

Uniting Church in Australia

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

VIA ZOOM

12 – 14 March 2021

PRESENT Deidre Palmer (President), David Baker, Rob Brown, Steve Francis, Colleen Geyer, Geoffrey Grinton, Sharon Hollis, Andrew Johnson, Mark Kickett, Jason Kioa, Elaine Ledgerwood, Clare Ligtermoet, Kath Merrifield, Nicole Mugford, Helen Paine, Catherine Pepper, Elaine Rae, Geoff Thompson, Yuko Tonai-Moore, Ian Tozer, Stuart Woodward.

In attendance: Felicity Amery, Jenny Bertalan, Jane Fry, David de Kock, Heather den Houting, Rob Floyd, Haloti Kailahi, Mark Lawrence and Ji Zhang.

WORSHIP On the Friday afternoon the President led worship and Mark Kickett offered the closing prayer. During the afternoon worship the President acknowledged the First Peoples of the land. The Saturday morning worship and the evening prayers were led by Stuart McMillan and Colleen Geyer, respectively. On the Sunday Sharon Hollis led morning worship and the closing prayer in the afternoon was led by the President.

WELCOMES The President welcomed all participants to the last meeting of the triennium. Also welcomed were Charissa Suli for matters related to the Domestic and Family Violence report, Claerwen Little and Geoff Batkin for matters related to the UnitingCare Australia report and Board Nomination, Kaye Roberts-Thompson for matters related to the Standards for Ministries Committee report. John Cox for matters related to the National Safe Church Unit report and Leo Iosifidis for matters related to the Assembly Finance, Audit and Risk Committee Report, Lin Hatfield Dodds and Leanne Jenski for matters related to the LGBTIQ Apology Task Group report.

APOLOGIES

21.01 **It was resolved** to receive the apology from Helen Paine and Hayden Charles for the whole meeting, Geoffrey Grinton for Saturday morning and Sunday, Catherine Pepper for Friday night and Saturday afternoon.

PASTORAL MATTERS

During worship the President led the meeting in prayer for Michael Zewdie and David. Individual members also prayed for our global partners and Church leaders, people who are transitioning to a new role as well as the Church's ministry workers and congregations.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

21.02 **It was resolved to:**
a) 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; and

- b) take Document 12 – CA5 – Lutheran / UCA Dialogue Report off the Consent Agenda and discuss it separately.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

21.03 It was resolved to confirm the minutes of the meetings held 8 – 10 November 2020 and 30 January 2021.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

21.04 It was resolved to:

- a) note:
- (i) Stuart Woodward's conflict of interest in relation to Document 17 – Additional members for the 16th Assembly since he is proposed to be co-opted to be a member of the 16th Assembly; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be in attendance for this business but not speak or vote;
- b) note:
- (i) Elaine Ledgerwoods's conflict of interest in relation to Documents 27 and 27A – Letter from WA Presbytery re Continuation of Voluntary Pastor Decision since she is an employee of the WA Presbytery and in that role also has ongoing connections to the individuals and congregations affected by the decision in question; and
 - (ii) resolve that she be in attendance for this business but not vote;
- c) note:
- (i) Mark Lawrence's conflict of interest in relation to Documents 23 and 23A - Regulation Exemption, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania since he is the author of the correspondence on behalf of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Standing Committee; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be in attendance for this business; and
- d) note:
- (i) Andrew Johnson's conflict of interest in relation to Document 16 – 16th Assembly and Document 17 – Additional Members for the 16th Assembly since he is a nominee for the Business Committee and nominated to be coopted member to the 16th Assembly; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be in attendance for this business but not vote.

NOTE CONSTITUTION CLAUSE 39

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

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

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The ex-President took the chair while the President spoke to Document 2, consisting of a report on her activities since the November 2020 meeting of the Standing Committee.

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

UAICC REPORT

Mark Kickett presented Document 3, consisting of a report on the conversations UAICC had and the actions they took.

21.06 **It was resolved** to receive the report. (Attachment B)

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. Climate Change Plan Report (ASC Minute 18.38.01)

Rob Floyd and Ji Zhang spoke to Document 14, consisting of a report on the progress made so far and proposed direction for future reporting to the Assembly Standing Committee.

21.07 **It was resolved to:**

21.07.01 receive the report; and

21.07.02 request that the Secretariat and each Agency report to the November meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee each year on their progress towards achieving the targets set in the Climate Action Plan.

2. Church in the Digital Age Task Group (ASC Minute 20.78.04)

Rob Floyd presented Document 9, consisting of a background report, the draft Terms of Reference as well as the the names and profiles of the people nominated to serve on the task group.

21.08 **It was resolved to:**

21.08.01 receive the report;

21.08.02 approve the Terms of Reference for the Church in the Digital Age Task Group, noting the changes made at the meeting;

21.08.03 a) appoint Rev Ann Perrin as Co-convenor and a young Task Group member as Co-convenor; and

b) authorise the General Secretary to contact that person;

21.08.04 appoint the following people as members of the Task Group

- Amelia Koh-Butler
- Duncan Mcleod
- Jenni Hughes
- Josh Wyatt
- Liam Miller
- Radhika Sukumar-White
- Rod Pattenden
- Seung Jae Yeon
- Tim Jensen

3. Domestic and Family Violence Resources Report (ASC Minute 18.29.03)

Charissa Suli spoke to Document 13, consisting of a report on the domestic and family violence resources that have been developed.

- 21.09** **It was resolved to:**
- 21.09.01 receive the report; and
- 21.09.02 note the Domestic and Family Violence resources that have been developed.
- 4. Extension of Online Gathering for Worship with Holy Communion (ASC Minute 20.78.04)**
- The General Secretary presented Document 24, consisting of a report on the necessity of extending the approval of permission for online gathering for worship with Holy Communion.
- 21.10** **It was resolved to:**
- 21.10.02 approve the extension of permission for Uniting Church in Australia Congregations to hold online gathering for worship with Holy Communion in accordance with the guidelines approved by the Assembly Standing Committee to the end of November 2021; and
- 21.10.03 request the General Secretary to review the Guidelines for the Online Gathering for Worship with Holy Communion in order to include Church congregations and other Uniting Church communities of faith which may find it necessary or appropriate to meet partially in a gathered community while also welcoming participation by others who join the community through real-time or recorded broadcasts; to be effective until the end of November 2021 in keeping with the approval of online gathering for worship with Holy Communion.
- 5. Restructure and Circles Review (ASC Minute 20.09)**
- The General Secretary spoke to Document 15, consisting of an evaluation of the current Assembly structure and Circles of Interest developed under the New Ways of Working Group overseen by the Assembly Standing Committee in 2016-2017.
- 21.11** **It was resolved to** receive the report.
- 6. Sovereignty Affirmation – Practical Outcomes Task Group Report (ASC Minute 20.86.08)**
- Stuart McMillan presented Document 19, consisting of a draft Assembly Protocol Advocacy Document which was presented for endorsement as requested by the November 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.
- 21.12** **It was resolved to** receive the report.
- 7. Strategic Plan and Business Plan (ASC Minute 20.82.03)**
- The General Secretary introduced Document 5, consisting of a strategic plan to respond to the ongoing needs of the whole Church and other Councils and a business plan outline the areas of work for the Assembly, the expected outcomes of that work and the key activities involved in achieving the work. Table groups discussion followed.
- 21.13** **It was resolved to** receive the report.

FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

1. Act2 Task Group Report

The General Secretary presented Document 26, consisting of an update regarding the work, including the outcome of the national conversations and survey, which had been undertaken since the November 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee and the process of the Act2 project. Table groups discussed the report and offered feedback.

21.14 It was resolved to receive the report.

2. Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee

Stuart Woodward and Leo Iosifidis spoke to Document 6, consisting of a report on the management of finance, audit and risk issues across the Assembly.

21.15 It was resolved to:

21.15.01 receive the report; and

21.15.02 note the re-appointment of KPMG as Assembly's external auditors.

3. Assembly Risk Management Report

Leo Iosifidis presented Document 7, consisting of an update on the Risk Management System and the Risk Register of the Assembly. Discussion in table groups ensued.

21.16 It was resolved to receive the report.

4. General Secretary's Report

The General Secretary introduced Document 4, consisting of a report on the Assembly's achievement against the Strategic Plan, the operations and issues relevant to its work.

21.18 It was resolved to receive the report.

5. LGBTIQ Apology Task Group Report

Lin Hatfield Dodds and Leanne Jenski spoke to Documents 29 and 29A, consisting of report of the Task Group and the Terms of Reference as revised September 2020. The Assembly Standing Committee members were asked to provide feedback to the Task Group on the questions proposed in the report.

21.19 It was resolved to:

21.19.01 receive the report; and

21.19.02 request the Task Group to provide a report including a proposed project plan and any budget implications to the August 2021 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.

6. Lutheran / UCA Dialogue Report

Rob Floyd spoke to Document 12-CA5, consisting of an end of triennium report from the dialogue and the proposed membership for the next triennium.

21.20 It was resolved to:

21.20.01 affirm that 'At the Table' and 'Eucharistic Hospitality' are not official documents of the Uniting Church in Australia;

- 21.20.02 a) request Sharon Hollis, Rob Floyd and Geoffrey Thompson to speak to the UCA members of the Dialogue; and
- b) bring proposals to the August 2021 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.

7. National Safe Church Unit Report

John Cox presented Document 25, consisting of a report on the work of the National Safe Church Unit, the updated National Safe Church Policy Framework and the progress made in the the Professional Standards Project.

21.21 It was resolved to receive the report.

8. Report on Standards for Ministries Committee Meetings in 2020

Kaye Roberts-Thomson spoke to Document 20, consisting of a report on the outcomes of discussion on responses to a questionnaire to Ministerial Education Boards.

21.22 It was resolved to:

21.22.01 receive the report; and

- 21.22.02 a) request the Associate General Secretary to provide feedback to the Standards for Ministries Committee regarding the report; and
- b) request the Committee to bring a subsequent report on the matters highlighted by the Assembly Standing Committee members to the November 2021 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.

9. UCA Assembly Limited Directors Nominations

Leo Iosifidis presented Documents 8, 8A and 8B, consisting of director nominations to ensure the Board of UCA Assembly Limited maintains a functional and highly skillful board and the Expressions of Interest completed by the nominees.

21.23 It was resolved to:

21.23.01 approve the appointment of Gillian Coutts to the UCA Assembly Ltd. Board in line with the UCA Assembly Ltd. Constitution from 12 March 2021 for a period of three years;

21.23.02 approve the appointment of Ted Woodley to the UCA Assembly Ltd. Board in line with the UCA Assembly Ltd. Constitution from 12 March 2021 for a period of three years; and

21.23.03 note and pass on a sincere thank you for both Jonathon Rea and Stephen Capelin for their time and contribution to the UCA Assembly Ltd. Board and the Assembly more generally.

10. UCA Redress Ltd.re Directors' Indemnity

The General Secretary introduced Documents 22 and 22A, consisting of a paper seeking endorsement to enter into deeds of indemnity with the directors and officers of UCA Redress Ltd and the proposed Deed of Indemnity.

- 21.24** **It was resolved to** enter into a deed of indemnity with the directors and officers of UCA Redress Ltd in the terms of the deed and that the appropriate person be authorised to sign such deeds on behalf of the Assembly Standing Committee.

11. UnitingCare Australia Board Nomination

Geoff Batkin and Clearwen Little spoke to Documents 11 and 11A, consisting of a nomination for the third independent Board member and the Expression of Interest completed by the nominee.

- 21.25** **It was resolved to** approve the appointment of Adam Connolly to the UnitingCare Australia Board for a period of three years, to take effect from August 2021.

12. UnitingCare Australia Board Nomination

Geoff Batkin and Clearwen Little spoke to Document 10, consisting of the annual report on the work of UnitingCare Australia.

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

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Additional Members for the 16th Assembly

The General Secretary introduced Document 17, consisting of the proposed cooptions to be made by the Assembly Standing Committee to membership of the 16th Assembly.

- 21.27** **It was resolved to:**

21.27.01 approve the following as coopted members to the 16th Assembly:

- Andrew Johnson (Chair, Business Committee)
- James Aaron (Convenor, Facilitation Team)
- Rob Floyd (Associate General Secretary)
- Stuart Woodward (Chair, AFARC)
- Assembly Legal Reference Committee member
- Polity Reference Committee member
- Standards for Ministries Committee member

21.27.02 provide advice regarding a further nine members to be coopted by the ASC to the membership of the 16th Assembly; and

21.27.03 approve the Assembly Officers to finalise the further nine cooptions following advice from the ASC, and the availability of people approached once the Synod and UAICC membership is finalized.

2. 16th Assembly Report

The General Secretary presented Document 16, consisting of an update on the planning for the online and reconvened meetings of the 16th Assembly and on the proposals that will be brought to the online Assembly meeting.

- 21.28 It was resolved to:**
- 21.28.01 note the updated indicative timetable for the online Assembly meeting;
- 21.28.02 appoint the following people as the Business Committee of the Fifteenth Assembly:
Andrew Johnson (Chair)
Colleen Geyer
Sharon Hollis
Deidre Palmer
James Aaron
Heather den Houting
- 21.28.03 note the updated Risk Profile for the 16th Assembly;
- 21.28.04 note the updated timeline for the online and reconvened meetings of the 16th Assembly;
- 21.28.05 request that the President and the General Secretary present the verbal Assembly Standing Committee report to the online meeting of the 16th Assembly; and
- 21.28.06 request that the President and Geoffrey Grinton (member of the General Secretary's Performance Review Task Group) prepare and present the proposal regarding the extension of the General Secretary's appointment for a further three years to the online meeting of the 16th Assembly.

3. Consent Agenda

The General Secretary presented the various documents which constituted Document 12, Consent Agenda.

- 21.29 It was resolved to:**
- 21.29.01 receive the Governance Reference Committee report;
- 21.29.02
- a) receive the report of the Continuing Witness Task Group;
 - b) approve that the three documents: The Confession of Belhar, Laudato si', and The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification be presented to the 16th Assembly (Reconvened) to be considered, by the Uniting Church, between the 16th and 17th Assemblies, for reception as continuing witnesses according to the processes set out in our previous report and employing the resources described in that report; and
 - c) propose to the 16th Assembly (Reconvened) that the Continuing Witness Task Group continue its work of identifying continuing witnesses with a special focus on the variety of forms of witness from Asia and the Pacific and to report on that work at the 17th Assembly.
- 21.29.03
- a) receive the report of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry/UCA Dialogue;
 - b) instruct the Assembly Resourcing Unit to bring a revised Terms of Reference to the August 2021 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee for approval; and
 - c) instruct the Assembly Resourcing Unit to bring a proposed list of UCA members to the Dialogue to the August 2021 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee for appointment.

- 21.29.04 receive the report of the Disability Royal Commission National Task Group;
- 21.29.05 receive the report on the Aged Care Royal Commission;
- 21.29.06 receive the report of the Uniting Church Adult Fellowship National Committee;
and
- 21.29.07 approve the Uniting Church Adult Fellowship National Committee Mandate.

4. Learnings from the Marriage Conversation Report

The ex-President took the chair while the President and Geoffrey Thompson introduced Document 21, consisting of a discussion paper to invite the meeting participants to reflect on the learnings from the processes and responses that led to and arose from the 15th Assembly's decision on marriage which can be passed on to subsequent Assembly Standing Committee. Table discussion followed.

21.30 It was resolved to:

- 21.30.01 receive the report;
- 21.30.02 request the General Secretary to make the summary of the discussion available to the next Assembly Standing Committee.

5. Letter from WA Presbytery re Continuation of Voluntary Pastors Decision

The General Secretary presented Documents 27 and 27A, consisting of a letter and a request from WA Presbytery regarding the consideration of reinstating the practice of allowing presbyteries to select and commission Community Ministers.

21.31 It was resolved to:

- 21.31.01 receive the report; and
- 21.31.02 authorise the Associate General Secretary to engage with the WA Synod regarding the issues which has given rise to the decision to close the Ministry of Pastor to volunteers in WA and report to a future ASC.

CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 6:00pm with prayer led by the President.

DATES FOR 2121:

27 – 29 August 2021
12 – 14 November 2021