

# Banyule Network of Uniting Churches

## - Creating Our Way Forward -

*This document has been prepared as a summary of our way forward as a Joint Church Council. It is based primarily on material prepared by the Network Coordinating Committee and was approved for distribution by the April 2011 meeting of the Joint Church Council.*

### **1. Our Shared Purpose and Mission**

With God's help, we aim to be a growing and networked community of Christians through which:

- the good news of Jesus Christ is celebrated and shared;
- people of all ages are encouraged and assisted to worship God;
- we seek to hear and respond to God's call;
- people are encouraged to grow in their understanding of the Christian faith and its application to everyday life experiences;
- we are cared for and equipped to serve others;
- marginalised members of the community are welcomed, accepted and served.

Core components of our mission are engagement in worship, evangelism, discipleship, faith sharing and development, pastoral care, community building, service, social justice and advocacy in the name of Christ.

We recognise that:

- growing and sustaining the Church into the future will require new ways for people of all ages to worship, grow in Christian faith and understanding, relate to one another in caring and supportive faith communities and to reach out in love to the broader community;
- loving and serving God and one another are the inspirational and motivating forces for growing the Christian community and its worship, ministry and mission in the region;
- our responses to God's calling are changing and evolving as we seek to work together in a rapidly changing and challenging world;
- our congregations are open and willing to consider new and different possibilities for worship, ministry, mission, and service; and
- continuing as we are is not an option for the future of the congregations in the Network.

*(from Future Directions Proposal 2010)*

### **2. Our Shared Commitment**

#### **Our Covenant to work together**

*"As congregations and ministers within the Network, we covenant to exercise our individual ministries together for the mission of the church in growing the Christian community and ministry within the Banyule Region.*

*In faith, and under God's guidance, we will support the Network in developing and implementing a strategic plan to ensure a faithful and effective Uniting Church presence in the region, respecting the continuing relationships we have with church agencies.*

*We will participate fully in the life and ministry of the congregations, supporting what is currently working well and being open to new and creative possibilities for ministry, worship, service and mission.*

*We recognise that we are on a continuing journey of discovery of God's purpose for the church in an ever-changing world and the nature of individual ministries and the form of congregations may evolve over time.*

*We accept the authority of the Presbytery of Yarra Yarra and promise to live together under the guidance of the Network Coordinating Committee.*

*We make this covenant in faith and hope and love, as the people of God on the way to God's promised end."*

*(Covenant Service Liturgy, November 2008)*

### **Endorsement of the Joint Church Council by Congregations & Presbytery**

That the Network Coordinating Committee of the Banyule Network of Uniting Churches: -

1. asks the Yarra Yarra Presbytery to establish a Joint Church Council (Joint Church Council) for the Banyule Network of Uniting Churches under Regulation 3.1.12(e);
2. establish that the membership of the Joint Church Council will be comprised of all ministers in placement within the Network (including supply ministers), a treasurer appointed by the Joint Church Council and two elected representatives from each Network congregation. The Joint Church Council may also appoint no more than two co-opted members with specific gifts important to the work of the Council;
3. agrees that the Joint Church Council will have responsibility to coordinate the mission planning, ministry placements and management of financial and property resources of the congregations, recognising that 'beneficial use' of property will remain with congregations;
4. recommends that the Joint Church Council establish a system, with Presbytery approval, for the coordination of the management of financial and property resources within the Network;
5. recommends that each Network congregation elect a Local Leaders' Meeting who will be responsible for the life and mission of the congregation.

### **3. The Role and Responsibilities of the Joint Church Council**

The Joint Church Council will assume responsibility for all other duties and responsibilities as set out in regulations 3.1.13 (a) – 3.1.13. (b) (xi) except those allocated to the Elders (namely (ii), (iii) and (iv).

Those responsibilities under the Regulations are: 3.1.13

- (a) *The Joint Church Council shall give priority in its life to building up the congregations in faith and love, sustaining members in hope, and leading the congregations to a fuller participation in Christ's mission in the world. This priority shall be reflected in the agenda of its ordinary meetings.*
- (b) *The duties and responsibilities of the Joint Church Council include the following:*
  - (i) *sharing with the Ministers in mission and in the pastoral care and spiritual oversight of the congregations;*
  - (v) *determining the time and place of services of public worship;*

- (vi) carrying out its functions concerning applicants for the ministries of Minister of the Word, Deacon, Pastor and Lay Preacher, having regard to the Regulations;*
- (vii) managing the financial affairs and the general administration of the Network including the reception, preparation and presentation of all necessary budgets, statements and reports;*
- (viii) managing and controlling property in accordance with the Regulations;*
- (ix) preparing and presenting to the congregations an annual report concerning the life and work of the Network including its worship, mission and service, and making recommendations with regard to the program for the ensuing year;*
- (x) exercising oversight of the appointment of officers and leaders of congregational organisations;*
- (xi) referral of matters to Presbytery as prescribed.*

*(c) Conduct of Meetings*

*Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with "A Manual for Meetings in the Uniting Church" unless the Church Council has adopted or shall adopt other standing orders or meeting procedures.*

(N.B. These regulations will be interpreted in the context of the Network's constituency of multiple congregations and one Church Council.)

*(from Establishing a Joint Church Council for the Banyule Network of Uniting Churches: a Discussion Paper, February 2010)*

#### **4. Decision-Making – Principles and Processes**

When making decisions, the Joint Church Council will be guided by the following principles.

- a) Our decisions will be consistent with our commitment to:-
  - i) love and serve God and one another, both as individuals and corporately, and
  - ii) grow the Christian community and its worship, ministry and mission in the Banyule region and wider world.
- b) Our decisions will be made on the basis that they will benefit the Banyule Network of Uniting Churches as a whole, rather than individual congregations.
- c) Our decisions will be made with regard to their longer-term implications for the life and mission of the church in Banyule area.
- d) Our decisions will reflect our recognition that growing and sustaining the Church into the future will require new ways for people of all ages to worship, grow in Christian faith and understanding, relate to one another in caring and supportive faith communities and reach out in love to the broader community.

The Joint Church Council will operate according to a consensus model of decision making, as set out in 'A Manual for Meetings in the Uniting Church'.

## **5. Relationship of the Joint Church Council with Congregations**

The Joint Church Council will work in partnership with Local Leaders Meetings and congregational members in the Banyule Network of Uniting Churches, according to the respective roles and responsibilities of each, to achieve the mission of the Banyule Network.

The relationship between the Joint Church Council and the congregations must be one of mutual respect and trust. The Joint Church Council recognises the importance of effective, open and honest communication in sustaining such a relationship.

Accordingly, the Joint Church Council will: -

- a) welcome comments and communication from Local Leaders Meetings and congregations;
- b) respond promptly, where possible, to issues and concerns raised by congregations;
- c) foster regular communication of the Joint Church Council's activities and decisions to Leaders Meetings and congregations; and
- d) encourage congregational representatives on the Joint Church Council to regularly report to their local congregations.

The Joint Church Council has been authorised by the congregations to make decisions on their behalf in relation to the specific responsibilities of the Joint Church Council, notably 'to coordinate the mission planning, ministry placements and management of financial and property resources of the congregations, recognising that beneficial use of the property will remain with congregations'. Where decisions on such matters are likely to involve major change to the Network, the Joint Church Council will consult with Local Leaders meetings and congregations.

In addition to its work relating to the coordination of current and annual resourcing of the Network, an important responsibility of the Joint Church Council is to provide leadership in discerning the ongoing vision for ministry and mission in the Network. In undertaking this task, the Joint Church Council will seek the wisdom and insight of all members of the congregations, by inviting direct communication with the Joint Church Council and by holding forums and other opportunities for wider consultation.