

“A Hitch Hikers Guide to Diakonia UCA”

Approved by the conference of DUCA 10/7/99, and amended at the National Business Meeting 7/2/04.

“Diakonia UCA: Promoting a Servant Church among the Disadvantaged”. This, along with the Statement developed at the 1997 Conference (attached) is our mandate.

We achieve this through advocacy and support of Deacons, Deacon candidates, and initiatives for diaconal ministry in the UCA. Diakonia UCA meets in National conference biennially, and appoints an Executive Committee to carry out its work, which includes members from each Synod Deacon group. DUCA operates with an ethos of consultation and shared responsibility through its Synod Deacon groups and through the network of Deacons across Australia.

The following is a guide to the functions and tasks of DUCA.

MEMBERSHIP OF DUCA

Membership is open to Deacons and Deacon candidates, and Deaconesses of the Uniting Church in Australia.

MEMBERSHIP OF EXECUTIVE

Membership is open to Deacons, Deacon candidates and Deaconesses who are financial members of DUCA, and consists of two categories: Host Synod membership, and Corresponding membership. The Host Synod is the Synod where the Executive is based for a stipulated period. Corresponding members are representatives of each of the other Synod Deacon groups.

There shall be between 6 and 8 Host Synod members, the majority of whom must be ordained Deacons, and 1 corresponding member from each Synod excluding the Host synod.

Membership is voted on at the National Business Meeting that takes place at each National Conference, and replacements between conferences for a Host Synod member are voted on by the whole Executive, or for a new corresponding member on the recommendation of the relevant Synod Deacon group.

Membership shall normally be for the period between National Business Meetings, usually two years. There is no maximum length of time that an individual may be a member of the Executive.

The National Business Meeting shall decide the Host Synod for the next period between National Business Meetings, and shall elect a Treasurer, a Secretary and a National Contact Person who coordinates and Chairs the Executive. A Minutes Secretary may also be elected if required. Other positions may be created as needed.

The Treasurer is responsible for collecting annual membership subscriptions, paying the subscription to World Diakonia, overseeing the process of the Travel

Equalisation at conferences, arranging for annual audits, keeping the accounts in good order, sending out Badges to new Deacons for their ordination (in response to requests) and arranging for the purchase of further badges as requested.

The Secretary shall send and receive correspondence, and shall ensure that Minutes of all meetings are taken and distributed. The Secretary is to see that original copies of Minutes of all meetings, and records of all correspondence are kept, and are passed on to the next Executive in good order.

The National Contact Person calls and chairs meetings of the Executive and oversees the execution of its decisions, prepares the agendas for meetings, deals with queries and requests made to DUCA nationally, and in general liaises between DUCA and the UCA, and between the various task groups of DUCA.

ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Executive can make decisions that carry out tasks set for them at the National Conference, but cannot decide against decisions made at National Conference. New issues can be dealt with by the Executive as they arise: these may be issues arising in the wider church that affect Deacons, Deacon ministry, marginalised sections of the Australian community and church, or the development of diaconal ministry in the UCA. These issues may come to the attention of the Executive directly, or from the Synod Deacon groups via their Corresponding members. Any member of the Executive may raise an issue for any meeting.

The Executive must present a report of its work and ongoing issues to the National Business Meeting.

Between National Business Meetings, the Executive is expected, through its members, to make every effort to consult widely with DUCA about the issues it considers.

The accounts of DUCA will be audited annually.

MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Executive meets as often, and for as long, as they feel they need in order to achieve their work. In the past, this has varied between 4 and 6 meetings a year.

MEMBERSHIP OF OTHER BODIES

DUCA is a member organisation of World Diakonia, and pays its subscriptions annually.

The Executive also has a role in ensuring the 'understanding' with UCA Assembly that Deacons will be sought to serve on Assembly committees where the work of that committee relates to Deacons, Deacon ministry, marginalised sections of the Australian community and church, or the development of diaconal ministry in the UCA.

EXECUTIVE TASKS

The Executive has responsibility to ensure that each of its delegated core tasks are fulfilled. It is not expected to fulfil these tasks itself, except in exceptional circumstances.

These tasks are:

1. Badges: through the Treasurer, these are sent free of cost to each Deacon being ordained. They can also be purchased by Deacons.

2. Newsletter: Is to be produced twice a year, in May and November, and sent to all Deacons, Deacon candidates and Deaconesses, whether or not they are financial members. The May edition is to be mailed or emailed with the Prayer Cycle/Directory. Its contents are determined by the Editor, but in general, contributions are sought from each Synod Deacon Group, usually through the Synod Contact Person. Each edition is to include a brief description of who DUCA is and why it exists, and news from each Synod including updated and current information on Deacons, candidates and diaconal issues. A report is also expected from the Executive, including current national diaconal issues, and reminders about subscription payments and upcoming conferences. Extra articles from individual Deacons highlighting new and exciting ministries, sorrows and joys, are to be sought and encouraged.

3. Prayer Cycle/Directory: Is to be updated annually, through an appeal for information from all Deacons, Deacon candidates and Deaconesses in each Synod, through each Synod Contact Person. It is to be mailed or emailed to all financial members of DUCA, and also to all Deacons and Deacon candidates, at Pentecost each year (roughly May). It is to include weekly foci for prayer relevant to diaconal ministry. Information on each entry can include name, contact details, brief description of current ministry/study/interests, brief resume of skills (up to 50 words), qualifications, experience and areas of future interest in ministry, prayer points, and brief personal/family information. The Directory can be purchased by other members of the UCA. Copies are sent to all Assembly and Synod General Secretaries. Placement Committees may also be encouraged to receive a copy.

4. Occasional Papers: At least one edition is to be produced each year, and distributed to all financial members (excluding financial Deaconesses who have indicated they do not want to receive it) and to all Deacon candidates. Content is to be determined by the Editor, but in general it is to explore issues in diaconal ministry, or relevant to diaconal ministry in the UCA. It is the Editor's responsibility to seek, and encourage, contributions. Copies of the Occasional Papers are to be placed in each UCA theological library. Otherwise, copies may be purchased.

5. Archive: Records of material relating to Deacons in the Uniting Church should be kept by the DUCA Archivist in the official UCA Assembly Archive.

6. Webmaster: Will maintain and develop the Diakonia UCA website. All material for posting on the website must have the approval of the DUCA Executive.

7. PreSessional: The Assembly Ministerial Education Commission (MEC) determines the venue and general course content of the biennial Deacon PreSessional course. The Deacons of the host Synod are invited, and encouraged, to become as involved as possible in the support and course content of the PreSessional, in collaboration with their Theological college.

8. National Conference: This shall be held biennially, usually to coincide with the Deacon Preessional course. Normally the Deacon Synod Group in the Synod where the Preessional is to be held shall host and organise the conference. The conference usually runs for the weekend prior to the second week of the national Deacon Preessional course, at a venue of fair standard, and reasonable cost. A Travel Equalisation Process operates, and each person registering for the conference who is a financial member of DUCA is expected to participate, unless exception is requested on the grounds of financial difficulty.

9. National Business Meeting: This shall be held biennially, during the National Conference. The Agenda shall include a report of the Executive, reports from other officers, elections for the next Executive, and for the positions of Newsletter Editor, Prayer Cycle/Directory Editor, Occasional Papers Editor, Archivist, Webmaster, and Synod Contact Persons.

10. National Deacon Continuing Education Event: This will take place every two years, usually to coincide with the second week of the national Deacon Preessional course and in a nearby venue. Normally the Deacon Synod Group in the Synod where the Preessional is to be held shall host and shall organise the Continuing Education event, at reasonable cost, and where possible with the assistance of the body responsible for Continuing Education for Ministers in that Synod.

11. WORLD DIAKONIA: The Executive maintains financial membership, and relationship with World Diakonia, by receiving their mailings, responding to their requests, and through any DUCA member who is a member of World Diakonia committees. The Exec is also a member of the Asia-Pacific Region of WORLD DIAKONIA.

12. Other business of the Executive includes:

*Liasion with Assembly General Secretary and other Uniting Church staff/ committee Chairs about issues relating to Deacons, Deacon ministry, marginalised sections of the Australian community and church, or the development of diaconal ministry in the UCA.

* Support initiatives of Synod Deacon groups.

*Facilitate networking between Deacons and Deacon candidates.

*Offer pastoral care where possible to Deacons and Deacon candidates.

*Advocate for individual Deacons as the need arises.

*Make comment on issues relating to Deacons, Deacon ministry, marginalised sections of the Australian community and church, or the development of diaconal ministry in the UCA, as requested by other bodies, after wide consultation with DUCA through Executive members.

Winding up. In the event of the National Business Meeting making a decision to wind up the organisation, a decision shall be made at that Meeting about disbursement of assets.

Attachment

Message to the 1997 UCA Assembly

The National Diakonia Conference of the past four days embarked on a Foresighting process into the long term future for the Church. Consequently, we make the following commitment to the Uniting Church in Australia:

We know our Church and world are changing: we are committed to life-giving change, helping the Church face the future, putting our shoulder to the Cross where death is the price, and promoting the hope that new life will emerge in many and varied ways.

In the present diversity, and the diversity to come, we will foster a sense of belonging: with people on the edges, and in partnerships with those of a common mission, and in dialogue with those who are not. We will name and explore diversity and conflict.

We will offer the great diaconal symbols into the Church's care: the bowl and towel of mutual service is ours together; the wedding banquet with those from the highways and byways is ours together; the unpotted plant of freedom and fullness of life is ours together. Ours together, living as friends of Jesus of Nazareth, our Lord and Saviour.

From Diakonia UCA