

UNITING FAITH and FAMILIES



Our Story

April 2022 - Last Updated

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This is our story of being an emerging Faith Community in the Uniting Church, our foundations and how we operate.

This is a living document, designed to be updated each year as the community lives and grows. It contains the common understanding of how we operate and our current processes and procedures to make our life together work.

Other foundational documents of the Uniting Church in Australia that we draw on can be found here:

[The Basis of Union](#)

[Constitution and Regulations](#)

[The first Statement to the Nation 1977](#)

Our Strategic Plan

MOU with the Presbytery of Port Philip West



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1. HOW AND WHY WE BEGAN

Our community has emerged out of the Synod of Victoria's significant legacy of camping in the 1980s and 90s. Many of the adults who attend camp were shaped, formed and cared for by the various Synod activities that were deliberately planned to allow young people in the Uniting Church to walk together in the footsteps of Christ. These Synod resourced activities gave us connections across the geographic divide of Victoria and Tasmania that emboldened us and nurtured us to deepen and maintain our faith in God and the church. Not only did these experiences fill us with the Spirit and enable us to become formed by the Good News found in the scriptures and the gathered Christian community; they provided skill development in leadership, community building and event organisation.

These adults now have children of their own. In 2011, in the absence of any synod camps, a small group decided to hold a social justice family camp and see if anyone wanted to come. About 50 people came and this grew to around 20 families - 70 people over the next few years. Over time a sense of community developed and in 2017 we became an official faith community of the Presbytery of Port Philip West. This document is a further unfolding of who we are.



2. OUR VISION AND MISSION

Vision

We want to create a geographically dispersed community where families are nurtured in their Christian faith, connected to others who may be isolated in their home congregations, and equipped to practice faith at home.

Mission

We are proud to be a part of the Uniting Church. Moulded by its inclusive theology, we are creating broader opportunities for our children to experience this same robust, challenging and social justice-based approach to knowing God.

- a. We are called to be God's authentic people who are filled with hope and courage. Who trust that life is oriented toward good.
- b. We are called to be present to God's Spirit living in us and through the complexities in our own lives and communities.
- c. We are called to be truthful disciples who live in the tension between personal and political engagement. Fear will not dominate. We will see Christ in our neighbours and respectfully challenge injustice.
- d. We are connected to God's energy and filled with light and hope. We stand alongside others in love and live together in community.

3. WHAT WE DO

Our main activity is an annual family camp held over the March long weekend each year. We usually meet at the Uniting Church Adekate Campsite in Creswick.

We also meet during the year at other times either regionally or online for bookgroups, discussions, prayer. Each year these things change and adapt with the needs of the community.

We also have a range of ways we keep in contact including small groups, a book that is passed from family to family, a regular online community brunch and various working groups that keep our community life going.



4. GOVERNANCE

The Uniting Faith and Families community is an official faith community of the Presbytery of Port Philip West.

The presbytery has a geographical boundary, but this is not restrictive in terms of who can be a part of the Uniting Faith and Families community. Our relationship to the Presbytery is for governance and ministry oversight and accountability and because we share strategic objectives. We are governed by a MOU.

4.1 Steering committee

We are governed by a steering committee, which does the equivalent work of a church council. Its main functions are:

- to oversee strategic direction
- pastoral care
- set the direction of the work carried out by the project worker
- attending to any issues arising between camps
- governance for financial and other accountability issues

People are appointed to the committee each year at family camp. The committee can also co-opt extra members if needed for specific purposes from time to time.

People are appointed to the Steering committee for ideally a minimum of three years and a maximum of five years.

To provide a leadership pathway for younger people they will be offered a mentor in their first year. Towards the end of their appointment, steering committee members should look to recruit someone else to take their place, in conjunction with the wider discernment of the committee.

Discernment around membership of the steering committee and the gifts and graces that the committee needs is to be conducted by December in the year before the March camp to allow enough time.

The steering committee should have at least six people appointed to it (to fulfil the current roles listed below and one person extra) and at least one person under the age of 25.

4.2 Current Roles on the steering committee (as at April 2022)

Chair – Joan Wright Howie.

Contact point for the project worker in between meetings, chairs the AGM, first point of call for any pastoral or financial issues that can't be resolved by the project worker.

Treasurer – Christopher McAvaney / Jonathan Chandler

Prepares the annual budget, reports the monthly profit and loss to steering committee meetings, assist with applying for grants if applicable, prepare accounts for auditing, provide an annual report to presbytery.

Project worker / Pastor (paid role) – Cath James (concluding 30 April 2022)

Carries out the work of the committee and serves the Uniting Faith and Families community in its ministry and mission.

Camp Co-ordinator (paid role) - Em Chandler

Organises the annual family camp.

Presbytery liaison – Robyn Zumstein

Attends presbytery meetings of Port Philip West and reports back any relevant issues to UFF. Is the conduit for any communication between the two. Initiates and organises a report from UFF to the presbytery each year.

Camping liaison – Darren Streader

Sits on the UCA camping committee and attends a UFF steering committee meeting bi-annually to provide communication between the two entities.

Youth representative - Naomi Bruinsma

4.3 Membership

Anyone is welcome to become a member of UFF. This can either be as a baptised member, a confirmed member or a member in association (a member of another church as well). More on this can be found in 1.1.2 of the UCA Constitution and regulations.

You can also be an adherent member which means that you regularly participate in the life of the community, but are not baptised or confirmed.

At each camp there is an opportunity to express your commitment to the community in whatever form feels appropriate.

4.4 Annual General Meeting and decision making process

The AGM occurs each year at the annual family camp. Anyone attending camp can vote and be involved in the decision making. The AGM is chaired by the UFF chairperson and the agenda set by the UFF steering committee. Any issues to be discussed at the AGM need to be submitted to the UFF by 1 February to ensure they are part of the February steering committee meeting and on the agenda. Other items can be added at camp but may not be able to be dealt with until the following year if a formal process is needed.



5. FINANCES

The steering committee oversee the finances of the community. Anyone can make a financial contribution or set up a direct offering via our account with the Bendigo Bank

BSB: 633 000

Account number 185629623

Name: Uniting Faith Families

The steering committee determines which roles are paid and the process for determining who is appointed in conjunction with the VicTas Synod guidelines for appointing an ordained minister or lay pastor.



6. WAYS OF BEING INVOLVED IN THE UFF COMMUNITY

Everyone is encouraged to use and share their gifts and skills as a way of living out our baptism and God's mission in the world.

Camp Roles

Announcements person

Food coordinator

Dishwashing coordinator and roster monitor

Pastoral care / meet and greet new people / make sure kids are getting along ok

Administration - allocating rooms, finances, camp liaison

Worship coordinator and other leaders

Music coordinator and other players

Program coordinator and delegator

Concert leaders and space set up

Small group organiser and leaders

All age games and free time organiser

First aid / safe church

Simulation game organiser

Promotion

Other ways of being involved:

- attending events and other activities
- pastoral supporting each other
- inviting other families to gatherings
- being part of one of the working groups: promotion, mentoring, online gatherings, face to face gatherings, teenager specific gatherings
- contributing financially

CONTACT

Joan Wright Howie - Chairperson (until March 2023)
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Facebook group: Victas Synod Social Justice Family Camp: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1530025527217509>

Facebook page: [unitingfaithfamilies](#)

Website: unitingfaithfamilies.org.au

Email: unitingfaithfamilies@gmail.com

