Lay Preachers Handbook

**A guide for those wanting to explore their future ministry**



Approved by the Candidates

for Ministries Committee

Presbytery of WA

## What is a Lay Preacher?

A Lay Preacher is one of the four specified ministries of the Uniting Church. The others are

* Minister of the Word
* Deacon
* Pastor

According to the Uniting Church:

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| *“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.”* |

## How do you become a Lay Preacher?

This guide is offered for the information of anyone seeking advice about becoming a Lay Preacher in the Presbytery of WA. We hope that it will also be helpful to Ministers and Church Councils, as they deal with applications for candidature of Lay Preachers.

*Uniting Church Regulations* concerning the selection, training and recognition of Lay Preachers are to be found in *Regulations 2.3.4, 2.4.4 and 2.4.7*.

## Discerning God’s Call

The first step in becoming a Lay Preacher is to discern that God is calling you to a ministry of proclaiming the gospel and leading God’s people in worship. There are many ways you can discern this call.

* Through your own prayer and devotional life, you may have heard God calling you to preach the gospel.
* God’s call to preach may have come to you through participation in worship, as you listen to the words of Scripture or songs.
* You may have been asked to lead some services of worship and from this experience, you have discerned gifts and a calling to this ministry.
* You may have undertaken some studies in Scripture and Theology and now feel that you have a calling to share what you have learnt through preaching.
* Others may have discerned a call and gifts for preaching in you and have encouraged you to become a Lay Preacher.
* You may have taken part in a Period of Discernment and through this process discovered a calling to become a Lay Preacher
* Others may have different experiences, but all will share a desire to proclaim the gospel of God’s grace in Jesus Christ.

## Testing your Call

When you have discerned that God may be calling you to the ministry of Lay Preacher, you need to test out this calling for talking to others. Discernment of call is always done jointly by the individual in consultation with leaders in the church.

Your first step is to talk to a Minister, either the Minister of your congregation or if your congregation does not have a Minister, talk to another Minister who knows you well. Tell them about your sense of call and find out if they affirm both your calling and your gifts for this ministry.

Secondly, talk to your Church Council to ensure your calling is affirmed by leaders in the church. The Church Council will meet with you to hear the story of your faith journey, and to test your sense of call: you need to be able to tell of the conviction of God’s call to preach and lead worship. The Church Council will also assess whether you have the suitable character, personality and spiritual maturity to fulfil this ministry.

## Applying to become a candidate for the ministry of Lay Preacher

You must have been a confirmed member of the Uniting Church for at least 12 months or have held equivalent status in another church.

You also need to have a current Working with Children Check and National Police Clearance.

You must apply to the Presbytery (through the Candidates for Ministries Commission) to be accepted as a candidate for the Ministry of Lay Preacher. The Application Form is attached to this Handbook.

Please note that there are sections on this Application Form that must be filled in by your Minister and your Church Council. Your Minister and Church Council must make their reports and recommendation to the Presbytery within 90 days of the application being received by them.

You may also seek up to two references from church members who can affirm your sense of calling and suitability for this ministry.

Once the Application Form has been completed by all parties, it is to be sent to the Chair of the Candidates for Ministries Committee, at [candidates.ministry@wa.uca.org.au](mailto:candidates.ministry@wa.uca.org.au)

The Candidates for Ministries Committee (CMC) on behalf of the Presbytery will consider the application, guided by all available reports and recommendations. CMC may interview you or may seek additional reports if considered necessary. CMC must make a decision about your application within 90 days of the application being received by them. A resolution to accept the application will be agreed upon by consensus, or if necessary, by formal vote with a majority of at least ⅔ of voters.

You will be informed of the decision of the Candidates for Ministries Committee within 7 days of the decision being made. If the application has been rejected, CMC will give you reasons for this and also offer advice on any future action.

You will be referred to the Commission on Education for Discipleship and Leadership (CEDAL) for education and formation if the application is accepted. CMC will appoint a Mentor who will assist you in your formation for this ministry and a Contact Person who will maintain contact with you on behalf of CMC during your education and formation.

## Education and Formation for the ministry of Lay Preacher

The National Assembly of the UCA establishes the Standards for the Education and Formation of Lay Preachers. These Standards are attached to this document.

All education and formation for the ministry of Lay Preacher will reflect the beliefs and ethos of the Uniting Church as expressed in the Basis of Union, and will take into account the inter-related ministries of the whole people of God, including the other specified ministries and the councils of the church.

In order to successfully complete their education, candidates for Lay Preacher are required to demonstrate competency in the following areas.

1. preparing material for worship appropriate to local contexts
2. facilitating shared planning of worship services
3. setting up and utilising worship spaces
4. speaking and leading in worship settings
5. undertaking exegesis of biblical texts
6. developing sermons appropriate to local contexts
7. presenting sermons appropriate to local contexts
8. ability to articulate a biblical and theological basis for Christian worship
9. ability to explain the shape and elements of Christian worship
10. ability to undertake evaluation and act on feedback
11. ability to articulate the scope and implications of the “Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for Lay Preachers”

After you have been accepted as a candidate, CEDAL staff will assess your competencies in these areas. Prior learning will be recognised, so it is possible for you to be assessed as being competent in an area without any further training being required. However, if gaps are identified, CEDAL will suggest education programs to assist you to acquire these competencies. This may involve a range of approaches to teaching, learning and assessment appropriate to adult education.

Varied learning experiences will be available for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. There is no “one size fits all” for education for Lay Preachers.

During your time of education and formation, you will be required to complete Safe Church Training, if you have not already done so.

As well as working with CEDAL to assess your competencies, you will also meet regularly with a Mentor who will guide you in your formation for this ministry. Formation will include

1. regular participation in the worship of a congregation or faith community
2. supervision in the preparation and leading of worship and feedback by an ordained Minister, accredited Lay Preacher, or other person/s designated by the presbytery
3. participation in the spiritual disciplines of prayer and study of the Scriptures
4. reflection on the Basis of Union and ethos of the Uniting Church
5. reflection on the UCA Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for Lay Preachers

## Application for Recognition as a Lay Preacher

When CEDAL has determined that you have demonstrated your competence in each of the areas listed above, and your Mentor indicates that you have satisfactorily completed your formation process, you then apply to the Candidates for Ministries Committee for recognition as a Lay Preacher.

You will also need to meet with your Church Council. This will provide the opportunity for you to reflect on what you have learnt and how you have grown through your time of education and formation, and for the Church Council to re-affirm your call and gifts for the ministry of Lay Preacher.

You can obtain an Application for Recognition as a Lay Preacher form from the Chairperson of CMC, at [candidates.ministry@wa.uca.org.au](mailto:candidates.ministry@wa.uca.org.au) You will need to fill in this form, attach a certificate or letter from CEDAL to verify that you have been assessed as competent in all areas and a report from your Mentor indicating that you have satisfactorily completed your Formation. You also need to provide evidence of having completed Safe Church training. Finally, the form needs to be signed by the Secretary of your Church Council indicating that they also believe that you have appropriate gifts and calling for the ministry of Lay Preacher.

CMC will consider the application, guided by all available reports and recommendations. They will normally interview you to assess your suitability for recognition as a Lay Preacher noting that recognition is dependent on the applicant demonstrating an understanding of and affirming adherence to the Basis of Union. A resolution to approve recognition will be agreed upon by consensus, or if necessary, by a formal vote carried by a majority of at least ⅔ of voters.

If the Candidates for Ministries Commission endorses your recognition as a Lay Preacher, they will arrange for you to be presented to a Presbytery meeting with the recommendation that you be recognised as a Lay Preacher.

## Service of Recognition

Once the full Presbytery meeting has made a decision to recognise you as a Lay Preacher, the Chairperson of Presbytery will arrange a service of worship at which you will be recognised and commissioned by the church and shall issue a *Certificate of Recognition* as a Lay Preacher.

## Life after Commissioning

The Pastoral Relations Committee maintains a roll of Lay Preachers in the Presbytery which is made available to congregations seeking a Lay Preacher to lead worship. This role is reviewed on an annual basis to determine whether Lay Preachers are still active or not.

Lay Preachers are eligible to be elected as members of Presbytery. If you want to take up this option, please inform the Secretary of Presbytery.

Lay Preachers are expected to engage in continuing education in Biblical, theological and practical skills. CEDAL provides regular opportunities for this. They are also encouraged to continue to evaluate the services they lead and seek feedback from the congregations they serve.

# Application for Acceptance as a Candidate for Lay Preacher

### Declaration of Intent

I believe that God is calling me to a preaching ministry within the Uniting Church in Australia. In obedience to that Call, I present myself to the Church for acceptance as a candidate for the Ministry of Lay Preacher.

I understand that my Call to preach will be tested as my application is considered by the Councils of the Church.

**Signature of applicant:** **Date:** \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

### Personal Details

**Surname:** **Title (Ms etc):**

**Given names:**

**Address:**

**Suburb:**  **Postcode:**

**Telephone:** Daytime Evening

Mobile

**Email:**

**Date of birth:** \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

How long have you been a confirmed member of the Uniting Church?

Present Congregation

Period of Church Membership at present Congregation

Do you have a current Working with Children Check? (Please attach copy) Yes  No

Do you have a current National Police Clearance? (Please attach copy) Yes  No

### Affirmation by others

1. **Minister:** Name (please PRINT):

I have known the applicant for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years.

I have met with the applicant and affirmed their gifts and calling to the ministry of Lay Preacher. (If they want, the Minister may provide further comments in a confidential report to CMC)

**Signature:** **Date:** \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

1. **Church Council**

We have met with the applicant and offer the following comments about their:

Faith Development

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Gifts for this ministry

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Calling for this ministry

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Spiritual maturity

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Character and personality

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After meeting with the applicant, we affirm that they are a suitable person to be accepted as a candidate for the Ministry of Lay Preacher.

**Voting:** For Against Abstain

**Signature (Secretary):** **Date:** \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

1. **Referees (Note: this section is optional)**

Applicants have the opportunity to supply the names of up to TWO referees.

Written references attached? Yes  No

**Title:**

**Address:**

**Suburb:**  **Postcode:**

**Phone:**  **Mobile:**

**Email:**

**Title:**

**Address:**

**Suburb:**  **Postcode:**

**Phone:**  **Mobile:**

**Email:**

1. **Presbytery - Candidates for Ministries Committee**

**Application Received Date:** \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

**Further Information sought:**

The Candidates for Ministries Committee meeting on \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ discussed the Application to Candidate for the Ministry of Lay Preacher and determined as follows:

To accept the application, or

To reject the application

**Voting:** For Against Abstain

**Signature (Secretary):** **Date:** \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

1. **Further action by CMC**

Applicant advised of decision **Date:** \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

CEDAL advised of decision **Date:** \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

Mentor appointed - Name:

Contact Person appointed - Name: