



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY
Assembly Standing Committee

11-13 March 2022

DOCUMENT 12

Title	Report from the Task Group on Holy Communion in Online Settings
Type of Paper	For decision.
Assembly or ASC Minute	21.62 (ASC, November 2021) request the Associate General Secretary, in consultation with Advocates and Panels of relevant Circles of Interest and the Church in the Digital Age TG, to bring a report about the permanent approval of online gathering for worship with Holy Communion, including reflections on what has been learnt about Communion both through practicing online communion and abstaining from it, to the March 2022 ASC. If relevant it should also include proposals and rationale for the consideration of the 16th Assembly at its reconvened meeting in 2022.
Consultation	Church in the Digital Age Task Group Rev Dr Geoff Thompson
Purpose	Recommendations to ASC regarding Holy Communion in Online Settings
Rationale & Findings Summary	The Task Group recommends that the ASC determine this matter and brings proposals to that end.
Attachments	Background papers: Church in the Digital Age Task Group – CIDA Sacrament HC and Rev Dr Geoff Thompson – Experimenting with Holy Communion
Proposal/s	PROPOSALS That the Assembly Standing Committee <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Receive the report;2. Recognise the ways in which the UCA has received the gift of Holy Communion in online settings; and3. Encourage the Church to continue this period of creative, contextual exploration and celebration of how the Spirit is leading the Church.
Submitted by	Rev Ann Perrin – Convenor of Church in the Digital Age Task Group Rev Alex Sangster – Advocate Transforming Worship Circle Rob Floyd – Associate General Secretary 0407 944 417

Report from the Task Group on Holy Communion in Online Settings

Following the request of the Assembly Standing Committee (ASC), the Associate General Secretary along with the Advocate for the Transforming Worship and the Convenor of the Church in the Digital Age Task Group formed a small Task Group and have considered the matter of Holy Communion in online settings, consulting informally with the Panel of the Circle, and officially with the Church in the Digital Age Task Group members. The Church in the Digital Age Group have submitted a background paper to resource the ASC, and following the discussion at the ASC, a further background paper was gratefully received by the Task Group from Rev Dr Geoff Thompson. Both of these papers are attached, to assist the ASC members in their discernment. The Task Group notes that while each of these papers begins from a quite different place and address the question of Holy Communion in online settings with different methodologies, each arrives at a similar practical conclusion.

The Church has needed to explore a variety of ways of meeting and making decisions in the current context. Similarly, and with the previous approval of the ASC, the Church has explored a number of ways of enabling people to grow and be spiritually fed in the current context, including a variety of approaches to celebrating the sacrament of Holy Communion in online settings. Further, it seems clear that this exploration of online possibilities has been received as a gift by large sections of the Church, enabling those who would otherwise have been separated to be brought together, and those who would otherwise have missed the sacrament of Holy Communion to be included in it. It is especially worth noting that this exploration has been received as a gift, not only by those affected by the pandemic, but by those whose experience of Church is in the context of being scattered by significant distances in rural and remote Australia. This exploration of what it means to be the scattered Church in current contexts and the ways in which digital means may be used to gather and re-member us has been life-giving for many.

It is the recommendation of this Task Group, that the ASC, having made the initial determination of this matter, should proceed to make an ongoing determination at this point, without reference to the full gathering of the Assembly. The Task Group believes that such a discussion on the floor of the Assembly is unlikely to be helpful, but instead might diminish us and cause division to little positive gain. Instead, following the suggestion within Rev Dr Geoff Thompson's paper, the Task Group recommends that the ASC should exercise on behalf of the Assembly its determining responsibility on this matter by refraining from making a decision either way about online communion and inviting the Church to engage in an ongoing exploration of Holy Communion.

PROPOSALS

That the Assembly Standing Committee

- 1. Receive the report;**
- 2. Recognise the ways in which the UCA has received the gift of Holy Communion in online settings; and**
- 3. Encourage the Church to continue this period of creative, contextual exploration and celebration of how the Spirit is leading the Church.**