

PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE AUGUST 2015

My time since the 14th Assembly has primarily been taken up with matters flowing from the meeting and preparations for this meeting.

A Time of Transition

It's been my concern that we have pastoral, responsible and transparent processes for the transition to a new General Secretary and for this reason we have a group which will oversee the transition processes for Terence Corkin and a second group which will oversee Colleen Geyer's transition into the role.

A Fresh Engagement

One of the conversations I was keen to see happen at the 14th Assembly was between our friends from Aotearoa NZ and UAICC. In Aotearoa they have an ecumenical Maori Council which meets regularly. We seek the opportunity for the two groups to grow in relationship, discuss common issues of contextual theology together with social and justice issues. The Rev James Bhagwan from Fiji joined this conversation and has since expressed the Methodist Church of Fiji's great desire to do likewise. It is my strong conviction that God is bringing about something significant between the people of Oceania and the First People of Australia.

The Uniting Church Speaks Up

There have been a number media statements which the Communication team have worked on: Uniting Against Racism, Prayers for peace and unity in Korea, Boat turn backs - ALP policy, WA Community Closures, Australia must aim higher on Emissions target, and prayers for a lasting peace in South Sudan. It was my delight to be in Sydney the same week as Margaret Reeson's book Live Peace about the work of Joy Balazo and the Young Ambassadors for Peace program was launched. Finally the General Secretary of the National Council of Churches asked for a few words to encourage Uniting Church folk to get involved in Christmas Bowl 2015.

Pastoral Concerns and Priorities

I wrote of behalf of the 14th Assembly to Justice McClellan to thank His Honour for addressing our meeting. The Chair of UAICC was pleased that the Royal Commission has an Indigenous Unit and Justice McClellan encouraged Dennis Corowa to make contact with the Unit. The 14th Assembly also asked me to write a pastoral letter to the church out of the Theology of Marriage and Same Gender Relationship discussions and resolutions. This has gone to all Synod's for distribution and been posted on web and social media pages.

In the first week of the month I attended the newly expanded Royal Commission National Task Group which now has full Synod representation. I have advised the Executive Officer of my intention to give a priority to attending these meetings if I am available. Our destiny together, First and Second people means I will give a priority to the covenant relationship with UAICC and the Multi-Cultural Ministry National Reference Committee together with the National Conferences. I will attend the South Sudanese National Conference in Brisbane in September and then MCM NRC meeting in Melbourne.

Our church experienced a new level of leadership and participation from the UAICC members and members from a variety of cultural backgrounds at the 14th Assembly. Clearly we have become a culturally and linguistically diverse church, thanks be to God. The Spirit I believe is now drawing us into a deeper, richer relationship, a truly intercultural community.

Stuart McMillan