

GUIDELINES FOR VISITING PREACHERS OR SPEAKERS FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS TO UNITING CHURCH CONGREGATIONS

PURPOSE

This is a policy to guide congregations when inviting non-Uniting Church visiting preachers or speakers who may contribute to a service of worship.

BACKGROUND

The Uniting Church Basis of Union, its ethos and Code of Ethics give meaning and direction to the life of all Uniting Church congregations. Visiting preachers/speakers can enhance and support the life of a congregation and its people by upholding the beliefs and practices of the Uniting Church.

This policy is written for visiting preachers and speakers who have a responsibility and obligation to honour the foundations and beliefs of a Uniting Church congregation. Some congregations have expressed concern that they have:

- Received theology contrary to the Basis of Union;
- Been given misinformation about the Uniting Church; and
- Been encouraged by visiting preachers to leave the Uniting Church.

For the purpose of this policy, a “visiting preacher” includes any person who is asked to lead worship in a congregation or faith community of the Uniting Church, but who comes from another denomination, including visitors from Gideons, Bible Society, Leprosy Mission, local school chaplains and other religious organisations. It also includes speakers who are given the opportunity to contribute to a service of worship.

It should be noted that if a local congregation has a formal covenantal relationship with another denomination to form a local joint/co-operative congregation, then that agreement takes priority over the guidelines of this policy.

PRINCIPLE

- Visiting preachers and speakers need to be aware of their obligations to respect the core values and beliefs of the Uniting Church as described in the attached paragraphs of the Basis of Union in order to preach in a Uniting Church setting. The core values and beliefs of the Uniting Church include the validity of the leadership and ordination of women, and of infant baptism.
- Visiting speakers are entitled to promote their organisation, mission or chaplaincy but not within the context of the proclamation of the Word.
- Visiting speakers must not promote their denomination or seek to influence members to leave the Uniting Church.
- Visiting preachers must show the credentials of their sponsoring body recognising the preacher is qualified to act on their behalf.
- Congregations who invite a visiting preacher/speaker from another denomination are asked as a matter of course to have the person sign a Statement of Agreement to work within the Basis of Union. This Statement of Agreement enables the preacher/speaker to participate in a Uniting Church service of worship.

Institutions of the Uniting Church may find the above as helpful guidelines when inviting guest preachers or speakers.

PROCEDURE

Congregations shall send to the preacher/speaker a copy:

- (i) The Statement of Agreement (*Appendix 1*);
- (ii) A copy of the "Basis of Union 1992" paragraphs 3,4,5,& II (*Appendix 2*);

When a congregation experiences difficulties in obtaining a signed Statement of Agreement, the Manager of the Pastoral Relations and Placements Unit is available to answer questions and assist.

Congregations are to:

- (i) Keep an up-to-date record of the signed Statement of Agreement on file;
- (ii) Note an expiry date on the document;
- (iii) Forward a copy to the Manager of Pastoral Relations Commission.

MATTERS TO NOTE - EXPIRY DATE

Two years is considered an optimal maximum period for any Agreement. Congregations are encouraged to make their own decisions within this time limit of a suitable expiry date.

FURTHER REFERENCE MATERIAL

- In conjunction with the paragraphs from the Basis of Union 1992, "Introducing the Uniting Church in Australia" by Andrew Dutney, published by The Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, 222 Pitt Street, Sydney 2000 Australia is a helpful resource.
- "Basis of Union 1992" - full version - refer to National Assembly website:
<http://assembly.uca.org.au/resources/introducing-the-uniting-church/basis-of-union>

**STATEMENT OF AGREEMENT FOR VISITING
PREACHERS & SPEAKERS**

BETWEEN

CONGREGATION NAME

and

NAME OF PREACHER / SPEAKER

When I preach or contribute to worship in Uniting Church congregations, I agree:

- To work within the Basis of Union and Ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia;
- I am familiar with the documents:

“Basis of Union (1992 Ed) Paragraphs 3, 4, 5 & 11. (*Appendix 2*)

PERIOD OF WORSHIP AGREED TO:

_____ DATE: _____

VISITING PREACHER/SPEAKER SIGNATURE

NAME: _____

_____ DATE: _____

CHAIR OF CHURCH COUNCIL SIGNATURE

NAME: _____

DATE SUBMITTED TO THE PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

**"BASIS OF UNION" 1992 Edition
PARAGRAPHS 3, 4, 5 & II**

Paragraph 3

BUILT UPON THE ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Uniting Church acknowledges that the faith and unity of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church are built upon the one Lord Jesus Christ. The Church preaches Christ the risen crucified One and confesses him as Lord to the glory of God the Father. In Jesus Christ "God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5: 19 RSV). In love for the world, God gave the Son to take away the world's sin.

Jesus of Nazareth announced the sovereign grace of God whereby the poor in spirit could receive God's love. Jesus himself, in his life and death, made the response of humility, obedience and trust which God had long sought in vain. In raising him to live and reign, God confirmed and completed the witness which Jesus bore to God on earth, reasserted claim over the whole of creation, pardoned sinners, and made in Jesus a representative beginning of a new order of righteousness and love. To God in Christ all people are called to respond in faith. To this end God has sent forth the Spirit that people may trust God as their Father, and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. The whole work of salvation is effected by the sovereign grace of God alone.

The Church as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit confesses Jesus as Lord over its own life; it also confesses that Jesus is Head over all things, the beginning of a new creation, of a new humanity. 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. The Church lives between the time of Christ's death and resurrection and the final consummation of all things which Christ will bring; the Church in pilgrim people, always on the way towards a promised goal; here the Church does not have a continuing city but seeks one to come. On the way Christ feeds the Church with Word and Sacraments, and it has the gift of the Spirit in order that it may not lose the way.

Paragraph 4

CHRIST RULES AND RENEWS THE CHURCH

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. Christ who is present when he is preached among people is the Word of the God who acquits the guilty, who gives life to the dead and who brings into being what otherwise could not exist. Through human witness in word and action, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ reaches out to command people's attention and awaken faith; he calls people into the fellowship of his sufferings, to be the disciples of a crucified Lord; in his own strange way Christ constitutes, rules and renews them as his Church.

Paragraph 5

THE BIBLICAL WITNESSES

The Uniting Church acknowledges that the Church has received the books of the Old and New Testament as unique prophetic and apostolic testimony, in which it hears the Word of God and by which its faith and obedience are nourished and regulated. When the Church preaches Jesus Christ, its message is controlled by the Biblical witnesses. The Word of God on whom salvation depends is to be heard and known from Scripture appropriated in the worshipping and witnessing life of the Church. The Uniting Church lays upon its members the serious duty of reading the Scriptures, commits its ministers to preach from these and to administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as effective signs of the Gospel set forth in the Scriptures.

Paragraph II

SCHOLARLY INTERPRETERS

The Uniting Church acknowledges that God has never left the Church without faithful and scholarly interpreters of Scripture, or without those who have reflected deeply upon, and acted trustingly in obedience to, God's living Word. In particular the Uniting Church enters into the inheritance of literary, historical and scientific enquiry which has characterised recent centuries, and gives thanks for the knowledge of God's ways with humanity which are open to an informed faith. The Uniting Church lives within a world-wide fellowship of Churches in which it will learn to sharpen its understanding of the will and purpose of God by contact with contemporary thought. Within that fellowship the Uniting Church also stands in relation to contemporary societies in ways which will help it to understand its own nature and mission. The Uniting Church thanks God for the continuing witness and service of evangelist, of scholar, of prophet and of martyr. It prays that it may be ready when occasion demands to confess the Lord in fresh words and deeds.