



Centre for
Ministry and
Leadership

LAY PREACHER

Handbook



Background

The ministry of Lay Preacher within the life of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) is vital to the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The UCA believes that “Christ who is present when he is preached among people is the Word of God who acquits the guilty, who gives life to the dead and who brings into being what otherwise could not exist.”¹ Therefore, the task of preaching the word of God, especially in the context of worship, is essential for the missional purpose and ongoing life of the people of God. It is within this essential practice of the missional church that the ministry of Lay Preacher is integrated.

The Moreton Rivers Presbytery seeks to provide a clear and robust process in which the education and formation of Lay Preacher Candidates occurs. As such, it is befitting of the importance of this ministry within the life of the UCA. Therefore, this handbook seeks to provide clarity concerning the pathway for recognition as a Lay Preacher and includes information regarding the formation pathway including:

- Acceptance as a Lay Preacher Candidate
- Education and Formation as a Lay Preacher
- Recognition as a Lay Preacher
- Continuing Education for a Lay Preacher

Acceptance as a Lay Preacher Candidate

Within the regulatory life of the UCA there exists a clear pathway for those members of the church who are seeking to apply for approval as a Candidate for Lay Preaching. The application pathway can be summarised as follows:

1. The applicant must be a member of the UCA for at least 12 months and be a person in good standing within the life of the congregation and Presbytery.
2. A written application (see attachment 1) is completed by the applicant and sent to their Minister or Presbytery PRC chairperson if there is no Minister of the Congregation.
3. The recipient of the application advises the Church Council that it is required to interview the applicant and then provide the Presbytery with a report and recommendation within ninety days
4. Upon receipt of the report the Presbytery, usually through the Pastoral Relations Committee will undertake all necessary due diligence, including reference checks and interviewing the applicant if necessary.
5. The Presbytery will approve the application if a two-thirds majority is achieved when voting on the recommendation that the applicant be selected as a Candidate for Lay Preacher.²

¹ UCA Basis of Union Paragraph 4

² The full version of the Process for Candidature and Selection of Lay Preachers can be viewed at Attachment 1



Formation and Education of a Lay Preacher Candidate

The pathway for education and formation of a Lay Preacher Candidate is grounded in the standards established by the Assembly for this Specific Lay Ministry within the UCA. The incorporation of these standards are reflected in the flexible approach provided by the Moreton Rivers Presbytery in seeking to utilise the “Learning for Living” resources and the Trinity of Tap courses. The Moreton Rivers Presbytery delivers the Learning for Living resources through its Centre for Ministry and Leadership. The Trinity on Tap courses are provided online in an asynchronous way.

The table below outlines the resources and requirements for Lay Preacher Education and Formation that are met through engagement in Trinity College’s pathway.

Study Component	Assessment Requirements	Course Options
Uniting Church Studies	Full participation Compulsory pre-reading for the course Complete required assessment	Participate in CML Short Course
Old Testament Introduction	Complete the course Complete required assessment	Participate in CML Short Course
Biblical Interpretation - OT	Complete the course Complete required assessment	Participate in CML Short Course
New Testament Introduction	Complete the course Complete required assessment	Participate in CML Short Course
Biblical Interpretation - NT	Complete the course Complete required assessment	Participate in CML Short Course
The Mission of God in Scripture	Complete the course Complete required assessment	Participate in CML Short Course
Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for Lay Preachers	Complete the course Complete required assessment	Participate in CML Short Course
Safeguarding in the Church	Complete the course	Participate in CML Short Course
Worship Planning and Leading	Full Participation in Worship Leading and Planning course Compulsory pre-reading for the course Conduct 2 worship services using different liturgical styles and approaches on each occasion. Submit 2 Liturgy outlines that reflect different styles and approaches to a Worship Service. A 500 word written reflection (or equivalent) will accompany each Liturgy outline picking up on learnings from conducting the relevant worship services.	Participate in CML Short Course
Theology of Worship	Complete the course Complete required assessment	Participate in CML Short Course
Preaching 1	Complete the course Complete required assessment	Participate in CML Short Course
Preaching 2	Complete the Course	The following need to be submitted at the end of the Lay Preachers Candidature:



Study Component	Assessment Requirements	Course Options
	All Lay Preacher Candidates need to complete the Formation requirements of Preaching 6 sermons. Feedback from these sermons need to be provided by select Congregation Members (Feedback Forms are at Appendix 1). Two Sermons need to be recorded, either audio or video, with manuscripts from both sermons provided to the Presbytery Lay Preacher co-ordinator.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submit 6 sets of feedback forms from the 6 sermons preached by the Lay Preacher• Submit recordings (either audio or video) from 2 sermons Submit the manuscripts from the 2 recorded sermons

Submission of Assessment and Notice of Completion

Assessment related to the various units within Lay Preacher Formation must be submitted to the relevant party within the Centre for Ministry and Leadership. The grading of the assessment will be based on a criteria of satisfactory or unsatisfactory.³ If the assessment is deemed unsatisfactory, the Lay Preacher Candidate will receive comments as to how the work can be improved and will be given another opportunity to resubmit.

Recognition as a Lay Preacher

The process for moving to recognition of a Lay Preacher is set out in the regulatory life of the UCA (see attachment 3) and, in typical circumstances, contains the following steps:

1. The relevant Presbytery delegate, advises the Pastoral Relations Committee that the Lay Preacher Candidate has fulfilled all the education and formation requirements, including a demonstrated understanding and affirmation of the Basis of Union.
2. The Presbytery determines whether the Candidate is to be recognised as a Lay Preacher.
3. The Presbytery arranges a service of worship at which such recognition will be acknowledged. This will also include the issuing of a Lay Preachers Recognition Certificate.
4. The Presbytery, in maintaining a list of Lay Preachers, will add the newly recognised Lay Preacher to the roll.

Continuing Education for Lay Preachers

The Synod Lay Preachers Association Committee will be responsible for encouraging and supporting the resourcing of Continuing Education for Lay Preachers in accordance with the Assembly standards for this Specified Lay Ministry. All Lay Preachers are to provide a learning plan each year to their Presbytery, that outlines what Continuing Education opportunities they will engage in. Some of the suggested learning opportunities are as follows:

- Reading a book relevant to preaching or worship and writing a book review that draws out the various reflections and insights that will be utilised in the ongoing ministry of the Lay Preacher.
- Attending a relevant course within the Centre for Ministry and Leadership
- National Lay Preachers' Conference

³ A grading rubric is utilised by CML markers and is also used as a moderation instrument. The grading guideline and rubric is at attachment 4



-
- Requesting the local Minister or Presbytery Minister assess a service of worship conducted by the Lay Preacher, following which s/he lists strengths and weaknesses with a plan for ongoing formation.
 - Audit or undertake for credit an accredited unit of study at Trinity

The role of the Presbytery is to provide oversight of the ministry of the Lay Preacher. The Synod Board for Christian Formation, in governance and resourcing continuing education, seeks to ensure that there is consistency of standards within the learning opportunities that all Lay Preachers engage in.



Attachment 1

UCA Regulation 2.3.4

Process for Candidature and Selection of Lay Preachers

(a) Any person offering to serve as a Lay Preacher must be:

(i) 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; and

(ii) assessed by the Presbytery as a person of suitable character, personality, spiritual maturity and capacity to exercise the responsibilities of Lay Preacher.

(b) Applicants shall 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;

(c) 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.

(d) 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.



Attachment 2

Preaching Feedback Form

Lay Preacher Candidate: _____

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Ok	Needs Work
Presentation – 30%					
Use of voice, gestures, expressions					
Word choice and delivery					
Eye contact and rapport with listeners					
Shape/Form – 30%					
Logical flow of ideas					
Engaging, able to hold interest					
Impact due to <i>form</i> of sermon					
Theology/Content – 40%					
Supporting evidence for points made					
Bible-based and exegetically sound					
Appropriate illustrations/images					
Impact due to <i>content</i> of sermon					

Notes:



Attachment 3

Recognition of Lay Preachers

UCA Regulation 2.4.7

Recognition

(a) The Church recognises as Lay Preachers:

(i) persons who at the time of the inauguration held the office of Lay Preacher or Local Preacher in any one of the uniting churches, and who signified adherence to the Basis of Union;

(ii) persons who are subsequently recognised as Lay Preachers in accordance with procedures prescribed by the Assembly.

(b) A former Minister whose recognition has been withdrawn under the provisions of Regulation 2.10.3(a), and who is in good standing with the Church, may upon request be recognised as a Lay Preacher.

(c) Candidates who have fulfilled the training requirements and passed the prescribed examinations may apply to the Presbytery through their Church Council for recognised as Lay Preachers.

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

(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.

(f) Each Presbytery shall maintain a roll of Lay Preachers and on the advice of the appropriate Church Council shall from time to time enter the names of Lay Preachers according to the following classifications:

(i) active;

(ii) inactive - unavailable for an extended period;

(iii) retired.



Attachment 4

Non-Accredited Assessment Rubric

The following rubric provides a basis for marking non-accredited papers required to satisfy formation and education requirements across various specified ministry pathways including the specified lay ministries of Pastor and Lay Preacher.

Criterion	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Timely Submission	The required assessment is submitted on or before the due date	The required assessment is not submitted in accordance with the due date
Knowledge of Subject	Demonstrates a reasonable grasp of foundational knowledge of the subject	Demonstrates an insufficient grasp of foundational knowledge of the subject
Engagement with primary sources	Engages clearly with the relevant primary sources and conveys an awareness of their significance	Does not engage with the relevant primary sources and lacks awareness of their significance
Structure of assessment	Demonstrates an ability to address the assessment task	Demonstrates insufficient ability to address the assessment task
Quality of writing	Demonstrates a reasonable standard of writing and/or compliance with conventional expectations of format	Inadequate standard of writing and/or compliance with conventional expectations of format



Attachment 5

Assembly Standards for Lay Preachers⁴

The following requirements for the specified ministry of Lay Preacher are as determined by the Assembly Standing Committee. These include requirements for Phase 2 of Lay Preacher formation and education. Within the context of worship, Lay Preachers provide encouragement and equipping for the witness and service of the people of God in God's world.

The relevant UCA Regulations are as follows:

2.2.3 Definition and Scope of 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.

2.3.4 Process for Candidature and Selection of Lay Preachers

2.4.4 Training for a Lay Preacher

2.4.7 Recognition of Lay Preachers

3.1.3 (j) Responsibilities of the Presbytery

1. The Education for Ministry Working Group shall provide national oversight of Lay Preacher formation and education on behalf of the Assembly Standing Committee.

2. Formation and education for Lay Preachers shall be based on a national competency and assessment framework as specified by Education for Ministry Working Group. These competencies shall be equivalent to the general competencies for the specified ministry of Pastor in relation to worship and preaching and the core competencies.

3. Formation and education for Lay Preachers shall

- a. reflect the beliefs and ethos of the United Church as expressed in the Basis of Union;
- b. take account of the existing competencies and gifts of applicants;
- c. take account of the inter-related ministries of the whole people of God, including the particular responsibilities of specified ministries and church councils;
- d. provide varied learning approaches for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities;
- e. include a range of approaches to teaching, learning and assessment appropriate to adult education.

4. Competencies for Lay Preachers shall include

- a. preparing material for worship appropriate to local contexts
- b. facilitating shared planning of worship services
- c. setting up and utilising worship spaces
- d. speaking and leading in worship settings
- e. undertaking exegesis of biblical texts
- f. developing sermons appropriate to local contexts
- g. presenting sermons appropriate to local contexts
- h. ability to articulate a biblical and theological basis for Christian worship

⁴ These Standards were approved by the Standing Committee, March 2016



-
- i. ability to explain the shape and elements of Christian worship
 - j. ability to undertake evaluation and act on feedback
 - k. ability to articulate the scope and implications of the “Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for Lay Preachers”

5. Assessment of Lay Preacher competencies shall be undertaken according to the principles of validity, sufficiency, fairness and currency.

6. Assessment of learners shall include recognition of prior learning in determining current competency.

7. Courses of education and assessment methods conducted within synods shall be approved by the Synod Ministerial Education Board (MEB) or another body appointed by it. Assessments shall be conducted by people approved by the MEB or another body appointed by it. The Working Group shall review education and assessment undertaken within synods at least every five years (normally within the Review of the MEB and its associated agencies.)

8. Formation of Lay Preacher applicants in the responsibility of the Presbytery in which they hold membership. Formation shall include

- a. regular participation in the worship or a congregation or faith community
- b. 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
- c. participation in the spiritual disciplines of prayer and study of the Scriptures
- d. reflection on the Basis of Union and ethos of the Uniting Church
- e. reflection on the UCA Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for Lay Preachers

9. When a Presbytery determines that the applicant is to be recognized as a Lay Preacher, the Assembly Lay Preacher Certificate shall be issued by the Presbytery.

WORSHIP & PREACHING COMPETENCIES

These competencies are equivalent to worship and preaching competencies for Pastors.

Units of Competency

- 1. Prepare and lead worship
- 2. Prepare and present sermons

Unit of Competency – Prepare and lead worship

Elements of competency

1. Prepare material for worship

Performance criteria

- a. articulate a biblical and theological basis for Christian worship, with particular reference to the UCA and its traditions
- b. explain the elements of Christian worship, with particular reference to the ‘Service of the Lord’s Day’ in *Uniting in Worship 2*
- c. explain the seasons of the church year and the contribution of the Revised Common Lectionary
- d. identify the spiritual, cultural and contextual characteristics of the worshipping community



- e. identify and access resources relevant to worship
- f. prepare an order or plan for worship connecting both theological and contextual sources

2. Facilitate shared planning of worship services

Performance criteria

- a. identify, affirm and encourage the use of others' skills and gifts in leading worship
- b. facilitate group planning processes which foster collaboration, consensus and shared responsibility
- c. contribute to the choice of music, visual and other creative elements of worship
- d. facilitate shared evaluation of worship services

3. Set up and utilise worship spaces

Performance criteria

- a. demonstrate awareness of the spatial characteristics of a worship space, including seating, symbols, visibility, lighting and sound
- b. demonstrate appropriate ways to use and adapt a worship space for particular worship services
- c. liaise effectively with people responsible for preparing the worship setting, including music, sound, lighting, projection, visual and other elements

4. Speak and lead in worship settings

Performance criteria

- a. read aloud and speak with sufficient clarity and articulation and appropriate timing and mood
- b. demonstrate effective use of microphones and presentation aids (if required)
- c. provide clear introductions, directions and explanations to facilitate participation in worship
- d. use appropriate gestures and movement to accompany speaking
- e. lead extemporaneous prayer in an appropriate manner
- f. demonstrate sensitivity and responsiveness to the work of the Spirit during worship

Unit of Competency – Prepare and present sermons

Elements of competency

1. Undertake exegesis of biblical texts

Performance criteria

- a. understand the history and main theological themes of the books of the New Testament
- b. understand the history and main theological themes of the books of the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures)
- c. understand the main literary forms and styles of the Old and New Testaments
- d. understand and apply exegetical approaches and skills in studying biblical texts
- e. identify and access appropriate reference materials including recent and relevant commentaries and dictionaries

2. Develop sermon appropriate to congregational or group context

Performance criteria

- a. understand a range of preaching styles and how they might be appropriate to different communities, contexts and times



-
- b. address the pastoral, educational and missional characteristics of the congregation or faith community
 - c. express key doctrines of the Christian faith within preaching
 - d. draw upon theological and historical insights, cultural and contemporary references, and personal experience in crafting appropriate sermons

3. Present sermons

Performance criteria - as for 'Speak and lead in a worship setting' above in terms of sermon delivery, taking into account a range of sermon approaches or styles as appropriate



Attachment 6 - Formation Plan

Phase 3 Formation Plan	
Name:	Ministry Context:
Email:	Presbytery:
Phone:	

Formation and Education Element	Participation Required Y/N	Details
Uniting Church Studies		
Old Testament Introduction		
Biblical Interpretation - OT		
New Testament Introduction		
Biblical Interpretation - NT		
The Mission of God in Scripture		
Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for Lay Preachers		
Safeguarding in the Church		
Worship Planning and Leading		
Theology of Worship		
Preaching 1		
Preaching 2		



Academic Considerations	
Qualifications currently held:	
Qualifications currently being completed:	

Signed:

Presbytery Minister

Lay Preacher Applicant