



UNITING CHURCH ADULT FELLOWSHIP REPORT TO 12TH ASSEMBLY, SYDNEY – JULY, 2009

The Uniting Church Adult Fellowship (UCAF) has fulfilled a most productive service for the Church over the last three years. With the strength and guidance of the Holy Spirit, much has been accomplished throughout Australia and in other parts of the world and it gives me great pleasure to present this report to the 12th Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Committee

In May 2006 at the 9th National Consultation held in Adelaide, a Committee from the Queensland Synod, consisting of eight women and two men was commissioned by the Assembly General Secretary, Rev. Terence Corkin as the UCAF National Committee for a term of three years.

The committee commissioned consisted of: President Mrs. Alyson Madsen, Vice-President Mrs Angela Lester, Secretary Mrs. Jan Akroyd-Bailey, Minute Secretary Mrs Chris Lloyd, Treasurer Mr. Barry Kerr, Chaplain Rev. Peter Arnett, Ecumenical/International Liaison Officer Mrs. Noela Schloss, and Committee members Mesdames Judy Kerr, Doreen Bengtson and Jean Dodd. Mrs Stephanie Kennedy was co-opted to the Committee as the Artistic Director for the Celebration.

Theme

The theme for the triennium was “Let the Son Shine Through” and each affiliated group was challenged to use the theme in such a way that the Uniting Church could exhibit the love of God to the wider communities in which they live. This, in fact means, in excess of 18,000 women and men are witnessing to the people of Australia.

The special project commissioned by the 2006-2009 National Committee invited each Uniting Church member to knit, crochet, or sew a square from warm material. The squares were then sewn together to form rugs. The rugs are a symbol demonstrating the Son shining through us, in the uniqueness of each one of us and from all different situations and stations of life, and yet reflecting the combining fabric of the church.

During the three years just over 2,400 rugs (approx. 48,000 squares) were received. They came in all colours, sizes and textures, all made with the special love of Jesus. The rugs were dedicated at the Fellowship’s National Celebration in Caloundra and then distributed through Uniting and International Mission as well as other sources to areas of need throughout the world.

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Rugs were forwarded, *free of cost*, to –

- Orphanages in Russia via Mission without Borders
- Watoto Program, Uganda Orphanages– through Bayside UC, Queensland
- PNG Cyclone Appeal – through Christian Outreach, Rockhampton
- Nan Province, North Thailand –through Tear Australia
- Mongolia – Orphanages - through Soroptomist Association
- Shi-Loh Church Ministeries Orphanages – through UC Church Rockhampton
- Napal and Kinglake Fire Victims – through Moreton Bay College,(a Uniting Church Girls' College, Brisbane)
- Luwi (Love) Orphanage Scheme, Zambia – through Brethren Church Wynnum
- PNG Highlands – through Rotary International, Jindalee Branch
- Cambodia – Dorcus Program
- Solomon Islands – rugs for new born babies
- World Vision (Guardian Pharmacy) held for despatch
- Equestrian Group Members in Warwick as a result of the Equine Flu shut-down

In a very practical way, this will deepen our relationships with other denominations and with churches in Asia, the Pacific, Africa and indeed throughout the world. Continued support of Uniting Care, Frontier Services and Uniting International Mission is just part of the joyful work of the fellowship members and will continue to be for years to come.

Assembly and Mandate

The Mandate for the National Committee is to plan, co-ordinate, and facilitate activities for its members under the approved Mission statement –

“To facilitate the network of Adult Fellowships nationally in order to promote the mission and witness of the Uniting Church in Australia.”

There are approximately 18,000 members nationwide; they bring diverse gifts and are extremely loyal and committed to the service of the church; arguably, they are the “glue” which holds many congregations together. Each is the coming together of men and women for spiritual, social, educational, recreational, service, and mission support activities. These activities are organised at local level and work and report to each of the local Synod Committees. The National Committee has a co-ordinating role with these Synod Committees. The National Committee is supported financially by Synod Committee levies, based on membership, forming part of the budget passed at each triennial National Consultation.

The UCAF National Committee is an Agency of the Assembly but, unlike other Agencies, has no National Director, has only a nominal budget, and is comprised entirely of volunteers. We thank the Assembly for their assistance with portion of our administration costs.

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The Committee was invited to contribute to the Assembly 2009 Mission Prayer Book and we thank Eva Donaldson (Queensland) for her devotional input on our behalf.

The National Committee is linked with, relates to, and pays affiliation fees to two world bodies: The World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFM&UCW) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Department of Partnerships of Women and Men). Our Ecumenical Liaison member corresponds with our thirty-three partner churches in the Pacific, Asia, India and Africa. Unfortunately we receive very little correspondence in return.

The National Committee is a member of "The President's Table" but, unfortunately during the triennium, attendance at functions has not been possible.

Conferences – South Pacific and World

In May 2006 nine members attended the conference of the WFM&UCW held in Jeju Island, Korea. Some 2,000 women from around the world attended the Conference. Young women under 30 years of age who hold active roles in the Church and show potential leadership qualities are invited to be nominated to attend the World Federation gatherings as Helen Kim scholars. Two young women from each Area are selected. Eighteen other young women from around the world attended as the 2006 Helen Kim Scholars and it was a joy to have as one of our group, Rowena Connan (Victoria) who was a recipient of the Helen Kim Bursary in 2001

At the Conference the Australian contingent, on behalf of the Adult Fellowship members, agreed to embody the eight Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations and encourage all Fellowships to incorporate at least one of the Goals into their annual program.

Following this gathering, President Alyson Madsen joined with eleven others from the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia as delegates to the World Methodist Conference in Seoul, a gathering of some 3,500 Christians from all over the world in which it was indeed an honour and joy to participate. The diversity of spiritual expression, the challenges confronting many countries, the outward expression of faith, and the joining together for daily worship was an experience one will never forget.

In an act of reaching out to our near neighbours, and in particular our prayer partner, the Solomon Islands, the National Committee invited and paid for Pose Telasasa to join with us at the World Assembly. Pose found this experience rather exciting and in her own way brought another dimension to the discussions.

In September 2008 thirty-four Australians attended the South Pacific Area Seminar of the WFM&UCW held in Tonga. Further financial assistance was given to a number of our Solomon Island and Thursday Island friends to be part of this gathering.

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One of our members, Ann Connan, is currently Vice-President of the South Pacific Area of WFM&UCW, and we give thanks for her leadership in the Bible Studies at the recent Conference in Tonga.

Working Procedures

During the triennium, part of the responsibility of the National Committee is to arrange and organise a National Celebration.

Over a five-day period in September 2007 people from overseas as well as every State and Territory in Australia, attended the National Celebration held at Rydges Resort, Caloundra on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. Dr. Val Webb was the Bible Study Leader, complemented by a number of Keynote Speakers. It was a pleasure to have Assembly President, Rev. Gregor Henderson present with us at this Celebration for part of the time and the General Secretary, Rev. Terence Corkin attended for the whole period. Past Moderators of the Uniting Church were present also (from Queensland, New South Wales, and Northern Synod).

Synod Committees were generous in supporting people with indigenous and ethnic backgrounds to take part in this Celebration.

Ecumenical/International Liaison

This position holds responsibility for keeping in touch with similar organisations within partner churches and international bodies with which the Uniting Church has links. Noela Schloss, as Ecumenical/International Liaison Officer, has where possible maintained this contact.

We continue to be affiliated with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFM&UCW) and receive the publications *Reformed World* and *WARC Update* and *Tree of Life* from the WFM&UCW.

These publications keep us up-to-date with activities of the many partner churches as well as the situations and needs of communities in underdeveloped countries throughout the world. The WFM&UCW holds Non-Government Organisation (NGO) Status with the United Nations in a consultative capacity. The partner churches are continually in our prayers.

Although many of our groups are now not fund-raising entities it continues to astound me that millions of dollars are forwarded for mission. Groups are responsive to appeals for specific needs of neighbouring countries. Synod Committees engage in many activities, and all on a voluntary basis. They continue to support financially, prayerfully, and in a practical way wherever the need arises.

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The South Australian Synod Committee endeavoured to fulfil the dream of a worker in Zambia by providing a small cuddly toy for each orphaned and vulnerable child in Mwandu. An appeal was launched and over 8,000 'cuddlies' were lovingly made. Cuddlies went to India, Thailand, and East Timor. This is certainly a testimony of love and care of our neighbours. Frontier Services, a sister Agency, is continually receiving support in many forms from our members as is local Chaplaincy work in the schools and colleges.

Many other projects, too extensive to list individually, are a great witness to the various communities which receive the assistance. All these activities provide the stimulation of spiritual growth and discipleship. They are opportunities of witness to the wider community and allow through fellowship the recognition, development, and use of gifts in ministries of service. Just as Jesus' ministry challenged people to give more serious attention to the nature of service the 'volunteer' program is renewing our commitment to Jesus' service'. It is just putting the presence of Jesus Christ into action.

National Consultation

Toward the end of the triennium the National Committee is obliged to arrange a National Consultation (Business meeting) of the UCAF in Australia. The 10th National Consultation will be held in Brisbane 21 – 24 May, 2009. The Assembly will send consultants and each of the Synod Committees three delegates, whilst Tasmania and the Northern Territory will send two. We are looking forward to the Assembly President being present for part of the time. It is unfortunate that, owing to commitments elsewhere, the General Secretary will be unable to attend. A vital part of the Consultation will be the discussion with Assembly representatives on how the UCAF can take part in the proposed *Generation Y* programme of the wider church.

The Commissioning of the new National Committee from New South Wales by the President of the Assembly will take place at Bayside Uniting Church, Manly West, Brisbane on Sunday, 24 May 2009.

We celebrated the 30th year of the Uniting Church during our term and were told - "The members are 'Pearls of Great Price'!"

During the triennium, as President I have been privileged to visit every Synod Committee and meet with many local groups in rural and metropolitan areas of Australia. I thank the many people who extended wonderful hospitality and it was my privilege to meet UCAF members in their home environment.

As well as sharing and enjoying devotional content and training, the practical projects and various pastoral care activities will continue to be part of our annual programmes. Fellowship groups provide a non-threatening environment within the church allowing many with a special need to find a place of solace.

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Most groups are 'left to their own devices' within their local church and get on with their work and witness without very much publicity. A number of our affiliated groups are now mixed, male and female, and these groups, numerically, are amongst some of the most successful groups.

Thanks

A special vote of thanks to-

- the Assembly President, General Secretary and the Assembly staff for the support, help, and encouragement received;
- the Assembly Communications Unit for maintaining our web site with information regularly given by Angela Lester, Vice-President;
- the Queensland Synod office staff: we have appreciated the many forms of assistance given to us, especially collection of rugs and use of rooms for meetings.
- to the Committee for their hard work during the triennium, much has been asked of them.

It has been a joy to serve the National Church, to meet and have fellowship with the committee and also with so many folk around the country. It has been a privilege to work in this way for our Lord and on many occasions we were assured that God was with us.

*Take time to think: it is the course of power
Take time to play: it is the secret of perpetual youth
Take time to read: it is the fountain of wisdom
Take time to pray: it is the greatest power on earth
Take time to laugh; it is the music of the soul
Take time to give: it is too short a day to be selfish.*

Alyson Madsen
President,
Uniting Church Adult Fellowship National Committee 2006-2009
February 2009