

Uniting Church in Australia

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

10 – 12 NOVEMBER 2006

PRESENT Gregor Henderson (President), Chris Budden, Terence Corkin, Isabel Thomas Dobson, Dean Drayton, Kate Fraser, Sue Gormann, Elise Honey, Andrew Johnson, Jason Kioa, Stuart McMillan, Alistair Macrae, Jim Mein, Vince Ross, Heidi Stabb, Allan Thompson, Robert Watson.

In attendance: Jenny Bertalan, Glenda Blakefield, Rob Bos, John Evans, Gavin Melvin, Paul Swadling.

WORSHIP On the Friday evening, as part of the formation of the community, John Evans presided at the opening Service of Holy Communion and Sue Gormann preached. On the Saturday Andrew Johnson led morning worship and Heidi Stabb led evening worship. On the Sunday Jan Trengove led morning worship and the closing prayer in the afternoon was led by Jason Kioa.

WELCOMES The President welcomed members to this second meeting of the Standing Committee for this triennium, especially those who were attending their first meeting. The participants spent time sharing in small groups. Also welcomed as visitors were Andrew Dutney for matters related to Church Polity, Jim Fraser for matters related to the Assembly Audit and Finance Committee, Lin Hatfield Dodds for matters related to UnitingCare Australia, Elenie Poulos for matters related to UnitingJustice Australia, Glen Powell for Proposal 72, Rosemary Young for matters related to Frontier Services and Sandy Yule for matters related to Christian Unity Working Group.

RECOGNITION OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE LAND

On behalf of Standing Committee, the President acknowledged the local Eora people and their role as custodians of the land on which the meeting took place.

APOLOGIES

06.81 **It was resolved** to receive the apology of Sue Clarkson, Bev Fabb and Liva Tukutama for absence from the whole of the meeting, of Heidi Stabb and Allan Thompson for absence from the Friday evening session and of Jim Mein for absence from the Saturday evening session.

PASTORAL MATTERS

The arrival of Sue Clarkson's son and Vince Ross' grandson was noted with joy. The President also informed the Standing Committee of Jason Kioa's induction as Moderator of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. Bruce Binnie reported with sadness that John Glover had lost his wife. Dean Drayton shared some of the 'once in a lifetime' experience he had been privileged to have at the funeral of the King of Tonga. The time of pastoral sharing closed with prayer led by the President.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The General Secretary spoke to the agenda and timetable as listed in Document 1. Documents 8, 18, 18A and correspondence from ministers of some large regional congregations were distributed on the Friday night.

- 06.82** **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

- 06.83** **It was resolved** to confirm the minutes of the meeting held 25 – 27 August 2006 with the deletion of Robert Watson's name from the apologies list and the teleconference held on October 4 2006.

NOTE CONSTITUTION CLAUSE 39

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

On the Saturday evening the President reported to the Standing Committee on his various activities in the short time since the last meeting of the Standing Committee. He spoke of the Synod meetings he had attended, highlighting the feeling of togetherness he experienced at these meetings. In his report he also said he had been impressed and challenged in his first four months as President by the vision and commitment of the church's migrant leaders. He added that he believes that it is the Church's desire to focus on its mission. He also shared that, partly because of the use of consensus decision making procedures, the meetings of the World Council of Churches Central Committee have become more efficient. He also spoke of the National Civil Society Forum which met for 2 days in the Parliament House where the participants, religious and non-religious alike, shared their concerns about Australian society and discussed ways to make it less divided. The President expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the whole Church for the tremendous support it had provided.

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

SYNOD SHARING – NSW SYNOD

Paul Swadling and Jim Mein from the NSW Synod were invited to share something of the life of their synod as an expression of our inter-councillar sharing.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. ASSEMBLY KEY DIRECTIONS (ASC MINUTE 06.59)

Glenda Blakefield spoke to Document 11, consisting of a report on the Assembly Key Directions approved by the 11th Assembly. Table group discussion followed which focused on how to develop a process that allows the ASC to attend to the Key Directions in its life as a Standing Committee.

- 06.85** **It was resolved to:**

06.85.01 receive the report;

06.85.02 request the General Secretary to shape the agenda of the Standing Committee in the light of the discussion.

2. BAPTISM AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP (ASC MINUTE 06.20.02)

Rob Bos introduced Document 13, consisting of a discussion paper on baptism and membership.

06.86 It was resolved to:

06.86.01 receive the report;

06.86.02 distribute a discussion paper based on the document "Baptism and Membership" for discussion in the Presbyteries and Congregations; and

06.86.03 request Theology and Discipleship to bring a report on the response of the church to the March 2008 Standing Committee meeting with a view to preparing proposals for the 12th Assembly.

3. DISCUSSION ON CHURCH POLITY (ASC MINUTE 06.38.08)

Andrew Dutney, Chairperson of the Church Polity Reference Committee, introduced Document 4 and led a discussion about the understanding of the councils of the Uniting Church. The discussion was arranged to assist the members of the Standing Committee as they prepare to address a number of polity issues arising from decisions of the 11th Assembly. Dr Dutney was thanked for his contribution.

4. FRONTIER SERVICES CONSTITUTION (ASC MINUTE 06.52)

The General Secretary spoke to Document 6, consisting of the proposed new Frontier Services Constitution. Discussion followed.

06.87 It was resolved to adopt the revised Frontier Services Constitution (Attachment A).

5. TASK GROUP ON THE BASIS OF UNION (ASC MINUTE 06.56)

Rob Bos spoke to Document 7, consisting of a report on the work undertaken in response to the Basis of Union issues raised at the 10th Assembly and the decision of the March 2006 Standing Committee (04.34.01).

06.88 It was resolved to:

06.88.01 receive the report;

06.88.02 take no further action on ASC minute 04.34, being action based on the referral of unfinished business by the 10th Assembly (Assembly minute 03.49); and

06.88.03 request the General Secretary to:

- a) arrange for the development of a resource or resources that will assist members of the Church to engage with the Basis of Union as a celebration of our missional identity around issues that are important to Christian faith and life at this time;
- b) arrange for the translation of the Basis of Union into as many community languages as possible; and
- c) have these resources available to the Church in time for the 30th anniversary.

6. TASK GROUPS ON THE SPECIFIED MINISTRY OF PASTOR

1. Transitional Arrangements for the Specified Ministry of Pastor

Dean Drayton delivered a verbal report on the work the Task Group has done since its establishment.

06.89 It was resolved to receive the report.

2. Task Group on the Ministry of Pastor

The General Secretary gave a progress report on the establishment of the Task Group and its meeting dates.

06.90 It was resolved to receive the report.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM THE 11TH ASSEMBLY

1. Proposal 52 – Ecumenical Relationships Post 10th Assembly (ASC Minute 06.66)

The General Secretary reported that Proposal 52 had been withdrawn.

06.91 It was resolved to note that the proposal had been withdrawn by the proposers.

2. Proposal 70 – Classification of Property as ‘Available for Alternative Missional Use’ (ASC Minute 06.70)

Glen Powell spoke to the proposal.

06.92 It was resolved to:

06.92.01 thank the NSW Synod for Proposal 70;

- 06.92.02
- a) acknowledge that the missional stewardship of property is a major issue for the church;
 - b) appoint Jim Mein (Convenor), John Preston and Gary Adsett (plus a corresponding member from the WA, SA and Northern Synods) to
 - i) prepare a draft discussion paper drawing on Proposal 70 and its rationale, plus other literature on the issue; and
 - ii) present the draft discussion paper to ASC in July 2007 for consideration and distribution to congregations, presbyteries and synods; and
 - c) request the ALRC to advise the Task Group on current understandings of the Regulations relating to property with regards to the authority of Presbyteries and Synods.

3. Proposal 74 – Lay Presidency (ASC Minute 06.71)

Sandy Yule, Secretary of the Christian Unity Working Group spoke to the revised proposal.

06.93 It was resolved that the Doctrine Working Group, in consultation with the Christian Unity Working Group, be asked to review the documents on ministry from our dialogues with the Anglican and Lutheran Churches, particularly the concerns expressed about lay presidency at the Lord's Supper, and report on any matters requiring further consideration by the ASC to the July 2007 meeting of the Standing Committee.

4. Proposal 91 – Competency in English for Ministers of Other Churches (ASC Minute 06.73)

The General Secretary spoke to Proposal 91.

06.94 It was resolved to:

06.94.01 request the General Secretary to ask the Synods of Victoria/Tasmania and NSW to provide information about their “theological English” courses; and

06.94.02 refer this information to the Reception of Ministers Committee and seek their comment on whether these resources meet the concerns that gave rise to Assembly proposal 91.

8. WESLEY UNITING EMPLOYMENT

Glenda Blakefield spoke to Document 9, consisting of a report on the issues related to the investigation of Wesley Mission Sydney by the Investigations Branch of the Department of Workplace and Industrial Relations.

06.95 It was resolved to

06.95.01 receive the report;

06.95.02 note the governance and accountability issues that have emerged during the current contract for Wesley Uniting Employment;

06.95.03 request the Commission for National Co-operation to prepare guidelines to assist the Church in addressing these issues when a comparable contract for the provision of national services may arise; and

06.95.04 report back to the Standing Committee for determination.

FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

1. ASSEMBLY AUDIT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Bruce Binnie and Jim Fraser introduced Documents 5, 5A and 5B, consisting of the budget proposal for 2007 for the Assembly agencies and the year end accounts for Frontier Services at 30 June 2006.

06.96 It was resolved to:

06.96.01 receive the reports in Documents 5 and 5A;

06.96.02 record appreciation and commendation for the work of Jim Fraser as Chief Financial Officer;

06.96.03 note with gratitude the contributions from Synods to the Assembly budget for 2007;

06.96.04 receive the year end accounts for Frontier Services; and

06.96.05 approve the 2007 budgets for

- Assembly Fund
- Uniting International Mission
- Uniting Church Overseas Aid
- Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress
- Uniting Education
- Coolamon College

2. BENEFICIARY FUND

The General Secretary presented Documents 18 and 18A, consisting of a report on the election of trustee directors and the board succession planning, respectively.

06.97 It was resolved to:

06.97.01 receive the report;

06.97.02 appoint Rev Robert Elkhuisen, Rev Anne Honey, Ms Sue Norman and Rob Runco for a period of three years each, and Mr Brian Hamley for 12 months; and

06.97.03 appoint Robert Hoskin, Margaret Burns, Robert Key, Richard Williams and Bruce Binnie as the member trustees.

3. GENERAL REPORT

The General Secretary introduced Document 10, consisting of a report on various matters.

06.98 It was resolved to receive the report.

4. LEGAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

The General Secretary spoke to Documents 14 and 14A, consisting of a report on the work the Legal Reference Committee has done since the August Standing Committee meeting and the proposed 'Guidelines for the Third Phase of Ministerial Education', respectively.

06.99 It was resolved to:

06.99.01 receive the report;

06.99.02 refer the report and the recommendations of the Legal Reference Committee on ASC Minute 06.69, the Guidelines for the Third Phase of Ministerial Education and Regulation 2.7.18 to the General Secretaries and the Ministerial Education Commission for comment and report back to the March 2007 Standing Committee meeting;

06.99.03 amend Regulation 2.7.16 to read:

CONGREGATION AND PRESBYTERY PLACEMENTS

2.7.16 (a) For a placement to be filled by call of the Congregation, a Joint Nominating Committee shall be constituted as follows:

- (i) at least two persons appointed by the Presbytery, one of whom shall be appointed by the Presbytery as chairperson, and preferably at least one of whom shall be a member of the Pastoral Relations Committee; ~~and~~
- (ii) two to six persons appointed by the Congregation ~~or other body~~;
- (iii) In circumstances where the Presbytery considers a larger Joint Nominating Committee advisable, up to four additional persons appointed by the Congregation

- (b) ~~Four members~~ Not less than half the number of members of the Joint Nominating Committee, or if an odd number of members then one member more than half, shall constitute a quorum, of whom at least one shall be a Presbytery representative and at least one shall be an appointee of the Congregation or other body;

06.99.04 determine that the effective date for the operation of the new Regulation shall be January 1 2007.

5. UNITINGCARE AUSTRALIA

Lin Hatfield Dodds spoke to Document 12, consisting of a report on recommendations regarding disability access in the Uniting Church in Australia and its agencies

06.100 It was resolved to:

06.100.01 receive the document;

06.100.02 refer the statement of theology and context (Part 1 of Document 12) as the starting point for further conversation to the National Working Group on Doctrine for further work and report to the Standing Committee:

06.100.03 a) request the General Secretary, in consultation with UnitingCare Australia, to develop access guidelines for all events and activities within its purview, and provide directions and guidance for all events organised at a national level;

b) to bring a report on the issues and implications of a disability access plan for the work of the Assembly; and

06.100.04 encourage each Synod to develop Disability Action Plans in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act, 1992, with the aim of eliminating access barriers pertaining to:

- i) Attitude / Theology of Exclusion
- ii) Communication
- iii) Physical Environment

6. UNITINGJUSTICE AUSTRALIA

Elenie Poulos spoke to Document 15, consisting of a statement on climate change.

06.101 It was resolved to:

06.101.01 adopt the statement "For the Sake of the Planet and all its People: A Uniting Church in Australia Statement on Climate Change" (Attachment B);

06.101.02 encourage Uniting Church members, congregations, groups, agencies and councils to

- a) model ways of living and working that minimise the production of greenhouse gas emissions;
- b) seriously and regularly include matters of environment and lifestyle change in prayer and worship, study, and communal decision making; and

06.101.03 encourage Uniting Church members to

- a) advocate for government to implement policies that significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and increase our use of non-nuclear renewable energy sources;

- b) engage in dialogues, shared learning and action with non-government environment action groups.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. CALLED TO BE THE ONE CHURCH

Sandy Yule presented Document 3, consisting of the proposed UCA response to the questions in the World Council of Churches 9th Assembly text on ecclesiology, 'Called To Be The One Church'.

06.102 It was resolved to:

- 06.102.01 receive the document; (Attachment C)
- 06.102.02 forward the document to the WCC as the UCA's response to the questions in the WCC 9th Assembly's text on ecclesiology, 'Called To Be The One Church'; and
- 06.102.03 request the CUWG to consider how the document can be publicized widely within the UCA.

2. CORRESPONDENCE FROM MINISTERS OF SOME LARGE REGIONAL CONGREGATIONS (EL250)

The President presented the correspondence from Evangelical Leaders 250 Plus (EL250). Discussion followed.

06.103 It was resolved to receive the correspondence.

3. CORRESPONDENCE FROM REFORMING ALLIANCE

The General Secretary spoke to Document 17, consisting of correspondence from Reforming Alliance. Discussion followed.

06.104 It was resolved to:

- 06.104.01 receive the letter dated 19 October 2006 from Reforming Alliance;
- 06.104.02 note the advice that a face to face meeting with the Executive of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations will take place on Wednesday 15 November;
- 06.104.03 affirm and endorse the action of the Assembly Officers taken in accordance with the authority granted by ASC Minute 06.60.09(b); and
- 06.104.04 take no further action in response to the correspondence.

4. GENERAL BUSINESS

The General Secretary spoke to Document 16, consisting of a report on various matters.

06.105 It was resolved to:

- 06.105.01 receive the report;
- 06.105.02 appoint Terence Corkin, Rosemary Young, Jan Trengove and Jim Mein to review Rev David Thiem (Associate National Director of Frontier Services) and to bring a recommendation regarding an extension of the placement to the March 2007 meeting;
- 06.105.03 adopt the following Terms of Reference for the Assembly Task Group on Doctrine for the ongoing work on sexuality and leadership;

- a) address the referral made by the 11th Assembly in minute 06.47 part 9 to engage in further work that assists the Church in our ongoing consideration of the theological diversity of the Church on this issue and to authorise the Assembly Standing Committee to determine the terms of reference for such work;
 - b) provide a clear, readable and relatively brief summary of the debate about sexuality over the last thirty years;
 - c) identify the areas in the life of the church where there is significant agreement on relevant ethical and theological issues;
 - d) identify the main current unresolved or contentious theological issues in the life of the church;
 - e) arrange for one or more colloquia to which noted "scholarly interpreters" will be invited to meet with the Working Group to present a variety of perspectives in order to seek points of agreement or clarify points of disagreement on those unresolved or contentious issues; and
 - f) report to the ASC no later than November 2008.
- 06.105.04 appoint Chris Hall to the National Committee of UnitingCare Australia;
- 06.105.05
- a) appoint Ivan Roberts (Convenor), Myong Duk Yang, Glen Powell, Sisilia Tupou-Thomas plus a nominee of both a presbytery and the NSW Synod Property Committee to the Task Group to address the matters in Assembly proposal # 71 'Property Sharing in Cross-cultural Settings' (Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry);
 - b) Andy Tiver (Convenor), Eseta Meneilly, Wai Hoey and someone from a Presbytery to the Task Group to address the issues raised in Assembly proposal # 72 'National Conferences' (Multicultural and Cross Cultural Ministry);
 - c) authorize the Assembly Officers to identify additional members;
- 06.105.06 appoint Mr Bruce Binnie as Chairperson of the Assembly Audit and Finance Committee and Mr Peter Andrews, David Greenall and Mr Rob Baker as members of the Assembly Audit and Finance Committee;
- 06.105.07 appoint Rev Apichart Branjerdporn to the Multicultural and Cross Cultural Ministry Reference Committee;
- 06.105.08 appoint Rev Apichart Branjerdporn to the Assembly Task Group on the Code of Ethics;
- 06.105.09
- a) receive the correspondence from the Ministerial Education Commission (August 30 2006); and
 - b) note that the Ministerial Education Commission intends to consider the Ministry Intern Phase at its meeting in 2007, including consideration of the timing of ordination and implications for our ecumenical relationships;
- 06.105.10 appoint Mr Michael Jeffrey to the National Youth Activities Reference Committee;
- 06.105.11 respond positively to the proposal that the Reformed Ecumenical Council join with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches into one international ecumenical organisation;
- 06.105.12
- a) receive the correspondence of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania to the Legal Reference Committee dated 16 October 2006;
 - b) note that the responses received from the Synods in relation to the concerns of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania regarding Regulation 4.12.1 differ in their acceptance of their views;
 - c) determine not to provide any guidance on this matter;

- d) note that Synods wanting to continue to progress this matter can approach their State or Territory Parliaments to amend their Uniting Church in Australia Act, after consultation with the Assembly.
- 6.105.13 a) note that Mrs Rosemary Miller has resigned from the UCOA National Committee effective 31 December 2006; and
b) appoint Mr Ted Woodley to the UCOA National Committee.
- 06.105.14 appoint Charles Biggs, Michaela Tiller, Alistair Macrea (corresponding member), Stu Cameron (corresponding member), Felicity Amery (corresponding member) and John Evans (corresponding member) as members of the Church Polity Reference Committee;
- 06.105.15 appoint Alan Robinson as a member of the National Working Group on Doctrine;
- 06.105.16 appoint Mary Pearson as a member of the National Working Group on Relations with Other Faiths;
- 06.105.17 appoint Philip Gardiner, Ian Price, David Pargeter, Adrian Pyle, Tina Randell, Graham Beattie and one person from the Northern Synod as members of the National Working Group on Missiology and Evangelism;
- 06.105.18 appoint Gregor Henderson, Dean Drayton and Mata Havea to conduct the General Secretary's annual performance appraisal; and
- 06.105.19 note that Isabel Thomas Dobson, Jan Trengove and Liva Tukutama will comprise the group that will assist the President to reflect upon his work as President (Assembly Minute 06.32).

5. NOMINATION FOR NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Jason Kioa spoke to Document 8, consisting of a report of the Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry National Director Nominating Committee.

06.106 It was resolved to:

- 06.106.01 receive the report;
- 06.106.02 appoint Rev Dr Tony Floyd to the position of National Director of Multicultural and Cross Cultural Ministry for a term of three years, commencing March 1 2007; and
- 06.106.03 authorise the General Secretary to negotiate the terms of appointment within the total package cost of a NSW based National Director position plus the normal 15% loading on basic stipend.

6. RESPONSE TO DROUGHT

- 06.107.01 note the initiatives taken by the Synods; and
- 06.107.02 request the President and the Moderators to prepare a pastoral letter to the Church in response to the drought and to encourage participation in the national day of prayer.

CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 4.00pm with prayer led by Jason Kioa.

NEXT MEETING:

10 – 12 November 2006