



SYNOD 2023 REPORT DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP

Chair	Rev Ken Devereux
Convenor	Margaret Johnston
Member	Rev David de Kock
Member	Brian Gluestein
Member	Alison McCubbin
Member	Rev Alan Thompson (Vic/Tas Synod)
Member	Rev Ruth Vertigan
Member	Christine Williamson

REPORT

Background

In 2019 The Assembly Standing Committee established a Review Task Group to undertake a comprehensive review of the Uniting Church's Regulations. This process was delayed by the impact of Covid and the broad implications potentially arising from the Assembly's national 'Act2' consultation about the future shape of the Uniting Church in Australia. Hence, revision of most regulations has been deferred until significant national decisions have been made about the design of the Church going forward.

However, in light of the urgent need to review and update our formal discipline processes, the 16th Assembly agreed that work continue towards revised Church Discipline procedures set out in Part 5 of the Regulations.

Early in 2023 the West Australian Synod's Committee for Discipline considered the draft proposals and put forward a submission to the Assembly's Regulations Review Consultation

Group. It is hoped that by the time of Synod meeting information will be available advising the national decisions on these issues. These will be important matters for consideration and implementation at all levels of the church.

Continuing Consultation

Meanwhile, serious consideration of the recent report *Act 2: In response to God's Call* throughout the Uniting Church across Western Australia is encouraged. Drawing on this wide-ranging collection of observations, findings, and alternate strategic options for shaping the future Church we are all invited to prayerful discernment and discussion. Section 6, as part of *Workstream 3: Governance and Resourcing* presents four quite different options for future governance and resourcing in order to support healthy, sustainable, and effective life in the Church and our community outreach.

Each of these has significant implications for the expectations and responsibilities of members, office bearers and ministers. Running through all of that will be potential implications for the boundaries, principles and procedures relating to the discipline of members and ministers of the Church.

Context of our Responsibilities

The Committee for Discipline approaches its significant responsibilities drawing on the Bible, the Basis of Union of the UCA, the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice. Our duties are aligned with the Strategic Planning Framework for the Uniting Church in Western Australia. With respect to the Focus Areas we are guardians of faithful Discipleship, valuing Diversity and inclusiveness, encouraging the building and growth of healthy interdependent relationships and Partnerships. Where breakdowns occur, we seek Justice and Reconciliation in the best ways possible under the circumstances.

Integrity, Accountability, and Justice amongst Love and Hope are the main Core Values underpinning our reasons for existing. Whilst at all times encouraging constructive and healthy ways of avoiding and addressing conflict within the Church's own environment, we also fully respect that at times appropriate engagement with due external legal processes is necessary.

Formalities

It has not been necessary for the Committee to address any particular referrals regarding the disciplining of a minister during the current year (under Reg. 5.7). Members of the committee are thanked for being available if needed. The continuing attention of all in

ministry to the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice is reaffirmed. The dedicated pastoral care exercised by Synod and Presbytery officers, the Culture of Safety Team and the Pastoral Relations Committee is commended.

Among the membership of the Committee for Discipline there is scope for fresh nominations and re-nominations this year. Rev David de Kock does not wish to continue beyond September.

Ken Devereux, Chair; Margaret Johnston , Convenor

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