



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY
Assembly Standing Committee

11 – 13 March 2022

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Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	Information
Title	Uniting Church Adult Fellowship (UCAF) National Committee
Assembly or ASC Minute	
Consultation	UCAF National Committee Chairperson.
Purpose	To inform Assembly Standing Committee of the work of the UCAF National Committee
Rationale & Findings Summary	
Attachments	
Recommendations	That the Assembly Standing Committee: 1. Receive the report of the UCAF National Committee.
Submitted by	Pam Grant, Secretary

UNITING CHURCH ADULT FELLOWSHIP (UCAF) NATIONAL COMMITTEE

Executive Summary

1. This report outlines the activities of the UCAF National Committee that was elected in May 2021 at the UCAF National Committee Consultation held in Adelaide. The committee was commissioned at that time, and commenced office effective 1 July 2021.

Background

2. The appointment of the National Committee in 2021 broke new ground for the UCAF, as it changed from a committee that served for three years on rotation through the Synod UCAF Committees to a representative one.

During the term of the 2015-2018 national committee it became apparent that it was going to be difficult to establish a national committee under this 'rotation' model with ageing UCAF members, so a proposal for a modified structure, based on a representative model with elected office-bearers (Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer) was taken to the 2018 Consultation. This proposal was accepted, with a Working Group established to think through how this new committee structure would work, and prepare the relevant documents for the new committee structure.

This structure was reflected in the Mandate given to the UCAF National Committee, agreed to by ASC in 2021.

The Working Group worked closely with the Synod UCAF Committees during its work, and took guidance from the Assembly General Secretary and Associate General Secretary.

The Working Group developed new Working Procedures for the national committee, having considered how the work of the national committee would be done and what changes would be required in the relationships with the Synod Committees and other groups the national committee is in relationship with.

The 2021 Consultation approved the new working procedures, and the election of the office-bearers. The Synod UCAF Committee members were also confirmed at this time.

Settling In

3. While COVID19 has been a huge disrupter to all our lives, there is one benefit in that we are all more familiar with the use of zoom and e-meetings; this was very important for the committee as we settle into our work. Having said that, there has been a big adjustment to working with this model of committee, especially because it is so different to the earlier model where all members were from the same synod.
4. To date all our meetings have been via Zoom or E-meetings. We were looking forward to a face-to-face meeting in Melbourne in March 2022 where we would have been able to get to know each other more. Sadly, this meeting had to be 'cancelled' owing to the hard border with WA. We are now planning for this meeting in July 2022.

Theme

5. Each Triennium the National Committee decides on a 'theme' that will guide the projects that are identified to be supported over that time. This is shared with the Synod UCAF Committees, who are encouraged to support the projects of the national committee.

Travelling a New Road came to us quickly, as we looked at the work we would be doing to bring the new National Committee together and move into the future.



The accompanying image, we felt was really helpful, as we were moving out into 'the light' and we chose Isaiah 43:18-19 for the accompanying text:

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

This image and words will appear on all our publications/correspondence.

Activities

6. As a Unit of the South Pacific Area of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW), the UCAF National Committee identifies with many of the projects of this body. Currently this is focussed strongly on the Sustainable Development Goals relating to Climate change.

We have designed a series of postcards, asking the Federal Government to consider more seriously the issue of climate change in Australia, recognising that what we do here will impact other parts of the world. These cards will be distributed to the Synod UCAF Committees, to enable members of their groups to send the cards to the Prime Minister and/or their local members. Time will tell if this has an impact, but we felt we needed to do something tangible rather than talk about it.

7. Through our relationship with the WFMUCW, we have connection with millions of Christian women from across the world. In August last year, an online forum was held in place of the World Assembly that was to be held in Sweden. A number of UCAF members participated in this event over two days. While it wasn't the same as being part of a group of around 5000 women, it was a special time to engage with the Federation and be inspired by a number of the women who spoke about the various programs of the World Federation, including climate change, and how some of the groups in Britain were offering different programs to connect with their local communities.

It is planned for the World Assembly to be held online this August, to conduct essential business, i.e. elections of office bearers. Our Chairperson, Margaret Pedler will be a voting member at this meeting.

The World Federation is in regular contact with the Units, offering monthly a "Call to Pray", a quarterly newsletter *Tree of Life* as well as more local news from the South Pacific Area.

Offering this connection is an important role for the UCAF National Committee.

8. As mentioned earlier in this report one reason for the change to a representative committee was the ageing of UCAF members across the country, and the difficulty for some Synod UCAF Committees to have full committees to enable them to do their work.

One Synod UCAF Committee is planning to go into recess in June 2022, as they have not been able to get sufficient members for their committee. This is of concern for the National Committee; not having a 'group' to connect with each synod, and our income will be affected through lower levies being received. These levies being the major source of income for the national committee.

At this stage, we don't believe it will be possible to stop this committee going into recess. However, two individual members will continue on the national committee as reps from Queensland for the 2021-2024 Triennium.

The relationship of Synod UCAF committees with their respective synods is varied. Some receive significant support and encouragement, while others have little support at all. It has been of concern to the National Committee that there has been a change in the relationship with these groups, in that the UCAF is seen as an 'interest group', rather than a ministry. While the numbers are diminishing the passion of the women, and men, involved with UCAF groups is still high despite their ageing.

Finance

9. As mentioned previously, the major source of income for National Committee is through levies that are paid by the Synod UCAF Committees. While we have some reserves these will be used very quickly if our income is compromised by Synod UCAF Committees not being able to meet their obligations. While this isn't serious at present, we will need to look at this closely in the future.

We also have financial obligations to the WFMUCW, in that we are charged levies by them annually. Of course, our payments to them are reduced owing to the reduction in our numbers.

Looking to the Future

10. Arising out of the concerns for reducing numbers of UCAF members and groups, the National Committee has begun thinking about how we might engage more closely with the Assembly and other national groups within the UCA. To this end we have had discussions with the President and General Secretary, and participated in the ACT2 Discussions. These discussions have been very helpful, and will shape our planning for the immediate future.

This matter will be part of the agenda for our face-to-face meeting in July. The President has been invited to join us for this session.

11. Being able to have UCAF National Committee news included in the Assembly e-news on occasion will help lift our profile, which we believe will be positive. Only time will tell if that develops into identifying new members and/or groups for the UCAF across Australia. Similarly, having an updated presence on the Assembly website, where we can share other news will be helpful, we believe.

Previously it has been difficult for UCAF National Committee to connect with CALD congregations and UAICC; however, after our discussions with the President and General Secretary we are now looking at how we can explore developing closer ties with these groups within the UCA.

12. It is not all doom and gloom for the National Committee however, as we begin to explore how we might connect with younger members of the UCA also. This is a challenge, especially with only a small committee in place.

Thanks

13. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the UCAF National Committee, to thank Assembly staff for their support as we look to 'lift' the profile of the UCAF and the ministry that can be offered to the UCA, across Australia. And, it is appropriate to note here the thousands of good and faithful servants who have offered God's mission over many years under the UCAF umbrella. We thank them for all they have done.

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