



Affinity

Affinity includes the words of commitment between Churches of Christ and an Affiliated Church, and a summary of the amended Statement of Purposes of Churches of Christ.

Also included inside **Affinity** you will find:

Introducing **Affinity**

A brief background paper that also outlines ways churches can affirm their affiliation

An **Affinity** Affirmation template

Appendix 1: Relationship Practicalities: Churches of Christ

Appendix 2: Relationship Practicalities: Affiliated Churches

These Appendices, an integral part of Affinity, outline the ways the Affinity relationship is to be interpreted and lived out by both Churches of Christ and Affiliated Churches

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
context and inviting others
to do the same...

Introducing Affinity For March 3, 2012 SGM



What is 'Affinity'?

Affinity means a feeling of identification; a close relationship; a similarity or connection between people; relationship or resemblance in structure between species that suggests a common origin; attraction or force between particles that causes them to combine.

What this 'Affinity' document is not

Affinity is not a creed, or 'credal statement'. Churches of Christ have never felt that a majority consensus on doctrinal issues should be made into a credal statement—written or unwritten—which could then be used as a test of fellowship. **Affinity** is rather a gathering together of biblical truths and practices common to us at this time in our history.

Nothing New

There is nothing new in this version of the **Affinity** document. It is a collation of (and at times a re-statement of) what is already in place in the affiliation relationship between a church and Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc. It is a simplified and amended version of the Affinity 3.0 discussion resource that has been drafted by a group appointed by Council and is based on input and feedback from churches and ministers.

Affinity clearly enunciates the Trusteeship of a church's properties (as described in The Churches of Christ in Victoria Property Act 1941 and the Churches of Christ Tasmania Act 1978). **Affinity** also includes a reference to another Prop Corp resource that provides further explanation about this important stewardship responsibility we share.

Affinity also includes guidelines for actions by a church when its membership falls below 25 and 10.

Throughout **Affinity** we have chosen to use the term 'Churches of Christ' to define the collective of churches in Victoria and Tasmania, sometimes called 'Conference'. These terms are used interchangeably in **Affinity**.

What is the process from here?

- The purpose of the SGM is to seek approval for Affinity as the document that fulfils clause 5.4 of the Constitution, as recommended by Council.
 - If Affinity is approved, churches will be invited to Affirm their Affiliation:
 - *By signing an Affirmation (on the basis of an appropriately Minuted resolution of the church*) that will be distributed after the SGM, **AND/OR***
 - *By sending to the Executive Officer a copy of an appropriately Minuted resolution of the church* expressing its support for Affinity.*
- (*For some churches this will require a vote of its leadership group; in others a formal church vote)

For further clarity about **Affinity** and its implications churches can contact the Chair of Council at council@churchesofchrist.org.au or the Executive Officer Paul Cameron at pcameron@churchesofchrist.org.au or 9488 8800.

Other

- Churches applying for Affiliation will continue to be required to sign an appropriately designed Application form, based on the Affinity document.
- Mission agencies and other 'non-church-like' mission projects will require an amended version, Council will design this version on the basis of the document approved at SGM.

Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania

affirm our commitment to Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour of his Church. Under God's sovereignty and guided by the Holy Spirit, we affirm our partnership with affiliated churches and mission agencies and our commitment to the fulfilment of the Purposes of our movement.

Therefore, we commit to:

A. Serve each church with love and integrity by:

- Partnering all churches without fear, favour or prejudice.
- Encouraging and protecting the unity and diversity of Churches of Christ.
- Operating with biblical values and practices.
- Affirming one another at all times, acting in love towards churches and supporting leaders as they follow Christ.

B. Pray for all churches regularly by:

- Responding to all requests for prayer, both personal and corporate.
- Communicating these prayer needs to others as appropriate.
- Maintaining a Prayer Link process to support corporate and local activities in prayer.

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

- Providing transferrable but contextually aware resources.
- Sharing these resources with grace, love, equity and justice.

D. Foster mission-shaped experimentation for churches by:

- Offering learning environments that stimulate the imagination of a variety of shapes of church.
- Actively encouraging the development of a variety of shapes of church.
- Supporting and resourcing these churches in ways that are appropriate to their culture, their context, and the shape of their mission and ministry.

E. Be accountable to affiliated churches through:

- Transparent reporting and the conduct of general meetings in accordance with constitutional requirements.
- A range of regional conversation opportunities as required.
- Regular communication and dissemination of information.
- Celebrating stories of health and growth.

To understand the practicalities of this go to Appendix 1

As a church affiliated with Churches of Christ

we affirm our commitment to Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour of his Church. Under God's sovereignty and guided by the Holy Spirit, we affirm our partnership with Churches of Christ and with other affiliated churches and mission agencies, and our willingness to fulfil the Purposes of our movement.

Therefore, we commit to:

A. Express the Common Mission of Churches of Christ by:

- Participating in spiritual practices and disciplines.
- Developing and using our God given gifts and talents.
- Engaging with our church's local context.

B. Honour the unity and diversity of Churches of Christ by:

- Operating with values and practices consistent with biblical teaching.
- Celebrating the unique mission and ministry of affiliated churches in their context.
- Acting with a generous spirit towards other affiliated churches, based on a connected interdependence.
- Inviting and encouraging dialogue, with a commitment to resolving any conflict.

C. Intentionally join in the life of Churches of Christ by:

- Praying for renewal and the development of healthy and growing churches.
- Partnering with other affiliated churches.
- Participating in Churches of Christ gatherings.
- Financially supporting our movement.

D. Value the story and reputation of Churches of Christ by:

- Encouraging Godly living among our people.
- Ensuring our church's ministry and mission activities are safe places for all people.
- Maintaining fair and equitable employment practices.
- Building and maintaining healthy relationships with other Christian churches and leaders.

E. Partner with Churches of Christ by:

- Cooperating with the Partner Departments (Stirling, Mission & Ministry, Prop Corp and Community Care) appropriate to our context.
- Releasing leaders for ministry and mission beyond our local context.
- Inviting conversation and dialogue about our church's health, growth and future.

To understand the practicalities of this go to Appendix 2

Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc.

Statement of Purposes: Summary

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 to extending the Kingdom of God in accordance with the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.

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, expressed with a spirit of unity and interdependence.

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.

Mutual Ministry

We value the unique contribution to ministry of each individual believer.

Servanthood

We value the biblical principles of servanthood and seek to be a servant church committed to responding to human need with love and compassion and so to positively influence society.

Intentional Stewardship

We value the biblical principles of stewardship, and, under obligation to God, we will together work for responsible Creation care and the faithful stewardship of our story and our resources.

Justice

We value the dignity, equality and inherent worth of all persons, and we will work for their justice and equal opportunity.

Collaboration and Unity

We value the close fellowship, community and collaboration of and with all those who accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

*A complete version of this Statement of Purposes can be found
in the Constitution of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc.*

Appendix 1: Relationship Practicalities: Churches of Christ

Churches of Christ and its Partner Departments exist primarily to serve affiliated churches. This servant ministry relationship will generally be expressed by the prayerful provision of best practice resources and services for affiliated churches. The resources and services offered are elements¹ of the relationship we share together as a movement, and will be taken up as needed and as agreed to by affiliated churches.

Churches and their Leaders are offered:

1. Skills and resources to assist churches in realigning around mission in their local contexts. This includes how it lives out the Common Mission and Values of Churches of Christ; and the church's vision, values, strategies, annual ministry plans, evangelism, discipleship and governance.
2. Church health assessments, including advice, counsel and resources for a church's ongoing health development.
3. Skilled 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. A ministry placement process, including Intentional and other Interim Ministries.
5. Church leadership training and development, including elders, treasurers and administrators.
6. Support, resources and training for ministries among families and children and youth and young adults. This includes the current Youth Vision Youth Internship program.
7. Risk Management, Code of Ethics documentation and procedures for people in ministry; policy documentation and procedures to enable churches to fulfil government regulations for those working with children and youth; plus other risk management issues collated by Prop Corp into a Red Book for churches.
8. Preaching and teaching, support for churches on request, especially when they are without a minister or when in need of specialist teaching.
9. Partnership with Community Care for community mission and service through CareWorks

People in Ministry and Leadership are offered:

10. Best practice theological education and formation for leadership, mission and ministry through Stirling Theological College (Stirling), a Partner Department of Churches of Christ. Australian College of Ministries (ACOM, a ministry of Churches of Christ in NSW and Qld) and Tabor College Victoria are also strategic partners.
11. Professional development and retreats for refreshment and renewal facilitated by Mission and Ministry in partnership with Stirling.
12. Advice regarding remuneration, conditions and minister/church agreements from a third party that understands the special relationship between people in ministry and a church. This includes a regularly reviewed Minister's Terms and Conditions document and salary recommendations.
13. Coaching and Mentoring is available, encouraging growth as imaginative, mission-shaped leaders.
14. Pastoral support for People in Ministry through Mission and Ministry.
15. An Endorsement process for People in Ministry including locally appointed church ministry staff and chaplains.
16. Ministers Review processes to assist churches undertaking a review of their minister/s. An independent chairperson can be provided along with documentation to promote health and growth.
17. Marriage License training, advice and management.
18. A long service leave fund, for churches to contribute to on behalf of their minister with a portability that enables ministers to accrue long service leave when moving between churches.

¹ The Council of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania, in collaboration with the four Partner Departments may make any non-substantive amendments to this list required to maintain consistency with changed relationships or branding. These will be reported to affiliated churches. Substantive changes will require more formal adoption in accordance with its Constitution.

Property and Governance resources include:

19. Provision by the Properties Corporation (Prop Corp), in accordance with its charter and related policies, of 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.
20. The Churches of Christ Insurance Program offers insurance (including Property, Public Liability etc) for affiliated churches at an overall cost reduction to participants because Prop Corp, on behalf of Churches of Christ, negotiates with insurance companies to achieve the lowest possible cost.
21. Administrative support and advice through the staff of the Churches of Christ Centre (in particular Prop Corp and Mission and Ministry), accessible by phone or email.
22. Governance guidelines² for churches have been formed by Prop Corp and Mission and Ministry. This can be provided along with constitutional advice appropriate for each unique church situation.
23. Legal Advice on particular issues by Prop Corp or by referral to a Legal Practitioner who understands churches and their particular legal needs.
24. Professional financial advice by Prop Corp, in accordance with its charter and related policies, on issues like taxation, GST, Business Activity Statements (BAS). Appropriate referrals can also be made.
25. At-call and term deposit investment opportunities for churches and members of Churches of Christ with access to Prop Corp's competitive interest rates.
26. Access to church property loans in accordance with the charter and policies of Prop Corp.

Collaboration and Unity in Mission is strengthened by:

27. Churches of Christ News, is an electronic and hard copy communication that brings churches together, informing churches, leaders and church members of news, current Christian thinking and practice and other matters.
28. Web Resources available through the various Churches of Christ websites.
29. Celebration Events, regular events where all churches are encouraged to combine for mutual inspiration and encouragement about what God is doing in and through our movement.
30. The provision by Churches of Christ Care Qld of residential aged care in partnership with Churches of Christ.
31. Support for churches engaged in intercultural, and Indigenous ministry and mission, including, for example, links with Australian Churches of Christ Indigenous Ministries (ACCIM).
32. Global mission partnership with overseas mission programs and aid projects through Global Mission Partners (GMP) and COCOA (Churches of Christ Overseas Aid).
33. Links with the Council of Churches of Christ in Australia, providing resources and connections for churches with other like-minded and like-spirited churches of our movement around the country.
34. The World Convention of Churches of Christ, linking churches with other like-minded and like-spirited churches of our movement all around the world.
35. Resources offered by the Social Justice Network, providing a collective voice on social issues.
36. The Victorian Council of Churches, linking Churches of Christ with other Christian communities (around Victoria, Australia and the world), and delivering a shared voice into the community and with government.

Appendix 1 is an integral part of Affinity

² Briefly outlined in Footnote 12 in Appendix 2

Appendix 2: Relationship Practicalities: Affiliated Churches

A church's affiliation relationship with Churches of Christ will generally involve interacting with and responding to Churches of Christ in the following areas. The resources and services offered and responses sought are elements³ of the relationship we share together as a movement, and will be taken up and utilised as agreed to by the church.

Collaboration

1. Supporting the Statement of Purposes, Common Mission and Values 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 intercultural congregations, 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 as appropriate and where possible encouraging the participation of members on the Boards, Task Groups and the Council.
6. Completing an annual church 'Census' return. This return will include statistical reporting, supplying a summary of the church's annual financial statements, and periodically, a review of the church's expression of the Common Mission and Values of Churches of Christ.⁴
7. Financially supporting the shared ministries of Churches of Christ through an annual Ministry Contribution based on a percentage of a church's general offerings⁵. 'Over-and-above' donations are also welcome when a church is able to contribute.⁶
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, where possible, 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 Endorsement⁷.
11. Accepting the conditions of the Code of Ethics for people in ministry, and implementation of the Responsible Leadership with Children policy.
12. Supporting, where possible, Mission and Ministry's Church Planting strategy by establishing new churches, developing multiple congregations, or supporting other churches that do.
13. Acknowledging Australian Churches of Christ Indigenous Ministries (ACCIM) as the primary federal partner of ministry and mission among Indigenous people, and promoting it where possible. This could also include intentionally engaging Indigenous people living in a church's community or sphere of influence.
14. Acknowledging Global Mission Partners (GMP) as the worldwide expression of our movement's mission and Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA) as the aid arm of GMP and Churches of Christ in Australia, and promoting them where possible.

³ The Council of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania, in collaboration with the four Partner Departments may make any non-substantive amendments to this list required to maintain consistency with changed relationships or branding. These will be reported to affiliated churches. Substantive changes will require more formal adoption in accordance with its Constitution.

⁴ Churches are encouraged to update the Churches of Christ Centre with changes or additions to contact details for church, minister/s and leaders, as they happen.

⁵ Approval for a Ministry Contribution of 2.5% of a church's General Offerings was given at the 2011 AGM.

⁶ 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.

⁷ Endorsement has many shapes, including the formal 'Endorsed' ministry that is ongoing and portable, as well as 'Locally Appointed or Recognized Minister' and 'Specialist Ministry', which are related to a specific ministry setting and are not ongoing and portable.

Property and Governance

15. 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 uses 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.⁸ Other appropriate arrangements related to a church's Titles may be designed and approved in consultation with Prop Corp.
16. Inviting assistance from Churches of Christ, usually through Mission and Ministry and Prop Corp, when a church's membership has decreased for five years in a row (as reported in the annual 'census') or falls below 25⁹. The goal of this assistance will be to facilitate health and vitality, and will be conducted in accordance with its constitution or governance structure.¹⁰
17. Agreeing to the transfer of the management of the church to Churches of Christ, usually through Mission and Ministry and Prop Corp, when a church's membership (as reported in the annual 'census') falls below 10 for two years in a row.¹¹ This transfer will usually be for an agreed period of time¹² and will be with the goal of reviewing and reshaping a church's mission and ministry in its local context. This management will be expressed in accordance with the church's constitution or governance structure¹³ to ensure the responsible stewardship of the church's story and its resources, and that this past will be reflected in a guided, prayerful imagination of a new future.
18. Committing to good governance by having governance and membership policies consistent with New Testament values and practices and the governance guidelines of Churches of Christ¹⁴ and a willingness to send its constitution or governance document to Churches of Christ.
19. Acknowledging the congregation's affiliation with Churches of Christ, either by including the words "Church of Christ" in the name of the church, or having 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).
20. Committing to reduce the church's environmental impact through intentional creation care.

Appendix 2 is an integral part of Affinity

⁸ For a more detailed guide to property trusteeship see www.propcorp.org.au/about-us/trustee/215-guide-to-churches-of-christ-in-victoria-and-tasmania-trusteeship

⁹ Other than acknowledged specialist ministries such as churches in remote or rural settings, new churches, house churches, intercultural ministries.

¹⁰ As membership drops below about 25 members, congregations can find it difficult to manage their normal levels of operation. Maintenance and survival can become overwhelming, leaving little time or energy to address the matter of how to refresh the vision for mission and vitality. The intention is that these conversations will open up new opportunities for health and growth

¹¹ Other than acknowledged specialist ministries such as churches in remote or rural settings, new churches, house churches, intercultural ministries.

¹² Often 2 to 4 years will be needed. There needs to be enough time to hear from the congregation; prayerful discernment and to ensure that any emerging fresh vision has the personnel, governance structure and resources to be viable.

¹³ By the time a church's membership falls to 10 active members (or more in what was once a larger church) congregations are often unable to sustain governance processes and a vital outreach focus

¹⁴ These guidelines indicate that governance will be best expressed by the drafting and implementation of a charter or way of operating that includes statements about the following: Purpose and objectives; a definition of 'membership'; processes of appointment of leaders and minister/s; the manner of voting to be undertaken; financial management, recording and reporting; affiliation with Churches of Christ; requirements of the Properties Corporation Act regarding property matters (where appropriate); not-for-profit status; as well as winding up or closure process/es.

Good governance also includes compliance with external and/or legal requirements related to employment (for ministers and other employees, this includes tax law, provision for superannuation and long service leave, keeping of leave records etc), occupational health and safety, local building regulations, and where appropriate the incorporation of association law.

Affinity

Affirmation of Affiliation

Church _____

Signature _____ Signature _____

Name _____ Name _____
Minister *Church Elders/Leadership Group/Board*

Signature _____ Signature _____

Name _____ Name _____
Secretary/Administrator, or other Leader/Elder/Board member *Treasurer, or other Leader/Elder/Board member*

Please circle role and print names of signatories.

_____ / _____ / 20_____

Please note that this document is designed to fulfil clause 5.4 of the Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc Constitution. It is not a legal contract.

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 VIC 3078



Office Use Only	Date Received	Noted by Executive Officer	Other comments
	____/____/20____		