

## Uniting Church in Australia

### ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

#### VIA ZOOM

6 – 8 November 2020

**PRESENT** Deidre Palmer (President), David Baker, Rob Brown, Steve Francis, Colleen Geyer, Geoffrey Grinton, Sharon Hollis, Andrew Johnson, Mark Kickett, Jason Kioa, Elaine Ledgerwood, Clare Ligtermoet, Kath Merrifield, Nicole Mugford, Helen Paine, Catherine Pepper, Elaine Rae, Geoff Thompson, Yuko Tonai-Moore, Ian Tozer, Stuart Woodward.

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

**WORSHIP** On the Friday night the President led worship. During worship the President acknowledged the First Peoples of the land. The Saturday morning worship and the evening prayers were led by Jason Kioa and Nicole Mugford, respectively. On the Sunday Kath Merrifield led morning worship and the closing prayer in the afternoon was led by Rob Brown.

**WELCOMES** The President welcomed all participants to the meeting. Also welcomed were Bruce Binnie for matters related to the Mercer reports; Amelia Koh-Butler, Loni Vaitohi, Matagi Vilitama, Steve Molkentin, Anne Perrin and Alex Sangster for matters related to the Advocates report, Michelle Cook for matters related to the Sovereignty Task Group report, Will Pearson and Jannine Jackson for matters related to the Frontier Services report, Rachel Kronberger for the Continuing Witness Task Group report, Andrew Glenn and Sureka Goringe for matters related to the Mogumber report, Paul Linossier for matters related to the UnitingCare Australia Board nominations, Leo Iosifidis for matters related to the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee, the Risk Register, Mogumber Report, Mercer Report, and the UCAAL Annual General Meeting, John Graves and Stephen Caplin for matters related to the UCAAL AGM.

#### APOLOGIES

**20.66** **It was resolved** to receive the apology from : Heather den Houting, Jane Fry, Stuart McMillan, Ayla Williams and Hayden Charles for the whole meeting, Steve Francis, David Baker and Ian Tozer for Sunday afternoon.

#### PASTORAL MATTERS

During worship the President led the meeting in prayer for Stuart McMillan, Rhane Tsetsakos, Rob Brown's son-in-law, Matt Pulford's mother-in-law, the two newly installed Moderators of the Synod of Queensland and Western Australia: Rev Andrew Gunton and Ms Susy Thomas, Nicole Mugford, Jason Kioa, Steve Francis.

#### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

**20.67** **It was resolved to:**

- a) 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; and
- b) take Document 11 – CA3 – Standards for Ministries Committee off the Consent Agenda and discuss it separately.

## **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**20.68** It was resolved to confirm the minutes of the meeting held 5 September 2020.

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

**20.69** It was resolved to:

- a) note:
  - (i) Rob Brown’s conflict of interest in relation to Document 7 – Mercer Report 1&2, 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) Stuart Woodward’s conflict of interest in relation to Document 11 – CA7C – Nominations to the Assembly Investment Advisory Committee, he is a friend and nominator of one of the nominees; and
  - (ii) resolve that he be in attendance for this business but not speak unless requested to answer any questions or speak on behalf of AFARC if required and not 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 President-elect took the chair while the President spoke to Document 2, consisting of a report on her activities and her reflection on the challenges and signs of hope for our Church that she has seen emerging over the past six months.

**20.70** 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.

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

## **BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE**

### **1. Advocates’ Report (ASC Minute 20.17.03)**

Rob Floyd spoke to Document 9, consisting of reports from the 7 Advocates so that the Standing Committee better understand what is happening within Assembly Circles of Interest. Amelia Koh-Butler, Loni Vaitohi, Matagi

Vilitama, Steve Molkentin, Anne Perrin and Alex Sangster joined the meeting via Zoom and engaged in table discussions with the meeting attendees.

**20.72** It was resolved to receive the report.

**2. Future of the Church Task Group Report and Consultations (ASC Minute 20.43.05)**

The General Secretary presented Document 17, consisting of a report in order to update the Assembly Standing Committee on the progress of the project since its July 2020 meeting.

**20.73** It was resolved to receive the report.

**3. Mercer Report (ASC Minute ASC Min 20.49.01(b))**

Bruce Binnie introduced Document 7 (1&2), consisting of a report on the structural changes to the Beneficiary Fund and the status of the Fund as well as on the status of the Participation Agreement with Mercer Superannuation (Australia) Ltd.

**20.74** It was resolved to:

20.74.01 receive the report;

20.74.02 approve amendment of the Participation Agreement to close the defined benefit section (Category 6) of the Fund to new members (as approved by the ASC on 25 Nov 2019) from 1 October 2020;

20.74.03 approve amendments to Clause 5 of the Participation Agreement to amend the threshold limit referred to in Clause 5.1 (b) (i) (A), (B) and (D) from \$250,000 to \$350,000 with effect from 1 January 2021; and

20.74.04 request the Employer Committee to consult with the actuary with a view to reporting to the Assembly on de-risking options in conjunction with the triennial actuarial review.

**4. Mogumber (ASC Minutes 20.45.02 and 03)**

The General Secretary presented Document 19, consisting of a report on provisions for Mogumber and associated risk and the outcome of conversations with the UnitingWorld Board regarding shared responsibility for Mogumber claims.

**20.75** It was resolved to:

20.75.01 receive the report; and

20.75.02 acknowledge and thank the UnitingWorld Board for its consideration of this matter and their agreement to share equally with the Assembly Fund the funding of these obligations.

**5. National Redress Meeting Report (ASC Minute 20.26.04)**

The General Secretary spoke to Document 20, consisting of a report on the national meeting held with participants from all the Synods and Redress UCA Ltd. as well as the next steps to be taken.

**20.76** It was resolved to receive the report.

**6. National Stipend Meeting Report (ASC Minute 20.47.02)**

The General Secretary spoke to Document 21, consisting of an an update on the issues discussed at the meeting.

**20.77 It was resolved to**

20.77.01 receive the report; and

20.77.02 request the General Secretary to work with the Synod General Secretaries to progress the actions agreed to by participants in the National Stipend Meeting; and to provide a progress report to the ASC and Synod Standing Committees in November 2021.

**7. Online Holy Communion: Practice and Reflection**

Anne Perrin and Alex Sangster introduced Document 10, consisting of a report from the Advocates and Panels for the Transforming Worship and Growing in Faith Circles on theological reflection and work regarding Holy Communion in online communities including a webinar and various theological papers.

**20.78 It was resolved to:**

20.78.01 receive the report;

20.78.02 approve the recording on the webinar be made available to the Church;

20.78.03 approve the extension of permission for UC Congregations to hold online gathering for worship with Holy Communion in accordance with the guidelines approved by the Assembly Standing Committee to the end of June 2021;

20.78.04 request the President, General Secretary, Associate General Secretary and the Advocates of the Transforming Worship and Growing in Faith Circles to:

- a) develop Terms of Reference for a task group to consider the theological implications of the Church in the digital age; and
- b) bring the Terms of Reference back to the March 2021 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee, along with names for members of the task group.

**16<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

The General Secretary introduced Document 13, consisting of an update on plans for staging the 16th Assembly in July 2021, on the need to Identify issues and challenges for Uniting Church members considering nominating for President-Elect and the actions taken by the Asembly Standing Committee relating to resolutions made at the 15th Assembly. Table discussion followed.

**20.79 It was resolved to**

20.79.01 identify any further actions required to complete the work from resolutions from the 15th Assembly;

20.79.02 identify issues and challenges that lie before the church in the forthcoming period to be addressed by those nominating as President-elect as follows:

Promoting the joys, passion and hope of who we are as the Uniting Church as we walk together in our diversity

**The Covenant**

- Living out the Covenant and relationship to First Peoples

### **Our Foundations of being the Uniting Church**

- Evolving and growing as a Church bearing witness to the Kingdom of God - modelling a countercultural way of living in the world
- Growing discipleship
- Enhancing the church's capacity for theological conversations by encouraging familiarity with the Bible, and how to use it according to Uniting Church's understanding of the Bible
- Confidence in the Gospel - in the context of a declining Church and a multifaith context

### **Future of the Church**

- Changing face of the church as worshipping communities
- Helping the church to respond effectively to rapidly changing contexts and ongoing marginalisation in society
- The church in a digital age
- Guiding the church through significant structural and regulatory change towards a sustainable future

### **Leadership**

- The nature of ministry for the future
- Encouraging young leaders, listening to their voices for how they see the future of the Uniting Church

### **Oriented Towards Justice**

- Resourcing the complex issues of life
- Climate justice - the impact of climate change
- Racial justice

## **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.

#### **20.80 It was resolved to:**

20.80.01 receive the Report; and

20.80.02 note the satisfactory finalisation of the June 2020 Audit of Annual Financial Statements.

### **2. Assembly Risk Register**

Leo Iosifidis presented Document 8, consisting of an update on the Risk Management System and the Risk Register of the Assembly which has been updated to be reflective of the categories as set out in the recent Assembly Standing Committee endorsed Assembly Risk Appetite statement presented to the September 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee. Discussion in table groups ensued

#### **20.81 It was resolved to:**

20.81.01 receive the report;

20.81.02 endorse the Exception Risk Register removing column Q; and

20.81.03 request the management to incorporate amendments identified by the Assembly Standing Committee into the Risk Register.

### **3. Assembly Strategic Plan and Business Plan**

The General Secretary spoke to Document 5, consisting of a report on the outline of a reporting framework for the Assembly Strategic Plan. Table group discussion followed to consider the framework and provide comments for any amendments prior to the completed Business Plan including reporting for all strategic directions being brought to March 2021 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.

**20.82 It was resolved to:**

20.82.01 receive the report;

20.82.02 approve the Business Plan reporting framework with amendments for the Assembly Strategic Plan 2020-2023; and

20.82.03 request the General Secretary to bring the completed Business Plan, including reporting to the March 2021 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.

**4. 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 any further issues that need to be considered, particularly with respect to the proposed reporting framework for the Strategic Plan in Document 5.

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

**5. Continuing Witness Task Group**

Rachel Kronberger spoke to Document 18, consisting of a progress report and the proposed scope of work to be brought to the 16th Assembly.

**20.84 It was resolved to:**

20.84.01 receive the report; and

20.84.02 determine that the three documents: The Confession of Belhar, Laudato si', and The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification be presented to the 16th Assembly to be considered, by the Uniting Church, between the 16th and 17th Assemblies, for reception as continuing witnesses according to the process set out above and employing the resources described in this report.

**6. Frontier Services**

Jannine Jackson and Will Pearson presented Document 15, consisting of a report on the work of the Agency, the financial pressures COVID-19 created as well as a number of highlights in results exceeding expectations.

**20.85 It was resolved to** receive the report.

**7. Sovereignty Affirmation – Practical Outcomes Task Group**

Michelle Cook spoke to Document 14, consisting of a report on the Task Group's planned actions and recommendations for Assembly.

**20.86 It was resolved to:**

20.86.01 receive the report;

20.86.02 request Synods and UAICC National Executive to work with the Assembly on developing comparable:

- a) policies regarding allocation of property sale proceeds and bequests;
  - b) employment policies for First Peoples including adequate cultural competency training for all Synod and Assembly Staff; and
  - c) protocols regarding the accountabilities and responsibilities between Regional Councils and Synods and between UAICC National and the Assembly;
- 20.86.03 request work outlined in Minute 20.85.02 to be on the agenda for the ongoing meetings between General Secretaries and the UAICC National Executive;
- 20.86.04 request the General Secretary to report to the in August 2021 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee regarding progress on these matters;
- 20.86.05 request the Standards for Ministries Working Group, in conjunction with UAICC National Executive, to develop policy that facilitate consistent orientation to UAICC, Covenant, Sovereignty of First Peoples and Australian First Peoples' Theologies for the formation of specified ministries and lay education;
- 20.86.06 provide feedback to the Task Group on the model of congregational engagement proposed in this section;
- 20.86.07 request the National Schools Consultative Group to work with Covenanting Consultant to strongly encourage that UCA schools include the UAICC and UCA Covenanting journey as part of their curriculum;
- 20.86.08 affirm the direction of the advocacy protocol document and request the Task Group to bring a more formal document to the March 2021 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee after consultation with National Justice Network and National UAICC; and
- 20.86.09 thank UnitingCare Australia for auspicing the Uniting First Peoples' Network.

#### **8. Standards for Ministries Committee re Chaplaincy Task Group**

Rob Floyd spoke to Document 11 – CA3, consisting of a report from the Standards for Ministries Committee and a proposal to appoint a new Task Group to look into Chaplaincy in the UCA. This document was removed from the Consent Agenda for in depth discussion.

#### **20.87 It was resolved to:**

- 20.87.01 receive the report;
- 20.87.02 establish a Task Group with the Terms of Reference as amended at the meeting (Attachment C); and
- 20.87.03 authorise the Assembly Officers to appoint an appropriate membership to this Task Group, including at least two members of the Standards for Ministries Committee, at least two members of ASC and other such members drawn from Synods and Agencies as are considered helpful.

#### **9. UnitingCare Australia Board Nominations**

Paul Linossier presented Document 22, consisting of a paper seeking approval of the appointment of Alison Overeem and Mark Dingle to the UnitingCare Australia Board.

- 20.88**            **It was resolved to** appoint Ms Alison Overeem and Mr Mark Dingle to the UnitingCare Australia Board for a period of three years, to take effect from February 2021.

## **GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **1. Australian Hymn Book Pty Ltd Report**

Rob Floyd spoke to Document 12, consisting of a report on the proposed dissolution of the Australian Hymn Book Pty Limited.

**20.89**            **It was resolved to:**

20.89.01.        receive the report; and

20.89.02        adopt resolutions 1-5 as listed in the ***Company Members Resolutions June 2020*** document.

### **2. Consent Agenda**

The General Secretary presented the various documents which constituted Document 11, Consent Agenda.

**20.90**            **It was resolved to:**

20.90.01        receive the Governance Reference Committee report';

20.90.02        a)     receive the Disability Royal Commission report; and

b)     approve the appointment of Paul Bolton and Jade Strongman to the Disability Royal Commission National Task Group;

20.90.03        receive the Aged Care Royal Commission report;

20.90.04        agree to exercise Reg. 3.10.1(a) to grant an exemption to Reg. 3.5.6(b), to allow for the 2021 meeting of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania to not commence with a public act of worship, understanding that a public act of worship will take place on Friday 26 February 2021 from 7:30pm on the opening day of the Synod meeting; and

20.90.05        endorse the appointment of Graeme Rough and Stephen Morrow as committee members of the Assembly Investment Advisory Committee.

### **3. Proposal from the Northern Synod**

Haloti Kailahi spoke to Document 16, consisting of a request to allow the Northern Synod to determine its members of the upcoming Assembly Meeting in a Special Synod meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2020 rather than their Synod Meeting immediately preceding the Assembly Meeting, in April 2021.

**20.91**            **It was resolved to** grant the exemption from compliance under Regulation 3.10.1(a) by not exercising Reg 3.3.9 (b) (ii) with the appointment of Northern Synod members to the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly at its Special Synod meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

## **UCA ASSEMBLY LIMITED**

### **1. Annual General Meeting**

**At 1.45pm on Sunday the meeting of the Standing Committee was adjourned and the meeting of the Annual General Meeting of the UCA**



**Assembly Ltd started. The meeting of the Standing Committee resumed at 2.15pm.**

**CLOSURE**

The meeting closed at 5:00pm with prayer led by Rob Brown.

**DATES FOR 2021:**

**12 – 14 March 2021**

**27 – 29 August 2021**

**12 – 14 November 2021**