

2. Procedures for Local Church Oversight

It should be clear that 'being in partnership' means that all parties of a Cooperative Venture are called to give oversight to the mission and ministry of the local church. Local church councils, ministers, regional and national courts, are charged with the duty to nurture the life of the congregations in their care. There is an understanding that Cooperative Ventures require one partner to take a primary role in giving oversight. To describe this primary role and the consequent relationship we identify a Coordinating Partner as taking a special part in the life of the Cooperative Venture, supported by the Participating Partner(s).

All partners have as their primary responsibility the task of supporting the local church in its commitment to working together in life and mission.

2.1 COORDINATING PARTNER

- 2.1.1 A primary task of the Coordinating Partner is to take responsibility for the working out of the partnership. This requires that genuine consultation be continually held amongst all partners and the local church before any decisions are made. A meeting of a local church's partners should happen at least once a year in a suitable manner.
- 2.1.2 Where a Regional Forum is functioning they should be consulted and be involved in key discussions and decisions. A Regional Forum provides a means of facilitation amongst the local partner churches. Where a Regional Forum is not in existence the UCANZ office should be consulted where appropriate.
- 2.1.3 As a sign of partnership, it is generally accepted that the Coordinating Partner role may move amongst the local church partners. A review of Coordinating Partner should be made every five years, even if there is no change, and when a ministry changes. A review should be conducted by all the local church partners and the local church council.
- 2.1.4 In some areas the role of Coordinating Partner may be taken by a combined court of the Partner Churches.
- 2.1.5 The Coordinating Partner takes responsibility for overseeing the process of ministry appointments, including developing a local church profile, holding interviews, and undertaking character and good standing checks. The Coordinating Partner must ensure that all partners are involved in the process and that there is consultation with partner church leaders before an appointment is officially confirmed. The Coordinating Partner also ensures that an induction service involves all the partners of the Cooperative Venture, a Code of Ethics and Letter of Appointment are signed (see 4.2), and that the UCANZ office is notified.
- 2.1.6 In all appointments, care should be taken to identify ministers who are committed to the ecumenical nature of cooperative ventures and any orientation or mentoring should be provided where it is deemed necessary.

- 2.1.7 If the appointed minister is not from the same church as the Coordinating Partner there must be deliberate attention given to the issues that arise, including ministry reviews and discipline. Differences in processes should be considered at the time of making the appointment.
- 2.1.8 A ministry review must be carried out between 9 to 12 months before the current term of ministry is completed. This is a task for the Coordinating Partner to oversee, although this may be a task delegated to a Regional Forum to coordinate.
- 2.1.9 When a ministerial vacancy occurs the Coordinating Partner will meet with the Participating Partner(s) and the local church council to decide which partner will act as Coordinating Partner. The Coordinating Partner takes a lead in helping the local church to develop both local church and minister profiles.
- 2.1.10 Where there is local shared ministry the Coordinating Partner ensures the appointment of a suitable ministry enabler, organises appropriate calling processes and gives direction to the ministry team. Other models of ministry may also have specific needs.
- 2.1.11 The Coordinating Partner will generally handle complaints that arise from a Cooperative Venture and should ensure that other partners are made aware of possible liabilities arising and the outcomes.
- 2.1.12 The Coordinating Partner will ensure that the local church is reviewed regularly, and that such reviews involve the Participating Partner(s). The form of the review will be in the hands of the Coordinating Partner, but should include questions relating to compliance, record keeping, strategic planning, building utilisation and mission goals. This responsibility may be delegated to a Regional Forum where it exists.
- 2.1.13 The Coordinating Partner will ensure that appropriate employment practices are followed for any person employed in the local church, and should keep the Participating Partner(s) informed of changes in local church employees.
- 2.1.14 The Coordinating Partner will ensure that appropriate payments to the Partner Support Fund are made.

2.2 PARTICIPATING PARTNER

- 2.2.1 Participating Partner(s) in a Cooperative Venture have responsibilities in maintaining contact with the local church, ministers, with the Coordinating Partner and the Regional Forum.
- 2.2.2 When moving from the Coordinating Partner role, there is a need to provide continuity for both the local church and the new Coordinating Partner. It is important that Participating Partners provide personnel to attend meetings called by the Coordinating Partner to advance the work of the local church. This is especially true when dealing with the overall mission and property matters.
- 2.2.3 There is also an ongoing responsibility to make local churches aware of the various resources that are available and to provide encouragement to ministers in exploring traditions different to their own. Ministers and laity should be encouraged to experience the wider church life of their local church partners.
- 2.2.4 Participating Partners continue to be involved in the local church, but it is a courtesy to inform other partners of activities that are undertaken on behalf of the Partner Church.

2.3 REGIONAL FORUM

Historically the development of Joint Regional Committees has been very diverse. In the beginning the Joint Regional Committees were a meeting of the five negotiating partners in a particular area – planning for the uniting of the churches. Since 2000 some Joint Regional Committees have ceased to function, some have become a meeting of Cooperative Venture representatives (with limited regional court involvement) and others have merged into bigger groupings.

- 2.3.1 A Regional Forum comes into being to support the Cooperative Ventures in an area, assist in the work of the Partner Churches, and to uphold the ecumenical hopes of UCANZ.
- 2.3.2 A Regional Forum will reflect the unique situation that exists within a region – there are no specific ways it might function, but it is important that the Partner Churches accept its mode of being.
- 2.3.3 When a Regional Forum functions it is considered as a consultant and should share in the discussions related to the local churches.
- 2.3.4 When a Regional Forum does not function, the UCANZ office should be involved as much as possible in decisions relating to the local church.
- 2.3.5 A Regional Forum may be delegated authority to conduct local church reviews and other tasks by the Regional Courts and facilitate the work of Coordinating Partners.
- 2.3.6 A Regional Forum may be an appropriate means to initiate new ventures and explore other possibilities for ecumenical cooperation.
- 2.3.7 The membership of a Regional Forum should reflect a balance between clergy/laity, women/men, and local churches/regional courts. All of the Partner Churches should be invited to participate and be represented.