

A photograph of a sunset over the ocean, framed by a white border with orange and red diagonal stripes. The sun is a bright orange circle on the horizon, casting a warm glow across the sky and water. A person is walking on the beach in the foreground, and a small boat is visible on the water in the distance.

Period of Discernment

Welcome to the Period of Discernment

The Period of Discernment (PoD) is a structured process that helps you consider God's call through a combination of reflection, prayer, conversation and learning.

It combines formal study with pastoral guidance to help you enrich your relationship with God, recognise your skills and knowledge, and discern what kind of ministry you are being called to.

You may discern you are called to ministry within your local community of faith or an agency of the church, within the wider community or your workplace. Alternatively, you may discern you are called to serve as a Youth Leader, Elder or Pastoral Carer or in one of the specified ordained ministries in the Uniting Church (Ministry of Deacon, Minister of the Word) or Specified lay ministries (Minister of Pastor or Lay Preacher).

You will be guided by a supportive mentor as you undertake formal study, (including a study of the history and polity of the Uniting Church), get a taste for ministry through experience and attend a discernment retreat.

Throughout this process you will record your thoughts and reflections that will form a basis for discussion with your mentor and your final presentation to the Period of Discernment Team where you will share what you have discerned.

The length of the PoD is generally 12 months, however this can be lengthened or shortened to recognise prior learning and ministry experience, if required.

This is an exciting and important journey where you will be supported as you explore your call, and one we feel privileged to be part of.

Max Howland (POSSA) & Ann Phillips (Wimala)

Period of Discernment Coordinators

About the Period of Discernment

Availability

The Period of Discernment is available to anyone who is in good standing in a congregation or faith community within the Uniting Church, regardless of academic background. People seeking appointment as a Deacon or Minister of the Word are required to undertake the PoD and have been a confirmed member of the Uniting Church for 12 months prior to applying for candidature.

Study Requirements

You will be required to study two units comprising a compulsory core unit and an elective. The core unit involves some study about the Uniting Church. This can be done in a few different ways so please speak to your PoD coordinator. The other unit can be one of your choice: we strongly suggest study at Uniting College, and you can study at Certificate IV or degree level.

Learning and Serving Agreement

With your mentor you will develop a 'Learning and Serving' agreement outlining a process, by which you agree to gain academic study and practical ministry experience during your PoD.

Portfolio

Throughout the Period of Discernment, you may wish to record your thoughts and reflections in a portfolio, which can take any form and include writing, photography, video or other creative elements. At the end of your PoD you will be required to write a 1000 word paper summarising your experiences and reflections for the PoD Team. The L&S will form the basis of your discussions in your monthly mentor meetings as you as you reflect on your progress and discern God's call on your life.

Discernment Retreats

It is recommended that you attend at least one retreat to reflect on what has already happened in your life, what is currently happening, and

where God might be leading you. The retreats are led by experienced ministry practitioners. The PoD Coordinator will provide further details.

Code of Ethics Training

It is recommended that you attend this non-accredited training about the Uniting Church's code of ethics, including the prevention of sexual misconduct. Code of ethics training is essential study for candidates for ministry



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