

Uniting Church in Australia

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

20 – 22 MARCH 2009

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

In attendance: Jenny Bertalan, Glenda Blakefield, Rob Brown, Kay Dowling, Graham Humphris, Douglas Jones, Peter Jones, Penny Monger, Paul Swadling.

WORSHIP On Friday night Dean Drayton presided and Jim Mein preached at the Service of Holy Communion. On Saturday Kay Dowling led morning worship and Heidi Stabb led the evening prayers. On Sunday Bruce Binnie and Allan Thompson led worship and the closing prayer was led by the President.

WELCOMES The President welcomed all Assembly Standing Committee participants to the meeting. Also welcomed as visitors were Anita Monro as Theological Listener for the whole meeting; Rob Runco and Rob Hoskin for matters related to Beneficiary Fund, 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

09.01 **It was resolved** to receive the apology of Vince Ross, Mata Havea and Shayne Blackman for the whole meeting; Jason Kioa for Friday and Saturday; Jim Mein for Saturday morning and afternoon; Kay Dowling for Saturday night and Sunday.

PASTORAL MATTERS

The President gave a report on the bushfires that devastated some areas of Victoria and mentioned the \$50,000 grant from the Assembly Disaster Fund. It was reported that the mothers of Lurleen and Shayne Blackman are in very poor health. It was also shared that Joan-Maree Deanmeade, who for years provided administrative support for Chevalier Resource Centre, passed away.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The General Secretary spoke to the agenda and timetable as listed in Document 1. Document 4A was distributed at the meeting.

09.02 **It was resolved to:**

09.02.01 consider in accordance with Minute 02.08.05 whether the content and emphasis of the agenda reflects an appropriate level of focus on matters of contemporary significance to the Church; and

09.02.02 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

09.03 It was resolved to confirm the minutes of the meeting held November 16 - 18 2008.

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

The President started his report by saying he had been able to do more parish work in the last 4 months, not least because the President receives relatively few invitations for December and January. However, in January there was a very important event – the NCYC in Melbourne, which drew a significantly larger number than the previous NCYC in Perth. 1300-1400 young people were there and their level of commitment to living as Christians is very high. They are serious about their faith, which is most encouraging. There was a lot of emphasis at NCYC on God's call to discipleship and ministry, including God's call to young people to serve as ordained ministers in the church. He had 35-40 individual conversations with young people who want to serve God through the church, using the gifts they've received from God. He has also spent time with a Jewish and Palestinian coalition following the Gaza crisis, in advocacy with parliamentarians, and attended the Griffith University Interfaith Conference held in Brisbane with 9-10 different faith groups. To finish his report, the President thanked the Standing Committee and the Church for their support during his presidency and expressed his sense of privilege at having been the Chair of the Standing Committee meetings.

09.04 It was resolved to receive the report.

SYNOD SHARING – NEW SOUTH WALES AND THE ACT

Paul Swadling from the Synod of NSW and the ACT shared something of the life of the synod as an expression of our inter-councilar sharing.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. CLAUSE 39 (ASC MINUTE 08.45.04)

Andrew Johnson introduced Document 13, consisting of a report on the responses to the discussion paper "Waiting Upon God's Word".

09.05 It was resolved to:

09.05.01 receive the report;

09.05.02 (a) submit to the 12th Assembly a proposal to amend the Constitution by the addition of the following sub-clause to clause 39:

- (b) (i) If within six months of a decision of the Assembly, at least half the Presbyteries within the bounds of each of at least half the Synods, or at least half the Synods, notify the President that they have determined that in their opinion a decision includes a matter vital to the life of the Church and that there

was inadequate consultation prior to the decision, the President shall notify the Church that the decision is suspended until the Assembly has undertaken further consultation;

- (ii) Following this consultation, the Assembly shall determine whether to affirm, vary or revoke the original decision and report its decision and reasons to the Church;
 - (iii) No action taken in reliance on a decision of the Assembly prior to the President's notification to the Church under clause 39(b)(i) shall be invalid by virtue of that notification;
 - (iv) This sub-clause can only be used a second or subsequent time on the same matter if the Assembly determines to vary the original decision."
- (b) authorise the Standing Committee, on the advice of the Legal Reference Committee, to approve any regulations that are necessary to give effect to the Constitutional change once it is approved by the Church; and
 - (c) authorise the Standing Committee, on the advice of the Legal Reference Committee, to approve any regulations or guidelines outlining the process for the use of the clause 39(a).

2. CODE OF ETHICS (ASC MINUTES 08.91.03 AND 08.91.04)

The General Secretary and Andrew Johnson spoke to Document 8, consisting of a report on further work undertaken in redrafting the Code of Ethics since the last meeting.

09.06 It was resolved to:

- 09.06.01 receive the report; and
- 09.06.02 refer the revised *Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice* to the 12th Assembly for adoption.

3. FOLLOW-UP ON PROPOSAL #70 FROM THE 11TH ASSEMBLY (ASC MINUTE 06.92.02(b))

Jim Mein introduced Document 10, consisting of a report of the Task Group on Alternative Missional Use of Congregational Property. Much discussion followed.

09.07 It was resolved to:

- 09.07.01 request that the 12th Assembly authorise the Standing Committee on the advice of the Assembly Legal Reference Committee to amend the Regulations to
 - (a). create a classification of congregational property to be called 'Available for Alternative Missional Use', which may apply to all or part of a congregation's "property", and provide a description of what constitutes 'Alternative Missional Use', that includes;
 - new congregations, faith communities or new worship gatherings within existing churches;
 - future new congregations or faith communities, perhaps in a similar context, as stipulated by synod upon recommendation from the presbytery;

- growing or migrant congregations with inadequate property resources or any other congregation which in the opinion of the presbytery has significant engagement in mission;
 - synod or presbytery approved strategic mission initiatives such as leadership;
 - such other missional priorities as the synod determines.
- (b) establish the process through which a congregation and Church Council (*and insert as appropriate*) may resolve to make part or all of its property available for 'Alternative Missional Use'; and also how a Presbytery, after appropriate consultation with a congregation and in a duly constituted meeting of the presbytery, may make recommendations to the synod to classify a property held by a congregation as 'Available for Alternative Missional Use';
- (c) require that in any consultation
- the Presbytery shall take proper account of the purpose, functions, responsibilities and rights of the Congregation as described in the Regulations;
 - the Presbytery and the Congregation(s) have a responsibility to listen faithfully to one another;
 - the Presbytery shall take into account any effect on an existing placement;
- d) provide that if after three years of a designation as 'Available for Alternative Missional Use' the property use has not been changed then the designation lapses;
- (e) establish the process whereby once a congregational property has been designated as 'Available for Alternative Missional Use' a Presbytery may transfer responsibility for the management of a property or benefit of use or income from a property to another body recognised by the Presbytery and / or Synod;
- (f) ensure that appropriate arrangements for the care of the congregation, its members and life and mission are attended to, and provide for the possibility that the affected congregation may participate in the process of investing the resources for which they were previously responsible into a new mission; and
- (g) make provision for an appeal by a congregation to the synod against all or part of a decision by a Presbytery to recommend to the synod that its property be designated as 'Available for Alternative Missional Use'; such appeal to be based on the process only;

4. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE PREAMBLE AND CONSTITUTION – GENERAL SECRETARIES' SUGGESTION (ASC MINUTES 08.39.02, 08.39.03 AND 08.73.03(b))

The General Secretary introduced Documents 7 and 7A, consisting of a report on the meeting between the General Secretaries and the National UAICC regarding the proposed changes to the preamble and constitution as well as on the suggestions from the General Secretaries and the response from Congress. Table group discussion ensued.

09.08 It was resolved to:

09.08.01 receive the reports; and

09.08.02 note that the Assembly Standing Committee will continue the conversation with Congress, through the ASC Task Group, in the light of the responses due from the Church at the end of April.

5. PROPOSAL TO REVISE THE REGULATIONS (ASC MINUTE 08.95.07)

The General Secretary spoke to Document 9, consisting of a proposal that the 12th Assembly consider a revision of the Regulations.

09.09 It was resolved to:

09.09.01 receive the report;

09.09.02 request that the 12th Assembly

- (i) authorise the Standing Committee, on the advice of the Legal Reference Committee, to amend the Regulations to achieve the following outcomes:
 - removal of redundant provisions;
 - standardising of language and style;
 - addressing the numbering of sections;
 - simplifying the Regulations so that they are prescriptive only where it is deemed to be essential, and simplified to enhance the capacity of Councils to be adaptive and missional in their particular contexts; and
 - consistently reflects the theology and polity of the Uniting Church
- (ii) to include in its deliberations consideration of providing for the establishment of binding policies and / or by laws that can be established and amended by the Assembly Standing Committee; and
- (iii) requires the Standing Committee to consult with synods, presbyteries, Congress, multicultural networks and the UnitingCare network as it undertakes its review and development of new Regulations;

6. SEXUALITY AND LEADERSHIP (ASC MINUTE 06.105.03)

The General Secretary spoke to Documents 16 and 16A, consisting of a paper from the Doctrine Working Group and a document titled 'Summary of the Current Position of the Uniting Church in Relation to Sexuality and Leadership.

09.10 It was resolved to:

09.10.01 receive the report;

09.10.02 invite members of the Assembly Standing Committee to submit recommended variations in writing to the General Secretary; and

09.10.03 request the General Secretary to do further work on the report in consultation with the Doctrine Working Group and bring the redrafted paper to a meeting of the new Assembly Standing Committee for adoption.

FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

1. ASSEMBLY AUDIT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Bruce Binnie delivered a verbal report on the work of the Audit and Finance Committee.

09.11 It was resolved to receive the report.

2. BENEFICIARY FUND

Robert Hoskin and Robert Runco spoke to Document 6, consisting of a report from the Beneficiary Fund.

09.12 It was resolved to:

- 09.12.01 note the Contribution Management Strategy adopted by the Church on 14 November 2004 (ASC minute 04.90.02);
- 09.12.02 resolve that in order to address the Actuary's classification of the Uniting Church in Australia Beneficiary Fund being in "an unsatisfactory financial position" and preclude the risk of the Fund becoming "technically insolvent"
- (a) the Church commit to providing lump sum contributions of \$2.5 million in 2009, 2010, 2011 and \$1.1 million in 2012 and 2013 if required;
 - ((b) request the General Secretary, in consultation with the Executive Director of the Beneficiary Fund, to negotiate with the Synods as to the way in which the contributions from across the Church shall be delivered to the Beneficiary Fund; and
 - (c) report back to the August 2009 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee on the outcome of these negotiations.

3. CHRISTIAN UNITY WORKING GROUP

Sandy Yule presented Documents 4, 4A and 5.

1. Nature and Mission of the Church (WCC Faith and Order Paper 198) - the UCA Response (Documents 4 and 4A)

09.13 It was resolved to:

- 09.13.01 receive the draft response to WCC Faith and Order Paper 198 – "The Nature and Mission of the Church", prepared by the Christian Unity Working Group, with thanks; and
- 09.13.03 endorse the paper as the response of the Uniting Church in Australia

2. World Communion of Reformed Churches General Council (formerly WARC) Nominations (Document 5)

- 09.14 It was resolved to** appoint Rev Alistair Macrae, Rev Terence Corkin, Rev Dr Kerry Enright, Ms Robyn Goodwin, Rev Prof. James Haire and Rev Charity Majiza as the UCA delegates to the Uniting General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

4. GENERAL REPORT

The General Secretary introduced Document 20, consisting of a report on various matters.

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

5. LEGAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

The General Secretary spoke to Documents 15 and 15A, consisting of a report on the work of the Legal Reference Committee.

09.16 It was resolved to:

09.16.01 receive the reports;

09.16.02 request that the 12th Assembly:

authorise the Standing Committee on the advice of the Legal Reference Committee to

(a) amend Regulation 3.1.14 ((b) to read:

3.1.14 ((b) The meeting shall not be obliged to fill any or all positions vacant and shall declare to be elected only such persons as receive the support of a majority of those participating in the ballot, or such higher percentage as the Congregation may have determined prior to the ballot.

(b) amend regulations 3.6.2 and 3.6 to read:

MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY

3.6.2 The membership of the Assembly shall consist of:

(a) ex-officio members:

- (i) the President of the Assembly;
- (ii) the General Secretary of the Assembly;
- (iii) the ex-President of the Assembly;
- (iv) the President-elect of the Assembly;
- (v) the Chairperson of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress;
- (vi) the National Administrator of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

~~(b) one Minister and one confirmed lay member appointed by each Presbytery~~

~~(c)~~ (b) six members appointed by the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, of whom no more than three shall be Ministers;

(d) (c) Ministers and confirmed lay members ~~appointed by each synod~~ from within the bounds of each Synod appointed as follows:

(i) number of members to be appointed from within the bounds of each Synod:

Synod	
<u>NSW and ACT</u>	54
<u>Northern</u>	10
<u>Queensland</u>	36
<u>South Australia</u>	34
<u>Victoria and Tasmania</u>	58
<u>Western Australia</u>	20

(i) (ii) equal numbers of Ministers and lay members shall be appointed;

(#)(iii) not fewer than one in every five of the lay members shall be a person who, in the opinion of the Synod, could reasonably be regarded as of youthful age;

- ~~(iii) — the total minimum number of members appointed by each Synod and the Presbyteries within the bounds of the Synod shall be ten and the Synod shall appoint those members who are not appointed by a Presbytery;~~
- ~~(iv) — subject to sub-paragraph (iii), each Synod shall be entitled to appoint the number of members calculated by multiplying the appropriate scale factor mentioned in the second column below by five and where the resulting number is not an even number, by adding one to the resulting number to achieve an even number of members appointed by the Synod as shown in the third column below;~~

~~members within the scale factor number of members to bounds of the synod be appointed by Synod~~

less than 5000	1	6
5,001 - 10,000	2	10
10,001 - 20,000	3	16
20,001 - 40,000	4	20
more than 40,000	5	26

- ~~(v) — for the purpose of sub-paragraph (iv) “number of members” shall mean the number of confirmed members and members-in-association within the bounds of the Synod last notified to the General Secretary of the Assembly by the Synod no later than one year before the date on which the ordinary meeting of the Assembly is due to commence or by such other date as the Assembly Standing Committee may determine;~~
- (iv) in its appointments the Synods shall take account of Regulation 3.5.25;
- (v) each Presbytery within the bounds of the Synod shall appoint one of the members and may appoint such number of additional members as the Synod in session decides;
- (vi) the Synod shall appoint the remaining members and shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with sub-paragraph (ii) and (iii) regarding the total number of members appointed from within the bounds of the Synod under this paragraph ((c);
- (e) ~~(d)~~ such confirmed members appointed by bodies directly responsible to the Assembly as the Standing Committee shall determine, each making its own appointments;
- (f) ~~(e)~~ Ministers and confirmed members, up to 20 in total, appointed by the outgoing Standing Committee having regard to the gifts, skills and experience needed by the Assembly. ~~such other confirmed members as are appointed by either the Assembly or Standing Committee, provided that the total number of members so appointed and ex-officio members shall not exceed one-tenth of the total membership of the Assembly.~~

~~In respect of any Assembly held within six years of the inception of the Church each Synod shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that one-third of the elected lay representatives are women.~~

- 3.6.3** The ~~Synods shall appointing council or body may~~ make provision for an alternate to attend the Assembly in the place of any elected member unable to be present.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. ASC PROPOSALS TO THE 12TH ASSEMBLY

The General Secretary spoke to Document 12, consisting of a list of proposals the Assembly Standing Committee intends to take to the 12th Assembly.

09.17 It was resolved to receive the report.

2. DRAFT ASC REPORT TO THE 12TH ASSEMBLY

The General Secretary introduced Document 3, consisting of the draft Assembly Standing Committee report to the 12th Assembly.

09.18 It was resolved to:

09.18.01 receive the report; and

09.18.02 approve it for distribution with the papers of the 12th Assembly.

3. GENERAL BUSINESS

The General Secretary spoke to Document 19, consisting of various matters.

09.19 It was resolved to:

09.19.01 receive the report;

- 09.19.02
- (i) note that the
 - (a) Central West Presbytery and the Darling Presbytery were amalgamated on 1 January, 2009 to form the Macquarie Darling Presbytery pursuant to Resolution 105/08SC of the Synod of New South Wales and the ACT on 27-29 June 2008
 - (b) Central West Presbytery has appointed one Minister and one confirmed lay member to the 12th Assembly, according to Regulation 3.6.2(b), and
 - (c) Darling Presbytery did not appoint members to the 12th Assembly prior to the amalgamation;
 - (ii) express the opinion for the purpose of Regulation 3.6.34 that special circumstances exist justifying the making of an alternate Regulation regarding the appointment of members to the 12th Assembly by the Macquarie Darling Presbytery (amalgamating the Central West and Darling Presbyteries);
 - (iii) resolve to make the following alternate Regulation:
for the 12th Assembly only,
 - (a) Regulation 3.6.2(b) will not apply in the case of the Macquarie Darling Presbytery;
 - (b) two Ministers and two confirmed lay members from the Macquarie Darling Presbytery will be appointed in the following manner as members of the Assembly
 - (i) one Minister and one confirmed lay member appointed by the Central West Presbytery prior to the amalgamation with the Darling Presbytery unless the Macquarie Darling Presbytery considers it necessary to vary the appointments, and

- (ii) one Minister and one confirmed lay member from the Far West Ministry Area appointed by the Macquarie Darling Presbytery

09.19.03 recommend to the 12th Assembly that

The Assembly

- (a) encourage members and councils of the Uniting Church to actively engage in a conversation about what sort of church we need to be in the new context that we face in Australia, and how this might be reflected in the Constitution of the church (e.g. what Constitutional values we wish to support, or what new organizational arrangements this might suggest);
- (b) request the Assembly Standing Committee to facilitate this conversation through:
 - (a) Arranging for the preparation of a study resource that includes (i) a short paper that outlines the issues, challenges and opportunities we face as a church, (ii) four responses from different perspectives in the church that explore the issues from different missional and theological perspectives, (iii) a reminder of the understanding of church found in the *Basis of Union* and (iv) suggested ways people and councils can best engage with this resource;
 - (b) Encouraging presbyteries to discuss the resource, organizing regional gatherings that will enable a broader conversation, and ensuring that these conversations are properly resourced (e.g. with people who can facilitate this conversation); and
- (c) request the ASC to prepare proposals for the 14th Assembly that gather up the conversations which have occurred, and to make suggestions (after consultation with the Legal Reference Committee) – if appropriate – about ways in which the Constitution and Regulations might be changed to enable the Uniting Church to more faithfully share in God's mission in this time;s

09.19.04 amend the Mandate of the National Historical Reference Committee (Attachment A) by:

- (a) replacing 'New South Wales Synod' with 'New South Wales and ACT Synod' throughout;
- (b) changing Section 4 of the Mandate to read 'To negotiate terms of access, care and preservation of Assembly and Assembly agency records ~~and with~~ any approved repositories.'; and
- (c) changing Section 8 of the Mandate to read 'To negotiate with ~~government~~ appropriate bodies on the funding of historical research, activities and conservation';

09.19.05 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 2010 meeting of the Standing Committee;

09.19.06 express the Assembly Standing Committee's pleasure at Rev Tara Curlewis, a Minister of the Word in the UCA being appointed as General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

4. REPORT ON PREPARATIONS FOR THE 12TH ASSEMBLY

The General Secretary introduced Document 2, consisting of a report on the preparations that have been done and will need to be done for the 12th Assembly.

09.20 It was resolved to

- 09.20.01 receive the report;
- 09.20.02 (a) appoint Terence Corkin, Alistair Macrae, Geoffrey Grinton (Business Manager), Glenda Blakefield, Andrew Johnson, Swee-Ann Koh, Paul Swadling and a Congress Nominee to the Business Committee;
- (b) authorise the Assembly Officers to appoint the Congress Nominee to the Business Committee;
- 09.20.03 (a) appoint the following persons, on the recommendation of the synods, as “youthful members” to the 12th Assembly: Emily Evans (Vic / Tas), Richard Telfer (NSW / ACT), Phillip Johnson (Qld); Ian Pryor (WA), Peter Grant (SA), and the nominee of the Northern Synod;
- (b) appoint Rev Apwee Ting, Rev Eseta Meneilly, Rev Kisoo Jang, Rev Ki Duk Hwang, Rev Amelia Koh-Butler, Ms ‘Ofa Benness, Rev Liva Tukutama, Rev Rodel Palma as members of the 12th Assembly under regulation 3.6.2 (f);
- 09.20.04 authorise the distribution of “Guidance for the Church’s Faithful Thinking” and “The nature of doctrine and the role of the Assembly” to members appointed to future meetings of the triennial Assembly;
- 09.20.05 propose to the Assembly, in relation to ballots, that the procedures be amended so that while two persons from a migrant background will continue to be elected to the ASC it no longer be predetermined from which cultural background these people shall come; and
- 09.20.06 propose that the 12th Assembly resolve to amend Regulation 3.6.25 (e) to read “The elected membership shall include no more than ~~six~~ five persons from any synod”, with immediate effect.

5. UNITING FAITH AND DISCIPLESHIP MANDATE

Glenda Blakefield and Stuart McMillan introduced Documents 11 and 11A, consisting of the draft Uniting Faith and Discipleship mandate, which was to replace the Uniting Faith and Justice one.

09.21 It was resolved to:

- 09.21.01 adopt the mandate of Uniting Faith and Discipleship (Attachment B);
- 09.21.02 note the operational guidelines of Uniting Faith and Discipleship; and
- 09.21.03 that the job descriptions be amended to include the operations of the team.

CLOSURE

Time was spent reflecting on the experience of the Standing Committee over the last triennium and hearing from long serving members who were concluding their term. The President also acknowledged the valuable contribution the Standing Committee participants have made over the past 3 years. The meeting closed at 3.00pm with prayer led by Gregor Henderson.

2009 MEETING DATES:
28 - 30 August
20 - 22 November