



Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress National Executive

Interim National Chairperson: Mark Kickett: 0455 438 295, mkickett@sa.uaicc.org.au

Interim National Administration Assistant: Ian Dempster: 0417 217 320. idempster@sa.uaicc.org.au

CONGRESS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

In the Congress report to Assembly, we advised that we were planning to hold the Congress National Conference in Darwin from October 11- 14th at Nungalinya College, with the theme being, "AWAKENING: NEW SEEDS FOR FUTURE DREAMING: UAICC 2021" .

Due to the ongoing Covid situation, particularly in the eastern states, and the snap lockdowns that occur elsewhere, the Strategic Planning & Support Group (SPSG) are proposing to the National Executive meeting which meets by Zoom on Thursday August 26th, that we postpone the National Conference until 2022.

Earlier this month – in the week before the snap 3 day lockdown in the NT - some members of the SPSG visited Darwin to continue with planning for the conference. This group included Candice Haseldine from SA who has joined the planning team for the conference, particularly to help with the logistics of the conference.

Work in the REGIONS

While in Darwin last week members of the SPSG met with members of NRCC, both at an informal lunch with conversation at the Synod office, and with other members outside under the trees at Nungalinya College after they had finished studies in the translation workshop. These meetings were important as opportunities to listen to what Congress members are saying.

We have also participated by Zoom in meetings with the WA Synod on Congress ministry and the work of BKI, which is at an important juncture in its history.

As chairperson I also continues to be involved with the VicTas Walking Together group which is looking at setting up a Synod Covenanting group. Next week we are joining in a meeting with Congress Victoria, as they plan a way forward for Congress ministry in that state.

In NSW as Interim Chair I have participated in the NSW Synod meetings, which has been a beneficial experience. We are working with the NSW Synod to establish youth workers and youth ministry to work alongside the Congress ministers.

The three Congress ministry centres in NSW are all affected by the Covid situation in country NSW. Wellington & Condoblin are all near the heavily affected City of Dubbo, while the third centre at Broken Hill, is also affected by cases at Broken Hill and Wilcannia. Our prayers continue for our First Nations people in NSW, and indeed all people affected by Covid particularly in NSW and Victoria.

We are pleased that one of our newly elected members to the ASC, the recently ordained Rev. Roberta Stanley from Queensland was able to contribute a prayer with the President's prayers published this week for people suffering from Covid. We are glad that Alison Overeem was also elected to the ASC and can sit alongside the "ex officio" members from Congress to the ASC, Ayla Williams and myself as Interim Chair.

In SA the months of June and July have been particularly devastating with the deaths of three of our Congress elders. They were the long term chair of our Salisbury congregation in Adelaide, Greg Sinclair, Marshall Carter from the Murraylands, and Lucy Lester. All three funerals have been affected by lockdowns and restrictions.

Of these three, Aunty Lucy in particular has had a significant long term role in the life of the Uniting Church and Congress. She was at one of the first Congress meetings on Elcho Island in 1983, and as the wife of Yami Lester (a man who as a child was blinded by the Maralinga Atomic tests), had a significant ministry with Yami at Mimili in the APY Lands and in Alice Springs where with the late Rev. Jim Downing they established the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD). Lucy's art work hangs at Yartu Apinthe (the Uniting College in Adelaide), and also appears in the Bible Society book "Our Mob, God's Story". She continued encouraging people in ministry throughout her life, and was still visiting Anangu in prison at Port Augusta while in her 70's.

CONCLUSION

We continue to value your prayers for Congress ministry across the nation, and the support from and relationships with the Synods and Presbyteries at the regional and local levels.

Mark Kickett

Congress National interim Chair

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