

The websites will also give information on matters such as continuing education and mission resources. As a participant of UCANZ you can have access to the resources of all our partners - if there are questions about this talk to the UCANZ office.

It is generally accepted that parishes will provide assistance in setting up a computer package for the minister. Be careful to make clear who owns the computer - a parish owned machine should not be overly used for personal activities and its files may be reviewed.

## **PARISH COUNCIL**

Cooperative Ventures are generally governed by a Parish Council that is elected by the congregation(s). There are many variations in how Parish Councils function, but they will usually have clear guidelines (or they should have) set down somewhere. There is no requirement for the minister to chair Parish Council and no rule for them not to! Parish Council is responsible for the functioning of the local church and the minister is to support them in that task.

## **WORSHIP**

Leading worship in a cooperative venture is an opportunity to celebrate diversity. Each partner denomination will have their own traditions, just as each local church will have some unique traditions of their own. As a minister it is possible to harness the best of each tradition and use it to develop inspiring worship.

**LECTIONARY:** The Revised Common Lectionary is a uniting feature of our churches and is used in most cooperative ventures. An emphasis on liturgical seasons and colours is generally left to the minister to decide - but there are some churches that place great importance on such things.

**COMMUNION:** There are no 'usual' practices that can be noted for cooperative ventures to follow. The balance between the traditional Presbyterian quarterly communion and the weekly celebration of other denominations has generally led to a monthly celebration in many congregations, although there are many who still hold some form of weekly communion service. The choice of liturgies, form of movement (coming forward or staying in the pews), and nature of the elements (wine/juice, bread/wafer) is decided by the presiding minister along with Parish Council - but an awareness of local traditions is important.

The Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches all maintain the view that the celebration of communion is to be led by an ordained minister, although there are some special exceptions to this rule for licensed lay leaders. Authority for lay people to conduct communion should be sought from the appropriate regional court. Cooperative ventures with Christian Churches or Congregational Union involvement have a tradition of using elders to administer communion along with their ministers.

**VISITORS:** Being a cooperative venture does mean that there is a pool of people from other denominations who can lead worship in the minister's absence. Be sure to also invite regional and national leaders to participate both in special and regular services within the local church.

## **PASTORAL CARE**

While there are denominational differences with respect to the processes of pastoral care, there are probably more differences based on local traditions. Any new minister must identify the expectations of the local church in regards to visiting, counselling and keeping in contact. It is generally accepted that membership of a congregation provides (without cost) services for baptisms, weddings and funerals. Many members will also expect to receive home communion if they are unable to attend worship due to disability - this may be a task expected of the minister.

## **MINISTRY REQUIREMENTS**

All of the denominations (and UCANZ) have an expectation that parish ministers will have professional supervision. This is mandatory and the cost should be met by the local church as part of ministry.

Ministers are responsible to the appointing denomination for ongoing ministry reviews, continuing education and leave entitlements. Any review should involve some form of consultation with the partner churches of the local church.

Ministers appointed by another denomination must take extra care to understand the requirements of that denomination and note the differences from their own.

The UCANZ office is in Wellington and is staffed by an Executive Officer and an Administrative Assistant. The office oversees the Partner Support Fund, Minister's Removal Fund, and is available to help parishes and partners deal with matters arising from working together.

The regional forums are essentially a communication hub where the local partners can meet and talk about the interests of the local churches. Their primary task is to ensure that all partners are involved in ministry reviews, parish reviews, vacancy procedures, inductions, property development and administration. The regional forum should also be a venue where partners discuss possibilities for new ventures and consider future directions for those in existence.

## **WEBSITES**

The denominations each have well designed websites. Ministers in CV's should be adding the parish partners to their browser and be checking in regularly. There is a wealth of resources and links on each website that is well worth the surfing time. The UCANZ website is also seeking to develop more resources and information - including a copy of the Procedures for Cooperative Ventures.

Signing up for electronic mailings is important, especially the Methodist "e-Messenger" and the Presbyterian "Bush Telegraph." On line you can also look at copies of the denominational magazines; Taonga (Anglican), Spanz (Presbyterian) or Touchstone (Methodist).

Various names are now used for co-operative ventures: Union or Uniting parishes, Co-operating parishes, Community churches, Local Ecumenical Projects. All of these forms, along with covenants to share buildings or ministry, are forms of co-operative ventures. To oversee these ventures the five partner churches established the Negotiating Churches Unity Council, which is now known as Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand (UCANZ).

The vision statement (2008) is "The Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand is a continuing journey of God's people seeking to reflect the essential unity of Christ's Church. This community of Partner Churches and Co-operative ventures is discovering and living out what it means to be a missional church of Jesus Christ in today's world."

## STRUCTURES

Uniting Congregations has a biennial *Forum* where partner and parish representatives gather to share ideas and plans for the future. The Forum appoints representatives to the *Standing Committee*, which is augmented by partner representatives. Standing Committee is the governing committee for co-operative ventures nationally. Regional courts are generally called *Regional Forums* (RF's) and are made up of parish and partner representatives from the local area.

Study leave is an opportunity for ministers to develop their professional ministry skills. Requirements vary according to the appointing denomination, but it is important for the minister to take initiative in planning for leave and identifying any funding required.

## MEETINGS

The church court of your appointing denomination is the primary connection for your ministry, but by being a minister in a cooperative venture you also have the right and privilege of membership on the other church courts of the denominations participating in the local church. Depending on the nature of the church to which you are appointed, you may hold a seat on Synod, Diocese or Presbytery - and attend Conferences or Assemblies. The extra meetings are seen by some as a burden, but many other ministers have been greatly enriched by their ecumenical experience and seeing how other people approach similar issues. You may also share in the work of your local UCANZ regional forum.

## CONTACT DETAILS

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## So, you're going to minister in a co-operative venture - what now?

Talk about a uniting church is nothing new. The Anglican Church began life in New Zealand as the "United Church of England and Ireland in New Zealand." The Presbyterian Church is a union of the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland and the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand - agreed to in 1901. The Methodist Church is also a union of United Free, Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists.

Ecumenical co-operation involves groups from various denominations coming together in some form of venture. Since the 1940's such ventures have developed in New Zealand. After the Act of Commitment (1967) entered into by the Anglican, Associated Churches of Christ (now Christian Churches NZ), Congregational Union, Methodist and Presbyterian churches, more co-operative ventures were formed. Now there are around 130 such ventures up and down New Zealand.