

## **THE UNITING CHURCH AS EMPLOYER PRINCIPLES**

The Uniting Church in Australia seeks congruence as an employer with the ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia.<sup>1</sup> The Uniting Church seeks to give contemporary expression to the ancient Christian tradition in ways that bring God's life and hope to communities and individuals. The 'Great Commandment' of Jesus (Matthew 22: 35-40 – love of God and neighbour as self) provides a clear framework for our identity and mission: we discover who we truly are when we give ourselves in love and service of God and neighbour.

The Uniting Church is therefore committed to helping people in their spiritual growth through worship, prayer and service. Linked with the spiritual disciplines is the church's commitment to giving clear expression to God's reconciling work in Christ. This call is the foundation of our commitment to seeking deeper partnerships with other churches and all people of goodwill; our involvement in community services; and action and advocacy for a just society. We are in covenant relationship with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and we are a multicultural church. Today, 'love for neighbour' extends to future generations and our non-human neighbours in God's creation by developing environmentally sustainable practices.

While the Uniting Church is clearly grounded in the historic Christian tradition, and the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are open to wisdom from people of other faiths and none; and seek partnerships in searching for truth and working for peace and justice in the world.

In Uniting Church workplaces we are committed to policies and practices that reflect such understandings.

To this end the Uniting Church seeks to provide workplaces which will:

- treat all people fairly and respectfully and not simply regarded as resources
- be non -discriminatory in our practices
- take seriously issues of work satisfaction, use of skills and the impact of work on other parts of people's lives
- foster a culture of encouragement and consultation
- affirm the legitimate role of unions and employer organisations representing their members in the workplace
- encourage collective workplace agreements wherever practicable
- provide fair and just reward and conditions for all employees
- resolve grievances and conflicts directly with those affected and involving third party mediation where helpful
- exercise creative and responsible stewardship of the church's resources

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<sup>1</sup> For a fuller understanding read *The Basis of Union* - the foundational document of the UCA which can be found at <http://assembly.uca.org.au/basisofunion/Basis1992.htm>

## Appendix:

### Some key theological affirmations guiding Uniting Church employment practices

Preamble:

This appendix is provided as an adjunct to the statements in the first three paragraphs of the principles document, which describes the ethos of the Uniting Church in Australia. These theological affirmations undergird and enlarge those statements.

The mission of the church is to be a sign of God's intentions for the world. A church community service agency or other employing body therefore seeks to embody the beliefs and values of the Christian faith.

- God, the Holy Trinity, created the world out of love and redeems and sustains it as a new creation. The life and work of the church is a response to the love of God; a response of gratitude and hope for a world which is intended to be guided by love, inclusiveness and justice.
- The God of the Bible is a God of justice, for whom just relations are central, and who is accordingly on the side of people who are poor, disadvantaged, marginalised or exploited.
- The Christian Church is called to be a sign of the 'new humanity' God has brought into being through the life, death and resurrection of Christ; and therefore to live and act in ways which contribute to human well-being in all its dimensions.
- All human beings are created by God and are intrinsically valuable.
- *All people, therefore should be treated with respect; those who depend on our services, their families, or employees. There is accordingly no place for discrimination in employment based on gender, race, language, age, sexuality or physical disability. Respect also involves the conditions in which people work. When we ignore occupational health and safety standards, for example, we are not merely breaking the law – we are denying the value of human life.*
- Human beings are created for community: with God and with other people. (Christ said 'the greatest commandment is to love God, neighbour as self')
- *God calls us to shape communities where all feel included, respected, valued, able to participate in society, and where all enjoy the fruits of their labours. We seek to embody this vision in our lives, but acknowledge that it is a vision which only God can fully bring about – it is a future hope, not to be fully identified with any present political, social or economic agenda. God invites humankind to work with God towards that end, by letting that vision shape the way we live now as individuals, as local communities and as a nation*
- Human life is about more than work. In Genesis God both works and rests.
- *Employment must allow and promote a rhythm in people's work lives that sustains and encourages a holistic life, and does not undermine adequate rest, recreation, time for relationships and participation in the wider community. When work is made the priority in life, it becomes a form of idolatry. In the end, this is counterproductive, harming everyone involved. Human labour is not merely another commodity, subject to the vagaries of the market. To view human labour as just another economic input reduces human beings to objects of commerce, and denies human dignity. It denies that they are in the image of God. Human labour is, at its best, participation in the life and work of God.*