

Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry

1. INTRODUCTION

The challenges and richness of being a multicultural church, living and witnessing cross-culturally in a multicultural and multi-faith Australia, continue to be at the centre of the work of this Agency. If the main focus of the previous three years was on enabling our church to be a reconciling community and a community of hospitality, in this triennium the focus has begun to shift towards identifying and naming maturing views of how we are already enriched by the diversity of biblical, theological and missional insights and the cultures that give rise to them. Gathered by Christ the host to a common table, how can we begin to identify and name images and metaphors, insights and language arising from our different cultural heritage but speaking to that which humanity shares in common as God's creatures made in the image and likeness of our Creator?

This sits alongside the ongoing focus areas of first and second generations; home church relationships; growing an educated ministry [specified and lay] that is enriched by and educated in and through our traditions, and the rich diversity of biblical, theological and missional insights and teaching methods that are also ours from outside Europe and even Christendom as it is experienced in the west; reviewing existing and developing new resources to equip and resource the whole church in crossing between and within cultures; entering into relationships with first peoples that open us to new ways of understanding place and belonging in this [still] strange and often threatening landscape.

Ongoing struggles to live together as God's people in different places across this land continue. As do tensions arising from moving quickly towards decisions and directions without the time-consuming but critical efforts to build relationships of trust and emerging understanding all continue apace. Alongside all of that are stories of remarkable trust, wonderfully grace-filled acts of welcome, sharing, and relinquishing of what have long been presumed to be 'right's' – property, resources, time and space. All of which help to reveal the profound correctness of the UCA declaration of 1985 that we are a multicultural church, and the 2006 affirmation that this church is one for all God's people.

Since the 11th Assembly the then National Director, Revd Helen Richmond concluded her ministry in December 2006 in order to complete her doctoral studies full-time. Helen provided 6 years of very significant service to the national church with her ministry and leadership reaching into every aspect of the UCA's life and witness as a multicultural church. Her considerable gifts built onto a substantial legacy of leadership, theology, teaching and progress. The ASC appointed the Revd Dr Tony Floyd to follow Helen in the position of National Director from March 1st, 2007.

During 2008 changes in responsibilities and the developing needs of the role meant that the position held by Ruth Crispin in our office was substantially upgraded. These changes meant that Ruth took a redundancy package in August 2008 after almost 10 years serving the UCA within the Assembly support team. A time of thanksgiving and acknowledgment in early August paid tribute to her service and substantial contribution to multicultural and cross-cultural ministry

Mrs Julie Redal was appointed to the new position of Executive Assistant to MCM [2 days per week] and Theology and Discipleship [3 days per week] and commenced in mid-August 2008. Julie adds another dimension to the Agency coming as she does from a Korean background and out of several years working in administration within the Sydney diocese of the Anglican Church.

1.1 Maintaining our identity – but working together in new ways

The 2005 ASC Review referred to in our report to the 11th Assembly reaffirmed the importance of having a national Agency that "... names the importance of being a cross-cultural community holds before the church the importance of this ministry as something core to who we are." (MCM Report Section 1.3)

However there have been ongoing conversations, deliberations, discussions, prayer and decisions that have led to the National Reference committee agreeing that for administrative purposes, MCM will enter fully into a team with other units with national responsibilities. This team, known as Uniting Faith and Discipleship, enables us to continue to be a lead body for the national church in multicultural and cross-cultural matters whereby all of our current Mandate and critical functions are taken up within a new set of Operational Guidelines under the mandate for Uniting Faith and Discipleship.

In all these conversations, the Reference Committee remained deeply conscious of the concerns raised at other times of Review, and strongly of the view that the identity of MCM should stand clearly

before the UCA without confusion or any diminishing of its role and purpose with national responsibilities and with a full-time National Director. At the national Reference Committee meeting in February 2009 the following was agreed to by consensus:

“Concerning the proposal for Administrative changes within the Assembly to establish a staff and agency team “Uniting Faith and discipleship”, IT WAS AGREED THAT:
If under recommendations approved by the Review Team and accepted by the Assembly Standing Committee in March, MCM:

- Remains as a distinct “brand” - Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry with its own National Director;
- Becomes part of an Administrative team - Uniting Faith and Discipleship
- Retains responsibility for the management of its budget through the National Director;
- Gains from having a more central and integrated place in the planning and carrying out of the ministries exercised by the other “brands” in Uniting Faith and Discipleship;
- Improves opportunities for ‘cultural’ input to and encouragement of programs and policies developed by the other parts of Uniting Faith and Discipleship;

Then the MCM-NRC supports the proposal going forward and approves the content of the Draft Operational Guidelines, recognising they may need to be edited into a more standard format.”

2. LOOKING BACK

2.1 Resolutions of the 11th Assembly

There were three resolutions adopted at the last Assembly

2.1.1 Renewing our Vision of being a Cross-cultural community

The 11th Assembly endorsed the Vision Statement “A Church for all God’s people” as a tool for urging the Church to renew its commitment by embracing a vision of being God’s diverse people, united in Christ, committed to being a cross-cultural community. The statement has been widely distributed across the church and is available on the MCM website. It is clear that such steps, while helpful, do not of themselves cause or even at times contribute to significant changes in attitudes or behaviours. On this and a range of matters [including property and the journey into the UCA for Ministers, Fellowship Groups and Faith Communities] we are currently working on the content, shape and availability of a ‘resource package’ that can be more readily available through presbyteries and in particular presbytery staff. It is intended

that this resource be available early in the 4th quarter of 2009.

2.1.2 National Conferences

The 11th Assembly recognised the significant role National Conferences have in the life of the Church, providing national networks for migrant communities. It went further and requested Councils of the Church, where possible, to work together with National Conferences in mutually supportive and collaborative ways; consulting with National Conferences as appropriate, working together when ministry consultations take place, finding ways to address issues of conflict and enhance the mission of migrant congregations. The variety of ways in which presbyteries go about their ministries, the different sizes, frequency of meetings, and familiarity with the UCA across out National Conferences and their leadership continues to make this a complex and difficult task. However opportunities to develop connections, to raise possibilities and to encourage such consultations are regularly taken up through the Uniting National Conferences working Group, through Synod and presbytery networks, by individual members of the Reference Committee and its Working Groups and by the National Director.

To further explore how the voice of migrant communities expressed through National Conferences might be strengthened in the life of the UCA a Task Group was established to have discussions with National Conferences and other bodies or Councils as appropriate to report, with proposals if appropriate, to the 12th Assembly. The National Director is a part of that Task Group as a consultant and they will be reporting separately to the 12th Assembly.

The Assembly Task group has met on a number of occasions, including a meeting convened by MCM of all Chairpersons plus one other from each of our National Conferences plus some additional leaders of groups who do not yet have a National Conference of their own. That meeting, the first of its kind, resulted in significant changes to the Guidelines for National Conferences [APPENDIX A], further clarification of roles and communication links, and a complete restructure of the Uniting National Conferences Working Group [APPENDIX B] so that it is now a forum for Chairpersons [or their nominee], one other from each national conference and others from emerging communities invited by the National Director and the Chair of the Reference Committee. The group will normally meet twice in the triennium

2.1.3 Property Sharing in Cross-cultural Settings

The 11th Assembly reaffirmed its understanding that all property belongs to God and we are called to be its stewards. It went on to encourage congregations that share property to undertake a 'Living together as God's people in this place' workshop and to explore ways in which their life together can reflect the love, justice and hospitality of God and ensure that the sharing of property promotes the ministry and mission of the people of God. This one day [or several evenings] workshop is available as a self-run program on the MCM website. Where it is used reports indicate a high level of usefulness and a significant impact in building understanding and providing a basis for ongoing conversation and genuine dialogue.

However it is still seen as optional and often only used when matters are already at crisis point. Implanting this workshop very early in the journey into the UCA and in an exploration of journeying together on one site or property is one of the key elements in the planning for the resource kit for presbyteries and congregations.

The ASC appointed a Property Sharing Task Group to explore and report, including bringing any proposals to the 12th Assembly on the state of property sharing in the UCA. MCM has participated in this Task Group through the inclusion of the National Director as a consultant to the process.

Arising from these and other discussions with the Board of Mission in the synod of NSW / ACT and another ASC Task Group working on Property regulation matters, the current "Property Policy for a Multicultural Church" has been reviewed and is being significantly rewritten.

2.1.4 Assembly Key Directions

Without developing specific strategies for each of the Assembly Key Directions, MCM continues to relate our various ministries to them. MCM continues to model 'theologically disciplined and collaborative ways of working' in the resources we prepare and the way we work with other Agencies, with synods, presbyteries, Theological colleges, and a range of groups across the life of the Church.

Living faithfully as a multicultural church and cross-cultural ministry itself both reflect 'new way[s] of being the national church' (i) as we discover, explore and implement worship, witness and service beyond familiar models towards embracing the challenges of living in multicultural and multifaith settings.

Working for (ii) 'justice, reconciliation, peace and relations with other faiths' continue to be intrinsic to a number of our activities: the cross-cultural workshops, One Great Sunday of Sharing materials, regular interactions and cooperation with the Assembly Working Group on Relations with Other Faiths, Uniting Justice, Christian Education, Youth and Young Adults.

Key Direction (iv) "Supporting and enabling the Church to live in unity with diversity" is reflected in our Operational Guidelines and is clearly stated in the new Mandate for Uniting Faith and Discipleship.

Migrant and multicultural congregations continue to develop contextually appropriate ministry models and strengthen the missional focus of the Uniting Church, reflecting the focus of key directions (v) and (vi), are reflected in the way.

'Forming disciples' and 'identifying new leaders' (vii) is a specific focus of our Second Generation Working Group and is taken up by National Conferences and the multicultural network generally, and forms part of the cooperation between MCM and Theology and Discipleship. In addition this was a specific focus of the 2009 National Gathering. Cultural diversity among our candidates for the specified ministries continues at a pace well ahead of the wider church's readiness to include such diversity.

Key Direction (viii) has been important for us particularly in our desire to learn from the spirituality of Indigenous people, a focus of the May 2006 National Consultation, and the subject of regular conversations between the leadership of the UAICC and MCM.

Relationships with 'home' churches overseas continue to be a set of relationships that are both nurturing and also a source of tensions and misunderstandings. Various communities regularly raise funds for specific needs or projects in their countries and churches of origin. As membership in communities in the UCA [and in Australia generally] increase in size the importance of clear relationships with the home churches and understanding of their priorities and processes continues to be a significant need and concern. These matters are a regular focus of conversations involving the General Secretary, Uniting World and MCM, along with key leaders from particular communities in the UCA [e.g. Chairs of National Conferences]. We continue to participate in ecumenical dialogue both within Australia and overseas with those involved in multicultural ministry, and to explore

mutual benefit built on personal relationships developed over time.

2.2 Policy development

A number of areas of work have already been noted in the report:

2.2.1 Property

As indicated above, work continues on the development of a national property policy that is both just and appropriate to our life together as a multicultural church and provides equitably for resources for the worship, witness and service in 21st century Australia.

2.2.2 Congregations in Association

A trend over recent years for 'home' churches to establish their own ethnic and denominational church structures in Australia continues. Conversations that began in the last triennium lapsed for a while with the leaving of the former National Director and other changes within the Assembly staff. Meetings reconvened by the General Secretary of the Assembly during 2008. Those involved include the General Secretary of the Assembly, the National Directors of MCM and Uniting World, a representative of the Korean Commission, several from various Pacific Islands and the Director of the Board of Mission of the Synod of NSW / ACT. The Rev Liva Tukutama [past chairperson of the MCM Reference Committee] and the current National Director are also members of this committee. While progress is being made the conversations are in their early stages of better understanding the mission plans and purposes of some 'home' churches - some of whom we have formal partnership arrangements with and others we do not.

It is already clear that all discussions require close consultation with UCA members and congregations from culturally diverse backgrounds – including, but not necessarily limited to National Conferences. The group reports to the ASC through the General Secretary.

2.2.3 Giving shape and intention to being a multicultural and multiracial church

As the UCA continues to live into its declaration of being a multicultural church questions continue to arise about how that bold affirmation 24 years ago is actually shaping every aspect of our communal life. It is clear that it does not! Across the country there are some who are raising questions about multicultural benchmarks – standards to be met and processes established by which all aspects of our life and our councils can be moved to more consistently and overtly reflect that essential characteristic. Others want to know when we will get serious about expecting some form of compliance about the many implications of being multicultural

and multi-racial – theological education and training, biblical insights and scholarship that arise in and through cultures that are neither western or Christendom.

We have noted that other churches overseas are also struggling with similar questions about authentic shapes and core values for such a church. To this end MCM is working on a statement that highlights the characteristics of a multicultural and multi-faith church. This written declaration of principles and objectives provides a series of benchmarks by which we can hold one another accountable across the whole church for the ways in which we live into [or not] our 1985 declaration and the 2006 reaffirmation that we are a multicultural church for all God's people. It is our strong conviction that such a document takes the UCA to a new level of commitment to and accountability for growing

What was not readily identifiable during the previous 23 years, and is now emerging as fundamental to the actual living out of that claim and promise is a framework that actually illustrates the shape and character of such a multicultural church, a church for all God's people. Something akin to the second statement from the Commission on Church Union: *The Church: its nature, function and order [1963]* in which an attempt was made to give shape to an emerging union of three churches that had agreed on certain fundamental beliefs.

This current document does not assume that status! However, it does intend to move the UCA more deliberately into accepting an intentional framework for our corporate life as a multicultural church. Under the guidance and grace of the Holy Spirit this framework requires greater accountability of all members and every part of our organisational structures in living out the declarations and affirmations of 1985 and 2006. In this way the whole UCA can continue to enter into all the richness and diversity, struggle and difficulty that are God's gifts to us through Christ in 21st century multicultural and multifaith Australia.

While not quite ready for a full discussion and determination by the Assembly the most recent Working document is available to any interested person or agency in the church for feedback to the National Director.

3. KEY AREAS OF WORK

3.1 Working Groups

For the first part of the triennium work continued through the 4 established Working Groups. At the beginning of this triennium the arrangement was:

- *Uniting National Conferences (UNC)* - Based in Melbourne
- *Intentional Multicultural Ministry (IMM)* - Based in Sydney
- *Cross-cultural Theology and Education (CCTE)* - Based in Sydney
- *Second Generation Youth and Young Adults* - Representatives from each Synod -but without a specific budget to make meeting face-to-face straightforward.

However over time it has become clearer that flexibility and change are an almost constant requirement. The workload on participants – particularly convenors – in their own placement or ministry context has increased significantly, sometimes to the point of needing to relinquish responsibilities. Considerable differences in approach and structures between Synods, particularly the larger ones of NSW / ACT and Vic / Tas also make locally based Working Groups with national responsibilities very difficult indeed. However time and budget mean that it is not possible to simply have all working groups on a national basis.

The current situation:

- *Uniting National Conferences (UNC)* – Is national – as per the new Mandate
- *Intentional Multicultural Ministry (IMM)* – is under review including the possibility of operating with several smaller groups in more than one synod
- *Cross-cultural Theology and Education (CCTE)* – is under review as to the most appropriate ways to build the necessary networks and inter-relationships for current and emerging circumstances
- *Second Generation Youth and Young Adults* - Representatives from each Synod –now has a small budget and is able to meet face-to-face annually for the immediate future. Reviewing other ways to maintain easy and effective contact, including video-conferencing, etc

Below is a brief outline of what each Working Group has achieved in the last three years:

3.2 Working Group: Uniting National Conferences

National Conferences continue their vital place in the life of the UCA, meeting in a variety of ways, scheduled at different times [annually, every 18 months, every 2 years, as required – self defined], involving different groups of people from everyone who can come, with certain designated people voting on decisions [e.g. Tongan], to smaller groups from each congregation with everyone voting [e.g. Chinese, Indonesian]. In 2009 there are 10 communities who have regular National Conferences: Tongan, Samoan, Fijian,

Indonesian, Tamil, Chinese, Filipino, Niuean, and Hindi speaking Fellowship [international group] and Korean [this has not met for a while and is being reviewed in light of experiences with the Korean Commission in the Synod of NSW / ACT]. The UCA Vietnamese ministers met in 2008 with assistance from MCM and the Cross-cultural ministry and mission team in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. We are currently exploring a gathering from within the Sudanese and Cook Islander communities.

When the Working Group “Uniting National Conferences” was established most of the National Conference Chairpersons were resident in Victoria. For this reason and for budget considerations [very limited and unlikely to grow] it made sense to base that working group in Victoria. Changes in the location of National Conference Chairpersons made that arrangement unworkable and concerns about lines of communication within the Agency, between National Conferences, and into the life of the UCA gave cause for a rethink.

In March 2008 the Convenor of the Uniting National Conferences Working Group, the Chair of the national Reference Committee and the National Director invited each national conference to send its chairperson and one other plus someone to interpret if that were a helpful way of inclusion and fuller participation, to a two-day gathering. Members of the Assembly Task Group established by the 11th Assembly and a few others from groups not represented by national conferences were also invited. This was the first time that such a face-to-face meeting had taken place.

That forum allowed for the sharing of hopes and joys, concerns and difficulties and the discovery of how many of those are shared in common. As a result of those conversations, and the ability to clarify matters directly with one another, the group reviewed, discussed, clarified and rewrote the Guidelines for National Conferences. These were subsequently approved by the Reference Committee at its meeting in March 2008 and distributed to the executive and leadership of all national conferences.

Further, at the recommendation of the gathering, the Reference Committee agreed to a new mandate for the Uniting National Conferences Working Group based on the way in which this gathering was constituted that will normally meet twice in the triennium between meetings of the national Assembly.

MCM and Uniting World continue to explore more effective ways of including National Conferences in the establishment or review of partnership agreements

between the UCA and 'home' churches. MCM continues to seek ways by which presbyteries and synods can also take account of the voices of National Conferences. It is important however for the UCA to understand that while very important in the life of the UCA, National Conferences do not always speak with one voice and do not always represent strongly held divergent views within cultural groups and communities. Finding ways in which that diversity can also be valued and represented within the various councils of the UCA remains an ongoing matter of concern and significance.

3.3 **Working Group: Cross-cultural theology and Education**

This working group is based in NSW / ACT and includes many who are also involved in this area of ministry within that Synod – both as staff in the theological college, lay training / education and similar areas. As such it is most difficult to distinguish between work undertaken regionally and that which has national significance and import. A result is that cross-cultural theology and education continues to progress in that synod and to contribute to the broad undertaking in these areas while there is somewhat slower overall progress nationally.

The Revd Drs Myong Duk Yang and Clive Pearson have both had extraordinary workloads associated in particular with the changes to arrangements between UTC and Charles Sturt University and the development of additional programs in cross-cultural education. This also affected the ability of this working group to function effectively during 2007 and 2008.

Conversations are currently underway between the National Director and Clive Pearson with a view to exploring alternative models of relating that will more effectively allow this important work to assume national place. In addition, there are increasing numbers of conversations taking place between theological colleges on matters central to the content, intent and manner of equipping for various ministries across the UCA.

Within the synods of NSW / ACT and Queensland for example education programs are taking place for specified ministries in a variety of languages and with a range of teaching and assessment styles. Connecting these excellent steps in progress into a national movement across the UCA remains a challenge at the forefront on our work into the early part of the next triennium.

3.4 **Working Group: 2nd Generation Youth and Young Adults**

This MCM Working Group began with membership from 5 of the 6 synods. Mata

Havea has been the convener of this energetic and visionary team. Identifying key issues, strengths and directions and working towards developing resources for second-generation young people living on the hyphen between two cultures remains central to this working group. Work continues towards building stronger 2ndGen networks and support persons in each of the Synods, and the success of this depends once more on widely varying workloads and other priorities and demands on limited numbers of people and other resources.

Queensland, NSW / ACT and Vic / Tas are developing regular 2ndGen 'events' – some locally and others regionally based. With the establishment of a web-site that is both more user-friendly and more readily changed and updated a new section is being worked on that will focus on specifically 2ndGen matters.

It is becoming increasingly clear that while there are significant matters that are unique to 2ndGen, our own designations may need to be further expanded in order to be more inclusive while at the same time not diminishing this vital ministry area. For example – 1.5 [young people born overseas but growing up and receiving all their education in Australia]; older 2ndGen adults; other youth and young adults – some of who are first generation. This working group was the main organising team for the 2009 National Gathering whose focus was on emerging and next generation leaders – especially those who are working on issues related to 2nd generation needs and hopes. Arising out of this gathering is a commitment by the Reference Committee to support 2ndGenerations in planning and leading a dedicated national 2ndGen Gathering in 2010 [between and not in competition with NCYC's].

This Working Group is also undertaking responsibility for the resources for the 2009 One Great Sunday of Sharing.

3.5 **Working Group: Intentional Multicultural Ministry**

This working group with the Revd Woonggul [Hugh] Park as convener met regularly for the first half of the triennium. Then changes in placement requirements, changes of placements, health and other issues meant a very significant reduction in both the timing of meetings and general availability. As pressure increased so the additional effort of focussing on matters of national rather than regional importance and usefulness also became more difficult. One of the key responsibilities carried through by this working group was the provision of resources for the 2008 One Great Sunday of Sharing.

The first gathering for 2009 will examine other possible ways of furthering this work focus – possibly with two or more sub-groups in different synods, something that is now easier with the National Director having regular time in both Sydney and Melbourne.

4. OTHER ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS OF THE AGENCY

4.1 One Great Sunday of Sharing

Continues to be a useful focus for congregations to use in highlighting and sharing stories and experiences of cross-cultural ministry across the UCA. The pattern of resources established over a number of years continues: stories for sharing and stimulating other local story telling, resources for use in worship, suggestions and ideas for cross-cultural gatherings and relationship building, notes for use by preachers, and music / song suggestions. In 2008 we moved away from the lectionary readings set for the particular Sunday in July as a way to encourage flexibility in the use of the day and its intention. While most of those congregations using the resource do so on the third Sunday in July, an increasing number are choosing times and occasions that fit in with their regular schedules.

The Working Group 2nd Generation Youth and Young Adults are arranging the resources for 2009 and the theme will follow on from the National Gathering in February 2009 – “New Wave” – around the ways in which God works newness among us, leading us in new ways, raising up new leadership and gifts for ministry, granting new insights ways of understanding and speaking.

4.2 Election Resources

For the Federal Election in 2008 MCM worked with all other Assembly Agencies in the production of resources to guide people of faith in making choices for their voting and also to guide them in assessing the values and priorities of various candidates. MCM contributed a “Hot Topics” leaflet and reviewed the major document in the resource booklet on multiculturalism

4.3 Mission Prayer Handbook

The 2009 version of this useful and imaginative resource is currently available and MCM was pleased to have contributed 8 stories, reflections and prayers to the whole. The stories reflect a mix of personal and communal, of insights [living water] and struggle [thirsty land] around the Assembly theme for this triennium: Living Water, Thirsty Land.

4.4 National Consultation on Cross-cultural Ministry 2009

February 10th to 12th 2009 saw the most recent National Gathering. Following the 2006 event the national Reference Committee determined that future occasions would be called Gatherings and not Consultations. The focus, intention and style of meeting of a Gathering is focussed more closely on relationships and building networks, exploring matters in common and ways of supporting, encouraging and developing ministries. Consultations were seen to be more input focussed, with particular kinds of expectations and outcomes sought.

For 2009 the intention was to focus on 2nd Generation issues and interests, and to meet in Queensland. The 2ndGen Working Group provided the main planning for the event. As the planning process took place there was a gradual shift from a specific focus on 2ndGen to a step away from that towards emerging leaders in the UCA and the kinds of issues and questions they are addressing as “hyphen Australians”. There was an expectation that this would provide encouragement to 2ndGen youth and young adults as they were exposed to leadership that is different from the kind of 1stGen leadership they most often experience. Model other ways of seeing and being church and leaders in the UCA.

The meeting was at the Alex Park Conference Centre on the Sunshine Coast and 85 people gathered from 4 of our 6 synods ranging in age from mid 70 to 17 years old. Over 50% of those who gathered were at such an event for the first time. Many of those are new to the UCA and greatly valued opportunities to simply share with others, to swap stories and experiences, to discover much in common and some things that are different about their journey's into and within the UCA.

The National Gathering 2009 heard the voices of a group of 2ndGen young people and young adults and requested the national Reference Committee to support a 2ndGen specific national gathering in 2010. The NRC agreed to this and small teams of 2ndGeners will be set up during April and May 2009 to plan and run that gathering.

Central to the conversations, input and discussions was the opening session led by the chairperson of the national Reference Committee the Revd Dr Apwee Ting who provided some strong, simple and very useful images for our various ways of being multicultural, cross-cultural, inter-cultural church within a multicultural and multifaith Australia, and of understanding the context within which the whole church and population live out or daily lives. More detailed reports, images, stories and reflections are on our web-site.

4.5

Citizenship Test

Uniting Justice Australia's National Director, Rev Elenie Poulos, and the National Director MCM met with the Federal Minister for immigration and citizenship to discuss the review of the Citizenship test, and to put UCA views concerning its inequities and the inappropriateness of the processes and many of the questions within it. While we received a good hearing the Minister made it clear that the test would remain and that the review was about the manner in which it would be 'taught' and conducted. In later correspondence the UCA was thanked for its concern and advised of some changes to the manner in which the test and its questions would be shaped and applied. Because some proficiency in English remains a requirement for citizenship the Minister advised that there would be no change to the education processes for the test being in English only. We had argued for education programs to be available in languages other than English in order to make better understanding of the details more likely.

4.6

International multicultural networks

INFORM, is an international multicultural network, established in Sydney in 1999 at the initiative of then National Director Seongja Yoo. We have continued our connection with the INFORM through the Rev Don Ikitaelagi, Director of Cross-cultural Ministry and Mission in the Synod of Vic / Tas who is the regional convenor of INFORM network. The WCC financial support for this Forum has been substantially reduced in the past couple of years, so it has not been possible for the regional network to meet. Attempts are being made to meet again during 2010 and MCM remains committed to supporting and participating in this important regional forum in whatever ways we can.

4.7

Sexuality and leadership – moving on in grace

This remains a difficult issue for many in our migrant and multicultural communities right across the UCA. Problems of translation and discussion of taboo subjects complicate this almost universally. However we continue to accept opportunities that are offered to work with communities in enabling them to hear the diversity of voices within the Uniting Church and to enable their voice to be heard.

While some confusion and puzzlement remain, there is a strong sense of appreciation that the UCA does listen and is listening to different voices, concerns and hurts. That choice about placements and leadership remains with congregations and faith communities is a vital part of this whole process and experience of diversity. In the last three

years the majority of 3 Indonesian congregations in Sydney left the UCA with their pastor citing Resolution 84 as one of the factors influencing their decision. Strong support for those who remained by the Indonesian National Conference and careful pastoral care and encouragement by the presbyteries involved has seen those remnants growing into strong communities committed to participation in, and contributing to, the ongoing life and witness of the UCA.

It should also be said that many congregations continue to express their willingness to support the polity of the Uniting Church whereby the Presbytery is responsible for testing a persons' call to ministry on a case by case basis. They understand that, as a church, we hold some views in tension. They feel that as long as their view is respected they can live in a church in which a diversity of views can flourish, and indeed they value belonging to such a church. We are moving into a time when the UCA can refocus its life, energy and ministries in more positive ways and on issues relating to cross-cultural mission and ministry.

5. THE NEXT TRIENNIUM

5.1

Make-up of the Assembly Reference Committee for Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry

The Chairperson of the Reference Committee is elected by the 12th Assembly and normally serves for a three year term to enable people from different communities to offer leadership. We wish to recognize and express our deep appreciation of the significant leadership and scholarly insights that Rev Dr Apwee Ting has offered during the last three years to both the national Reference Committee and to other areas of work of the Assembly.

Rev Eseta Meneilly has been nominated to be Chairperson for the period 2009-2012. An indigenous Fijian, trained and ordained in the Synod of Vic / Tas, Eseta brings strong gifts for leadership, wide experience of multicultural and cross-cultural life in the UCA, deep sensitivity to and understanding of the complexities of leadership for a Pacific Island woman among some of our cultural groups.

Following the 12th Assembly the ASC will appoint a new Assembly Reference Committee from a list of nominations of people from Synods, National Conferences and co-opted members, one from UAICC, and the immediate past-Chairperson.

Our thanks also go to members of the Reference Committee and its Working Groups who serve this UCA with vision

and commitment and are passionate about building the Uniting Church in Australia as a faithful community of hospitality and justice in Christ.

The Reference Committee for the next triennium will continue to build on what we have been developing: networks both national and regional, continuing collaboration and cooperation with Assembly and Synod staff, with National Conferences, with UAICC, and Working Groups. Broadening and further developing intentional multicultural and cross-cultural ministry, supporting existing and new migrant communities, providing, reviewing and developing new cross-cultural resources and supporting second generation youth and young adults remain our major priorities. We envisage Working Groups continuing to develop important initiatives alongside the National Director.

We place on record in this Assembly the thanks of the Agency, National Director, the Reference Committee and its Working Groups to Ruth Crispin who worked long and hard to assist the National Director, the Reference Committee and the MCM Agency. Also to Julie Redal who has embarked with energy and enthusiasm on that long and mysterious journey of discovering the what, how and why of this UCA and its multicultural and cross-cultural life.

5.2 Developing new initiatives

The Agency is both challenge to, and resource for, the whole church: enabling congregations to grasp the challenge of mission and ministry in contemporary multicultural and multi-faith Australia. Across Australia increasing numbers of congregations are developing creative ways to engage in multi and cross-cultural ministry. We are committed to supporting them and to encouraging other congregations to share their stories, to follow their example.

The vision of transformed relationships in Christ that is a multicultural and cross-cultural church continues to inspire us and to undergird all of our work. During the next triennium the Agency is committed to take forward our central responsibilities under our Operational Guidelines, to build relationships between indigenous and migrant communities, to call the UCA to more clearly and deliberately live into its calling to be a faithful and just multicultural Church, to develop policies and guidelines, resources and educative tools that will support new and emerging communities and work in the four key areas that have been identified.

In addition, we are convinced that 'place' – Australia, and 'Spirit' – the gift and presence of God here and active through Creation and throughout all time and

history may well be relatively unexplored gifts to help us all understand better the rich depths of our own various cultures and spiritual insights from those cultures. Further, that these gifts from indigenous peoples of insight and naming of the presence of God and Spirit in this land may well provide ways forward that will be effective tools for understanding one another and at the same time connect that which is disproportionately European and Western with other ways of knowing, understanding and speaking about God, life in Christ, and journeying in the presence of the Holy Spirit. We will continue to look for ways to explore this through emerging biblical and theological scholars, teachers and leaders from cultural, language and world-views that are neither European, western, or Christendom based.

5.3 Looking to the Future – A Church for all God's People

It is a great blessing and joy to serve as National Director in this Agency. I thank God for this gift with all its rich experiences, and the trusting, gracious, patient and welcoming individuals and communities.

This church and country receives a remarkable gift in the rich diversity of cultures, races and languages we have in Australia and within the UCA in its life as the one body of Christ. Yet the journey we are on to build relationships of understanding, to discover ways in which we can celebrate our differences and receive each other as equals in the Spirit is often painful as well as joy-filled. This journey is into unknown territory involving as it does the courage to share resources that are God's gift and not our possession, stepping out from the shelter and safety of our own community, culture and ways of being, to sing the Lord's song in a new land in new and unexpected ways, and to be a Church for all God's people, a Church of diverse people in a rapidly changing 21st century Australia and world.

That this journey has an end that is within the promises of a faithful God remains a promise and journey to be trusted. May God continue to inspire and guide us all on that way to be a Church of and for all God's people!

Rev Dr Apwee Ting
Chairperson: Reference Committee

Rev Dr Antony [Tony] Floyd
National Director

MULTICULTURAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY GUIDELINES FOR NATIONAL CONFERENCES

[Revised and Approved April 2008]

1. Introduction

The Uniting Church in Australia is an ethnically diverse and multicultural community and recognises the need for culturally and linguistically diverse communities that are part of its life to have opportunities to meet together for sharing, reflection and discussion in their first language.

Since the first National Conference was held in 1987 [Tongan], other communities have formed National Conferences. By 2008 National Conferences have been held by the *Chinese, Fijian, Filipino, Indonesian, Korean, Niuean, Samoan, Tamil, Tongan, and Vietnamese* communities within the UCA.

Some communities are quite small [1-2 congregations, faith communities and fellowship groups]. Others are very large (20+ congregations, faith communities or fellowship groups totalling 2,000+ women and men, youth and children). The National Reference Committee and the National Director continue to explore the possibility of developing national conferences for smaller and emerging communities within the UCA *where that is an appropriate strategy*.

2. Definition of 'National Conferences'

2.1 National Conferences have a significant role and place in the life of the Uniting Church in Australia. This is illustrated in the "Structures and Relationships" chart shown at number 11 in these Guidelines.

2.2 National Conferences bring together people from congregations, faith communities and fellowships of the same culture within the Uniting Church in Australia (and sometimes reaching beyond the Uniting Church) for consultation and sharing.

2.3 National Conferences are able to represent a significant voice for each community.

2.4 National Conferences can act as a consultative body in the UCA.

3. Aims

3.1 To establish a national network of solidarity, support and fellowship between congregations, faith communities, fellowship groups and members of the Uniting Church from the same culture and speaking the same language.

3.2 To share common problems, joys and concerns and offer mutual co-operation in solving difficult issues arising in the life of their congregations, fellowship groups, faith communities and members.

3.3 To increase a sense of belonging to and understanding about the multicultural Uniting Church.

3.4 To review ministry and mission needs of their community and communicate concerns or issues to the appropriate councils and agencies of the Uniting Church.

3.5 To enable the voice[s] of particular language specific communities to be heard and to help the community make a distinctive contribution to the life of the Uniting Church.

3.6 To assist other councils of the church in matters relating to congregations, faith communities, fellowship groups and members from their community.

3.7 To give attention to the needs of the first and second generations. [Note: Some National Conferences organize parallel youth programs].

3.8 To forward recommendations to the Assembly Standing Committee and other councils of the UCA as appropriate in consultation with the Assembly Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry National Director and Chairperson of the National Reference Committee.

3.9 To participate in the *Working Group: Uniting National Conferences*, to assist in the development of Uniting Church processes, policy and polity that are responsive to the needs of our communities.

4. Frequency of Meetings of the National Conference

Each community/National Conference decides the frequency for their meeting. For example, it may be once a year, every second or third year or 'as required'.

5. Funding of Meetings of National Conferences

5.1 Each congregation, faith community or fellowship group is encouraged to contribute towards the costs of sending its participants to meetings of the Conference.

5.2 Each Conference can apply through the National Director to receive some financial contribution towards the meetings of the Conference.

NOTE: For the period 2008-2010 the National Reference Committee has determined that an amount of up to \$2,000 is available to a particular National Conference for the whole period. So, whether a National Conference meets once [1] or three times [3] in that period, the maximum available is a total of \$2,000. Conferences that meet more than once in the 2008-2010 period can request how they receive up to that amount. For example: 2 Conferences \$1,000 each or \$1,200 and \$800 and so on.

6. Formation of a Working Committee or Executive

6.1 It is recommended that the National Conference of each community elect a Chairperson, one or two Secretaries (Minutes to be provided in language and in English), treasurer and other office bearers as required to organise the meetings of the Conference in consultation with the National Director and follow up issues between meetings of the Conference.

6.2 In electing office bearers and in the formal operation of their meetings, National Conferences are encouraged to make use of Uniting Church procedures and the *Manual for Meetings*. These can assist in meeting 'Aim 3.3' above to – *increase a sense of belonging to and understanding about the multicultural Uniting Church.*

7. Accountability

7.1 National Conferences were initiated through the Assembly Agency – Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry and each Conference is accountable to the Assembly Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry National Reference Committee (MCM-NRC) through the National Director, Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry. The Minutes of each National Conference [in language and in English] comes to the National Director and a report is provided to the MCM-NRC.

7.2 The Working Group 'Uniting National Conferences' provides a forum for the Chairpersons of National Conferences [or their nominee] and leaders from within other culture and language communities in the Uniting Church in Australia to meet together to share matters of common concern, develop common vision and highlight common issues of national importance to the multicultural and cross-cultural life of the Uniting Church in Australia. This annual meeting will include access to the national Agencies of the UCA and report [with the other Working Groups: 2Gen/nXtgen; Intentional Cross-cultural Ministry and Cross-cultural Theology and Education] directly to the National Reference Committee.

8. Membership of the Meetings of each National Conference

National Conferences bring together representatives of congregations, faith communities and fellowship groups of the same culture within the Uniting Church in Australia (and sometimes reaching beyond the Uniting Church) for consultation and sharing. Within that gathering there will be times when the Conference wants or needs to make decisions on particular matters.

8.1 As a decision-making body the National Conference will have voting members from each Uniting Church congregation, faith community and fellowship group.

8.2 As voting members of National Conferences, congregations, fellowship groups and faith communities are encouraged to include women and men and younger generation members as well.

8.3 The size of each National Conference may vary depending on the overall size of a particular community and its needs.

For example:

There may be a National Conference that has the ministers/leaders and two [or more] people nominated from each congregation, faith community or fellowship group.

Other conferences may choose to have a larger number of voting members. In such cases it is suggested that there be:

Six for the first 50 confirmed members: Two for every 50 confirmed members or part thereof after the first 50 confirmed members up to 500 confirmed members: One extra representative for every 50 confirmed members if membership is over 500. (e.g. A congregation of 170 confirmed members would send 12 representatives: first 50 = 6, second 50 = 2, third 50 = 2, final 20 [part of 50] = 2, total = 12). At least one third of the congregation's voting representatives should be women.

8.4 Ministers/leaders serving language and culture specific congregations, faith communities and fellowship groups are members of the Conference. Other ministers/leaders who would normally be invited include:

- o English speaking ministers who have a leadership and pastoral oversight role within the

particular community

- o Retired ministers/leaders
- o Ministers of the particular language/cultural background who are serving in English speaking or other placements

8.5 The National Director for Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry is a member of each Conference and may attend Working Committee/executive meetings of the Conference.

9. Guests and Observers at meetings of the National Conference

9.1 When sending out invitation to a National Conference it is normal to include:

- o the President of the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia,
- o the Chairperson and members of the National Reference Committee for Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry,
- o the Associate General Secretary of the Assembly of the UCA,
- o the General Secretary, staff member(s) of Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry of the Synods and Presbyteries in which the National Conference is meeting,
- o staff members of the Uniting International Mission, and
- o other appropriate Uniting Church leaders are invited for particular sessions. For example the chairpersons [or their nominee] from other National Conferences, representatives of the National Reference Committee Working Group 2Gen/nXtgen.

9.2 If a National Conference or its Executive decides to invite the President or Office bearers of 'Home churches', then the President of the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia will send an invitation letter on behalf of the National Conference as one 'head of church' to another. A letter or email should be sent to the President of the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia requesting that he/she do this.

9.3 Each National Conference is responsible to decide whether to invite participants of the same cultural background who are not members of the Uniting Church in Australia. (Such participants shall normally have the right to speak when invited to do so by the Chairperson, but not to vote except as determined by the Conference.)

10. Recommendations from each National Conference

10.1 In consultation with the Chairperson of the Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry National Reference Committee and the National Director, recommendations from a National Conference may be sent to the Assembly Standing Committee or to the Assembly.

10.2 Any decisions or recommendations of a National Conference sent to councils or agencies of the church are to be copied to the National Director Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry.

10.3 Recommendations and key decisions are reported to the Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry Reference Committee, the Working Group: Uniting National Conferences and the National Director.

10.4 Once in each three years, each National Conference is invited to provide two nominations [male and female] to the Working Group, Uniting National Conferences through the National Director: Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry. These nominations will be included in the list of persons from which nominations will be made for membership at the following meeting of the National Assembly **and** persons nominated for appointment to the National Reference Committee for the 3 years until the next meeting of the National Assembly. A list is required in order that the requirements and expectations of the National Assembly are met when the appointments are made:

- o The diversity of the UCA is represented – so people from other communities of non-English speaking backgrounds who do not have a National Conference are also included on the list, and
- o There is a balance in the overall membership between genders [women and men], youth and age, ordained and lay persons and cultural diversity.

MULTICULTURAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL MINISTRY MANDATE FOR THE WORKING GROUP: UNITING NATIONAL CONFERENCES

The Working Group “*Uniting National Conferences*” is a recognised Working Group of National Reference Committee of the National Assembly Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry. It will normally meet *at least twice between meetings of the national Assembly*.

The Working Group is responsible to the Assembly Multicultural Ministry Reference Committee through the National Director [MCM].

The Assembly Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry National Reference Committee [MCM-NRC] will appoint a Convenor of the Working Group from among the membership of the NRC.

Membership includes:

- The chairpersons of each National Conference [or their nominee]
- Representatives of other language specific communities in the UCA who do not yet have a National Conference – invited by the National Director and Chairperson of the MCM-NRC.
- A convenor appointed by the National Reference Committee
- The Chairperson of the National Reference Committee [ex-officio]
- The National Director – MCM [ex-officio]
- The Associate General Secretary of the National Assembly [ex-officio]
- The National Directors of Assembly Agencies [or their equivalent] are invited for specific sessions in order to build relationships, to continue to develop UCA understanding of living cross-culturally in a multicultural church and to gain insights into how the various agencies can better understand and respond to matters raised in the areas of the life of the UCA for which they have *national* responsibility.

Role of the Working Group

The role of the Working Group is to:

1. *Provide a forum for people representing the different National Conferences and other language specific communities in the life of the Uniting Church in Australia, to share matters of common and special concern.*
2. *Enhance, promote, articulate and encourage the ministry of our different communities in the life of the Uniting Church in Australia.*
3. *Develop relationships between the different National Conferences and other communities for the purpose of information sharing and support and promote ways for members from different traditions and cultures to share with and to learn from each other.*
4. *Reflect on the implications of the multicultural and multi-ethnic nature of the Uniting Church in Australia for the ordering of the Church's life and enable the full participation of all members in the life of the Uniting Church.*
5. *Hear the issues that arise from National Conferences and within other community groups and reflect on how these matters impact on the policies and practices of the Uniting Church.*
6. *Address issues of concern that might arise in our different communities and facilitate the representation of these concerns to the appropriate Councils of the Church.*
7. *Provide a forum within which the leadership of Assembly Agencies and Working Groups can hear at first-hand the voices of the various language specific communities within the UCA as a resource in developing policies appropriate to being a multicultural church in a multicultural and multi-faith Australia.*
8. *Arrange for the translation and interpretation of official documents, liturgies, music and other relevant material as required.*
9. *Monitor matters relating to resources and property as they affect the ministry of migrant-ethnic churches and multicultural ministries, and refer to the appropriate Councils of the Church as required.*

Revd Eseta Meneilly
Convenor 2007 – 2009