

Uniting Church in Australia

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

20 – 23 March 2015

PRESENT Andrew Dutney (President), Bethany Broadstock, Michelle Cook, Denise Champion, Terence Corkin, Dennis Corowa, Emma Davison, Kate Fraser, Geoffrey Grinton, Zac Hatfield Dodds, Andrew Johnson, Jason Kioa, Alistair Macrae, Stuart McMillan, Deidre Palmer, Ian Price, Isabel Thomas-Dobson, Ian Tozer and Jenny Tymms.

In attendance: Peter Andrews, Jenny Bertalan, Glenda Blakefield, Chris Budden, John Cox, Gary Doyle, Peter Jones, Rosemary Hudson-Miller, Mark Lawrence, Matt Pulford, Nigel Rogers, Chris Walker, Andrew Williams.

WORSHIP On the Friday evening, as part of the formation of the community, the President preached and presided at the opening Service of Holy Communion. On the Saturday Deidre Palmer led morning worship and Kate Fraser led evening prayers. On the Sunday Stuart McMillan led morning worship. On the Monday Alistair Macrae led morning worship and the closing prayer in the afternoon was led by the President.

WELCOMES

The President welcomed all participants to the Standing Committee meeting with a special welcome to Gary Doyle as the new General Secretary of the Queensland Synod. Also welcomed as visitors were Gregor Henderson, Jim Mein, Grahame Ryan, Bruce Alcorn, and Lin Hatfield Dodds for matters related to Frontier Services; Jim Mein, Robert Elkhuisen and Bruce Binnie for matters related to the Beneficiary Fund; Duncan Macleod for the report of the Task Group on the Ministry of Pastor and Anne Perrin for the report of the Task Group on "Revisiting Eldership".

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

15.05 **It was resolved to** accept the apologies of Emma Davison for Monday, Deidre Palmer for Sunday.

PASTORAL MATTERS

It was shared that Ros McMillan has been in hospital but is improving.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The General Secretary spoke to the agenda and timetable as listed in Document 1. Documents 9, 15 and 20B were distributed at the meeting.

15.06 **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

15.07 **It was resolved to** confirm the minutes of the

1. meeting held on November 14 - 16 2014; and
2. teleconference held on February 27 2015.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

15.08 It was resolved in relation to the conflicts of interest to:

- a) note:
 - (i) Chris Walker's conflict of interest in relation to the report of the Nominating Committee for National Director, Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry and the Nomination for General Secretary; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be absent for this business;
- b) note:
 - (i) Glenda Blakefield's and Terence Corkin's conflict of interest in relation to the report of the Nominating Committee for the General Secretary position; and
 - (ii) resolve that they be absent for this business; and
- c) note:
 - (i) Glenda Blakefield's conflict of interest in relation to the deliberative session on the budget for 2015 - 16; and
 - (ii) resolve that she be absent for this business

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 Friday evening the President reported on a range of activities in which he had been involved since the November Standing Committee meeting. He said that these experiences reveal, on the one hand, the continuing vitality of the church and, on the other hand, the decay and collapse of practices and institutions that thrived in Christendom but are not fitted to the post-Christendom situation in which we are finding ourselves. The events he mentioned included:

- speaking at a young adults celebration in the South Moreton Presbytery (Brisbane)
- spending a week with the young, multicultural community at NYALC 2014 (Sydney)
- visiting Presbytery ministers in western NSW
- teaching an intensive course on the Heritage, Theology and Polity of the UCA (Adelaide)
- speaking at the biennial DUCA conference (Adelaide)
- visiting the national meeting of the Assembly Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry reference committee (Adelaide)
- participating in the NCCA Executive (Sydney)
- chairing the 2nd national consultation on theological colleges
- facilitating a long mediation process in one of the Synods
- chairing the national meeting on the future sustainability of the Assembly
- chairing an emergency Moderators' teleconference on Frontier Services
- chairing a special ASC teleconference on the Royal Commission on Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

The President expressed appreciation for the recent work of Dr Keith Suter on "The Future of the UCA", in which he has applied scenario planning to develop four "futures" for the Uniting Church:

1. Word and Deed (a UCA comprised of a small number of large congregations that balance the proclamation of the Gospel, nurturing Christian discipleship and fellowship and delivering services to people in need in the wider community)
2. Secular Welfare (a UCA that no longer includes congregations and is instead a network of community service agencies delivering government funded services)
3. Early Church (a UCA which has discarded its corporate businesslike nature and is operates as a network of small congregations and individuals focussed on fellowship and discipleship, with no government-funded services)
4. Recessional (from the music played at the conclusion of a service of worship – this UCA is finding a dignified way to distribute its assets and wind up)

The President noted that these “futures” (and others too) are already evident in the present Uniting Church; a fact made evident not only through his experiences as President but also in the reports from the National Census of UCA Congregations and Ministers (2014).

The President expressed concern that the church’s imagination and Regulations do not always grasp the diversity of the Uniting Church’s life. He mentioned the fact that while the UCA is largely a “small church” denomination, with a median congregational attendance of 35, we also have more than 40 congregations with weekly attendances of over 200 people. Larger churches are necessarily organised and led in different ways to smaller churches. He spoke about the anomaly of formally dissolving congregations when what is really intended is the closure of a church building; in many instances a de facto congregation of 10-20 people remains in the town or neighbourhood after the formalities of dissolution are completed. The President said that the Uniting Church would be well served by developing a more robust theology of diversity which was less about the simple acknowledgement that people are different and more about the celebration of and commitment to the diverse ways in which the Spirit gathers and equips the church today.

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

On Friday night the General Secretary walked the Standing Committee through the agenda indicating to people the objectives to be achieved at the meeting, the shape of the agenda and the expected outcomes.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. Beneficiary Fund (ASC Minute 14.48.04)

Bruce Binnie, Robert Elkhuisen and Jim Mein spoke to Documents 10, 10A, 10B, 10C and 10D, consisting of a report on the Transition Board Arrangements, the draft Participation Agreement, the proposed Policy Committee and Employer Committee.

15.10 **It was resolved to:**

15.10.01 receive the report;

15.10.02 approve the reduction in the number of Directors of Benefund Ltd from eight to six from 1 April 2015;

15.10.03 approve a further reduction from 1 November 2015 in the number of Directors from 6 to the minimum number (if required) to maintain the corporation during

the run-off period for director liability insurance and until the company can be de-registered with ASIC;

- 15.10.04 authorise the General Secretary to approve such amendments to the Constitution and Rules of the Fund as may be necessary to effect such changes;
- 15.10.05 authorise the Assembly Officers on advice from the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee to endorse the draft Participation Agreement, noting that further work is required;
- 15.10.06 authorise the Assembly Officers on advice from the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee to direct the Directors of UCA Assembly Ltd. to execute the Participation Agreement on behalf of the Church;
- 15.10.07 authorise the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee to give consent to Benefund Limited to amend the Rules of the Beneficiary Fund to the extent that they may be required to effect the successor fund transfer, provided such amendment does not adversely affect the accrued benefits of any member or beneficiary of the Beneficiary Fund;
- 15.10.08 appoint Rev Robert Elkhuizen (VIC/TAS), Bruce Binnie (QLD), Alice McCleary (SA) and Robert Locke (WA) as the initial Members of the Policy Committee for the Beneficiary Fund sub-plan of the Mercer Master Trust;
- 15.10.09 invite the Synods to provide nominations to the Assembly for two positions as Assembly members of the Policy Committee, one of which will be from the Synod of NSW / ACT;
- 15.10.10 authorize the Assembly Officers, on advice from the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee to approve the Assembly Standing Committee Superannuation Delegations instrument;
- 15.10.10 request the Directors of Benefund to return to the next meeting of the Standing Committee with a process for appointments and terms of office for the Policy Committee; and
- 15.10.11 record its appreciation to the Directors of the Beneficiary Fund for the careful and professional leadership they have exercised in enabling this transition to take place.

2. Code of Conduct for Lay Persons (ASC Minute 14.69.02)

The General Secretary spoke to Documents 16 and 16A, consisting of a report on the work that has been done to develop a Code of Conduct for Lay Persons and a draft policy.

15.11 It was resolved to:

- 15.11.01 receive the report;
- 15.11.02 request Alison Atkinson-Phillips to redraft a Code of Conduct for Lay Persons; and
- 15.11.03 request the General Secretary to bring the redrafted version of the Code of Conduct for Lay Persons to a later meeting of the Standing Committee.

3. Complaints Processes Task Group (ASC Minute 14.85)

Document 19, consisting of a report from the Complaints Processes Task Group was moved formally.

15.12 It was resolved to:

- 15.12.01 receive the report;
- 15.12.02 receive the correspondence for Rev John Cox on behalf of the inter-Synod National Complaints Conversation group; and
- 15.12.03 note that the terms of reference anticipated in ASC minute 14.85 will be brought to the August 2015 meeting of the Standing Committee.

4. Elders Revisited (ASC Minute 14.28.04)

Anne Perrin and Geoffrey Grinton presented Document 6, consisting of a report on the background and process used by the Task Group that was established to revisit the ministry of Elders in the Uniting Church and to consider possible changes to the Constitution and Regulations.

15.13 It was resolved to:

- 15.13.01 receive the report;
- 15.13.02
- a) endorse in principle the proposed changes to the Constitution and the Regulations as a way forward, and ; and
 - b) request the Task Group to revise the report in the light of the discussion at the Standing Committee in order to propose to the 14th Assembly that the Church Council is comprised of all the Elders / Leaders of a Congregation.

5. Frontier Services (ASC Minutes 14.50.04(b) and 14.76.04)

Bruce Alcorn, Lin Hatfield Dodds, Gregor Henderson, Jim Mein and Grahame Ryan introduced Documents 2, 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G and 2H, consisting of a report from the Frontier Services Interim Board, a Review of Frontier Services Patrol Ministry, Future Options Report, Recommended Option: Option 7, Frontier Services Budget 2015-2016, Frontier Services Annual Accounts – Year Ended 30 June 2014, Frontier Services Management Accounts, Additional Information on Frontier Services Finances and Cash Flow Forecast to 30 June 2015. The Standing Committee dedicated two sessions to discussing these matters.

15.14 It was resolved to:

- 15.14.01 receive the report;
- 15.14.02 direct the Frontier Services Board to negotiate for the withdrawal of Frontier Services from all government funded community services and its exit from the services known as the Atherton Group Home and Charleville Early Learning Centre by June 30th 2015;
- 15.14.03 determine that Frontier Services
- a) move to no longer provide direct oversight and management of the patrol ministries; and
 - b) fund patrols that are delivered by other Uniting Church Councils or bodies;
- 15.14.04 direct Frontier Services to enter into negotiations with synods and the presbyteries where patrol ministries are presently funded in order that together they identify
- a) which patrols will be funded by Frontier Services' grants to the synods;
 - b) the elements and timeline for a transition plan to the new arrangements; and
 - c) complete the transition to the new arrangements by 1 January 2016;

- 15.14.05 establish a process that will enable a National Consultation on Remote Area Ministry to be held prior to the 14th Assembly that
- a) will provide recommendations to the Assembly and other Councils and Agencies of the church in relation to:
 - (i) the definition of, and criteria for determining, what constitutes “remote area ministry”;
 - (ii) the needs of the people and communities in remote Australia including the first peoples;
 - (iii) priorities for ministry and mission with the people and communities of remote Australia;
 - (iv) which Councils and / or Agencies of the Church should have responsibility for the delivery of the various aspects of ministry and mission on behalf of the Uniting Church and in what ways they may collaborate in that ministry and mission;
 - (v) such other matters that it considers to be relevant; and
 - (vi) report to the 14th Assembly through a supplementary report of the Assembly Standing Committee on the directions identified, and to the August meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee with particular recommendations including but not limited to the ongoing role for Frontier Services in the delivery of community recovery, volunteer and pastoral programs and as a funding body for remote area ministry;
 - b) invites Synods, relevant Presbyteries, the UAICC and relevant UnitingCare agencies to participate with the Assembly in the National Consultation on how the Uniting Church will give expression to its commitment to the people of remote Australia; and
 - c) is funded through participating bodies covering the cost of their participation;
- 15.14.06 appoint the President (Convenor), Chris Budden, Peter Jones and a nominee of the Frontier Services Interim Board as members of the Working Group to make all arrangements for a National Consultation on Remote Area Ministry;
- 15.14.07
- a) authorise the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee (AFARC) to approve a 2015/16 budget for Frontier Services based on the draft provided by Frontier Services with the requirement that the budget include a contingency for non recurrent costs of \$450,000, a surplus of at least \$25,000 and 5% of income directed to repayment of the loan from Assembly;
 - b) require Frontier Services to report bi monthly to AFARC, on a schedule established by AFARC, on the performance of its budget and any remedial action (excluding sale of assets as part of the remedial action) taken to ensure that the 2015/16 expenditure achieves the budgeted surplus notwithstanding any shortfall in income or unbudgeted expenses, including from legacy issues;
 - c) request AFARC to include a report on the performance of Frontier Services to budget in its report to each Standing Committee with commentary;
 - d) require that Frontier Services budgets beyond 2015 /16 include a provision for loan repayment to the Assembly of at least 10% of its budgeted income, and
 - e) require that the proceeds from the sale of assets, after the repayment of the loan to Uniting Financial Services (NSW), be directed to the reduction of the Assembly loan with the first priority being any amounts owing to the UAICC;
- 15.14.08 request Frontier Services to bring to the August 2015 meeting of the Standing Committee
- a) nominations for appointment to the Board; and
 - b) a revised Constitution, mandate and other proposed governance arrangements that give effect to the decisions taken by the ASC, and

which excludes the involvement of Frontier Services in the delivery of any government funded community services and patrol ministry.

Communications Strategy re Frontier Services decisions

15.15 It was resolved to:

- 15.15.01 request the Assembly Officers to institute a communications strategy which:
- a) affirms the commitment of the UCA to rural and remote Australia;
 - b) affirms those who carry out this ministry on behalf of the Church; and
 - c) speaks about the transition phase we have entered into noting:
 - (i) transfer of aged care and community services to UnitingCare agencies;
 - (ii) ongoing patrol ministry;
 - (iii) the need to develop new models of ministry for remote Australia;
 - (iv) engagements with Synods and other agencies;
 - (v) President to convene a national consultation on ministry in remote Australia; and
 - (vi) Frontier Services continuation including volunteer and fundraising programs;
- 15.15.02 the communication to go to Synods, Presbyteries, UAICC, congregations and agencies; and
- 15.15.03 the report to be included in the Assembly papers to include information consistent with that included in the communication strategy.

6. National Complaints Register (ASC Minute 14.53.04)

The General Secretary presented Documents 22, 22A and 22B, consisting of a report.

15.16 It was resolved to:

- 15.16.01 receive the report; and
- 15.16.02 request the General Secretary to
- a) prepare a further draft of the National Complaints Register taking into account comments from the meeting;
 - b) consult with the Synod Secretaries and the inter Synod group of persons who deal with complaints on the draft; and
 - c) bring a revised draft National Complaints Register to the August meeting with a view to adopting a National Complaints Register.

7. Nomination for General Secretary (ASC minute 14.54.04(iii))

Alistair Macrae chaired the meeting while the President introduced Document 9, consisting of a report of the Nominating Committee and a nomination for the Assembly General Secretary position.

15.17 It was resolved to:

- 15.17.01 receive the report;
- 15.17.02 resolve to recognise the role of Assembly General Secretary as appropriate for the exercise of the ministry of Pastor;
- 15.17.03 recommend to the 14th Assembly that Colleen Geyer be appointed as the General Secretary from the 1 January 2016;

- 15.17.04 embargo the disclosure of this nomination until the first mailing of papers for the 14th Assembly;
- 15.17.05 seek advice on the term of the appointment to be recommended to the 14th Assembly;
- 15.17.06 note that the remuneration package for a lay person in the role of Assembly General Secretary has been determined as per ASC Minute 14.80.02 to be the equivalent of the ministerial stipend package of the Synod of NSW and the ACT with an uplift of 30% plus the allowances associated with that stipend and the provision of a manse and a motor vehicle; and
- 15.17.07 refer the transitional issues and processes discussed in the meeting to the Assembly Officers.

8. Nominating Committee for National Director – Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry (ASC Minute 14.70.03)

Glenda Blakefield, Michelle Cook and Jason Kioa presented Document 15, consisting of a progress report of the Nominating Committee.

15.18 It was resolved to:

- 15.18.01 receive the report; and
- 15.18.02 appoint Rev Dr Apwee Ting as National Director Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Ministry to a limited placement of two years, from a date to be negotiated with the Associate General Secretary.

9. Review of the Ministry of Pastor (ASC Minute 13.64.03)

Duncan Macleod introduced Documents 5, 5A and 5B, consisting of a report of the Task Group and the Lay Ministry Remuneration Guidelines and the Congregation and Presbytery Guidelines to Employing Lay Ministry Workers from the Synod of NSW / ACT.

15.19 It was resolved to:

- 15.19.01 receive the report;
- 15.19.02 recommend that the Assembly
 - a) delete Regulations 2.3.3.a(ii) and 2.3.3(c) and to make any other consequential amendments;
 - b) remove the requirement of membership for a period of 12months under Regulation 2.4.6(a) and replace it with a requirement of membership for no required period of time; and
- 15.19.03 refer the report and the other proposals in the report to the incoming Standing Committee.

10.Task Group to Review Regulation 5.5.1 (ASC Minute 14.86.08(c))

The proposals in Document 24 were moved formally.

15.20 It was resolved to:

- 15.20.01 receive the report; and
- 15.20.02 authorise the Task Group to bring a recommendation for amendment to Regulation 5.5.1 to the 14th Assembly.

11.UCA Assembly Ltd. (ASC Minute 14.13)

The General Secretary spoke to Documents 12, 12A and 12B, consisting of a report on the process that led to the drafting of a new constitution, the draft 2015 Constitution and the 2004 Constitution.

15.21 It was resolved to:

- 15.21.01 adopt the revised Constitution for UCA Assembly Ltd, as amended in the discussion at the meeting; and
- 15.21.02 request the Company Secretary and the General Secretary to do such things as necessary to enable the implementation of the Standing Committee's expectations with respect to the operation of UCA Assembly Ltd; including but not limited to:
- a) advertising for new Directors and, with the advice of the current Directors, bring nominations for appointment to the August meeting of the Standing Committee;
 - b) in consultation with Agencies that utilize the Assembly body corporate and the current Directors, develop the supporting documents and procedures that will enable the Directors to function as anticipated in the decisions expressed in ASC minute 14.13; and
 - c) report on the outcome of this work to the August 2015 meeting of the Standing Committee.

12.2015/16 Budget (ASC Minute 14.86.10)

The General Secretary introduced Documents 4, 4A and 4B, consisting of a budget narrative, the 2015/16 Budget and the supplementary documents requested by the Standing Committee. Much discussion followed.

15.22 It was resolved to:

- 15.22.01 receive the report;
- 15.22.02 in the light of the discussion recommend to the General Secretary that in order to achieve a balanced budget for the next two financial years that the budget be framed taking into account the following considerations
- a) in the light of the reserves available to UnitingWorld Church Connections, maintain UnitingWorld Church Connections at 2014/2015 grant of \$222,000 for the next two years; and allow UnitingWorld Church Connections to draw on reserves up to the amount of the reduction in the grant in order to balance its budgets;
 - b) accept with gratitude the offer of the UAICC to reduce its grant from the Assembly Fund by \$70,000 for 2015/2016 year, and express the intention of returning the next year to the 2013/14 budgeted level
 - c) cease funding Songs That Unite;
 - d) reduce funding for the Secretariat to reflect the discontinuation of the Associate General Secretary position while retaining funds for supply and costs to aid the transition to new General Secretary
 - e) reduce funding for UnitingJustice Australia by \$35,000;
- 15.22.03
- a) affirm project based budgeting reflecting Assembly priorities, as the preferred framework for the future ways of fulfilling the work of the Assembly; and
 - b) appoint a task group of Michelle Cook, Jenny Tymms and Stu Cameron, in consultation with the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee, to further develop this scenario, in consultation with the new General Secretary, working on income of no more than \$2.5 million from Synod grants, and present it to the March 2016 meeting of the Standing Committee;

- 15.22.04 request the General Secretaires to continue the conversation about funding to determine an equitable and sustainable funding model for the work of the Assembly and present that model to the Assembly Standing Committee in March 2016; and
- 15.22.05 request the Assembly Business Committee to make time for a discussion around the financing of the functions of the 14th Assembly.

FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

1. Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee

Peter Andrews spoke to Documents 3 and 3A consisting of a report from the Committee and a statement of net available funds.

15.23 It was resolved to:

- 15.23.01 receive the report;
- 15.23.02 a) establish the following process by which it will review and refine its Risk matrix and to ensure there is appropriate risk mitigation:
- (i) appoint Isabel Thomas Dobson to update the risk register and Peter Andrews to offer comments on the current risk register;
 - (ii) the practice of nominating Standing Committee participants to reconsider the risk register before each meeting; and
- 15.23.03 decline to auspice the establishment of a national legal vehicle for UnitingCare activities.

2. Assembly Standing Committee Governance Group

The General Secretary presented Document 14, consisting of a report from the Task Group.

15.24 It was resolved to:

- 15.24.01 receive the report;
- 15.24.02 establish a Governance Reference Committee with the following terms of reference:

Name

Assembly Standing Committee Governance Reference Committee

Membership:

The President, President-elect, General Secretary, and three members of the Standing Committee.

Report: Each ASC meeting.

Review: Every 3 years. March 2018

Purpose:

To assist the Standing Committee in the fulfillment of its governance responsibilities by

1. ensuring that the agenda of the Standing Committee includes sufficient time for it to undertake its governance role;
2. identifying the resources required at particular meetings in order to fulfill this responsibility; and

3. undertaking other roles as directed by the Standing Committee that will assist it to be an effective governance body.

Particular Tasks:

1. Work with agencies and other bodies to develop guidelines and a timetable for them to report in a timely, informative and succinct manner on the exercise of their delegations.
2. Identify and plan into the ASC agenda opportunities for the Assembly to engage with those areas of the Assembly's work for which no governance responsibilities have been delegated.
3. Shape the agenda of ASC meetings with due regard to issues of strategic importance and / or urgency for the Assembly and the wider Uniting Church.
4. Reflect upon the performance of the ASC and feed back to it how it can better undertake its responsibilities.
5. Assist the General Secretary to identify agenda items.
6. Enhance the capacity of the ASC in the fulfillment of its governance role by undertaking tasks referred to it from time to time; e.g. considering areas where co-options may be appropriate.

3. General Report

15.25 It was resolved to receive the report.

4. Legal Reference Committee

15.26 It was resolved to receive the report.

5. Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry

15.27 It was resolved to receive the report.

6. National Task Group re the Royal Commission

The General Secretary spoke to Document 13, consisting of a report from the National Task Group.

15.28 It was resolved to:

15.28.01 receive the report;

15.28.02 appoint David Pargeter to membership of the National Task Group;

15.28.03 request the 14th Assembly Business Committee to allocate time in the agenda to:

- a) receive advice about Royal Commission related issues which may include:
 - (i) providing members with an update on the redress scheme proposed by the Royal Commission in its final paper, anticipated on June 30th, and any implications for the UCA including possible financial impact
 - (ii) issues relative to legal structures - possibly including incorporation and
 - (iii) the development of a complaints register;
- b) use the kind of forum that was used in the 2014 Queensland Synod meeting for consideration of Commission related matters; and
- c) invite Justice Peter McClellan to address the Assembly on the work of the Commission with particular reference to redress and legal structures;

- 15.28.04 request Synods in their reports to the 14th Assembly to include comment on how Synods are responding to the work of the Royal Commission;
- 15.28.05 request the Task Group, in consultation with the Legal Reference Committee, to recommend proposals that will enable the 14th Assembly to make changes to the Regulations including, but not limited to, reference to a Complaints Register and to addressing possible changes to legal structures; and
- 15.28.06
- a) delegate responsibility to appoint the new Executive Officer for the National Task Group for a period of two years and up to 70% time, to the National Task Group; and
 - b) request the Assembly Officers to appoint a member of the Standing Committee to the Joint Nominating Committee;
- 15.28.07
- a) refer Commissioner Fitzgerald's comments at Public Hearing 24 to the UnitingCare Australia Executive; and
 - b)
 - (i) request that it provide advice on a way in which it will be possible for Uniting Church Agencies to overcome Commissioner Fitzgerald's concerns; and
 - (ii) report to the August 2015 meeting of the Standing Committee.

7. UAICC re WA Communities

Chris Budden presented Document 8, consisting of a report on actions taken by the Government of Western Australia in relation to remote Aboriginal communities.

15.29 It was resolved to:

- 15.29.01 receive the report; and
- 15.29.02 note the serious distress caused to Aboriginal people by the disclosure that the Western Australian Government considers that a large number of remote Aboriginal communities will have to close;
- 15.29.03 note the decision of the National Conference of Congress to:
- a) call on the Western Australian and Federal governments to apologise to the Aboriginal peoples who suffered distress as a result of this information becoming public;
 - b) call on the Federal, State and Local Governments to develop a Code of Conduct on how to work sensitively with Aboriginal people and the Code be developed through consultation with the communities; and
 - c) call on the Federal and State governments to initiate research in consultation with all remote communities to develop ways of sustaining the connection of small, remote communities with their land;
- 15.29.04 commit the Assembly to work with Congress, Synods, and UnitingCare, to raise these matters with governments; and
- 15.29.05 call on the Federal Government and the Government of Western Australia to contribute to adequate funding and services to remote communities.

8. Working Group on Doctrine

Alistair Macrae introduced Document 7, consisting of a report from the Working Group on the process followed; a description of the approach taken by the Working Group; a summary of the key themes from the responses received from approximately 438 groups and individuals; and a mapping of the further resourcing the Working Group believes the Church needs in order to make faithful and well-informed decisions in this area. Much discussion ensued.

- 15.30 It was resolved to:**
- 15.30.01 receive the report;
- 15.30.02 request Synods to:
- a) remind Ministers who are recognized marriage celebrants under the Commonwealth Marriage Act 1961 of their legal and liturgical obligations to conduct marriage services according to the rites of the Uniting Church in Australia, including:
 - (i) paying particular attention to the notes and rubrics in the Marriage Service, so that they can distinguish between what is optional and what is required in the conduct of a UCA Marriage Service; and
 - (ii) where services are conducted in languages other than English, using an approved translation of the UCA Marriage Service or, where such a translation is unavailable, approved services from a partner church that meet the legal and theological criteria of the UCA;
 - b) notify UCA Councils and agencies responsible for Code of Ethics training of the need to ensure that the legal and liturgical standards required of UCA marriage celebrants are known and adequately supervised under the Code of Ethics;
- 15.30.03 note that the Working Group on Doctrine, in consultation with relevant people and groups, will undertake further doctrinal exploration of the Uniting Church's understanding of marriage including but not limited to:
- (i) the changing scientific and cultural understandings of human nature and relationships that inform and shape our society's changing norms;
 - (ii) understandings of the spectrum of sexual differentiation including intersexuality and transgenderism;
 - (iii) the Christian vocation to celibacy;
 - (iv) the Uniting Church's understanding of the use and authority of scripture in the formation of doctrine;
 - (v) how the churches prior to Union came to a decision to permit divorce and the remarriage of divorced persons prior to the presentation of the 1997 statement on divorce to the UCA Assembly;
 - (vi) an exploration of the relationships between Paragraphs 5,10 and 11 of the Basis of Union in terms of ethical decision-making and theological discernment more generally; and
 - (vii) whether on the basis of (i)-(vi) the Uniting Church should maintain the current definition of marriage or change it to include same-gender covenantal relationships.
- 15.30.04 recommend to the 14th Assembly that the Assembly
- a) receive the report on 'The theology of marriage and same gender relationships within the Uniting Church';
 - b) affirm that Ministers continue to be free to accept or refuse requests to celebrate marriages within the constraints of the Marriage Act 1961 (CTH);
 - c) request the Standing Committee to explore how the UAICC and CALD communities can engage in further discussions about marriage and same-gender issues in culturally appropriate ways; and
 - d) request the Standing Committee to:
 - (i) establish a Task Group to investigate the implications of changing the Church's current relationship with the Commonwealth Government with respect to the conduct of marriages;
 - (ii) set appropriate Terms of Reference for this work, allowing for an exploration of the possibilities that this work may be undertaken in consultation with our ecumenical partners; and

- (iii) report, with appropriate recommendations, to the Fifteenth Assembly.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Admission of Ministers Committee Mandate

- 15.31 **It was resolved to** approve the amended Mandate of the Admission of Ministers Committee. (Attachment A)

2. Code of Ethics in Plain English.

- 15.32 **It was resolved to:**

- 15.32.01 receive the report;

- 15.32.02 request the General Secretary to send the "Plain English" version of the *Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice* to

- a) the UAICC National Executive, the Multicultural and Cross Cultural Ministry people in Synods and the National Committee asking them whether such a resource would be useful in their context and whether they have any comments on the draft; and
- b) the Synod Secretaries asking that the synods provide feedback on whether they consider that the draft is consistent with the official *Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice* and any other feedback to the General Secretary; and

- 15.32.03 request the General Secretary to bring a report on the results of the consultation to the March 2016 meeting of the Standing Committee and recommendations on the endorsement of an official "plain English" version.

3. Delegations Given to Agencies

The General Secretary introduced Documents 11 and 11A, consisting of a report and a spread sheet on delegations given to Agencies as they are reflected in mandates, terms of reference, constitutions and governance documents. Table group discussion followed.

- 15.33 **It was resolved to:**

- 15.33.01 receive the report;

- 15.33.02 refer the issues identified through the table group discussion to the incoming Standing Committee with encouragement to move forward with developing, as a high priority, an an adequate system of delegations.

4. Discipline Regulations

The General Secretary spoke to Document 29, consisting of correspondence from the Convenor of the Synod Standing Appeal Panel (South Australia).

- 15.34 **It was resolved to:**

- 15.34.01 receive the correspondence; and

- 15.34.02 request the General Secretary to

- a) prepare proposals for the 14th Assembly that will enable it to address the proposed changes to the Discipline regulations that are raised in the correspondence; and
- b) forward to Synod Secretaries, for appropriate internal distribution, the advice from the Synod Standing Appeal Panel (SA) regarding the

importance of Committee for Discipline processes guarding against the risk of perceived or actual procedural bias.

5. General Business

The General Secretary presented Document 23, consisting of various matters.

15.35 It was resolved to:

- 15.35.01 receive the report;
- 15.35.02 recommend to the 14th Assembly that the Assembly adopt the policy that
- a) (i) any person who is Staff of the Assembly or of any of its agencies is ineligible for election to the Standing Committee. If a member of the Standing Committee accepts appointment as Staff of the Assembly or of any of its agencies then that member shall no longer be a member of the Standing Committee; and
 - (ii) staff means a person who has a direct reporting line or accountability to the General Secretary or Associate General Secretary, or who is a member of the team or support staff who has a direct reporting line to that person;
- 15.35.03 appoint Agio (Fie) Marino to the membership of the Christian Unity Working Group; (agreement)
- 15.35.04 determine that the location of the Doctrine Working Group from the next triennium be Melbourne;
- 15.35.05 amend the Terms of Reference for the Multicultural and Cross-cultural Reference Committee to read:

Membership of the Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry National Reference Committee

Membership of the National Reference Committee will normally consist of Uniting Church members appointed in according with the Mandate of Uniting Faith and Discipleship with the following additions for this specific work area:

- The staff member of Uniting Faith and Discipleship with responsibility for the work area within which the committee operates – *National Director Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry*;
- The Associate General Secretary;
- The Chairperson appointed by the Triennial Assembly;
- The Convenor of the National Conferences
- Additional persons appointed by the Assembly Standing Committee at the first meeting after the Triennial Assembly, with expertise in the work area and up to a total of ~~sixteen~~ fifteen persons.

- 15.35.06 acting under the authority granted under Regulation 3.10.1 make an alternative Regulation 3.3.8 (a) (i) such that for the 14th Assembly the National Coordinator of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and not the National Administrator shall be an ex officio member of the triennial Assembly;
- 15.35.07 receive the correspondence from the Uniting Justice Australia Reference Committee;
- 15.35.08 receive the verbal report in relation to the National Consultation on Theological Education and request a further report to the August meeting of the Standing Committee;

- 15.35.09
 - a) receive the correspondence from the Formation, Education and Discipleship Reference Committee; and
 - b) at the request of the Chairperson not consider the matters raised in the correspondence;
- 15.35.10 receive the correspondence from the Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee;
- 15.35.11 determine that the effective date for the revised Part 6 – Appeals regulations and the consequential amendments be 1 June 2015;
- 15.35.12 receive the reports of the General Secretaries re the slow progress in relation to ASC minutes 14.37.03 and 14.37.04 and note that the work continues;
- 15.35.13 appoint the convenor of the national Standing Appeal Panel by electronic voting;
- 15.35.14
 - a) receive the correspondence from the Synod of NSW / ACT re the current limit of 30% for the tax free payment within stipends; and
 - b) refer it to the incoming Standing Committee; and
- 15.35.15 appoint Mr Peter Uhlmann as a member of the National Committee for UnitingWorld Relief and Development.

6. Induction Service for Defence Force Chaplains

- 15.36** **It was resolved to** defer Document 25 to the August meeting of the Standing Committee with a request for advice from the Working Group on Doctrine prior to the meeting

7. Membership Discussion at the 14th Assembly

The General Secretary introduced Document 21, consisting of a report from the Formation, Education and Discipleship Workshop on a process that will enable the members of the 14th Assembly to discuss a variety of matters around the issue of church membership.

- 15.37** **It was resolved to:**

- 15.37.01 receive the report;
- 15.37.02 request the Assembly Business Committee to set time aside during the 14th Assembly to engage in a significant discussion on church membership and to provide feedback regarding possible future directions;
- 15.37.03 request the Formation, Education and Discipleship Working Group to
 - a) arrange for the development of a document which is a simplified summary of concerns raised by respondents to the 2010 Church Membership paper; and which identifies possible future directions arising from the Church Membership document;
 - b) prepare the document in a way that can be used at the 14th Assembly, along with a suitable process and questions for discussion;
 - c) provide this document to the General Secretary by 15 May 2015;
 - d) receive the feedback from the discussion at the 14th Assembly and to develop the responses from the discussion into a reworking of the Church Membership document; and
 - e) bring a final document on Church Membership with any recommendations for change to the Standing Committee in July 2016.

8. Skills Matrix for the ASC – Preparation for the Next Triennium

The General Secretary introduced Document 17, consisting of a report on possible skills that the ASC requires in its membership.

15.38 It was resolved to:

15.38.01 receive the report; and

15.38.02 endorse the skills matrix as developed at the meeting for use by the incoming Standing Committee.

9. 14th Assembly Preparations

The General Secretary spoke to Documents 20, 20A and 20B, consisting of a report on a number of areas where decisions needed to be taken, the Standing Committee's report to the 14th Assembly and the list of suggested movers and seconders.

15.39 It was resolved to:

15.39.01 receive the report;

15.39.02 appoint Stuart McMillan, Terence Corkin, Glenda Blakefield, Geoffrey Grinton, Rosemary Hudson Miller, Alison Atkinson - Phillips, Michelle Cook, Deidre Palmer, Chris Budden, Dennis Corowa and Haloti Kailahi as the Business Committee for the 14th Assembly;

15.39.03 approve the direction of the ASC report as the report for the 14th Assembly;

15.39.04 acting under the authority of Regulation 3.3.8 (a)(v) appoint the following persons to the membership of the 14th Assembly:

- a) Warwick van Ede;
- b) Sam Fangatu, Jemma Whittaker and Jordan Crass and the nominees of the Synods NSW / ACT, South Australia and Queensland as advised to the General Secretary; and
- c) Amelia Koh-Butler; Dev Anandarajan; Ki Soo Jang; Nga Ly; Charissa Suli; Do Young Kim; Moses Leth and Akesa Racava; and

15.39.05 authorise the Assembly Officers to identify movers and seconders for the Standing Committee proposals.

CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 4.00pm with prayer led by the President.

DATE FOR 2015 28 – 30 August 2015
13 – 15 November 2015