

Associated Congregations - 30 November 2005

At our recent Synod meeting, amendments were passed to the Church Administration Ordinance 1990 which enable congregations which do not meet in a licensed church building to be formally associated with a church. Once associated, the members of such congregations are treated as parishioners of the church for vestry meeting and other purposes.

Currently, the members of such congregations often cannot participate in vestry meetings of a church and are often not eligible to be elected to certain offices within the parish such as churchwarden and parish councillor.

The amendments address this issue.

How is a congregation associated with a church?

The process by which a congregation is associated with a church is straightforward.

1. The minister and churchwardens of a church propose that a congregation be associated with the church. To be eligible for association, the congregation –

- must be a group of persons who meet together on a regular basis within the Diocese for public worship as part of the Anglican Church of Australia, and
- must be under the pastoral leadership of the minister of the church, and
- must not meet in a licensed church building of the relevant parish.

2. If the congregation proposed to be associated with the church meets in a building situated outside the parish, the minister and churchwardens should consult about the proposal with the regional council and parish council of the parish in which the building is situated.

3. The proposal that the congregation be associated with the church must then be approved by a vestry meeting of the church. A simple form of resolution that could be passed by the vestry meeting for this purpose would be –

“This vestry meeting approves of [insert description of congregation] being associated with [insert name of church] for the purposes of clause 46(1)(b) of the Church Administration Ordinance 1990.”

4. The minister and churchwardens conclude the process by notifying the Registrar in writing of the congregation which is to be associated with the church. The notification should include a brief description of the congregation and the address of the building in which the congregation meets.

What happens if an associated congregation moves to a new building?

If an associated congregation moves to a new building, the minister and churchwardens should notify the Registrar of the address of the new building as soon as practicable. However, if the new building is situated outside the parish, the minister and churchwardens should first consult about the move with the regional council and parish council of the parish in which the new building is situated.

When does a congregation cease being associated with a church?

The association with a church ends if the congregation ceases being eligible to be associated with the church (see item 1 above) or if a vestry meeting of the church resolves that the association should be discontinued.

Do you want members of these congregations to take part in your next annual vestry meeting?

If so, then you must hold the special vestry meeting referred to in item 3 above and notify the Registrar in the manner described in item 4 above as soon as possible. Once this happens, people who have usually attended meetings of the congregation during 3 months within the past 12 months will be able to participate in the vestry meeting of the church to which the congregation has now become associated (subject to other qualifications to participate being met).

It is hoped that this initiative, which has come from the Policy 4 Reform Committee, will be of benefit to you. In particular, it is hoped that this reform will give you and your parish the freedom to plant churches in other buildings and places without in any way removing from those involved in the church plant their proper rights and responsibilities as parishioners.

Please feel free to contact me about any matter raised in this circular. I can be contacted on 9265 1671 or at rjw@sydney.anglican.asn.au.

If you wish to raise any other matter which you believe would benefit from further reform, you are welcome to contact either myself or the Chairman of the Policy 4 Reform Committee, Bishop Robert Forsyth. Bishop Forsyth can be contacted on 9265 1598 or at robforseyth@sydney.anglican.asn.au.

ROBERT WICKS
Diocesan Secretary