

Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

20 – 22 NOVEMBER 2009

PRESENT Alistair Macrae (President), Jenny Brecknell, Michelle Cook, Terence Corkin, Lesley de Grussa-Macaulay, Andrew Dutney, Andrew Glenn, Geoffrey Grinton, Kisoo Jang, Andrew Johnson, Jason Kioa, Peter McDonald, Stuart McMillan, Ken Sumner, Fatai Tapuelulu, Kendall Trudgen, Jenny Tymms, Robert Watson, Adrian White, Wendie Wilkie.

In attendance: Jenny Bertalan, Glenda Blakefield, Rob Brown, Kay Dowling, John Hirt, Graham Humphris, Peter Jones, Penny Monger, Paul Swadling and Chris Walker

WORSHIP On the Friday evening, as part of the formation of the community, Ken Sumner preached and the President presided at the opening Service of Holy Communion. On the Saturday Fatai Tapuelulu led morning worship and Lesley de Grussa-Macaulay led evening prayers. On the Sunday Geoffrey Grinton led morning worship and the closing prayer in the afternoon was led by Jason Kioa.

WELCOMES The President welcomed all Assembly Standing Committee participants to the meeting. Also welcomed as visitors were John Hirt as Theological Listener; Anna Grant-Henderson for matters related to the Lutheran Declaration, Rosemary Young for matters related to Frontier Services and Jim Fraser for matters related to the Budget 2010.

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

09.53 **It was resolved** to receive the apology of Gregor Henderson, Kim Anderson, Douglas Jones and Shayne Blackman for the whole meeting, Kisoo Jang for Saturday and Sunday and Graham Humphris for Sunday.

PASTORAL MATTERS

The General Secretary informed the Standing Committee about the serious illness of Glenda Blakefield's mother and husband and the engagement and resignation of Penny Monger, Senior Communications Officer. It was reported that Mawunydjil Garawirtja passed away. The Standing Committee participants were advised that the father of Kevin Dobson, Isabel Thomas Dobson's husband, passed away.

ORIENTATION TO THE WORK OF THE ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

On the Saturday morning Glenda Blakefield led the Standing Committee in a time of community building which provided the participants with an introduction to a framework for reflecting theologically, for locating the discussions within the UCA's theological traditions, and for thinking about what it meant to be a member of the Assembly Standing Committee. Key questions to be discussed in table groups included: "What does a term of service on the ASC mean for your ministry and other parts of your life?"; What is important about communal discernment as

set out in the Manual for Meetings?"; How do you picture / think about your engagements, particular gifts and skills with the ASC business over the next three years?"

"WHAT SORT OF CHURCH IS GOD CALLING US TO BE?"

At its August 2009 meeting the Standing Committee resolved to have a time of discussion at the November ASC meeting around issues relating to ministry in non-congregational settings and how this informed its thinking about the kind of Church God is calling us to be. Peter McDonald, Robert Watson and Wendie Wilkie (Convener) led the general discussion after the group work. The groups had three case studies to choose from and reflect on.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The General Secretary spoke to the agenda and timetable as listed in Document 1. Documents 6, 7, 8, 13A and 14 were distributed on the Friday night.

09.54 **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

09.55 **It was resolved** to confirm the minutes of the meeting held August 28 - 30 2009 with the addition of the following minutes:

Proposal 51 – Amendment to Regulation 3.1.16 – Term of Office for Church Councillors

09.50 **It was resolved** not to take any further action.

Proposal 76 – Ministry of Pastor

09.51 **It was resolved** not to take any further action.

Revision of the Regulations

09.52 **It was resolved to**

request the General Secretary to

- (i) write to synods, presbyteries, Congress, multicultural networks and the UnitingCare network inviting them to offer amendments to the Regulations so that they are prescriptive only where it is deemed to be essential, simplified to enhance the capacity of Councils to be adaptive and missional in their particular contexts; and so that they consistently reflect the theology and polity of the Uniting Church; and
- (ii) bring a report on the responses to a future meeting of the Standing Committee with proposals in how to progress the revision of the Regulations in the light of the feedback from the Church.

NOTE

Standing Committee members were reminded of:

1. Constitution Clause 39: "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 Synods and/or Presbyteries and/or Congregations as the Assembly may determine.”; and

2. the authority of the Standing Committee as set out in Regulation 3.6.34 and the resolutions of this Assembly on this subject (Assembly minute 09.08.07).

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

On the Saturday evening the President reported to the Standing Committee on his various activities since the last meeting of the Standing Committee. He spoke of the celebrations which were held in Korea, Sydney and Melbourne to mark 120 years of engagement between the Uniting Church and the Presbyterian Churches in Korea. As part of these celebrations, he was blessed to visit Korea for eight days and was impressed by the esteem that the Korean church has for the original missionaries; and how that esteem flows across to their current regard for the Uniting Church. He was also honoured with invitations to attend the Northern and South Australian Synods as the bible study leader and recently spent eight days in Western Australia. Four of those days were with UnitingCare West and other service providers, visiting a lot of their programs. It was inspiring to see those agencies at work. There seem to be new opportunities to nourish relationships with the institutions and agencies of the church. Four days were spent down south around Albany, talking with congregations about the Preamble and taking time to discuss the church and the current mission context. It was during this time in WA that he hosted his first President’s Table. During this period the President also attended the Indonesian National Conference; the Frontier Services Patrol Ministers Conference; some Presbytery retreats; a number of congregations’ special occasions and a meeting of the National Council of Churches Executive and the National Heads of Churches. Last but not least, he also spoke about the two key social issues that he has been quite vocal on in recent weeks and months on behalf of the Assembly: asylum seekers and the proposed Human Rights Act.

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

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP (ASC MINUTES 06.86.02 AND 06.86.03)

Chris Walker spoke to Document 2, consisting of a report from the National Working Group on Doctrine in regard to the paper ‘A Church of Passionate Disciples Rethinking Church Membership’.

09.57 **It was resolved to:**

09.57.01 receive the report;

09.57.02 affirm the general direction of the report but not support action that requires Constitutional change;

09.57.03 request the National Consultant of Theology and Discipleship to develop a paper that

- a) takes up the issues raised in the discussion, including but not limited to
 - Investigating ways in which confirmation may be freshly understood and used, and can be more significantly incorporated into the Church’s renewed focus on the importance of baptism and discipleship formation;
 - The way in which a covenantal understanding of the character of the local congregation can be part of the way in which

participation in government and leadership is enabled, with examples of how this covenantal relationship might be expressed;

- Revisit the links between baptism, confirmation and participation in the life of the Church (see Basis of Union, Paragraph 12);

b) make recommendations on the steps required to progress this issue in the life of the Church; and

09.57.04 affirm ASC minute 08.21.03 and request the General Secretary to report on progress to a later meeting of the Standing Committee.

2. FUNDING OF AGE CARE PROVIDERS (ASC MINUTE 09.48.02)

Rosemary Young made a presentation on the funding of aged care providers.

09.58 It was resolved to:

09.58.01 receive the report; and

09.58.02 commend Frontier Services for the work they have been doing in advocacy on this matter.

3. THEOLOGY OF STIPEND (ASC MINUTE 09.42)

Chris Walker introduced Document 4, consisting of a report on the Theology of Stipend. Discussion followed.

09.59 It was resolved to:

09.59.01 receive the paper "Theology of Stipends";

09.59.02 acknowledge that our theology and practice in this area is not always congruent; and

09.59.03 request the National Consultant of Theology and Discipleship to prepare a paper that identifies the areas of incongruence and whether our practice or theology might need to be critiqued or changed.

FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

1. ASSEMBLY AUDIT, FINANCE AND RISK COMMITTEE

Jim Fraser introduced Documents 3, 3A and 3B, consisting of the budget proposal for 2010 for the Assembly agencies and the year end accounts for Frontier Services at 30 June 2009.

09.60 It was resolved to:

09.60.01 receive the report in Document 3;

09.60.02 receive the year end accounts for Frontier Services;

09.60.03 approve the 2010 budgets for

- Assembly Fund
- UnitingWorld
- UnitingWorld Relief and Development
- Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress
- UnitingCare Australia;

- 09.60.04 note with gratitude the contributions from Synods to the Assembly budget for 2010; and
- 09.60.05 record appreciation and commendation for the work of Jim Fraser as Chief Financial Officer.

2. FRONTIER SERVICES

Rosemary Young spoke to Document 12, consisting of the revised mandate incorporating minor changes.

- 09.61** **It was resolved to** approve the revised mandate for Frontier Services (Attachment A).

3. GENERAL REPORT

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

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

4. LEGAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

The General Secretary spoke to Document 10, consisting of a report on the work the Legal Reference Committee has done since the August 2009 Standing Committee Meeting.

- 09.63** **It was resolved to:**

- 09.63.01 receive the report;
- 09.63.02 amend the following Regulations to read:

7.6.3

The chairperson of the Presbytery shall refer to the Pastoral Relations Committee any complaint ~~with~~ which:

- (a) the chairperson is unable to deal with adequately by counselling; or
(b) in the chairperson's opinion, warrants no further action.

7.6.4

- (a) The Pastoral Relations Committee shall:
- (i) confer with the respondent and with the complainant with a view to resolving the matter amicably;
 - (ii) if it thinks fit enquire into the complaint; and
 - (iii) report to Presbytery.
- (b) At any stage after a complaint is referred to it, the Pastoral Relations Committee may determine that the complaint warrants no further action;
- ~~(b)~~(c) When requested by the respondent or by the complainant or where it considers it is necessary to do so, the Pastoral Relations Committee shall refer the complaint to the Synod Committee for Counselling.

7.7.3

- (a) In dealing with any complaint referred or made to it the Committee shall counsel and confer with the Respondent, the Complainant and such other persons as it considers desirable with a view to resolving

the matter amicably, and make reports to the Synod, the Presbytery and other bodies as it thinks appropriate.

(b) At any stage after a complaint is referred to it, the Committee may determine that the complaint warrants no further action;

(b)(c) If the Committee be satisfied that the matter cannot be dealt with adequately by counseling and that the complaint warrants further action it shall refer the matter to the Committee for Discipline.

09.63.03 the effective date for the new regulations be 1 January 2010;

09.63.04 amend the following Regulations to read:

2. MINISTRY

DEFINITIONS

2.1.1 In Regulations 2.1.1 to 2.3.9A and 2.9.1 to 2.9.3 unless the context or subject matter otherwise indicates: ...

~~**Intern** means a Certified Candidate undertaking the Licensed Year within the meaning of Regulation 2.1.1;~~

~~**Licensed year** means a period after the completion of core theological education in which the candidate for Minister of the Word, Deacon or Youth Worker will combine the practice of ministry with significant periods of study and reflection;~~

2.2.18 The responsibilities of the Ministerial Education Commission shall be:

(c) to prescribe the areas of study and the minimum requirements within each area which shall comprise an acceptable course of study for the various ministries of the Church, including the requirements of the licensed year for mentoring and support for newly ordained ministers during the first three years of their ministry;

2.2.24

~~(g) The faculty shall liaise with the Advisory Committee on Ministerial Placements in relation to the licensed year.~~

2.2.25

~~(d) In the licensed year, the candidate shall normally be transferred to the pastoral care and oversight of the Presbytery in which the candidate is exercising ministry.~~

DECISION TO ORDAIN OR COMMISSION

~~**2.2.28** At the conclusion of the licensed year the Presbytery which had pastoral care and oversight of the candidate during the period of core theological education shall, following consideration of an appraisal from and consultation with the Presbytery in which the candidate exercised ministry in the licensed year, determine whether or not to ordain or, in the case of a Youth Worker, commission the candidate, taking into account the requirements of the Church, including Regulations 2.3.1 or 2.9.2.~~

2.7.4 The Placements Committee shall:
(f) ~~liaise with the faculty in relation to ministry positions in the licensed year for candidates for Minister of the Word, Deacon and Youth Worker;~~

renumber clauses (g) to (o) as (f) to (n);

3.1.12

(a) The Church Council shall consist of:
(i) the Ministers, ~~Interns~~, Youth Workers, Pastors and Lay Pastors who are serving in approved placements in the Congregation;

3.4.4 The Presbytery shall have responsibility for ...

(f) taking such part in the selection, pastoral care and oversight of candidates for the specified ministries of the Church as required by the Synod and/or Assembly, ~~normally including the pastoral care and oversight of candidates for Minister of the Word, Deacon and Youth Worker who are exercising ministry within the bounds during the licensed year;~~

3.4.15 The Presbytery shall consist of:

(c) ~~(v) Interns for whom the Presbytery has pastoral care and oversight in accordance with Regulation 2.2.25.~~

3.5.2 The membership of the Synod shall consist of ...

c) Ministers of the Word, Deaconesses, Deacons, ~~Interns~~, Community Ministers, Lay Pastors and Youth Workers who are members of a Presbytery within the bounds, appointed by each Presbytery, the number being such proportion as the Synod shall determine;

7.7.4

Minister means a Minister (as that term is defined in Regulation 7.1.1) ~~or an Intern~~ or Candidate (as ~~these~~ that term is defined in Regulation 2.1.1) involved in field education.

09.63.05 (b) the effective date for the new regulations, for persons entering the licensed year, be 1 April 2010 (agreement).

5. UNITINGWORLD

The General Secretary presented Document 5, consisting of a report on two significant events in the life of the Uniting Church, namely the UCA/Korea celebrations and the Niue agreement.

09.64 It was resolved to:

09.64.01 receive the report; and

09.64.02 note the signing of the agreement with Ekalesia Kerisiano Niue and the Mission Declaration marking 120 Years of Australian Mission in Korea.

- 09.67.02 extend the placement of Rev Glenda Blakefield as Associate General Secretary for a period of 12 months to 1 March 2011; and
- 09.67.03 advise the review group not to proceed with the review of the Associate General Secretary until July 2010 unless advised otherwise by the Minister that she is now available to undertake the review.

4. REVIEW OF NATIONAL DIRECTOR, CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Jenny Tymms introduced Document 6, consisting of a report on the review of Rev Dr Mark Hillis, National Director, Christian Education.

09.68 It was resolved to:

- 09.68.01 receive the report;
- 09.68.02 affirm Rev Dr Mark Hillis for his significant work as National Director, Christian Education;
- 09.68.03 request the General Secretary to provide the March 2010 meeting of the Standing Committee with recommendations relating to a revised Position Description for the position of National Director, Christian Education that includes the new directions outlined in paragraphs 19 and 20 of the report;
- 09.68.04 extend the placement of Rev Dr Mark Hillis to December 31 2010 to enable further discussions and discernment to take place in relation to the new direction for the role of National Director; and
- 09.68.05 thank and discharge the Review Group.

5. REVIEW OF NATIONAL DIRECTOR, MULTICULTURAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY

Jason Kioa spoke to Document 7, consisting of a report on the review of National Director, Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry.

09.69 It was resolved to:

- 09.69.01 receive the report;
- 09.69.02 affirm with thanks the leadership of Rev Tony Floyd as National Director, Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Ministry over the past two and half years and extend his appointment for a further term of five years from March 2010;
- 09.69.03 request the national reference committee, Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Ministry in consultation with the working groups and the National Director to review the number and purpose of the working groups that report to the Reference Committee within the mandate of Uniting Faith and Discipleship;
- 09.69.04 request that the Associate General Secretary in consultation with the reference committee, Multicultural and Cross Cultural Ministry bring a revised position description of the National Director to the March 2010 meeting, that accurately reflects the location of Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Ministry within the Mandate of Uniting Faith and Discipleship; and
- 09.69.05 thank and discharge the Review Group

6. WCC PAPER – TOWARDS A JUST PEACE

The General Secretary presented Document 14, consisting of a draft response from the Uniting Church in Australia to the World Council of Churches' initial statement towards an ecumenical declaration on just peace.

09.70 It was resolved to:

09.70.01 receive the report; and

09.70.02 submit the paper as the Uniting Church in Australia's response to the World Council of Churches initial statement towards an ecumenical declaration on just peace, on the recommendation of the Christian Unity Working Group.

7. "WHAT SORT OF CHURCH GOD IS CALLING US TO BE"

Wendie Wilkie spoke to Document 9, consisting of a proposal on how a discussion on this topic could be facilitated in the Church. Table group discussion ensued.

09.71 It was resolved to:

09.71.01 receive the report; and

09.71.02 request the General Secretary to arrange for a facilitated conversation during a Standing Committee meeting in 2010, that will address the "values and culture" discussion outlined in 12th Assembly minute 09.12(d) with a view to giving consideration to whether this may lead to changes to the Constitution and Regulations.

CLOSURE

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

2010 MEETING DATES:

19 – 21 March 2010

16 – 18 July 2010

19 – 21 November 2010