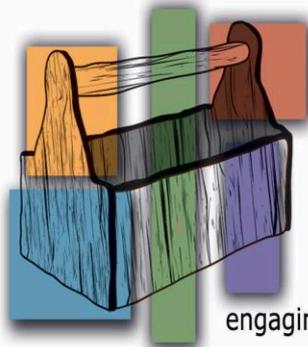


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Congregational Life

Intentional and  
creative community:

engaging pastoral ministry in varying circumstances

DIY  
C7

## Module Overview

## Leader's Guide

### Aim

The aim of this module is to engage participants in reflection and discussion on how to be and create community in varying circumstances.

### Participant outcome

When they have completed the work for this module, participants will be able to further explore and articulate something of what is vital for their community to thrive and be healthy and connected. Together, participants will be encouraged to further delve into and discuss what are the basics of pastoral ministry for their community.

### Leader's role

The main role of the leader in this module is to encourage participants to be critically reflective regarding pastoral ministry, but also importantly to allow individuals to express their opinions safely when different from others' views. The first activity is an introduction to the topic that will help the group begin (or continue) to explore their community's experience of living with and through, local and worldwide crises. As such, the leader also needs to be in a 'facilitating mode', and a 'pastoral mode', listening for expressions of lament and hope.

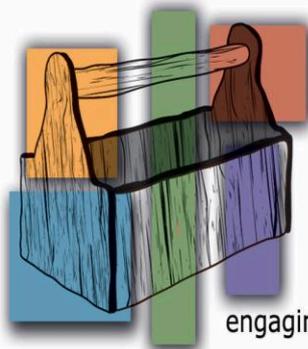
Note: If the group is meeting online, it is helpful if the leader is able to use the facilities of 'breakout groups' and 'screen-sharing'. For larger groups, split the group into smaller discussion groups using a 'breakout rooms' facility. When sharing feedback, use 'screen-sharing' so all can see the ideas shared.

Providing a safe space for conversations is critical for the participants' learning. Please provide a relaxed, friendly and an environment that is open for sharing and listening respectfully to different viewpoints. Have brief breaks, as necessary. If meeting online, this is particularly necessary, as people fatigue faster, so have a break after each activity.

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## Resources

Prior to the session, the leader will need to:

- provide a copy of Handout 1 (C7H1) and Handout 2 (C7H2) to each participant

Each participant will also need:

- Individual highlighters and drawing pencils or crayons
- Plain paper

## Session outline

85 mins - 2 hours

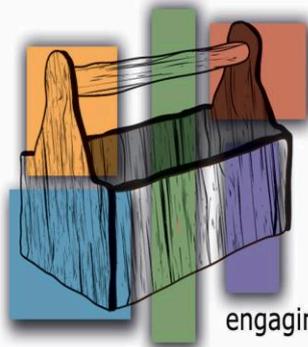
- |                                                                |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Introduction                                                | 10 min. |
| 2. Small group Activity 1 with C7H1 with larger group activity | 40 min. |
| 3. Large group Activity 2 with C7H2                            | 30 min. |
| 4. Close                                                       | 5 min.  |

The time is given here as a guide; it is more helpful to the group and the discussion to take time and space for sharing and consideration of questions and answers.

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## 1. Introduction

Tell the group: *"In the session on 'The call to faithfulness in changing times' (C2), we explored the elements that are essential for Christian community – and for our communities. As the world rapidly changes, what we considered essential before, we may no longer be able to engage with as community. This session continues that reflection. It is an opportunity to listen to one another and discover the views that are similar to one another and those that are different. It is also an opportunity to continue exploring how we engage with effective pastoral ministry in varying circumstances."*

Commence the time together in prayer. (5 min.)

Tell the group: *"When we are not able to meet in ways we would normally, maintaining community and engaging pastorally can be challenging. To be pastorally effective in these times takes intentionality and creativity. To help us do this, it can be useful to return to the basics of pastoral ministry. We may then find that we need to embrace new ways of being and let go of old patterns and ways of connecting, at least for a period of time. This can involve some aspects that are freeing and hope-full for the community. Change in any form, however, often also brings grief, loss, tiredness, and struggle. Allowing ourselves and others space to name how things are can be a gift to the health, development, and connectivity of the community."*

**[Note:** for more information on loss and grief during times of uncertainty, as well as mental and emotional well-being resources, see <https://victas.uca.org.au/lay-leadership-mental-and-emotional-wellbeing/>. If your group needs to stop at this point to explore some of these resources, take the time to do so.]

Tell the group: *"Returning to the basics of pastoral ministry and what is vital for our community can also help us focus on what is **unchanging** for us and others. And it is in focusing on the basics, and what is vital and unchanging for us and our community, that the keys to intentionality and creativity can be found."*

## 2. Activity 1 with C2H1

Prior to the session, ensure that each participant has a copy of Handout 1 (C2H1).

In groups of 5 or 6 complete Activity 1, with groups offering back to the whole group to share their discussion. (15 min.)

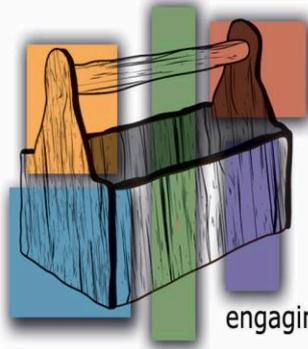
1. With the wider group, discuss the questions: *"What did you discover in completing this activity?"*

(Remember: some participants may find it a relief to let go of some things which were considered important and necessary before. Others will be experiencing grief and loss of things they consider essential and vital for the community. It is likely that many are feeling a mixture of emotions. Be prepared for expressions of loss, lament, and grief as well as relief.) (10 min.)

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2. *What remains unchanged for your community?* Participants may find it helpful to think about different areas of community life that essentially have remain unchanged. For example, we are still children of God and God continues to journey with us; we can still connect and care for one another, though the means have changed. (10 min.)

*"In revisiting and exploring basics of pastoral ministry, we can clarify what we value about our connections as a community of faith, and what of these remain unchanged. Clearly however, for many, the 'how', 'when', 'what', and 'where' of pastoral ministry changes in different circumstances, particularly when there is trauma, and/or unexpected and varying circumstances. In the next activity, we will explore what it might mean to be responsive to these changes."*

### 3. Activity 2 with C2H2

Tell the group: *"When we experience different or varying circumstances, the ways we do ministry changes."*

*Many communities are quite able to adapt to the changes required in exercising pastoral ministry in different circumstances. For example: many intentionally respond in creative and effective ways when there is a disaster or someone in their community experiences trauma, offering food, shelter, care at all hours, etc.*

*However, to engage in these ways over long periods of time, particularly when the circumstances keep changing, can be mentally, spiritually, emotionally, socially, and physically challenging. Being intentional and creative in times of uncertainty also necessarily requires us to commit to adapting to the changes around us. And this can be very tiring.*

*So, what can help during these times? Allowing imaginative simplicity, change, mistakes, difference, understanding, space, rest, and most of all loving kindness and grace towards ourselves and others."*

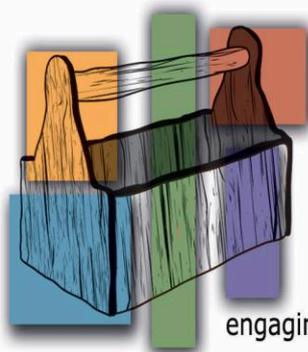
Work through the questions in C7H2 with the group.

**Note:** This activity might be difficult for some and freeing for others. The idea of not having to have all the answers and being allowed to make mistakes can be both challenging and a relief. However, for communities to survive and to thrive during times of uncertainty, change and ambiguity, there needs to be the grace and space for creativity and making mistakes. Being intentional in pastoral ministry is about 'why' we do what we do. Seek to be pastoral in your approach to leading this section.

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#### 4. Close

Tell the group: *"In closing, working together to seek what is vital for our communities to thrive, is an ongoing journey, one that takes grace and compassion for ourselves and others."*

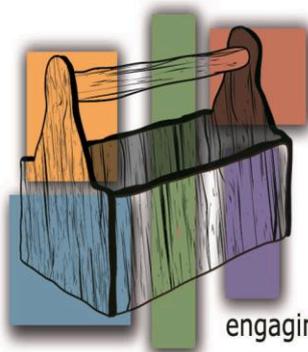
Invite the group to reflect on these thoughts and to pray about them individually and together.

Close the time together in prayer. (5 min.)

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DIY  
C7 H1

## Handout 1

### What is vital and unchanging?

In groups of 5 or 6 review the following basics of pastoral ministry. Add anything else that you consider fundamental to pastoral ministry for your community.

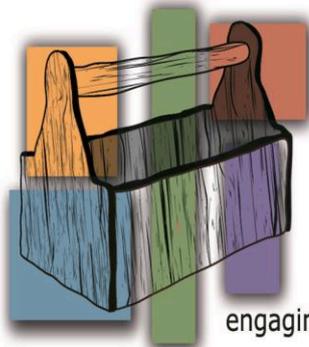
UCA Basis of Union – worship, witness, and service
Caring for God’s people (our church communities and the wider community).
Walking alongside people as they explore and grow in their relationship with God.
Companionship people as they experience daily life – in all its joy, hope, and lament (and everything in between!)
Seeking to guide, nurture, support and sustain, reconcile, and heal.
Seeking guidance, nurture, support and sustenance, reconciliation, and healing for self, and being reflective in praxis.
Seeking to provide and engender a listening space for all to share their story, regardless of culture (ethnicity, age, socio-economic condition, place of birth, gender, etc).
Supporting and mentoring others to articulate and develop faith.
Supporting and mentoring others to articulate and develop the unconscious skills and gifts used in pastoring with others.

15 mins for activity

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*20 minutes for discussion*

*Take a little time to reflect (think, pray, feel) about your community.*

Then, consider the following questions:

As you look at the above list (and any others you added), what are the basics of pastoral ministry for your community?

What is **vital** for your community to thrive and be healthy and connected? *or*

What is **vital** for your community to thrive – spiritually, mentally, emotionally, socially, and physically?

Sometimes what we considered vital before becomes not so important under different circumstances, for example: when we experience disasters, global pandemics, community tragedies, etc.

Is there anything that you considered vital before that you now think is unimportant? Have you been surprised or challenged by anything the group has raised?

Again, considering your community, look again at the list of basics for pastoral ministry.

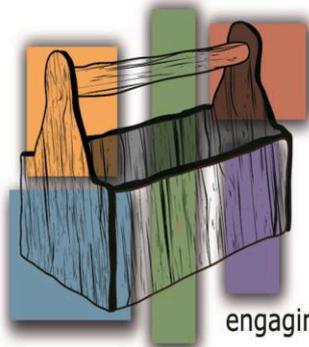
What strikes you as **unchanging** as you again reflect on the list? What has remained the same in your community?

Be prepared to share your reflections with the rest of the participants in the wider group.

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## Handout 2

### Intentional and creative pastoral ministry

30 mins for activity

When we experience different or varying circumstances, the ways we do ministry changes.

**The 'how' ...**

**The "when" ...**

**The "what" ...**

**The "where" ... of pastoral ministry changes...**

Many are already well on the way with this journey of adaptation and change. You may have already made many decisions, and had many discussions, regarding pastoral ministry in your community; some may have been unexpected and surprising at the time (for example, think of your community's response to drought and bushfire, as well as the current pandemic). Perhaps some of the following questions might provide some grace and space in your decisions.

*Remembering what is unchanging and vital for your community, in what ways can (or have you) intentionally and creatively adapt/change the "how", "when", "what" and "where" of pastoral ministry in, and for, your community?*

*How can you draw others into, and involve your community in, this process of intentionality and creativity? For example, in what ways can you be creative about nurturing your community and being church in this time and place together? (Note: this will be an ongoing work.)*

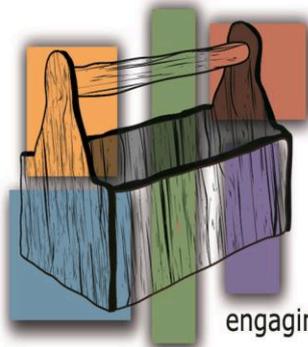
*What would/does it mean for you to be able to make mistakes through this process?*

*What does/could it mean for you and your community to know that some ways of engaging with pastoral community might only work for some, or for a few weeks?*

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*How might you 'hold lightly' ways of exercising pastoral ministry? What support do/might you and your community need around this?*

*How can you be intentional in your approach to, and exercise of, pastoral ministry during this time and other times of varying circumstances? What do you need to be intentional about in your ministry? How can you keep that simple?*

**Remember, it is so important that we offer to others, and ourselves, compassion, understanding, space, rest, and loving kindness as we seek ways to minister to others all the time, but especially during times that are difficult.**

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