needed in theological education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates, particularly those who will minister in non-traditional cultural situations.
 - c. make recommendations to the MEC. [Section 8]

2. INTRODUCTION

The Basis of Union acknowledges that the Uniting Church exists as a community which is built upon the one Lord Jesus Christ.

The Uniting Church acknowledges that the Church is able to live and endure through the changes of history only because its Lord comes, addresses, and deals with people in and through the news of his completed work. [para 4]

The church is always called to share in the life and purpose of Christ.

God in Christ has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation. The Church's call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself. [para 3]

The same paragraph reminds us that we are a pilgrim people, a people always on a journey towards God's promised goal, never allowing ourselves to believe that what we have is perfect or complete, always open to renewal and newness. Such openness applies to our understanding and practice of ministry, as to all dimensions of our life together.

This self-understanding shapes the way we seek to live in and understand our world. It means that we are always alert to the struggles, needs, alienation, search for wholeness, exhilaration, vision and love which mark people's lives, the points where the church may with integrity proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

It is this awareness of change and the need for renewal and newness that has shaped this Report. The Task Group has been less concerned to provide a detailed critique of what has occurred in Ministerial Education, than to suggest appropriate ways forward in a changing context. The Task Group also recognises the need to be more consciously committed to mission.

It is clear that the colleges have all continued to struggle with their role in Ministerial education, and have changed to meet their understanding of the needs of the church. There are major variations between colleges on what they perceive to be the best response, and on their openness to change. As a major partner in the church's formation of people for Ministry, the colleges are to be commended for their work, and encouraged to continue the search for appropriate developments in ministerial education, which will help the church prepare for pioneering ministries in a sceptical age.

The Task Group sought responses regarding the adequacy of the present form of Ministerial education through a number of different questionnaires (a questionnaire to all Ministers, a separate survey of those who had been in Ministry for 3-5 years, and for those who had resigned in the last five years). It held conversations with groups of migrant-ethnic ministers. It issued an open invitation through Synod magazines for submissions, wrote to a number of people seeking responses, and explored the previous work of the National Church Life Survey and Hugh Mackay's report for the Development Committee. There was a high level of response, which shows the interest that there was in the Review.

While the responses were valuable in drawing the Task Group's attention to the issues which needed consideration, they were of limited assistance in providing an evaluation of the adequacy of present training for the following reasons:

- i. There is a great variation of philosophy and approach between the colleges, and no overall evaluation could take account of those differences.
- ii. The church has not been clear about the sort of Ministry it requires and, thus, there is no clear statement the goals or outcomes which would provide the basis for an evaluation.
- iii. Each of the colleges has been undergoing change, and it would be quite unfair to evaluate present practice on the basis of the experience of those who had been in college even five years ago.

- iv. There is ambiguity regarding the question: "from whose perspective should an evaluation be done - Congregations, Ministers, Colleges or the wider church (or even wider society)?"

Rather than attempting a detailed evaluation of present performance, the Task Group believed that it would be more beneficial to seek clarification of the goals and outcomes for Ministerial education so that there would be a basis for evaluating present practice, while suggesting what the Task Group believed would be the best sort of framework for Ministerial education.

Nevertheless, there were some comments that need to be taken seriously as the Colleges continue to respond to the needs of the church as we enter the 21st Century:

- i. In the balance of skills and knowledge, do Ministers obtain enough skills and practical knowledge for day to day Ministry, and the capacity to relate their knowledge to Ministry situations? Some skills mentioned were: administration skills, evangelism and mission, conflict resolution and counselling skills, cross-cultural ministry, and assisting the whole people to be in ministry.
- ii. Are people being prepared for Ministry in the post-Christian situation where there is a need for an emphasis on mission?
- iii. People were concerned that there be a more flexible and integrated educational program, the possibility of more action/reflection experiences, and more diverse field education experiences.
- iv. There was support for the need for continuing education and lifelong learning.

The Colleges are aware of these issues, and have begun to develop responses, responses which need to be tested against the broader issues raised in this Report.

The Task Group has sought to hear the concerns, and be aware of the Colleges' responses, as it has prepared this Report.

Whose perspectives shape our understanding of Ministerial Education?

A number of people and groups have a special interest in the process and outcome of Ministerial education, including the people in congregations who share ministry with Ministers, the wider church which uses Minister's skills, the Ministers, and the theological colleges. Each group has its particular needs and viewpoints. These perspectives plus the needs of the wider community must be carefully considered in forming our understanding of Ministerial education.

What is it that the Uniting Church wishes to achieve through Ministerial Education?

One of the issues raised by the colleges is that the Church has not been very clear about its underlying vision and goals for Ministerial education. It has left the colleges to develop these, and has then expressed concern about the sort of Ministers which the college is producing. The Task Group believes that the Church needs to be very clear about its vision and goals, so that the colleges are able to develop strategies to achieve the goals. This Report proceeds on that assumption.

The Report describes:

- i. **The vision** which we believe should shape Ministerial education, material that seeks to suggest why we should head in certain directions, why we would want to emphasise certain things. This section explores the mission of God, the mission and ministry of the church, and the vision we have of the ministry of the whole people and lifelong learning.

- ii. **The context** in which this vision is to find concrete expression, including the Australian context and the changing mission context.
- iii. **The goals of Ministerial education**, what we seek to achieve, the sort of Ministry we wish for in the light of our vision and context.
- iv. **A suggested framework to achieve these goals**, with many of the strategies in the theological education and Ministry Formation phase being entrusted to Colleges for development and explanation of how they achieve the goals.
- v. The Task Group's response to a **number of other important issues** which were referred to it.

As the Report has emerged, certain themes have become significant signposts along the way:

- * **Dependence on God is the ground of ministry, thanksgiving for Christ and witness to the good news its focus, and fellowship in the Spirit its context. Spiritual formation therefore undergirds all the educational processes.**
- * **The education of Ministers is set within the education of the whole people of God, so there is a mutual learning process as well as specialised programs for those called to particular service.**
- * **For all Christian people the learning process is lifelong and involves personal development and spiritual formation during all the years of discipleship.**
- * **We learn in many ways, through study, relationships, worship, social action, and reflection on our experiences. In education for ministry formal education and practical experience must constantly inform each other.**
- * **With the very diverse range of candidates for ministry there is no one course of study which can be right for all. Flexibility is necessary, with account taken of previous life experience and study.**
- * **By using a mixture of educational modes, including Distance Theological Education, we not only meet more personal situations, but help Ministers to prepare for their continuing education.**
- * **Ministerial education in Australia needs to take account of, and see as a given, the multi-cultural context of our society and the development of ecumenical courses and initiatives.**
- * **In the Uniting Church those who will be Ministers of the Word, Deacons and Youth Workers benefit from training together, but there are distinctive requirements and emphases, some of which are best pursued nationally.**
- * **Efforts to ensure that as much training as possible is conducted in an ecumenical context are an important part of the UCA's ecumenical commitment, and experience suggests that there are great benefits for Ministerial education.**
- * **University connections have also proven to be valuable in terms of sharing staff and resources with the universities, allowing theological studies to be**

part of the broader university community, providing opportunities for candidates for Ministry to study in a broader setting.

This Report leaves open the detailed contents of each part of the course. The Task Group believes that forming the curriculum is best left to the colleges, while the MEC continues to ensure that the major areas of study and field work are adequately covered, and that the courses help the church to achieve its goals in Ministerial education.

Ministerial education is not the primary shaper of tomorrow's church but is a major contributor. The Task Group prays that under the guidance of the Spirit the processes outlined in this Report will help to fashion a church which is a loving community, responsive to human need, enterprising, hospitable, diverse, confident in the reality of Christ, eager to learn God's way, committed to share God's mission in the world.

3. VISION: THE MISSION OF GOD AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

3.1 The Mission of God

The mission of the church begins with the mission of God, God's reaching out to the world in creation and redemption through Jesus and the Spirit. God is the One who loves the world, is always God-for-people. The Bible depicts God as the One who calls the world into being and sustains its life, as the shepherd who seeks the lost, as the one who liberates the captive, as the loving parent who waits patiently for the wayward offspring to return home. There is in the mission of God always movement and activity to sustain and build relationships, always an aching and nurturing Spirit which calls people to life and love with God.

God's presence in the world is revealed most clearly in Jesus Christ, at the heart of whose life and teaching is the reign of God. "The reign of God includes:

- * the announcement of forgiveness - that God accepts us all although we are unworthy;
- * an invitation to participate in the restoring, saving, reconciling of the world, in co-operation with God;
- * an invitation to enter into the life of the world, and to share in the struggles and sufferings of its people, as God did by becoming human in Jesus Christ;
- * an invitation to take up our cross, which stands in contrast to much of the triumphalism of much of the church;
- * an expectation of resurrection - of new life coming out of suffering, death and apparent defeat."¹

The expression of God's mission in Jesus is an expression of concern for the whole of life. Jesus' ministry was concerned for wholeness, for a place for the outcast and lost, for inclusive community. The mission of God is not simply the salvation of souls. It is always a commitment to the whole world, an affirmation of goodness and a critique of the broken-ness and oppression of the world. However we understand the church, the commitment of God is always broader than this community of the faithful.

¹Assembly Commission for Mission Theological reflections on Australian society and the mission task of the church (1989) p. 3

3.2 The mission of the church

The Christian community is a community whose life is committed to hearing and proclaiming the good news, and to worshipping God for the gifts of creation and salvation. This means seeking to embody in our lives a glimpse of the new humanity brought by Christ, being a people in loving, just, equal and freeing relations. We tell the story of Jesus as the one who reveals to us the love of God, offers us salvation, brings us new life and calls us into new community.

As God is always actively present in the world, so the church is called to be always actively present in the world. We are to be outward directed, reconciling and gathering, raising new communities in unlikely places, engaged with injustice, oppression, poverty, discrimination and violence. The church is called to be committed to the following of Christ in costly love for the world.

If the church is not engaged in mission, it is not the church of Jesus Christ. Everything we do in ministry as the people of God should sustain this agenda of life.

In giving expression to the mission which the church shares with God, the church has three tasks:

- i. *Being the church.* The church exists as a foretaste and sacramental sign of the purposes of God. In its living, worship and praise of God, celebration of the sacraments, proclamation of the word, pastoral caring, and prayer for the world, the church is being a missionary community. The church is an essential part of the saving purposes of God.
- ii. *Calling people to faith.* Evangelism is an essential element of mission - a call to faith, repentance, conversion, and a life of service lived in the Spirit. The church is called to bear its witness to the faithfulness of God to the ends of the earth. We are to lift up hope, courage and compassion in the lives of people so that they become agents for the transforming of the world.
- iii. *Pursuing justice and mercy.* The pursuit of justice and mercy are not optional extras for the church or for those with an interest in certain issues. Justice and mercy are at the heart of all God's dealings with people, and are what God expects of people in their relationships with each other.

It is important that these three aspects of the mission task of the church be woven together and not separated. In particular, it is important that worship, evangelism, justice and mercy are not pulled apart, nor should any one of them be seen as inessential or unimportant.

Yet, it must also be recognised that in each particular context and historical period, one of these areas of mission has become formative for the church. In our context the church's mission has largely been expressed through the church being the church, a community where people could come and give expression to their faith.

In a changed world, the church needs to be more self-consciously and with greater priority, a community formed by the mission imperative to share the good news of Jesus Christ and to pursue justice.

How might we stay fresh and open to the movement of God in this changing world, this changing mission context? A spirit open to God's Spirit is necessary - a spirit that seeks constantly to learn more from God's Word, and to grow in faithful discipleship.

3.3 Lifelong Formation

Learning is thus an essential part of the whole of life, and a recognition of its importance and place in the life of God's people is crucial. It is not appropriate to suggest that education is 'packaged knowledge' received at one point in an individual's life and then drawn on for all future needs. This is true whatever a person's role and ministry in life, or whatever their place in the life of the church. A person's formation for christian life is an ongoing process from the beginning of life to its end.

It is the church's responsibility to affirm this ongoing formation and to provide opportunities and resources for that formation to take place at appropriate times and in suitable ways. The church as a whole, and in its congregations, is to be characterised by attention to the learning, spiritual development and personal growth of all its members. This requires recognition of the needs of people at the various stages of their Christian life. These needs may arise because of major changes and crises in a person's life, yet they are also part of the ordinary progress of life and the demands of living in a changing world. However they arise, the church is called to assist people to meet their needs, to support the growth of the person as a follower of Jesus Christ involved in God's mission in and to the world.

The church is to have an ethos of learning which encourages a growing, developing body of people. Within this body everyone has a dual role: to be one who learns and one who enables others to learn. As we relate to God in Christ we do so as people who seek to know Christ, and to grow to be like him through worship, study and relationships with other committed Christians. So we are to be part of a body in which we grow as individuals and as community, with the experience and example of each one being important to the growth of all.

In emphasising the importance of both lifelong and mutual learning, the Report recognises the particular function/office of Ministers, yet maintains that in the church and the world at this time it is important to affirm that ministry belongs to the whole people of God. Our vision for ministry is one of connectedness and mutuality in ministry rather than separateness.

Those whom the church has designated as Ministers have an important role in lifelong formation for the whole people of God. These Ministries have particular responsibilities for leadership of the people of God, and it is fitting that their preparation and ongoing functioning be put in the context of lifelong learning.

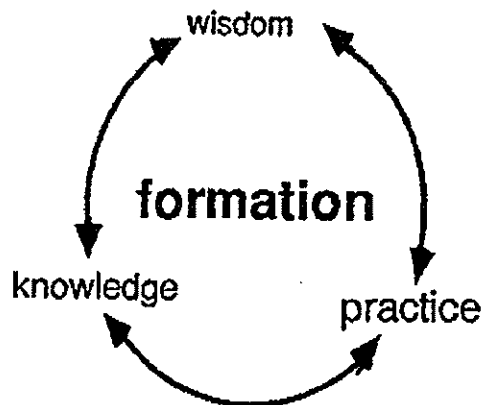
It is important that Ministers have the capacity to model lifelong growth in faith. They will need to be equipped to be educators, leaders and enablers so that they can encourage and assist the people of God to undertake lifelong learning. The Report seeks to suggest directions for the ongoing preparation of Ministers which will achieve this end.

What is required is a properly constructed initial formation which is part of a lifelong process, and which leads into vocationally oriented continuing education. That is, the period of initial formation is not complete in itself. It requires the ongoing, **intentional lifelong** learning and formation which is proposed in this report.

Formation is the creative interplay between many aspects of a person's life, but particularly the interaction of experience and knowledge with the development of wisdom and discernment.

Formation for ministry is an interactive process which occurs at all stages in our life. As we all grow and develop in faith and understanding, so we necessarily continue to be formed and re-formed spiritually, vocationally and personally.

Every Christian needs to be involved in this formation for ministry. Those who are training for Ministry will be formed in ways that are most appropriate for their ministry, and it will be a formation that will occur during the formal period of preparation and beyond. Formation is not a subject or curriculum item that can be taught in one phase of ministry, and ticked off as completed. Rather, formation occurs as the person develops personal disciplines and habits within the care and mutual discipline of a faith community.



The colleges are already well aware of this task of formation. Presbyteries and mentors as well as the wider church also need to understand their role as making significant contributions to the formation for ministry.

3.4 Ministry and Mission

Ministry is the gift and vocation of all Christians; the particular ministry of witness. Ministry is the vocation or task of enabling others to receive, understand and claim for themselves the good news of Jesus Christ and to become, in their turn, witnesses to God's grace.

Ministry and mission are entrusted to the followers of Jesus Christ. They are the task of carrying the good news of healing, love, salvation into the world. We sustain the life of the church as the community where people can begin to live the promises of Christ, can worship God, can support and sustain each other.

This is not to suggest a division and too clear a distinction between our life in the church and in the world. There is a dynamic and vital movement between the two, an overlapping and sharing of life.

One implication of this is that people in the various Ministries of the church can no longer be the main factor in the congregation's mission. They contribute to that mission, providing leadership and inspiration, but central to mission will be the whole people of God.

In each generation we will develop different structures and ministries to effectively participate in mission. In our generation the tasks of those in the various Ministries of the church are to build the Christian community, to articulate the vision, to help people

rehearse the story, to facilitate worship, and to offer leadership of the Christian community as it shapes its life of mission. As Ministers engage in ministry they provide models for this mission expression.

It is critically important that those whom we ordain to bring the Word to the church, and to call it forth in diaconal ministry, and those whom we set aside for youth ministry, receive a preparation for their ministry which, implicitly and explicitly, teaches the centrality of mission to the life of the church.

Education for ministry must always be education for mission, regardless of what responsibility or vocation the ministry involves. There are three interwoven aspects of education for ministry - the ministry that belongs to all Christians:

- i. Education in the Christian *life*, or what has been called *spiritual formation*.
- ii. Education in the Christian *faith*, growth in understanding of the Christian witness so that we can give an account of our faith to others.
- iii. Education for the particular responsibilities or vocation which one has as a Christian.

All Christians need and deserve competent education in these three areas.

A theological college provides an opportunity for intensive learning in each of these three areas and has the crucial task of enabling people to become competent and critical participants in theological enquiry, to have the capacity for critical reflection on their own and the church's life and witness seen in the light of the gospel.

Those who enter the Ministries of the church are entrusted with missional, liturgical, pastoral, theological, and other forms of leadership. This is a facilitative, visioning leadership. It is not simply a matter of performing certain functions or carrying out certain roles, but of exercising imagination, courage and theological judgement. Church leadership has the task of "equipping the saints for the work of ministry, building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).

Such leadership is not the preserve of those Ministry, but is a task shared by all Christians. However, in a particular sense, the task of leadership is something inherent in Ministry. It is for this reason that we insist on an intensive theological education that will develop the capacity for theological judgement and critical self-reflection.

How do we understand the place of Ministry in the life of the church, and its relationship to the ministry of the whole people, and how does this understanding impact on the way in which people are prepared for Ministry? That is, what is the nature of the vocation of those in Ministry, and how does it relate to the vocation of the whole church?

It is clear that, in choosing to ordain people or set them apart in a public way, we are saying that those in Ministry have a different place in the life of the church. This is not a different status (in the sense of being granted greater importance), but a particular place and task within the ministry of the whole church.

Recognising the particular place and responsibility of Ministry, the Task Group wishes to suggest that the church needs to help Ministers give expression to their Ministry within the ministry of the whole people. In an un-churched society it seems appropriate to emphasise the shared nature of ministry, rather than distinctions, and this needs to be reflected in preparation for Ministry. For this reason, the Report is about preparation for Ministry that gives considerable weight to candidates remaining in and being able to reflect on situations similar to that in which they will exercise Ministry.

4. CONTEXT

As the Task Group sought to understand more about the context in which ministry occurs, it found that some things were worth highlighting.

4.1. Australia

At the end of the 20th Century Australia is a nation facing rapid change. Technological, scientific and social change is happening too rapidly to be grasped fully, leaving people anxious and feeling that life is out of control.

Australians have generally taken pride in the belief that we are a relatively egalitarian, peaceful, socially progressive, tolerant community. This belief has been severely shaken in recent times.

It is only in recent years that we have started to re-assess the history of conquest of this nation, and to absorb the truth about the massacres and cruelties perpetrated against indigenous people and, to a lesser degree, against the convicts, Kanaks and Chinese by the English-speaking majority. Racism is firmly embedded in the Australian psyche, and still denies justice and a full place in society to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to Asian migrants. As recent events have shown, that racism can be brought to the surface very quickly.

The Port Arthur tragedy in April 1996 was more than another example of the violence smouldering under the surface. It also reminded us of a history marked as much by cruelty and class differences as by the cherished myths of easy-going mateship and egalitarianism.

Wealth accumulation as a prime measure of achievement has always been part of modern Australia. Until recently, however, there was also a strong sense of the common good, of the need to look after those who are less well off. Economic rationalism, with its strong individualism, refusal to recognise any human values but wealth and possessions, and lessening of the role of governments and structures to protect weaker members of society, has contributed significantly to a major change in our society.

Those who are least well-off have been forced to carry the greatest share of industrial and economic restructuring, at the same time as there has been a reduction of support services to those who are unemployed or caught up in poverty. Large numbers of people are losing their jobs while profits remain high and senior executives receive obscenely large salary packages.

The virtual dismantling of the rural sector, with an ever-increasing concentration of the population in the large coastal cities, the forced mobility of those following jobs, and astonishing advances in communication technologies, have resulted in less rather than more communal living.

The privatisation of essential services, and the internationalisation of business makes it difficult for Australians to shape their own life or the life of their community.

The natural environment is also under enormous stress, both from those who have little regard for that environment and those who are seeking to protect short-term job losses.

Definitions of family have changed, and the nuclear family is but one form of family life. There are significant stresses as people divorce, remarry and seek to form new families.

In the anxiety and uncertainty of change, the most vulnerable become the target of blame for social ills. One third of women experience domestic violence, and an untold number of children are victims of abuse. Aboriginal people have greater levels of unemployment, are more likely to live in poverty, die earlier or be sent to gaol. The unemployed are constantly subject to abuse, and are receiving decreasing support at a time when 8% of the workforce are unemployed. Suicide, especially among young men, is on the increase.

Ministry occurs in the context of rapid and difficult change, anxiety, increasing social divisions, a widening gap between rich and poor, and the ongoing struggle to make sense of the pain, death and social dislocation that is part of life. Ministry also occurs in a context in which people still do find meaning, purpose and enjoyment in life. People sustain relationships, support others in need, work for justice and human rights, celebrate the diversity of society, enjoy the natural world and human endeavours, and live cheerfully and hopefully.

Aboriginal and Islander People

Government policies and practices and community attitudes over the past 200 years have left Aboriginal people dispossessed of most of their land, socially fragmented and dislocated, marginalised economically and socially, their culture not understood or respected, and with their needs, hopes, fears and sufferings being accorded a different value from those of other Australians. The Church has for much of its history been more or less captive to both Government policies and community attitudes. Where it has been convinced that what was happening in policy and in the community was wrong, the Church has not been successful in achieving change.

Aboriginal people suffer the highest levels of unemployment, live in poorer housing, suffer poorer health, have higher levels of morbidity and mortality, and are imprisoned at much higher rates. Forty eight percent of juveniles in detention in New South Wales, for example, are Aboriginal children. In spite of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the number of deaths in custody continues to climb. Domestic violence and anti-social behaviour among children are widespread, signs of an angry and oppressed people turning their violence inward.

What is amazing is that the story is not simply one of oppression and defeat. It is also the story of a people who have survived, and survived with courage and dignity. It is the story of a people who have forged a particular identity as Aboriginal people, an identity that has different features depending on their location and experience of the impact of white occupation. It is a story of people who have survived a terrible onslaught on their life, and have found a way through.

The High Court decision followed by the passing of the federal Government's Native Title legislation gave great hope to many Aboriginal people. At last their prior and, in some cases, continuing ownership of the land was recognised. But widespread antagonism to the recognition of native title rights makes these gains quite vulnerable.

The church carries out its mission task in a context which has been shaped by the history of relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. It is a situation in which the church is challenged to work with Aboriginal and Islander people in and outside of the church to:

- * reach out to non-Aboriginal people in order to achieve understanding and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and to build a more just community.

- * recognise the prior occupation of this land by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- * assist, serve, care for and provide employment for Indigenous people.
- * defend their civil, human and Indigenous rights, and
- * assist Indigenous people to make strong contributions to the economic, political, cultural, sporting and spiritual life of the nation.

Multiculturalism

Our context is also multicultural. This multiculturalism has broadened the society's sense of the world. It has made Australians more aware of different languages, food, dress, social customs and religious traditions. It has forced us into a continuing debate about the basis for our unity and the limits of our diversity. At times it has confronted us with our own racism.

Multiculturalism has provided a particular challenge for the churches. The church has many faces and many languages, and in this we rejoice. People have brought different cultural and religious traditions into the churches, and have asked for space to speak their own languages and to worship in ways that better reflect their own culture. The challenge for the mainline denominations has come as churches from overseas, particularly from Asia and the Pacific, have sought a place in Australian churches while keeping their distinctive identities.

Further challenges will occur as children of those born overseas seek to shape Australian society and the church from their bi-cultural backgrounds.

4.2. A Mission context in transition

In the closing years of the century, the church is being compelled to recognise and meet the changes which have emerged over several generations in the nature and location of mission. Until relatively recently, the church had a reasonably significant place in society and was seen to be a natural part of community events, public debate, and moments of personal and communal crisis and celebration. Many people still understood Christian language, images, symbols and categories, even when they were not active members of the church. There was still a strong sense that a person was born into a particular Christian church, and should celebrate significant stages in life in that place.

In this situation the ministry of the church focused on providing programs which would meet people's needs and attract them into a more active involvement with the church. A great deal of energy was spent on Sunday Schools and Youth activities, and on welfare services for those in need. Home mission generally meant the building of churches to meet the needs of people in new housing areas, although there were occasional, large scale evangelical enterprises aimed at bringing people back to the church.

Our understanding of mission was largely shaped by the idea that 'mission' meant bringing Christ to people in foreign countries, or to people in remote areas of Australia. The task of the local church and its members was to raise finances which were directed through denominational structures to distant mission fields. When mission happened in our local community it was mostly concerned for services and activities to assist those in need.

We trained people for a settled, pastoral ministry which took for granted the place of the church, and assumed that most people both accepted and understood the worship life and pastoral liturgies of the church.

In many ways the church avoided the changes which were occurring because of the great amount of church activity, including large Sunday schools and Youth Groups which marked the 1950s and 60s. Since the 1960s the world has changed rapidly, although the speed and extent of change varies a great deal across the country. The church is now forced to face the implications of these changes and those of earlier times. The church no longer has the same automatic access to people it once had, and many people do not understand what Ministers are or why they wish access to hospitals and other places. Most people no longer understand the language, images and values of the Christian faith, nor see themselves as even nominally part of the church's life. The pastoral services of the church are frequently offered to people who are strangers to what they seek. For example, baptism often remains vaguely part of people's understanding of life and religion, yet they often bring vastly different expectations from those held by the church.

What is significant for the church at the end of the 20th Century is that a long period of gradual change has reached a point where the cumulative change has forced us to think differently about the world, and to become aware of this change. The nature and extent of this change challenges us to re-think our understanding of church and mission.

The task of mission and evangelism is at the very door of the church, rather than in distant places. It is a context in which people are still keen to explore religious and faith issues, but do not necessarily see the church as the natural place to explore these questions. People have less loyalty to a denomination, and when they join the church it is the congregation they join and not a denomination, and when the congregation no longer meets their needs they move to another congregation. The primary purpose of the congregation in a church society was to help believers grow in faith, and their primary focus was nurturing the lives of members. In our society congregations still need to care for and nurture members, but the primary focus needs to be on reaching out beyond the church with the healing message of Christ. In a community that no longer understands the language and symbols of the church, the church needs to adopt new methods of communicating, and to understand that it is effectively working in a context as different as that which was once experienced by overseas missionaries. In the past professional people carried out mission on behalf of the church. Funds were raised locally, passed to our denominational mission bodies, and other people did the mission work. In our day the church is in a mission field, and all members have responsibility for mission and evangelism. Ministers no longer act on behalf of their congregation, but participate with and facilitate ministry and mission in the local area and beyond.

4.3. The Educational Context

There is a further aspect of our present social context which has a significant impact on Ministerial education: the change in the place of the Christian faith as part of people's general cultural education. In the past it could be assumed that those who candidated for Ministry had a reasonable grounding in Christian faith, tradition and denominational ethos, gained from family, school, church, Sunday School, youth groups, and student Christian movements. People entered theological colleges from a background of spiritual formation, leadership recruitment and pre-college study.

This is no longer the case for many candidates, some of whom enter college with relatively little experience of the UCA, and without the forming experiences of Sunday Schools, youth networks or a reasonable parish Christian education program. This means that colleges are expected to accomplish many of the tasks and dimensions of preparation that were once shared by the whole church, and colleges are often faced with remedial tasks prior to further learning. This is bound to have an impact on the length and content of courses, the general milieu of colleges, and the student body.

Theological education in Australia cannot be isolated from international theological education, which includes the following trends:

- * Relating much more closely the classroom experience and the practice of ministry.
- * Engaging the college community more directly in the social, political and economic struggles of the wider community.
- * Support for, and development of, regional expressions of theology, liturgy and social ethics, and escape from Euro-dominated theological models.
- * Placing firmly in the curriculum the approach to inter-faith understanding and the development of the ecumenical movement.
- * Engaging the college community in evangelistic work alongside local congregations.
- * Wide development of part-time courses, often on an ecumenical basis, and particularly designed for mature candidates.
- * Distinctive tracks for university relations -
 - some heading for the Christian university concept
 - some heading for the Faculty of Theology in a secular university
 - some heading towards an independent church seminary
 - some planning a college of Christian education recognised by civil authorities.
- * Wide development of M.Min and D.Min courses as a feature of continuing education for Ministers.

4.4 The UCA

The formation of the Uniting Church has enabled members of the previous three denominations to join together in love and service of Christ with more flexibility than was previously possible. Together with those who have joined over the last 20 years, these faithful followers of Christ have sought to 'remain open to constant reform under his Word' (Basis of Union, para 1).

Any discussion of Ministry within the UCA must always assume that this Ministry occurs within the ministry of the whole people of God.

The Uniting Church affirms that every member of the Church is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant. It acknowledges with thanksgiving that the one Spirit has endowed the members of Christ's Church with a diversity of gifts, and that there is no gift without its corresponding service: all ministries have a part in the ministry of Christ. [Basis of Union, para 13]

The Uniting Church is committed to ensuring that Ministry in all its forms is open equally to women and men.

The empowering of the laity for ministry and mission, and the increasing number of women in leadership positions have enriched and strengthened the UCA for the tasks of worship, mission, evangelism and community-building.

The Uniting Church has committed itself to a relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that will better enable indigenous people to shape the church's ministry among their own people. The tensions and sorrows that have been part of our journey have been declared to us in the Uniting Church through the Covenant made in 1994 with the indigenous people represented in the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

The Uniting Church has also committed itself to being a multicultural church, and is still struggling with issues of tradition, language, expectations about ministry, representation

in the councils of the church, and a host of other issues that arise as an effort is made to allow a diversity of traditions to exist side-by-side.

From its founding denominations the Uniting Church adopted a college education model for training its Ministers of the Word, Deaconesses (and now Deacons). Supervised field education is a significant component of the three years' study of theology. Ecumenical and university connections are important.

5. GOALS FOR MINISTERIAL EDUCATION

5.1 What sort of Ministers?

Given this vision of mission, ministry and lifelong formation, and considering the particular context of the Uniting Church in Australia at the end of the Twentieth Century, what are the goals of Ministerial Education? That is, what do we want people in the various Ministries of the church to be and to know?

To respond to the urgent mission needs of the Australian community, the UCA needs faithful leaders who can enable the church to call people to faith in Jesus Christ, to witness to God's call for a just world, and to be a community which is a sign of God's promises for the world.

The goals of Ministerial Education are to prepare Ministers with the following qualities and competencies:

5.1.(a) A growing faith and spirituality that will sustain their lives in Ministry. The church needs Ministers who, first of all, have a deep faith in Jesus Christ, are committed to growth in their own faith and to a spirituality that will sustain their lives. Ministerial Education should equip Ministers to:

- * further develop their strong sense of the centrality of the gospel of Jesus Christ to their lives and their actions in the world.
- * be open to the Holy Spirit and critically reflective about those experiences which are attributed to the Spirit.
- * further develop a spirituality and spiritual 'discipline' that is appropriate for their life and personality, and is sustaining of their particular ministry.
- * encourage others to discern the actions of God's Spirit in their lives and the world.

5.1.(b). A conscious and critical commitment to Ministry and mission. The church needs Ministers who have a critical understanding of the nature of ministry and mission, and an appreciation of the importance of a conscious commitment to and participation in the task of mission through worship, witness and service. In particular, Ministerial Education should equip Ministers to:

- * encourage individuals and communities of faith to gather in response to God's grace to worship, pray, celebrate, receive the sacraments, share faith and life journeys, explore the Scriptures, and commemorate particular personal and communal life events.
- * share their faith, and lead congregations and communities which are actively committed to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.
- * contribute to effective action for justice, peace and reconciliation, and develop a commitment to support and advocate for those who have been pushed to the edges of society.
- * build communities of faith and discipleship which are just, caring, supportive, inclusive, flexible, forgiving and always in the process of being reformed.

- * help congregations and agencies discover God's presence in the local community, and to explore ways in which, as a congregation, they may participate in and contribute to their local community.
- * be genuinely committed to an understanding of ministry which involves the whole people of God, and who can model 'leader' as learner, equipper, prophet, pastor, pioneer, evangelist, priest and missionary, and who can provide leadership that is transformative.
- * encourage all members of the church to realistically assess their own and one another's gifts, and to utilise those gifts in mission.
- * understand, appreciate and be committed to the ethos of the Uniting Church whilst appreciating the traditions of other churches and working ecumenically.

5.1.(c) *Knowledge of and appreciation of the Tradition.* As members of the church we affirm that we believe in 'the one holy catholic and apostolic church'. In the Reformed tradition, this has been primarily interpreted to mean that the church is constantly open to guidance and reform through the witness and testimony of Scripture. Apostolic also means being a community that witnesses, that is committed to mission. To be a community committed to mission, the church must also be clear about what it means to be a community whose identity is found in Jesus Christ. To do this it must have a deep, though critical knowledge of and appropriation of the Christian tradition. One of the tasks of Ministry is to help the church to shape its future in the light of tradition.

The church needs Ministers who are equipped to:

- * understand the Christian tradition and help people to explore the Christian faith and its claims in a world of competing faith claims.
- * honestly explore the Scriptures in the light of recent biblical scholarship, and do theology together with the whole people of God, drawing on theological insights and traditions in Australia, the Asian Pacific region and beyond.
- * become competent and critical participants in theological enquiry, and have the capacity for critical reflection on our own and the church's life and witness seen in the light of the gospel.
- * recognise what elements of the congregation's and agency's present understanding of the tradition provide appropriate entry points for expanding their view of the Gospel and mission.

5.1.(d) *Knowledge of the cultural and social context.* The church's identity and mission are shaped by its tradition in dialogue with the ministry context. The church's constant struggle is how it discovers and expresses its true identity and mission in Jesus Christ in a rapidly changing cultural and social context.

The church needs Ministers who are equipped to:

- * understand and respect the communities in which they live and serve.
- * recognise and understand the diversity of Australian society, and be sensitive to and knowledgeable about the particular cultures of those they serve and be able to adapt their ministry to different contexts.
- * appreciate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and spirituality and be able to assist the Uniting Church to strengthen its commitment to and action on reconciliation and covenanting with Aboriginal people.
- * operate in multicultural and multilingual environments and be able to relate the gospel to immigrant Australians.
- * translate the gospel from the church's culture to non-church cultures which form Australian society, and assist congregations to do this in the wide variety of ways which are possible, including word, action, music, art and drama.
- * know how to work for systematic change in unjust structures.

5.1(e) *Skills appropriate for their particular Ministry.* Ministers not only need a range of knowledge, but also certain skills for day-to-day Ministry. The church needs Ministers who are equipped to:

- * integrate practice with spiritual and theological reflection and are sensitive in inter-personal relationships.
- * engage effectively in the particular Ministry to which they are called.
- * facilitate the involvement of the whole group in its decision making, so that business is carried forward both efficiently and graciously.
- * understand the role of conflict in understanding the social context and change, and has the skills of effective conflict management and resolution.
- * work effectively in team ministry.
- * provide care and support, and recognise the limits of their skills and the need to refer.
- * be open to and comfortable with change, understand the ways in which people can work through issues of change, encouraging those changes that will forward the kingdom of God and resisting those that would hinder or corrupt.
- * organise their time and priorities to adequately engage in, and reflect on, ongoing ministry and mission

Each form of Ministry will have particular skills which enable people to engage effectively in that form of Ministry, and one of the goals of Ministerial education is to help people develop those skills.

5.1(f) *Critical imagination.* The church needs Ministers who are not simply aware of the knowledge required, and able to perform the necessary tasks, but who are critically reflective. It needs Ministers who are equipped to:

- * exercise imagination, courage, theological judgement and critical self-reflection.
- * recognise the strengths of the church's traditions and life and speak with fresh accent and fresh imagery.
- * recognise creativity and faithfulness wherever they are and understand the value and pitfalls of the unorthodox voice.
- * love people more than systems and ideologies, and are ready to confront injustice and enter into the experience of those who suffer, and confident to lead people to Jesus as Saviour and Lord.

These six areas describe the goals of the church as it prepares its Ministers, the competencies the church is encouraging. All Ministers have gifts and strengths in each of these areas, but no-one excels in them all. None should be neglected. It is a lifelong task to develop these competencies, and there is a need for this to be done within and alongside a community of people who are also developing their gifts and skills.

The adequacy of any process of Ministerial education will be judged by its capacity to encourage and foster achievement of these six goals.

6. HOW WE BEST ACHIEVE THESE GOALS.

The Task Group is proposing a framework for Ministerial Education which we believe will best enable the Uniting Church to achieve its goals in regard to the Ministers we require. It is a framework rather than a detailed plan for every aspect of theological and ministerial education. Many of the decisions about subjects, teaching methods, etc are issues best left to the Colleges, with the Colleges indicating to the church through the MEC how their work will enable the church to reach its goals.

The Task Group is proposing a framework that sees Ministry as part of lifelong ministry, and as part of lifelong learning. It is suggested that there be:

- * A **period of discernment** during which people will explore their call to ministry. This will be open to any person who wishes to reflect on which ministry is appropriate for them. This may be followed by a candidating process if a person's call leads them towards Ministry.
- * A period of study and field education which will provide **the core theological education** necessary for Ministry.
- * A **licensed year** in which the candidate will combine significant periods of study and reflection with the practice of Ministry. If appropriate, ordination will occur after this licensed year.
- * **Life-long continuing education.**

This framework is based on a set of essential principles, which are set out in section 6.1. These principles underlie the way in which Ministerial education should occur, offering suggestions about educational processes and the sort of community in which learning can best occur.

6.1 Essential Principles

The Task Group believes that there are some essential principles which should underlie Ministerial Education, goals for the way in which Ministerial education occurs.

6.1.1 Formation for ministry

There are three aspects to formation for ministry, and each one must receive attention.

'Spiritual formation' means the development of the individual in awareness of the presence of God, in recognising Christ in other people, in ways of prayer and meditation, and in the experience of confession, forgiveness and renewal.

'Vocational formation' means the individual's growing perception of the nature of 'call' within the context of the church's understanding of ministry. It also embraces the individual's awareness of what sustains him/her in ministry.

'Personal formation' involves the individual in developing a creative and critical self-awareness, an appreciation of their gifts and graces and of the personal limitations which are brought to ministry.

All three aspects of formation involve issues of creative relationships, the setting of boundaries, and the appropriate exercise of power which is inherent in pastoral relationships.

6.1.2 Lifelong Learning

The Ministry Education goals are underpinned by the Task Group's assumption that lifelong learning is a discipline and a responsibility of all Christians and that all of life offers opportunities and phases for ongoing formation and growth in faith. The education of Ministers is to enhance and continue to build upon the learning taking place in other parts of the individual's life as well as anticipating further lifelong learning opportunities.

The intention is that the habit of lifelong learning will continue to serve the Ministers' and the church's needs well past the formal training period. Study habits, personal and professional action-reflection processes, the use of a mentor for critical reflection and

accountability, all these serve the goal of sustainable, creative Ministry responsive to changing times and ministry contexts.

6.1.3 Adult Education Processes

There is a need for Ministry education to reflect in its curriculum appropriate learning strategies for effective adult education, including flexible delivery modes, interactive processes, the integration of both action and reflection, and the recognition of prior learning.

A recognition of adult education principles necessarily involves us in a curriculum that acknowledges and gives expression to a richness of learning styles including case study, narrative learning, self-directed learning, critical praxis and reflection-action opportunities.

Many of the curricula evident today are based upon a 'classic' approach that is linear in its movement, commencing with core knowledge, moving to practical knowledge and then applied knowledge. A curriculum expressing an integrated approach based upon inter-disciplinary engagement with the 'core' subjects would be one that emphasised an ongoing conversation between culture and experience, tradition and the church and our scriptural centre.

This suggests a curriculum that reflects the place of the Scriptures, our faith, theology and mission, but also needs to give urgent attention to how such 'disciplines' are particularly related to education for Ministry.

The concept and practice of curriculum that inform and support the Ministerial education goals are broad. The curriculum is not only the content but also the process and delivery mode. When writing of the curriculum at all phases of ministry education all three aspects are to be addressed. In its broadest understanding, curriculum can also encompass the educator as the lived or modelled curriculum who reinforces the claim that delivery of the course content is a crucial aspect of the achievement of curriculum goals. The style, the nature, and the modelling offered by members of the faculty, the mentors and supervisors are all critical factors in achieving the Ministry goals.

A curriculum which would reflect this approach is not only contextual in the sense that it is grounded in the reality of everyday life, but recognises and explores God's present initiatives and action in human life.

It is recommended that the MEC ensure that each college continues to develop adult learning processes in the planning and presentation of courses, and enable college staff to extend their skills in adult education principles and processes.

6.1.4 Ongoing discernment of God's call.

The nature of 'call' is understood to be a process as well as an 'event'. The achievement of the Ministry Education goals and the process by which they are achieved are integral to the discernment of the appropriateness of the call to Ministry. Reflection and discernment about the call are essential at every stage of the process of formation for ministry.

Many of the synods currently work closely with presbyteries in ongoing discernment of an individual's formation. The introduction of a formally recognised mentor is understood by the Task Group as a basic move to strengthen what already exists in the

process of discernment. The manner of contribution and influence of the mentor in the formal discernment process will be determined by each synod.

6.1.5 Inclusive Community

The principle of an inclusive community underpins the scheme of training and education proposed in this Report. The community of learning needs to be inclusive of the gifts of women and men from a variety of backgrounds and in every form of ministry. An inclusive community will also be one where people of different ethnic backgrounds and life experiences feel able to participate and contribute.

The desire for such inclusiveness may necessitate the intentional promotion of affirmative action in gender balance within the faculties. This will include the consideration of the particular needs of women students in regard to timetable and part-time courses, enabling women to share fully in fashioning the learning context, the avoidance of exclusive gender language, and the encouragement of the study of feminist theologians and biblical scholars by all students.

6.1.6 Recognition of Prior Learning and Experience.

This principle acknowledges that individuals bring a wealth of experience and previous learning to their ministerial formation and education. This learning and/or experience may be directly related to ministry or may be in other areas of professional, vocational or personal life.

This recognition of experience and learning can happen in a variety of ways. Two clear possibilities are:

- i. previous learning, qualifications and experience being taken into account when assessing appropriate study for ministry education. This may potentially 'release' the individual from completing particular aspects of the curriculum if it is considered that this prior learning adequately fulfils certain goals or outcomes of Ministerial education.
- ii. previous learning and experience can be recognised and taken into account when creating the specific requirements of any aspect of the course allowing for the integration and reflection on such experiences and learning. For instance, assessment may well include, or even require, the re-visiting of previous experiences and learning and/or reflecting upon them in the light of new experiences and knowledge.

6.1.7 Mentoring

A key principle underlying the proposals and achievement of ministry education goals is the concept and practice of mentoring. At every stage of preparation for Ministry each individual is to be in a mentor relationship. The mentor, although working in an honorary capacity, is to have recognised training in the role. This training is to be arranged by the appropriate agency in each synod.

The mentor plays a vital role in the process of continuing discernment of the call to Ministry, particularly in relation to both the individual and the Presbytery. The preference would be for the same mentor to journey with the individual through the whole ministry education and discernment process.

6.1.8 Assessment

It is proposed that the assessment of an individual's successful completion of each phase of ministry education (see page 28 for a brief description of the phases) **be based upon a portfolio approach**. In this approach the individual 'presents' or 'displays' to the authorising agency evidence that the outcomes or goals have been achieved. This shifts the emphasis from completing certain courses to an emphasis on acquiring or displaying particular outcomes. In this approach individuals negotiate and contract how they will effectively show that the specific outcomes of a course or field education experience have been achieved.

In some situations this would be through an examination of the content of a course indicating that a particular level of knowledge and reflection has been achieved. In other situations the individual may 'present' and engage a panel of peers and teachers in a conversation and 'debate' displaying whether indeed a particular level of knowledge and reflection has been acquired. In the field education component an individual may have lengthy experience in ministry as a lay preacher, elder or lay leader. To successfully fulfil a number of the prescribed outcomes the individuals would prepare a theological reflection and a personal critique of that previous ministry experience.

A portfolio approach would include an indication that not only were content goals being achieved, but the essential principles were also being fulfilled.

6.1.9 Appropriate recognition

It is envisaged that at each phase of ministry education the individual has an opportunity to achieve recognition for having completed that phase. This may be in the form of certificates, degrees, or some other form of acknowledgment of regular engagement in lifelong learning.

6.2 A Four Phase Framework

This proposal is shown in diagrammatic form on the next page. The details of the proposal are described in the material which follows.

In each of the Four Phases there is a need to give consideration to the role of Distance Theological Education. Developments at Coolamon College mean that the Uniting Church is increasingly able to provide a wide range of courses by this mode of learning. DTE provides greater flexibility for people as they prepare for all forms of ministry, and has the advantage of allowing people to remain in their situation (including work) while they undertake their studies. On the other hand, if people seek to complete all their studies by DTE they are deprived of the advantages of study in another theological community, formation alongside other people preparing for Ministry, and the capacity to step back a little from a particular social context and reflect on what it means for them. There is a need for both DTE and for periods of study in a college community, and the balance may differ in each phase of preparation.

6.2.1 PHASE ONE: Period of Discernment

6.2.1.(a) Purpose and Goals of this phase

The church has generally considered that a crucial factor in deciding if a person should be accepted as a candidate for Ministry is a sense of 'call'. There are two parts to this 'call': the 'personal call of God' to which a person must make response, and the 'call' which comes when the church discerns that the gifts and graces of a person fit them for a

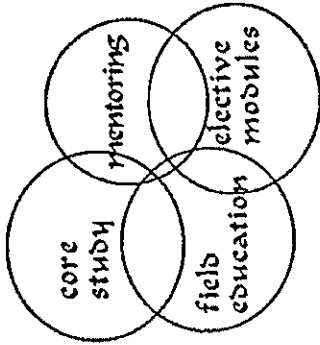
baptism & confirmation

Proposed Ministry Education - An overview

ministry continues...

PHASE ONE

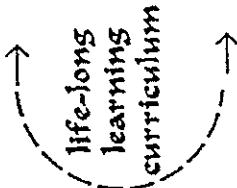
Period of Discernment



CURRICULUM
content / process / delivery

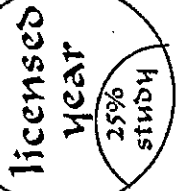
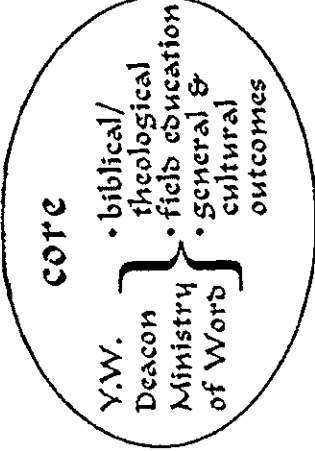
PHASE FOUR

Continuing Education



PHASE THREE

Theological Education and Ministry Formation



ordination commissioning

GOAL discernment development of ministerial goals & formation ongoing formation & professional development

RESPONSIBILITY ministry training centre Theological College continuing education centre Theological college & presbyteries

STYLE portfolio portfolio portfolio

TIME no less than 12 months ≥ 3 years ≥ 1 year life commitment

QUALIFICATION 'Orientation to Ministry' certificate theological degree & post-graduate studies

OVERSIGHT & DISCERNMENT home presbytery mentor home presbytery theological college mentor serving presbytery mentor presbytery

FUNDING private needs based grant Austudy Austudy EAG synod stipend - congregation - agency synod parish / presbytery minister

STATUS lay member UCA candidate lay ministry student licensed lay - vocation - ministry ordained commissioned acknowledged

particular ministry in the life of the church. These are not two things but *two parts of the one 'call'* which must be held together. Nor is there any set order in which the two parts of the 'call' may come to a person. It may be initiated by the church and confirmed in the personal 'call of God' to a person. Or it may be that a person experiences a personal 'call' which is then affirmed or redirected by the church.

A process which enables the church and the person together to discern God's call is required. It will be a process which:

- * will further develop the person's relationship with God and understanding of self as a person;
- * gives the person opportunity to understand the ministry of the church, the variety of ministries within that ministry, and the function, purpose and responsibilities of these ministries.
- * recognises, affirms and builds upon the skills, knowledge and experience that the individual brings to the year of discernment;
- * will enable the church to better discern the person's gifts and graces for ministry.

For some individuals and ministries this process will be informal and will occur in the life of a congregation and/or parish. For other individuals and ministries, in particular the three Ministries referred to in this Report, it will be a formal process, established and recognised by the church.

It is the intention of this proposal that the period of discernment be open to all members of the Uniting Church who wish to enter a process of discernment for appropriate ministry. This may well include ministries within the congregational life of the church (such as elders, lay leadership) or vocational ministries exercised beyond the local congregation in the workplace and the community (such as teaching, administration, service professions).

The period of discernment does not take the place of the application process, nor does it usurp the roles of the presbytery and selection panel in dealing with applications for specified ministries.

Neither is the period of discernment intended as a way in which people fulfil any academic or other prerequisites required by colleges (although study in this period may fulfil some requirements of a later stage in the portfolio). This model does not suggest any compulsory prerequisites, although people may need them to enter certain courses of study. If any prerequisites are set, colleges should be clear about their purpose and how they will contribute to the desired outcomes. At present it is not always clear whether prerequisite courses are primarily intended to indicate a person's academic capacity or to provide information and skills which contribute to further Ministerial education.

6.2.1 (b) Curriculum and Outcomes

The program for each person will be designed by the appropriate synod agency to provide opportunity for the person and the church to discern the will of God for the person's ministry. The program will also contribute to the overall preparation of the person for ministry.

The program will be in three parts:

- i. Core subjects in basic biblical and theological fields, with a minimum of two semester length subjects required.
- ii. Elective modules in the areas of ministry and mission, for example rural ministry, eldership, youth work.
- iii. Field education which offers the opportunity for the individual to exercise ministry in a local context in an intensive and reflective program. This may

be in such areas as community advocacy, evangelism or congregational leadership. It is generally intended that people would complete this section in new areas of ministry rather than in their present ministerial tasks. The reflective aspect of the field education is crucial in enhancing the learning and developing of the individual's self-awareness and theological critique.

The level at which subjects in parts i and ii are taken will be appropriate to the person's background and needs for discernment. The minimum level will be Associate Diploma or Lay preacher Certificate as in the Coolamon College Program A.

6.2.1 (c) Qualifications

It is envisaged that there would be a certificate of completion of this period of discernment. This would not prove that the person had discerned a call to a particular form of ministry, but would indicate the course and fieldwork completed. It is particularly intended for those who do not proceed to one of the three forms of Ministry which are of central concern to this Report.

6.2.1 (d) Responsibility and Discernment

The development of the program would be the responsibility of the synod agency concerned for ministry training. The oversight of the student in this period of discernment would rest with the home presbytery and with the mentor.

6.2.1 (e) Funding

It is expected that this time of Discernment would normally be self-funded, with assistance through AUSTUDY where appropriate. A limited amount of grant funding may be available through an individual's own congregation or synod educational agencies (where such grants exist).

6.2.1 (f) Ongoing ministry and discernment

Throughout and on completion of the period of Discernment the individual, in consultation with his/her mentor and home presbytery, will reflect on how and where the call to ministry may be located. For many it will involve engaging in chosen professions and trades with a renewed understanding of ministry opportunities in their present workplace. For others it may involve testing further a call to Ministry. In other instances it may be a decision to engage more intentionally in ministry within a local congregation or beyond.

6.2.2 PHASE TWO: The Core Program

6.2.2 (a) Purpose and Goals of this phase

The Core Program's focus is the exploration of a sound understanding of ministry and the 'knowledge' base which underpins ministry experience. This is to be integrated in an interactive process with field experience so as to develop skills and wisdom for ministry.

It is intended that during this phase candidates will be encouraged to gain an appropriate theological degree or diploma, which may be completed within the three years or during the final portion of study during the licensed year. It may also be completed as part of further education.

6.2.2 (b) Curriculum and Outcomes

The core areas of the course would include study of the bible and theology, historical and liturgical studies, development of the capacity for critical reflection, and an awareness of cultural realities. It would also involve ascertaining that the candidate had achieved certain goals in regard to cultural and general studies, had developed critical capacity in field education experiences and had continued in spiritual, vocational and personal formation.

There is a need for a core course on mission and evangelism within each theological college, to convey the message that mission and evangelism is not simply an elective activity but is an absolutely central part of the existence of the church and its ministry. There is a need for resources that enable people to reflect on what mission means for our day and age, how evangelism and justice relate, the issues that arise in cross-cultural mission, and what is being learned in the great mission conferences of the world.

There is a need for preparation to help in the formation of the whole people, in their strengths, expertise and survival in mission. This clearly means education to equip the Ministry with ability to teach and educate the people of God. The Ministry needs to be equipped to understand and educate for change, to understand and work with systems, power dynamics, and a rigorous spirituality that enhances life and encourages hope and faith.

The cultural and general aspects of the core program may be achieved in a variety of ways. The proposal allows for flexibility of completion of the required outcomes. It may be through previous study in an appropriate field, or in the evaluation that previous work and experience enables the candidate to clearly display a satisfactory grasp of cultural and social issues within society. Further study in the area of the humanities may be needed at some point to meet these outcomes. This study may be within the theological college or be completed in a secular institution. To enable this to happen it may be necessary for the core program to take more than three years. (It needs to be noted that reference to cultural and social studies is not the same as that required at present for Cultural and General studies. This proposal does not require Cultural and General studies as it is presently understood.)

Obviously we cannot keep loading our ministerial education with more and more courses. The Task Group suggests that it is time for a review of the core curriculum in the light of the changed world in which we live, the framework being suggested in this report, and a renewed commitment to mission. This reassessment needs to consider not only what subjects are covered but the way in which subjects are presented.

The Task Group recommends that each theological college be asked to indicate to the MEC how its developing curriculum, educational methods and variety of courses enable the church to meet its goals for ministerial education, with particular reference to the way people develop their understanding of Scripture as evangelical word, to courses on mission and evangelism, and to the practical skills needed for Ministry.

One particular issue is the relationship between themes and subjects, and the relationship between theological themes and life themes. Particular knowledge is needed, and particular skills that need to be developed. The issue is one of a beginning point, of the concern that gives shape to the way in which the learning occurs. Is the beginning point an assumption about what body of knowledge needs to be learned, or is there a recognition that experience is the overwhelming shaper of life, and learning needs to

occur in relation to experience? That experience could be worship, or it could be personal and social ethical issues, for example.

6.2.2 (c) Time

It is proposed that this phase will take a minimum of three years. The actual time taken will depend on mode of study, and whether or not the person has met the requirements for cultural and general studies prior to this phase. Normally at least two years of this core program are to be achieved 'on-campus' with the option that the other year/s can be completed in a different learning style, such as distance education or recognition of prior learning/study. In special circumstances, defined by each MEB, less time may be required 'on-campus'. The aim is to achieve a sound understanding of Ministry and maximum flexibility to take account of the very different circumstances of both candidates and synods.

6.2.2 (d) Responsibility and discernment

The responsibility for the development and delivery of the core program established by the MEC lies with the theological colleges. It is the college in consultation with the candidates home presbytery and his or her mentor that continues the oversight of the welfare and progress of the candidate in general and, in particular, continues to discern the appropriate formation of the candidate for Ministry.

The discernment process and oversight of the candidate during the core program lies with the home presbytery in collaboration with the theological college in consultation with the mentor.

6.2.2 (e) Funding

The financial support for the candidates within the 'core' phase of education will be through a combination of personal resources, assistance from the synod and AUSTUDY. More detailed comments on this issue are found later in the Report.

6.2.2 (f) Assessment of outcomes being achieved

As is currently the practice, the theological college assesses when the satisfactory completion of the core program has been achieved.

6.2.3 PHASE THREE: The Licensed Year

Prior to any decision on readiness for ordination, each candidate will be required to undertake a further year in which they are engaged in ministry in an appointed ministry context in which appropriate study is continued for 25% of the time and the exercise of Ministry is the focus of the other 75%.

6.2.3 (a) Purpose and Goal

The Licensed Year offers a supervised experience of Ministry with many of the aspects of accountability and responsibility at a greater level than that of the Core Program Field Education component. The requirement of 25% continuing study and supervision is designed to establish a discipline of time and patterns appropriate for lifelong ministry.

This period is another opportunity for the individual and the church to reflect on and ascertain the person's suitability for Ministry.

6.2.3 (b) Curriculum and Outcomes

The curriculum is, in general terms, the practical life of Ministry coupled with the completion of study.

The proposal for the 25% study component is again one offering flexibility which is dependent on the needs of the Licensed person and the discernment of the theological college and presbytery. Some individuals may well use the opportunity to complete or extend a qualification for Ministry. Others will take the opportunity to explore other aspects of the theological, missional or biblical foundations of ministry not covered in the Core Program. This component may be completed in intensive periods of study in the college environment, in summer and vacation programs or, if appropriate, regular weekly commitments to study. The way in which people meet the outcomes required will be influenced by the location of the Ministry appointment, availability of courses, level of qualification sought, and necessary strengthening of aspects of the Licensed person's competency, preparation and formation for Ministry.

6.2.3 (c) Responsibility and Discernment

The Joint Presbyteries Settlements Advisory Committee, in consultation with a parish or other Ministry situation, and with the theological college, will arrange the placement for the Licensed Year. In particular this will involve the appointing of the candidate to a Ministry context and the appropriate continuation of the study component. The oversight and discernment process continues in this phase but is transferred to the presbytery where the candidate is serving his/her appointment, rather than the presbytery from which the individual candidates. The mentoring role also continues but, for reasons of geographical distance, may be transferred to another person.

6.2.3 (d) Funding

During the Licensed Year the funding will be a joint responsibility between the congregation or agency to which the candidate is appointed and the synod. The Licensed person will receive a full stipend. It is envisaged that a minimum 75% of the stipend will be paid by the body receiving the ministry.

6.2.3 (e) Assessment of Successful outcomes

It is the Licensing Presbytery in consultation with the theological college who will determine whether the outcomes of the Licensed Year have been successfully reached. Again, a portfolio approach is recommended. The successful completion of the Licensed Year will indicate an individual's readiness for ordination or commissioning.

6.2.4 **PHASE FOUR: Continuing Education**

6.2.4 (a) Purpose and Goals of this phase

Long-term effectiveness in Ministry depends on continuing the learning process developed in the core program and Licensed Year. The goal of this process is to enable Ministers to continue to develop their skills and competencies for their particular ministry. In the modern world this is not an optional extra, but is essential for all who would offer leadership within the church. Continuing Education needs to be built into the ongoing program of all those in specified Ministries.

6.2.4 (b) Curriculum and Outcomes

There needs to be an opportunity to develop a deeper relationship with God, deepen one's knowledge of the gospel, maintain an awareness of the world in which ministry is exercised, grow in self-awareness and relational skills, and develop particular competencies.

It is envisaged that each Minister will plan their continuing education so that it intentionally covers the major aspects of Ministry over a period of for example five years, in order that they may have the opportunity to develop a cycle of ongoing continuing education. There is also a strong suggestion that their proposed program reflect not only a broad range of areas but also of delivery modes and styles of learning. Distance education, action-reflection, pursuit of post-graduate qualifications all need to find a place in continuing education curriculum. The Continuing Education curriculum prepares Ministers for developing trends and possibilities, and not only support and skills for immediate demands and issues.

6.2.4 (c) Responsibility and Oversight

The responsibility for the development of the continuing education curriculum would be with the appropriate agencies in each synod. Ministers themselves need to exercise professional responsibility in developing and maintaining their commitment to professional development and ongoing formation.

It is the responsibility of the presbyteries to ensure that Ministers fulfil expectations in regard to continuing education. Agency reviews or Parish Consultations conducted by the presbyteries can contribute to the encouragement of Ministers to continue to equip themselves for fruitful and effective ministry. **It is proposed that all Ministers be required to enter into five year continuing education contracts with their Presbytery or other appointing body, and that no further settlement or appointment be possible if the Minister has not undertaken satisfactory education in the previous five years.**

6.2.4 (d) Funding

The funding for continuing education involves a co-operative effort between synod resourcing (e.g. scholarships, or support of a resource person), the ministry context (e.g. a parish or agency), and the Minister him or herself.

6.3 Advantages of the new four stage procedure for preparation for Ministry

The Task Group believes that there are several advantages to the proposal that has been outlined in this section of the Report:

- i. A clearer vision of the ministry for which the candidate is preparing.
- ii. A more satisfactory way for people to explore their 'call' and for the church to respond to that 'call'.
- iii. Better preparation for the ministry which is being entered.
- iv. The preparation process is close to the ongoing life of the church and community, and encourages integration between study and practice.

- v. Flexibility of modes of study.
- vi. The initial preparation encourages people to see continuing education as integral to the work of Ministry, and to see learning as a lifelong enterprise.

7. THE MINISTRY OF DEACON AND THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH WORKER

The proposal which has been offered so far applies to all three Ministries which are the subject of this report. This section raises some issues which arise from the special circumstances of the two new ministries.

All of the Colleges have faced pressures and difficulties in establishing courses which prepare people for the newly recognised Ministries of Deacon and Youth Worker, largely because only limited additional resources have been made available for the specialised training required. This has meant that, to a considerable degree, Deacon and Youth Worker courses have largely consisted of parts of the Minister of the Word course, with addition of areas particular to Deacons and Youth Workers, rather than development of courses which are particular to each Ministry.

The fact that there are relatively small numbers of people training for either Ministry has led to the suggestion that one national centre of training for each is to be preferred - for example, all Deacons to train in Victoria and all Youth Workers in Queensland. The Task Group believes that there is great value in the three forms of Ministry training together along with those training for other ministries. There are as many disadvantages in locating training in one centre as there are in reducing the number of colleges.

A 1994 consultation on education for Ministry of Deacon indicated that the deacons sought a style of education which stressed adult learning processes, a holistic approach, an action-reflection model and mentoring. They sought more emphasis on practice and reflection, and less on the classroom. Hopefully the proposals made in this Report will encourage colleges and other bodies to respond to these needs for all Ministries.

The Task Group recommends that the MEC explore ways in which the appointment of a Deacon Education Co-ordinator may be made to assist all colleges, to prepare national events and to keep an up-to-date listing of resources (the need for the position to be reviewed after 5 years by the MEC).

There would be benefits having a nationally recognised person as a focus for Youth Worker Ministry, and the Task Group recommends that the MEC explores ways in which the appointment of a Youth Worker Co-ordinator may be made to assist the colleges and MEBs (the need for the position to be reviewed after 5 years by the MEC).

8. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CANDIDATES

Located in Darwin, Nungalinga College has from its inception been an ecumenical venture which has sought to develop appropriate education and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The college prepares people for Ministry, and also has a number of courses which focus on community and personal development. In 1995 there were 17 members of the faculty, coming from many countries, and some 240 students located in various places and never all in residence at the same time.

The style of teaching is designed to meet the requirements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural patterns. Most courses are dealt with in short, intensive sessions, followed by action-reflection in communities. Distance learning methods are used, with faculty travelling to local communities to assist with study.

Nungalinya is now a member of the Adelaide College of Divinity. The Nungalinya Diploma of Theology is in the process of being accredited and an Advanced Diploma is under consideration. The Certificate of Theology and the Associate Diploma of Theology are accredited for ABSTUDY purposes.

Courses in association with Nungalinya College are also being developed in Brisbane and Sydney, with particular concern for urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates.

However, the concentration on Nungalinya College as the focus for the theological training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people leaves some major gaps. The Uniting Church needs to explore ways to provide for the preparation and ordination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people whose educational needs and expectations are not met through Nungalinya College. There are fundamental differences of history and experiences in other parts of Australia which mean the present arrangements are incomplete. In some situations candidates in some synods find that arrangements suitable for their needs cannot be made through Nungalinya or the Synod Theological College. They are then tied to a system which prolongs their training unnecessarily and unjustly, and which is detrimental to their involvement in the Ministry and mission of the church.

The Task Group believes that there needs to be closer examination of the character, skills and knowledge demanded in the various contexts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ministry in order to ensure that our resources are actually allocated in the way which can secure the outcomes needed in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander congregations.

The Task Group recommends that the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress:

- i. assess the character, skills and knowledge needed for Aboriginal and Islander Ministry in each region of the Congress,**
- ii. hold discussions with Nungalinya College and other Uniting Church theological colleges about any additional options needed in theological education for Aboriginal and Islander candidates, and**
- iii. make recommendations to the Ministerial Education Commission.**

9. GROWING A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH

Australia's development as a multicultural society has continued in the 1990's with some success and some struggle. At times the nature of this 'multicultural' society appears quite fragile but at other times through communication, co-operation and an openness to learn, the benefits of ethnic and cultural diversity result in the enrichment of the lives of individuals, communities and Australian society as a whole.

In this context, the Uniting Church is gradually coming to terms with the concept of 'multiculturalism', including the implications of being a multicultural church in a multicultural society.

As the needs of potential applicants and candidates are considered, the church should raise its awareness of the various cultural, theological, socio-economic, political and

educational issues that will impact on an individual's development into the specified ministry to which they are called. These issues vary from culture to culture, person to person and reflect the individual's experience before and since arriving in Australia.

If we are committed to the development of a truly multicultural church, the Uniting church needs to take seriously the equipping of both English speaking and non-English speaking background leaders to assist the church in this task.

To assist this process the Task Group recommends that synods, MEBs and colleges implement and further develop the following:

9.1 A cross-cultural studies component in theological/lay education courses which could include:

- * A subject on 'Multiculturalism in Australia and the Uniting Church'
- * Exploration of cross-cultural and ethno-specific issues that arise out of the content of particular subject/topic areas. In particular, consideration should be given to issues relevant to ethnic groups that are dominant in the Australian community and/ or the Uniting Church.
- * A program that is intentional about increasing dialogue between people of different cultures (including English and non- English speaking) through field/exposure visits to various communities, visiting speakers, discussion forums, films, student and lecturer participation in wider community forums on these issues, etc.
- * Access to second language programs for students whose first language is English, in languages that are significant in the Australian community and/or the Uniting Church. Opportunity for students to gain academic credit for these subjects as a part of their coursework should be available.

9.2 Field education placements that focus on multicultural/cross cultural issues, for English and non- English background students, as appropriate.

9.3 Staff development for continuing education, 'year of discernment', theological college/hall and lay educators on cultural issues and theological insights of the Asia/Pacific, Asia/India regions, in particular in relation to those ethnic/cultural groups that have been established in Australian society over the last twenty years.

9.4 Support programs and/or processes, during the time of discernment and for candidates for specified ministries who have English as a second language, that promote equity in theological education and ministry outcomes. This needs to include support from the church and college:

to acquire oral and written English language proficiency to adequately engage in ministry and education for ministry

to acquire an overview of the nature and development of Australian society

to gain an understanding of the frames of reference used in theological education and the Uniting Church, in Australia

through the provision of pastoral care, mentoring and/or links to appropriate community networks, especially for students recently from overseas or those who are isolated from previous networks in Australia.

If delivery of these programs/processes is assisted by providers outside of the colleges or the Uniting Church, students should be offered assistance as necessary, in accessing these.

9.5 The employment of Faculty in colleges who reflect the diversity of the Australian community and can contribute effectively to the ongoing development of the Uniting Church as a multicultural church. Just as a balance in theological, ministerial, academic and gender dynamics is currently considered in developing educational teams in colleges/halls it is increasingly important that ethnic/cultural background and/or one's ability to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on the development of a multicultural Uniting Church be considered in the employment of staff and the engaging of visiting lecturers.

10. SOME RELATED ISSUES.

10.1. Academic and Professional Standing of the Colleges

The Task Group was asked "to evaluate the present academic and professional standing of the theological colleges of the Uniting Church, including provision of continuing and advanced training and research".

The Task Group is of the opinion that the colleges maintain high academic and professional standards, and within the constraints of staff time encourage advanced training and research.

As colleges continue to develop their commitment to adult education principles and to a variety of learning styles - case study, narrative learning, self-directed learning, critical praxis, and action-reflection opportunities - there is a need to ensure the development of staff competencies in these areas.

10.2. Terms of service of college staff

There is a long tradition in university teaching for members of staff to stay a long time; many hold tenure for life. It was believed that this was the best way to encourage the scholarship and research needed for good teaching.

While this tradition has been part of our colleges' life, changes are occurring. Appointments are usually made for set terms. This gives the church the opportunity to review the staffing of the colleges in the light of changing mission needs, ensuring that the mission of the church sets the agenda of staffing committees rather than academic tradition. The change to fixed term appointments is also one way the church ensures that staff do not become isolated from the church and its various ministries.

The Task Group recommends that college appointments be made for an initial term of seven years and that following review re-appointments for terms of five years may be made. The review of appointments will keep in mind the university and ecumenical contexts, and the range of expertise available across all the colleges in the UCA.

There is a variation in stipends across the synods, partly because of variations in the basic stipend between synods and partly because the amount added to the basic stipend

varies. The argument for a loading above stipend has been variously related to academic salaries, Assembly and synod officer stipends and professional expenses.

The Task Group recommends that teaching staff salaries should be set at minimum stipend plus 15% , providing the college gives adequate assistance with the cost of housing and other allowances.

Study leave or sabbatical leave is part of the terms of service of all synods. It is appreciated and well-used, although there seems to be little effort for colleges to give guidance to staff about areas of study that would be of benefit to the college and the church. Those who work within theological colleges need to keep in touch with the needs of Ministers in various types of settlement. Numerous people suggested that college staff should be required to spend part of their study leave in a parish or other settlement, recognising that their skills should relate not just to their area of academic speciality but to the relationship between that speciality and the tasks of Ministry. The colleges are asked to give serious consideration to this issue as they establish guidelines for sabbatical leave.

It is recommended that the governing body of the college establish guidelines for sabbatical leave and require a report to the college at the completion of the leave.

10.3 Candidate Selection

The selection of candidates for the Ministries of the UCA is a process of discerning the calling of God, a calling which is made evident in the faith, life, abilities and personalities of individuals. It is a mutual process, the individual and the church seeking to know the will of God. The current process is set out in detail in Regulations, section 2.2.

Under the proposals contained in this Report, individuals who have completed the period of discernment and have discerned a call to a specified ministry would apply to be a candidate for that Ministry.

Consideration of the application

The initial consideration of an application will be undertaken by that person's home presbytery, which receives the application, using information provided by the person's minister and elders council, and references from persons nominated by the applicant. An important part of the application will be a statement which explains how the period of discernment has helped shape the applicant's understanding that candidature is the best way to fulfil their ministry. The Synod's ministry Training Centre (may be theological college, or a body that covers all ministry education) will not only provide evidence of completion of the period of discernment, but reflection on the shape of ministry which has been discerned through the process.

The presbytery arranges an interview, and then decides whether to commend the person to the Synod, to defer such commendation or to reject the application.

Those recommended to the Synod will be considered by the Synod Selection Panel, which will undertake the work detailed in Regulation 2.210 and 2.211. In place of 2.2.12 (which provides for the Panel to report back to the Presbytery which then makes its decisions) the Task Group proposes that the Selection Panel should make the decision and inform the Presbytery of it. The Task Group suggests that the Panel should be joined by a representative of the relevant Presbytery in considering each person. This change is suggested on the basis that the Selection Panel has the best opportunity to

undertake thorough procedures and represents the wider church. The Task Group believes that this simplification of the process will be helpful to candidates.

Right of appeal.

Any person whose application is not accepted will have a right of appeal on the grounds that correct procedures have not been followed. This is not a right of appeal against the actual judgement of the body, which means an amendment to Regulation 2.2.15.

The Task Group recommends that the Legal Reference Committee be asked to draft amendments to Regulations to give effect to the previous two sections of this Report (6.3.1 and 6.3.2).

Continuous assessment.

During the Core Program and the Licensed Year there is further consideration of the suitability of the candidate for the particular Ministry, and a time in which the candidate may also reassess their call. Candidates need to know that initial acceptance is not the final determination of the suitability for Ministry.

10.4. Educational Assistance Grants

The Church has become dependent to a considerable degree on AUSTUDY support, although experience varies across the Synods. There is an increasing willingness of the DEETYA to accept courses that involve two disciplines (eg Arts and Theology) and last for five years. Distance learning programs can qualify.

There are four areas of concern in this reliance on AUSTUDY: that courses will be shaped more by AUSTUDY requirements than the needs of the church; questions about the relationship between church and state implied in such a funding arrangement; the danger of building the whole theological education process on government funding policies; and the variation on AUSTUDY rules across the States and Territories.

Student assistance grants from synods vary greatly across the church, far more than cost of living differences require. The following figures show the level of grants in each synod. These grants are not taxable. The figures are calculated as a percentage of the minimum stipend in the synod (without housing allowance).

- * NSW: For single students 36% of stipend, and for married students 54%. In both cases there is an allowance for dependent children of 5% per child. The allowance is means tested, and after the student earns more than 20% of stipend they lose \$1 for every \$2.
- * Northern: Students who go to theological colleges in other synods receive the same allowances as students in those synods.
- * QLD: a grant equivalent to what would have been received as Austudy if that person had qualified.
- * SA: 48.8% of stipend.
- * Tas: Same conditions as Victoria
- * Vic: For single students a grant of 29% and loan of 10% of stipend. Married students 36% grant and 12% loan.
- * WA: Because of the connection with Murdoch University, students receive Austudy. Synod pays an additional accommodation allowance of approximately \$6000.
- * ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER STUDENTS. Where people attend Nungalinya College their studies and allowances are covered by Abstudy.

Presbyteries also provide further allowances (e.g. in the Northern synod students get an extra \$80 per fortnight).

The Task Group recommends that the Synods consult on the levels of Educational Assistance Grants, so that the differences between the synods may be lessened, and adopt a maximum grant per student per annum of 40% of stipend.

10.5. Advanced study

While some colleges encourage and support advanced study and research by students, this has not always occurred in a formal and systematic way. Even fewer colleges are able to offer financial support for such study and research.

The Task Group believes that the church would benefit from a more active encouragement of study and research, and **recommends that the church, through its colleges, more formally and systematically encourage people who are suitable to undertake postgraduate study, offer advice about areas of study that are of most benefit to the life and mission of the church, and seek ways to financially assist people complete the study.**

10.6. Students' families

Students are no longer single males, forbidden to marry while in college, expected to do so when they leave, knowing that their spouse would be the unpaid assistant/ secretary/ women's groups leader. Students are male and female, single and married, young and old. Many spouses have their own careers.

What is clear is that neither spouses or children can be pressed into the life and service of the church. No assumption should be made that they will actively participate in the ministerial preparation. What the church may properly ask is whether the family has talked through all that will be involved and has reached a common mind on the application.

10.7 Ecumenical and University relations

Each of the colleges has entered into close working relationships with other church institutions. These have the advantage of introducing students to a wider experience of the church, and to a wider circle of teachers. They help to prepare candidates for ecumenical relations in their various settlements. Where the number of candidates for each denomination is small, they enable a full range of subjects to be covered. Such relationships are one means of fulfilling the Uniting Church's commitment to unity, and the ecumenical context provides the most appropriate learning community for those preparing for ministry. It is assumed that the distinctive evangelical and Reformed tradition of the Uniting Church is maintained in the ecumenical conversation.

The Task Group considers that the ecumenical relationships formed by the colleges are a most important development and **recommends that wherever possible the colleges provide education for ministry in an ecumenical context.**

Each college has also formed university relations, usually through a combined Faculty of Theology, and this has benefits for the range of resources and breadth of curriculum. The Task Group encourages these relationships, but asks that the church take care to develop courses for its purposes and not for those of the university.

10.8 Numbers of candidates

Nationally, the number of candidates is slightly more than needed to fill current vacancies, but shortages and surpluses occur from time to time in any synod.

There are different approaches to the question of numbers. Some accept all those considered suitable in the selection process. Some set the limit of financial support available and accept students until that limit is reached. Others look at the usual number of vacant settlements and accept up to that average figure.

The Task Group proposes that the Standing Committee be asked to explore the possibility of national co-ordination and/or networking regarding numbers of candidates for Minister of the Word, Deacon and Youth Worker.

10.9 Specialised Ministries

The context in which people are socialised has a significant effect on how they relate to and interpret their life-experience in any other context. For this reason, the Task Group believes that synods should give careful attention to the preparation for specialised ministries such as urban and rural ministries and chaplaincy.

The fact that the church provides education for ministry in an urban context has an impact on the ability of candidates to relate to and to interpret their experiences in a rural context. The Task Group suggests that each synod should give consideration to providing a rural 'place' for preparation for rural ministry at which candidates would have the opportunity to undertake a significant part of their total course and at which retraining needed in moving from urban to rural settlements could occur.

There is also a need for centres providing a focus on Ministries in urban contexts such as those in multicultural and low income communities.

The Task Group considers that, in order to fulfil the mission calling today, the Church will need well-qualified and highly motivated Ministers in pioneering situations, beyond present congregational settlements. Often such Ministers will need to be wholly or partly self-supporting and so offering Ministry part-time. They will need the encouragement and support of the Presbytery. In their preparation such candidates should have opportunities to develop their understanding of the special context in which they will initially serve.

10.10 Formal Qualifications

A good deal of current planning is focused on the degree or diploma that is achievable at the end. It is widely seen as confirmation of the academic integrity of the course.

The Task Group believes that the primary interest of the church needs to be in planning a course which prepares people for ministry. However, for many candidates there is value in pursuing a degree program. The course recommended by the Task Group will allow most candidates for ordination or commissioning to complete the requirements for a degree. Those unable to complete a degree in this time may do so as part of their continuing education program. The continuing education program also provides the opportunity to obtain further qualifications.

11. Use of the Church's resources

There are two over-riding questions - whether the UCA as a whole is using the right proportion of its resources for ministerial education; and whether the present use of resources is as effective and economical as possible.

11.1. The proportion of Mission and Service Funds spent on Ministerial Education.

The current overall expenditure by the church is about 20% of the Mission and Service Fund income of each Synod, but is a much smaller percentage of the church's overall income. The Task Group has not found any arguments against this proportion among those who are responsible for forming synod budgets. But with the current pressure on all church finances it is unlikely that there will be an increase, and more likely that there will be a reduction. The Task Group urges the maintenance of the proportion of funds spent in this area of the church's life. The proportion is comparable in other denominations.

11.2. The question that is being pressed is whether we make the most effective use of the finance available.

11.2.1 *The Colleges.* The Task Group has examined options for reducing the number of colleges and has listened to views across the Church. The conclusion is that there is no clear case at present for such reduction. If the colleges were concerned only with the on-campus teaching of ordination candidates, there might be such a case, for there could be a more economic student/staff ratio. However, the colleges are also involved with private students, continuing education for Ministers, lay training and field education, as well as providing a significant contribution to the life of the synods.

Maintaining the colleges is costly and the Church needs to be assured that they are providing quality preparation for ministry at a reasonable cost. One thing that is contributing to this is wider ecumenical sharing of both staff and facilities. There can be savings when denominations work on a single campus, share support staff, and appoint teaching staff to a joint faculty. Financial saving is not the primary reason for such sharing; ecumenical commitment comes first, and we cannot expect great savings, but experience suggests that this is a way in which resources can be more economically utilised. The church should monitor the effects of the single campus plans in Adelaide and the Murdoch University model in Perth.

11.2.2 *The shape of courses.* As this report indicates, the normal course for the preparation of Ministers will be mixed mode. It is likely that there will be an increased use of DTE, and the church will need to consider ways this can be financed without an increase in the overall ministerial education budget. The stress on continuing education means that both Ministers and the Church (congregations and synod) will need to provide additional resources, or work out ways to use present resources more fully.

11.2.3 *Student grants.* This is a major item for each Synod budget and is referred to in the Report at Section 10.3. It is important that the Church be clear about the basis on which it offers financial assistance to students. The Church is not providing a stipend or salary. The Church seeks to provide such assistance as will enable the candidate to put together from all sources a financial package sufficient to maintain the candidate and any dependents in good health and free from worry about the basic needs of life. Such assistance will be tailored to the needs and resources of each candidate. The other major financial factor is the number of candidates and this is referred to at Section 10.7 of the Report.

11.2.4 *Faculty*. One way of using resources wisely is for the expertise of faculty to be shared among the colleges. Visiting lecturers from one college may undertake intensives; post-graduate students may be referred by one college to another. The skills and gifts of the staff in each college should be available to the whole church.

12. Subsequent Issues

As the work of the Task Group proceeded it became obvious that there were some issues which, while not strictly within the terms of reference of the Group, deserved some comment, either in the form of recommendations or suggestions for further study by the church.

12.1 Resources for ministry

If the task of Ministry occurs within the ministry of the whole people of God, this Report begins to pose some questions about the way in which the church expresses its commitment to the education of the people. In particular, there is a need for the church to consider such questions as:

- * How can the church make a greater percentage of its education budget available for continuing education and training for lay people as they seek to exercise their ministry in daily life.
- * In what ways can the church more actively support the training, in the situation, of lay people to exercise ministry in the increasing numbers of parishes which cannot afford or attract Ministers? Is there a need to consider the advantages and disadvantages of a dispersed faculty?

12.2 Ministerial Education Commission

Oversight of education for the specified Ministries of the church is provided by the Ministerial Education Commission of the Assembly. The major tasks of the Commission are to:

- * prescribe areas of study and minimum requirements for the courses of study for the various Ministries.
- * review the way in which the prescriptions are met in each college by way of annual reports from the colleges and Ministerial education Boards (or equivalents) and regular visitation to colleges and MEBs.
- * determine when a candidate has qualified for ordination or recognition and to certify to this effect.
- * recommend to the assembly general policies and standards for continuing education of Ministers.

For a full list, see Regulation 2.2.19.

The MEC has carried out these tasks and has provided a forum for discussion of matters related to Ministry and education for Ministry among the colleges and MEBs.

The work of the MEC increased markedly with the recognition of additional specified Ministries at the 1991 Assembly. To enable the work to be done, and to ensure that expertise related to the different Ministries was available, the Commission was re-structured at the 1994 Assembly to provide a separate specialist sub-committee for each specified Ministry. These sub-committees are situated in the various synods. At this early stage of development it appears that the new structure is working well.

The Task Group believes that, although the Commission meets only once a year, with thirty six members it is too large a group to carry out effectively its planning and review function, and to implement the developments recommended in this Report. **The Task Group recommends that the balance of expertise and variety of function be maintained with the following membership:**

- * **Chairperson and Secretary appointed by the Assembly**
- * **the Principal (or alternate appointed by the Principal) of each theological college recognised by the Assembly**
- * **one person from each synod**
- * **two persons appointed by the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress**
- * **the chairperson of each advisory committee appointed by the Commission**

This constitutes a total of twenty three members (compare Reg. 2.2.16 (a) to (e)).

The Task Group also believes that the Commission will be assisted in the implementation of the recommendations of this Report by **the appointment of two members of the Task Group to the Commission for the next triennium.**

APPENDIX One: Terms of Reference

94.24.05 Ministerial Education

(a) recognising

- that there is increased diversity and expectation of choice in the community
- that a variety of models of theological education are being developed to meet the diversity of mission contexts being met by the church
- the importance of personal and professional formation as well as growth in awareness of and understanding of the evangelical word taught and proclaimed by the church (ie the apostolic faith)
- the increased age of people at ordination

to request the Standing Committee to investigate and report to the Eighth Assembly with recommendations on the future provision of ministerial education for Ministers of the Word, Deacons and Youth Workers, such investigation to involve reception of submissions from members and councils of the church. The report shall give particular attention to:

(i) an evaluation of:

(a) the effectiveness of current education for the varying demands of ministry in the Australian setting, and the capacity of theological graduates to minister in ways that empower the people of God for life and ministry in the world;

(b) the ecumenical relationships of Uniting Church colleges;

(c) recent changes in education for ministry which are taking place in Uniting Church colleges;

(d) whether pre-candidating studies should be obligatory for all people;

(e) an action-reflection apprenticeship model;

(f) whether theological education could occur more effectively if there were less emphasis on a central location or institution;

(g) the use of Distance Theological Education training for Ministers of the Word, Deacons and Youth Workers;

(h) the adequacy of the spiritual formation of candidates as persons of faith upheld by creative spiritual disciplines;

(i) a consideration of the appropriate number and location of theological colleges of the Uniting Church, including the suggestion that different colleges might be developed as centres of expertise or excellence in education for a distinctive aspect of or setting for ministry;

(iii) consideration of the appropriateness, ability and willingness of the church to continue to allocate the current proportion of Mission and Service revenue to ministerial education;

(iv) the need or otherwise for a uniform system across Australia for education assistance grants for candidates;

(v) the desirability of the Uniting Church having a national policy in relation to the number of candidates accepted in any one year, including the criteria by which applicants are selected and the process followed by Selection Panels;

(vi) the appropriateness and adequacy of present Uniting Church policies and practices in continuing education and formation of ministers in the context of their accountability to the church;

(vii) the desirability of settling newly ordained ministers in appointments where they will receive adequate supervision, mentoring and peer support;

(viii) an evaluation of the present academic and professional standing of theological colleges of the Uniting Church, including provision of continuing and advanced training and research;

(ix) consideration of a uniform system of staff classifications and conditions of employment for theological college staff;

(b) to request that membership of any task group established by Standing Committee in relation to (a) above be drawn from three synods, and consist of a chairperson plus seven other members, and include at least one member from a theological faculty; one from the Ministerial Education Commission (not being a faculty member), and one from a synod Ministerial Education Board (not being a faculty member).

APPENDIX Two: Ministerial Education in each Synod

Each synod has a different way of providing lay education, Ministerial education and continuing education.

New South Wales has a Centre for Ministry which brings four schools together on one site: ELM Centre (lay education), United Theological College (Ministry), Continuing Education, and the Institute for Mission (a joint venture of the Synod and Assembly).

Queensland has Trinity Theological College which provides Ministerial and lay education.

South Australia brings the three areas together in Parkin-Wesley College, which has a close link with the University.

Tasmania. Candidates for Ministry from Tasmania study in Melbourne. Lay education and continuing education are the responsibility of the Education for Ministry Commission.

The Northern Synod. Aboriginal students go to Nungalinga College. Other students go to a college in another synod. Lay education and continuing education come under the oversight of Mission and Parish Services.

Victoria prepares people for Ministry at the Theological Hall, and provides lay education and continuing education through Otira College.

Western Australia provides preparation for Ministry through Perth Theological Hall which works with Murdoch University. There is a part-time continuing education co-ordinator.

The colleges in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth are each involved in some form of ecumenical co-operation, from the formation of joint faculties, to single-site campuses, to varied forms of ecumenical teaching, to membership of degree-conferring bodies. There is also some form of university relationship, which in recent years has grown in some synods towards joint appointment of staff. Within the five colleges there are 37 full-time teaching staff and 53 part-time or visiting lecturers. In addition there are library and administrative staff. In each college there are significant numbers of students who are not candidates.

Nungalinga College in Darwin is an ecumenical enterprise (Anglican, Catholic, Uniting Church) designed to meet the needs of the Aboriginal and Islander communities, with a distinctive teaching method which best suits those communities.

Coolamon College, based in Brisbane, provides Distance Theological education for just under 700 students around the country, who are taking a total of 975 units in 1996. This translates to approximately 130 full-time students. Synods increasingly use this resource for preparation of Lay Preachers. Courses may also lead to a B.Th. with the Brisbane College of Theology.