



Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress

Report to ASC

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Travel to the REGIONS

Since the last ASC meeting as Interim National Chair I have been able to maintain a steady number of visits to the regions. These have included:

1. Three trips to Alice Springs being:
 - a. A visit to Finke for the memorial & funeral service of Congress elder Aunty Lucy Lester. This funeral was originally to be held in August, but was delayed due to a Covid lockdown in the NT. This sadly meant that the ex-President was unable to come with me, but it did mean that I was able to travel with Bible translator and language speaker, Paul Eckert. The local people and Rev. Peter Greenwood led the memorial and funeral service, which were special times.
 - b. Participation in the Ananguku Area ministry council meeting held at Honeymoon Gap. This meeting reconstituted the council after a number of years of inactivity. In addition it agreed that two of their members should become pastors in their communities after 10 years of study. The recommendation to appoint Darrien Bryant of Kalka and Jill Doolan of Finke as pastors was subsequently approved by the NRCC meeting in October, and warmly received by the Northern Synod meeting.
 - c. A visit to the APY lands with the new Moderator of the Northern Synod, Rev. Tony Goodluck. Up until the Synod meeting Tony had been Dean of Nungalinya College, so in addition to visiting the communities and listening to the needs of the people, many application forms for college enrolment were completed. Whilst on the journey which included visits to Kalka, Pipalyatjara, Amata, Ernabella (Pukatja), Kenmore Park, Fregon and Finke (Apatula) they also had a meeting with new NRCC chair, Jamie Nyaningu.

2. A visit to Perth in WA in September. This included meetings with the Moderator, Interim General Secretary and Uniting Care staff as well as a visit to the Congress organization at BKI. Alison Overeem from Tasmania participated in this visit, and has accepted a place on the BKI board as a National Congress member, replacing two of our National Elders. In addition the team travelled to Coolbellup to meet with Congress candidate for ministry, Mitchell Garlett, and also to Waroona to meet with members of the WA Regional Council including chairperson, Rev. Robbie Jetta. One of the issues identified in this visit was the need for governance training for the regional council. A follow up visit is planned for late November to begin this training and to continue to discuss plans for Congress ministry in WA.
3. Visits to Darwin to see the NRCC in action and to share in the Northern Synod meeting. It was good to be with the Congress Presbytery (Northern Region Council of Congress) in the Northern Synod in October, and to see over 33 members present from all over the Synod. They came from the Kimberley, East & West Arnhem and the APY lands for their annual Presbytery meeting, which was held the day before the Synod meeting. Major business included the election of Jamie Nyangu as chairperson. We give thanks for the work of previous chairperson, Mickey Wunungmurra who served the Congress through two terms as chair. Mickey continues in a leadership role as he will continue to serve as deputy chair. Most Presbytery members stayed on for the annual Synod meeting.

In the following week a National Executive meeting was held in Parap in Darwin. This was held in the week that had been planned earlier in the year as the date for the National Conference. Naturally due to Covid, many of the executive could not attend though some were able to attend through Zoom. It was a blessing also to have a couple of our NRCC elders attend, and to have them share some of their wisdom.

4. A visit to Cairns this month after an attempt to travel was aborted 12 months ago when I was in the airport about to board a plane. It was good to finally meet with members of the Calvary Zone of the new Carpentaria Presbytery. This was the first meeting of the National Office with some of the members of the former Calvary Presbytery. It was a blessing to hear their stories of faith, and also of their challenges. We are keen to work with Congress and the Synod to recommence the Queensland Congress Regional Council.

Strategic Planning Support Group (SPSG):

The SPSG maintains a focus and working commitment on matters the UAICC National Executive need follow up with. The strength and support of this group has been incredible and has allowed the National Office to function many times under the most difficult of circumstances. We are currently dealing with the following issues:

- NSW/ACT - Restructuring and re-instating of the NSW/ACT Regional Council, focusing on a sound and solid governance structure.
- QLD – Re-formation of the QLD State governance structure, following the winding up of the Calvary Presbytery.
- VIC – A new structure and Strategy for UAICC Victoria.
- WA – Support for affirming current membership and the provision of good governance training for all Regional Council members.

REPRESENTING CONGRESS on the NATIONAL STAGE

I continue to represent Congress on local, national & international meetings, which are mostly held on Zoom. Most recently some of these meetings have included:

- Ongoing planned meetings with President Sharon Hollis
- Meeting with Pacific partner churches and Pacific Partnership Advisory Network
- Working with Disability Royal Commission Uniting Care
- Forum with Uniting First Leaders organized by Uniting Care. It was great to welcome Sam Gledhill from Canberra to her first meeting in September.
- Frontier Services Bush Chaplains conference
- Standards for Ministries Committee
- VicTas Walking Together group

In addition it has been great to work with members from the Northern Synod and Assembly in putting in a joint submission with NRCC on the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Amendment (Economic Empowerment) Bill 2021.

CONGRESS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

In the last Congress report we advised that we were planning to hold the next Congress National Conference in Darwin with the theme being, “AWAKENING: NEW SEEDS FOR FUTURE DREAMING: UAICC 2021”. We undertook some further planning for the conference at our recent Executive meeting, which included a Zoom meeting with past National Coordinator, Chris Budden. We hope to hold the conference now in the middle of next year.

CONCLUSION

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

From a national perspective, retelling the story and rebuilding relationships with the Congress regions is vital work, as is governance training in the regions. Just as important is retelling the Covenant and Preamble stories and working closely with our Presbyteries, Synods and the Assembly.

Mark Kickett

Congress National interim Chair

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