



Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress

Report to ASC

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INTRODUCTION

Since the last ASC meeting there have been lots of things happening including sorry business, Covid, the Assembly meeting, Synods, and other important meetings. In the midst of this we have had the blessings of a Congress ordination, the commissioning of pastors and the celebrations of Reconciliation week and NAIDOC. This report talks about some of these matters, which are important in the life of Congress.

SORRY BUSINESS

I had spent most of my time in Perth at the start of the year from February 3rd with my mother in and out of hospital, until her passing in late March. Her funeral was a month later on April 29th. It was a special day of tributes to my mother. It was a blessing to have ex-President Deidre there along with WA Gen Sec Andrew & Katalina Williams and my Congress colleagues.

Naturally there are many others experiencing sorry business. Marrpalawuy, one of the President's chaplains is burying her husband the week after this ASC meeting, with a memorial service on July 15th.

ORDINATIONS & PASTOR'S COMMISSIONING

On May 1st I preached at the ordination of Mitchell Garlett in Perth, WA. This was a wonderful celebration, coming just over 2 years after the death of Mitchell's father, ex-Congress national Chair, Rev. Sealin Garlett.

In June, Qld Moderator Andrew Gunton, commissioned Perry Yunkaporta as a pastor to the Aurukun community on Cape York. NRCC also commissioned four pastors in the APY Lands on Pentecost weekend. They were Yanima (Darrien) Bryant of Kalka, Jill Doolan of Finke (Aputula), and support workers Ben & Emily Howland. Yanima & Jill had both studied for many years at Nungalinga College. Both before and after the commissioning the new pastors participated in a few days of pastors training.

ASSEMBLY & SYNOD MEETINGS

It was a privilege to be involved in the Assembly meetings and to sit at the top table with the President, General Secretary and chaplains.

The renewal of the Covenant was a special occasion. As we work towards the next Assembly in 2024, we are mindful that this will be the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Covenant, and also 15 years since the new Preamble to the constitution. We may also want to ask, what does the re-reading of the Covenant mean to us all as a church, and what actions as a church may we need to undertake.

It was good having Congress members involved in the Assembly, not only through the morning chapel, but also in Bible study and worship with NRCC members, and the presentation of proposals with Alison's involvement.

In the last two months there have been Synod meetings in three states being Queensland, SA and VicTas. Congress has been involved in all these meetings. In Melbourne I had the privilege of being the theological reflector at the end of each day and to preach at the final service.

OTHER IMPORTANT MEETINGS

At the end of May I had the opportunity to meet with the President and Moderators in Melbourne. It was good to be able to share with the Moderators and the President in this meeting. Unfortunately during the meeting the President tested positive to Covid, and the next week when I went home I did the same. As a result I unfortunately missed the commissioning of the pastors in Ernabella in the APY lands on the Pentecost weekend.

After Assembly, some Congress leaders met with the CEO of Frontier Services, Jannine Jackson to talk about how Frontier Services might work in partnership with Congress in our ministry. This included Tasmanian Congress, NRCC staff and the Northern Synod joining in by Zoom to talk about possibilities of working together in new ways. Congress has one bush chaplain in SA who works in the far north of the State from Oodnadatta. It was noted that the local state office of Congress has an important role in helping to support the ministry of the bush chaplain. We look forward to ongoing conversations about how new partnerships can emerge and develop ministry to First Nations people across the country.

In the week after NAIDOC week we have participated in Townsville with members of the Queensland Synod and Congress in a Covenanting Gathering and Yarning Circle. This included a day spent Walking on Country. This was an important meeting in the process of the restoration of the Queensland Regional Council following the closure of Calvary Presbytery some years ago. It also hearing about a variety of great programs supporting First Peoples in Queensland.

Next week we are sharing with Pacific Island church leaders in an important meeting in Canberra for the Pacific Church Partnership Advisory Network (PCPAN). Alison Overeem and myself will be sharing in a panel on self-determination with Pat Anderson, co-chair of the Uluru statement.org

RECONCILIATION & NAIDOC WEEKS

Congress appreciates the support of the Assembly Communications team in promoting various stories through Reconciliation week and NAIDOC. We are blessed also through the contributions of our Tasmanian Congress members to both the Communications team, and to the First and Second Peoples Circles of Interest. During NAIDOC week Tasmania also hosted 23 people from Pilgrim College in Melbourne for a Walking on Country immersion, which was a special time.

CONCLUSION

There are a lot of things happening in the next few months. I will travel to the WCC conference in Germany and attend the Indigenous Peoples pre-conference. There will be a Uniting First People's Gathering in Brisbane in late August, while the Congress National Executive are also meeting earlier in the month. We will be working on ideas for our National Conference, which is now planned for early in 2023. We value your ongoing prayers and support.

Mark Kickett

Congress National Interim Chair

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