

B17 WORKING GROUP ON WORSHIP

1. RELOCATION OF THE WORKING GROUP

After the meeting of the Fourteenth Assembly, the Working Group on Worship relocated to South Australia, with Rev. Dr Graham Vawser as Convenor. The members of the Working Group have been Rev. Peter Gador-Whyte, Rev. Christine Gilbert, Rev. Sean Gilbert, Rev. Jenni Hughes, John Howland (Secretary), Rev. Do Young Kim, Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler, Rev. David MacGregor, Craig Mitchell, Pastor Wendy Perkins, Rev. Matthew Stuart, Rev. Alison Whish, with Assembly representation from Rev. Dr Chris Walker (until July 2017) and Rev. Lindsay Cullen (since October 2017).

2. GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

After the relocation to South Australia, the Working Group set priorities for its work during the triennium. These included emphases on resourcing the worship of the Uniting Church more broadly, the preparation of web-based resources, being aware of the different styles of worship across the Church, the preparation of resources for the 40th Anniversary of the Church, planning for an open and Church-wide conference on worship, and planning for a third SongWrite conference. In various ways these priorities have been achieved.

Throughout the triennium the Working Group on Worship continued to use the principles of “Ordered Liberty” as guidance for our reflection on, creation and preparation of worship resources for the Uniting Church.

(https://assembly.uca.org.au/images/stories/Theology_Discipleship/pdf/Ordered_Liberty_in_Worship.pdf) We have provided resources in various genres that allow flexibility relating to local needs and responsibility to the heritage of the Reformed Evangelical Church of which we are heirs.

The Working Group has endeavoured to arrange that the Assembly website is upgraded to allow for better access to worship resources by all in the Church who seek material relating to congregational worship, worship in public places, and the worship responsibilities of Presbyteries. Currently all resources which the Working Group has prepared are available through links from (<https://assembly.uca.org.au/cudw/worship-resources-and-publications>).

The Working Group has continued to respond to requests for resources from both the Standing Committee and the wider Church, and has taken a number of initiatives of its own. The Working Group has worked closely with other departments and Agencies of the Church, especially with the Working Group on Doctrine, with the Multicultural and Cross Cultural Ministry Reference Committee and with the Lay & Leadership Educators Network. It continues to provide UCA representatives to meetings of the Australian Consultation on Liturgy (ACOL) and the Together in Song Editorial Committee.

Included in these resources are translations of pastoral services from Uniting in Worship 2 into the languages of the ethnic congregations of the Uniting Church. To date translation has been made into Korean, Fijian, Hindi, Chinese, Tongan, Fijian, Filipino, Indonesian, Tamil, Farsi, Hindi, and Samoan. There are also introductions to how different cultures express their faith and community life in worship, including Tongan, Korean, Vietnamese, Samoan and Niuean.

The Working Group also continues to identify people who can provide brief biographies of the Christian men and women whose names are recorded, and whose memory is encouraged, in the Calendar of Commemorations. The Worship Resources section of the Assembly website suggests that “the calendar may provide helpful resources for worship services, for preaching, for congregations that hold services during the week, or in Bible study, fellowship, or house groups.

Part of the Working Group’s responsibility continues to be the provision of material which provides foundational information about the place of worship in the Church’s life. The three educational

DVDs mentioned in the Working Group report to the meeting of the Fourteenth Assembly (“A Guide to Worship for the People of God”, “The Prayers of the People”, and “Holy Communion”) continue to be available free of charge on request and have been very well received. So also does the educational material which is on the Worship website, particularly the document “Alive to God in Worship”.

3. REMITS FROM STANDING COMMITTEE AND OTHER ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES

In the past triennium, requests have come to the Working Group on Worship from the President, the Standing Committee, the Admission of Ministers Committee and the Moderator of the Queensland Synod.

- ✎ In response to a request from the President to facilitate the redistribution of Australian Hymn and Together in Song books, the Working Group affirmed that it could be a point of connection whereby congregations wishing to dispose of such and congregations desiring such could be put in touch with each other.
- ✎ In response to the Standing Committee request for expanded provision of resources for worship leaders and preachers the Working Group reviewed the “Worship Planning Template” which was uploaded to the Worship resources website, and requested that the Worship Resources part of the Assembly website be made more easily navigable.
- ✎ In response to the Standing Committee request for worship resources for the acknowledgement of “Affirmed Membership” the Working Group provided a service of “Celebration and Acknowledgement of Affirmed Members” (with introductory notes) which was received by the Task Group appointed by the Standing Committee.
- ✎ In response to a request from the Admission of Ministers' Committee, the Working Group reviewed and amended the service of “Admission of a Minister from Another Denomination” and forwarded the amended document to the Committee.
- ✎ In response to the request from the Queensland Synod Moderator, the Working Group prepared an additional question to be included in the Induction Service, asking Elders and Leaders to commit to working together for the mission of Christ. This was forwarded to the Standing Committee for approval.

4. MAJOR INITIATIVES

4.1 TRANSFORMING WORSHIP CONFERENCE JULY 2017

In July 2017 the Working Group facilitated the Transforming Worship Conference, focusing on both the transformation which comes from worship and on ways in which worship can be transformed. This Conference was attended by more than 150 people from across the Church. Resource material from the Conference has been uploaded to the Assembly website.

One outcome of the Conference was an expressed desire for further opportunities for people to gather for facilitated discussion about issues relating to the many aspect of worship in the UCA. The Working Group believes that this must be a priority in the life of the Assembly.

4.2 SONGWRITE SA & SONGWRITE 3

Growing out of the success of the first SongWrite in Canberra in 2013 and SongWrite 2 in Adelaide in June 2015, a “local” event (SongWrite SA) was held in Adelaide in June 2016, convened by the Centre for Music Liturgy and the Arts with support from the Working Group. This event, and SongWrite 3 in Brisbane (January 2018) have continued to provide opportunity for songwriters and musicians to share their experiences, joys and frustrations. In addition to these national events, there have come a number of new music resources which are being made available to the Church through the Centre for Music Liturgy and the Arts in Adelaide and the UCA Music website. Some of

the music written during Songwrite 3 has been included in preparation for worship at the meeting of the Fifteenth Assembly.

5. NEW MATERIAL PREPARED DURING THE TRIENNIUM

A considerable amount of the Working Group's meeting time has been spent in preparation of liturgical material, all of which has been uploaded to the Assembly website. This has included, among other material:

- ✎ Resources for the 40th Anniversary of the Uniting Church;
- ✎ Provision of Prayers of Lament in relation to sexual abuse – relating to the publication of the findings of the Royal Commission;
- ✎ Resources for Acknowledgement of Country and Indigenous people;
- ✎ Provision on the UCA publication of The Lectionary of “A Calendar of Additional Community and Multi-Faith Dates”;
- ✎ A resource for the preparation of a funeral service;
- ✎ Presbytery services which relate to the closure of a ministry placement, the closure of a Congregation, the commissioning of board members, and the reception of a faith community into a UCA Congregation;

6. CONCLUSION

Feedback from the Transforming Worship Conference affirmed the decision to invite people from across the Uniting Church to share together in reflection on and creativity within the worship life of the Church. Many people expressed their hunger for the opportunity to share, and spoke about the ways in which the various keynote and elective speakers had opened for them new possibilities for worship experience and leadership in their local situations. The use of the term “Transforming” in the conference title allowed a two-fold focus which proved effective: people saw the time as an opportunity for worship to be transformed and also were reminded that worship is a transformative experience in discipleship and mission. Among the responses from people at the Conference were affirmations about the exchange of transferable ideas and resources to be used in local churches, the flexibility and inclusivity of worship, the strong reinforcement of the place of storytelling and listening and the gift each one brings to worship, comments of the depth of value of migrant members in Church, and permission and encouragement to leave stuff that is no longer helpful to our worship.

Anticipating the closure of the Working Group on Worship, and aware of the planning for the new Assembly structure which will include the Transforming Worship Circle and Panel, we pray that Uniting Church will continue to provide opportunities for leaders at every level to grow in their understanding and awareness of the value and importance of worship in the personal and communal discipleship and mission of the Church.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Assembly:

1. Receive the report of the Working Group on Worship.
2. Thank and discharge the Working Group.