

Uniting Church in Australia

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

VIA ZOOM

18 - 19 July 2020

PRESENT Deidre Palmer (President), David Baker, Rob Brown, Hayden Charles, Steve Francis, Colleen Geyer, Geoffrey Grinton, Sharon Hollis, Andrew Johnson, Mark Kickett, Jason Kioa, Elaine Ledgerwood, Clare Ligtermoet, Stuart McMillan, Kath Merrifield, Nicole Mugford, Helen Paine, Catherine Pepper, Geoff Thompson, Stuart Woodward.

In attendance: Felicity Amery, Jenny Bertalan, David de Kock, Heather den Houting, Rob Floyd, Haloti Kailahi, Mark Lawrence, Matt Pulford and Ji Zhang.

WORSHIP On the Saturday morning the President led worship. During worship the President acknowledged the First Peoples of the land. She reflected on three Bible readings: Psalm 86, Matthew 11: 28-30 and 2 Corinthians 4:7-12. She spoke about "Orientation, Disorientation and Re-Orientation" (Walter Brueggemann) and the words of comfort and hope that God speaks to us in this time of global pandemic, disruption and uncertainty. Elaine Rae led the closing prayers on Saturday. On the Sunday David Baker led morning worship and the closing prayer in the afternoon was led by the President.

WELCOMES The President welcomed all participants to the meeting. Also welcomed were Bruce Binnie via Zoom for matters related to Mercer report; Claerwen Little and Paul Linossier for matters related to UnitingCare Australia, Leo Iosifidis for matters related to the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee.

APOLOGIES

20.35 **It was resolved** to receive the apology from Felicity Amery for the first session on Saturday; Ayla Williams, Yuko Tonai-Moore and Jane Fry for the whole meeting; Heather den Houting for Saturday morning; Hayden Charles for Saturday morning and Sunday afternoon, Jason Kioa for Saturday afternoon.

PASTORAL MATTERS

During worship the President led the meeting in prayer for Yuko Tonai-Moore, Andrew Johnson, Mark Kickett, Elaine Rae, Jason Kioa and the Mascot community, and the states of Victoria and NSW.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The General Secretary spoke to the agenda and timetable as listed in Document 1.

20.36 **It was resolved to** approve the timetable and agenda of the meeting as outlined in Document 1, noting that the committee is free to vary the agenda at any time.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

20.37 It was resolved to:

20.37.01 confirm the minutes of the meeting held 13 – 15 March 2020 with the deletion of Elaine Rae's name from those present;

20.37.02 confirm the minutes of the meeting via Zoom held 2 April 2020.

ACTION REGISTER

20.38 It was resolved that the nomination for Convenor of the Apology to LGBTIQ Australians Task Group be approved by electronic ballot.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

20.39 It was resolved to:

- a) note:
 - (i) Rob Brown's conflict of interest in relation to Document 10, Mercer Report, since he is a Beneficiary Fund pensioner; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be in attendance for this business but not speak or vote;
- b) note:
 - (i) Colleen Geyer's conflict of interest in relation to Document 12, General Secretary Progress Report, since the report pertains to her role as General Secretary; and
 - (ii) resolve that she be absent for this business;
- c) note:
 - (i) Sharon Hollis' conflict of interest in relation to Document 10, Mercer Report, since she is on the Policy Committee of the Mercer Fund; and
 - (ii) resolve that she be in attendance for this business but not speak or vote;
- d) note:
 - (i) Geoffrey Thompson's conflict of interest in relation to Document 14, UnitingCare Australia Board Chair Nomination, since he is a personal friend of the person nominated as Chair of UnitingCare Australia Board; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be in attendance for this business but not speak or vote;
- e) note:
 - (i) David Baker's conflict of interest in relation to Document 7-CA9, UnitingWorld Nomination for Board Position, since he is a friend of the nominee and was also his referee; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be in attendance for this business but not speak and vote;
- f) note:
 - (i) David Baker's conflict of interest in relation to Document 11, Standards for Ministries Report, since he is on the Board for Christian Formation of the Queensland Synod; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be in attendance for this business but not speak or vote; and
- g) note:

- (i) Heather den Houting's conflict of interest in relation to Document 11, Standards for Ministries Report, since she is on the Board for Christian Formation of the Queensland Synod; and
- (ii) resolve that she be in attendance for this business but not speak or vote.

NOTE CONSTITUTION CLAUSE 39

The Standing Committee members were reminded of the Constitution clause 39, as per ASC minute 00.71:

"On matters which, by a two thirds majority vote, the Assembly deems to be vital to the life of the Church, the Assembly shall seek the concurrence of the Synods and/or Presbyteries and/or Congregations as the Assembly may determine."

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Ex-President took the chair while the President spoke to Document 2, consisting of a report on her activities since the last meeting of the Standing Committee and her reflections on the current context that we are facing as a Church.

20.40 It was resolved to receive the report (Attachment A).

UAICC REPORT

Mark Kickett presented Document 3, consisting of a report on the conversations UAICC had and the actions they took.

20.41 It was resolved to receive the report. (Attachment B)

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. Assembly Budget (ASC Minute 20.26.03)

Stuart Woodward and Leo Iosifidis presented Document 6, consisting of a financial overview, a review of the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee's operations and the 2020-2021 budget assumptions.

20.42 It was resolved to:

20.42.01 receive the report; and

20.42.03 approve the 2020-2021 financial budgets of the Assembly and its Agencies as submitted (and as reviewed by the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee.

2. Future of the Church Task Group Report and Consultations (ASC Minutes 20.29.02-03)

Andrew Johnson presented Documents 8, 8B and 8C, consisting of an analysis of the survey that the Assembly Standing Committee members participated in prior to the meeting and the proposed process for engagement with the Church prior to the 16th Assembly. Table discussion followed.

20.43 It was resolved to:

20.43.01 receive the report;

- 20.43.02 adopt the 'Statement of the Task', materially in the form as presented, and refer to the Future of the Church Task Group to further refine and guide its work in the lead up to the 16th Assembly;
- 20.43.03 note the proposed Success Measures in the lead up to and at the 16th Assembly and refer to the Future of the Church Task Group for further refinement;
- 20.43.04 refer the feedback received from small groups and plenary session to the Future of the Church Task Group to shape and refine its work;
- 20.43.05 request the Future of the Church Task Group continue the work and report to the November 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee; and
- 20.43.06 authorise the Future of the Church Task Group to co-opt additional members as required.

3. General Secretary Process Report (ASC Minute 20.10.03)

The President-elect chaired the meeting while the President spoke to Document 12, consisting of a report from the Task Group on the extension of the placement of the Assembly General Secretary.

20.44 It was resolved to:

- 20.44.01 receive the report;
- 20.44.02 recommend to the 16th Assembly that the placement of the Assembly General Secretary, Ms Colleen Geyer, be extended for a further three years until January 2025;
- 20.44.03 recommend to the 16th Assembly that the extension of the term continue to be a ministry placement;
- 20.44.05 recommend to the 16th Assembly that as a placement, the remuneration continues to be based on the process used by the NSW/ACT Synod with the current loading for the Assembly General Secretary and maintain the current superannuation levels;
- 20.44.06 thank Mr Steve Eltis and Wesley Mission Queensland for the dedicated time and significant gifts that were given to the Assembly through Steve's oversight and analysis of the survey evaluations; and
- 20.44.07 thank and discharge the Task Group.

4. Mogumber (ASC Minute 20.26.04)

The General Secretary spoke to Document 9, consisting of a summary report on the decisions made by the Assembly Standing Committee in relation to Mogumber.

20.45 It was resolved to:

- 20.45.01 receive the report;
- 20.45.02
 - a) request the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee to review the provisions made for Mogumber and the risk to the Assembly financial sustainability, and
 - b) bring a report to the November 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee regarding further action required; and

- 20.45.03 a) request the General Secretary to have a discussion with the UnitingWorld Board to explain the history of Mogumber including UnitingWorld's historic connections; explain the basis for the ASC decision in 2012; explain the current status of claims and its impact on the sustainability of the Assembly; consider UnitingWorld's financial capacity to assume shared responsibility for Mogumber claims; and
- b) provide a report to the November 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.

6. Standards for Ministries Working Group Report (ASC Minute 20.13.04)

Rob Floyd introduced Documents 11, 11A and 11B, consisting of a report on the consultation with Queensland Board of Christian Formation (their MEB) and Trinity College, the 2018 report of consultation and a report of follow-up consultation held in October 2019.

20.46 It was resolved to:

20.46.01 receive the report; and

20.46.02 recognise that the courses offered by the Queensland Board of Christian Formation and Trinity College fulfil the Regulations of the Uniting Church for the ministries concerned and the Standards of formation, education and training for the specified ministries.

FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

1. Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee

Stuart Woodward and Leo Iosifidis spoke to Document 6, consisting of a report on the management of finance, audit and risk issues across the Assembly. This document also included the Assembly's 2020/2021 budget.

20.47 It was resolved to:

20.47.01 receive the report;

- 20.47.02 a) request the Assembly General Secretary to convene a national meeting and discussion in relation to stipends and related matters;
- b) provide a status report at the November 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee; and
- c) bring an initial scoping document re the matters that may be considered to the September 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee; and

20.47.03 request the President to write to Frontier Services, thanking them for their accelerated Assembly loan repayment program.

2. General Secretary's Report

The General Secretary introduced Document 4, consisting of a report on the Assembly's achievement against the Strategic Plan, the operations and issues relevant to its work. Table groups discussed Document 4 and Document 5 – COVID19 Report together.

20.48 It was resolved to receive the General Secretary's report.

3. Mercer Report

Bruce Binnie spoke to Document 10(1) and (2), consisting of a report on the status of the Beneficiary Fund, the current activities of the Employer and Policy Committees and the status of the Participation Agreement with Mercer Superannuation (Australia) Ltd.

20.49 It was resolved to:

- 20.49.01 a) receive the report from Mercer Employer Committee on the status of the Fund; and
- b) request the Employer Committee to engage further with the Assembly Finance, Audit and Risk Committee on the matters covered in the paper, and other matters, and report back to the November 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee. Such a report should clearly set out, amongst other things, the conditions that would lead to a need for a top-up of the Fund, and also explore the triggers that might suggest appropriate timing for any potential elimination of Defined Benefits risk, the options to do so and associated costs and benefits; and
- 20.49.02 a) receive the report from the Mercer Employer Committee on the Participation Agreement with Mercer Superannuation (Australia) Limited; and
- b) request the Employer Committee to return to the November 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee with a firm proposal from an independent third party expert to test the market.

4. UnitingCare Australia

4.1 UnitingCare Australia Report

Claerwen Little and Paul Linossier introduced Document 13, consisting of the annual report on the work of UnitingCare Australia.

20.50 It was resolved to receive the report;

4.2 UnitingCare Australia Board Chair Nomination

Claerwen Little and Paul Linossier presented Document 14, consisting of a report on the recruitment process and the resulting nomination for the Chair position of the UnitingCare Australia Board.

20.51 It was resolved to appoint Geoff Batkin as Chair of the Board of UnitingCare Australia for the remainder of the current Triennium commencing in November 2020.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Consent Agenda

The General Secretary presented the various documents which constituted Document 7, Consent Agenda.

20.52 It was resolved to:

- 20.52.01 receive the Governance Reference Committee report;
- 20.52.02 receive the Risk Appetite Statement report;
- 20.52.03 receive the Aged Care Royal Commission report;

- 20.52.04 a) receive the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability Update report; and
- b) approve the amendment to the National Task Group's Terms of Reference
- 20.52.05 a) receive the UCA Defence Force Chaplaincy Report;
- b) approve the co-option of Rev (Chaplain) Andrew Watters, RAN to the UCA Defence Force Chaplaincy; and
- c) request the President to write to Rev (Chaplain) Murray Lund and Rev Mark Dunn, thanking them for their service
- 20.52.06 receive the Sovereignty Affirmation-Practical Outcomes Task Group update;
- 20.52.07 appoint Heather den Houting and Katrina Gillies to the Frontier Services Board;
- 20.52.08 a) appoint Warren Tapp to the Board of UnitingWorld; and
- b) thank Margaret Watt for her years of service as member of the UnitingWorld Board; and
- 20.52.09 receive the World Council of Churches Update report.

2. COVID-19 Report

The General Secretary introduced Documents 5, 5A, 5B and 5C, consisting of a report on the Assembly's operational response to the COVID19 pandemic, the COVID19 Risk Register, the UCA Vision Statement Post COVID19 and the COVID19 Learnings

- 20.53** **It was resolved to** receive the report.

3. Remaining Assembly Standing Committee Meetings

The General Secretary presented Document 17, consisting of a report on the time and possible agenda items for an additional Assembly Standing Committee meeting agreed to at March 2020 meeting and on the most appropriate way to hold the November 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee in a post-COVID19 context.

- 20.54** **It was resolved to:**

- 20.54.01 receive the report;
- 20.54.02 approve that it will meet for an additional meeting on Saturday, 5 September via videoconferencing, to consider agenda items as outlined in the working paper; and
- 20.54.03 approve that it will meet via videoconferencing for its November 2020 meeting, 6-8 November following feedback.

4. 16th Assembly

The General Secretary spoke to Document 15, consisting of a report on the necessity of establishing flexible parameters for the planning for the 16th Assembly due to implications from COVID19.

- 20.55** **It was resolved to:**

- 20.55.01 receive the report;
- 20.55.02 approve the date for communication of Synod members to the Assembly General Secretary for the 16th Assembly be set at Monday 1 March 2021;
- 20.55.03 approve that the length of the meeting of the 16th Assembly is no longer than five days and no fewer than three days; and requests the General Secretary to bring a firm proposal to the September 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee for the final dates of the 16th Assembly, and a report from the planning group regarding how the meeting will be run to the November 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee;
- 20.55.04 approve an exemption to Regulation 3.3.8(a)(iii)(1) regarding Synod membership of Assembly for the meeting of the 16th Assembly;
- 20.55.05 approve the reduction of Synod membership by approximately 25% as:
NSW.ACT Synod – 40 members, Northern Synod – 8 members, Qld Synod – 28 members, SA Synod – 26 members, Vic.Tas Synod – 44 members, WA Synod – 16 members;
- 20.55.06 note the information regarding delegates from overseas partner churches and that an update on their involvement will be brought to the November 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee; and
- 20.55.07 request the General Secretary to inform Synods of the relevant decisions.

CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 4:00pm with prayer led by the President.

DATE FOR 2020: 5 September 2020
6 - 8 November 2020