

Uniting Church in Australia

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

16 – 18 MARCH 2007

PRESENT Gregor Henderson (President), Bruce Binnie, Chris Budden, Sue Clarkson, Terence Corkin, Isabel Thomas Dobson, Dean Drayton, Bev Fabb, Kate Fraser, Sue Gormann, Mata Havea, Elise Honey, Andrew Johnson, Jason Kioa, Stuart McMillan, Alistair Macrae, Jim Mein, Vince Ross, Heidi Stabb, Allan Thompson, Jan Trengove, Liva Tukutama, Robert Watson.

In attendance: Jenny Bertalan, Glenda Blakefield, Rob Bos, Rob Brown, Kevin Davis, Graham Humphris, Gavin Melvin, Clive Pearson, Paul Swadling, Jenny Tymms.

WORSHIP On the Friday evening an induction service was held for Rev Dr Tony Floyd, National Director, Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry and Rev Dr Kerry Enright, National Director, Uniting International Mission. On the Saturday Isabel Thomas Dobson led morning worship and Alistair Macrae led evening worship. On the Sunday Bruce Binnie led morning worship and the closing prayer in the afternoon was led by Allan Thompson.

WELCOMES

The President welcomed members to this third meeting of the Standing Committee for this triennium.

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

07.01 **It was resolved** to receive the apology of Shayne Blackman for the whole meeting; Sue Gormann for Friday evening, Dean Drayton for Friday evening, Saturday morning and Sunday morning; Chris Budden for Saturday from morning tea until the evening session, Jim Mein for Saturday evening and Liva Tukutama for Sunday.

PASTORAL MATTERS

The President informed the Standing Committee of the illness of Alison and Cathy Henderson. The General Secretary reported the death of Tim, Mark and Merrill Hillis' son. Stuart McMillan was pleased to report that Mawunydjil Garawirtja (the Chairperson of the NRCC), who had open heart surgery in Adelaide in February, is doing well. Bev Fabb advised about the illness of Libby and Glenda Blakefield reported the illness of Lin Hatfield Dodds' father. Robert Watson shared about Elizabeth Burns and the death of her husband, Alex. The time of pastoral sharing closed with prayer led by Jan Trengove.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The General Secretary spoke to the agenda and timetable as listed in Document 1. Documents 4 and 13A were distributed on the Friday night.

07.02 **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 MEETING

07.03 It was resolved to confirm the minutes of the meeting held 10 –12 November 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 on his various activities since the last meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee. He referred to his recent visit to the Lakeview transient accommodation at Port Augusta and showed some photos taken of the abject conditions. He reflected on the experiences he had at the NCYC in Western Australia, expressing joy at the young people’s strong commitment to Christianity. He spoke of the numerous visits he had to various congregations. Emphasising the importance of ministerial leadership, he also shared his four-part formula for effective local churches, namely worship that connects/reconnects people with God; a welcoming ethos; at least one community connection and support for the wider mission of the church. He believes that now the UCA has an excellent opportunity to build the church and thanked the Church and God for the support.

07.04 It was resolved to receive the report.

SYNOD SHARING – SYNOD OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Graham Humphris and Jan Trengove from the Synod of South Australia were invited to share something of the life of their synod as an expression of our inter-councilar sharing.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. ASSEMBLY RESPONSE TO “FOR THE SAKE OF THE PLANET (ASC MINUTE 06.101.02)

The General Secretary spoke to Document 16, consisting of a report of possible responses the Assembly might make to the statement adopted by the November 2006 ASC meeting “For the Sake of the Planet and all its People: A Uniting Church in Australia Statement on Climate Change”.

07.05 It was resolved to:

07.05.01 receive the report;

07.05.02 authorise the General Secretary to engage Carbon Planet to conduct an audit of the Assembly’s environmental footprint;

07.05.03 determine that, based on the results of the audit, the Assembly will immediately begin to reduce or offset its greenhouse gas emissions and develop a long-term strategy for the continued reduction of its environmental footprint, including an action plan ready by the end of June for inclusion in the 2007-08 budget;

- 07.05.04. request UnitingJustice Australia to develop an Assembly sustainability policy for consideration by the ASC before the end of 2007; and
- 07.05.05 request a report from the Assembly Audit and Finance Committee on the Assembly's investments and advice on whether it is appropriate for the Assembly to divest itself of any investments in fossil fuel producing companies and invest in renewable energies.

2. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY (ASC MINUTE 06.105.18)

The President presented a positive verbal report on the performance of the General Secretary.

07.06 It was resolved to:

- 07.06.01 receive the report; and
- 07.06.02 adopt the changes to the revised Position Description of the General Secretary. (Attachment A)

3. PUBLICATIONS ACTION COMMITTEE (ASC MINUTE 06.103)

The General Secretary introduced Document 14, consisting of a report on the work the Publications Action Committee has done since its inception in 2000.

07.07 It was resolved to:

- 07.07.01 receive the report;
- 07.07.02 thank and discharge the Publications Action Committee; and
- 07.07.03 authorise the continued allocation of \$15,000 per year to the Essential Publications Fund.

4. REFLECTIONS ON THE POLITY OF THE CHURCH (ASC MINUTE 06.38.01)

Chris Budden spoke to Document 8, consisting of a report of the Task Group on Polity and Governance. Table group discussion followed. Comments were collected and will be used to assist the Task Group in its ongoing work.

07.08 It was resolved to receive the report.

5. REPORT ON THE PRESIDENT'S DELEGATION TO PORT AUGUSTA (ASC MINUTE 06.19.01)

The President and Vince Ross presented Document 3, consisting of a report on the visit to Port Augusta.

07.09 It was resolved to:

- 07.09.01 receive the report;
- 07.09.02 write to the three levels of Government noting the specific concerns that have been identified within each Government's areas of responsibility, in particular encouraging them to engage in meaningful dialogue and consultation with aboriginal people about issues that impact on their lives;
- 07.09.03 request Congress to join with the Assembly in a delegation to meet with the Federal Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the South Australian Minister of Indigenous Affairs to represent in person the issues raised in the final section of the report;

- 07.09.04 authorise the production of appropriate media releases to follow up on the announcements already made, including a special report for distribution to the synod papers; and
- 07.09.05 request the General Secretary to explore possible new sources of funding, in co-operation with the synods, that might enable it to commit resources to working with Congress on developing and implementing a strategy that will enable the wider church to play a part in bringing Aboriginal issues on to the wider public and political agenda.

6. REVIEW OF REV DAVID THIEM, ASSOCIATE NATIONAL DIRECTOR, FRONTIER SERVICES (ASC MINUTE 06.105.02).

Jim Mein, Convenor of the Review Group, presented the report.

07.10 It was resolved to:

- 07.10.01 receive the report;
- 07.10.02 extend the placement of Rev David Thiem as Associate National Director - Frontier Services for a period of up to five (5) years;
- 07.10.03 note that the National Director - Frontier Services will address the issue of accommodation in Sydney for the Associate National Director - Frontier Services; and
- 07.10.04 defer discussion on whether the Assembly Standing Committee should delegate future appointments of the Associate National Director - Frontier Services to the Board of Frontier Services until an opinion is received from the Board, and information is provided to the Assembly Standing Committee on the basis upon which the Standing Committee initially determined that it would make the appointment.

7. SHAPING THE ASC AGENDA IN RESPONSE TO THE ASSEMBLY KEY DIRECTIONS (ASC MINUTE 06.85.02)

Glenda Blakefield and the General Secretary presented Document 2, consisting of a report on how to shape the Assembly Standing Committee agenda in response to the Assembly Key Directions. Extensive discussion on various matters including key directions, building up the church, discernment and being forward looking followed. The feedback from the Assembly Standing Committee will be used in framing future agendas.

07.11 It was resolved to receive the report.

8. TASK GROUP CO-ORDINATING ISSUES ON THE SPECIFIED MINISTRY OF PASTOR (ASC MINUTE 06.43)

The General Secretary introduced Document 6, consisting of a report of the Implementation Task Group on the Specified Ministry of Pastor.

07.12 It was resolved to:

- 07.12.01 receive the report;
- 07.12.02 request the Synod Secretaries to establish a small working group to:
- a) identify the practices and procedures that operate within the synods for the appointment and remuneration of lay pastoral workers;
 - b) offer advice to the Standing Committee on whether a national approach can be established for the procedures and practices that operate for the appointment and remuneration of Pastors; and
 - c) report to the ASC in November with any appropriate recommendations;

- 07.12.03 request the Legal Reference Committee to recommend a mechanism that will allow for Youth Workers and Lay Pastors to be considered as having continuous service for the purposes of retaining their standing as Accredited Youth Workers and Lay Pastors where they remain continuously in placements or when they are granted leave of absence from active service by the Placements Committee on the recommendation of the Presbytery for a defined period to undertake an approved course of study, for family or other pastoral reasons, or for other reasons which the Placements Committee considers sufficient.
- 07.12.04 refer the following proposal to Church Polity Reference Committee for a comment back to the next meeting; “determine that the decision on whether a Pastor is required to be a confirmed member, or a member in association of the Uniting Church shall be made by the Presbytery in the case of congregational and presbytery appointments and by the appointing body in the case of other appointments at the time a decision is made to establish the position that will be filled by a Pastor;”
- 07.12.05 determine that
- a) a person will cease to be recognized as a Pastor if they resign, or are terminated from their appointment, or do not continue to develop the competencies required for their position as determined by their “appointing body”; and
 - b) in all other circumstances the Presbytery, in the case of congregational and presbytery appointments; and the synod and Assembly in the case of appointments made by those Councils, shall be responsible for determining a person’s suitability and ongoing recognition as a Pastor; and
- 07.12.06 request that the Church Polity Reference Committee provide advice to the ASC on whether and in what circumstances Pastors should be members of the Church Council and Presbytery and whether, in the latter case, they should be lay representatives in addition to the normal number of lay persons that might be appointed from a congregation.

9. TASK GROUP ON THE TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENT FOR THE SPECIFIED MINISTRY OF PASTOR (ASC MINUTE 06.42)

Dean Drayton introduced Document 5, consisting of a report of the Task Group on Transitional Arrangements for Persons in the Specified Ministries of Pastor. Much discussion ensued.

07.13 It was resolved to:

- 07.13.01 receive the report;
- 07.13.02 adopt the guidelines for Presbyteries and Synods as amended (Attachment B);
- a) request each Synod to appoint a Synod Transitional Panel;
 - b) request the General Secretary to convene a meeting of the convenors of each Synod Panel to meet together with a suitable team by May 31 2007 to
 - i) plan the initial one or two day “Discernment Retreats”,
 - ii) plan also the week-long Formation Intensive, and
 - iii) develop a common approach shared by the Synods; and
 - c) request that the MEC advise the Standing Committee on the way in which the corpus of skills and insights developed for training for ministry with and by young people will be maintained within the recognised colleges of the UCA, and how appropriate elements may be included in education and training programs for Pastors, Ministers and Deacons;
- 07.13.03 urge Synods to make funds available to give applicants sufficient time to complete the process determined with the Synod Panel, if the applicant is required to take time out of their placement;

- 07.13.04 determine that applicants have a right of appeal against a decision of the Presbytery or the Synod Panel following the procedure in Regulation 2.2.14; and
- 07.13.05 thank and discharge the Task Group.

FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

1. ASSEMBLY AGENCIES

The General Secretary presented Document 9, consisting of lists of S.M.A.R.T. goals from various Assembly Agencies, namely Christian Education, Coolamon College, Frontier Services, Relations with Other Faiths, Secretariat, Theology and Discipleship, UnitingCare Australia, UnitingJustice Australia.

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

2. CHURCH POLITY REFERENCE COMMITTEE

The General Secretary presented Document 17, consisting of a letter from the Church Polity Reference Committee. Discussion followed.

- 07.15** **It was resolved to** receive the correspondence.

3. GENERAL REPORT

The General Secretary introduced Document 15, consisting of a report on various matters.

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

4. LEGAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

The General Secretary spoke to Document 7, consisting of a report on the work the Legal Reference Committee has done since the November 2006 Standing Committee meeting.

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

5. THEOLOGY AND DISCIPLESHIP

Rob Bos presented Document 11, consisting of a report on the structure and responsibilities, Assembly key directions and some highlights of Theology and Discipleship's work.

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

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. APPRECIATION FOR GAVIN MELVIN, SENIOR COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

The President, the ex-President and other Assembly Standing Committee members expressed their gratitude for the outstanding work Gavin has done for the Uniting Church in Australia. The following resolution was passed with acclamation.

- 07.19** **It was resolved to** record the Assembly Standing Committee's appreciation to Mr Gavin Melvin for his significant contribution, leadership and service to the Assembly as Senior Communications Officer.

2. CODE OF ETHICS FOR LAY PREACHERS

The General Secretary introduced Documents 10 and 10A, consisting of a report on the proposal to adopt a national Code of Ethics for Lay Preachers.

- 07.20** **It was resolved to** adopt a Code of Ethics for Lay Preachers within the Uniting Church in Australia as amended by the Assembly Standing Committee (Attachment C).

3. CORRESPONDENCE FROM REFORMING ALLIANCE

The General Secretary delivered a verbal report on the correspondence that was received from Reforming Alliance on 16 March 2007.

- 07.21** **It was resolved to:**

- 07.21.01 receive the letter from Reforming Alliance dated 16 March 2007;
- 07.21.02 note that the legal opinion provided with the correspondence has not been copied to the members of the Assembly Standing Committee due to its late arrival; and
- 07.21.03 request the General Secretary to:
- a) seek legal advice on the opinion provided to the Assembly Standing Committee by Reforming Alliance; and
 - b) report to a later meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee on a proposed course of action in the light of the advice received from the Assembly's legal advisors, such report to include a copy of the Reforming Alliance legal opinion.

4. GENERAL BUSINESS

The General Secretary spoke to Document 13, consisting of a report on various matters.

- 07.22** **It was resolved to:**

- 07.22.01 receive the report;
- 07.22.02 approve a blue Geneva cap and the UCA scarf as appropriate for use in a grant of armorial bearings that is suitable for a Minister of the Word in the Uniting Church in Australia;
- 07.22.03 a) endorse the action of the General Secretary in issuing an invitation to the World Methodist Council (WMC) for its Executive to meet in Sydney from September 14 to 20 2007;
- b) request the General Secretary to liaise with the WMC in relation to invitations to worship with local congregations on Sunday 16 September;
- 07.22.04 a) receive the letter from the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania; and
- b) request the Legal Reference Committee to provide wording that will enable the Assembly Standing Committee to resolve in such a way that the total number of appointments from the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania and the Presbyteries from Victoria shall be the same at the 12th Assembly as were appointed from these Councils to the meeting of the 11th Assembly;
- 07.22.05 a) appoint Rev Ken Anderson to the Executive of the World Methodist Council until July 2009; and
- 07.22.06 b) review the appointment of Ken Anderson to the Executive of the WMC after consultation at that time with the 12th President of the UCA;
- 07.22.07 appoint Rev Apichart Branjerdporn and Rev Kiduk Huang as members of the Multicultural and Cross Cultural Ministry Reference Committee;

- 07.22.08 appoint Rev Dr Kerry Enright as a Director of UCA Assembly Ltd;
- 07.22.09 (a) note the resignation of Mr Jamie Isbister as a member of the National Committee of Uniting Church Overseas Aid; and
 (b) appoint Rev John Ruhle as a member of the National Committee of Uniting Church Overseas Aid.
- 07.22.10 request:
 a) the Presbyteries of Parramatta-Nepean and Sydney North to recommend persons to be appointed to the Property Sharing Task Group under ASC minute 06.105.05(a); and
 b) the Assembly Officers to make appointments to the Task Group;
- 07.22.11 receive the advice of the Church Polity Reference Committee regarding contributions by the Defence Force to ministerial training (ASC Minute 06.74.01) and await the advice from the Ministerial Education Commission before determining the matter;
- 07.22.12 a) receive the verbal report of the General Secretaries on the need to revise aspects of the Guidelines for the 3rd Phase of Ministerial Education; and
 b) defer a decision on a revision of the Guidelines until the requested response has been received from the Ministerial Education Commission;
- 07.22.13 note the referrals from the 11th Assembly on matters related to the work of the Task Group on the Specified Ministry of Pastor and defer discussion until further work has been done by the Implementation Task Group on the Specified Ministry of Pastor;
- 07.22.14 a) receive the correspondence from the Assembly Reception of Ministers of Committee;
 b) note that the resources that Proposal #91 from the 11th Assembly proposes to produce are already available through church and community sources; and
 c) determine that Proposal #91 referred from the 11th Assembly not be supported and advise the 12th Assembly of this decision;
- 07.22.15 act under the authority granted by Regulation 3.6.34(a) and grant to the Synod of Queensland an exemption to the operation of Regulations 3.5.14 and 3.5.15 sufficient to enable the Moderator of Queensland to be appointed for a term of six years;
- 07.22.16 a) receive the correspondence from the Ministerial Education Commission; and
 b) request the General Secretary to clarify the issue that has been raised.

5. PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF EL250

The President spoke to Document 12, consisting of a report on his meeting with the representatives of EL250. In his presentation the President emphasised the positive tone of the meeting.

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

6. POSITION DESCRIPTION – NATIONAL DIRECTOR – FRONTIER SERVICES

The General Secretary presented Document 18, consisting of a revised Position Description of the National Director - Frontier Services.

- 07.24 **It was resolved to** adopt the changes to the revised Position Description of the National Director – Frontier Services. (Attachment D)

CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 3.15pm with prayer led by Allan Thompson.

NEXT MEETING:

16 – 18 November 2007