



The United Methodist Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia

LAY PREACHER'S HANDBOOK



A guide for Ministers, Church Councils and
people interested in considering a call to Lay Preaching

UPDATED: JANUARY 2021

PREAMBLE

This guide is offered by the Lay Preachers' Committee (LPC) of the Synod of SA for the information of anyone seeking advice about becoming an **Accredited Lay Preacher**.

We hope that it will be helpful to Ministers and Church Councils, and we ask you to keep it in a place where it can be readily accessed when needed.

Uniting Church Regulations concerning the selection, education, training and assessment of Lay Preachers are those numbered as follows:

- 2.2.3 Definition and Scope of Ministry
- 2.3.4 Candidature and Selection
- 2.4.4 Formation and training
- 2.4.7 Recognition.

Throughout this document, 'Synod' means in practice the Lay Preachers' Committee of the Presbytery, unless stated otherwise.



FIRST ENQUIRIES

The stimuli that leads a person to enquire about lay preaching are many, but among them must be the personal sense of a call to preach, for example:

- ✓ Some may have participated in leading services of worship
- ✓ Some may have begun or completed Biblical / Theological studies at Uniting College for Leadership and Theology, or another education provider
- ✓ Others may have either both or neither of the above.

A person considering accreditation as a Lay Preacher should talk with his/her minister about their sense of Call and their expectations of the ministry of Lay Preacher.



LAY PREACHERS

The **Uniting College** website contains this introductory note:

The ministry of Lay Preacher is a specified lay ministry within the Uniting Church. Lay Preachers read Scriptures, lead prayers, share faith stories and conduct other aspects of congregational worship.

To become a Lay Preacher a person must become a candidate for training and undertake prescribed studies and supervised practical experience.

Studies in lay preaching ground students in the Bible and Christian teachings. It also increases their understanding and skills in worship leadership and preaching.

The study requirements for lay preachers are provided by the Uniting College, refer to page 10-14.



It is recommended that people undertake a **Period of Discernment** before applying to be a Candidate for Training as an Accredited Lay Preacher. Information can be found on the Uniting College website www.unitingcollege.org.au

Further general information may also be found on the Uniting College website: click on Courses, then on Certificate IV I Christian Life and Ministry (which takes you to the 'Christian Ministry and Theology' heading), then on the link to the list of topics.

THE PATH TO ACCREDITATION AS A LAY PREACHER

1. ACCEPTANCE AS A CANDIDATE FOR TRAINING

- 1.1.** In South Australia, management of formal processes of application and acceptance for accreditation rest with the Lay Preachers' Committee of the Synod of SA. An application for acceptance as a Candidate for Training as an Accredited Lay Preacher is made to the Lay Preachers' Committee.

The application is normally made through the Minister and the Church Council. The Church Council will interview the applicant, who is then asked to tell the story of his/her faith journey. The Church for its part will test the person's Call, perhaps at more than one Council: the Applicant needs to be able to tell of the conviction of God's Call to preach and lead worship.

Within 90 days of the application being received by the Minister, the Church Council makes its report and recommendation to the Presbytery.

- 1.2.** The Lay Preachers' Committee will consider the application, guided by all available reports and recommendations. The LPC may interview the Applicant – any such interview will normally be conducted by a representative of the Lay Preachers' Committee. A resolution to accept the application will be agreed by consensus, or if necessary by formal vote with a majority of at least $\frac{2}{3}$ of voters.

The decision of the Lay Preachers' Committee is referred to the Formation, Education and Discipleship Subcommittee (FED) for endorsement.

2. EDUCATION, TRAINING AND COMPETENCY

The Ministerial Education Commission (MEC) of the UCA Assembly establishes the rules for the education, training and competency of Lay Preachers. The MEC stipulates that 'there shall be a Course of Study for the specified ministry of Lay Preacher' which 'shall reflect the emphases of the Uniting Church as expressed in the *Basis of Union*'.

MEC requires the following:

- **Biblical studies** – the historical and literary understanding of the Old and New Testaments and their contemporary interpretation
- **Theological studies** – Christian doctrine as expressed by the UCA in the *Basis of Union* and including the historic Creeds, Trinity, Person and Work of Christ, and many more, and the relation to mission and contemporary issues and interpretation
- **Worship and Preaching** – the theology and practice of community worship and of preaching, including traditional and contemporary forms.

MEC further requires that competency in **preaching and leading worship** will be supervised and assessed by persons designated by the relevant Presbytery; and that **language competency** be demonstrated in the language in which the person is to preach.

2.1. The College

Uniting College presents courses designed to meet the MEC study requirements. An Applicant / Candidate may **at any time** commence, continue, or advise completion of, study in those subjects. The list of subjects is provided as part of this document.

Applications for status for subjects or completed courses undertaken at other education facilities should be made to the College.



NOTE – the Lay Preachers' Committee provides a subsidy for the purchase of study resources: the subsidy is made available to people who have been accepted as Candidates for Training as a Lay Preacher, and applies to studies undertaken **after acceptance** as a Candidate.

2.2. *The Candidate's Minister*

The Candidate may elect to seek practical training in the conduct of worship. Ideally, studies in worship and preaching would precede this training, but it is not mandatory. The assistance of the Minister or another preacher will be needed, especially in arranging opportunities to preach. The Minister should keep the Church Council advised that the Candidate is being given preaching opportunities. (See also the Section 3 [Assessment] below.)

2.3. *The Lay Preachers' Committee*

Candidates are required to undertake **a program of reading, reflection and conversation**, about 7-10 hours in total, in matters of Uniting Church polity and foundational values. The *Basis of Union* and the *Lay Preachers' Code of Ethics* are examined and discussed, along with a brief exploration of the historical heritage of the UCA, and some aspects of the structure of the UCA and its decision-making processes, including the consensus process.

The Lay Preachers' Committee will provide a mentor to assist the Candidate with the program.

3. ASSESSMENT of worship leading

3.1. The Lay Preachers' Committee has the responsibility to ensure that the Candidate obtains practical experience and a satisfactory degree of competence in preaching and leading worship. To this end, the Candidate will be required to conduct services of worship, including preaching.

For the overall worship service, there are at least two possible scenarios.

- a) The Candidate may conduct the whole service, including preaching, without the participation of other people beyond the reading of the Scriptures.
- b) The Candidate may preach the word and work with one or more worship leaders; for a service in this style, the Candidate will need to provide evidence of working closely with the worship leader(s) and of shaping the direction of the service.



Please note, that the definition of 'preaching' is understood to include a wide variety of presentations of the message: spoken, drama, spoken and visual components together, or with various levels of congregation activity and participation. The requirement being that the 'preacher' has prepared the presentation and is in control of managing the occasion.

If all assessed worship services were in the style of (a) on page 6, then the Candidate will normally be required to conduct **three** services that are assessed as satisfactory; at least one of those needs to be at a congregation other than the Candidate's 'home' church.

If any of the services for assessment are in the style of (b) on page 6, then the Candidate must obtain satisfactory assessment for three preaching occasions, at least one of which will also involve leading the whole service.

The Candidate will normally be required to indicate additional preaching and worship leading, for experience and practice but not assessment, at least equal to the number of services assessed.

As a guide, it is suggested that it will be best if the assessed services in particular are conducted towards the end of the Candidate's study program, when the majority of the biblical, exegesis and practical education program have been completed.

3.2. The Lay Preachers' Committee undertakes:

- To oversee arrangements for the Candidate to conduct services which are to be assessed, and to make those arrangements if the Candidate is not able to;
- Prepare and provide an assessment form to be used as a guide in assessing the Candidate's worship and preaching.
- Appoint one or more assessors (generally Accredited Lay Preachers or ordained Ministers) to be present and assess the service, and to advise the Candidate of their names. Ideally two assessors will be present; that is not always possible. The assessor(s) should greet and pray with the Candidate before the service.

- Advise the assessor(s) of the need to share the assessment with the Candidate as soon as is convenient at the conclusion of the service – the time of sharing should include positive comment as well as noting areas that may need further development, and suggestions for making that improvement – and to return the assessment form to the Presbytery as soon as possible.
- Maintain records of services conducted and assessed.



Note that it is the Candidate who needs to advise LPC that preaching opportunities are being sought and assessors need to be found.

4. ACCREDITATION

- 4.1.** When all requirements have been met – the study program, assessments of worship and the UCA polity program – then the Candidate applies to the Lay Preachers' Committee through the Candidate's Minister and Church Council for accreditation.

A form is provided for this purpose.

To enable the Church Council to come to an informed decision, and to assist the Candidate in relating anew his/her sense of Call, the Church Council may wish to interview the Candidate at this stage. Such an interview may provide the Council with an opportunity to re-affirm the Candidate's Call on behalf of the Church.

- 4.2.** The Lay Preachers' Committee will consider the application, guided by all available reports and recommendations. The LPC will usually interview the Applicant – any such interview will normally be conducted by a representative of the Lay Preachers' Committee. A resolution to accept the application will be agreed by consensus, or if necessary by formal vote carried by a majority of at least $\frac{2}{3}$ of voters.

The decision of the LPC is referred to the Formation, Education and Discipleship Subcommittee for endorsement.



NOTE THAT each new stage in the process is an independent body and makes its own decisions re applications. For example, the endorsement of a Church Council need not automatically lead to endorsement by the LPC. Similarly, an applicant whose application is declined at any stage may nevertheless apply to the next stage. It should be understood, though, that a committee will need very sound reasons to overturn a decision of an earlier body.

When Formation, Education and Discipleship Subcommittee has endorsed the recommendation of the Lay Preachers' Committee, the Committee will liaise with the Candidate's Minister for a date on which the normal worship service will proceed and include:

- The declaration of Accreditation and the Commissioning of the Candidate as a Lay Preacher;
- Presentation of a Certificate of Accreditation to the Candidate.

Normally a member of the Lay Preachers' Committee will represent the Presbytery on such an occasion.



THE STUDY COMPONENT

THE STUDY COURSE

PREREQUISITE LANGUAGE SKILLS

The Candidate **must** be fluent in the language of those among whom he/she will most often exercise a preaching ministry.



ENGLISH

The study program is presented in English, and English is the common language of the majority of UCA congregations.



OTHER LANGUAGES

The United Church is a multi-cultural and multi-lingual church, and enquiries are received from people wishing to minister among non-English-speaking groups. Such Candidates need to be able to satisfy the Presbytery that they are fluent in the language of their intended congregation. The Presbytery will make such enquiries as are necessary to establish that the requirement has been met.



THE STUDY COMPONENT

UNITING COLLEGE FOR LEADERSHIP AND THEOLOGY (UCLT)

Uniting College for Leadership and Theology is the Uniting Church's college for discipleship and ministry training in South Australia. The College provides high quality, accessible education for all people: lay people and those preparing for ordination and other specified ministries within the Uniting Church, so they may become effective leaders, empowered by the Spirit. The College also provides study options for people from a range of church backgrounds with a personal interest in Christian theology.

The College offers Vocational Education and Training and undergraduate and postgraduate degrees through our partnership with the Adelaide College of Divinity and Flinders University.

The College provides information regarding enrolment, timetable, any necessary text books and other materials. Information can also be made available concerning Recognition of Prior Learning for studies completed at other education institutions.

The College phone number is **(08) 8416 8420**.



For information about the Lay Preacher application process, assessments of worship and preaching, the UCA Polity program and pastoral issues, please contact the Chairperson of the Lay Preachers' Committee: Max Howland, **0414 910 419**.

Support towards the cost of undertaking study courses at Uniting College is available in the form of scholarships. Eligibility criteria applies.

UCLT TOPICS REQUIRED FOR LAY PREACHER ACCREDITATION

The Assembly standards for Formation and Education for the specified ministry of Lay Preacher state that the competencies for a Lay Preacher 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

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.'



Candidates are required to attend a 2 day Code of Ethics training and choose one of the following education pathways to meet competencies:

1. Vocational Education and Training (VET)

This pathway involves students completing 4 units of the Certificate IV in Christian Ministry and Theology (10742NAT). This can be completed in 1 year, with one unit enrolment per term. Students will be required to invest approximately 5 hours per week over four, nine week terms. The Certificate IV units that cover the competencies are:

Christian Belief	CMTTHE401	Interpret and discuss Christian Scripture & theology
Christian Scriptures	CMTTHE402	Interpret Theological Data
Christology	CMTTHE403	Compare & present on a theological theme or issue
Worship and Preaching	CMTMIN402	Communicate theological information

Candidates who wish to graduate with the whole Certificate IV qualification would need to complete all nine units of this course.

2. Certificate of Higher Education

This pathway enables candidates to gain a higher education qualification and students will need to provide some additional evidence to gain the Lay Preacher Accreditation. This course can be completed over 2 years. The required investment would be approximately 8 hours per week during the 4 semesters.

The higher education units that cover the competencies are:

MINS1002	Interpreting the Scriptures
MINS1304	Introduction to Christian thought
MINS2533	Homiletics
MINS2534	Liturgy and Worship

This pathway is recommended to candidates that are considering gaining further qualifications in the future and to candidates that may wish to explore ordained ministry. Completion of these units can be credited towards a diploma or degree in Ministry.

Both courses are offered at UCLT through the Adelaide College of Divinity (RTO 4863).

Please contact the Adelaide College of Divinity VET coordinator to discuss options on, **(08) 8416 8421**.

Further information about these courses, including the unit descriptions, timetable and online enrolment can found at **acd.edu.au**.

Please check the UCLT website **unitingcollege.edu.au** for *Code of Ethics* training dates or email **info@unitingcollege.edu.au**.



Please note that once you have completed the education requirements you will also be assessed in your worship leading by the Lay Preachers' Committee.



Uniting College
Learn. Lead. Live.



Adelaide College
of Divinity

Contact:

Adelaide College of Divinity (ACD)



ACD VET Coordinator



(08) 8416 8421



acd.edu.au

Uniting College for Leadership and Theology
(UCLT)



unitingcollege.edu.au



info@unitingcollege.edu.au

APPLICATION FORMS

Standardised Application Forms for both Candidacy and Accreditation are supplied by a Presbytery. We strongly recommend that applicants use these forms.

Paper copies are enclosed as part of this booklet – the forms may be copied as often as necessary. Alternatively, forms in fillable PDF format may be downloaded from the UCA Synod of SA website.

Completed forms should be forwarded to the address listed on the form.



sa.uca.org.au/lay-preachers





Candidate for Lay Preacher - Application for Acceptance for Training

Lay Preachers' Committee

Part 1 - to be filled out by applicant

Personal Details	
Title	Given Name (s)
Preferred Name <i>(if applicable)</i>	
Surname	
Residential Address	Suburb
Postcode	Postal Address
Suburb	Postcode
Home Phone	Work Phone
Mobile	Email
Present Congregation Name:	
Period of Church Membership at present congregation	
<i>(if less than 1 year, please state total UCA membership)</i>	

Education History
Christian Education or theological study previously completed?

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 training as a lay preacher. I understand that my call to preach will be tested as my application is considered by the Councils of the Church.

Privacy Statement

All information collected on this form is managed in accordance with the *Uniting Church SA Privacy Policy 2019*. It has been collected for the primary purpose maintaining the roll of lay preachers as well as communication, correspondence and administration related to the activities conducted by Synod of South Australia. If you need clarification about what constitutes an authorised activity or you have any other privacy related queries, please contact the Privacy Officer on (08) 8236 4206 or privacy@sa.uca.org.au

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Candidate for Lay Preacher - Application for Acceptance for Training Lay Preachers Committee

Part 2

Referees - OPTIONAL			
1. Title	Name		
Address		Postcode	
Phone	Mobile	Email	
2. Title	Name		
Address		Postcode	
Phone	Mobile	Email	

Recommendation by Minister	
<i>Please submit this form to your minister for processing.</i>	
Minister Name <i>(please print)</i>	
<i>A separate sheet may be attached with comments.</i>	
Signature	Date
<i>Please forward this application to the church council. The applicant should be advised when the application has been forwarded.</i>	

Recommendation by Church Council			
Church Council Name			
Date of Vote	<input type="radio"/> Consensus	<input type="radio"/> For	Against Abstain
<i>A separate sheet may be attached with comments.</i>			
Signature	Date		
<i>Please forward this application to:</i>			
Max Howland, Chairperson, Lay Preachers' Committee, 1A Lamington Ave, Seacliff Park SA 5049			
OR max.howland@internode.on.net			
<i>The applicant should be advised when the application has been forwarded.</i>			

Recommendation by Lay Preachers' Committee			
Application Accepted?	<input type="radio"/> Yes: Advise Applicant		
	<input type="radio"/> No: Advise Applicant and explain; counsel re further action.		
Date of Vote	<input type="radio"/> Consensus	<input type="radio"/> For	Against Abstain
Signature of Secretary	Date		
Formation, Education and Discipleship Subcommittee advised: (date)			
Formation, Education and Discipleship Subcommittee endorsement: (date)			
Applicant advised: (date)			



Recognition as a Lay Preacher - Application

Lay Preachers' Committee

Part 1 - To be filled out by candidate

Please attach a copy of your Uniting College transcript with this form.

Personal Details

Title _____ Name _____

Address _____ Postcode _____

Phone _____ Mobile _____ Email _____

Any changes to information/contact details since the application for candidacy was made?

Date of acceptance as candidate _____

Current Education and Training

Do you have a certificate or formal letter from Uniting College to indicate that you have completed the required study? Yes No

Do you have satisfactory assessments for three worship and preaching occasions? Yes No

Have you completed the UCA Polity program? Yes No

The application can proceed ONLY if the answer is YES for all three questions.

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 recognition as a lay preacher.

Privacy Statement

All information collected on this form is managed in accordance with the *Uniting Church SA Privacy Policy 2019*. It has been collected for the primary purpose maintaining the roll of lay preachers as well as communication, correspondence, providing names and phone numbers of potential lay preachers to congregations as requested, and administration related to the activities conducted by Synod of South Australia. If you need clarification about what constitutes an authorised activity or you have any other privacy related queries, please contact the Privacy Officer on (08) 8236 4206 or privacy@sa.uca.org.au

Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Recognition as a Lay Preacher - Application

Lay Preachers Committee

Part 2

Recommendation by Minister

Please submit this form to your minister for processing.

Minister Name (please print)

A separate sheet may be attached with comments.

Signature

Date

Please forward this application to the church council. The applicant should be advised when the application has been forwarded.

Recommendation by Church Council

Church Council Name

Date of Vote

Consensus

For

Against

Abstain

A separate sheet may be attached with comments.

Signature

Date

Please forward this application to the Presbytery:

Max Howland, Chairperson, Lay Preachers' Committee, 1A Lamington Ave, Seacliff Park SA 5049
 OR max.howland@internode.on.net

The applicant should be advised when the application has been forwarded.

Recommendation by Lay Preachers Committee

Application Accepted?

Yes: Advise Applicant

No: Advise Applicant and explain; counsel re further action.

Date of Vote

Consensus

For

Against

Abstain

Signature of Secretary

Date

Formation, Education and Discipleship Subcommittee advised: (date)

Formation, Education and Discipleship Subcommittee endorsement: (date)

Applicant advised: (date)
