



**Uniting Church in Australia**  
**ASSEMBLY**  
Assembly Standing Committee

11-13 March 2016

**DOCUMENT/S:**

Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	Information
Title	Presidents Report
Assembly or ASC Minute	N/A
Consultation	N/A
Purpose	To report to the ASC about President's work and seek feedback
Rationale & Findings Summary	Outlines key activities of the President and issues the President is seeking ASC feedback on.
Attachments	Nil
Recommendations	That the report be received
Submitted by	Sharon Hollis, President

*Regulation 3.6.4.2 Duties of the President: "The duties of the President shall be to give spiritual leadership and encouragement to the Church generally, to represent the Church as appropriate, to give counsel as occasion requires and to do such other things as may be requested or advised by the Assembly"*

As much as possible I will report each ASC against Regulation 3.6.4.2, which outlines the duties of the President. I will also note how my work fits with the Assembly Strategic plan which I am also seeking to use to guide my work. I welcome feedback on whether you find this a useful way for me to report as President.

### **Give Spiritual leadership and encouragement**

*Prayer for those affected by COVID-19.*

I responded to an invitation from the National Council of Churches to join in a Day of Prayer for those affected by COVID-19 by inviting the Church to prayer on 22 August. I worked with the Communications Unit to source and distribute prayers for use by Uniting Church members. It was decided that we would invite prayer on the same day as the NCCA was doing this without linking to the NCCA website because of the link on the NCCA page to a group (not a member of the NCCA) whose theology would not be the theology of the Uniting Church. A member of the NSW-ACT Synod also asked the Assembly to consider a call to prayer so the invitation from the NCCA was well timed in relation to this question to the Assembly at the Synod meeting. My thanks go to Rebecca Beisler and the communications team for their work on this.,

### **Represent the Church**

*Overseas partners*

I joined the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) leaders meeting via Zoom. This group is aiming to meet twice a year to share what is happening in each of the member churches and discuss issues we have in common.

Mark Kickett, Colleen Geyer, and I hosted two meetings with many of our partner churches, with the support of Uniting World. These meetings were held because we couldn't meet with our partners at the Assembly meeting. The common issue in both meetings was COVID-19 which is devastating the countries of many of our partners. Several of them told of colleagues, friends and family who have had COVID-19, many of whom died. This is not just a grief for the leaders but for the churches many of these people pastored, worked for, and worshipped with. I was also grateful for the greetings that were sent by our partners to the Assembly meeting.

These gatherings have me reflecting on how we make space for the voices of our partners in our life and decision making.

*Statement on Afghanistan*

I provided a response to the situation in Afghanistan and

### **Other things as requested or advised by the Assembly**

*Act2*

I continue to chair the Act 2 task group and to undertake work agreed to by that group as directed by the previous ASC

### *Disability Royal Commission Task group*

I attended my first Disability Royal Commission task group meeting where I was invited to lead the opening reflection. This revealed to me how I haven't kept up with current writing in the field of disability theology and biblical studies. There are many capable people on this task group and in our councils and agencies who will ensure the work of responding directly to the Royal Commission will be well attended to. I want to sit with the question of how we respond theologically to the Royal Commission so that the whole church is also doing the work of thinking theologically about the inclusion of people with a disability and how we read scripture and our tradition with the insights of recent scholarship in the field of disability readings.

### *UCA response to the Catholic Church in Australia convocation (Resolution 18.54)*

By the time the ASC meets I will have finalised resources to be distributed to congregations with an invitation to pray for their neighbouring Catholic parish(es) and suggestions about how they might convey this prayer to the parish they are praying for.

I have also written to the Most Rev Mark Coleridge, the President of Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and the Most Rev Michael McKenna, Chairman-Bishops Commission for Christian Unity and Inter-religious dialogue conveying this invitation and wishing the best for the convocation. This concludes the tasks outstanding from this resolution.

### **Give counsel**

Not counsel, rather an observation. I note that almost everyone I meet with is tired. I think the impact of COVID, particularly for those who are in extended lockdowns has wearied many people and this will impact what we can ask of each other. We also need to create places to pause, to rest, to remind ourselves that we are held in hope and love by God.

### **Other matters**

#### *National Young Adult Leaders Conference (NYALC)*

I have begun work on the next NYALC which will meet both online and in person, when possible. The focus of this conference will be hearing from Young Adult Leaders about Act 2 and exploring what leadership gifts and needs. There will also be times of resourcing, worship, study, and celebration.

### **Seeking feedback**

#### *Priorities of the President*

As I begin my time as President I am wanting feedback from the ASC about the priorities of the President over the next triennium.

Amid the regular work required of the President I think these are the four priorities I should have as President. I want to test my discernment with the ASC

Act 2, both the work of the task group and encouraging wide participation in the consultation

Supporting the Covenant and further exploring implications of sovereignty by reflecting on how colonisation has shaped my own life and the life of the Church and growing my relationship with Congress

Encouraging the Uniting Church to grow into its commitment to being a multicultural church by being an advocate for the multicultural church, giving priority to meetings with multicultural leaders and communities, challenging racism in my own thinking and the life of the Church and listening to the

Encouraging theological reflection. For me this is a key way I seek to offer spiritual leadership and encouragement.

#### *Questions for discussion*

What do you think should be the key area of focus for the President?

What

#### *Future of President's conferences.*

Since Gregor Henderson held the first President's conference the style, focus and attendance has changed several times. Given work of Act 2 will require times of seeking feedback and having consultation with a significant number of people of over the next triennium and the current uncertainty about travel I want to test whether there is still need for the President's conferences.

I would appreciate the feedback about whether ASC thinks there is a need for President's conferences. If there is a need who should the conferences be for? What sort of a conferences would be appropriate? What should they focus on?

#### **Thanks**

I want to thank everyone who was involved with the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly, particularly the local arrangements committee and staff of the Synod of Queensland, particularly Kellie Broderick and Vanessa van der Rhede, the various people who managed all the technology that was required for the Assembly to run smoothly, Radhika Sukumaran-White who developed the liturgy for the opening service, Andrew Johnson, chair of the business committee and all the members of the business committee and the General Secretary who provided wise guidance and unstinting support in the planning for Assembly, during the meeting and as I've transitioned into the role of President.

Sharon Hollis  
18 August 2021