

Uniting Church in Australia

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

17 – 20 November 2016

PRESENT Stuart McMillan (President), Alison Atkinson-Phillips, Bethany Broadstock, Hayden Charles, Dennis Corowa, John Cox, Lindsay Cullen, Garry Dronfield, Andrew Dutney, Steve Francis, Colleen Geyer, Geoffrey Grinton, Zac Hatfield Dodds, Haloti Kailahi, Denise Liersch, Amelia Koh-Butler, Deidre Palmer, Catherine Pepper, Ian Price, Akesa Racava, Elaine Rae, Isabel Thomas-Dobson, Ian Tozer, Warwick van Ede, Jacki Watts, Wendie Wilkie.

In attendance: Jenny Bertalan, Chris Budden, David de Kock, Heather den Houting, Mark Lawrence, Matt Pulford, Nigel Rogers, Chris Walker.

WORSHIP On the Thursday evening Andrew Dutney lead worship, the Friday morning worship was led by Denise Liersch. On the Thursday night, as part of the formation of the community, the President preached and Dennis Corowa presided at the Service of Holy Communion. During the Service the President acknowledged Cadigal Clan Nation of the Eora people by paying respects for the wisdom of their elders past and their care of country and to all descendants of this nation and the evening prayers were led by Myung Hwa Park. On the Saturday Tim Matton Johnson led morning worship and Akesa Racava led evening prayers. On the Sunday Zac Hatfield Dodds led morning worship and the closing prayer in the afternoon was led by Geoffrey Grinton.

WELCOMES The President welcomed all participants, Catherine Pepper as the new coopted member of the Standing Committee, Kaye Roberts-Thomson for matters related to Education for Ministry Working Group, Claerwen Little, Martin Cowling and Peter Bicknell for matters related to UnitingCare Australia, John Cox for matters related to the Royal Commission; Geoff Thompson for the Marriage conversation, Stuart Woodward and Leo Iosifidis for matters related to the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee; Morag Logan for matters related to Christian Unity Working Group; John Evans for matters related to Incorporation, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.

APOLOGIES

16.46 **It was resolved** to receive the apology Haloti Kailahi for the first session on Sunday; Hayden Charles for Thursday evening, Saturday and Sunday, Chris Walker Friday morning and afternoon, Peter Jones, Peter Andrews, Felicity Amery and Jane Fry for the whole meeting, Catherine Pepper for Thursday night, Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

PASTORAL MATTERS

The pastoral matters also formed part of the worship led by Andrew Dutney on Thursday night. It was shared that Felicity Amery broke her arm, Alistair Macrae will soon start treatment, Peter Andrews had surgery and Jane Fry is suffering from back pain. The President led the meeting in prayers.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The General Secretary spoke to the agenda and timetable as listed in Document 1.

16.47 **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

16.48 It was resolved to confirm the minutes of the meeting held 15-17 July 2016.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest was submitted.

NOTE CONSTITUTION CLAUSE 39

Standing Committee members were reminded of the Constitution clause 39, as per ASC minute 00.71:

“On matters which, by a two thirds majority vote, the Assembly deems to be vital to the life of the Church, the Assembly shall seek the concurrence of the Synods and/or Presbyteries and/or Congregations as the Assembly may determine.”

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

On the Saturday evening the President reported to the Standing Committee on his various activities since the July 2016 meeting of the Standing Committee.

16.49 It was resolved to receive the report (Attachment A).

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. A Destiny Together: Prayer and Fasting (ASC Minute 15.78.05)

This matter formed part of the General Secretary’s report.

2. Assembly Legal Reference Committee (ASC Minute 16.08.02)

Warwick van Ede delivered a verbal progress report.

16.50 It was resolved to receive the report.

3. Education for Ministry (ASC Minute 16.31.02)

Kaye Roberts-Thomson introduced Documents 12, 12A and 12B, consisting of the Standards for Theological Education and Formation: Phase 2 for Ordained Ministries; Guidelines for Consultation with Synod MEBs, Theological Colleges and Educational Agencies and a report on the Education for Ministry Working Group meetings.

16.51 It was resolved to:

- 16.51.01 a) adopt the updated Phase 2 standards for Ordained Ministries as amended (Attachment B); and
- b) request relevant Assembly staff to communicate them to all Synods, MEBs and Theological Colleges for implementation for all commencing students from 1 January 2017 and for current students by 1 July 2017;.
- 16.51.02 a) adopt the Guidelines for Consultation with Synod MEBs, Theological Colleges and Educational Agencies (Attachment C);

- b) request relevant Assembly staff to communicate them to all Synods, MEBs, Theological Colleges and Educational Agencies for implementation from 2017; and
 - c) approve the proposed visitation program;
- 16.51.03
- a) receive the report;
 - b) request the Education for Ministry Working Group to proceed to review the standards for Phases 3 and 4; and
 - c) approve Rev Christine Sorensen as a cooption to the Education for Ministry Working Group.

4. Funding the Assembly (ASC Minute 16.30.03)

The General Secretary spoke to Document 19, consisting of a report on the progress in developing the funding model for the Assembly

16.52 It was resolved to:

- 16.52.01 receive the report; and
- 16.52.02 endorse the proposed approach to Assembly Funding

5. Honouring First Peoples – Sovereignty and Treaty Conversation (ASC Minutes 16.34.03 and 16.34.04)

Chris Budden presented Document 15, consisting of a resource paper to enable the members of the UAICC Executive, the Moderators, representatives of Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry Reference Committee and the Standing Committee participants to engage in a meaningful conversation about Sovereignty and Treaty on the Friday night and Saturday. Murray Muirhead facilitated this meeting.

In the light of the conversation conducted between ASC, the UAICC National Committee the Moderators, General Secretaries and the representatives of the Multicultural and Cross-cultural Reference Committee.

16.53 It was resolved to:

- 16.53.01 a) request the General Secretary to:
 - (i) write to the Synod MEBs
 - a) drawing their attention to s.4viii of the new Standards for Theological Education for Formation Phase 2 for Ordained Ministries;
 - b) reminding them that the ordination Charge and the induction and commissioning vows of Ministers and Pastors commit Ministers to work within the Covenant between the UCA and the UAICC, and accordingly;
 - c) encouraging them to ensure that the formation and education syllabus for which they have responsibilities reflects the UCA's commitment to the Covenant, and
 - d) requesting a progress report on the way the syllabus is reflecting the Uniting Church's commitment to the Covenant
 - (ii) copy the letter to the UAICC MEB and the Education for Ministry Working Group for information;
- b) request Bruce Mullan, the coordinator of the National UCA Theological Educators Consultation (Brisbane, 6-9 December 2016)

to facilitate a conversation between the Consultation participants on how they do and/or could reflect the UCA's commitment to the Covenant in their work as educators; and

- 16.53.02 support resolution 16.11.06.07 a) of UAICC to call on the Commonwealth Government and Northern Territory Government to increase funding support for Indigenous Education, particularly for secondary students in remote areas.

6. National Brand Update (ASC Minute 15.82.02)

Peter Bicknell spoke to Document 10, consisting of a progress report on a national brand and brand governance from UnitingCare Australia National Committee

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

7. New Ways of Working for the Assembly (ASC Minutes 16.32.02-05)

The General Secretary introduced Document 14, consisting of a report on logistics for implementing the proposed model, New Ways of Working, for the Assembly.

- 16.55** **It was resolved to:**

- 16.55.01 note the paper, *The Assembly: New ways of working 2*, and the logistics and timeline for implementing the agreed model as set out therein; and

- 16.55.02 approve the Position Descriptions for Associate General Secretary, Assembly Resourcing, and National Consultant as amended.

8. Task Group on Membership (ASC minutes 15.69.02)

Ian Price presented Document 4, consisting of an interim report identifying the preferred name for membership of a local congregation and the draft liturgy prepared by the Worship Working Group for establishing the annual roll of members

- 16.56** **It was resolved to:**

- 16.56.01 receive the report;

- 16.56.02 approve the use of the term Affirmed Members;

- 16.56.03. request the Membership Task Group to amend the liturgy as appropriate in the light of the work of the Legal Reference Committee; and

- 16.56.04. request the Membership TG to bring a process for establishing the Affirmed Membership of a local congregation to the March 2017 meeting of the Standing Committee;

9. The Church – Towards a Common Vision

Morag Logan spoke to Document 13, consisting of the revised text which had been prepared by Christian Unity Working Group following feedback from 14th Assembly and the Standing Committee to be submitted to The Faith and Order Commission of the WCC as the formal UCA response

- 16.57** **It was resolved to:**

- 16.57.01 receive the report;

- 16.57.02 approve the report as the Uniting Church's formal response to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*;
- 16.57.03 request the President to forward the document to the World Council of Churches;
- 16.57.04 thank Christian Unity Working Group for their work and the clarity of the response.

FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

1. Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee

Stuart Woodward and Leo Iosifidis spoke to Documents 17 and 17A, consisting of a finance report and the statement of net available funds.

16.58 It was resolved to:

- 16.58.01 receive the report;
- 16.58.02 note the satisfactory audit reports received for the Assembly Fund, UnitingCare Australia, UnitingWorld Relief and Development, UnitingWorld Church Connections, UAICC and UCA Assembly Limited; and
- 16.58.03 approve the write off of the loan of \$5M from Assembly to Frontier Services.

2. ASC Governance Reference Committee

The General Secretary presented Document 21, consisting of a report from the Reference Committee.

16.59 It was resolved to note the report.

3. General Secretary's Report

The General Secretary spoke to Documents 24 and 24A, consisting of a report on various matters and a reflection on the World Methodist Conference and Council. She also shared that the General Secretaries and Moderators resolved to call the UCA for 40 days of prayer with 40 hours of prayer to celebrate the UCA's 40th Anniversary in 2017 which will also include 'A Destiny Together – Prayer and Fasting' initiative.

16.60 It was resolved to receive the report.

4. National of the Task Group

John Cox spoke to Documents 3, 3A and 3B, consisting of a report from the National Task Group, the 2016 Audit Report of the Implementation and the UC Royal Commission Communications Strategy (October 2016).

16.61 It was resolved to receive the report.

5. UnitingCare Australia

Peter Bicknell and Martin Cowling introduced Document 9, consisting of a report on issues of risk, governance and compliance, finance, and the work of UnitingCare Australia.

16.62 It was resolved to receive the report.

6. UnitingJustice Australia – Learnings from the Sanctuary Movement

The General Secretary presented Document 7, consisting of an update of planning and preparation and exploration of what we have learned from our participation in the movement. The document also included an Appendix: UCA Sanctuary Guidelines for Congregations.

16.63 It was resolved to receive the report.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. ASC Risk Register

The General Secretary presented Documents 2, 2A, and 2B, consisting of an updated ASC Risk Register, a paper on the process to review the ASC Risk Register and Section 8 Risk Management Network. Table Group discussion followed. The areas to be reviewed were Operational and Strategy.

16.64 It was resolved to:

16.64.01 request the ASC Governance Reference Committee to amend the Risk Register in the light of the comments provided by the Standing Committee during its review; and

16.64.02 bring the amended register to the March 2017 meeting of the Standing Committee.

2. General Business

The General Secretary presented the business in Documents 23, 23A, 23B, 23C and 23D, consisting of a report on various business.

16.65 It was resolved to:

16.65.01 receive the report;

16.65.02 note the resignation of Dr Deidre Palmer as Chair of the UnitingJustice Australia Reference Committee; and that Professor John Langmore has commenced as Acting Chair;

16.65.03 note the appointment of Ms Claerwen Little as the UnitingCare Australia National Director, from 6 February 2017;

16.65.04 note the update re the consultation on the Code of Ethics in plain English, and its inclusion in the Professional Standards for Ministry Agents national project;

16.65.05 request the General Secretary to:

a) advise the Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee that the Standing Committee continues to see ordination as requirement for a placement as a Chaplain in the Australian Defence Force but encourages the Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee to explore what attributes and qualifications would be considered in the Ministry of Pastor to be appropriate for Defence Force Chaplaincy; and

b) bring a report to the July 2017 meeting of the Standing Committee

16.65.06 a) note that the UnitingArchives Network will not be established; and

b) request the Assembly Archivist to write to all Uniting Church archivists, encouraging them to consider becoming a member (or associate member)

of the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA), and if practicable a member of the ASA's Collections of Faith Traditions special interest group;

- 16.65.07 a) note the resignations of Rev Professor Ian Breward and Rev Dr Geoff Thompson from the Admission of Ministers Committee; and
- b) note the minute of appreciation for Rev Professor Ian Breward
- 16.65.08 approve the nomination of Rev Murray Lund as a member of the UCA Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee;
- 16.65.09 approve the nomination of Jenni Hughes as a member of the Worship Working Group; and
- 16.65.10 approve the nominations of Kate Potter and John Manning as members of the UnitingWorld Church Connections National Committee, and Siokatame Tupou as a member of the UnitingWorld Relief and Development National Committee.

3. Marriage Conversation Update

Geoff Thompson introduced Document 16 and 16A, consisting of a progress report on the Worship Working Group's work on marriage and the next steps to 15th Assembly re the issue of marriage and marriage equality in keeping with Assembly and ASC resolutions. Table discussion followed.

16.66 It was resolved to:

- 16.66.01 receive the report;
- 16.66.02 request the National Consultant, Doctrine, Worship and Christian Unity, National Consultant Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry and Interim National Coordinator UAICC to develop a resource that enables people to live in the diversity that is the Uniting Church;
- 16.66.03 a) request Doctrine Working Group to provide the interim work towards their report by the end February 2017;
- b) request the General Secretary to provide the support needed to facilitate two consultations hosted by the President, of 30 people each using the Space for Grace process to consider theologies of marriage and that these consultations occur prior to 30 July 2017;
- c) request the General Secretary to provide support needed, including insights from the consultations, for Presbyteries & Synods to have conversations prior to end November 2017; and
- d) requests Doctrine Working Group to provide their report to March 2018 ASC meeting, including the direction of possible proposals to be taken to the 15th Assembly.

4. Minute of Appreciation

The General Secretary presented Document 8, consisting of a Minute of Appreciation UnitingJustice Australia Reference Committee adopted for Ms Rosemary Hudson Miller.

- 16.67 It was resolved to** note the Minute of Appreciation for Ms Rosemary Hudson Miller with acclamation.

5. National Cooperation

The General Secretary spoke to Document 5, consisting of a report on the ongoing national cooperation work in keeping with the Assembly priority – *To facilitate and encourage national cooperation.*

16.68 **It was resolved to** note the report;

6. Professional Standards

The General Secretary and John Cox introduced Documents 6 and 6A, consisting of a paper on the scope of the review of professional standards for Uniting Church ministry agents and associated project documentation and a draft project plan template.

16.69 **It was resolved to:**

16.69.01 receive the report; and

16.69.02 request the General Secretary to continue to inform the Standing Committee about the progress of this project.

7. Update on Incorporation, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Mark Lawrence spoke to Document 11, consisting of a progress report on the status of the Victorian / Tasmanian Synod Standing Committee's consideration of the Church's incorporation.

16.70 **It was resolved to:**

16.70.01 receive the report of the Victorian and Tasmanian Synod and note its decision, in principle, to incorporate the Church in that Synod by amendment of the Uniting Church in Australia Acts in Victoria and Tasmania as its required response to the Betrayal of Trust Report of the Victorian Parliament;

16.70.02 request the President and General Secretary to call a meeting in the first quarter of 2017 with representatives of each Synod and the UAICC to explore the possibilities and implications of maintaining a uniform legal personality for the Church across each Australian jurisdiction and how that uniformity may be achieved, wherever possible;

16.70.03 a) further to resolution 16.70.02 request the General Secretary refer the question 'in what ways do our legal and regulatory structures reflect the interconciliar nature of the UCA?' to the Polity Committee and provide appropriate resources to facilitate the considerations of the Committee; and

b) that a report on this question be brought to the July 2017 meeting of the Standing Committee.

8. 15th Assembly Update

Mark Lawrence spoke to Document 25, consisting of a report on the options for the venue and date for the 15th Triennial Assembly meeting in July 2018

16.71 **It was resolved to:**

16.71.01 receive the report;

16.71.02 approve flexible accommodation arrangements for the 2018 Assembly meeting to include:

a) commercial accommodation close to the meeting venue;

- b) billeting arranged with local Assembly members or local UCA congregation members;
- c) members own arrangements including staying with family, friends or local members staying at their own homes;

16.71.03 agrees that an equalisation policy be developed to ensure an equal accommodation contribution is paid by all members attending the 15th Triennial Assembly meeting; and

16.71.04 approves that the 15th Triennial Assembly meeting be held at the Box Hill Town Hall, Melbourne, from Sunday 8th July – Saturday 14th July, 2018.

CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 3.35pm with prayer led by Geoffrey Grinton.

DATES FOR 2017: **3 – 5 March 2017**
 14 – 16 July 2017
 10 – 12 November 2017

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 President

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 Date