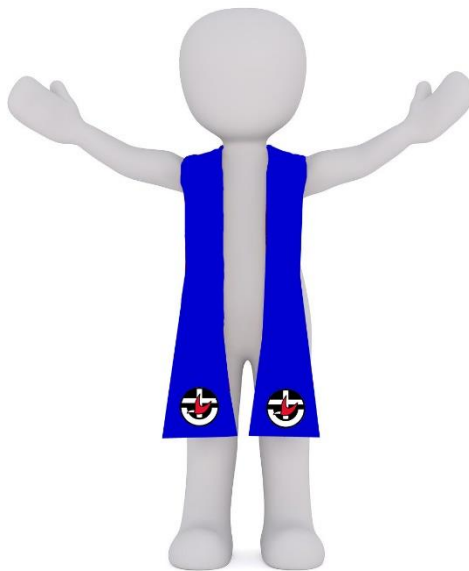


# Called to the Ministry of Lay Preacher



**Uniting Church in Australia**  
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



equipping Leadership *for* Mission



# MINISTRY OF LAY PREACHER ROAD MAP

## Being Called

The Ministry of Lay Preaching is one of the two Specified Lay Ministries in the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). The UCA has recognised the ministry of Lay Preaching since its inception with this ministry having an established history in churches joining to form what became the UCA in 1977. According to The Basis of Union, the UCA recognises the gifts of ordained and lay.

The UCA seeks to be an inclusive church and recognises the gifts of people of different cultures, genders and sexualities, those who are Neurodiverse and those with different abilities.

### What is the Ministry of Lay Preacher?

The Ministry of Lay Preacher is one in which lay persons may participate in the proclamation of the gospel and in witness to Christian faith and experience, and for which they have received gifts and are called by the Holy Spirit. [Regulations 2.2.3(a)]

A member of the Church who is recognised as a Lay Preacher may conduct services of worship in the Congregation in which such Lay Preacher holds membership and in any other Congregation to which the Lay Preacher may be invited by the Minister, or where there is no Minister in placement the Church Council. [Regulations 2.2.3(b)]

Lay Preachers are people who are recognised by their Presbytery as having:

- the gifts of the Spirit required for this ministry
- ethical, personal, and spiritual maturity
- the ability to communicate effectively to the community in which they will exercise their ministry
- the ability to exercise the responsibilities inherent in this ministry and
- demonstrated the required levels of competency in specified areas.

If you believe you are being called to the Ministry of Lay Preaching, undertaking a Period of Discernment or starting some study are great ways to begin to explore this call. Talk with your Minister, Church Council, or Presbytery for more information.

## Apply

When making an application to become a Lay Preacher Candidate, a person must:

- be a confirmed member of the Church and must have held the status of a confirmed member for twelve months or more or have held equivalent status in another church acknowledged by the Church [Regulations 2.3.4(a)(i)]
- be assessed by the Presbytery as a person of suitable character, personality, spiritual maturity and capacity to exercise the responsibilities of Lay Preacher [Regulations 2.3.4(a)(ii)]
- make written application to the Presbytery through the Minister of the Congregation (or through the appropriate member of the ministerial team in the Congregation) in which the applicant holds membership. If there is no Minister of the Congregation in which the applicant holds membership, the application may be made directly to the Presbytery. [Regulations 2.3.4(b)]

The Minister of the Congregation or, if there is no such Minister, the Presbytery, shall notify the Church Council of the application, after which the Church Council shall interview the applicant and forward its report and recommendations, to the Presbytery within ninety days. [Regulations 2.3.4(c)]

The Presbytery shall request a confidential report from an appropriate Minister and shall make such other investigations and enquiries as it sees fit and may interview the applicant and shall either accept the applicant as a candidate for training as a Lay Preacher or reject the application providing that a two-thirds majority vote of members present shall be required for acceptance. [Regulations 2.3.4(d)]

## Study

Candidates for training as Lay Preachers shall be required to undertake such preparation and training as are prescribed by the Assembly. [Regulations 2.4.4(b)]. This includes both academic learning and formation for the role they are being called into.

In the past, Lay Preachers would study a series of subjects for their training. Now, in order to be recognised as a Lay Preacher, candidates need to demonstrate they are competent in a number of ways that had been identified by the Assembly in Formation, Worship and Preaching.

These standards set by the Assembly have not taken away the need for Lay Preacher candidates to study subjects/courses/units, and demonstrate a specified level of competency, in Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, Christology, Worship and Preaching.

It is still important that Lay Preachers have a solid grounding in the Bible, Theology, understanding and conducting worship, and the ability to preach well (including preparation). What has changed is that there is now an understanding that appropriate and sufficient learning may be achieved through multiple pathways. Prior learning and prior experience can be recognised when mapping out a pathway of learning for new Lay Preacher candidates.

All Lay Preacher candidates will also undertake some form of formation study around working within the doctrine, ethos and polity of the Uniting Church and understanding the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for Lay Preachers.

According to the *UCA Assembly's Standards for the Ministry of Lay Preacher*, there are three (3) main areas in which Lay Preacher Candidates need to demonstrate competency before they can be recognised by their Presbytery.

These are:

- 1. Formation – Working within the Doctrine, Ethos and Polity of the Uniting Church**  
and, understanding the **Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for Lay Preachers**
  - **Doctrine, Ethos and Polity of the Uniting Church**
    - This can be studied by taking the online unit *Understanding the UCA* which is offered once or twice a year through the Lay Education section of Pilgrim

Theological College. Check out the Pilgrim Theological College website (under Ministry) for when the next unit is being offered.

- Alternatively, people can take *Uniting Church Theology and Ministry* at Pilgrim Theological College which is run every two years. Refer the Pilgrim Theological College website for further detail on when this will be run next.
- Or, your Presbytery may decide to undertake some other training in this area with you directly.

- **The Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for Lay Preachers**

- This can be studied by taking the online unit *Understanding the Code of Ethics for Lay Preachers*. Check out the Pilgrim Theological College website (under Ministry) for when the next unit is being offered.
- Alternatively, your Presbytery may decide to undertake some other training in this area with you directly.

2. **Worship** (including Biblical and Theological studies)

3. **Preaching** (including Biblical and Theological studies)

Currently, the Biblical and Theological studies are identified as at least being competent to an introductory level in:

- Old Testament studies
- New Testament studies
- Theology (specific to the UCA)
- Christology

Some Lay Preacher Candidates may have already undertaken some study. Contact the Synod Lay Leadership Development Coordinator for a conversation about the possibility of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (contact details at the back of this booklet).

## Educational Paths:

There are a number of ways Lay Preacher Candidates can undertake Biblical and Theological studies as they prepare for the Ministry of Lay Preaching.

The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania currently offers two (2) options for study:

- **Lay Education online units** (TMEC<sup>1</sup> Approved Training) – Many people have found these units to be excellent grounding and foundation for further theological studies. Refer to the Pilgrim Theological College website (under “Ministry”) for further information on what units are currently being offered.
- **Pilgrim Theological College** – Units from Bachelor level. (*Refer Pilgrim Theological College for specific requirements for study*)

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<sup>1</sup> TMEC = The Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Theological & Ministerial Education Committee. The Lay Education units are approved by TMEC and are in line with the standards set by the Assembly.

## Practice

Learning also comes through practise for Lay Preacher Candidates. Being involved in worship leadership and preaching in your local congregation (or perhaps another supportive one), and asking trusted others for feedback, is a great way to practise your craft.

Those who study through the Lay Education units are also given many opportunities to practise and gain valuable feedback through the assessments.

## Recognition

Once a Lay Preacher Candidate has completed all the necessary and required formation and study, a *Certificate of Lay Preacher Studies* can be issued by Pilgrim Theological College, through the Lay Leadership Development Coordinator.

Those Candidates who have fulfilled and demonstrated competency in all training requirements, may then apply to the Presbytery through their Church Council to be recognised as a Lay Preacher [Regulations 2.4.7(c)].

Recognition is dependent upon the candidate demonstrating an understanding of and affirming adherence to the Basis of Union. [Regulations 2.4.7(d)].

(e) The Presbytery shall determine whether or not a candidate is to be recognised as a Lay Preacher and shall, where appropriate, arrange for a service of worship at which such recognition will be acknowledged before the Church, and shall issue a certificate of recognition as a Lay Preacher. [Regulations 2.4.7(e)].

### For more information:

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# MINISTRY OF LAY PREACHER ROAD MAP

God calling you to the journey of Lay Preaching in the UCA?  
Check out the road map below for the places you need to visit.



1

Being Called

2

Apply

3

Study

4

Practise

5

Recognition