



muylathina takila-ti
Le:wun tunk-ungai tuldangk tunk-ungai
Ola ma tumau i le alofa'
사랑 안에서 살기
Tinggal di dalam Kasih
Nofoma'u i he Ofa
愛中合居

SIXTEENTH ASSEMBLY MINUTES



PRESIDENTS AND GENERAL SECRETARIES OF THE ASSEMBLY

	ASSEMBLY	PRESIDENT	SECRETARY
1.	June 1977 <i>Sydney</i>	J Davis McCaughey	Winston O'Reilly
2.	May 1979 <i>Melbourne</i>	Winston O'Reilly	Winston O'Reilly <i>to December 1979</i>
3.	May 1982 <i>Adelaide</i>	Rollie Busch	David Gill <i>from January 1980</i>
4.	May 1985 <i>Sydney</i>	Ian Tanner	David Gill
5.	May 1988 <i>Melbourne</i>	Ronald Wilson	David Gill <i>to July 1988</i>
6.	July 1991 <i>Brisbane</i>	H D'Arcy Wood	Gregor Henderson <i>from January 1989</i>
7.	July 1994 <i>Sydney</i>	Jill Tabart	Gregor Henderson
8.	July 1997 <i>Perth</i>	John E Mavor	Gregor Henderson
9.	July 2000 <i>Adelaide</i>	James Haire	Gregor Henderson
10.	July 2003 <i>Melbourne</i>	Dean Drayton	Terence Corkin <i>from January 2001</i>
11.	July 2006 <i>Brisbane</i>	Gregor Henderson	Terence Corkin <i>from January 2001</i>
12.	July 2009 <i>Sydney</i>	Alistair Macrae	Terence Corkin <i>from January 2001</i>
13.	July 2012 <i>Adelaide</i>	Andrew Dutney	Terence Corkin <i>from January 2001</i>
14.	July 2015 <i>Perth</i>	Stuart McMillan	Terence Corkin
15.	July 2018 <i>Melbourne</i>	Deidre Palmer	Colleen Geyer
16.	July 2021 <i>Brisbane</i>	Sharon Hollis	Colleen Geyer

Introduction for 16th Assembly Minutes

The Sixteenth Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) took place in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic. As such it took place over two events, an online meeting in 2021 and reconvened for an in-person meeting in 2022.

This historic context required the Uniting Church in all its Councils to adapt and learn new ways so that the work of the Church could continue to be the witness of the Gospel in the many communities it lives and serves. The triennial meeting of the national Council of the UCA was no different.

The Standing Committee monitored the pandemic, considered associated risks and made subsequent decisions regarding how the 16th Assembly would be held, and to reduce membership by 25%.

Prior to the online Assembly meeting, Assembly members met online in their Community Working Groups, and attended online reports from Assembly Agencies, Committees, Working Groups and Circles of Interest. At the online meeting, 17-18 July held at the Qld Synod offices in Brisbane, prayers and business were led by outgoing President, Dr Deidre Palmer, including the important business of electing Rev Sharon Hollis as the 16th President of the Uniting Church.

Rev Hollis was installed as President in a service of Opening Worship of the Assembly and Installation of the President, that was publicly live-streamed. The theme for the Assembly – Dwelling in Love – was introduced by Rev Hollis in her sermon, and was evident throughout both meetings.

Members of the Standing Committee and Chairs of Assembly Boards and Committees were elected in the online meeting, and Rev Charissa Suli was elected as President-elect.

The following May (6 - 9 May), members met in person for the reconvened meeting of the 16th Assembly at Alex Park on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. Members were grateful to be together and worked well to make significant decisions regarding the future of the Uniting Church (Act2 project), documents to contribute to the continuing witness of our Church, the environment and sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts.

In a significant act, the President led the Assembly in a moving renewal of the Covenant between the Uniting Church and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

The President and Assembly members knelt as they spoke the words of the Covenant that were first spoken by President, Dr Jill Tabart at the 7th Assembly; and members of UAICC present spoke the words first spoken by Pastor Bill Hollingsworth.

The rhythm of worship moved throughout both meetings, weaving prayer and praise through the business, calling the Assembly to focus on the presence of God in all that was considered, discussed and agreed.

Throughout the Assembly, in addition to the contribution of the voting members and various guests, the Assembly was most helpfully resourced by the many people who led the community working groups, Chaplains, people associated for particular business and wonderful volunteers and technical support staff.

Behind the scenes Mr Andrew Johnson, the Business Manager, ensured that we stayed on track with the agenda and that we were always aware of what had been decided and what remained to be done. Once again the Facilitation Group greatly assisted the Assembly and made a significant contribution in the journey towards consensus.

Every Assembly is more than a business meeting. Meetings of the Assembly are gatherings of Christians called and equipped by God for the task of discernment and leadership within a specific area of the life of the Uniting Church that is our national Council. This life of Christian community and openness to the leading of the Spirit was resourced by prayer and worship throughout the two meetings and Bible study.

The Bible studies were led by students and staff from Nungalinga College, including Rev Deacon Maratja Dhamarrandji, Kirsty Burgu Marlene Boko, Wängarr Dhamarrandji, Troy Mardigan, Uncle Joe Cuttabut, Joanne Baker, Maurice Karui, Yurraydjil Dhurrkay, Mandy Mangurra, Gemma Alange Ngambe, Robert Maliwalnawuy Gaykamanu and Milminydjarrk Helen Garrawurra and coordinated by Rev Michelle Cook.

Professor Anthony Reddie, Director of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Culture at Oxford University brought the Cato Lecture to the Assembly at the online meeting. Interacting with the theme of the Assembly, Prof Anthony Reddie mounted a vision for unity in the Christian community where both difference and oneness in Christ are affirmed and celebrated.

He explored the dichotomy of holding together human commonality and difference as we strive to find new ways to live in whole, healed and just communities. The Assembly is particularly appreciative of the support of the Cato Trustees in making this internationally renowned speaker available to the Assembly.

Youthful members of the Assembly were also very prominent in their leadership and were a great encouragement to the other members of the Assembly, bringing wisdom and hope.

In the pages that follow you will find the record of the formal resolutions and actions of the 16th Assembly. Present among these words are the prayers and the discussions that undergird them as a witness to a community that was seeking to faithfully fulfil its calling as the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia.

MINUTES OF THE SIXTEENTH ASSEMBLY ONLINE MEETING 2021

The Sixteenth Assembly, meeting virtually, was formally opened at 10.00am on 8th July 2021 with welcome to country given by Mark Kickett, Interim Chair of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress who also offered acknowledgement to the Turrbal and Jagera First Peoples as the traditional guardians of the land on which the virtual Assembly was taking place.

OPENING ACTIONS

INSTALLATION OF THE PRESIDENT

The Assembly convened online at 11.30am on 17th July 2021 in a virtual worship service to formally install its President, Rev Sharon Hollis.

The Assembly resolved:

- 21.01 ROLL OF THE ASSEMBLY (See Appendix A)**
to adopt the roll of members, subject to any alterations advised to the General Secretary no later than 2.00pm on Saturday 17 July 2021.
- 21.02 ELECTION OF PRESIDENT**
to elect Sharon Joy Hollis as President of the Assembly, to hold office until the installation of her successor at the next ordinary meeting of the Assembly.
- 21.03 ASSEMBLY PROCEDURES**
 - 21.03.01 Appointment of Minute Secretaries**
to appoint the following persons as Minute Secretaries: Jenny Bertalan and Lara Regan.
 - 21.03.02 Order of Business**
to approve the order of business and the timetable submitted by the Business Committee, noting that decisions to vary the order of business and timetable can be taken by the Assembly at any time.
 - 21.03.03 Confirmation of the Minutes**
to authorise the following persons to confirm the minutes of the Sixteenth Assembly: Colleen Geyer, Sharon Hollis, Andrew Johnson and Heather den Houting.
 - 21.03.04 Ballots and Nominating Procedures**
 - (a) to appoint Scott Ballment as Returning Officer, and Rohan Pryor and Kath Merrifield as Assistant Returning Officers.
 - (b) to appoint a Ballot Committee with responsibility for advising the Assembly on any questions relating to nominations and elections.

- (c) to appoint the following persons as members of the Ballot Committee: Scott Ballment (Convenor), Rohan Pryor and Kath Merrifield (Assistant Returning Officers).
- (d) to endorse the decision of the Business Committee that nominations for the Assembly Standing Committee, all Board and Committee Chairs and Advocates, closed at 5pm on 9 July 2021.

21.03.05 **Association of Persons with the Assembly**

- (a) to welcome Ecumenical guests, from other Australian churches and the National Council of Churches in Australia; and from overseas churches and international ecumenical bodies to the online meeting of the Assembly;
- (b) to note and thank the following persons for resourcing the Assembly at the Information Sessions held prior to the online Assembly meeting:

Mr Will Pearson for Frontier Services
Mr Geoff Batkin for UnitingCare Australia
Mr Andrew Glenn for UnitingWorld
Mr Steve Molkentin for Discipling the Next Generations Circle of Interest
Rev Alex Sangster for Transforming Worship Circle of Interest
Rev Ann Perrin for Growing in Faith Circle of Interest
Rev Dr Amelia Koh-Butler for Seeking Common Ground Circle of Interest
Rev Loni Vaitohi for Working for Justice Circle of Interest
Rev Dr Matagi Vilitama for Being a Multicultural Church Circle of Interest
Mr Stuart McMillan for Walking Together as First and Second Peoples Circle of Interest
Ms Janet Woodward for UC Adult Fellowship
Rev Dr Glen O'Brien for UC Historical Society
Dr Kaye Roberts-Thomson for Standards for Ministries Committee
Rev Stephen Robinson for Uniting Disaster Recovery
Rev Charles Vesely for Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee
Rev Kaye Ronalds for Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee
Ms Anne Cross for UCA Redress Ltd
Ms Sarah Lim for UCA Redress Ltd
Mr Peter Andrews for National Safe Church Unit
Rev John Cox for National Safe Church Unit
Mr Bruce Binnie for Mercer Superannuation Trust
Rev Robert Elkhuisen for Mercer Superannuation Trust

- (c) to associate the following persons with the Assembly for the business as listed, with the right to speak but not to participate in decisions:

Ms Claerwen Little for UnitingCare Australia
Dr Sureka Goringe for UnitingWorld
Ms Jannine Jackson for Frontier Services
Mr Leo Iosifidis for Strategic Finance and Administration
Rev John Cox for National Safe Church Unit
Ms Sarah Lim for UCA Redress Ltd

- 21.03.06 **Reception of Reports**
to receive the reports of Agencies, Committees and Work Units:
- 21.03.07 Threshold for Extension of the Appointment of the General Secretary
- (a) to determine that at least two-thirds of the members present and voting must support the extension of the appointment of the General Secretary; and
 - (b) to approve that the session dealing with the extension of the appointment of the General Secretary be a private sitting of the meeting.

- 21.04 MINISTERIAL MATTERS (See Appendix B)**
The President tabled the names of Deacons and Ministers of the Word who have been ordained or admitted by the Uniting Church since the Fifteenth Assembly, of Ministers of the Word, Deaconesses who have died since the Fifteenth Assembly, and of Ministers of the Word whose recognition has been withdrawn since the Fifteenth Assembly.

The Assembly resolved:

- 21.05 RETIRING PRESIDENT**
- (a) to receive the report of the retiring President, Dr Deidre Palmer presented by Rev Rob Brown; and
 - (b) to record its deep thankfulness to God for the ministry of Deidre Palmer during his term as 15th President of the Uniting Church in Australia (2018-2021), and its deep thankfulness to Deidre for her gifted, faithful, and wise leadership of the Church.

President, as one of Deidre's Chaplains, it is my privilege to propose this Minute of Appreciation for Dr Deidre Palmer in her role as President of the 15th Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia.

As I do so, I want to acknowledge that I am speaking from the Adelaide Plains, the traditional country of the Kaurna people. I pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. I recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land, all of which are of continuing importance to the Kaurna people living today.

I want to begin with Deidre's own understanding of herself in this role. Let me quote from her address to the 2019 Tongan National Conference. She said: "I am Deidre Palmer, beloved daughter of God, follower of Jesus, powered by the Holy Spirit – these descriptors are at the core of my identity. I may describe myself in other ways – theological educator, passionate member of the Uniting Church, daughter, wife, mother, grandmother. But always at the heart of who I understand myself to be are these three – beloved daughter of God, follower of Jesus, powered by the Holy Spirit."

Unpacking that quote points to Deidre's theological and practical understanding of herself and how she has lived out the responsibilities of President.

Deidre epitomises what it is to be a passionate member of the Uniting Church. For example, her passion for our Church has been evident in her relationship with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. She has lived out this relationship in the formal ways expected of a President but she has developed the relationship informally, as well, as she has supported the leaders of Congress and has paid particular attention to the development of younger generations of Congress members.

She is also a passionate supporter of the multi- and inter-cultural nature of the Uniting Church. She is a regular attendee of the various National Conferences that are held by members of the Uniting Church who have culturally and linguistically diverse origins. Deidre devoted considerable time to these National Conferences after the outcomes of the 15th Assembly meeting became known. Her commitment was evident not just in the celebrations attached to those Conferences but in the ongoing development of relationships with the leaders and other members of the communities involved. Here also is an indication of the relationship that she has developed with leaders of our Partner Churches in their various communities scattered around the globe.

Deidre has brought with her into her term as President a commitment to every-member ministry (as evidenced in her recent President's Conference) and her firm belief in the Uniting Church's understanding of gender equality.

In an article highlighting the ordination of women, Deidre said: "It has been a joy to see the fruits of nurturing girls and women in a church, which affirms the equality of women and men and the mutuality of lay and ordained ministries – a discipleship of equals".

Along the way we have also evidenced her deep commitment to the eradication of domestic violence and, with others, she has worked tirelessly lobbying our political leaders as they have attempted to formulate legislation that enshrines religious freedom.

As I think you will have recognised from what I have said and what you have seen, Deidre's contribution as President has been wide and deep. I could go on for some time highlighting her various contributions. In closing, however, I want to reflect on how this role has impacted on Deidre, herself.

Many of us know her as a person who thrives on personal contacts. Such contacts energise her and she has lived out her ministry through them. During her term, however, came Covid-19 and face to face meetings were no longer possible. I think it is fair to say that Deidre found this change challenging but as she learnt to cope with this new, virtual, way of being Church so she developed new skills. She addressed many groups by ZOOM, she participated in Synod meetings by a mixture of ZOOM and live presence, she was involved in Partner Church Conferences in a variety of virtual formats and I think, most significantly, she chaired several complex Assembly Standing Committee meetings by ZOOM, and she chaired them extremely well, with the support of other Assembly Officers and staff.

Through all of these changes the resilience that Deidre had shown in other contexts came to the fore. I think resilience is one of the features of her presidency that we have most come to appreciate.

There were joyful times but there were hard times as well; hard Covid-19 times but other hard times, too, as Deidre dealt with matters that arose from intensely personal interactions throughout the Church. Deidre dealt with those interactions and the criticisms that were sometimes implicit within them with grace and love, ensuring that all who dealt with her were treated fairly and with respect.

Through all of this, Deidre was blessed with the love and support of her family; Lawrie and Joanna, in particular, but also from afar, Kate and Tas, Flynn and (more recently) Beren. Her parents, Edith and Doug were also great supporters and it was unfortunate that Deidre had to farewell them both during her time as President-elect and President.

The Uniting Church in Australia has been blessed by the ministry and leadership of Dr Deidre Palmer and so we record in this Minute the appreciation of the Assembly for Deidre and all she has faithfully achieved on our behalf.

BUSINESS FROM THE ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

The Assembly resolved:

21.06 EXTENSION OF THE APPOINTMENT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

21.06.01 that the placement of the Assembly General Secretary, Ms Colleen Geyer, be extended for a further three years until January 1, 2025.

MINUTES OF APPRECIATION

21.07 to place on record its deep appreciation for the contribution the following people have made to the life of the Uniting Church (See Appendix C):

Rev Dr Amelia Koh-Butler, Advocate, Seeking Common Ground Circle of Interest

Mr Andrew Markwell, Trustee, John Flynn Foundation

Rev Ann Perrin, Advocate, Growing in Faith Circle of Interest

The Hon. Bronwyn Pike, Chair, UnitingCare Australia Board

Mrs Dorothy Creek, Member, Frontier Services Board

Rev Garry Dronfield, Member, Frontier Services Board

Rev Gregor Henderson, Trustee, John Flynn Foundation

Mr John Baxter, Member, Frontier Services Board

Dr Kaye Roberts-Thomson, Chair, Standards for Ministries Committee

Rev Dr Matthew Wilson, UCA Co-convenor, Uniting Church in Australia and Executive Council of Australian Jewry Dialogue

Rev Dr Murray Earl, Convenor,

Mr Paul Linossier, Member and Interim Chair, UnitingCare Australia

Mr Richard Stewart, Trustee, John Flynn Foundation

Mr Steve (Molk) Molkentin, Advocate, Discipling the Next Generations Circle of Interest

Mr Stuart McMillan, Trustee, John Flynn Foundation

Mr Stuart McMillan, Advocate, Walking Together as First and Second Peoples Circle of Interest

UnitingWorld Board – **Dr Andrew Glenn, Mr David Hodges, Ms Tina Rendell-Thornton, Ms Margaret Watt and Rev Dr Paul Swadling.**

Rev Will Pearson, Chair, Frontier Services Board

Rev Garry Dronfield, National President, Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress

BUSINESS FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

Members engaged with Assembly agencies through a number of small-group presentations prior to the virtual meeting.

ELECTIONS:

21.08 After the online voting, Scott Ballment, Returning Officer, declared the following results of elections:

President-Elect Standing Committee

James Aaron
Sandy Boyce
David Busch
Michael Dobson
Linda Driver
David Fotheringham
Philip Gardner
Richard La'Brooy
Nicole Mugford

Charissa Suli

Alison Overeem
Catherine Pepper
Raul Sugunanathan
Roberta Stanley
Lilliani Tahaafe-Williams
Geoff Thompson
Yuko Tonai-Moore
Anna Wilson
Kerry Wilson

GENERAL BUSINESS

21.09 GREETINGS FROM ECUMENICAL GUESTS

Historically, the triennial Assemblies have rejoiced in including guests from our partner churches as part of these gatherings, but, due to the worldwide Covid pandemic it sadly was not possible to invite overseas guests to attend in person. However a special virtual meeting with the President-elect and the Interim Chair of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress was offered and the guests were also able to join the members of the 16th Assembly online for the opening worship and installation of Rev Sharon Hollis, the new President.

21.10 BIBLE STUDY

On 17 July 2021 the opening worship was led by Dr Deidre Palmer, the President. On 18 July 2021 the Bible studies were offered by Nungalinga College leaders.

CATO LECTURE

- 21.11** The pre-recorded and live streamed Cato Lecture on what it means to hold together our oneness and our diversity was delivered by Professor Anthony Reddie, the Director of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Culture at Oxford University.

BUSINESS FROM THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

The Assembly resolved:

21.12 RECONVENING THE MEETING OF THE 16TH ASSEMBLY

- 21.12.01** a) to adjourn the meeting of the 16th Assembly at the conclusion of the Closing Worship; and
b) to reconvene at a time and place and in a manner determined by the President.

CLOSING ACTIONS

The Assembly resolved:

21.13

APPRECIATION

to give thanks to all people who contributed to the smooth facilitation of the online 16th Assembly, to the host Queensland Synod, worship leaders, facilitators and particularly the many volunteers, and to the General Secretary and President who have led us with wisdom and grace.

CLOSE

The online Sixteenth Assembly online meeting adjourned at 3.15pm on Sunday, 18 July 2021 following worship led by the President.

MINUTES OF THE SIXTEENTH ASSEMBLY RECONVENED 2022

The Reconvened Sixteenth Assembly was formally opened by the President at 7.00pm on Friday, 6 May 2022. She extended a warm welcome to the lands of the Gubbi Gubbi people, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of the land the Reconvened 16th Assembly took place. The members of the 16th Assembly were also welcomed by Rev Andrew Gunton, Moderator of the Queensland Synod, and then were called to worship by the President, Rev Sharon Hollis.

The members of the Reconvened 16th Assembly took part in a historic and profound renewal of the Covenant between the Uniting Church in Australia and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress in a liturgy led by UCA President Rev Sharon Hollis together with Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress National Interim Chairperson Rev Mark Kickett.

BUSINESS FROM THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

The Assembly resolved:

22.01

ASSEMBLY PROCEDURES

22.01.01

Order of Business

to approve the order of business and the timetable submitted by the Business Committee, noting that decisions to vary the order of business and timetable can be taken by the Assembly at any time.

22.01.02

Alternates

to make provision for alternates to attend the 16th Assembly reconvened meeting in the following instances –

Rev Andrew Williams for Rev David de Kock (WA Synod)
Rev Mike You for Rev Lisa Stewart (Vic.Tas Synod)
Rev Heather Hon for Rev Claire Dawe (Yarra Yarra Presbytery)

- 22.01.03 **Association of persons with the Assembly**
to associate Rev Charissa Suli for the whole of the reconvened meeting of the Assembly, with the right to speak but not to vote; and Mr Malcom Hinton for business related to Proposal 35, Review of the Regulations, with the right to speak but not to vote.

22.02 VENUE FOR THE 17TH ASSEMBLY

- 22.02.01 to receive with thanks the invitation of the Synod of NSW and ACT to hold the Seventeenth Assembly within the bounds of the synod; and
- 22.02.02 to authorise the Standing Committee to determine the exact date, and to negotiate with the Synod of NSW and ACT as to the particular location and venues for the various Assembly functions.

GENERAL BUSINESS

22.03 BIBLE STUDIES

During the Assembly the Bible Studies were conducted by the students at Nungalinga College, Kirsty Burgu and the Northern Synod members.

BUSINESS FROM THE ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

The Assembly resolved:

22.04 ACT2: ON THE WAY

In consideration of the ACT 2 report and Para 17 of the Basis of Union The Uniting Church acknowledges that the demand of the Gospel, the response of the Church to the Gospel, and the discipline which it requires are partly expressed in the formulation by the Church of its law. The aim of such law is to confess God's will for the life of the Church; but since law is received by human beings and framed by them, it is always subject to revision in order that it may better serve the Gospel. The Uniting Church will keep its law under constant review so that its life may increasingly be directed to the service of God and humanity, and its worship to a true and faithful setting forth of, and response to, the Gospel of Christ. The law of the Church will speak of the free obedience of the children of God, and will look to the final reconciliation of humanity under God's sovereign grace.

- 22.04.01 Further to the Act 2 Report, to authorise the following work:
- i. to identify ways to strengthen and develop the local expressions of worship, witness, service, and the making and forming of disciples, in the various forms of communities of faith;
 - ii. to discern, clarify and strengthen our national identity as a church, informing our structure and culture; and

iii. to review governance structures and practices that reflect our contemporary context, in particular:

- a) to identify ways to strengthen and develop the local expressions of worship, witness, service, and the making and forming of disciples, in the various forms of communities of faith;
- b) In keeping our law under constant review to address the need for an evolving interconciliar process that is responsive and agile
- c) to further develop theological culture of the Uniting Church in Australia, and the framework and provision for theological education
- d) being informed by our Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress;
- e) recognising we are a multicultural Church; and
- f) to continue to fulfill of our ethical, legal and social obligations;

iv. to develop a resourcing framework that takes into account whole of Church resourcing arrangements

22.04.02 as the Assembly progresses this work, to invite each of the Synods and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress to join with the Assembly, recognising the importance of consultation to be undertaken across the whole of the Church;

22.04.03 to delegate to the Assembly Standing Committee to progress the work on behalf of the Assembly and report to the 17th Assembly;

22.04.04 to affirm the importance and urgency of this work and that it should be adequately resourced; and

22.04.05 to request each of the Synods in consultation with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Congress to join with the Assembly to consider and contribute to resourcing the work.

22.05 CONTINUING WITNESS

22.05.01 to approve the following documents for consideration by the Uniting Church between the 16th and 17th Assemblies, for reception as continuing witnesses:

- a) The Confession of Belhar,
- b) Laudato si', and

c) The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification;

- 22.05.02 that the process of consideration should involve an invitation for all Presbyteries within the Church, and such other Councils of the Church as desire to participate, to commit to discussing each document for a period of at least one hour, using resource materials provided by the Continuing Witness Task Group, and reporting the results of this discussion to the Task Group;
- 22.05.03 to request the Assembly Standing Committee to oversee the Task Group in the work of providing ongoing support and resourcing of these conversations, and gathering responses from Presbyteries; and bring a report to the 17th Assembly along with proposals for the official adoption of documents as 'Continuing Witnesses'; and
- 22.05.04 that the Assembly Standing Committee request the Task Group continue its work of identifying further continuing witnesses, with a special focus on the variety of forms of witness from Asia and the Pacific and report to the 17th Assembly.

22.06 A CALL TO ACTION FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE: LISTENING TO FIRST PEOPLES' WISDOM

- 22.06.01 to acknowledge that since time immemorial the Creator gifted First Peoples to be the timeless caretakers of country and the natural environment;
- 22.06.02 to confess that as Second Peoples we have heard the wisdom of First Peoples, the call of our Partner Churches, and stories of communities already affected by climate change, but we have not listened. We have failed to act as a whole Church with the level of urgency needed, and have not made the fundamental behavioural changes needed to care for creation. We confess that while effort has been made to change from ways that destroy the Creator's good creation, carbon pollution continues as a direct result of our activities individually and as a Church, and global carbon pollution is now causing irreversible harm;
- 22.06.03 to commit anew to listen to First Peoples wisdom and knowledge, and to take practical climate action including changing our own behaviour;
- 22.06.04 to call on all Councils of the church, agencies and schools who have not already done so to join with the Assembly in committing to net zero emissions by 2040 at the latest, so that together we can become a zero emissions Church. We further urge all Councils to make use of the resources, stories and carbon accounting tools made available online;
- 22.06.05 to request the Standards for Ministry Committee to identify the most appropriate way to embed learning from the wisdom of First Peoples, care of creation, climate justice and the spiritual and

theological basis for a zero emissions church into formation, education and training for the specified ministries of the Uniting Church and report back to the November 2022 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee;

22.06.06 to request the Assembly Circles, Advocates and Panels to include learning from the wisdom of First Peoples, care of creation, climate justice and the spiritual and theological basis for a zero emissions church into their work for the remainder of this triennium; and

22.06.07 to request the Assembly Standing Committee to:

- a) establish a national zero emissions church working group to:
 - gather data on commitments to greenhouse gas emission reduction made across the life of the church, and progress towards those commitments
 - share stories, expertise and learnings on effective strategies and resources to reduce emissions, prioritising the wisdom of First Peoples
 - consider how the whole of the church can move together to net zero emissions by 2040; and

b) to bring a report on findings and recommended next steps to the 17th Assembly.

22.07 REVIEW OF THE REGULATIONS – DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO AMEND PART 5 OF THE REGULATIONS

22.07.01 to defer any review of the Regulations that are associated with, or ancillary to, the broad strategic work done as part of the Act2 process, other than Part 5 – Church Discipline – in order to ensure that any proposals as part of the review are aligned to the strategic direction of the Assembly;

22.07.02 to delegate, pursuant to Regulation 3.10.2(a)(ii), to the Assembly Standing Committee the authority to make Regulations under Part 5 of the Regulations (Church Discipline), subject to:

- a) those Regulations being generally in accordance with the amended Framework of Principles (See Appendix D) and subject to appropriate consultation on the draft regulations; and
- b) the approval of those Regulations by the Assembly Standing Committee on the advice of the Assembly Legal Reference Committee.

BUSINESS FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

Members engaged with Assembly agencies through face-to-face meetings with the visiting National Directors on Sunday, 8 May 2022.

The Assembly resolved:

22.08 UNITINGCARE AUSTRALIA

- 22.08.01 **Aging and Aged Care**
to endorse the establishment of Uniting Friends of Ageing as a new national network within the life of the Uniting Church open to all members interested in and concerned about ageing and aged care;
- 22.08.02 to endorse the celebration of Older Persons Sunday (for example on the first Sunday of October) each year, and note that UnitingCare Australia is providing worship resources to assist congregations in the celebration of Older Persons Sunday; and
- 22.08.03 to endorse the priority advocacy of UnitingCare Australia to:
- a) urge the Australian Government to support the development of an international covenant, under the auspices of the United Nations, on the rights of older persons; and
 - b) urge the Australian Government to fully implement the recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission, including a human rights-based Aged Care Act and increases for the wages of aged care staff based on decisions of the Fair Work Commission.

BUSINESS FROM ASSEMBLY MEMBERS

The Assembly resolved:

22.09 DEACONS IN THE UCA ANNIVERSARY

- 22.09.01 to acknowledge with joy the 30-year anniversary of the renewal of the diaconate within the Uniting Church in Australia (1991 Assembly), and its respected place in the ecumenical, worldwide community of diaconal ministry;
- 22.09.02 to give thanks for all those who have been ordained as Deacons in the last 30 years, and celebrate the many and varied ministries they have undertaken to fulfill their calling as bridge builders between the church and the community;
- 22.09.03 to acknowledge the role that Deacons have to encourage and equip followers of Jesus to faithfully live out their baptismal call through acts of caring compassion, empowerment, service, and prophetic hope; through solidarity and accompaniment; through working for justice and liberation; and as advocates for creative transformation; and

- 22.09.04 to emphasise that the current 'Standards for Education and Formation of Candidates for Ordination - Phase 2' requires that "due attention be given to the different perspectives of Ministry of Deacon and Ministry of the Word" (Clause 15) and strongly remind the UCA theological colleges to the need to provide specific courses, formation and field placements for Deacon candidates to prepare them for diaconal ministry.

22.10 MOVING FORWARD IN BEING A MULTICULTURAL CHURCH

- 22.10.01 to adopt the 3rd Sunday in July (or another date best suited to the local setting) as 'Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday', to celebrate UCA being a Multicultural Church and to create an opportunity for congregations and faith communities to connect and build relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in their neighbourhoods. This Sunday is to replace One Great Sunday of Sharing;
- 22.10.02 to request the Assembly Standing Committee to develop a process to create liturgical, theological, and practical materials as resources for the wider church in its celebration of Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday and seeking to be an Intercultural Neighbourhood Church within the current triennium, in consultation with National Conferences and relevant Assembly Circles;
- 22.10.03 to request the Assembly Standing Committee, liaising with other parts of the Church, to move towards simpler, friendlier, and more equitable church structures, processes, and ways of working that foster CALD participation and intercultural partnership by:
- a) reviewing the NATIONAL PROPERTY POLICY FOR THE UCA with regard to clause 1.2.: "Where a UCA congregation is sharing property with a non-UCA congregation, Faith Community or Fellowship Group"; and,
 - b) reviewing the Regulations relating Faith Communities (3.9.2) and produce an Assembly Protocol/Guideline for receiving/recognising Faith Communities/Congregations from other CALD churches; and
- 22.10.04 to encourage Synod Placement Committees and Presbytery Pastoral Relation Committees to review and revise the Minister Leadership Profile Form and Congregation Placement Profile and other key reporting and review documents to reflect the ethos and characteristics expressed in Living with the Neighbour Who is Different (9th Assembly, 2000) and One Body Many Members: Living faith and life cross culturally (13th Assembly, 2012).

22.11 PREVENTING HARM FROM SEXUAL ORIENTATION & GENDER IDENTITY CHANGE EFFORTS (SOGICE)

- 22.11.01 to affirm the Uniting Church Statement, Dignity in Humanity,

which states that 'every person is precious and entitled to live with dignity because they are God's children';

- 22.11.02 to affirm that prayer and pastoral care are long-held Christian practices that will continue to be offered to support and uphold people, including LGBTIQA+ people, and agree that these Christian practices should not be used to harm or condemn any people including LGBTIQA+ people;
- 22.11.03 to recognise that sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts (SOGICE), often referred to as 'conversion therapy' are harmful to people's mental health and wellbeing; and
- 22.11.04 to request the Assembly Standing Committee to develop a process to provide a national resource for congregations, agencies, and individuals to learn how they can help prevent harm from SOGICE ideology and practice.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND REGULATIONS AND RELATED MATTERS

The Assembly resolved:

- 22.12 **AUDIT OF SMALL CONGREGATIONS FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**
to authorise the Assembly Standing Committee, on the advice from the Assembly Legal Reference to amend the following regulations:
 - a) Regulation 3.8.7(c) – to amend through insertion after “The books of account” the words “when the gross receipts are above \$100,000”, the proposed wording of the revised Regulation being:
 - (c) The books of account, when the gross receipts are above \$100,000, shall be audited and certified by the auditors at least once in every year and at such other times as may be required by the chairperson of the Church Council or other body responsible as the case may require.;
 - b) Regulation 3.8.7(e), Variations to Qualifications from 2.5 times to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) financial reporting revenue threshold for small charities, the proposed wording of the revised Regulation, subject to Assembly Legal Reference Committee advice, being:
 - (e) Where the gross receipts of a Congregation or body or fund in the year is below a figure that equates to 2.5 times the notional stipend the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) financial reporting revenue threshold for small charities, the books of account may be audited and certified by two persons who are not qualified

in terms of (d) above, but who are, in the opinion of the body responsible, fit and proper persons to undertake the responsibility.

CLOSING ACTIONS

The Assembly resolved:

21.13

APPRECIATION

to give thanks to all people who contributed to the smooth facilitation of the 16th Assembly reconvened, to the host Queensland Synod, worship leaders, facilitators and particularly the many volunteers, and to the General Secretary and President who have led us with wisdom and grace.

CLOSE

The reconvened Sixteenth Assembly concluded at 12.30pm on Monday, 9 May 2022 following worship led by the President.