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GENERAL BUSINESS

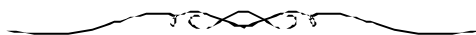
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ATTACHMENT A: *Dancing Future Circles* Gathering, July 2002 – Visions and dreams for the Uniting Church in Australia

ATTACHMENT B: *Seeking a Heart of Wisdom* – Guidelines for Continuing Education for Uniting Church Ministers

ATTACHMENT C: MEC Rules – Course of Study for the Specified Ministry of Lay Pastor



Uniting Church in Australia

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

15 – 17 November 2002

MINUTES

PRESENT James Haire (President), Jane Aagaard, Craig Bailey, Bruce Binnie, Robert Brown, Elizabeth Burns, Dennis Chapman, Terence Corkin, Kylie Crabbe, Dean Drayton, Jelita Gardner-Rush, Sealin Garlett, Jason Kioa, Alistair Macrae, John Mavor, Jim Mein, Myung Hwa Park, Julia Pitman, Allan Thompson, Jan Trengove, Seongja Yoo-Crowe

In attendance: Rob Bos, Chris Budden, Stu Cameron, John Evans, Robert Johnson, John Rowland, Gillian Stone, Jenny Tymms, Wendie Wilkie

WORSHIP On the Friday evening, as part of the formation of the community, the President presided and preached at the opening Service of Holy Communion and Jane Aagaard did the Bible reading. On the Saturday Rob Brown led morning worship and Rob Bos led evening worship. On the Sunday John Evans led morning worship and the closing prayer in the afternoon was led by John Mavor.

WELCOMES The President welcomed all ASC participants to the meeting and extended a special welcome to Jane Aagaard who has been unable to attend the previous two meetings due to the heavy responsibilities of her role as the Northern Territory Government's Minister for Health and Community Services. Also welcomed as visitors were Rev Dr Paul Walton to present reports on the Ministry of Deacon Review and *Uniting in Worship #2* on Saturday, and Matthew Budden, Assembly Communications Officer, from Saturday midday to Sunday afternoon.

APOLOGIES Apologies were received from Shayne Blackman and Jenny Byrnes for the whole of the meeting; Bruce Binnie, Elizabeth Burns, Kylie Crabbe and Sealin Garlett for Friday evening; Seongja Yoo Crowe for Saturday evening; Jane Aagaard for Saturday evening and Sunday; Rob Brown for Sunday.

RECOGNITION OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE LAND

On behalf of Standing Committee, the President acknowledged the local Indigenous people and their role as custodians of the land on which the meeting took place.

PASTORAL MATTERS

The President invited ASC participants to share any pastoral matters. The General Secretary referred to the death of Bill Fischer's father, Mr Noel Gordon Fischer, on 21 September and Bill's subsequent illness. He reported the illnesses of Peter Tebbutt, a member of the Assembly Legal Reference Committee and former ASC member, and Hugh McGinlay, UniEd Christian Education Associate – Publishing. John Rowland advised of the death of one of Scotch College's year 9 boys at rowing training after suffering a cerebral aneurism.

The ASC expressed its support for Jenny Byrnes at this time as she prepares to move to her new ministry in Adelaide, and her absence from the meeting due to family illness. Rev Dr Anita Monro was also remembered as she concludes her position as acting Principal, Coolamon College, and moves from Queensland to take up her new position as Lecturer in Theology at United Theological College, NSW from February 2003.

Wendie Wilkie advised that this is Matthew Budden's last ASC meeting as he will be leaving the Assembly staff in February 2003 to travel overseas. Thanks were expressed for his work over the past two years as the Assembly's IT and Web Manager.

THANKYOU TO GILLIAN STONE

The General Secretary announced that Gillian Stone is leaving the Assembly staff after 15 years in the position of Assistant to the General Secretary. Jan Trengove expressed the thanks of the ASC to Gillian for her service to the Assembly and a presentation was made to her.

APPROVAL OF TIMETABLE AND AGENDA

The General Secretary spoke to the proposed timetable and agenda as listed in Document 1, noting some changes to the agenda and several new business items. Several new documents were distributed on the Friday evening.

02.54 It was resolved:

- (a) in accordance with Minute 02.08.05, to consider whether the content and emphasis of the agenda reflects an appropriate level of focus on matters of contemporary significance to the Church; and
- (b) approve the timetable and agenda of the meeting as outlined in Document 1, noting that the committee is free to vary the agenda at any time.

CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

02.55 It was resolved to confirm the minutes of the meeting held 19 – 21 July 2002, with the sole correction of the spelling of the word "Erriskillen" to "Enniskillen" under International Visits in the second paragraph of the President's report on page 3.

NOTE CONSTITUTION CLAUSE 39

Standing Committee members were reminded of Constitution clause 39, as per ASC minute 00.71:

"On matters which, by a two thirds majority vote, the Assembly deems to be vital to the life of the Church, the Assembly shall seek the concurrence of Synods and/or Presbyteries and/or Congregations as the Assembly may determine."

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

At the beginning of each day the President provided a focus for reflection by lighting a candle and displaying cloths from the Protestant Christian Church in Bali (Gereja Kristen Protestan di Bali) and the PCCB's Women's Fellowship following the horrific bomb attack of 12 October in Kuta, Bali as a demonstration of our solidarity with the people of Bali and Indonesia.

On the Saturday evening the President shared four issues or experiences involving him since the previous meeting:

- **Ministry among young people** – he had been privileged to lead the President's Young Leaders' Conference, with 31 young people and 5 mentors, and the group is maintaining ongoing contact with each other;
- a number of areas in relation to **Ethics** –
 - the stem-cell-debate re cloning and therapeutic application of stem-cells
 - the degree to which several churches are questioning the moral appropriateness of churches participating in the process of competitive tendering
 - raising ethical issues with politicians and other church leaders as an important part of our Church's contribution to national discussions;
- during a **visit to remote areas in the North** with the NRCC he had seen signs of hope through Aboriginal self determination but also areas of great need;
- the **President's Forum** at Coromandel Church in Adelaide in September had received an excellent response and had been well attended.

02.56 **It was resolved** to receive the report.

SYNOD SHARING – SYNOD OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Participants from the Synod of Western Australia were invited to share something of the life of their synod as an expression of our inter-conciliar sharing. John Evans gave a PowerPoint presentation "Celebrating our Journey 1977 – 2002" consisting of extracts from a multimedia presentation to the 2002 WA Synod meeting. This was followed by verbal reports from Sealin Garlett, John Evans and Elizabeth Burns on some of the struggles facing the Synod and signs of hope and unity emerging for the future of the Church in WA as its people grapple with new ways of being the church in community and working together in the face of dwindling financial resources. The President led the meeting in a prayer for the WA Synod.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. COOLAMON COLLEGE (ASC Minute 02.37)

Wendie Wilkie, convenor of the Joint Nominating Committee, presented Document 15, consisting of a report on the recruitment process undertaken since the July ASC meeting for the appointment of Principal, Coolamon College.

02.57 **It was resolved** to:

02.57.01 receive the report;

02.57.02 agree to the appointment of Dr Marelle Harisun as acting Principal, Coolamon College from 1 January 2003 until a new Principal is appointed.

2. TASK GROUP ON GOVERNANCE (ASC Minute 02.40)

Allan Thompson, convenor of the Task Group, presented Document 21, consisting of a further report on issues of governance having taken into account the table group discussion at the July ASC meeting. Much discussion followed in plenary session.

02.58 **It was resolved** to:

02.58.01 receive the report;

- 02.58.02 refer the matter back to the Task Group on Governance to bring a further report to the March ASC meeting with particular reference to what can be adopted by the March ASC meeting and what needs to go to the 10th Assembly.

3. AGENCY ARRANGEMENTS (ASC Minute 02.41)

The General Secretary presented Documents 3A and 3B, consisting of two papers outlining the case for change to Assembly Agency arrangements and the proposed organisational strategy. Much discussion followed in table groups and in plenary session.

02.59 It was resolved to:

02.59.01 receive the report;

02.59.02 appoint the Task Group on Governance and Jenny Tymms to work with the General Secretary on the further development of the proposed organisational strategy for return to the March ASC meeting.

4. REVIEW OF NATIONAL DIRECTOR, FRONTIER SERVICES AND ASSOCIATE GENERAL SECRETARY (ASC Minute 02.45.02(b) – (c))

On the Saturday afternoon Assembly staff were asked to leave when the Standing Committee, with the Synod Secretaries, considered this agenda item. The convenor of the Review Group, Mrs Jan Trengove, introduced Document 20A re National Director of Frontier Services. The convenor of the Review Group, Ms Jelita Gardner-Rush, introduced Document 20B re Associate General Secretary.

(a) National Director, Frontier Services

02.60 It was resolved to:

02.60.01 receive the report;

02.60.02 affirm the need for Frontier Services and the position of National Director Frontier Services;

02.60.03 adopt the following alterations to the Position Description:

- To be listed at the heading "Has reporting to him/her"
"Executive staff of Frontier Services as designated"
- To be listed under Major Responsibilities as a new 4th dot point:
"To consult and work with the Uniting and Aboriginal Islander Christian Congress regarding ministry with Aboriginal people in remote areas."
- To be listed under Major Responsibilities as a new 6th dot point:
"To liaise with community groups and Government agencies involved in remote areas of Australia;"

02.60.04 agree to review the current national director being mindful of the revised position description;

02.60.05 request the Review Group to proceed with the second stage of the review and report to the March ASC meeting.

(b) Associate General Secretary

- 02.61 It was resolved:**
- 02.61.01 to receive the report;
- 02.61.02 Request the review committee to
- a) proceed to the review of the performance of the Associate General Secretary on the basis of the current position description; and
 - b) bring proposals to the next meeting of the ASC on the future of the role, the position description and extension for the Associate General Secretary.
- 02.61.03 that the issue of providing appropriate professional support to the Associate General Secretary be referred to the General Secretary for consideration and report to the March 2003 ASC meeting;
- 02.61.05 to request the review committee to consult the 'Neill Report' on lay and ordained remuneration in the Assembly and bring a proposal to the March 2003 ASC meeting, with the recommendation from the review, that either:
- (a) proposes a remuneration package based on the policy in that document OR
 - (b) identifies areas of further policy development work required before any change in the package can be proposed.

The private sitting was then concluded.

5. DISCUSSION ON MEMBERSHIP (ASC Minute 02.46.04)

Rob Bos presented Document 6, consisting of a draft document entitled *Becoming Disciples* on membership within the Uniting Church, arising out of a decision at the previous meeting for a fuller consideration by the ASC of the issues raised by the report. Table groups were asked to consider whether this document is one that the ASC wanted to place before the Church and whether it should be circulated throughout the Church for discussion in the first part of 2003, prior to coming to the 10th Assembly. Extensive discussion followed.

- 02.62 It was resolved** that the document *Becoming Disciples* be amended in the light of the discussion and distributed to synods, presbyteries and members of the Assembly for their consideration and comment prior to the 10th Assembly.

6. REPORT OF TASK GROUP ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION (ASC Minute 02.49)

Allan Thompson presented Document 12, consisting of the Task Group's report under the heading *Theological Education: alive and well every-where?.* Discussion followed.

- 02.63 It was resolved to:**
- 02.63.01 receive the report;
- 02.63.02 refer the paper back to the Task Group to amend in the light of the comments at this ASC meeting and to develop the conclusions in Section 8 into proposals for the consideration of the 10th Assembly, and bring this report back to the March ASC meeting.

7. REQUESTS TO BLESS SAME SEX RELATIONSHIPS (ASC Minute 02.50.03)

The General Secretary presented Document 8, consisting of a report on actions taken and matters that have arisen since the July ASC meeting. He also presented Document 8A, consisting of a paper entitled *Doctrine, Theology and Ethics, and the role of the Assembly* written by Chris Budden to resource the ASC's consideration of the issue at this meeting. Much discussion followed.

02.64 It was resolved to:

- 02.64.01 receive the report and the resource paper entitled *Doctrine, Theology and Ethics, and the role of the Assembly*;
- 02.64.02 determine that it does not think it is appropriate for the ASC to make determinations in relation to matters on sexuality that the 9th Assembly chose not to proceed upon;
- 02.64.03 appoint a working group to consider issues related to sexuality that arise from within the Church prior to the 10th Assembly, and how they may be most helpfully addressed at the 10th Assembly;
- 02.64.04 request the Assembly Officers to appoint the group to work with the General Secretary as an advisory group to the ASC on this subject.

8. VILIFICATION AND HARASSMENT (ASC Minute 02.52)

The General Secretary reported on behalf of the Synod Secretaries that the drafting of proposed Guidelines dealing with vilification and harassment in the church is a work in progress and a focused effort will be made to bring draft Guidelines to the March 2003 ASC meeting.

02.65 It was resolved to receive the report.

FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

1. TENTH ASSEMBLY DESIGN TEAM

Robert Johnson, convener of the Design Team, presented Document 11, consisting of a report on topics considered at two meetings held in Melbourne since the last ASC: the establishment of an Assembly 2003 web site, nominations for President-elect, planning for worship and Bible Study, special events as a way of reflecting on the theme eg an art exhibition and a photographic display, planning for the KUCA-A program, security around universities and facilities for disabled members, and the appointment of a Cato Visitor or the exploration of an alternate program. Phillip Creed has joined the team as convener of the Local Arrangements Committee.

02.66 It was resolved to receive the report.

2. REPORT RE “UNITING IN WORSHIP #2”

Paul Walton, convener of the Working Group on Worship, gave a progress report on the development of *UIW #2*, illustrating how it differed in format and features from *UIW #1*. The Services for the Lord's Day, Marriage and Baptism will be ready for adoption by the 10th Assembly and a comprehensive range of other pastoral services are also being written. *UIW #2* will be published as a loose leaf binder, with less frequently used worship resources available on

the web. A CD edition will also be available. Publication should be complete no later than the end of 2004.

02.67 **It was resolved** to receive the report.

3. REPORT OF MINISTRY OF DEACON REVIEW GROUP

Paul Walton, convenor of the review group, presented Document 5, consisting of a two part report – the first part being a short background paper on the process undertaken by the review group in preparing its report for the 10th Assembly, and the second part being the review group's draft report to the 10th Assembly entitled *Theology and Praxis of the Ministry of Deacon*, which was brought to the ASC for feedback. In light of discussion which took place in table groups and plenary session, amendments will be made to a section of the report prior to going to the 10th Assembly.

02.68 **It was resolved** to receive the report.

4. UNITY & INTERNATIONAL MISSION / UNITING CHURCH OVERSEAS AID

John Mavor, chair of UCOA's Program Committee, presented Document 7, consisting of a report on a proposed alteration to the structure of Unity and International Mission.

02.69 **It was resolved** to:

02.69.01 receive the report about the relationship between Christian Unity and UIM;

02.69.02 express support for the idea that the Christian Unity work relate directly to the General Secretary of the Assembly;

02.69.03 request the National Director of UIM to bring a later report on any consequential recommendations regarding mandates and names for the Agency's work;

02.69.04 note that when the change of responsibility is effected funds provided to UIM to cover the Christian Unity work will be reallocated to the budget of the Secretariat.

5. NATIONAL CO-OPERATION

The General Secretary presented Document 9, consisting of a report on the Consultation on National Co-operation held 31 October–1 November for representatives from Synods and the Assembly. The consultation sought to explore how to advance national co-operation in "ministry areas" and arose from discussions within the life of the ASC about core and lead functions in the Assembly's work. Since the discussion arose from a consideration of the Assembly budget processes the meeting also addressed matters related to the financial resourcing of the Assembly. Another meeting will take place regarding administrative and technical areas on 18 November.

02.70 **It was resolved** to:

02.70.01 receive the report;

02.70.02 thank the Synods for their participation in the significant consultation on national co-operation and Assembly funding;

02.70.03 agree to the establishment of an Assembly capital fund during 2003;

- 02.70.04 approve of the General Secretary negotiating with the Synods for Assembly funding to be based on a percentage of the relevant synod fund;
- 02.70.05 note the discussions taking place between the Northern Synod, the Synods of Western Australia and South Australia re what it means to be a synod in their particular situations.

6. GENERAL REPORT

The General Secretary presented Document 10. Among matters raised were:

- **Detention Centre Ministry**
- **Publications Action Committee**
- **Actions arising from decisions of the last ASC**
- **Review of the National Director of UIM** – due to Bill Fischer's illness there was a revision of the review process with a report to come to the March 2003 meeting of ASC.
- **World Methodist Conference** – the Executive of the WMC at its meeting in Oslo from September 16–23 took the decision to hold the 2006 Conference in Korea and the 2004 meeting of the Executive in Durban, South Africa. Discussion took place on the process used by the WMC in making its decisions and clarification of our protocols and processes in case Australia be considered in the future.
- **WMC Mission and Ministry Guidelines** – the President presented a set of Guidelines for the Mission and Ministry of Member Churches of the World Methodist Council which the WMC Executive approved and sent to member churches inviting each member church to adopt them and to work with other member churches in their region to develop their relationships and lines of communication.
- **Correspondence from the National Chairperson of the Evangelical Members within the Uniting Church (EMU)** – subsequent to ASC Minute 02.51.03 further correspondence had been received from the chairperson of EMU's National Council indicating EMU's ongoing concerns.
- **Interest in the UCA's consensus decision making process** – expressions of interest have come from the Reformed Church of America and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and it is likely there will be more requests in the future. The General Secretary will consult with the Assembly Officers to develop a broad response rather than respond case by case.

02.71 **It was resolved to:**

- 02.71.01 receive the general report;
- 02.71.02 request the Assembly Officers to communicate with the Christian Unity Working Group about the ways in which the CUWG and ASC can most effectively communicate about issues that require the involvement of both bodies;
- 02.71.03 endorse the Guidelines for the Mission and Ministry of Member Churches of the World Methodist Council, and inform the WMC;
- 02.71.04
- (a) express its concern that senior members of EMU are denigrating the processes and councils of the Church through the publication *Travelling EMU*;
 - (b) indicate that the continued naming of a particular person and placement is hurtful to the individual and not acceptable;

- (c) request the General Secretary to communicate the views of the ASC to the persons concerned.

7. REPORT ON THE NATIONAL COVENANTING SUMMIT

On behalf of Peter Lewis, National Director of Covenanting, the General Secretary presented Document 13, consisting of a report on the first National Covenanting Summit held between Congress and representatives of the Assembly and Synods in Geelong from 1-3 November. Sealin Garlett spoke positively of the Summit. Jane Aagaard spoke from her experience of working on Indigenous issues in the Northern Territory. Discussion followed.

- 02.72** **It was resolved to:**
- 02.72.01 receive the report;
- 02.72.02 note the suggestion arising from the National Covenanting Summit that opportunity be sought to celebrate or recommit to the Covenant at the 10th Assembly;
- 02.72.03 agree to set aside time during the 10th Assembly for such a ceremony;
- 02.72.04 request the National Executive of Congress to work with the Assembly General Secretary to identify the form and content of such a covenanting commitment or celebration after consultation with Synods.

8. THEOLOGY AND DISCIPLESHIP

Rob Bos presented Document 2, consisting of a report on three matters relating to the work of T&D, including the messages of visions and dreams for the Church from participants at the National Gospel & Gender Gathering, *Dancing Future Circles*.

- 02.73** **It was resolved to:**
- 02.73.01 receive the report;
- 02.73.02 note the action taken by Theology and Discipleship in consequence of ASC regarding Gospel and Gender;
- 02.73.03 note the visions and dreams offered to the Church by the *Dancing Future Circles* Gathering in July 2002 (**Attachment A**);
- 02.73.04 send sincere thanks to Dean Eland for his years of service on the Missiology Working Group and, in particular, his work as convenor, as well his skilled and untiring efforts in arranging the second National Theological Consultation in August 2002;
- 02.73.05 appoint Ms Tina Rendell and Rev John Rickard as co-convenors of the Missiology Working Group from 17 November 2002 to the 10th Assembly.

9. UAICC REBUILDING OF THE CHURCH AT MAPOON

Jim Mein presented Document 4 that indicated the need for significant support from the Synods if the proposed fundraising was to be successful, the need to accurately identify the true costs of a minimum viable project and the need for a history of the Church's involvement in the removal of people from Mapoon. Discussion followed.

- 02.74** **It was resolved to:**

- 02.74.01 receive the report;
- 02.74.02 encourage the Mapoon task group in its work as an expression of the whole Church's response to this national issue;
- 02.74.03 commend the project to the Synods.

10. LEGAL REFERENCE COMMITTEE

The General Secretary presented Document 16, consisting of a report on matters considered by the ALRC since the July ASC meeting.

02.75 It was resolved to:

- 02.75.01 receive the report;
- 02.75.02 submit the following amendment to the Regulations to the 10th Assembly for determination:
 - "2.13.10 (a) When a candidate has fulfilled all the requirements, including satisfactory completion of the course of studies and in the Synod body's opinion is ready to exercise the ministry of Lay Pastor, the Synod shall certify that the person is ready to exercise the ministry of Lay Pastor.
 - (b) The Synod shall recognize a person as a Lay Pastor when the person, who is so certified, commences an approved placement.

WITHDRAWAL OF RECOGNITION

2.13.11 The recognition of a Lay Pastor shall cease upon:

- (a) the acceptance by the Synod of a resignation from the ministry of Lay Pastor;
- (b) the termination of the placement of a Lay Pastor where the Lay Pastor does not immediately commence a new placement;
- (c) the determination of the Committee for Discipline pursuant to Regulation 7.8.16(f), subject to the Regulations relating to review and appeal."

11. NATIONAL FINANCE COMMITTEE AND 2003 BUDGET

Bruce Binnie, chairperson of the NFC, presented Document 17, consisting of a report on the Assembly Year 2003 budget and the membership of the NFC, highlighting four points and the synod budget allocations. He also presented Documents 17A, consisting of a report on the review of the NFC's mandate, and Document 17B, consisting of a report on the 2002/2003 budgets for Frontier Services and UnitingCare Australia.

02.76 It was resolved to:

- 02.76.01 receive the reports;
- 02.76.02 note with gratitude the contributions from Synods to Assembly budgets for 2003:

NSW	\$1,448,952
Northern	10,000
Qld	504,000
SA	374,000
Vic/Tas	1,568,650

WA

190,000

Total

\$ 4,095,602

- 02.76.03 approve the 2003 budgets as submitted for:
- Assembly Fund
 - Unity and International Mission
 - Uniting Church Overseas Aid
 - Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress
 - Uniting Education
 - Coolamon College;
- 02.76.04 note the resignations of Margaret Lightbody and Mary Henning as Assembly Elected members on the National Finance Committee;
- 02.76.05 request the Assembly Legal Reference Committee to propose amendments to Regulations 3.6.31 to 3.6.33 to provide for the establishment of an Assembly Audit and Financial Advisory Committee to serve the Assembly, Standing Committee and the General Secretary;
- 02.76.06 (a) acknowledge the need for an ongoing forum where representatives from Assembly, Synods and Agencies can explore and co-operate in matters of common concern in relation to finance, property, investment, insurance and information technology;
- (c) request the NFC to bring a further proposal to a future meeting of the ASC on how this forum may best be constituted in the light of ongoing discussions about national co-operation;
- 02.76.07 approve the Frontier Services 2002/2003 Budget;
- 02.76.08 approve the UnitingCare Australia 2002/2003 Budget.

12. MINISTERIAL EDUCATION COMMISSION

On behalf of the MEC Chairperson, Jenny Byrnes, the General Secretary presented Document 18, consisting of a report with a request from the MEC Supervision Implementation Task Group for two amendments to the Code of Ethics. He also presented Document 18A, consisting of correspondence from the Secretary of the MEC on several matters requiring decision by the ASC.

02.77 **It was resolved to:**

- 02.77.01 receive the reports;
- 02.77.02 request the General Secretary to pass on ASC's comments to the review group on the Code of Ethics indicating suggestions made in the discussion at the November ASC meeting:
- (a) section 3 relates to professional conduct and to change the words in 3.8 would confuse the overall section;
 - (b) the new words would lead to as much confusion as the present ones;
 - (c) however, there is a need to reconsider the term "professional conduct";
- 02.77.03 write to the MEC recognising that the Implementation Task Group has identified a real problem but that their solution is not considered adequate and to invite them to return to a later meeting with an alternative proposal;
- 02.77.04 adopt the revised Guidelines for Continuing Education for Uniting Church Ministers – *Seeking a Heart of Wisdom (Attachment B)*;
- 02.77.05 amend the Rules for the Course of Study for the Specified Ministry of Lay Pastor by the addition of the following words at the end of section 3, "Lay

Pastors normally undertake a Period of Discernment, but presbyteries and the Synod Lay Pastors committee or equivalent body may determine appropriate specific requirements on a case by case basis, maintaining flexibility to take account of the maturity, past experience in the church and theological training of each applicant.” (**Attachment C**);

- 02.77.06 appoint Rev Chris Udy as Chairperson of the MEC from 1 January 2003 until the 10th Assembly;
- 02.77.07 confirm the relocation of the MEC Executive from Victoria to New South Wales from 1 January 2003;
- 02.77.08 authorise the Assembly Officers to appoint the Secretary of the MEC from 1 January 2003 until the 10th Assembly on the recommendation of the current Executive;
- 02.77.09 co-opt Jenny Byrnes to the Executive for the period 1 January 2003 until the 10th Assembly.

13. SPECIFIED MINISTRIES

Rob Bos presented Document 19, consisting of a paper to resource a discussion at the ASC. The paper was written in response to a claim from the Ministerial Education Commission that there are a number of issues in regard to the six specified ministries of the Church that warrant discussion. Discussion followed in table groups and plenary session. Comments indicated that this is a significant matter in the life of the Church but no particular action was proposed.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. UNITED AND UNITING CHURCHES CONSULTATION

The General Secretary presented Document 14, consisting of a report on the 7th Consultation of United and Uniting Churches convened by the Faith and Order Committee of the World Council of Churches, which he had attended at Drieberg – Zest in The Netherlands from 9-16 September. The theme for the consultation was “Unity, Mission and Identity”.

- 02.78 **It was resolved** to receive the report.

2. CHANGE OF SYNOD BOUNDARIES

The General Secretary reported that he has received a request from the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania for the Assembly to alter the bounds of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania by transferring Apsley Congregation to the Synod of South Australia.

- 02.79 **It was resolved** to defer this matter to the March 2003 ASC meeting.

3. LOCATION OF THE CHURCH POLITY REFERENCE COMMITTEE

Rev John Mavor gave notice that at the March 2003 ASC meeting he intends to propose that the CPRC be relocated from Melbourne to Adelaide.

- 02.80 **It was resolved** to:

- 02.80.01 request John Mavor to bring a paper and proposals to the March 2003 ASC meeting;

02.80.02

request the General Secretary to initiate a discussion with the Church Polity Reference Committee to ascertain their views on this proposal.

4. STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING DATES FOR 2003

The dates of the 2003 ASC meetings are:

- 14 – 16 March
- 22 –24 August
- 14 – 16 November

CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm with prayer led by John Mavor.

CONFIRMED:
PRESIDENT

DATE:

**2003 ASC DATES:
14 – 16 March
22 –24 August
14 – 16 November**

*From the Dancing Future Circles gathering, July 2002 –
voices for the future:*

Visions and dreams for the Uniting Church in Australia

As part of a liturgy proclaiming a contemporary word for the Gathering, and calling all participants to realise that a vision exists for continuing the work of Gospel & Gender within the Uniting Church, participants were invited to write cards to the Assembly Standing Committee. In these cards, participants were asked to reflect on their visions and dreams for the church, now and in the future. For some, one card was not enough, for others a few words was all that was possible.

A few examples –

- A vision that our church is willing to go beyond structures and money to live out the Gospel in a way that threatens the powers and principalities.
- A church that will both *speak out* and *act* against injustice towards any group of people or any individual.
- I have a dream that the unique potential of the UCA as a truly national Australian church can be realised through the shared vision of women and men throughout parishes, presbyteries, synods and Assembly agencies – resourced with our re-energised people of faith and real financial commitment from all levels to the Assembly.
- I have a dream that the Uniting Church will sell all churches, manses, offices and property, and think again how to gather as faith communities and people of faith.
- My vision is that we will follow the call of God to be a church where all people are enhanced by being members of our communities not diminished or living without safety. This means that both women and men can give their gifts and they will be received with great dignity and respect, and so change the world. Taking up the challenge of the leadership to our world to enable that is part of the call and needs to be exercised with passion, strength, congruence and love.
- A vision of community which lives its values in concrete practical ways within the world. A community of diversity, tolerance, graciousness and generosity of spirit. A community which can laugh at itself and cry with the pain of others. A community of acceptance and love.

Specific to the continuing work of gender issues in the Uniting Church were:

- Please be aware of the continuing needs of women in the church – as an institution the UCA tends to want to return to rest at the status quo. Continuing vision and advocacy is essential for forward movement.
- I have a vision of a church which is the voice of prophecy in all matters of justice and equality. I have a vision of a church in which gender issues are integrated fully into every aspect, commission, committee, worship, liturgy etc and not on the periphery, dependent on being reminded: a right, not a privilege.
- I have a dream that UCA will be intentional to be inclusive – maintaining particular work in women's/gender issues, disability issues, christian employment considerations, racism.
- I dream that there will be real 'listening' and story telling and mutual support of each other. One of the great things that Gospel & Gender offered was a place to share stories and dreams, and a place to weep and laugh. Also a place to call the church to account, to offer a prophetic voice, a challenging voice. That can't afford to be lost. I dream that Assembly will take a moratorium on making more regulations and resolutions and instead take time to dream about the sort of church we should be and are called to be, and then try to see how this can truly be communicated and owned in the UCA.

- I have a dream that the Uniting Church will cherish its women and give them the space and safety to express their spirituality in ways of their choosing. That the assumed maleness of God can be questioned and discussed without threats or assumptions of heresy. If the Uniting Church is serious about these issues, it needs to foster women's expression of spirituality, not homogenize it. There can never be a "one spirituality fits all", when so much imagery is male and patriarchal. We need a working group in Theology & Discipleship which focuses on gender issues. It is still and always will be a "hot issue".
- Further I dream that the work of women and men/Gospel & Gender will be fully integrated in the ongoing work of various Assembly Agencies and that the gatherings focusing on women and men/feminist theology will continue.
- A vision that the work of Gospel & Gender becomes integrated into all our thinking and doing but until that time, a working group is appointed to ensure this integration becomes reality.
- The states and Assembly need to have a voice for gender issues – it needs to be a specific job description with its own identity. The local congregations need to be able to seek advice from someone. Good luck!
- An essential women's position that infiltrates all commissions and links women across the country.
- I have a dream that someone, named and advertised as such will be a designated person for gender issues in the Uniting Church.
- A task group on Theology & Discipleship that addresses, explores and informs the church of gender issues and bridges the application of this to church groups.

Seeking a Heart of Wisdom

(Psalm 90:12)

Guidelines for Continuing Education for Uniting Church Ministers

Background:

The Church is the community of God's people in the world, called to witness, in word and in action, to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit, the church recognizes particular people who have a calling to leadership for which they are ordained or commissioned. The types of ministries to which people are called vary, and are in response to the need for a renewed participation of all the people of God in the service of Christ. The nature of the particular calling may include the preaching of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments, the building up of the fellowship of the church and its commitment to the service of Christ in the world for which Christ died. These callings have at their heart leading God's people in witnessing through word and action, and relating the gospel to the needs of people in the 21st century.

The 1997 Report of the Task Group to Review Ministerial Education recognized that in order to respond to the urgent mission needs of the Australian community, "... the UCA needs faithful leaders who can enable the church to call people to faith in Jesus Christ, to witness to God's call for a just world, and to be a community which is a sign of God's promises for the world."

It established the goals of Ministerial Education as being to prepare Ministers with the following qualities and competencies:

- * A growing faith and spirituality that will sustain their lives in Ministry
- * A conscious and critical commitment to Ministry and mission
- * Knowledge and appreciation of the Tradition of the church
- * Skills appropriate for their particular Ministry
- * Critical imagination

In order to achieve these goals, the Uniting Church is committed to life-long continuing education for all members, and in particular for all those called into leadership ministries.

An Invitation to Lifelong Learning

At the 1997 Assembly, the Uniting Church affirmed the importance of continuing education, and asked of all its ministers that they enter into **continuing education learning agreements** to foster their faith and understanding.

Under duties of a minister in the regulations, 2.3.10 j lists "the **enhancement** of the Minister's own **gifts for the work of ministry**," of which continuing education plays a crucial part. In the Code of Ethics 3.4a, a minister's competence includes maintaining "high standards of knowledge and skills in all the areas of Ministry relevant to their settlement/appointment. This responsibility requires that the Minister undertakes continuing education appropriate to this ministry."

Normally, ministers would discuss their continuing education program as part of their ongoing conversation with their pastoral supervisor.¹

These guidelines are intended for **Ministers of the Word, Deacons, Youth Workers, Lay Pastors, Community Ministers, Congregations, Agencies, and ministry placements, Presbyteries and Synods**, to aid in finding their role in continuing education. They have been prepared with input from across the church, and are offered as a guide to continuing education. In these guidelines the word “minister” will be used to cover Deacons, Youth Workers, Ministers of the Word, Community Ministers, and Lay Pastors.)

To Be Nourished for the Journey

Areas of Study

In setting out suggested areas of study, **flexibility and variety** are critical, given the diverse kinds and settings of ministry. Nonetheless, certain **core areas of study** are foundational for most ministries. These include:

- **spiritual growth**
- **Biblical studies**
- understanding and appreciation of **theology** and **church history**
- skills for the **practice of ministry**
- reflecting on **society** and **culture**

Allocating Your Continuing Education Time

To balance a broad understanding with particular needs and interests, ministers are asked to:

- **devote at least half** of their continuing education time over the course of the five year learning agreement **across the spectrum of the core areas** of study.

For instance, over the five year period, a minister would seek to do at least one continuing education experience (a course, short course, workshop or other event) in the area of spiritual growth, one in some aspect of Biblical studies, one in theology or church history, one in the practice of ministry, and one reflecting on the larger society and culture.

- The **remaining half** of the minister’s continuing education time would then be **allocated as desired**, taking into account their specified ministry, the minister’s areas of interest and the needs of the present ministry setting. (See **sample Learning Agreement** at the end of these guidelines).

Planning for the year ahead will be able to be done in more depth and detail than planning for the later years of the learning agreement, however, broad outlines of areas of study can be sketched for the later years as part of a long-term learning plan.

Time Commitment:

Ministers are given **14 days** of continuing education leave per year. This time is meant to include preparation and contact learning time. This is a minimum amount, with ongoing planned reading programmes and other enrichment like spiritual disciplines being integrated into a minister’s regular duties. Those in part-time ministries would have their time for continuing education on a pro-rata basis.

Types of Courses

All areas of study may include self-directed reading courses.

Continuing education in the area of **Spiritual Growth** may be undertaken in a variety of ways:

¹ See “Pastoral Supervision: Introducing a Process of Reflection on Ministry Experience,”
Uniting Church MEC, September 2001.

- through training in spiritual direction (ministers may be recipients as well of spiritual direction)
- through course work in college or by distance education (in Australia or overseas programs)
- through attending spiritual retreats
- training in Aboriginal spirituality

Biblical, historical, and theological studies may be taken up in a number of ways:

- where accessible, attendance at Hall/College units,
- conferences offered centrally or regionally
- reading units offered via distance education
- independent reading, e.g., a commentary each year

Skills for the practice of ministry may be offered in:

- seminars on preaching, liturgy and worship
- specialised seminars on rural, urban, Aboriginal ministries and other culturally-specific ministries
- specialised seminars for Deacons and Youth Workers, including conferences offered outside the church which are germane to their work, e.g., community development, social analysis, drug- related issues
- leadership development events; facilitation skills seminars
- seminars on changing patterns of church and ministry
- computer skills related to ongoing ministry
- counselling skills

It should be noted that as part of their continuing education in the practice of ministry, ministers are required to seek training on the range of issues including professional conduct, ethics, prevention of sexual misconduct, and discipline/discipleship at least twice in the five-year learning agreement cycle.

In engagement with **issues of society and culture**, ministers are encouraged to consider such areas as:

- ministry and evangelism in a multicultural, post-modern, secular context
- Aboriginal and covenanting issues
- ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue
- issues in rural ministry

Issues of society and culture may be pursued through:

- courses offered by hall/college
- other course work or seminars in regional universities, TAFE,
- distance education courses, and other agencies such as CAE

Degree Studies: Where ministers opt to do a degree or diploma this would normally constitute their continuing education time for that period.

Resources for Continuing Education:

Nungalinga College: PO Box 40371
Casuarina NT 0810

Otira College: 73 Walpole Street, Kew Vic 3101
(03) 9853 2000
info@otira.vic.edu.au

NSW Centre for Ministry, School of Continuing Education:
16 Masons Drive, North Parramatta NSW 2151
(02) 9683 3655
sce@nsw.uca.org.au

Coolamon College: Uniting Church Centre
GPO Box 674
Brisbane Qld 4001
(07) 3377-9940 or free call 1 800 639 385
coolamon@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au

The theological hall or college in your Synod

NSW United Theological College
Centre for Ministry
16 Masons Drive, North Parramatta 2151
(02) 8838 8926
sarahm@nsw.uca.org.au

QLD Trinity Theological College
GPO Box 674
Brisbane 4001
(07) 3377 9950
suef@uccentre.ucaqld.com.au

SA Parkin-Wesley College
34 Lipsett Terrace
Brooklyn Park 5032
(08) 8416 8422
andrew.dutney@flinders.edu.au

VIC Theological Hall
Ormond College
Parkville 3052
(03) 9347 7199
pmatheson@vic.uca.org.au

WA Perth Theological Hall
PO Box 76
Bull Creek 6149
(08) 9360 2395
pthall@central.murdoch.edu.au

Minister's Responsibilities

- 1) In consultation with your Presbytery PRC and supervisor, **fill out a Learning Agreement** as a guide to your continuing education over the next 5 years. Be prepared to revise this plan in the light of changing opportunities and needs. (You will find a sample Learning Agreement form at the end of this document).

Plan to apportion 1/2 of the continuing education time across the range of core areas of study listed above, with the remaining 1/2 to be taken in areas of particular interest.

- 2) **Undertake the agreed course of study**, using your 14 days per year of study leave as a starting point.
- 3) **Yearly**, discuss with your church council or other committee of management your continuing education studies.
- 4) **After completing** the courses outlined, notify your Presbytery to obtain a certificate or written statement of recognition, which may then be filed with your profile when seeking a new call.

Congregation, Agency, or other Ministry Placement Responsibilities

- 1) **Discuss with the minister** and give input on what kinds of continuing education might be most helpful in their placement
- 2) **Yearly, be informed** of the minister's continuing education programme and learning outcomes for ongoing ministry.
- 3) Taking account of Synod stipend guidelines, **support** the minister's continuing education with appropriate funding.

Presbytery Responsibilities

(See booklet: "Fostering Continuing Education for Ministers in Your Presbytery" for ideas on implementation)

- (1) **Work with ministers on their Learning Agreements;** the PRC will normally ask the minister's supervisor or mentor to help advise in Continuing Education, planning study proposed for the present year and outlining general areas of study for the next 3-5 years . Alternately, the Pastoral Relations Committee may delegate this responsibility to an appropriate body. The minister and a representative from the Presbytery will sign the Learning Agreement.
 - Guidance on continuing education could be incorporated into a yearly retreat for ministers, paired with self-care and other reflection on ministry practice.
 - For those in Presbyteries that use accompanied self-appraisal, (as is the case in some South Australian Presbyteries), that process will inform their continuing education choices.
 - Encourage ministers to allocate their study leave across the five core areas of study (as listed in "Seeking a Heart of Wisdom") and to take into account their gifts and their placement's needs.
- 2) **Record Keeping:** The Pastoral Relations Committee (or other group to whom they delegate this responsibility) will keep a copy of the Learning Agreements for ministers on file. Yearly, they will encourage ministers to reflect on and update their learning agreement.

- 3) **Issue a Certificate or Statement of Recognition** when a minister has completed his/her learning agreement courses for the 3-5 year period. This may be presented at a Presbytery meeting, and prepared by the PRC, Min Ed Committee or other designated body. A sample certificate will be found on the last page of this document. To recognize the ongoing nature of continuing education, Presbyteries may want to issue a certificate for “10 Years of Continuing Education,” “15 Years,” etc.

Celebrate ministers’ continuing education and make space for ministers to share their “learnings” with the Presbytery through presentations or workshops. This can help to highlight the diverse and creative ways ministers can pursue their continuing education.

- 4) **Give support to all ministers working in settings** who may need advocacy to gain time and support to carry out their continuing education studies. (Deacons, Chaplains, Youth Workers, those in rural settings and others may need special advocacy to access their continuing education allocation.) Identify any placements that have difficulty implementing the guidelines in terms of time allotted, finance, and coverage during leave, and help to arrange the needed support where possible.
- 5) **Work with the Synod to include in the training of Supervisors or mentors** work on guiding ministers in their continuing education.
- 6) Work with the Minister’s Congregation, Agency, or other Ministry Placement to encourage them to:
 - **Reflect with the minister** on what kinds of continuing education might be most helpful in their placement given their mission & needs
 - **Make space for the minister to inform them on their** continuing education programme and learning outcomes for ongoing ministry
 - **Support** the minister’s continuing education with appropriate funding according to Synod guidelines

Synod Responsibilities

- 1) Through the MEB or other appropriate body, **give careful consideration to funding** for continuing education, either through annual allowances, grants, or loans. (E.g., the Synod of Victoria recently approved an allowance of \$1500 per year for each minister. This can be used for continuing education, books, computer, etc. The Synod of NSW provides grants for continuing education through a foundation within its Ministerial Education Board.)
- 2) Consider appointing a **Continuing Education Coordinator** (if one is not at present in place) who can liaise with the Theological Halls and Presbyteries, broadly encourage continuing education, and develop structures to put in place programs ministers will undertake.
- 3) **Training of Pastoral Supervisors** should include work on guiding ministers in their continuing education.
- 4) **The Synod Secretariat** will determine how often and in what form to offer seminars for ministers in the area of **professional conduct**, ethics, and the prevention of sexual misconduct. Likewise, training in multicultural awareness and Aboriginal spirituality could be coordinated at the Synod level.
- 5) Give special consideration for the needs of **newly ordained or commissioned ministers**. Studies have shown that a program of reflection on ministry issues and collegial support can help ministers in their initial transition to ministry, helping in retention and commitment. (In the Synod of Victoria, ministers in their first 3 years of settlement take part in a “Romp” program, Reflections on Ministry Program, that is in house for 2-3 days twice a year.)

Accreditation

1) Academic Study

Continuing education undertaken through tertiary studies will be accredited through normal awards, e.g., diplomas. Copies of these and transcripts are kept as part of a minister's continuing education file.

2) Other Study

Certificates or Written Statements of completion (if issued) are kept, together with a brief description of studies undertaken.

3) Portability and Continuity

Presbyteries will accept study satisfactorily completed in a minister's previous presbytery. Any study begun in one placement may be continued in any following placement, provided it remains appropriate continuing education for the minister in the new setting. This may be negotiated during conversations between ministers and their proposed placement.

Approved by Assembly Standing Committee – November 2002

Continuing Education Learning Agreement

between
Minister _____ **and the Presbytery of** _____

Areas of Study:*	Spiritual growth	Biblical studies	Theology & Church History	Skills for practical ministry	Society & Culture
Year:					
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

*Over the five years of the learning agreement, half of continuing education time is to be allocated across the spectrum of the core areas of study listed above, with the remaining continuing education time to be given to courses chosen at your discretion according to interest and appropriateness for your ministry setting. Plan in detail for the next 1-2 years; longer term, sketch areas to explore.

The Uniting Church in Australia

Awards this Certificate of Recognition
of Lifelong Learning

Continuing Education Learning Agreement

between Minister _____ and Presbytery

Date _____

Studies Completed:

signed for the Presbytery _____



Uniting Church in Australia

MINISTERIAL EDUCATION COMMISSION

RULES

Course of Study for the Specified Ministry of Lay Pastor

1. There shall be a Course of Study for the specified ministry of Lay Pastor available in each Synod to standards approved by the Ministerial Education Commission. This Course of Study comprises two parts: (a) an initial program and (b) an ongoing program of supervised study.
2. The Course shall comprise studies through an approved educational institute of the Uniting Church in Australia, i.e. a theological faculty or lay education centre. The Course should give opportunity for both academic study and practical experience.
3. The Course of Study shall
 - (i) reflect the commitment of the Uniting Church to work and witness within the fullness of the catholic faith and its evangelical expression in the reformed tradition of the Basis of Union;
 - (ii) be appropriate to the specified ministry of Lay Pastor and take account of the varying capacities and needs of candidates and lay pastors and the needs of the church;
 - (iii) focus on the specific nature and identity of the ministry of Lay Pastor and its relation to other ministries in the Uniting Church in Australia and on the development of skills for co-operative ministry with others.

Lay Pastors normally undertake a Period of Discernment, but Presbyteries and the Synod Lay Pastors committee or equivalent body, may determine appropriate specific requirements on a case by case basis, maintaining flexibility to take account of the maturity, past experience in the church and theological training of each applicant.

4. Admission to the Course shall normally be based on prior completion of the lay preachers' course or equivalent within the previous 15 years. Exemptions from this provision on the grounds of other studies or experience may be granted by the Ministerial Education Commission through its Working Group on the Specified Ministry of Lay Pastor.
5. The Course shall comprise units which may be studied in a variety of ways: full time, part-time, through intensives, distance theological education, or by individual mode.
6. The initial program, normally to be completed satisfactorily before taking up an appointment, shall be a minimum of 350 hours in duration (10 weeks full-time or equivalent). The ongoing program shall be not less than 200 hours per year. (*This of*

- course would cover annual CEM requirements*). This includes the Assembly requirements for Continuing Education.
7. The initial program shall include units in the following areas. It is not implied that each unit shall require the same number of hours.
 - (i) Biblical and Theological studies, including overview of themes, skills for in-depth study, Christian doctrine, theological reflection and studies of the Basis of Union;
 - (ii) Worship and Preaching, including preparation and planning, leading worship and resources for worship and preaching;
 - (iii) Ministry and Pastoral Care, including commencing a new ministry, visitation, grief and loss;
 - (iv) Mission and Education, including the focus and context of mission, education and nurture within the church, community and school;
 - (v) Sacraments, including practice and procedures, theology of baptism and Communion;
 - (vi) Marriage and Funerals, including legal procedures, resources and pastoral care;
 - (vii) Administration, including polity of Uniting Church, meeting procedures, Uniting Church in Australia Synod resources;
 - (viii) Spirituality and Formation, including practice of spiritual disciplines and development of personal resources.
 8. The ongoing program shall be designed to enhance the ministry of each lay pastor and both the nature of the studies and the manner in which they are pursued shall be determined following consultation with each lay pastor.
 9. Credit towards the initial program, apart from the requirements for admission (see 4 above), may be given for:
 - (i) previous studies completed through theological colleges or through lay education centres;
 - (ii) experience and personal competencies gained by mature age applicants as church members or within secular or other employment.
 10. On the recommendation of the Synod Lay Pastors Working Group, the Ministerial Education Commission may grant exemption from particular components of the initial program, provided that evidence is given that the applicant has adequate training and experience.

Approved by the Assembly Standing Committee – November 2002