



B5 ASSEMBLY RESOURCING UNIT

Including ASSEMBLY CIRCLES OF INTEREST

1. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Established in July 2017, the Assembly Resourcing Unit (ARU) is a multi-disciplinary, collaborative, project-based team that resources the work of the Assembly as set out in the Constitution and Regulations, the Assembly Strategic Plan, the national work of the Uniting Church and specific projects as identified by the Assembly and the Assembly Standing Committee (ASC).
- 2.2 The ARU staff team has remained stable through the triennium, with the addition of Mr Stuart McMillan, National Consultant Covenanting in September 2018. Rev. Dr Ji Zhang, Assembly Theologian in Residence has been a part time member of ARU, also working in UnitingCare Australia (throughout the triennium) and UnitingWorld (until July 2020). In early 2021 Rebecca Beisler moved to higher duties to act in the vacant National Manager Media and Communications role. Bethany Broadstock was recruited as Communications Officer to cover those areas of responsibility.
- 2.3 The team brings a diversity of backgrounds, skills and experience to the work of the Assembly. A major focus is to engage the wider membership of the UCA in the work of the Assembly.
- 2.4 The ARU team is:

Mr Rob Floyd	Associate General Secretary
Rev. Charissa Suli	National Consultant
Rev. Dr Apwee Ting	National Consultant
Rev. Lindsay Cullen	National Consultant
Mr Stuart McMillan	National Consultant Covenanting
Rev. Dr Ji Zhang	Assembly Theologian in Residence
Ms Rebecca Beisler	Communications and Resources Officer
Ms Anna Catliffe	Executive Administrative Assistant
Ms Bethany Broadstock	Communications Officer

2. AREAS OF WORK

3.1 How ARU works

The ARU has sought to work collaboratively in all it does. This is reflected in the Guiding Principles in the Assembly Strategic Plan 2020-2023:

- Seek first the opportunity to enable fruitful collaboration before doing anything alone.
- Act as the glue which draws the national Church together.
- Ensure the identity and vision of the UCA is evident.

As a result of this, much the ARU's work, as it undertakes the projects and responsibilities given to it, includes facilitating, supporting and collaborating with other groups within the Church. This includes connection to Synods, Presbyteries and Congregations, National Conferences and other groups that gather from across the Church around particular ministry areas.

This triennium has seen a significant shift in the way the ARU and all other groups have worked with an almost complete shift to online videoconference-based meetings and gatherings. As all other parts of the Church have found, this comes with challenges as well as advantages. ARU staff are appreciative of the willingness of many people across the Church who have been willing to work in new ways throughout the triennium.

3.2 Strategic Directions

The ARU work is driven by the Assembly Strategic Plan 2020-2023 which has identified five key strategic directions:

3.2.1 Respond to the Church - Respond to the ongoing needs of the whole Church and other Councils

The ARU contributes to this direction by addressing decisions of the Assembly and the ASC, supporting Task Groups, Committees and the work of Assembly Circles of Interest. These activities are further described below.

3.2.2 Identity - Communicate a clear and concise message — who are we as the UCA and what is our distinct role in working toward the coming of the kingdom of God in Australia

The ARU contributes to this direction through its input into Assembly communication that focuses on the identity of the Church, through the ongoing work in support of the Covenant, through national justice and advocacy and through supporting the National Safe Church unit. These activities are further described below.

3.2.3 Innovation - Take risks, experiment and shape our church to respond to the needs of today and those of the future

The ARU contributes to this direction through support of groups exploring emerging expressions of the Church and through Assembly communications, encouraging, sharing and learning in this area. The ARU has also driven development of a national online learning platform, Uniting Learning, described below.

3.2.4 Intergenerational - Welcome, equip and hold together the different generations, in the life, Ministry, decision making and leadership of the church

The ARU contributes to this direction through the development and provision of resources and training across the Church, facilitating and supporting people engaged in ministry in this area and organizing and supporting youth events. These are described below.

3.2.5 Intercultural - Learn from and enable diverse cultural groups within the church to flourish together

The ARU contributes to this direction through its support of National Conferences, support for the development of language resources and the development and provision of resources and training across the Church. These are described below.

In line with these areas of focus, ARU staff have regularly preached at congregations, recorded podcasts, recorded on social media channels, hosted webinars and online hangouts, written articles and contributed to the work of other councils of the Church.

The ARU works closely with other parts of the Church and Congress to address these directions.

3.3 Assisting Assembly Task Groups and Committees

During the triennium the Assembly moved to a more project-focused way of working. Key pieces of work arising from Assembly and Assembly Standing Committee (ASC) decisions has generally been undertaken by Task Groups. Task Groups have a clear Terms of Reference and ASC appointed membership.

The ARU has provided administrative support to Task Groups in the following ways.

1. Assisting ASC in developing Terms of Reference and appointing suitable membership
2. Assisting in organising meetings including travel arrangements, and through the COVID-19 pandemic, providing appropriate technology platforms through which groups meet.

3. Most Task Groups were also supported by one member of ARU in regard to document management and reporting to ASC. In some contexts staff have provided significant theological and strategic input to the Task Group at key times through the life of the groups.

The ARU have similarly assisted the Standards for Ministries Committee, established in the last triennium.

3.4 Decisions from the 15th Assembly that involve ARU

A number of decisions were made at the 15th Assembly or subsequent ASC meetings in regard to decisions of the 15th Assembly, from which the ARU were asked to undertake work.

3.4.1 *Decision on Marriage*

The ARU, supporting the General Secretary and the President, was involved significantly in follow-up work in terms of supporting the development of an additional marriage liturgy, providing information to the Church and developing strategies in the event of the marriage decision needing to be further addressed in line with the Constitution.

3.4.2 *National Conferences with UAICC*

The ARU, working with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), was tasked to create opportunities and processes to encourage and develop covenant relationships between UAICC and National Conferences.

This has been addressed in a number of ways.

- The ARU, working with UAICC developed Acknowledgement of Country resources which have been translated into the languages of the National Conferences (NCs).
- Other resources including Day of Mourning liturgies have been passed to NCs for their use as well.
- Young people from NC communities were invited and encouraged to participate in a Walking on Country in Raukkan South Australia in 2019.
- The National Consultant Covenanting and members of UAICC have joined NC meetings to speak about the Covenant and UAICC, informing NCs and inviting them to explore relationships with UAICC and First Nations communities more broadly in their own contexts. This will continue in the new triennium.

3.4.3 *Pastoral Support for Seasonal Workers*

The ARU was tasked to work with Synod personnel to:

1. Establish networks that acknowledge and support the pastoral work of those in the UCA ministering to these vulnerable people;

A network across four states, with connections in each region was established and has met approximately quarterly. Expertise, particularly from Dr Mark Zirnsak, informed the conversations as to government policy and ongoing issues confronting the workers.

2. Raise awareness across the Uniting Church of conditions for seasonal workers, particularly in vulnerable communities;

Communications through Assembly media channels and presentations to Synods and other councils have happened across the triennium to raise awareness.

3. Work ecumenically and with civil society partners in Australia and the Pacific to improve pastoral support for seasonal workers coming to Australia

The UCA has participated in several National Council of Churches in Australia initiatives as well as shared information with overseas ecumenical groups, especially the Pacific Conference of Churches.

3.4.4 *Domestic and Family Violence*

The ARU was requested to liaise with Synod and Agency personnel to scope educational and theological materials relating to the Statement on Family and Domestic Violence adopted by the 15th Assembly.

Extensive consultation with Synod and Agency personnel took place across the triennium. A resource that incorporates educational and theological material has been produced and is available through the Assembly website.

During the triennium staff also used Assembly communication channels to support and promote two international campaigns that focus on violence against women and girls, these being:

- The World Council of Churches “Thursdays in Black – Towards a world without rape and violence”
- The United Nations Women led “16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence”

3.4.5 Day of Mourning

The National Consultant Covenanting was requested by ASC to work with UAICC and the ARU to develop resources for the Uniting Church for the Sunday before Australia Day as a Day of Mourning for the UCA. Three liturgies have been produced that reflect on the effect of invasion and colonisation on Australia’s First Peoples.

3.4.6 Climate Change

Taking into account Resolution 66 of the 15th Assembly, the ARU, liaising with UAICC, and Synod and Agency personnel was requested to prepare a National Climate Action Plan and Reporting Framework, and supporting educational and theological materials, to resource the wider church to take action on climate change.

The ARU has developed a Climate Action Plan approved by the ASC. It provides a background to Assembly decisions on climate and environment and then sets out three areas of action following the same structure as used by the Pacific Conference of Churches. These three areas are:

Prophetic – Raising our voice for stronger action

Practical – Walking the Talk through Emissions Reduction and Adaptation Responses

Pastoral – Walking alongside those most impacted

Working with other parts of the Church, the ARU is addressing these areas.

3.5 National Conferences (NC)

A key area of work for the ARU is providing support to National Conferences, including being the key point of contact for NCs into the life of the Assembly. This support has taken several forms.

Regular conversations between NC Chairs, the President and members of the ARU. Initially arising as a pastoral and support response to the decisions of the 15th Assembly, these meetings became a key way of staying in touch through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participation in NC gatherings. The ARU oversees a small amount of Assembly funding to NCs to assist in their meeting costs. Staff attend to support the NCs, bring a report on the work of the Assembly and listen to NCs as they share their joys and concerns.

In several contexts the ARU, with UnitingWorld, has facilitated conversations between diaspora communities, overseas Churches and NCs when issues have arisen that impact on communities within the Uniting Church.

Not all members of the UCA who have come from diverse cultural backgrounds are members of a NC. Where possible the ARU reaches out and opens communications with leaders of these communities and assists in their orientation and journey into the UCA.

3.6 Intercultural and Intergenerational Ministry

Throughout the triennium the ARU has identified a need to assist the Church in its understanding and practice of intercultural and intergenerational ministry (ICIG). These needs have arisen through conversations with NCs, Circles and interaction with staff in other parts of the Church.

Two National Consultants, ARU staff, have led workshops in these areas, with a range of councils and groups across the Church. The materials will become available on the Uniting Learning platform (see below) in the new triennium with a focus on developing trainers and general capacity across the Church.

Topics for this training will include:

- Cultural Awareness for groups across the Church
- Understanding Mono, Multi, Cross and Intercultural church
- Understanding Inter-Generational church
- Ministering in Cross/Intercultural church
- Ministering in Inter-Generational church
- Mission and ministry in a multi-cultural context
- Mission and ministry in an ICIG church
- Leadership and Conflict in ICIG church
- Pastoring in Cross/Intercultural church
- Leading an Intergenerational Bible Study
- Leading an Intergenerational worship

(this list is likely to be added to as church-wide expertise and diverse approaches are identified and developed)

3.7 **Justice and Advocacy**

The justice and advocacy work of the Church nationally continued, having a significant COVID-19 focus across much of the triennium. The ARU leads this work from a national perspective.

2.7.1 *Our Vision for a Just Australia*

During the triennium the major tool for developing advocacy positions of the Church nationally has been through the *Our Vision for a Just Australia* documents and the post-COVID-19 focused *Build Back Better*, an adapted version of the *Vision* specifically related to post-COVID-19 government strategies.

These documents were developed and reviewed through a collaborative process involving the President, synod personnel, UnitingCare Australia and Agency personnel. The ARU facilitated and coordinated the process and the final documents.

These documents have been shared with politicians both federal and state, ecumenical partners and other community groups.

3.7.2 *Climate Change*

Addressing Climate Change remained a key focus of the work at a national level and is described above, as work delegated to the ARU by the Assembly and ASC.

3.7.3 *Refugees and Asylum Seekers*

Advocating for the rights and just treatment of refugees and asylum seekers remained a priority throughout the triennium. Much of the focus has been on COVID-19 responses and removing people from detention.

The ARU, through Assembly communications has encouraged members to contact members of parliament to advocate on key issues, participate in Palm Sunday rallies and other such actions.

The Associate General Secretary chairs the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce, an activity of the National Council of Churches in Australia. This has been a secondary voice through which our Church has raised key issues.

3.7.4 *Submissions, Advocacy Letter Writing and Meeting with members of parliament*

The ARU, in some cases working closely with UnitingCare Australia, UAICC and synod staff, facilitated a number of submissions to government and also facilitated and contributed to letters written to the Prime Minister, other federal Ministers and members of parliament. Several opportunities to meet with members of parliament were also taken up by the President, supported by staff.

Early in the triennium much energy and engagement focused on the Federal Government's attempt to develop a Religious Freedom Bill.

As the triennium progressed most advocacy centred around government response to COVID-19.

3.7.5 International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

The Uniting Church is a member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). The focus this triennium has been on raising awareness of and encouraging Australia to both sign and ratify the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This treaty entered into force in January 2021, having received the requisite level of support from member nations of the United Nations. Many countries, including Australia, are yet to sign.

The ARU facilitated an ecumenical meeting and then facilitated an Interfaith Service commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, at which the President spoke.

3.7.6 Advocacy for overseas contexts

Working with UnitingWorld and diaspora communities within the UCA, the ARU facilitated advocacy to government and Ambassadors of foreign governments on the situations in the Philippines, Myanmar and West Papua.

3.8 Illuminate online resource portal

Through the triennium the ARU, led by one National Consultant, worked with Assembly Communications and also a Synod staff person to develop an online resource portal. This portal replaces the previous approach of placing important documents and resources on the Assembly website where searching for them was complex. Approximately 600 documents are currently available on the portal and others will be added over time. The new portal can be found at <https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/>

3.9 UnitingLearning

During the triennium a national online learning, training and discipleship platform has been established. The ARU, led by one National Consultant, has driven this development with support and growing involvement from Synod personnel and staff from the National Safe Church Unit.

The platform currently has over 1000 subscribers and a range of course material. It is projected that by the end of 2021 up to 16000 subscribers will be registered. This increase will be driven by a number of national safe church modules becoming available and compulsory for ministry agents and staff across the Church.

3.10 National Young Adult Leaders Conference (NYALC)

Working with the President, the ARU organised and ran a NYALC attended by approximately 130 young adults. The event was held in Adelaide in January 2019.

A second in-person NYALC was in planning to be held in January 2021. It was cancelled as a result of COVID-19 concerns. The President and ARU staff ran a number of NYALC online events which we well attended.

3.11 Ecumenical Relationships

The Associate General Secretary acts as the Assembly's Ecumenical Officer, in support of the General Secretary.

Ecumenism in this triennium has been greatly impacted by COVID-19. For some local expressions of ecumenism this has reduced the capacity for groups to meet as they have done previously. National and Global ecumenical bodies have found the shift to video-conferencing giving some new life and energy to their work as participation in such contexts was significantly stronger than previously. For the UCA, this meant the barriers created by distance to Asia, the Pacific and Europe have been overcome and participation is more likely.

The Pandemic has also presented opportunities for shared discussion and learning as churches globally adjusted to meet their own specific challenges.

ARU staff have participated in a range of online events organised by the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Christian Conference of Asia and the Pacific Conference of Churches. These were communicated to the wider UCA through Assembly communications channels.

The ARU provides some support to UCA members:

- Emily Evans in her role on the WCC Central Committee and Executive Committee
- Morag Logan in her role on WCC Faith and Order Commission

- Terence Corkin in his role on the Christian Conference of Asia
- Amelia Koh-Butler in her role on the World Methodist Council

The ARU supports the UCA members of the Lutheran Church of Australia – UCA Dialogue, who are appointed by and report to the ASC.

The ARU supports the President in National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) church leader meetings, participated in the NCCA Forum, and represents the Assembly in NCCA activities as required.

The ARU facilitated several online gatherings of UCA members across Australia including staff, engaged in ecumenical activities.

The Assembly Theologian in Residence:

- Visited the WCC in 2019, meeting with senior staff
- Provided a Response to the keynote speaker at the Congress of Asian Theologians, Christian Conference of Asia meeting in Indonesia. Paper presented: “Theology of Social Service of Uniting Church in Australia”
- Participated in an online international joint conference, WCC and International Society of Diakonia Studies. Paper presented: “Faith Foundations: Being and Becoming the Church through Social Service”
- Participated in an online international conference, Institute of Diakonia Research, University of Heidelberg. Paper presented: “Diakonia in China: a dialogue with China Christian Council”
- Participated in the 'Sacred People, Sacred Earth', Australia Religious Response to Climate Change annual meeting

3.12 Interfaith Relationships

The ARU supports the UCA members of the Dialogue our Church has with the Executive Council of Australia Jewry. The UCA members are appointed by and report to the ASC.

The ARU supports the relationship the UCA has with the Muslim Community through helping to organise and participating in an Iftar Dinner annually. The Assembly partners with the NSWACT Synod, Uniting NSWACT and the Affinity Foundation in this.

Additionally, the ARU has represented the UCA and the NCCA in the Australian National Dialogue for Christians, Muslims and Jews.

As reported earlier, the ARU facilitated an interfaith meeting and a subsequent Interfaith Service commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Assembly Resourcing Unit has a varied role that involves carriage of specific responsibilities, tasks and projects as well as collaborating with other parts of the Church and facilitating groups and members of the Church to come together as they undertake specific tasks and activities.
- 4.2 Having moved fully to online meetings through the COVID-19 pandemic, it is likely much of the work of the ARU and the groups it supports will remain in online formats. This is as a result of budgetary constraints as well as growing familiarity with, and flexibility and accessibility of the online format. Staff are aware of the need for careful and intentional community building to be undertaken, as well as thoughtful approaches to meeting processes to ensure the groups feel supported and able to work well together.
- 4.3 I have greatly appreciated the excellent work of all members of the ARU throughout the triennium as our geographic spread and the pressures and necessities of the times forced us to move into different ways of working as a team and across the Church. I believe it has been a successful triennium for the ARU and the groups it supports.

Rob Floyd
Associate General Secretary

5. ASSEMBLY CIRCLES OF INTEREST

The Assembly established its seven Circles of Interest to assist people to engage with the Uniting Church's national work, providing opportunities for people to be informed, to contribute and to connect with others.

Each Circle represents a broad area of the Assembly's mission and ministry. Together, the seven circles encompass some of the core values of the Uniting Church and how we contribute to God's mission in the world.

The Circles are:

- Being a Multicultural Church (BMC)
- Discipling the Next Generations (DNG)
- Growing in Faith (GIF)
- Seeking Common Ground (SCG)
- Transforming Worship (TW)
- Walking Together as First and Second Peoples (WTFSP)
- Working for Justice (WFJ)

People are free to join one or more of the circles. Each circle is a platform for learning and sharing among its members and provides a mechanism to offer input into the Assembly's work. Through this interaction, the Circles become a sharing and learning space where we are stretched, faith is deepened and together we listen to where God is leading the Church.

Members of the Circle are connected to the circle via regular email communication and have the option to join circle conversations on social media (Facebook).

Each Circle is supported by Panel Members identified by the Assembly as people with particular gifts and expertise in that area of interest. An Advocate is also appointed to each Circle to nurture and encourage activity, conversation and input from Circle members. Advocates report to the Assembly Standing Committee twice per triennium on the activity of their Circle.

In the 2018-2021 triennium, the Advocates were as follows:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| • Being a Multicultural Church (BMC) | Rev Dr Matagi Vilitama |
| • Discipling the Next Generations (DNG) | Steve (Molk) Molkentin |
| • Growing in Faith (GIF) | Rev Ann Perrin |
| • Seeking Common Ground (SCG) | Rev Dr Amelia Koh-Butler |
| • Transforming Worship (TW) | Rev Alex Sangster |
| • Walking Together as First and Second Peoples (WTFSP) | Stuart McMillan |
| • Working for Justice (WFJ) | Rev Loni Vaitohi |

A more detailed description of the Circles is found at **Appendix 1**

A description of the role of Circles, Panels and Advocates is found in **Appendix 2**

Circle of Interest Reports

B5A Being a Multicultural Church (BMC) Rev Dr Matagi Vilitama

It was not until 1985 that the UCA declared itself to be a multicultural church. In 1977 when the UCA was inaugurated, there were no acknowledgment of country, no greetings or songs in different languages, no conch shell Introit.

It is now recognised that UCA is made up of many diverse cultures from different backgrounds, from different parts of the world. Over the years, the church had also affirmed its intercultural nature with declaration documents like 'One Body, Many Members.'

We had come from our different backgrounds because of our common faith in Christ. We had all been baptised into Christ; we had been buried with him, and we were raised in him to become the body of Christ. It was through the cross of Christ that we are called into this church together, sharing about our faith. We are more than multicultural, we are a cross cultural church.

The Being a Multicultural Church Circle (BMCC) platform was created for collaboration, sharing, informing and resourcing members of the church. The Circle has tried to live out those objectives in the past triennium. Moreover, through the platform, we celebrate our diversity of cultures and languages and the emerging subcultures in the Church.

Engagement of the members on the Facebook page was mostly on stories and events members shared, inspiring the church to celebrate its diversity and the many gifts there are in our ethnic communities.

There are sharing of national and international events that inform and encourage members in cross/inter cultural and ecumenical relationships. There were sharing of articles and short snippets about racism encouraging conversations about intercultural relationships and how to improve being a community of diverse members. Some of these were cross-shared with other Circle's Facebook pages. The Assembly Resourcing Unit staff were very helpful in sharing and encouraging on these platforms.

During COVID-19, a webinar series were created to respond to the pandemic offering support to members and the wider community in times of isolation, restrictions and socio-physical distancing. 'COVID-19' became an overarching theme with sub-topics covering theological, liturgical and pastoral issues. Sub-topics included: Ministerial Practices; Hybrid Ecclesiology; Contextual Leadership; Domestic Violence; and Mental Health. The undergirding theme for this year is 'The Uniting Church in the 21st Century', exploring what it means to be a Cross/Inter Cultural UCA in the Anthropocene, especially in light of the 'new normal'.

In all our webinars, the panel were intentionally diverse: selecting speakers, moderators and theological listeners from different cultural backgrounds, gender balanced and intergenerational.

In the last three years, a 'Tagata Pasifika Theological Symposium' was initiated by the BMCC in collaboration with others to showcase the theological contribution of the Pacific Island communities to the theological repertoire of the UCA. Papers from the symposium are now published as a resource for the Church. There is a plan to organise similar symposiums in the next triennium with/for other ethnic communities in the church.

Translation materials for publications is an ongoing work of the Circle and the Assembly Resourcing Unit. Conversations have been taking place with panel members about further work on revision and translation of key documents of the UCA from the lens of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. There are conversations about re-reading the Basis of Union through CALD eyes; shared ministry between spouses, creating online faith communities who do not have adequately trained and accredited pastors/leaders. There are conversations around the Period of Discernment and similar processes for CALD candidates. Looking at the Code of Ethics and Ethical Training from the Multicultural practitioners' cultural backgrounds. The ongoing work on translation of UCA worship resources.

Looking to the next triennium, the BMCC will contribute to the work of the Assembly and the Assembly Strategic Plan 2020-2023 by helping building ministry of the National Conferences and collaborating with the 'Walking Together as First and Second Peoples Circle' in building covenantal relationship.

The Circle will collaborate with the Assembly to organise a combined National Conferences gathering bringing all the 13 Conferences to celebrate and promote the intercultural and cross-cultural life of the UCA.

It is also important for the BMCC to be actively involved in Assembly Act2 project.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge our panel members contributions in Being A Multi-Cultural Circle:

Hee-Jeong Sylvia Yang, Jason Kioa, Levon Kardashian, Moses Leth, Steve Bernaudo, Alvin Gunawan, Viniana Ravitali, Kisoo Jang and Bryan Gilmour.

B5B Discipling the Next Generations (DNG) Steve (Molk) Molkentin

The DISCIPLING THE NEXT GENERATIONS circle engages many people keen to support ministry with young people (under 30). Some are practitioners, youth workers and ministers; some are school and university chaplains; some still are enthusiastic supporters. Predominantly the content shared on the DNG Facebook group has been about signposting—identifying content that is suitable for ministry with young people, or sharing content that circle members have created or used that might benefit others. Bec Beisler (ARU) has been a massive assistance in collecting noteworthy content and sharing that as a part of the circles newsletters.

There has been limited feedback regarding the success or failure of using any of the content shared (other than the experience of the person posting it in the first instance). In no small part this could be related to the impact of COVID on everyone, especially ministry with young people. Navigating moving groups online and staying connected proved difficult for many leaders who find online technology challenging, as much as the acknowledgement their home internet connections did nothing to support them.

An additional challenge for the circle has been that some came looking for the “next big thing” to “save/reinvigorate their youth ministry or congregation”, especially during the pandemic. With all members of the panel involved in ministry with young people in either a vocational or volunteer context this proved to be something we continually wrestled with, in no small part because we were all running as fast as each other to keep our groups together. There was, especially in the latter part of the triennium, little time to offer much more than the digital equivalent of one beggar showing another beggar where to find food.

For a time the DNG panel, along with the ARU and other people in ministry with young people around the country, invested significant energy in developing a proposal for a national gathering (similar to the National Christian Youth Conventions (NCYC) that took place every two years). With changes within Assembly structure prior to the 15th Assembly, this triennium had no direct contact to engage Synods or Presbyteries in this vital ministry...and any conversations by panel members or the ARU with those groups ended largely due to lack of funding and support for such an idea. The effort by that collective group to develop the proposal was lost as the proposal fell away and was never put to the Assembly Standing Committee for discussion.

An enthusiastic, inclusive national gathering is vital to the future of the Uniting Church in Australia. A mountain top experience where young people are challenged not only by those that might speak; they are also challenged by their peers to take their relationship with Jesus seriously. The community that grows from these events and its impact within the life of the church is evident in the many that have in the past heard a call from God and engaged in vocational ministry within the life of the church. That so many older people within the life of the church are still members is because they had the opportunity to gather and be a part of life-changing communities that impacted them and our churches for the better.

The members of the Assembly Standing Committee, the ARU, and the 16th Assembly are encouraged to consider their responsibility regarding ministry with young people so seriously as to work towards the support, resourcing, and funding of such an ongoing event.

Ministry with young people within the life of the modern UCA is deeply embedded in the development of identity and innovation and lives wholly in an intergenerational and inter/multi/cross-cultural space. Those engage in ministry with the next generation of young people plead for the support of the church at all levels – congregation, presbytery, synod, and assembly – to leverage assets to sustainably call, train, and develop young ministry agents and volunteers representative of who we are, and mentor them for all the roles the church has to offer. The UCA must wrestle with its response to a shrinking pulpit and pew and consider how we offer empathy and take Jesus' message seriously in prioritizing young people (and their families) everywhere within the life of our churches.

The DNG panel – Leviana Ravetali, Nicole Mugford, Nia Lavaki, Sione Hehepoto, Robin Yang, and Bradon French – are to be congratulated for their efforts in pastoral care of each other and those they minister to, and their vision for a church full of young people who are passionate about their relationship with Jesus. They each bring significant skill and numerous gifts, and their informed reflections on the issues facing young people and the UCA deserve a wider audience.

B5C Growing in Faith (GIF) Rev Ann Perrin

The Growing in Faith Circle works to enhance how we as the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) support our members in their growing in understanding and application of the faith, which is the calling to all followers of the risen Christ. The Circle has provided a place for people to share ideas, articles and upcoming courses and events, allowing interaction between members on some key themes.

Like all parts of the Church, COVID-19 has impacted on people's lives significantly. Some physical gatherings and activities were unable to take place. In this context, the Facebook group provided a place for sharing by Circle members of articles and courses that might be of interest. Members of the Panel also posed questions to the Circle members on occasion. This generated some follow up comment on questions asked or articles shared. Invitations issued to the Facebook group to share resources for inclusion in the newsletter were not often taken up.

Aside from the Facebook interactions, the Circle has spoken into the wider Church through contributing to some Circle specific newsletters as well as several combined Circle newsletters. These newsletters had a distribution beyond the Circle members including presbyteries and congregations. Both members of the Circle and of the Panel were invited to contribute to the newsletter. Each newsletter was a combination of newly written articles and items from the Facebook group. All told, Growing in Faith Panel and Circle members contributed to 12 newsletters on a variety of topics including: Disability and Faith, Faith and COVID-19, Faith Formation at Home, Growing Disciples, Easter, Revelation through Scripture, Voluntary Assisted Dying, Christmas, Revelation through experience, Climate Change and the UCA Constitution Preamble.

The role of the Circle came into its own when the members were invited by the Assembly Standing Committee to provide input and reflections on the nature of Holy Communion in online settings. The Growing in Faith Circle contributed to the survey on online communion. Some members of the circle wrote papers about their experience of online communion. Circle members also took part in a combined Transforming Worship / Growing in Faith panel webinar that focused on Holy Communion in online settings. Additionally, members also were invited to comment on the survey that was done in conjunction with the Transforming Worship Circle on online Holy Communion.

When asked via Facebook, the circles would like the Growing in Faith Panel to resource conversations about discipleship and Intergenerational ministry in the future. There is the potential to collaborate with other Circles in these areas. In the new triennium there is opportunity to have discussion panels about different aspects of the work of the Church nationally that circle members might be drawn to.

B5D Seeking Common Ground (SCG) Rev Dr Amelia Koh-Butler

The Seeking Common Ground Circle (SCG) embodies how the Uniting Church is in relationships that are ecumenical, interfaith and with people of no institutional faith. The transition from this area of work operating within a committee model to this Circle model of collaboration within these areas of ministry has been slower than expected and we are still in a process of transition and continue to explore the best ways to engage and connect people who are involved in or passionate about this space.

The Circle has used both an email Newsletter and a Facebook group as the major platforms for connecting members. The Facebook Group has close to 200 members and information shared includes links to articles and resources that are ecumenical or interfaith in nature. However, engagement in conversation is minimal and the Facebook group has not been able to become a relational space for its members.

Some members have contributed stories of interest to the SCG newsletter, usually by invitation. Generally, the newsletters report on good news rather than addressing issues of concern, development or future strategy.

The SCG facilitated three videoconferences during the COVID lockdown. The meetings gathered people from all synods and listened to their ecumenical engagements in synods and presbyteries. Areas of collaboration have been identified, including communications between synod groups, theological reflection of current ecumenical activities, reconciliation with First Peoples, and climate change.

UCA members engaged in Relationships with Other Faiths and Ecumenical work have not always shared common goals in the past, so pastoral relationships have been key in holding people to the connection with SCG. During the Triennium, face-to-face meetings with some key people in Synods took place and the Circle, mainly through the Advocate.

Assembly staff has kept in touch with and offered support to people with specific roles within ecumenical councils, including Emily Evans (World Council of Churches), Morag Logan (World Council of Churches), Terrence Corkin (Christian Conference of Asia), Sandy Boyce (World Diakonia) as well as the Advocate Amelia Koh-Butler (World Methodist Council). These people have contributed information back into the life of the Circle.

Prior to COVID-19 the Assembly supported one young member to participate in a youth event run by the Christian Conference of Asia.

Some Circle members are low in energy when it comes to the 'big conversations' about the UCA in ecumenism and interfaith activity, however many remain locally active in continuing to nurture strong ecumenical and/or interfaith relationships where they are placed. They tend to be connected into those relationships as individuals rather than with any authority to represent the UCA in those relationships. Structurally, in terms of formal ecumenical and interfaith relationships the UCA may be at our lowest point since Union, however, we have a good track record and substantial respectful relationships attached to real people. This gives us something to build on in the future.

There has been an initiative to populate the Facebook group site with Facebook Learning Units. The idea will be to ask all members of the Circle to complete at least 3 units of learning from a choice of about 10. This starts to raise the bar of expectation. If you express interest in SCG, you will have opportunities to share, learn and be able to contribute out of developing knowledge. Hopefully, members will feel there will be some point to being in the Circle as Learning Modules increase sharing and expertise. People with specific expertise and experience will be asked to develop some learning modules.

Circle members have participated in and contributed to the organisation of Iftars (including the Assembly Iftar events) and local ecumenical and interfaith activities in their own settings.

Members have responded to specific requests by Assembly staff for information about Jewish-UCA and Lutheran-UCA relationships. There is interest in knowing more about UCA-Roman Catholic relations and where the Assembly resolution relating to the Catholic Plenary is situated.

Members are active in the Scriptural Reasoning (now Academic Dialogue between Christians and Muslims). This is both ecumenical and interfaith, with Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Academics meeting with Muslim

Academics from Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra. It is largely coordinated by Uniting and Muslim leaders from Charles Sturt University and Affinity.

Circle members contributed to the survey around Holy Communion in online settings. One Circle member Siosiana Joyce Tangi has been our UCA representative on Youth Parliament of World Religions (Youth PoWR), helping to bring to fruition The Sydney Statement. Amelia has also served on the Steering Reference Committee for Youth PoWR and the development of The Sydney Statement.

The Advocate and Assembly staff involved in the SCG hosted a Presbyterian Church of Korea visit to the Uniting Church and shared resources from the UCA to ecumenical partners. These included sharing the Uniting Church Safe Church Framework and Liturgy of Acknowledgement and Lament with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Christian Conference of Asia, and sharing the Liturgy of Dying Person in COVID, the Day of Mourning worship resources with the WCC.

Beyond formal ecumenical and interfaith relationships, UCA members and some members of SCG are engaged in UCA and wider responses to issues like Climate Change and Justice in the wider community. These are areas of strong ecumenical action and some members note that we are stronger when we work well with others around key prophetic and justice issues.

There are some areas of work that SCG can contribute to in the new triennium.

- Seeking Common Ground Circle embodies ecumenical and interfaith relationships. On the one hand, it is about the unity of the Body of Christ; on the other hand, it is about Christian witness in the religiously plural world. These aspects of Assembly ministry will provide pathways for the Uniting Church to participate in and contribute to God's mission in the world.
- Ecumenical and interfaith relationships build on person-to-person connections. We need to provide opportunities and resources to grow and transition these relationships to a new generation of leaders.
- Partner Church and sister church relationships are, by nature, ecumenical. We need to clarify the relationship between the common ecclesial/theological underpinnings and the political realities to some of those relationships. There is real tension here and it could become a helpful growing space where we do excellent ground-breaking work.
- Currently the ARU is in the process of publishing the Basis of Union in 10 language translations. This initiative will encourage dialogue among a number of Circles. The SCG will engage two aspects of reading the Basis of Union – in the diverse communities, and between the communities. It will encourage a further and broader discernment about unity and diversity in the life of UCA.
- Much of religious justice and service activity is in the Interfaith space. Emergency response, international relations, service provision on the margins - all involve significant Interfaith work. SCG may be able to assist the Assembly to invest in building relationships to serve these areas well

B5E Transforming Worship (TW) Rev Alex Sangster

Let me welcome you into the Transforming Worship Circle (TWC) by giving you a taste of the feast of conversation that takes place. Here are some randomly selected posts from the last few weeks. Each of these posts has been responded to by other UCA folk from across Australia, with rich, insightful and useful comments, many of which are contributing to the life of the Circle and the life of the worship in the UCA and beyond.

"Hi There, I'm a newish member of the Transforming Worship Panel and I'm wondering... What songs have shaped the life of the Uniting Church? What are the songs that capture the heart of your worshipping community? Are there home grown songs that resonate - "this is who we are!"... ?

"Anyone developed worship resources for Anzac Day they are happy to share?"

"Resource Recommendation...Good Evening friends. I just wanted to bring to your attention a fantastic tech tool I've been using for pastoral care contact over the last few years. It's an app called ..."

"Friends, here's a 2020 song: FRUITFUL BE ... fits well with Sundays 2 May and 9 May of the RCL - in which the John 15 gospel readings call us to find our life..."

The TWC is called to invite people to engage with the ways the Assembly resources the wider Church and thinks creatively about our worship.

Circle members have been invited to learn about, share information on and explore worship resources for liturgy, including in different languages, as well as for music, preaching, dance, drama, inter-generational and intercultural worship. This might also include thinking on preparing spaces for worship and the multiplicity of factors which enable healthy, vital worship within the breadth of the Church.

We have approached this call by developing a welcoming and responsive Facebook Community, by responding to suggestions from members about specific areas of interest and by encouraging conversations around diverse issues. The panel has met every six weeks or so online as well as a two day (pre-COVID) in person gatherings.

The TWC Facebook Group is an active, vibrant community with nearly 800 members. Members post questions about practical concerns, theological reflections and information sharing. The group is supportive and imaginative and has a healthy organic 'life'. Many (not all) Circle Members are active in the conversation on the FB group. Many regularly post and participate. Areas in which the Circle share resources and ask for help include: liturgy, music, online communion, community gathering, prayers for palliative care, working with children, working with online communion...the list goes on.

At the beginning of 2020 as the COVID 19 pandemic began to unroll across the land, the Panel members, with the support of the Circle planned and designed what became Assembly Australia Wide Worship. This ran for just over three months during the first lockdown. Worship leaders and their communities from all over Australia led worship for the whole church, sharing their diverse gifts at a time that many ministers and their communities were struggling with the practical and emotional realities of doing church differently. The TWC supported by Assembly Staff including the Assembly Communications team were able to offer joyful and theologically diverse resources to unite the church at a time when many were isolated, struggling and alone.

In 2020 we also created a Liturgy for those Dying in Isolation. This came about at the request of one of our hospital chaplains.

We developed an Advent resource from across Circle members, a song which built each week, to be shared in worship.

We are working on a Liturgy to support people within the processes and decisions surrounding Voluntary Assisted Dying. This came about at the request for resources from the VICTAS Synod. We are exploring the creation of an entirely reimagined marriage liturgy, a task stimulated by the thoughts and recommendations of the Task Group which created the Additional Marriage Liturgy (2018).

We are looking at ways to encourage conversations around 'Ordered Liberty' and the opportunity it gives to embed inclusive language, and recognitions of indigenous sovereignty into all our historic and official liturgies. We are looking at ways of facilitating a conversation for rural ministry practitioners who are struggling with lack of lay and ordained leadership.

Our Circle has directly contributed to the work of the Assembly by undertaking two specific requests. Firstly, the Liturgy for the Anniversary of the National Apology to Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, which we helped to create in 2019 as a written document and then recreated this year as a film.

Secondly the Circle helped the Assembly Standing Committee (ASC) and UCA look at Holy Communion in online settings which we did by working with Assembly staff to convene an online panel of theologians and practitioners and by asking our Circle members to participate in a survey, the results of which contributed to the final report.

This Circle will continue to contribute to the transformation of worship in the UCA and the Assembly Strategic Plan for the next triennium by helping to listen to the on the ground voices of worship practitioners and by sharing their voices with the ASC. It is a radical and inspiring thing to be part of a church which is genuinely interested and informed by its members and that bases important decisions on lived experience. The TWC is like a lovely raucous little boat filled with the people of God who are passionate about travelling the rich and stormy waters of faith and making sure no one is left without a life jacket. When our Circle members put up their arm for help, the response is swift and helpful. In a world of disconnect, where the sea of faith is ever withdrawing from the secular world, this sense of companionship is no small thing.

Blessings

Rev Alexandra Sangster
On behalf of the Panel and Circle of Transforming Worship

B5F Walking Together as First and Second Peoples (WTFSP) Stuart McMillan

This Circle works to enhance how we as the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) live out the binding commitment of our covenant relationship with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and more broadly our Christian commitment as sisters and brothers, First and Second Peoples, one in Christ.

The Circle is one significant place where the Church is able to share stories and resources to encourage the whole Church in this commitment. The Circles social media and newsletters have shared widely resources produced for significant commemorations within the Church. The Transforming Worship Circle has also been involved in resource collaboration and the circulation of resources. For example, within the UCA, the Day of Mourning, and nationally Sorry Day and NAIDOC week.

Advocacy for First Nations justice issues has been undertaken in line with the Assembly Advocacy Protocol and circulated through this and the Justice Circle. In some justice issues Circle members are also encouraged to advocate personally, for example the 30th anniversary of the Royal Commission Report into Black Deaths in Custody.

In our newsletter and through social media we seek to encourage the sharing of stories which highlight the 'life' of our covenant and walking together, at a local level. It is in sharing stories that the Circle encourages others in what is possible and point to where God is at work in our midst.

The life of the Circle has connected with the work of an Assembly Task Group that has been exploring the practical applications of the decision of the 16th Assembly to acknowledge that First Nations Peoples are Sovereign in this land.

One area of focus that has emerged and will continue into the new triennium is to strengthen connections between local UAICC communities and/or Regional Councils and local congregations. The Circle has sought to be connected closely to the UAICC National Executive. It has done this through some of the membership of the Panel and also regular contact between the Advocate, and UAICC Executive.

Promoting these connections, as well as providing resources and opportunities to share has been the key way that Circle members have worked this triennium. This has encouraged engagement and a renewed understanding of expression of identity at a regional, presbytery and local level. Panel members and the wider Circle membership will continue this into the new triennium.

In addition, this Circle will be able to contribute into the Assembly Strategic Plan 2020-2023 in a number of other ways.

1. We Walk Together in covenantal relationship across the generations. The Circle will, in conjunction with the Discipling the Next Generations Circle, seek to highlight and encourage intergenerational life. Second Peoples have much to learn from First Peoples about being naturally intergenerational.
2. This Circle will feature in conjunction with the Being a Multi-Cultural Church Circle the engagement between UAICC and various National Conferences. The desire to workshop the theology of the Preamble will happen, and this will be featured within the Circle, affording the wider Church's understanding and engagement with the Preamble.

B5G Working for Justice (WFJ) Rev Loni Vaitohi

The Working for Justice Circle is a platform where panel members and visitors can share their feelings, points of view, and their experiences in relation to matters of justice that they are passionate about. This ranges from the global and national, to local issues.

Events and action on matters relating to justice and human rights are published in the Circle's newsletter and the Working for Justice Facebook page. These media platforms inform Circle members and the wider church about key issues that arise and the Uniting Church's position on them. It also informs Circle

members about upcoming activities like protest marches and opportunities to make submissions and sign petitions. There has also been sharing about practical local responses like hosting a local event, creating banners and other forms of awareness raising.

There have been particular issues like Climate change, Indigenous sovereignty, Asylum seekers and Refugees, black deaths in custody to name a few that have been shared on the Circle's Facebook page. The nature of the conversation is mostly about seeking resources and connecting with like-minded people

Through these conversations and sharing, members offer each other directions and encouragement to advocate for justice and to support each other on their justice endeavours.

The Working for Justice Circle has contributed to the work of the Assembly with some practical activity like petitioning and protesting.

The contribution of the Working for Justice Circle to the wider work of the Assembly and to the Assembly Strategic Plan in the new triennium, would be to continue what has been done on justice issues before, and identify, prioritise and encourage more participation and engagement from panel members.

Appendix 1

Circle Descriptions

Below you will find a short summary of the focus areas for each of the seven Circles. Further information regarding the mission and ministry focus areas and activities of specific Circles can be found at <http://uniting.church/circles>.

Walking Together as First and Second Peoples

The *Preamble to the Constitution* of the Uniting Church states that “As the Church believes God guided it into union so it believes that God is calling it to continually seek a renewal of its life as a community of First Peoples and of Second Peoples from many lands”.

This journey is marked by commitments. In 1985, the Assembly of the Uniting Church unanimously welcomed and agreed to officially support the formation of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). In 1994 the Uniting Church in Australia entered into a Covenant with our Congress brothers so that together we may contribute to a more just church and nation.



The Walking Together as First and Second Peoples Circle encourages members of the UCA to see a destiny together, praying and working together for a fuller expression of our reconciliation in Jesus Christ. The Circle is a space for walking together, for listening to and sharing of the experiences of our Indigenous brothers and sisters. The Circle will consider some of the important issues that impact our ability to live out our Covenant commitments.

Being a Multicultural Church

In 1985 the Uniting Church declared itself a multicultural church, embracing the growing cultural diversity of its membership. Today in the Uniting Church we worship in 30 languages other than English (not including Indigenous languages); we have more than 195 groups who worship in a language other than English; and we have 12 national conferences which support congregations and communities of the same culture.

The Uniting Church rejoices in its diversity of races, cultures and languages as God's gracious gift and seeks to be a true multicultural church living its faith and life cross-culturally.

The Being a Multicultural Church Circle seeks to create genuine ways for diverse voices and contributions to be respectfully heard across the wider membership of the church.



This Circle is for everyone, whether you are part of a small or big community, speaking English or not, recently arrived or having lived in Australia for generations.

Circle members will be invited to share their own stories of faith, hope and love in Christ Jesus. The Circle will be a platform to learn about and contribute to cross cultural learning, ministry with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups, intentional intercultural ministry and formation for the next generation.

Seeking Common Ground

Being in relationship with others is instrumental to how the Uniting Church seeks to witness to Christ in the world. The Seeking Common Ground Circle invites people to learn about and participate in the ways the Uniting Church is in relationship with other Churches, other faiths, and those of no institutional faith, as together we seek to find common ground for the good of all.



Circle members will be informed about and invited to contribute to the Church's witness through ecumenical relationships. This includes the ways that we seek to witness to the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, with churches across Australia and overseas Partner Churches.

The Circle will invite members to explore the importance of interfaith relationships as a means to witness to God in a world of many faiths. Circle members will engage with theological reflection discerning God's openness to the world, be invited into mutually respectful interfaith dialogue and promote opportunities for friendship with other faiths.

Additionally, the circle will explore how the Church witnesses to the reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation as it engages with the search for spirituality and meaning in wider society, including with people who do not identify with any institutional faith.

Working for Justice

Central to the identity of the Uniting Church is a commitment to pursue a just and peaceful world. As Christians we believe that all people are precious and that we are called to follow the example of Jesus to love one another. The Working for Justice Circle provides a space to live out this calling to be a prophetic voice for justice in our church, our communities and our world.



Circle members will be informed about, engage with and contribute to how the Uniting Church pursues social and economic justice, human rights, peace and care for the environment. There will be a particular focus on climate change and refugees and asylum seekers as two key areas of concern for the Uniting Church.

The Circle will support the work of the Assembly to encourage wider theological reflection and action on issues of social justice. Collaboration, sharing and joint action will be a major feature for this Circle, both across the Church and with others who are also committed to working for justice.

Discipling the Next Generations

At its heart, "The Great Commission" (Matt 28:16-20) is a call to pass on the faith by making disciples who follow in the footsteps of Jesus. The Assembly of the Uniting Church responds to that call with a commitment to "encourage and resource deeper discipleship of UCA members, equipping them to participate in God's mission."



A key part of discipling is the way the Church nurtures and encourages children, youth and young adults within its family. We seek to resource the next generations of Christian faith by inviting younger people to join in God's mission, equipping and releasing them to do so.

The Discipling the Next Generations Circle is an invitation to be involved with how the Assembly supports our next generation of leaders and to connect with others who are passionate about this space.

Open to everyone, Circle members will have the opportunity to learn more about and to participate in the ways we do this, including the creation of resources, developing intergenerational awareness in diverse settings and the initiation and support of national youth events.

Growing in Faith

Growing as disciples of Christ, equipped to participate in God's mission, is central to our journey of faith. As described in our founding document, The Basis of Union, (Paragraph 11), the Uniting Church holds a high regard for faithful and scholarly interpreters of Scripture, who reflect deeply upon and act in obedience to God's living Word. We are also thankful for the learning which comes through literary, historical and scientific understanding and continue to be open to learning from contemporary thought and societies.

Encouraging and guiding such learning and how it shapes our understanding of the faith is an important aspect of the Assembly's work.

Growing in Faith encompasses not only our academic understandings of theology, but also how we as followers of Christ grow in our understanding and application of the faith.

The Growing in Faith Circle provides a space for people to be informed about and offer input into this important area, and to share your own faith journey with others.

Circle Members will be invited to engage with and contribute to resources and activities, such as discussion papers or study resources on topics of the moment, online forums engaging with questions of faith and doctrine, and national conferences or events.



Transforming Worship

As Christians and members of the Uniting Church, worship is a fundamental activity that draws us together. When we gather in worship, we respond to God's invitation to be loved and we encounter God's own gracious self-revelation through word and sacrament. In communal worship all bring their gifts, varied and different. Being drawn into communion with God and others can be a transforming experience.

The Transforming Worship Circle invites people to engage with the ways the Assembly resources the wider Church and thinks creatively about our worship.

Circle members will be invited to learn about, share information on and explore worship resources for liturgy, including in different languages, as well as for music, preaching, dance, drama, inter-generational and intercultural worship. This might also include thinking on preparing spaces for worship and the multiplicity of factors which enable healthy, vital worship within the breadth of the Church.



Appendix 2

How Circles, Panels and Advocates Work

Assembly Priorities

In carrying out their work, all Advocates and members of Circles and Panels will be mindful of broader Uniting Church and Assembly priorities in all they undertake including:

- Living out our covenant as First and Second Peoples
- Living out our commitment to being a multicultural church
- Being oriented towards justice, grounded in the Church's relationships of solidarity with those most affected by injustice and concerned with the needs of the whole creation
- Being an inclusive church where those of differing ability, age, gender, race and sexuality are welcomed
- Ensuring that all activities are grounded in the Gospel, consistent with the Basis of Union of the UCA, the Constitution and Regulations, built upon the traditions of the Uniting Church in Australia and align with the current strategic priorities of the Assembly
- Considering how the work relates to other Circles, Councils, Agencies and groups within the UCA, and working collaboratively wherever possible
- Considering how the work relates to other bodies ecumenically, and with other faiths and civil society organisation and working collaboratively wherever possible
- Conducting the work on the basis of current best practice and with regard to contemporary research in the area
- Contributing positively to Australian civil society including by representing the Uniting Church position appropriately

Members of a Circle will:

- Be Informed
- Be Resourced
- Participate in Sharing
- Provide Input
- Be Collaborative

Members of a Panel will:

- Exhibit the following characteristics
 - Expert in latest thinking in the ministry area
 - Active participants in the field of work
 - Expert in the theological underpinnings of the ministry area
 - Aware of UCA positions (current and historic) and current ongoing work across the life of the Church
 - Able to help critique and formulate UCA positions
 - Available to provide expert input to their Circle or other groups in the life of the UCA
 - Available to participate in Task Groups
 - Able to suggest suitable outside expert input in the field of work
 - Well informed about opportunities for training and other events
- Undertake the following roles in order to support Advocates and Assembly staff
 - Provide feedback to Assembly on policies and resources in their area of expertise as required
 - Serve on Task Groups appointed by the ASC
 - Read widely, filter and share resources to their Circle
 - Mentor and nurture developing leaders within the Circle
 - Gather input from Circle to feed into policy development and development of future ministry priorities
 - Gather sharing from their Circle to communicate more widely
 - Assist in documenting and drawing upon the history of the Church's work in a ministry area

Advocates will:

- Exhibit the following characteristics
 - Passionate and able to inspire others in their area of ministry
 - Good communicators in all forms
 - Widely known and respected in the field of work
 - Committed to collaborating across the Church and to the National work of the Church
 - Aware of others in the ministry area and good at networking
 - Able to mentor and nurture developing leaders
 - Experts in their area of ministry (see Panel member description)

- Undertake the following roles in order to support ASC and Assembly staff
 - Engage, inspire, resource and communicate with their Circle
 - Monitor the health and vitality of their Circle and of Panel members
 - Cultivate and maintain information about potential Panel and Task Group members
 - Suggest to ASC possible membership and Terms of Reference for Task Groups
 - Liaise between Circles, Panels, Task Groups and Assembly staff
 - Draw out of UCA policy statements and resources the specific issues of relevance and significance for their Circle
 - Gather input from their Circle to feed into policy development and future priorities
 - Regularly communicate with other Advocates to determine possibilities for cross-fertilisation and collaboration