



Uniting Church in Australia

ASSEMBLY

Assembly Standing Committee

27-29 August 2021

DOCUMENT 8K

Title	Reappointment of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) – UCA Dialogue
Type of Paper	For information and decision
Assembly or ASC Minute	Add minutes in when finalised
Consultation	UCA Members of the LCA-UCA Dialogue
Purpose	To receive a summary report of the Dialogue and to approve Terms of Reference and UCA membership of the Dialogue for the new triennium.
Rationale & Findings Summary	
Attachments	
Recommendations	That the Assembly Standing Committee: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Receive the Report2. Adopt the revised Terms of Reference for the LCA – UCA Dialogue for the triennium3. Appoint the UCA members to the LCA – UCA Dialogue for the triennium<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rev Dr Anna L. Grant-Henderson (UCA co-convener)• Rev Denise Liersch• Rev Paul Stephens• Rev Dr John Adsett Evans• Rev Dr Edward Craig Thompson
Submitted by	Rob Floyd Assembly Associate General Secretary rob@nat.uca.org.au , 0407 944 417

Report from the UCA Members of the Lutheran Church of Australia – Uniting Church in Australia Dialogue (LCA-UCA Dialogue)

For the Triennium - October 2018 to July 2021

When the UCA came into being in 1977, dialogue with various churches was part of its very DNA. Since then many dialogues have fallen by the wayside because the church is dealing with so many other issues. The LCA/UCA Dialogue is one of the few dialogues to maintain momentum and is very keen to work towards mutual fellowship.

It was set up in 1978 with the general aim “to establish pulpit and altar fellowship between the two churches”. In the next decade a number of Agreed Statements were produced (The Word of God-Justification by Faith 1981, Law & Gospel 1982, Baptism 1984, Ministry 1987, The Church 1988, One Christ in Church & World 1990, A Pastoral Statement on Marriage was also agreed to in 1987). These Statements were all received by both churches. As a result, the establishment of altar and pulpit fellowship was taken up with studies in the areas of conditions required by each church. A number of issues were identified (see Appendix D in Reports to the Seventh Assembly, 1994). However, it was deemed not the right time to go ahead with shared communion instead the dialogue was tasked with working on more practical issues to help the churches.

The first task set for the newly commissioned Dialogue (May 1997) was “a doxological affirmation”. In the following years we worked on practical matters such as Guidelines for Co-operating congregations and templates for commissioning services for these congregations. We then moved forward to a Commentary on a Eucharistic service. This demonstrated the differences in practice and theology but was affirmed strongly by the UCA and later by LCA. An important document was the, “Declaration of Mutual Recognition by the LCA & UCA” together with letters naming certain provisos, in 2010. At the end of the document under Future Growing Together in God’s Mission there is a goal of working on a Concordat for full communion. It was in 2016, the LCA Co-chair unexpectedly suggested that we begin work on a Concordat. It was an extraordinary moment for me and one which I thought would never happen. We had over the years Spirit-filled moments when certain comments were made that just were so profound and this was one of those moments.

We began by working on the eucharist and called the Document, ***At the Table***, which was finalised and sent to the Christian Unity working Group and ASC during 2018. At the same time, we included a document for discussion by the churches called, ***Eucharistic Hospitality for Congregations in Special Need***.

These documents were distributed to a number of scholars for comments. Some members of the ASC met with members of the UCA Dialogue team twice in this trimester and it was extremely helpful for both parties to talk through issues. There were obvious difficulties around Eucharistic Hospitality because of the unresolved matter of women’s ordination in the LCA. Many members of the LCA team find it a very painful issue. The LCA has been given feedback from its Commission on Theology and Inter Church Relations (CTICR) and has incorporated the first response but will now work on a final ***At the Table*** document.

At the Zoom meeting in Nov 2020 with our LCA colleagues, the UCA members of the Dialogue believed that further work on the Report was not advisable at this juncture. Tweaking the Report at this stage to reflect the respective concerns of the UCA and the LCA would result in two versions of the Report, neither before both Churches. We believed, then, that it was wiser to let the Report stand as a Dialogue document and to note in an addendum the concerns of both Churches. These concerns could then be incorporated into a later version of the document which would form part of a proposed agreement ('concordat') between the two Churches on a broader range of matters. However, at the face to face meeting in May 2021 a LCA member raised the issue of whether this was the best way forward. As a consequence we reversed that decision and hope to bring a revised edition of **At the Table** incorporating the principal concerns expressed by the ASC. The UCA members of the Dialogue believe they have heard the following, and summarise them very briefly here as elements of this re-working of **At the Table**:

1. The ASC expressed concern about how the participation of children in the Eucharist was described and would look for a clearer statement of the UCA position on children here and reconciliation with the LCA position.
2. The ASC raised a concern about the absence of explicit reference to the Basis of Union's link between the Eucharist and mission.
3. ASC raised concern about the LCA's position on the ordination of women and the impact this would have on the possibility of mutual recognition of Table ministry and so the possibility of cooperation, where it might be needed.
4. The ASC raised concern about the language of 'worthiness' in participation in the Eucharist.
5. The ASC raised concern about the language of parts of the Report – in particular that it sometimes is distinctly Lutheran or, at least, not recognisably reflecting UCA theological modes of expression. (We remark here that restating denominational emphases with language which is not recognisably Lutheran or Uniting has been important to discovering agreement where denominational language seemed to preclude it. This will be made clearer in a later version).

Several other concerns were expressed by the ASC – for example, the significance of the range of practice around the Eucharist within the UCA – but we believe these to be matters on which the UCA has itself yet to have made a clear statement, and not things the UCA Dialogue team is competent to determine.

At the same time the dialogue will incorporate the feedback from the LCA and so the same revised document will be presented to both our churches. We are suggesting that this revised document be sent to external readers for comment before submitting to ASC.

At the time of submitting **At the Table** to the ASC, the Dialogue also submitted a **Proposal for Implementing Eucharistic Hospitality for Congregations in Special Need**. This proposal sought to extend beyond the present possibilities of cooperation between the Churches, based on the conclusions of **At the Table**. In light of the issues around the ordination of women and LGBTQ we don't think this will be possible to implement at this stage in the UCA and have withdrawn our request for ASC approval of the Report in its present form. However, the process proposed towards Eucharistic hospitality, and the conclusions drawn in **At the Table**, may inform efforts in local contexts where a bishop and presbytery would like to explore cooperative ministry. We believe, then, that the proposal may have some limited usefulness without official endorsement.

In light of comments from the ASC and the dialogue's discussion we decided at the May meeting to discontinue work on a statement about Ministry. We have gathered a significant body of material from both churches and decided this would be gathered into one resource document and kept until such time we could work on it.

Instead we made a decision to work on a document which will explain why we think it is important to work on a concordat and rather than use that term which is unfamiliar, looked at a possible heading, **Bases for Communion**. We hope it will clarify the ecumenical journey we are taking and make engagement with our church bodies easier. The way we go about this task is to ask people from each church to gather relevant documents, write an initial paper, work with the person from the other church and come up with a joint document for discussion at the next dialogue meeting. So we try and get work done between meetings.

I'd like to comment briefly on the importance of the dialogue for the LCA.

The composition of the LCA team demonstrates how significant the Dialogue is for the LCA. There has always been a President/Bishop on the Dialogue and the present co-chair is a past Bishop with the present Bishop coming as a guest. The LCA has always tried to have a woman which has not always been easy but they think it is important and so pay an airfare twice a year for Dr Allie Ernst (Director, Institute of Faith Education, [RC] Archdiocese of Brisbane) to come down from Brisbane. There have always been two people from the faculty and a person from local ministry. The person likely to fill this role will come from Brisbane also with air fares and accommodation provided. Indeed, the accommodation and travel costs have always been paid for by the church. To be willing to pay two airfares from Brisbane is a clear indication of the serious LCA commitment to the dialogue, including the weight they place on the right people and mix on their team.

The LCA has struggled with two particular decisions made by the UCA Assembly.

In 1997 the Assembly received the report from the Task Group on Sexuality and Resolution 84 was passed. The LCA was uncertain but a meeting went ahead and the Dialogue made a decision to exegete Scripture in relation to the issues. It was a very helpful couple of years and produced a paper, "Summary and Outcome of Discussion on Interpretation of Scripture". The Assembly Decisions with respect to marriage in 2018 were noted but didn't cause any undo concern.

We have been working more efficiently recently, with work being assigned between meetings and material assumed to have been read. The old way was to wait for papers, read them aloud, discuss and write further papers.

I hope this helps ASC to understand my passion about the progress the Dialogue has made which I didn't think would happen in my lifetime. This passion is, I think, shared by dialogue members, and it is no exaggeration to say that, for all our undoubted failings, meetings of the dialogue demonstrate a clear care for each other and serious, sustained, prayerful, and concentrated examination of our differences. Dialogue takes time, listening, patience, coping with frustration and believing in John 17:20-25. Please hold us in your prayers.

Blessing and Peace, Anna

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna", written over a horizontal line.

Lutheran Church of Australia and Uniting Church in Australia Dialogue

TERMS OF REFERENCE

DRAFT (August 2021)

[Date of approval]

Purpose:	The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) and Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) Dialogue is an ongoing Dialogue between the two churches. This Terms of Reference relates to the UCA members of the Dialogue.
Reporting Arrangements:	Assembly Standing Committee (ASC)
Period:	This Terms of Reference is for the period August 2021 – June 2024
Membership:	As determined by the ASC on the recommendation of the UCA Convenor of the Dialogue, the Assembly General Secretary and the Assembly Resourcing Unit (ARU)

Tasks Required:

Reflecting the work completed through the previous triennium, feedback from the ASC and planning with LCA Dialogue partners in May 2021:

1. Incorporate the feedback from both churches into the **At the Table** document and re-present to ASC in 2022.
2. Compile the documents already gathered towards an **Agreed Statement on Ministry** and keep as a dialogue document only until it is deemed the right time to work on it.
3. Begin work on a document which explains the purpose of a Concordat /Agreement and suggest areas of work that need to be included in it.
4. Through the Dialogue, maintain relationships between the LCA and UCA and provide feedback to the ASC of emerging areas of interest or emerging issues that may need to be pursued by other parts of the Assembly.

Expected Outcomes:

The UCA members of the Dialogue form, for the purposes of the ASC, a Task Group within the life of the Assembly. During the 2021-2024 Triennium the Task Group will:

1. Present a written report annually to the ASC via ARU in time for the July ASC meeting in both 2022 and 2023, and a report for the 17th Assembly in July 2024 that is provided to the March 2024 ASC meeting.

These reports will indicate:

- Progress of key conversations
- Any documents produced by the Dialogue during the period
- Constraints or issues to be addressed (if any) for ongoing work
- Any need for changes in membership of the UCA Dialogue members

2. Working through the ARU, provide any documents or reports that need to be considered by ASC for input or adoption.
3. Forward unconfirmed and confirmed minutes after each dialogue meeting to the ARU for Assembly records.
4. In its 2024 report to ASC, provide an indication of the vitality of the Dialogue, suggesting what areas of work and the appropriate membership that would be required carry this work forward.

How the task group will work:

1. Be grounded in the gospel and build upon the tradition of the Uniting Church in Australia.
2. Live out our covenant as First and Second Peoples.
3. Live out our commitment to being a multicultural church, oriented towards justice.
4. Embody an inclusive church where those of differing ability, age, gender, race and sexuality are welcomed
5. Ensure that the activities of the Task Group are consistent with the Basis of Union of the UCA, the Constitution and Regulations, and align with the current strategic priorities of the Assembly.
6. Consider how the work of the Task Group relates to other councils, agencies and groups within the UCA, and work collaboratively wherever possible.
7. Consider how the work of the Task Group relates to other bodies ecumenically and with other civil society organisation and work collaboratively wherever possible.
8. Where appropriate, conduct its work on the basis of rigorous, contemporary research and analysis

Membership:

The UCA Dialogue members (Task Group) will be appointed by the ASC in their August 2021 meeting, guided by input from the ARU, having consulted with the UCA Convenor of the Dialogue and the Assembly General Secretary.

The UCA members of the Dialogue will comprise of up to six people, one of whom is appointed by the ASC as the Convenor.

The selection process will consider the expertise and experience required to undertake the work of the Task Group. Some consideration of geographic location will be given when selecting members given the UCA and LCA are predominantly co-located in Victoria and South Australia.

Should there be need to add new members during a triennium then ASC will do so on the recommendation of the current Dialogue members and the ARU.

Convenor:

The Convenor will be responsible primarily for liaison with the LCA in order to arrange meetings, collate necessary information and provide reports to ASC. The Convenor will be the primary point of contact for the ARU as they support the Dialogue.

Period:

This Terms of Reference is for the three years of the triennium 2021-2024. The ASC understands the long-term, relational nature of ecumenical dialogues and understands that there may be an extension of the UCA participation in the Dialogue into the next triennium.

In the lead up to the 17th Assembly the Dialogue Task Group will report to ASC through the ARU as to whether there is ongoing work to be done and if so the nature of this work.

Based on this report, the ASC will determine whether or not to extend the Task Group into the following triennium, and then review the Terms of Reference and membership with a view to these going forward to the August ASC meeting in August 2024.

**Proposed UCA members of the
Lutheran Church of Australia and Uniting Church in Australia Dialogue
2021-2024**

It is proposed that the following people be appointed as the UCA members of the LCA-UCA Dialogue for the triennium 2021-2024.

- Rev Dr Anna L. Grant-Henderson (UCA co-convenor)
- Rev Denise Liersch
- Rev Paul Stephens
- Rev Dr John Adsett Evans
- Rev Dr Edward Craig Thompson

Brief CVs are as follows:

Rev Dr Anna L. Grant-Henderson

- Ordained to Ministry of Word, 1978,
- Academic qualifications, PhD (1998), Flinders University of South Australia, BTh, Hons. 1st Class (1984), Flinders University of South Australia, BA., Flinders University of SA 1978. Clinical Pastoral Education: 2.5 Quarters
- Served in Reynella Parish 6.5 years
- Lecturer in Pastoral Studies, 5 years
- Lecturer in Pastoral Studies and Old Testament 5 years
- Lecturer in Old Testament 11 years.

- Chairperson Fleurieu Presbytery, Chairperson of Presbytery Pastoral Relationships Committee
- Member of MEC and MEC review teams,
- Review team for the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia
- Member of the Catholic Biblical Assoc.
- Member of the Earth Bible Lectionary
- Member of the British Old Testament Studies Society
- Minister of Word Working Group
- 12 years teaching in an ecumenical setting as part of the Adelaide College of Divinity
- 10 years on a UCA/RC State Dialogue team
- 10 years as member of the Assembly Commission on Ecumenical Affairs
- 9 years on the Executive of the Ministerial Education Council
- Served on the Boards of the Adelaide College of Divinity and of Flinders University
- 5 years Chairperson of SA Synod Committee on Ecumenical Affairs
- 9 years member of the Adelaide Theological Circle
- 16 years as member of Australia and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools
- Australian delegate to WCC Vancouver 1983
- Australian delegate to Association of South East Asian Theological Schools' conferences for *Women in Theological Education*, 1986, 1993
- Australian delegate to WCC Asian and Pacific Regional meeting on *The Viability of Theological Education*, 1994,
- Created courses for the BTh and steered them through the required structures of the ACD.
- Co-chair of LCA/UCA dialogue group, 2008-present

Rev Denise Liersch

- Physiotherapist (public hospital & community-based: women's health, surgical/medical, chronic/complex health) 1982-2005
- Elder, Lay Preacher & member of lay ministry team in small congregation over 20 years
- Chaplain/Chaplaincy Coordinator, University of Melbourne 2006
- Formation as Spiritual Director 2006-7 (YTU)
- Lived in Germany 1999-2002 and 2008-2010: taught ESL (adults) at Reserve Bank of Germany / European Central Bank 2001-2002; studied German language in Volkshochschule over this time;
- Completed MA (Th) and formation for ministry in German Methodist Seminary (Theologische Hochschule) 2008-2010, member International Students Committee 2008-2010, chaired 2010
- Ordained Oct 2011 (UCA) as Minister of the Word
- Placements: 2011-2019 Congregational placement (VicTas)
- 2019-present, Moderator of Synod of VicTas
- Assembly Committees: Commission on Doctrine 1986-1992, Church Polity 1995-1999, Assembly Standing Committee 2015-2018
- Past member Synod Committees:
 - Vic, Doctrine & Liturgy 1992-1998
 - Vic Standing Committee 1994
 - VicTas Standing Committee 2013-2014 and 2017-present
 - Assembly LCA/UCA Ecumenical Dialogue 2011-present

Denise brings skills in theological reflection and discernment; understanding and experience in ecumenical and intercultural relations and polity of UCA; analytical skills; and an appreciation of governance and regulatory compliance issues. She brings a pastoral voice, as well as understanding and experience of the challenges of discerning the new ways God is calling us to be church in a 21st century Australian context.

Formal qualifications:

- B App Sci (physiotherapy) Lincoln Institute of Health Sciences 1982
- B Th Melbourne College Divinity (UFT) 1989
- Cert Spiritual Direction Melbourne College Divinity (YTU) 2007
- Test DaF (Deutsch als Fremdsprache) Test-DaF Institut 2008
- Grad Dip Theol Melbourne College of Divinity 2008
- MA (Theol) Theologische Hochschule Reutlingen 2010
- Grad Cert Leadership University of Divinity (Pilgrim) 2019

Rev Paul Stephens

(Full name: William Paul Douglas Stephens)

- Ordained to the ministry of the Word in December 1985. Trained at United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne.
- Formal qualifications include B. Sc., (Pure and Applied Chemistry), B. Theol., and Master of Ministry.
- Served in congregational placements in Bairnsdale and Geelong, and as a Presbytery Minister for Mission and Education in the Presbytery of Yarra Yarra.
- Was seconded in 2017 to the Synod for work on the future shape of Presbyteries in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.
- Since February 2018 in a congregational placement at St Luke's Highton, Geelong.
- Extensive experience of working with congregations as they discern their mission directions.
- Served previously as secretary of the Synod Doctrine and Liturgy Committee.
- Served on the Lutheran-Uniting dialogue since 2013.
- Paul has strong and ongoing commitment to ecumenism
- He serves on the board of an ecumenical school ... Christian College, Geelong.
- Paul is married with adult offspring.

Rev Dr John Adsett Evans

- John is a retired Uniting Church minister.
- He has served the Church in four synods in a variety of placements: rural, inner city, and roles of institutional leadership (a synod General Secretary, principal of a Uniting Church University College and within a parish mission.)
- In his former life he was first a law lecturer and then a public servant within the Attorney General's Department.
- In retirement he has undertaken extended supply in congregational and Presbytery roles.
- His doctoral work at the University of Otago, NZ was in the area of Christian social ethics and church state relations.
- He currently lives in Melbourne, though does have close family ties in Queensland.
- He is married to Jean; and has two adult daughters and one grandchild.
- Through his ministry, he has had a close relationship with the Lutheran Church of Australia. Both his rural placements were in areas where there was a strong Lutheran presence (Albury and southern NSW and Maryborough in the Burnett – Wide Bay area of Queensland.) Through these placements he has developed a close personal link with several Lutheran pastors.
- John believes he can bring much to the Uniting Lutheran dialogue from his experience and 'on the ground' understanding of the Lutheran Church.

Rev Dr Edward Craig Thompson

- Age: 55 years (b. Melbourne, Australia 1965)
- Doctor of Theology (Melbourne College of Divinity). *Thesis title*: On the possession of God: towards a theological absorption of George Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine*
- Bachelor of Divinity (Hons) (Melbourne College of Divinity)
- Graduate Diploma of Education (Melbourne College of Advanced Education)
- 1986 Bachelor of Science (University of Melbourne)
- 1999-present Minister of the Word, Congregation of Mark the Evangelist (Uniting Church, North Melbourne); Kew and Auburn Uniting Church Congregations; Narre Hampton Park Congregation
- 1994-1999 Studies towards ordination, including post-graduate/doctoral study. Tutor in various theological subjects (systematic theology), United Faculty of Theology, concurrent with ministerial candidature studies.
- Lay Parish Assistant (supply ministry) Violet Town, Strathbogie and Boho South Uniting Church congregations
- 1992 Lay Parish Assistant (supply ministry) Lakes Entrance and Johnsonville Uniting Church congregations
- 1990-1991 Full-time study, United Faculty of Theology (private student)
- 1988-1989 High School Teacher, Essendon High School

- Research Interests - Christian discourse within wider cultural discursive spheres; "Re-grammaring" as a heuristic for scriptural interpretation, contemporary preaching and theological interpretation; Contemporary popular expressions of atheism; The theology of St Paul
- Member and Chairperson, Uniting Church Victorian Synod's Committee on Doctrine and Liturgy, 2000-2006 (Chairperson 2003-2006)
- Co-editor, *Cross Purposes: a forum for theological dialogue 2005-2013*
- Corresponding member, Uniting Church Assembly's Doctrine Working Group 2010-2018
- Member/Convener, Tertiary Ministry Working Group (Yarra Yarra Presbytery), 2014-2020