



**Uniting Church in Australia**  
**ASSEMBLY**  
Assembly Standing Committee

10 – 12 March 2023

**DOCUMENT 9**

Title	<b>Assembly Resourcing Unit Ministry and Mission and Circles Report</b>
Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	For information and decision
Assembly or ASC Minute	
Consultation	ARU Mission and Ministry Team, Circle Advocates
Purpose	Regular Report to ASC
Rationale & Findings Summary	<p>The Mission and Ministry Team of the ARU is in a substantial period of rebuilding as a result of coming out of the pandemic, significant staffing changes and a modification to the overall structure of the ARU as outlined in the November 2022 General Secretary's report.</p> <p>Circles continue to find their feet in a new way of working and communicating with the wider church and having been hindered, diverted and in some cases given direction by the pandemic.</p>
Attachments	Appendix 1 — Advocates report Appendix 2 — Expressions of Interest, Alex Sangster, Jon Humphries
Recommendations	That the ASC: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. receive the written report along with verbal updates from the Associate General Secretary and from the Circle Advocates;</li><li>2. Approve the appointment of two new Advocates — Rev Alex Sangster (Working for Justice) and Rev Jon Humphries (Transforming Worship).</li></ol>
Submitted by	Lindsay Cullen

# Mission and Ministry Team of the Assembly Resourcing Unit

## Introduction

1. This report is necessarily brief, as the period between mid–November and mid–February (when this report is being written) is generally a fairly quiet period with many staff — both in the Assembly and in agencies and councils with which we collaborate — taking substantial leave and being occupied with the Christmas season. Additionally, as is described below, the work of the Mission and Ministry team has been substantially curtailed by staffing changes.

## Structure

2. As reported by the General Secretary at the November 2022 ASC, the Assembly has moved toward a flatter structure, with the 'Assembly Resourcing Unit' now comprising all parts of the previous Assembly Resourcing Unit (now referred to as the Mission and Ministry team), the Assembly Support Unit and Communications Unit. This combined ARU is jointly managed by the Associate General Secretary (AGS) and the National Director Strategic Finance and Administration. Leo and Lindsay have been meeting regularly together, and along with the General Secretary as we begin to move forward as one Unit.
3. The AGS also has regular (currently weekly) meetings with the National Manager of Media and Communications as well as facilitating weekly meetings between the Mission and Ministry and Comms teams in order to ensure that there is good alignment and collaboration between these teams who have overlapping roles in communicating and strengthening the identity of the Assembly and of the wider Church.

## Staffing and Recruiting

4. As you would be aware, the past 18 months has been a time of significant staff change for the Mission and Ministry team (ARU), with the placements of Stuart Macmillan and Ji Zhang coming to an end, along with the resignations of Rob Floyd and Charissa Suli. While it was not envisaged that the National Consultant Covenanting or the position of Theologian in Residence would be ongoing roles within the ARU, the further decision was made due to funding pressures that following Charissa's resignation, there would be only two National Consultant positions within the ARU.
5. The appointment of Lindsay Cullen to the role of AGS meant that there was only one National Consultant remaining in the team, and further, Rev Dr Apwee Ting has recently informed the AGS of his intention to finish his time with the ARU and take up a new opportunity. An announcement will be forthcoming shortly and ASC members will be informed by email.
6. As a result, there will soon be no National Consultants within the Mission and Ministry team and so the AGS along with the General Secretary will be considering how the Mission and Ministry team may need to be reshaped and re-staffed in order to best serve the specific needs of the Assembly over the next few years.
7. In the meantime, the AGS intends to use a couple of short term contracts in order to complete some specific work related to resources on the illuminate document portal, and the work on an intergenerational vision and framework previously started by the ARU in collaboration with the National Youth, Children and family workers Coalition (NYCC). The completion of these two projects will mean that as a new Mission and Ministry Team is recruited, they will be able to begin with a fairly clean slate.
8. Throughout these staffing changes, Executive Administrative Assistant Anna Catliffe has done a wonderful job of keeping the shrinking team and the new AGS on task!

## **Task Groups and Committees**

9. As can be seen from the details listed in the Business Plan report, the ARU MM has continued to support Task Groups set up by the ASC, including the Continuing Witness Task Group, the Apology Task Group, the Church in the Digital Age Task Group, the new Task groups related to Zero Net Emissions and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Change Efforts (SOGICE).
10. The team also supports the ongoing work of the Standards for Ministries Committee, the Lutheran-UCA Dialogue and the UCA-Jewish Dialogue.

## **Circles and Advocates**

11. Many of you would be aware of the health issues being faced by Rev Loni Vaitohi, our Assembly Advocate for Working for Justice. Late last year, the AGS spoke to Rev Vaitohi, and he expressed a desire to be released from this work in order to be able to focus on his health. Rev Vaitohi was assured of the Assembly's understanding of his position, and of our prayers and best wishes for him. The ARU followed up this conversation with the delivery of a Christmas hamper and a note of thanks for all Rev Vaitohi's work as the inaugural Working for Justice Advocate.
12. Rev Alex Sangster, Assembly Advocate for Transforming Worship, had previously informally indicated an interest in moving to the Working for Justice Circle at some point, and so discussions were held with her as to whether this was still of interest. Following her positive indication, discussions were held amongst the ARU (MM and Comms) and with some key members of the Transforming Worship Panel after which a number of people — some from the current panel, one at the recommendation of Alex and one based on their level of active participation in the Circle — were approached to consider submitting an Expression of Interest for the role of Transforming Worship Advocate. In the end only one of those approached, Rev Jon Humphries agreed to be considered.
13. Rev Alex Sangster has been an excellent Advocate for the Transforming Worship Circle, showing self-motivation, an ability to deliver worship resources for the Church, and the pastoral and social skills required to keep the Panel motivated and to enable the Circle Facebook group to reach over 1100 members. Alex's primary passion however is as an activist in areas of justice, most especially climate justice and care for the creation and she is excited to contribute her passion to the Working for Justice Circle.
14. Rev Jon Humphries has been a very regular and valued contributor of prayers, poems and worship ideas, both to the Transforming Worship Circle and to Assembly updates and publications when asked. He has also been a faithful and engaged member of the Growing in Faith panel, where, along with his worship resources, he has also regularly contributed to online and panel discussions about faith formation, especially in youth and young adults. Jon was delighted to be asked to be the Advocate for Transforming Worship, and has already communicated a list of possible work areas to the AGS, and has emailed the panel to encourage and motivate them.
15. With the press of time, and especially as a face to face meeting of the ARU and Advocates had previously been planned for early February, Alex and Jon were asked to take on the position of Advocates in an acting role until such time as the ASC could approve their appointments. As a result, the ARU (Mission and Ministry team) brings a recommendation to the ASC that these two excellent potential Advocates should be approved until the next Assembly meeting.
16. As both Alex and Jon have been members of a Circle Panel (and in Alex's case an Advocate), they are known to the ASC, however for reference, their Expressions of Interest are attached.
17. At the recent meeting of the Advocates and ARU, the Advocates were asked to contribute a few 'dot points' describing the Achievements and Challenges facing each of their Circles and the attached report was the result. The Advocates are also looking forward to engaging with the ASC via Zoom during our meeting.

18. At the meeting of Advocates and the ARU, the issue of diminished Assembly staffing was raised, and following a helpful discussion, it was agreed that the main focus of ARU staff was not the maintenance, administration for or motivation of the Panels. Instead, ARU staff will be focussed on communication with and support of the Advocates whose responsibility it is to ensure the health of Panels and the wider Circle.
19. There was a lively discussion regarding social networks, Facebook, email lists and Zoom meetings, and Advocates were reminded that neither the use of the Facebook platform, nor monthly meetings of Panels were mandated by the Assembly or ARU and that the Advocates were free to explore and utilise other platforms, frequencies and ways of meeting, with the proviso that Assembly funds were not able to support flights or accommodation for face to face meetings of panels except in specific pre-approved circumstances and that technical support for multiple software platforms would be limited by the resources of the ARU.
20. Advocates agreed that meetings between the Advocates were especially helpful for their work, both in mutual support and collaboration, and it was agreed that the ARU would attempt to organise two face to face meetings and two Zoom meetings of the Advocates each year.

**Lindsay Cullen,  
Associate General Secretary**

## **Appendix 1 — From the Advocates — Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities**

### **Walking Together as First and Second People**

- Achievements - Panel engagement, Day of Mourning resources, Voice Webinar
- Challenge - Broadening the number of people involved
- Important event — Congress National Conference
- Opportunity (and Challenge) – The ‘Voice’ Referendum

### **Discipling the Next Generations**

- Challenge - Understanding ‘what’ and ‘who’ are ‘Next Gen’
- Challenge – Use of social media (FB!?) when most younger people are craving F2F
- Opportunity - Put the Church’s words into action

### **Seeking Common Ground**

- Challenge — some of those on the panel and many of those active in the Circle are used to the traditional forms of Ecumenical and Interfaith Dialogues at a formal, structural, denominational level and are uncomfortable with a more relaxed and informal approach
- Challenge - It’s not yet clear what the new mode of engaging in ecumenism or interfaith activity is for a national body
- Opportunity – thinking through whether a Circle is the best mode of operation for this aspect of the National Church’s work

### **Growing in Faith**

- Achievement - Building off “The Basis at 50” conference with some informal response papers
- Challenge - Finding focus for the panel – pulled in different directions (people and time)

### **Transforming Worship**

- Achievement – Inclusivity in Worship resources
- Achievement – Development of a Trans affirming renaming liturgy soon to be shared on the TW webpage

### **Working for Justice**

- Opportunity – Listening and yarning about the referendum
- Opportunity – continued focus on Climate issues

### **Being a Multicultural Church**

- Achievement – seeding discussion leading to the Assembly resolution
- Opportunity – making out intercultural commitment visible

## Appendix 2

# SIXTEENTH ASSEMBLY - NOMINATION FORM

This form is to be used by Committees in making nominations for the Chairpersons of their Committee and Circles making nominations for the Advocates

**1. Committee / Circle: Transforming Worship**

**2. Name of nominee: Rev Alexandra Sangster**

Postal Address: 85 Gillies St Fairfield

Email Address: alisangster@gmail.com

Mobile Phone: 0411292273

**3. Profile of nominee** [no more than 80 words, to cover the nominee's personal and church experience relevant to the position, qualifications, and if under 25 years of age. Please note that marital status, age and number of children are not relevant criteria.]

Over the last 16 years of ordained ministry I have felt called to lead communities into creative responses to the climate crisis, particularly with ARRC and Friends of the Earth on the Stop Adani campaign.

I have harnessed the power of my vocation to speak truth to power alongside secular and faith filled folk.

I am constantly breaking open the Gospel and preaching from the earth of eco-spirituality, feminism, process and child centred theological schools.

I am constantly encouraging folk to get in contact with their own lived experience of the Cosmic Sophia Christ through embodied practice and connecting with the wild.

I am deeply encouraging of those seeking to work theologically and 'incarnationally' to reawaken our worship and faith using art, storytelling, music and re-wilding.

I am a member of ARRC, JCMA and LMAW. I sit on the Ministry Formation Committee for Yarra Yarra and the Mission and the Climate Change Forum and the Ministry Committee for the Synod. For the last 3 years I have been honoured to work with the Assembly as the Transforming Worship Advocate.



**Expression of Interest Form  
for  
Assembly Circles of Interest Panel Members**

**Basis of Union:**

The Uniting Church recognises that responsibility for government in the Church belongs to the people of God by virtue of the gifts and tasks which God has laid upon them.

**Constitution:**

The Assembly shall have determining responsibility in matters of doctrine, worship, government and discipline, including the promotion of the Church's mission, establishment of standards of theological education and the reception of ministers from other denominations, and is empowered to make final decisions on all matters related to the Constitution of the UCA.

**Name of the Assembly Circles of Interest:**


- Walking Together as First and Second Peoples
- Growing in Faith**
- Being a Multicultural Church
- Seeking Common Ground
- Discipling the Next Generations**
- Transforming Worship**
- Working for Justice

**Brief description of the Mandate / Terms of Reference for this body:**

The Assembly established its seven Circles of Interest to assist people to engage with the Uniting Church's national work, providing opportunities for people to be informed, to contribute and to connect with others.

Each Circle represents a broad area of the Assembly's mission and ministry. Together, the seven circles encompass some of the core values of the Uniting Church and how we contribute to God's mission in the world.

**Personal Information:**

	Name: Jon Humphries  Ministry Placement: School Chaplain – Ravenswood School for girls Presbytery: Sydney Central Coast Synod: NSW/ACT
What skills and experience will you bring to the Committee / Task Group? Theological, creativity, prayer writing,	
What if any relevant experience have you had in the life of the Church?  I am a Minister of the Word in the Uniting Church. I have been a school chaplain for 21 years and have extensive experience around creating innovative and engaging worship experiences both in the school and congregational settings. I am a qualified teacher, with almost 30 years experience teaching K-12. I have a passion for faith and discipleship and have been active in this space for many years. I regularly contribute	

to a series of Facebook groups about faith and discipleship, including the Assembly circles. I facilitate a group about creative worship spaces. I have developed resources for creative, collaborative and interactive worship experiences. I have developed a resource for extroverted spirituality Up until the end of 2017 I was a member of the NSW/ACT Synod Selection Panel, being chair for 6 years. I host page on Facebook about Changing Church, which is about how we better engage people who no longer learn and work in relational models around much of which we I am currently, and have been working on for the past 10 years, a model of discipleship which would provide a framework for understanding the facets and task of discipleship.

I have also been a part of team which developed a Christian Education learning framework which could be applied in schools and in the Church.

What if any relevant qualifications do you have?

B.Ed (Primary Teaching), Dip.T, B.Th.

Age range	Under 30	30-59	53	60+
Ministry category	Lay			
			Ordained	in 2001
Location	Remote	Rural	Regional Centre	City

What cultural and linguistic background do you have?

English

**Referees:** *(Please list the names and contact details of two people to act as referees for you in regard to this role)*

1. Rev Phil Swain [phil.swain@turramurrauniting.org.au](mailto:phil.swain@turramurrauniting.org.au)
2. Rev Vanessa Williams-Henke [vwilliams-henke@mlcsyd.nsw.edu.au](mailto:vwilliams-henke@mlcsyd.nsw.edu.au)

If you are not appointed to this body, are you willing for Assembly to retain a copy of this form, and to consider you for appointment to a relevant task group in the future? YES / NO

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 18.08.2021