Period of Discernment

**An information kit for those wanting to explore their future ministry**



Approved on 25 August 2022

Candidates for Ministries Committee

Presbytery of WA

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# Overview

At the heart of the Period of Discernment process is the understanding that all people who have been baptised are called to discipleship and ministry.

This ministry may be expressed:

* within your local congregation or the wider Uniting Church
* in your workplace or the community
* or within one of the specified lay ministries of a Lay Preacher or Pastor.
* or within one of the ordained ministries of a Deacon or Minister of the Word.

We believe that no ministry is more important than any other.

The Period of Discernment is a process approved by the National Assembly of the Uniting Church to enable the church and individuals together to discern God’s call on their life for future ministry, whatever that may be.

While all people considering offering as a candidate for one of the ordained ministries must participate in the Period of Discernment, it is not just for such people. There are no pre-determined outcomes, the Period of Discernment provides an opportunity for all members of the church to clarify God’s call on their lives to serve in any number of different areas.



# Steps through the Period of Discernment

### Step 1

Contact the Chair of the Candidates for Ministries Committee (CMC) of the Presbytery of WA at candidates.ministry@wa.uca.org.au. The Chair of CMC will provide you with a *Period of Discernment (POD) Handbook*, or you can access it from our [*Becoming a Minister*](https://unitingchurchwa.org.au/discipleship-education/becoming-a-minister/) page. Read the information in the Handbook and decide if you want to engage in a POD.

If you would like to engage in a POD fill in the Registration Form (see page 17) and attach a brief statement (100 – 200 words) outlining your reasons for wanting to participate in the Period of Discernment.

Ask your minister to fill in the section on the Registration Form relating to your membership in the Uniting Church. If there is no minister in placement in your congregation, ask the Church Council Secretary to complete this section.

Any member of the UCA has the right to engage in a POD. Please note that your minister and/or Church Council cannot reject your application to begin a POD.

### Step 2

Send your completed Registration Form and statement to the Chair of CMC via email to - candidates.ministry@wa.uca.org.au.

At their next meeting, CMC will appoint a Mentor for your POD. Normally your current congregational minister cannot be your Mentor. The role of the Mentor is to assist you to discern God’s calling and complete the POD according to the guidelines.

CMC will also appoint a CMC Contact Person who will be your main point of contact with CMC during our POD.

### Step 3

When your Mentor has been appointed, arrange to meet with them to discuss how you will work together. If both agree to go ahead with this relationship, sign the Mentoring Agreement (page 18) and return this to the Chair of CMC. Both you and your Mentor need to retain copies of this document.

Then work with your Mentor to develop your Discernment Plan for the POD (see pages 19-20). Once the Discernment Plan is completed it should be signed by both you and your Mentor and returned to the Chair of CMC. Both you and the Mentor also need to retain a copy of the Discernment Plan.

This should be submitted to CMC within 6 weeks of your first meeting with your Mentor. If CMC believes the Discernment Plan is appropriate, it will be approved and the commencement date for your POD noted.

Your CMC Contact Person will contact you to introduce themselves and to get to know you.

### Step 4

Work through your Period of Discernment, completing your Discernment Plan, and meeting with your Mentor regularly (at least for an hour per month).

Your CMC contact will contact you about once every two months to see how you are progressing with your POD.

Normally a POD will last for 12 months but in special circumstances, you, with the support of your Mentor, may request CMC to consider if this period is shortened in recognition of your prior learning and/or ministry experience. This needs to happen within 3 months of you beginning your POD. CMC will determine if the POD can be shortened or not and let you know the result.

A POD may last longer than 12 months, as long as you are making progress towards discerning God’s call.

### Step 5

During your POD you will collect a portfolio of documents. This may include your journal, liturgies, sermons, class notes, photos, reflections on ministry experience, helpful articles- anything that is of significance to you in your learning.

At the end of your POD, with the assistance of your Mentor, prepare a Portfolio Statement, which will summarise your learnings during the POD and what you have discerned about God’s call to you. This should be no more than 5 pages in length.

### Step 6

Forward your Portfolio Statement to CMC who will arrange to meet with you to discuss your Portfolio Statement, your ministry experience, your learnings, and your discernment of God’s calling to you. CMC will then issue a Certificate of Completion for your Period of Discernment.

### Step 7

Continue in ongoing ministry and discipleship within or beyond your local congregation.

If through your POD you have discerned a calling to become a Lay Preacher, Pastor, Deacon or Minister of the Word, then you can test this calling by applying for candidature for this ministry. For more information on how to apply for these ministries, contact CMC at candidates.ministry@wa.uca.org.au.

**Note:** Completion of the Period of Discernment does not automatically qualify you for acceptance as a candidate for any of these ministries.

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| ***Stewart’s story****I had done a number of different types of ministries in the past and didn't feel any particular sense of where my "call" or "niche" was for the future. I entered the POD process just to have a look at what the options might be. The POD process was great as it enabled me to talk to a wide variety of people in different types of ministries.* *The study and practical components opened up ministry opportunities that I had not considered before and affirmed gifts that I didn't recognise strongly before. I completed my POD with no clear sense of direction for the future, however it provided a strong affirmation that I was in the right place for the time being.* *Because of the POD process, should I feel a sense of call or desire to change my place of ministry, I think I have a broader, more insightful, and positive understanding of what other forms of ministry might entail.* |

# Goals of the Period of Discernment

* To develop your relationship with God and your understanding of yourself as a Christian disciple
* To allow you to understand God’s ministry and mission in the church and the world and the variety of ministries within the Uniting Church.
* To recognise, affirm and build upon skills, knowledge, and experience that you bring to the Period of Discernment.
* To enable both the church and you to discern better your gifts and graces for ministry, and the type of ministry in which these gifts and graces may be expressed.

In preparation for undergoing the Period of Discernment, why not reflect on your hopes for the Period of Discernment? (This could form the basis of your first journal entry.)

# Key Elements of the Period of Discernment

There are several key elements in the Period of Discernment, as outlined below. You need to develop a Discernment Plan in consultation with your Mentor which includes each of these elements.

However please note that there is great flexibility in how you engage with each of these elements. What you include in your POD may be different to what others do. In developing your Discernment Plan you need to take into account your gifts and interests, the areas of ministry you want to explore, the level of study you want to be involved in, and your time availability. It is important to include elements that will stretch you and challenge you to try new things.

1. **Meet with a Mentor**
You are required to meet regularly with a Mentor (for at least 1 hour once a month) who will help you reflect theologically and integrate your learning and ministry experiences. In some cases, meeting face-to-face with your Mentor may be difficult.

You may choose to speak with your Mentor on the phone or use email or Skype / Zoom as your method of communication. As you approach the end of your Period of Discernment, your Mentor will also help in the development of your Portfolio Statement.
2. **Practical Ministry Studies**You are encouraged to undertake some studies which will grow your practical skills in ministry and mission. Most of these courses will be one or two days in length and many can be undertaken online. Some ways you could complete this requirement are:
	* Participating in Summer Spirit, held every February.
	* Completing the Mission Shaped Ministry Course.
	* Completing Safe Church Training.
	* Participating in workshops focussed on developing skills in preaching.
	* Undertaking studies in leadership within a Christian context.
	* Completing training on how to respond to disasters in the community.
	* Attending a course on ministry with children or young people.
	* Undertaking a course to enable you to develop your communication and relationship skills.
	* Undertaking a course in counselling, social welfare or community development at a university or TAFE.
	* Or any other relevant course.
3. **Biblical and Theological Studies**This will involve you growing in your understanding of the Bible and Christian theology. It is important that you choose subjects for study at an appropriate level to your background and your time availability. Some ways you could complete this requirement are
	* Participating in a course run by CEDAL which aims to deepen your understanding of the Bible or an aspect of theology. Courses are run on Old Testament, New Testament, Understanding Christ and the Trinity and can be undertaken face to face or via Zoom or online.
	* In consultation with your Mentor, develop a reading programme of suitable theological books which you can then discuss with your Mentor.
	* Undertaking online undergraduate or certificate studies through the Adelaide College of Divinity or another interstate UCA college.
4. **Ministry experience**
You are invited to engage in some hands-on ministry experience and to reflect on this with your Mentor. You are encouraged to try new things and move out of your comfort zone as you experience new ministries. Some ways you could do this are
	* Leadership of youth or Bible study group.
	* Preparation and leadership of worship in your own or another congregation
	* Service through a church or community welfare programme
	* Pastoral visitation in your congregation or at a hospital or aged care facility.
	* Developing relationships with an indigenous or migrant community.
	* Participating in an evangelistic programme
	* Or whatever ministry opportunity comes your way
5. **Spiritual Formation**It is expected that the whole process of the Period of Discernment is one of personal growth and spiritual formation. As a minimum requirement, you are expected to
	* be involved in the worshipping life of your own congregation
	* and to participate in the annual retreat which CMC organises for all those undertaking a POD.

However, you also need to include some other specific elements in your Discernment Plan such as:

* + Participate in a 1 or 2-day retreat - held regularly by Dayspring or at New Norcia.
	+ Try some new spiritual disciplines - new ways of praying. Ask your Mentor for ideas and reflect with your Mentor on your experience.
	+ Set up meetings to discuss spirituality with people from a range of different Christian backgrounds eg, Orthodox, Catholic, and Pentecostal.
	+ Enrol in the Tree of Life Spirituality programme run by the Anglican church.
	+ Undertake a programme to grow in self-awareness, such as a Myers Briggs or Enneagram or similar course and reflect on how these impact your spiritual life.
1. **Understanding the Uniting Church**During your POD you will be expected to deepen your understanding of the Uniting Church, its theology and ethos. Some ways you can do this are by
	* Read the *Basis of Union* of the Uniting Church and the *Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice*, reflect upon these and discuss them with your Mentor.
	* Attend the 2-day course on the *Basis of Union* and the 1-day course on the Code of Ethics.
	* Make time to discuss with your Mentor the Uniting Church’s understanding of baptism, ministry of women and men, consensus decision-making, covenanting with indigenous people and being a multicultural church.
	* Set up appointments to meet with Deacons, Ministers of the Word, Pastors, Lay Preachers and people in a variety of lay ministries and discuss with them their understanding of their ministry.
	* If possible, attend a meeting of your Church Council, Presbytery or Synod.
	* Read the Brief Statement on Ordination available at <https://assembly.uca.org.au/doctrine/item/858-beliefs> and discuss with your Mentor.
2. **Meetings with others undertaking a Period of Discernment**During your Period of Discernment, you are expected to participate in some gatherings with others undertaking a Period of Discernment. These include
	* Commencement Service- held in February of each year. At this service, the church prays for all those undertaking a POD
	* Retreat Day- also held in February which will focus on how to discern your gifts and calling
	* Ministry Expo- held in April or May, this event provides information about a wide range of ministry opportunities in the church
	* POD Gatherings- two other gatherings are held during the year often via Zoom. These will be of two hours in length and will provide the opportunity for you to meet with other PODs, ask any questions about the process and reflect more on the process of discernment.

Dates for these events will be communicated to you early in the year and we ask you to mark them in your calendar and make it a priority to attend.

1. **Journal**
You are encouraged to keep a journal as you work through the Period of Discernment. Journaling is a useful spiritual discipline in which you regularly note your learnings, experiences, and reflections on your Christian journey. The form this takes is up to you. Your journal may take the form of poems, prayers, accounts of significant experiences or incidents, photos, helpful quotes, drawings – anything that makes an impact on you during your Period of Discernment.

Your journal may be part of the material you use to form the basis of your discussions with your Mentor and may be helpful when drawing up your Portfolio Statement as you come to the end of your Period of Discernment. However, your journal is your private record – you do not have to share this with anyone.

# DecorativeFrequently asked questions

### How is the Mentor appointed?

You may want to suggest a person you think might be appropriate to guide you as a Mentor. CMC will consider your suggestion but, in the end, they will appoint someone they believe is appropriate to be your Mentor.

Why can’t my congregational minister be my Mentor? The POD provides you with the opportunity to develop a relationship with an experienced person in the church who you may not have had contact with before. Your congregational minister will continue to provide pastoral care and nurture for you.

### What is the role of the Mentor?

The Mentor walks alongside you as you work through the Period of Discernment:

* Meeting with you regularly for a minimum of 1 hour per month.
* Helps in the development of your Discernment Plan.
* Monitors your implementation of your Discernment Plan.
* Helps you reflect theologically and integrate your ministry experience and learning.
* Guides you in the development of your Portfolio Statement.

### Can your Mentor be changed?

While it is desirable to have the same Mentor throughout your Period of Discernment, CMC can appoint another Mentor if you request this.

### How long does the Period of Discernment take?

On average the Period of Discernment takes between 12 and 18 months, however, you may work through it over a longer period. In certain circumstances, the Presbytery may determine that a shorter time is appropriate- see next question.

### Is prior learning and experience considered?

Yes, it is possible to claim recognition of prior learning or experience if you have previously undertaken significant Biblical or Theological Studies, Practical Ministry Studies or have had significant Ministry Experience. If you want to claim RPL for any of these elements, you need to discuss this with your Mentor when you are developing your Discernment Plan and submit your request to be exempted from some parts of the POD when you submit your Discernment Plan to CMC. CMC will consider your request and may as a result agree to your POD being shortened to less than 12 months.

### What’s the difference between the journal and the portfolio, and the Portfolio Statement?

Your journal will be used to record things of a personal nature during your Period of Discernment. It is your private record of experiences, feelings, and learnings.

The portfolio will be a collection of documents from your POD including liturgies, sermons, class notes, photos, reflections on ministry experience, helpful articles- anything that is of significance to you in your learning. You may choose to discuss this material with your Mentor.

Your Portfolio Statement will be a summary of your key learnings through your POD and what you have discerned about God’s calling. Your Mentor will help you prepare your Portfolio Statement which is presented to CMC after your Period of Discernment.

Please note that while the contents of your journal and portfolio are private, your Portfolio Statement is a public document. It will be discussed by CMC and if you decide to candidate for ordained ministry, it will be used in the selection process.

What should my Portfolio Statement look like? The Portfolio Statement should be a relatively brief account (no more than 5 pages) and analysis of what you have done during the Period of Discernment and how you have grown during that time. It provides an opportunity to:

* Outline the variety of ministry experiences, study, and spiritual and personal development you have undertaken on your POD.
* Outline feedback you have received from others about your ministry, gifts and calling.
* Reflect on your learnings about your ministry and yourself during the Period of Discernment.
* Reflect on how your understanding of the Uniting Church and ministry and mission have grown during the POD.
* Outline what you have discerned about God’s call to you.

You need not restrict yourself to a written Portfolio Statement to document your learning throughout the Period of Discernment. You could present your Portfolio Statement as a series of photos or drawings or poems to demonstrate your key learnings and discernment.

### How will my Period of Discernment be assessed?

There is no pass or fail for a Period of Discernment. Rather, when you feel you have completed your POD and submitted your Portfolio Statement, CMC will arrange to have a conversation with you about what you have learnt and discerned and may add some wisdom that may be helpful in your future ministry.

### When is the Period of Discernment finished?

After CMC have met with you to discuss your Portfolio Statement a Certificate of Completion of Period of Discernment will be issued by CMC.

However, CMC may decide to terminate your POD at an earlier stage if they believe that little progress is being made. You will always be given a warning that CMC is considering terminating your POD and be allowed to respond. Such action is only taken if there is evidence that you are not meeting regularly with your Mentor and are not following through on your Discernment Plan.

### What if I want to apply to candidate for a specified ministry?

If you have discerned a call to one of the specified ministries such as Deacon, Minister of the Word or Lay Preacher, you will then have to apply for candidature through CMC. Completion of the Period of Discernment does not mean you will necessarily be accepted as a candidate for any of these ministries. For more information on how to apply for candidature as a Deacon, Minister of the Word or Lay Preacher, check out our [*Becoming a Minister*](https://unitingchurchwa.org.au/discipleship-education/becoming-a-minister/) page.

### What if I’ve already discerned that I’m called to be an ordained minister?

The church believes that the call to ordained ministry comes both from an individual and through the church. In other words, your convictions are confirmed by other Christians within the life of the church and vice versa. The Period of Discernment provides an opportunity for you and the church together to discern God’s call on your life.

### What about funding?

The Period of Discernment is normally self-funded. You may be eligible for some financial assistance from CEDAL for some courses.

### What role do the Candidates for Ministries Committee have?

The Presbytery has oversight of people engaged in the Period of Discernment. In the case of the Presbytery of WA, it has delegated this responsibility to the Candidates for Ministries Committee (CMC). CMC’s role during your Period of Discernment includes:

* Receiving your registration for a POD
* Appointing the Mentor and CMC contact person
* Receiving regular reports from the CMC contact person on your progress
* Determining, after discussing the Portfolio Statement with the participant, that the Period of Discernment is completed
* Issuing of a Certificate of Completion of the POD

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| ***My Mentor****“It was helpful for me to have a woman in full-time ordained ministry as a mentor. In the time I shared with her she was able to help me identify my gifts and affirm my passion. She asked challenging questions that helped me to articulate my faith journey and sense of call. I never felt pressured to have to come to any conclusions, she just encouraged me in the process of discovering things for myself and helped me reflect on what I was learning.**I was also able to ask her practical questions about how she managed to maintain her marriage, raise children, and look after herself while in full-time ministry. These were important things for me to consider as a woman thinking about future ministry options that might be long-term or full-time.”* |

# Illustration of a couple embracingMentoring and the Period of Discernment

The Mentor relationship is a vital part of your Period of Discernment. The Mentor is chosen because they are a wise person with experience of ministry in the Uniting Church, a good listener, able to ask challenging questions and help you to reflect theologically on your experience and discern God’s call.

The Mentor will guide you through this time of discernment by listening, affirming, supporting, and asking questions that will clarify the issues and explore options.

### Mentors are expected to:

* Meet with you at least once a month for an hour- this can be face-to-face or online.
* Spend time getting to know you, sharing with you about their faith journey, and working out how best you might work together.
* Help you to develop your Discernment Plan and then monitor how you are progressing on achieving this.
* Listen carefully and be willing to ask probing, challenging, and thoughtful questions.
* Reflect on the Bible and your faith together.
* Explore questions that arise for you out of your experience or studies, helping you to reflect and integrate your learning and experience.
* Provide honest and sensitive feedback to you.
* Help you to discern your gifts and calling to ministry.
* Be active learners themselves, always open to learning new things, and encourage you to learn.
* Be wise encouragers and appropriate affirmers
* Be trustworthy and able to maintain confidentiality
* Pray for you and with you.
* Help you develop your Portfolio Statement for presentation to CMC

To make the most of the mentoring relationship the person being mentored also needs to bring something to the relationship.

### You should:

* Be willing to meet with your Mentor regularly for at least 1 hour per month and be reliable.
* Prepare for each mentoring session and come to the session with something you want to discuss with your Mentor- it may be a book you have read, a course you have taken, a ministry experience you have had, something you have heard God saying to you, the feedback you have had from others, or questions you have.
* Work your way through the Discernment Plan you have agreed to, completing tasks and discussing these with your Mentor.
* Be willing to listen, reflect, grow and learn personally and spiritually.
* Be willing to be challenged and explore your faith openly.
* Take the experience seriously and contribute to the relationship.
* Be willing to ask for help when needed.
* Show appreciation to your mentor.

## Some guidelines for the relationship

**When will you meet?**

It is important to set up a regular meeting time as soon as possible and for both of you to put this in your diary. It is recognised that sometimes illness, family emergencies or ministry situations can disrupt planned meetings, but alternative dates need to be decided as soon as possible.

**Where will you meet?**

It is important to meet somewhere where both parties will feel comfortable and safe, and which will allow the conversation to be confidential.

**Be careful about physical contact**

Most people feel uncomfortable about physical contact until they know the person very well. Always check what physical contact is acceptable.

**Confidentiality**

At the very beginning of the relationship establish the expectation of confidentiality, not telling anyone else about the discussions you have.

The times when Mentor and participant meet should be challenging, exciting and even fun. We believe that you will both benefit.

# Journaling

Journaling is one of the simplest ways to develop a greater understanding of yourself. Different from traditional diary writing, which is more a record of daily events, a journal goes beneath the surface, recording the emotions you feel and the things that you’ve discovered about yourself, others and God.

A journal is a private record of your life journey which includes the journey of your mind, heart, body, soul, and spirit.

You may discover insights and issues that would otherwise remain hidden – some of their treasures. It is important to share some of these insights and issues with your Mentor, particularly those things which may affect your future ministry.

Keeping a journal as part of your Period of Discernment is a means to spiritual and personal growth. It can also be a tool to record issues to ensure that you bring them to mentor sessions for discussion, and a place to record and note progress on short and long-term goals throughout the Period of Discernment.

Remember that your journal will have material that will assist you when putting together your Portfolio Statement to be presented to CMC at the completion of your Period of Discernment.

A journal may include stories, reflections, notes, prayers, drawings, lists – anything that helps you reflect personally and spiritually on your experiences, observations, feelings and concerns. Your journal can include your ups and downs, challenges, fears, joys, motives, doubts and opportunities.

If you are just starting out, make a particular notebook your dedicated journal. Set aside time to write something regularly, even if it is just a few lines.

## How do I journal?

Just go with the flow – don’t force anything and don’t repress anything. Don’t worry about spelling or grammar. If you can’t think of anything to write to begin with, just write about your day, what you got out of your daily bible reading or reflection, a place you love, or someone you’re concerned for. When writing about any of these things, use “I” language and try to write about the feelings and emotions you associate with these things.

Try to be honest – write about both the positive and negative aspects of your life and ministry experiences, your relationship with others and with God. Ask yourself why you might be feeling that way. This might lead to some helpful insights or realisations. The more you journal, the more natural it will feel.

Remember to keep your journal somewhere safe – where it cannot be easily accessed by others. It is important that you feel confident to express yourself with complete honesty in your journal.

Through the processes of journaling, you can grow in an awareness of:

* self and self-worth
* ways of relating to others and God
* areas of personal growth
* acknowledgement & appreciation of different cultures
* some experiences particular to the Uniting Church
* gifts and calling

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| *“Journaling has been an invaluable tool for me in clarifying issues in my Christian journey and personal life. It’s helped deepen my understanding of myself and my ministry and has also been a great way of helping me overcome obstacles I’ve had to deal with along the way”**- Joanne* |

# Registration for the Period of Discernment

Completed forms are to be returned to the Chair of CMC, via candidates.ministry@wa.uca.org.au

### Participant Information

**Surname:**

**Given names:**

**Preferred Title (Ms etc):**

**Postal Address:**

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

**Telephone:** Daytime Evening

Mobile

**Email:**

**Occupation:**

**Age Group:**  Under 21[ ]  21 to 30[ ]  31 to 40[ ]  41 to 50 [ ]  50+ [ ]

### Membership of the Uniting Church in Australia

Baptised member [ ]  Confirmed member [ ]  Member-in-Association [ ]  Adherent [ ]

The Congregation where you currently hold membership:

**Educational background**: [Attach a separate page if space is insufficient]

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Institution | Description of Award | Year |
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**Citizenship and Language**

Are you a Citizen of Australia? Yes [ ]  No [ ]

Are you a Permanent Resident of Australia? Yes [ ]  No [ ]

Is English your first language? Yes [ ]  No [ ]

If **No** give your first language and, if known, details of your English competency test scores under the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

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## Church Roles

Church roles you’ve undertaken in the last five years:

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Have you ever applied for or been employed as a Pastor, Deacon, Minister of the Word or Youth Worker, in any church? No [ ]  Yes [ ]  If yes, give details:

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Have you commenced/done the Period of Discernment before? No [ ]  Yes [ ]

If Yes, with which Presbytery did you undertake the POD:

Do you have any suggestions of who you would like to be appointed as your Mentor?

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

Attach a brief statement (100-200 words) outlining what you hope to achieve as you participate in the Period of Discernment. Ask your congregational minister (or if no minister in placement, the Church Council Secretary) to complete the section below. Then forward this form and your statement to the Candidates for Ministries Committee.

## Applicant’s Statement

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| To be completed by the Minister (or Church Council Secretary):The person registering: is a:**Baptised member** [ ]  **| Confirmed member** [ ]  **| Member-in-association/adherent** [ ]  in good standing of the Congregation. **Phone:**  **Name:** [Print] **Position:**  **Signature:** **Date:** \_\_/\_\_/\_\_ |

# Mentoring Agreement for the Period of Discernment (POD)

### The purpose of the POD is for the participant to:

* Discern God's calling to ministry
* Grow spiritually
* Experience the practice of ministry
* Engage in Biblical, theological, and practical ministry study
* Prepare a Portfolio Statement
* Become familiar with the theology and ethos of the Uniting Church

### The Mentor and the participant enter a covenant together

* The mentor and participant will work together to foster the participant's growth and development.
* The mentor and participant will meet for at least 1 hour per month.
* All conversations between mentor and participant are confidential
* The mentor will not report any information or recommendations to the Candidates for Ministries Committee without the participant's permission
* If the relationship between the participant and mentor breaks down, there will be a no-fault dissolution of the relationship.

**We** **and** ,

*have read the guidelines for the Period of Discernment and we have discussed the basic principles underlying our mentoring relationship. We agree to voluntarily enter into this mentoring relationship which will be based on encouragement, constructive comments, mutual trust and respect and a willingness to learn and share. We agree to a no-fault conclusion of this relationship if necessary.*

**Participant**  **Mentor**

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

***Note:*** *The principles for Mentoring adopted by the Candidates for Ministries Committee. Presbytery* of *WA 2006 -*

* Mentors are appointed by the Candidates for Ministries Committee
* Members of the Candidates Committee cannot be mentors.
* Mentors cannot be members of a Candidate's home or placement congregation.
* The agreement is to be signed by both parties and returned to CMC, with your mentor and participant each retaining a copy.

# Developing a Discernment Plan

The Discernment Plan is the record of what is to be undertaken during your Period of Discernment and is the basis on which progress is monitored and assessment of your Period of Discernment is made.

Your Discernment Plan should be challenging, but at an appropriate level for you. You need to develop and submit your Discernment Plan, in consultation with your Mentor, to complete your registration for the Period of Discernment.

## Steps to develop a Discernment Plan

1. Consider all the elements listed on pages 7-9 as part of a Discernment Plan.
2. Under each of the 8 headings list what you intend to do to meet this requirement. Consider the alternatives suggested in this Handbook and discuss other possibilities with your Mentor.
3. Reach an agreement with your Mentor about what you will do during your Period of Discernment and complete your Discernment Plan which both of you will sign.
4. Submit your Discernment Plan to the Candidates for Ministries Committee. They will consider it to determine if it is adequate. They may suggest changes or additions to it. NOTE- this needs to be done within 6 weeks of your first meeting with your Mentor.
5. **Note:** Your Period of Discernment is not considered to have started until you submit your Discernment Plan and get it approved by CMC. The starting date will be the date you lodged your application for a POD.
6. Keep watch on SEEDS and News and Notes for information about other events that may be helpful to you to include in your Discernment Plan.

## Template for Discernment Plan

### Meeting with my Mentor

* How often will you meet? Where? When? How?
* What do you hope to gain from meeting with your Mentor?

### Practical Ministry Studies

* What courses will you undertake? Be specific in listing your courses
* List dates of courses- are they intensives, weekend courses or semester-long courses?
* What time is involved? Is it xx hours per week, or xx weeks of the year?
* What do you hope to learn from your Practical Ministry Studies?

### Biblical and Theological Studies

* What courses will you undertake? Or what books will you read and discuss with your Mentor? Be specific.
* List dates of courses- are they intensives, weekend courses or semester-long courses?
* What time is involved? Is it xx hours per week, or xx weeks of the year?
* What do you hope to learn from your Biblical and Theological Studies?

### Ministry Experience

* What ministry experience will you undertake?
* Where will this take place?
* What time is involved? Is it xx hours per week, or xx weeks of the year?
* What do you hope to gain from your ministry experience?

### Spiritual Formation

* What programs will you engage in to develop your spirituality?
* How and when will you engage in these programs?
* What time is involved? Is it xx hours per week, or xx weeks of the year?
* What do you hope to gain from your spiritual practices and personal formation?

### Understanding the Uniting Church

* What documents do you need to read and discuss with your Mentor?
* Are there any courses you want to attend?
* Who will you talk to about this? Consider people who are in different types of ministries, for example, Deacons, Ministers of the Word, Pastors, and Lay Preachers.
* Are there any areas you are unfamiliar with? For example, the UCA’s understanding of covenanting and sovereignty, our understanding of baptism or the role of women in leadership, or consensus decision-making? How can you best learn about these?
* What do you hope to gain from your study of the Uniting Church?

### POD Gatherings

* List the dates of the POD gatherings you will attend, including the Commencement Service, the Retreat Day, the Ministry Expo, and the POD evenings.

### Journal

* How much time will you set aside to journal your reflections? This could be daily, weekly, monthly or at special times.

*It is acknowledged that this Period of Discernment Handbook has been based on work done previously in the Synods of NSW/ACT and Victoria and Tasmania. We thank them for their assistance in the process of developing this handbook.*