

**The Uniting Church in Australia**

**Uniting Church Adult Fellowship
National Committee**

***Resource for Worship Service at the Closing One Group
and
Reaching Forward to a New Community of Christian Ministry***

This resource has been prepared by the UCAF National Committee, for the use of groups and/or committees that have determined to close their current ministry and look to something new.

This document may be modified to reflect the particular circumstances of the group or committee.

Bold text in paragraphs indicate responses for the ‘congregation’.

**Call to Worship**

 Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Amen.
 *Psalm 124:8*

**Sentences**

Our land is alive with the glory of God;**desert sands hum and gum trees dance.**Brown grasses sing
**and mountains breathe their stillness.**All created things add their rhythms of delight**and even stones rap out their praise.**

Let our voices mingle with those of the earth;**may our hearts join the beat of her joy,**for our triune God is with us:**the Source of all being surrounds and upholds us.Christ Jesus walks beside and before us.The Spirit moves within and between us.Blessed be God, our wonder and delight.**

**Declaration of intent**

We are here to celebrate the end of (insert name of group/committee) to give thanks to God for the gifts that have come to us and to others through this ministry.

We have also come to acknowledge our sadness at the close of this ministry, and to affirm again our faith in Jesus Christ.

Let us give grateful thanks for God’s gifts, honest about our sorrow, open in our love, at all times trusting in Jesus Christ, the only head of the church.

**A Time of silent reflection**

The service today marks a new time of opportunity. A ministry is coming to a close;
something new is about to be born. In this time of change let us be open to the leading of God.

**Hymn**

**Prayer**

**O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: by the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Call to Confession**

Let us humble ourselves before God, opening our lives to God’s healing presence, forsaking all that separates us from God and neighbour.
Let us confess to God whatever has wounded us or brought injury to others, that we may receive mercy and become for each other ministers of God’s grace.
Let us confess our sin together.

**Confession of Sin**

**Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you**
**in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done,**
**and by what we have left undone.**
**We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength;**
**we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.**
**In your mercy forgive what we have been, help us amend what we are,**
**and direct what we shall be, so that we may delight in your will**
**and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

**Assurance of God’s forgiving grace**

Hear the good news! If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! *2 Corinthians 5:17*

**Hymn**

**Prayer of Illumination**

In our struggle to hear your word, O God, bless our doubts, our wonderings, our wanderings, our soul-struggles, life’s deep questions, and deeper mysteries. Teach us to love our questions as well as our answers. **Amen.**

**Scripture**

**Sermon**

**Prayer**

Now to the One who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to God be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

**Thanksgiving for the ministry**

Include here a brief program celebrating the past ministry of the group, or two or three testimonials reflecting on the ministry over the life of the group.

**A Time of Remembering**

During this time members of the faith community share treasured memories.

**Prayer of thanksgiving**

How can we thank you, O God, for the ministry of this (insert name of group/committee). For every person who has shown the love of Christ to another, for every quiet act of service which helped another, for every prayer uttered here which gave you honour and glory, for all the ways in which you have guided and directed these your people,

Include here additional specific prayers of thanksgiving to be offered for all these gifts of ministry,
***we give you thanks and praise!***

**A Prayer of Letting Go**

Holy Lord, change can often seem scary. The past is known and manageable but the future is unfamiliar and unknown. Accepting change means letting go of control and being ready to face outcomes which may take us on untried pathways. Letting go means trusting you to guide the outcomes that seem best to you. As we say goodbye to the old help us to be accepting of the new, knowing that all things are in your hands. Grant us the confidence to face the future with confidence and hope, drawing closer to you as begin this new journey. We pray in Jesus’ name, the saviour of all. Amen

**Rite of passage to new forms of ministry**

Listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah:

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. *Isaiah 43:19*

The time has come for the ministry of this group to come to an end. It is also time to look for the new thing God is doing.

***As your people, may we journey on to offer gifts of ministry in new ways as God may lead.***

**A Charge to take us into the Future**

Guided by your grace and empower by your Holy Spirit, let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds. **Amen** *Hebrews 10:23-24*

**Hymn**

**Benediction**

**Acknowledgements**

Ideas have been drawn from many places including;

***A litany for the closing of a church,*** from the United Church of Canada, and

***Uniting in Worship 2.***

This order is designed as a template, to be adapted to suit local needs and traditions.

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