

A BRIEF STATEMENT ON ORDINATION

Study Guide

Working with the statement

The following questions and exercises have been devised for study purposes – to be used by individuals, with conversation partners or in group settings. You may wish to approach this *Brief Statement on Ordination* section by section, or choose from the suggestions in framing your study of the document as a whole.

SECTION 1

Baptism and the life of the body of Christ

- How is Baptism understood by you and other members of your congregation or faith community?
- In what ways does your congregation assist baptised members to activate their calling as “members of Christ’s Church”?
- What is the relationship between baptism and ordination?
- What more could the Church do to encourage the view of Christian life portrayed in Section 1?

SECTION 2

The ministry of the ordained is a representative ministry

Consider the meaning of the phrase, “the ministry of the ordained is a representative ministry,” using the following questions:

- What might be the key characteristics of a ‘representative’ in any walk of life?
- What are the most important elements of representation for ordained ministers?
- How may ‘representative ministry’ take place where there is no resident ordained person?

“The ordained ministry of the Uniting Church consists of two offices: the ministry of the Word and the ministry of deacon”

- How well, in your view, does Section 2 account for the origins and reasons behind these offices?
- If possible (especially in a group setting), share or describe observed stories or examples of these ministries in action.
- Considering any stories or examples, in what ways may the ministries of the Word and Deacon overlap? Would you agree with the statement that their particular responsibilities are not exclusive?

“An instrumental understanding of ministry is inadequate”

- Why is an “instrumental understanding” of ministry seen to be inadequate? Do you agree? Give reasons, or discuss this question with others, based upon experience.
- Find out how calls to the ministry are discerned in your context?
- Why is “mere performance” seen to be insufficient? How are “substantive spiritual relationships” identified?

SECTION 3

“Not all ‘specified ministries’ in the Uniting Church are ordained ministries”

Comment on the distinctions made between ordained and other specified ministries.

- Are these distinctions clear and adequate in your view?
- With others, share examples and stories that may clarify the difference between ordination and commissioning.

SECTION 4

There is no “right” to ordination

- How do you respond to the notion that ordination is “a process in which the person re-evaluates their life in terms of the call of Christ”?
- In your view, has the Church given too much attention to ordination? Why or why not? (If you have access to discussion partners, explore this question together.)
- How may an appropriate appreciation of all the ministries in the Church (both ordained and not ordained) be achieved?