

Church as a Second Language...

or everything about church you were afraid to ask!



CROYDON UNITING CHURCH

# BELONGING...

## and “forms of membership”

Belonging to a church comes in various forms and ways... from the start we want to say, that if you wish to participate and be involved in the life, worship and mission of Croydon Uniting Church [CUC] (in the way and level that you feel comfortable) you are welcome and you are a part of this community - and we hope that we can assist you to feel that you **belong**.

There are, however, various forms of “membership” as defined in the regulations of the Uniting Church in Australia. They are important because it is helpful to have a system for the processes and procedures of the church to enable good governance and care of all those involved in the life and ministry of the church - and systems of governance assist with this.

They also allows us opportunities to consider our levels of involvement and participation in a local congregation - perhaps helping us to reflect on our commitment and participation in a life of faith as followers of Jesus, and in the life of this particular Christian community.

After you read this leaflet, you may decide that:

- You “fit” into a category of membership already - and the community of CUC already knows this!
- You “fit” into a category of membership and haven’t yet *transferred* your membership, or had your *membership status recognised* by Church Council at CUC. Let us know so that we can help you to enact the appropriate steps!
- You would like to learn more about a category of membership, and perhaps consider taking steps to become a member.
- You are happy to remain in the *ADHERENT* category (see below for what that means!) - and **whatever decision (or not) you make, we want you to know that you are a part of the community that is Croydon Uniting Church - and that you are welcome!**

### A note or two on terminology:

Throughout this leaflet some words are used that outside the church organization are used in more casual or different ways to describe levels of involvement - member is one of these. It is not unexpected that we might use the word **MEMBER** to mean someone who participates in the life of the church, but within the church regulations certain terms have specific meanings so the following words are defined in the following ways:

**MEMBER** is a term used in the Uniting Church to mean a specific type of member, such as **BAPTISED MEMBER**, **CONFIRMED MEMBER** or **MEMBER-IN-ASSOCIATION**

**ADHERENT** describes a person who participates in the worship life and life of the church, but who is not a member (by the definitions over), or who has not moved their membership to Croydon Uniting.

Other churches use different or very specific terms in different ways to describe membership. Some of these are described below, and please ask if you have any questions.

### How it works at other churches...

Other denominations (that is “types” of Christian churches) have various rules and types of membership. Most Christian denominations have baptisms - some, like the Uniting Church, recognise that this can happen for babies as well as teenagers and adults, other denominations only recognise teenager or adult baptism (such as the Baptist and Churches of Christ Churches). So in some churches “full membership” is achieved through confirmation (such as the Uniting and Anglican Churches), in others through baptism, and in others there are different processes and procedures for “full membership”. Some churches, such as the Catholic Church, have a process of “First Communion” (usually undertaken around 8-10 years of age) which fulfils some of these “membership” steps after infant baptism - and also indicates when one can participate in communion. At Croydon Uniting Church all are welcome at Communion irrespective of “Membership status”.

## So... in the Uniting Church in Australia ...

### **What's a BAPTISED MEMBER?**

A BAPTISED MEMBER is a person (irrespective of age) who has been baptised, but not yet confirmed and whose membership is listed and recognised at CUC. This will include those baptised at CUC, and those who were baptised elsewhere whose membership has been *transferred* to CUC, or those who have had their *membership status recognised* by Church Council at CUC.

Baptism is an important *sacrament* (special rite) of the Christian faith. It is a sign of God's grace, a sign of the gift of God to his people, and of our acceptance and recognition of not only the freely-given gift, but of our responsibility to respond to it.

*See the CUC BAPTISM leaflet for more information on what baptism is and means - and if you, or your child(ren), aren't baptised how you can discover more about baptism, and the process of being, or having your child(ren), baptised.*

### **What's a CONFIRMED MEMBER?**

A CONFIRMED MEMBER is a person who has been confirmed and whose membership is listed and recognised at CUC. This will include those confirmed at CUC, and those who were confirmed elsewhere whose membership has been *transferred* to CUC, or those who have had their *membership status recognised* by Church Council at CUC.

Confirmation is a personal re-affirmation of baptism. Confirmation originated in churches where the Bishop could not be present at the baptism service. He then confirmed the baptism at his next visit to the congregation by laying hands on the newly-baptised. Later, confirmation became an opportunity for teenagers or adults to make public confession of the faith into which they were baptised as children.

The rite of Confirmation in the Uniting Church makes opportunity for those participating to make:  
“acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, determination to follow him in daily life, intention to participate actively in the fellowship of the Church and to support its work, and resolution to seek the extension of the reign of God in human society.” [Regulations of the UCA]

*See the CUC CONFIRMATION leaflet for more information on what confirmation is and means - and if you aren't confirmed how you can discover more about confirmation, and the process of confirmation.*

### **What's a MEMBER-IN-ASSOCIATION?**

A MEMBER-IN-ASSOCIATION is person who has applied to (and been recognised by) the CUC Church Council for recognition as a member-in-association - as the person is a member of another Christian denomination but not actively engaged in the life of that denomination and participates in the corporate life of the CUC and accepts the polity and discipline of the Uniting Church: or participates actively in the corporate life of two Uniting Church congregations and is enrolled as a confirmed member of the other congregation.

### **What does this all mean for church structure and procedures?**

Under current Uniting Church regulations only those who are CONFIRMED MEMBERS and MEMBERS-IN-ASSOCIATION are able to vote at congregational meetings (on issues such as the budget, calling a new minister and any other “BIG” decisions) and are able to be an ELDER (a member of the Church Council at CUC). Only those CONFIRMED or IN-ASSOCIATION can be a representative at the regional (PRESBYTERY), statewide (SYNOD) or national (ASSEMBLY) meetings or can candidate (take the steps to becoming a minister of the church).