

Affirmation

*Of the relationship between
Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania
Inc.
and an
Affiliated Church*



Dialogue: Belonging Together

Since May 2007 the Council of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc. has invited dialogue with affiliated churches about our identity and purpose. This has grown into the current theme: what it means to be part of a network of churches being renewed as a 21st Century missional movement. This dialogue has taken place in a range of ways, including Annual General meetings, Dreaming Days (2007 and 2010), as well as two rounds of regional conversations and other less organised interaction too.

The conversation is a way of imagining and helping shape a future-orientated movement committed to missional engagement in the 21st Century. Outcomes sought included a new Purpose Statement for Churches of Christ, and the provision of space for people and churches to evaluate their affinity with Churches of Christ, and to affirm their ongoing commitment to be affiliated with Churches of Christ and to work together for the achievement of its purposes.

There have been many conversations, formal and informal, planned and unplanned, that have informed the thinking of Council. We are now in a position, as the body charged with overseeing the spiritual health and direction of Churches of Christ, to enunciate a new Statement of Purposes and to invite churches to re-affirm their partnership on the journey we are on together.

Council of Churches of Christ
in Victoria and Tasmania
13 April 2011

Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc¹

Statement of Purposes

What is our COMMON MISSION?

To be a movement of the people of God gathering around the central figure of Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, living out his Way in our local contexts and inviting others to do the same.

What are our SHARED VALUES?

The Gospel

We passionately value the good news about God as revealed to us in Jesus Christ, and are committed to the mission of communicating it and sharing it with others, making disciples who can make more disciples, and so extend the Kingdom of God.

The Scriptures

We value and affirm the centrality of the scriptures as our authority for Christian belief, identity and practice.

Diversity

We value and recognise the diversity of Christian understanding, belief and experience. Therefore, we value the freedom, flexibility and creativity of a variety of ministry practice and expression, and are committed to the nurture of a diversity of healthy and growing mission-shaped churches that, by crossing frontiers and impacting cultures, are a sign, witness and foretaste of all that God has for the world through Jesus Christ.

Formation

We value various spiritual practices and disciplines described in the New Testament as aspects of our formation as disciples of Jesus, and our constant renewal by God and the Holy Spirit. Therefore we passionately encourage active personal formation through practices and disciplines that include (but are not limited to) baptism, the breaking of bread, fellowship, prayer, worship, meditation, stewardship, spiritual gift discovery etc.

Collaborative Ministry

We value the unique contribution to ministry of each individual believer, and are committed to equipping believers (through, for example, the five-fold ministry pattern of Ephesians 4:11-16), and releasing them to participate in ministry and mission on the basis of their giftedness and capacity.

Servanthood

We value the biblical principles of servanthood and therefore seek to be a servant church committed to responding to human need with love and compassion and to identify and release servant leaders.

Justice

We value the dignity, equality and inherent worth of all persons regardless of gender, race, economic standing or belief system. Therefore, in announcing the Kingdom and expectant of its arrival, we will work for social justice, equal opportunity for all persons, and the responsible care and management of the environment.

Collaboration and Unity

We value the close fellowship, community and collaboration of all those who accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Therefore, we passionately seek to promote unity in the wider church and are committed to the ultimate ideal of visible unity.

¹ Hereafter named as Churches of Christ

Churches of Christ, by declaring Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour of his Church, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, affirms its Statement of Purposes and invites affiliated churches to re-affirm their partnership with Churches of Christ and their commitment to the fulfilment of these Purposes.

Therefore, Churches of Christ commits itself, its Partner Departments and its leaders to:

A. Serve each church with love and integrity

By partnering all churches, as fellow servants of our Lord Jesus, without fear or favour and without prejudice. By making the shared resources of Churches of Christ available with grace and love, and with a commitment to equity and justice.

B. Pray for all churches regularly

By sacrificially responding to all requests for prayer, and communicating these prayer needs to others as appropriate.

C. Seek to equip each church according to God's calling for it in its mission context

Committed to the establishment of a diversity of health and growing churches, we will do this by providing culturally sensitive but gospel-strong skills and conversations that help churches live out the Way of Jesus in their local context and to so announce God's Kingdom.

D. Foster missional experimentation

By encouraging churches to consider ministry and mission activities that may be 'outside the lines'. By offering learning environments that stimulate imaginative, fresh expressions of church. By being 'gate-openers' for a church's ministry and mission.

E. Be accountable to affiliated churches

We commit to open and transparent reporting, to well planned general meetings and to the initiation of, and response to other conversations as needs arise.

Living out this relationship: Churches of Christ

Churches of Christ and its Partner Departments will generally express the relationship with affiliated churches by providing best practice resources in the following areas of a church's ministry and mission:

For Churches and their Leaders

1. *Realigning Churches around Mission*, including assistance to develop a church's missional imagination within a culture of experimentation; including its vision, values, strategies, annual ministry plans, evangelism, discipleship and governance.
2. *Church Health Consultancies*, including church assessments, intervention and ongoing health development
3. *Mediation* is available to churches as needed, either by referral or by Mission and Ministry staff. This may be between leaders, members of the congregation, staff or any other group.
4. *Ministry Placement Process*, including Intentional and other Interim Ministries.
5. *Church Leadership Training and Development*, including elders, treasurers and administrators.
6. *Community Mission* including Care Works.
7. *Youth Vision*, support for youth and young adult ministries, leadership training and an Internship program.
8. *Kids Vision* provides support for congregational ministries among families and children, resourcing ministers and other leaders.
9. *Child Protection*, policy documentation and procedures are provided for all churches to enable them to fulfil government regulations for all those working with children and youth. This is in partnership with ChildSafe.
10. *Preaching and teaching*, support for churches on request, especially when they are without a minister or when in need of specialist teaching.

People in Ministry and Leadership

11. *The Churches of Christ Theological College (CCTC)* as a Partner Department of Churches of Christ is the primary provider in this area. It provides best practice theological education and formation for missional leadership and ministry.
12. *Professional Development*, refreshment and renewal for people in ministry, overseen by Mission and Ministry, and in partnership with CCTC.
13. *Minister's Terms and Conditions, including Salary*, advice for ministers and churches regarding remuneration, conditions and minister/church agreements from a third party that understands the special relationship between people in ministry and a church.
14. *Coaching and Mentoring* is available, encouraging growth as imaginative, mission-shaped leaders.
15. *Minister Care and support* is offered through Mission and Ministry.
16. *Endorsement of People in Ministry* including locally appointed church staff members and chaplains.
17. *Ministers Review and Documentation*, if churches require assistance in undertaking a review of their minister/s an independent chairperson can be provided along with documentation to promote health and growth.
18. *Marriage License* applications are made on behalf of ministers and churches and practical training and advice is provided through Mission and Ministry team members.
19. *Ministers Long Service Leave Fund*, for churches to contribute to on behalf of their minister provides portability enabling ministers to accrue long service leave when moving between churches.

Property and Governance

20. *Property*, the Properties Corporation (Prop Corp), in accordance with its charter and related policies, is committed to provide expert advice with regards to property related matters. This may include advice when a church is considering a property purchase, development or sale, as well as the negotiation of contracts, property license agreements etc for churches.
21. *Insurance*, the Churches of Christ Insurance Program provides insurance (including Property, Public Liability etc) for affiliated churches. This program provides an overall cost reduction to all participants because Prop Corp, on behalf of Churches of Christ, negotiates with insurance companies to achieve the lowest possible cost.
22. *Administrative Support* and advice through the staff of the Churches of Christ Centre (in particular Prop Corp and Mission and Ministry) that have expertise that leaders may lack, accessible by phone or email.
23. *Constitutional Support*, Prop Corp and Mission and Ministry have formed Governance Guidelines for churches. This can be provided along with constitutional advice appropriate for each unique church situation.
24. *Legal Advice* by Prop Corp on particular issues or referral to a Legal Practitioner who understands churches and their particular legal needs.
25. *Financial Advice*, Prop Corp, in accordance with its charter and related policies, can provide helpful professional advice on issues like taxation, GST, Business Activity Statements (BAS) or make any appropriate referral.
26. *Investments and Loans*, churches and members of Churches of Christ have access to Prop Corp's competitive at-call and term deposit interest rates, and churches have access to property loans in accordance with the charter and policies of Prop Corp.

Collaboration in Mission

27. *Churches of Christ News*, electronic and hard copy communication bringing the churches together, and advising churches and leaders of opportunities, decisions and proposals that affect them.
28. *Web Resources*, through the Mission and Ministry website, but also the websites of other Departments, and the general Churches of Christ website.
29. *Celebration Events*, events where all churches are encouraged to combine for mutual inspiration and encouragement about what God is doing in and through our movement.
30. *Aged Care*, Churches of Christ Care Qld provides residential aged care in partnership with Churches of Christ.
31. *Community Mission*, Mission and Ministry, through CareWorks, partners with churches for community mission, service and outreach.
32. *Cross Cultural Ministry*, support for churches engaged in multicultural and Indigenous ministry and mission or wishing to enter these areas of mission.
33. *Global Mission*, support for overseas mission programs and aid projects through GMP and COCOA.
34. *Council of Churches of Christ in Australia*, resourcing and linking churches with like-minded and like-spirited churches around the country.
35. *World Convention of Churches of Christ*, linking churches with like-minded and like-spirited churches around the world.
36. *Social Justice Network*, a collective voice on social issues to the community.
37. *Victorian Council of Churches*, linking with other Christian communities (around Victoria, Australia and the world), and a shared voice with the community and with government.

As a church affiliated with Churches of Christ, we affirm our commitment to Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour of his Church, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, re-affirm our partnership with Churches of Christ and with other affiliated churches, and our willingness to fulfil the Purposes of our movement.

Therefore we will:

A. Express the mission of Churches of Christ

By gathering people around the central figure of Jesus Christ, living his Way out in our local context, and by inviting others to do the same. By active participation in spiritual practices and disciplines. By developing and using our God given and unique gifts and talents.

B. Protect the unity and diversity of Churches of Christ

By acting in love toward other affiliated churches. By supporting leaders as they follow Christ. By supporting other churches within our movement. By inviting and encouraging dialogue. By intentionally reconciling conflict. By refusing to gossip.

C. Share in the responsibilities of Churches of Christ

By joining others in Churches of Christ in praying for personal and corporate renewal. By praying for and building healthy and growing churches. By developing a generous, servant heart. By identifying and releasing leaders for ministry and mission locally and beyond. By faithfully attending Churches of Christ gatherings. By warmly welcoming new churches. By financially supporting the movement.

D. Support the story and reputation of Churches of Christ

By striving to ensure that all aspects of our church's ministry and mission are safe places for all people. By encouraging a Godly lifestyle and behaviour among our members, leaders and minister/s. By being good 'employers'. By building healthy relationships with other Christian churches.

E. Participate in ongoing conversations with Partner Departments

By developing a sense of partnership with the four Partner Departments (CCTC, Mission and Ministry, Prop Corp and Community Care). By being open to dialogue about our church's health and growth, and the futures God has for it.

Living out this relationship: the affiliated church

A church's affiliation relationship with Churches of Christ will generally be lived out in the following ways (variations can be arrived at in consultation with the Council of Churches of Christ and in all cases approved variations will be attached to this Affirmation):

Collaboration

1. Supporting the Statement of Purposes of Churches of Christ.
2. Protecting the unity and interdependence of affiliated churches, and praying for their mission-shaped renewal.
3. Co-operating, in an interdependent way, with other Churches of Christ, particularly cross-culturally, and building and/or maintaining healthy relationships with congregations of other Christian traditions or denominations.
4. Participating in decision-making forums of Churches of Christ that are held at least annually, contributing to the development of its policies and strategies and being involved in their implementation through its ministries and those of the Partner Departments of Churches of Christ.
5. Promoting the Partner Departments and encouraging the participation of appropriate members on the Boards, Task Groups and the Council.
6. Completing an annual church 'census' return, and supplying the church's annual financial statements and constitution. *Including updating the Churches of Christ Centre with changes or additions to contact details for your church, its minister/s and leaders, as they happen.*
7. Financially supporting the shared ministries of Churches of Christ through an annual Ministry Contribution based on a percentage of a church's general offerings². 'Over-and-above' donations are also welcome when a church is able to contribute. *We recognise that every church is at a different stage in its lifecycle. Churches that feel they may be unable to meet the Contribution are invited to discuss their situation with Conference leadership and an alternative arrangement will be arrived at in conversation.*
8. Where appropriate using the services provided for the mutual benefit of churches and people in ministry by Churches of Christ and its Partner Departments.
9. Generously contributing resources and skills to assist other affiliated churches.

Ministry and Mission

10. Appointing people in ministry according to the Terms and Conditions of the Employment of Ministers within Churches of Christ in Vic/Tas; and appointing to leading ministry positions people who are either Endorsed or who are willing and able to meet the criteria for Endorsement.
11. Accepting the conditions of the Code of Ethics for people in ministry, and implementation of the Responsible Leadership with Children policy.
12. Supporting Mission and Ministry's Church Planting strategy by establishing new churches, including multiple congregations, or supporting other churches that do.
13. Promoting Australian Churches of Christ Indigenous Ministries (ACCIM) as the primary federal partner of ministry and mission among Indigenous people.
14. Intentionally engaging Indigenous people living in a church's community or sphere of influence.
15. Promoting Global Mission Partners (GMP) as the worldwide expression of our movement's mission.
16. Promoting Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA) as the aid arm of GMP and Churches of Christ in Australia.
17. A commitment to reduce the church's environmental impact through intentional creation care.

² Approval will be sought at the 2011 AGM that this be a percentage of 2.5%.

Property and Governance

- 18. Registering the church’s property Titles in the name of Prop Corp who will act as Trustee for the church and for Churches of Christ. *The church will use the property to fulfil the church’s purposes, in accordance with the purposes, values and policies of Churches of Christ, and any legal compliance. This Trusteeship is an expression of a church’s stewardship of its story and resources, and that of Churches of Christ in a particular location. Other arrangements may be approved after consultation.*
- 19. Being willing participants in conversations initiated by Churches of Christ, usually through Mission and Ministry, when a church’s membership (as reported in the annual ‘census’) falls below 25³. *By this point (and often in a ‘traditionally-shaped’ church when its membership falls below 40) churches begin to struggle to continue their normal levels of operation. With all good intentions for mission, maintenance and survival can become the all-consuming activity. This conversation will open up new opportunities for health and growth.*
- 20. Transferring the management of the church to Churches of Christ, in dialogue with Mission and Ministry and Prop Corp, when a church’s membership (as reported in the annual ‘census’) falls below 10⁴. *By the time a church’s membership falls to this level (and often in a ‘traditionally-shaped’ church when its membership falls below 25) churches are unable to operate with good governance let alone a mission-shaping focus. This conversation will ensure the responsible stewardship of the church’s story and its resources, and that its past will be reflected in a guided imagination of a new future.*
- 21. A commitment to good governance by having governance and membership policies consistent with New Testament values and practices and the governance guidelines of Churches of Christ.
- 22. Including the words “Church of Christ” in the name of the church, **OR** have the words “Affiliated with Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania” and/or the Churches of Christ logo (without alteration) included in any governance document (eg constitution), and/or displayed in a public place or within any regular communication of the church (eg. newsletters, website/s etc).

Affirmation

Church _____

_____	_____
Minister	Secretary/Administrator
_____	_____
Treasurer	One other Leader/Elder/Board member

Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc.

_____	_____
Executive Officer	Conference President

_____ / _____ / 20 _____

***Please return, along with a copy of the Minuted resolution of the church, to:
Executive Officer—Churches of Christ, First Floor, 582 Heidelberg Rd., Fairfield 3078***

³ Other than acknowledged specialist (incl. rural), alternative or new churches.
⁴ Other than acknowledged specialist (incl. rural), alternative or new churches.