



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY
Assembly Standing Committee

21-23 July 2023

DOCUMENT 3

Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	Information
Title	President's Report
Assembly or ASC Minute	<i>Regulation 3.6.4.2 Duties of the President: "The duties of the President shall be to give spiritual leadership and encouragement to the Church generally, to represent the Church as appropriate, to give counsel as occasion requires and to do such other things as may be requested or advised by the Assembly."</i>
Consultation	Various as outlined in the report.
Purpose	To report on key activities of the President.
Rationale & Findings Summary	
Attachments	
Recommendations	That the Assembly Standing Committee 1. receive the report.
Submitted by	Sharon Hollis, President 0439 396 577

President's Report

Some of my work over the last few months is reported on elsewhere, through the Act2 report, the report on the Apology to LGBTIQ+ people and the recruitment process for the next General Secretary.

Give Spiritual leadership and encouragement.

Easter and UCA anniversary messages

My thanks to the Assembly communications team who filmed and edited my Easter and Uniting Church Anniversary messages. I was glad to be able to feature three CALD leaders in my Easter message as we reflected on the meaning of Easter for each of us. The anniversary video encouraged the Uniting Church to be bold in our witness to the gospel, drawing on our founding for inspiration and guidance.

Podcasts

I've released two series of podcasts over the last three months. One was an interview with each of the three people featured in the Easter message, providing the opportunity to explore in more depth the message they shared in the video. The other series focused on prayer and coincided with Uniting in Prayer.

UMMN gathering

Korean National Conference (KNC)

I was a pleasure to attend the Korean National Conference and be asked to preach at the opening service. The Korean National Conference has traditionally been a gathering of ministers and their partners, as this one was. At the conference there was an extended discussion about whether the KNC need to meet differently, in ways that include lay people in the future. While there are no definite decisions yet the KNC will consider this seriously going forward.

It is worth noting that one of the reasons the current members of the KNC appreciate meeting as ministers and partners is the opportunity it gives to meet and talk about the challenges, complexity and joy of ministry as ministers not from the dominate culture, either in the church or society, in their first language, in an environment that feels safe. The cultural safety of our ministers and members from diverse backgrounds is something we need to continue to work on achieving.

Rev Myung Hwa Park was elected as the chair of the KNC, the first woman to be chair of the KNC.

Represent the Church

Crocker Island Settlement Conferences

I spent a week in Darwin, along with Leo Iosifidis, attending settlement conferences in relation to survivors of Crocker Island. This included meeting some of the survivors individually as well as offering apologies to a group of survivors based in Darwin and to individuals who live elsewhere.

I was grateful to be able to draw on an apology given by Rev Gregor Henderson to Crocker Island survivors in October 1997 which enabled me to say sorry clearly. The use of the word sorry is more difficult in the NT than other places because of legislation, so the fact that the Uniting Church has already said sorry to the survivors of Crocker Island enabled me to apologise without reservation.

These settlement conferences are challenging, because of the very deep trauma that has been experienced by the survivors. I am grateful for the commitment of the Church to attend these conferences and do what we can to help support the healing of survivors.

Iftar Dinner

It was a pleasure to attend the 10th Annual Iftar Dinner hosted jointly by the Assembly, the Synod of NSW/ACT, Uniting NSW/ACT and Affinity Intercultural Foundation. Ms Rachel Perkins gave a beautiful and moving speech about involvement in the Uluru dialogue, her commitment to the Voice and what it will mean for her to be able to vote Yes not just for herself but to honour her ancestors and their suffering, their survival, their resilience and their thriving. I was delighted to be one of the people who offered a response to her speech.

Now that we have celebrated 10 years of this dinner the Assembly has begun to have conversations with our Uniting Church partners about the future of this event.

Overseas partners

I have sent greetings to a number of our partner churches on the occasion of an anniversary, a Conference or Assembly meeting or the election of new Officers. I am grateful to Charissa Suli and Feke Kamitoni who represented the Assembly at the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga Conference and Duncan McLeod who represented the Assembly at the Cook Islands General Assembly

Such other things as may be requested or advised by the Assembly.

Other

Congress National Conference

I will leave it to Congress to report on the outcomes of their National Conference. I thank National Congress for the invitation to be at the conference and learn from so many wise members of Congress.

WCC Central Committee

I attended the Central Committee in Geneva in late June. We covered a wide range of topics and passed a number of minutes, statements and proposals, including the strategic plan for the next seven years. There are several statements that relate to the work of the Uniting Church,

including a focus on climate justice, a commitment to solidarity with Palestinian people, peace on the Korean Peninsula and extra-judicial killings in the Philippines. After more consultation I may bring proposals to a later ASC relating to the statement on peace on the Korean Peninsula. I have also begun thinking about how we might use the work of the WCC more in the work of the Uniting Church.

A key highlight of the work of the WCC over the next two years is the 1700th anniversary of the council and creed of Nicaea, including an exploration of what it means to live the apostolic faith today.

As part of the meeting members met in their confessional group. I attended the United/Uniting confessional meeting. Traditionally the United/Uniting churches have not been considered a confession group within the WCC. Rather the United/Uniting churches are seen as a movement. At this meeting there was discussion about what this means for United/Uniting churches to be a confessional body within the WCC. There is a desire from some in this group for the United/Uniting group of churches to do more work on what distinctive theology and spirituality we might contribute to the ecumenical movement and what it means to form people for discipleship and leadership within a United/Uniting Church. I hope as a denomination the Uniting Church will give serious thought to how we engage with other United/Uniting Church and to whether the time has come for this to be our primary place of belonging confessionally within the ecumenical movement, and what the implications of this might be for our ongoing membership of and participation in other confessional bodies

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