

Uniting Church in Australia and Executive Council of Australian Jewry Dialogue

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Approved by Assembly Standing Committee – 28 August 2021

Purpose: The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) and Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) Dialogue is an ongoing Dialogue between the two faith communities. 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 Members of the Dialogue, the Assembly General Secretary and the Assembly Resourcing Unit (ARU)

Background:

The UCA-ECAJ Dialogue has been ongoing for more than 25 years and has provided the foundation for a longstanding relationship between the two faith communities. The Dialogue was established to provide a forum between the two faith communities to learn and appreciate each other's beliefs, and particularly to explore and address concerns regarding issues in the Middle East. This dialogue is particularly significant to the Uniting Church because of the unique relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Jesus was born, lived and died a faithful Jew and cannot be fully understood apart from the Jewish faith of his time. This Task Group sits amid a range of strategies for maintaining the relationship between the Uniting Church and Jewish communities including the relationship between the UCA President, Moderators and other church leaders with Jewish leaders, other dialogues including at the Synod/State level and local community engagement and events that bring the two faith communities together.

Task Required:

1. Maintain relationships between the ECAJ and UCA, and so model mutual and respectful relationship between the Uniting Church and Jewish community.
2. Provide advice to the ASC on sensitive issues that arise within the justice and advocacy work of the UCA and communicate carefully and respectfully with ECAJ in regard to UCA statements and positions that may cause concern for the Jewish community in Australia and internationally.
3. Respond to requests from the ASC or ARU to raise issues or areas of interest related to the work of the Assembly and provide feedback to the ASC of emerging issues that may need to be pursued by other parts of the Assembly.
4. Provide a platform for the Uniting Church and the Jewish community to learn more about each other's beliefs and traditions and to share this learning with the national church as outlined below.
5. Look for creative ways to encourage and resource interfaith engagement in local congregations
6. Explore opportunities for the dialogue to engage with and invite contribution and participation from women and younger generations.

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 an Annual Report 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:

- Frequency of meetings
 - Any need for changes in membership of the UCA Dialogue members
 - Progress of key conversations
 - Any documents produced by the Dialogue during the period
 - Constraints or issues to be addressed (if any) for ongoing work
2. Working through the ARU, provide any documents or reports that need to be considered by ASC for input or approval.
 3. In its 2024 Report, provide an indication of the vitality of the Dialogue, suggesting what areas of work and the appropriate membership that would be required to carry this work forward.
 4. Look for ways the Dialogue can inform, engage with and invite contribution from the wider Uniting Church and especially from the Seeking Common Ground Circle.
 5. There is an expectation that some members of the Dialogue will be members of Assembly Panels and available to serve on Task Groups established by the ASC if required.

How the task group will work:

As a Task Group representing the Uniting Church in Australia engaged in an interfaith relationship:

1. Listen respectfully to others and share openly and honestly about your own faith and the beliefs of the Uniting Church.
2. Do not seek to change the other and be open to learning and growing in your own understandings.

As a Task Group of the Uniting Church in Australia:

3. Be grounded in the gospel and build upon the tradition of the Uniting Church in Australia.
4. Live out our covenant as First and Second Peoples.
5. Live out our commitment to being a multicultural church, oriented towards justice.
6. 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.
7. Consider how the work of the Task Group relates to other councils, agencies and groups within the UCA, and work collaboratively wherever possible.
8. Consider how the work of the Task Group relates to other bodies ecumenically and with other faiths and interfaith and civil society organisations and work collaboratively wherever possible.
9. 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 Members 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 Co-Convenor. It is expected the ECAJ will also appoint a 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 history of Sydney and Melbourne based dialogues.

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 ECAJ in order to arrange meetings, collate necessary information and provide reports to ASC. They will present the annual report to the ASC in person and be available for questions. 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 longterm, relational nature of inter-faith 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 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 Dialogue 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.