

3. Procedures for the Local Church

The complexity of our modern church makes definitions rather more complex. What is defined in these Procedures as the local church may also be known as a congregation, parish, circuit, or charge. It also refers to one or more congregations that come under one administration.

3.1 MEMBERSHIP

- 3.1.1 People are members of the Church Universal through baptism and the public confession of faith. As a local expression of this members of a Cooperative Venture are received by the local church council and their names placed on a single Roll of Members.
- 3.1.2 Members of a Cooperative Venture have reciprocal membership in the Partner Churches while they remain associated with the Cooperative Venture.
- 3.1.3 A Roll of Members is required to be kept by the local church and needs to be reviewed at least annually. This provides a legal basis for voting and decision-making. A Pastoral or Associate Roll may be kept of all those who are associated with the local church including those who are not considered full members or may be called inactive members.
- 3.1.4 All members have a right to vote at the Annual Meeting and at any special meeting of the local church called to discuss specific business.
- 3.1.5 Special meetings of the local church may be called by the local church council by giving reasonable notice (normally not less than two clear Sundays) and advertising their purpose. In exceptional circumstances the local church partners may require the local church council to call a special meeting.

3.2 LOCAL CHURCH COUNCIL

The local church council may also be known as Parish Council, Session, Vestry or Church Board. Congregational councils may exist in local churches with multiple congregations.

- 3.2.1 The local church council manages the life and resources of the local church for local mission and the wider mission of the Partner Churches. There should be good systems of communication with the congregation(s) on all aspects of the local church life.
- 3.2.2 People elected to the local church council must be members of the local church.
- 3.2.3 The local church council reports to the congregation(s) through an Annual Meeting and that meeting elects the members of the local church council.
- 3.2.4 A local church may develop a constitution for itself, but this must be consistent with the practices of the partner churches, reflect the partnership model, and not be in conflict with the Procedures for Cooperative Ventures.

- 3.2.5 Ordained and Lay Ministers appointed to the local church are members of the local church council. They may chair the local church council, but they may not be treasurer for the local church.
- 3.2.6 The local church council is responsible to the local church and partner church courts for the financial affairs, historic records, roll of members, and generally the life and work of the local church. They are also required to meet all statutory requirements as necessary (for example, Health and Safety, Fire, and Building Code regulations).
- 3.2.7 It is appropriate for the local church council to develop processes that support those undertaking ministry in the local church. This may mean appointing, in consultation with those in ministry, an individual or small group (possibly called wardens, stewards, or senior elders) to give pastoral support to those who work in the local church.

3.3 RELATIONSHIPS

- 3.3.1 A Cooperative Venture is regarded by the Partner Church courts as one of their own.
- 3.3.2 A Cooperative Venture should seek to be represented on all church courts as it is appropriate.
- 3.3.3 Cooperative Ventures also have a responsibility to ensure that Participating Partners are active and visible in the life of the local church. Deliberate attention should be paid to ensuring that all partners are honoured in the life of the local church and that events are fairly publicised. The worshipping life of the local church should reflect the traditions and current practices of all its partners, but also provide opportunities for new patterns of worship.

3.4 FINANCIAL MATTERS

- 3.4.1 The financial accounts of the local church should be transparent, readily available and reflect the partnership entered into.
- 3.4.2 All financial accounts of the local church should be reviewed annually by a suitably qualified person.
- 3.4.3 Cooperative Ventures, as part of the wider church, support the work of the Partner Churches through the Partner Support Fund, Diocesan Levies (for Anglican Churches) or through Partner Churches at an approved rate.
- 3.4.4 Regional courts may charge reasonable levies upon Cooperative Ventures, but these should take into account the nature of partnership, the level of giving to the wider church budgets, and the ability of local churches to pay.
- 3.4.5 Removal Expenses: Availability of funds varies throughout the country - local churches should check on requirements before any moves are made. UCANZ does operate the Cooperative Ventures Removal Scheme (see 8.5.2 and 9.3) which supports those local churches that are members of the fund to defray removal expenses.
- 3.4.6 There is to be no pecuniary gain for members of the church, in accordance with the charitable aims of the local church.

- 3.4.7 Church members who have an interest in any financial or property decision should make their interest known to the deciding church court and will step aside for the discussion and decision.
- 3.4.8 At the closure of any local church, all funds and assets are returned to the Partner Church courts in accordance to the Schedules of Record.

3.5 PROPERTY

- 3.5.1 All Cooperative Ventures must have Schedules of Record approved by their Partner Churches which outline the resources brought into the venture and the Capital Ratio. When there are changes in capital contributions the schedules and ratios must be re-evaluated. Loans, bequests and donations made to the Cooperative Venture do not affect the Capital Ratio.
- 3.5.2 The titles to property and buildings are vested with Trustees from one of the Partner Churches in accordance with the Agreement signed when the Cooperative Venture was formed. Such property is held in trust for all participants in the Cooperative Venture according to the Schedules of Record. Any property development should be considered in consultation with the relevant Partner Churches. Advice and guidance in these matters can be obtained by contacting the UCANZ office.
- 3.5.3 Any significant property development must have final approval from the trustees in whom the property is vested, and it must also be approved by the regional courts of the local church partners and be referred to the trustees of the relevant Partner Churches.
- 3.5.4 The local church council is required to insure buildings and contents, ensure all compliance matters are completed, and to provide a safe environment for all users of the buildings.
- 3.5.5 Significant expenditure based on an insurance claim is subject to the requirements of the relevant Partner Churches. Consultation and approval is needed before any remedial work is undertaken.

3.6 LOCAL CHURCH REVIEWS

Local church reviews have also been known as visitations or consultations.

- 3.6.1 Regular local church reviews are acknowledged as an important aspect of ongoing development.
- 3.6.2 Organising reviews is the task of the Coordinating Partner, working in association with the Participating Partner(s). This task may be delegated to a Regional Forum.
- 3.6.3 The form of the review will essentially be in the hands of the review team, but it would consider the following areas:
- Mission of the local church
 - Strategic planning
 - Property utilisation, upkeep and planning
 - Financial viability
 - Relationships with the local church's partners
- 3.6.4 The Coordinating Partner must undertake to ensure that any recommendations from a local church review are carried out.

- 3.6.5 Any local church partner may call for a special review and the Coordinating Partner will organise any required meetings. A special review may focus on specific issues facing the local church situation or may involve more than one local church.

3.7 CHARITY STATUS

- 3.7.1 Cooperative Ventures register with the Charities Commission as independent charities functioning under the Agreed Provisions for Cooperative Ventures. They will each have a Charities Commission number and an Inland Revenue number.
- 3.7.2 Responsibility for meeting the requirements of the Charities Commission and Inland Revenue rests with the local church council.

3.8 CHURCH RECORDS

The history of the church is contained in the records that are passed on to the next generation – they provide a glimpse at our past and tell the story of our faith journey.

- 3.8.1 The local church council has the responsibility to ensure that records are maintained, stored and appropriately archived.
- 3.8.2 The following records should be kept:
- a) Registers: baptism, marriage, funeral, worship service.
 - b) Minute books: all minute books of all church organisations.
 - c) Annual reports.
 - d) Correspondence, inwards and outwards: in whatever form this is kept eg files, letter books.
 - e) Rolls: membership, pastoral, confirmation, Sunday School, Youth Group or Bible Class etc.
 - f) Financial records: annual accounts, cash books, journals, ledgers.
 - g) Local church newsletters, magazines, church bulletins, orders of service (weekly and special), scrapbooks, newspaper clippings (including date and name of newspaper)
 - h) Property records: maps, plans, architectural drawings, building specifications, contracts.
 - i) Legal documents.
 - j) Jubilee and centennial celebration records: minutes, correspondence, registration forms, photographs, programmes, tickets, orders of service, publications, balance sheets and cash books, tape recordings, videos.

It is not necessary to collect national church publications, general circulars, or promotional material unless they are of specific significance to the local church.

- 3.8.3 Archive repositories exist for all the Partner Churches and Cooperative Venture records should be lodged in an approved archive and all local church partners notified of what was lodged and where.

3.8.4 Electronic files are not archive or history friendly. It is important to print at least one copy of relevant correspondence and reports, and store with printed minutes and agendas. Photos (loose or in albums) should be environmentally protected and people and items named.