
General Council

Moderator	Rev Steve Francis
Ex-Moderator	vacant
General Secretary	Rev David de Kock (from March 2016)
Acting General Secretary	Rosemary Hudson Miller (until December 2016)
	Rev John Dunn (January – February 2016)
Synod Board Chairpersons	Rev John Dunn
	Dr Elaine Ledgerwood
	Margaret Martin
Presbytery Commission Chairpersons	Rev Bev Fabb (until July 2016)
	Rev Craig Collas
	Rev Ivan Clark
	Rev David de Kock (until February 2016)
	Rev Izak Cronje (from August 2016)
Members elected by Synod/Presbytery	Rev Dr Ian Tozer (until July 2016)
	Rev Stephen Larkin
	Travis Windsor
In attendance (when required)	Robert Watson
	Robert Locke (General Manager Resources)
Minutes Secretary	Maree Kemp

I. MEMBERSHIP OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

I.1 Membership

New members on General Council were nominated in September 2015 at the Annual Presbytery/Synod Meeting: Dr Elaine Ledgerwood (UnitingWorld WA Committee), Rev Bev Fabb Commission for Education for Discipleship & Leadership (CEDAL), Rev Ivan Clarke (Strategy & Mission Planning Commission), Rev David de Kock (Pastoral Relations & Placements Commission), Rev Dr Ian Tozer and Travis Windsor.

Rev David de Kock was elected as General Secretary in February 2016 and his position on General Council became vacant.

Rev Zac Cronje (Pastoral Relations & Placements Commission) was appointed in August 2016.

Rev Dr Ian Tozer resigned from General Council in July, having been appointed as Deputy General Secretary but stays on in an ex officio capacity.

Rev Bev Fabb resigned in July having vacated the position as Chairperson of CEDAL to take on the role of Interim Director of Education and Formation.

Rev Lesley de Grussa was appointed as Interim Chairperson of CEDAL.

We thank those whose term of office has ended Rosemary Hudson Miller (Acting General Secretary), Geoff Ebell, Thomas Stokes, Rev Cathie Lambert and Rev Isobelle Shortreed. Also Rev John Dunn, Rev Dr Ian Tozer and Rev Rick Morell who served for times as Acting General Secretary.

I.2 Meetings

General Council met on 12 October 2015, 8-9 November 2015 (Retreat), 14 December 2015, 8 February 2016, 26 February 2015 (Special Meeting), 11 April 2016, 30 May 2016 (Special Meeting), 13 June 2016 and 8 August 2016.

2. MATTERS ADDRESSED

2.1 Theological Education in WA

This took a significant part of General Council's attention following the resignation of Rev Dr Alex Jensen to take up a position at Cambridge University, the retirement of Rev Dr Geoff Lilburne, the planned appointment of a Director

of Education and Formation who would also take up the role of Principal of Theological Hall, and the formal staff reviews for academic staff. These factors contributed to an ongoing strategic review of theological education in WA.



Director of Education and Formation

In October 2015 it was resolved to appoint a Director of Education and Formation who would also take up the role of Principal of Perth Theological Hall, presently filled on a temporary basis by Rev Prof Bill Loader.

The role was to include responsibility for training in Phase 2, Phase 3 and Phase 4, as well as enhancing and co-ordinating our lay education programs. A preferred applicant was identified, but unfortunately withdrew and no appointment was made. The General Secretary was requested to follow-up with the candidate and following successful negotiations, Rev Dr John Squires agreed to take-up the appointment commencing 1 February 2017.

Lecturer in Systematic Theology

General Council received the resignation of Rev Dr Alex Jensen as Lecturer in Systematic Theology in December 2015. It was decided to defer an appointment until we had greater clarity with regard to the future of theological education in WA.

Dealing with theological education

Added to these staffing issues, General Council had become increasingly concerned about the merit of current theological education for both candidates and lay people. Murdoch University had dropped the Bachelor of Theology degree in favour of an Master of Divinity which offers much higher levels than were believed necessary. In the post-Christendom era we are confronted with new ways of doing church which focuses a much greater responsibility on lay leadership and lay training. Current, lay ministry training is already being upscaled by CEDAL, but is still needing attention.

In the circumstances, General Council requested the Moderator to seek a conversation with the Anglican Archbishop regarding his view of theological training at Murdoch University. Additionally, the new General Secretary was requested to form a Task Group to provide the Uniting Church with an agreed set of outcomes for its continuing engagement with the Perth College of Divinity. The members of the Task Group are the General Secretary, Principal of the Perth Theological Hall, Chair of CEDAL and Dr Elaine Ledgerwood.

This has led to a series of conversations within the Task Group, as well as with CEDAL, Perth Theological Hall staff, Perth College of Divinity

and Murdoch University. Presbytery was given opportunity to add to the conversation in May 2016.

On 30 May 2016, it was agreed to proceed with the appointment of a Systematic Theology lecturer and work commenced on the documentation required by the University. On 21 July 2016, the General Secretary was informed that Murdoch University had frozen all new appointments with effect from 1 July 2016. We were later given to understand that a case could be put to waive the freeze on this appointment.

However, given the appointment of Rev Dr John Squires, General Council decided not to proceed so that the new Director of Education and Formation could be involved in the process.

2.2 Review of First Third Ministry

In October 2015, General Council initiated a process to begin a strategic review of First Third Ministry. A Task Group was established to determine the Terms of Reference. These were submitted to General Council in December and the Acting General Secretary was instructed to form a Task Group to conduct the review and to report to General Council at the February meeting. Unfortunately, with changes in the position of Acting General Secretary, at the time followed by the appointment of the new General Secretary meant that the process stalled. The momentum has now been re-established and the Task Group is proceeding with its work and intends to report to the Presbytery in November. Members are encouraged to complete the survey which can be found on the website.

<https://revivemagazine.org.au/2016/08/10/first-third-survey/>

2.3 Sale of St Andrews

In October 2015, Robert Locke reported that a longstanding option to purchase the property at St Andrews had been exercised by GP Hotels Perth WA Pty Ltd and the cash settlement would take place on 30 October. A meeting with the congregation had taken place on 4 October which the Moderator had chaired in a graceful and professional manner despite hostility from some of those present. The angst of the congregation was to be expected and General Council respected the loss and grief they had suffered and offered prayers. A concluding service in a much gentler atmosphere was held on 25 October.



All the furniture, organ and other valuable items have been carefully dismantled and moved into safe storage. Several Uniting Church Australia congregations had offered hospitality to St Andrew's congregation, but they have accepted the kind offer from Anglican Archbishop Roger Herft to use the facilities at St Bartholomew's in East Perth.

2.4 Congress Presbytery

Synod agreed to the establishment of a Congress Presbytery at the meeting in September 2015. General Council has been progressing the steps for this to come to fruition, including extensive discussion at the General Council/Standing Committee Retreat held in November 2015 (more detail below).

In January, a review by a team from the National Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress was undertaken. The full report has not yet been received, but General Council was advised by Interim National Co-ordinator, Rev Dr Chris Budden that the National Congress were recommending that the establishment of a Congress Presbytery be postponed. Rev Dr Budden and National UAICC chairperson, Rev Dennis Corowa addressed the Presbytery on the matter in May 2016. The decision to postpone the establishment of the Congress Presbytery was taken by Standing Committee and will be noted by Synod at this meeting. Further progress in meeting the requirements set by National Congress have been referred to the Covenanting Commission.

Rev Dennis Corowa and Elder, Vince Ross from the National Congress were appointed to the Board of Beanang Kwuurt Institute (BKI) and under the guidance of National Congress a review of BKI was undertaken. Since then the General Secretary has worked closely with National Congress and the BKI Board to develop a viable future. Some difficult decisions were taken and BKI now continues to deliver the same services to the Aboriginal community in a much more streamlined form. Future assistance is also being negotiated with UnitingCare West and Good Samaritan Industries.

2.5 General Council/Standing Committee Retreat

General Council and Standing Committee held a combined retreat on 8-9 November 2015. The focus was on matters of mutual importance which required more extensive discussion than could take place in a normal meeting. The two

main topics were the implementation of the four Strategic Directions and the restructuring that would be required to accommodate a second Presbytery.

Strategic Directions

After extensive discussion, the following steps were agreed:

1. To conduct a survey of all congregations, this will include the demographics, ministry and missional activities and projects, and three years of financial statements.
2. Based on the results of the survey to identify structures, resources and strategies to meet congregations' missional goals.
3. To identify and implement strategies in regard to resources, compliances and public presence.
4. To encourage all councils, commissions, committees, boards and working groups to prayerfully discuss and develop specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely strategies by which these strategic directions can be enacted within each area of the Presbytery.

In reviewing these at the April 2016 meeting, General Council resolved to prayerfully consider a Vision Statement which aligned with the four Strategic Directions:

- (i) developing a culture of open communication;
- (ii) increasing the church's capacity for community engagement;
- (iii) developing and/or promoting relevant education, training, and leadership development resources, programs, and projects; and
- (iv) promoting a culture of faith formation and faith sharing.

Restructuring Synod and Presbytery

Given that a second Presbytery has been approved, it was important to review how the two Presbyteries and their Commissions would work in the context of the current situation in the Western Australian Synod.

It was agreed that the process would require the disbanding of General Council in favour of a Synod Standing Committee and a Standing Committee for each Presbytery, as per the Uniting Church in Australia Regulations. Unbundling the various commissions which had been combined when the single Presbytery structure was instituted is complex. The separation of Placements



Commission and Pastoral Relations Commission is one such instance, but the unbundling from Pastoral Relations & Placements Commission (PR&PC) is expected to have significant and healthy benefits. A Task Group under the leadership of the General Secretary was established to examine processes and adjustments to By-Laws. A report and series of proposals will be presented to Synod to enable the process to begin. Enactment will only take place after the November Presbytery meeting. In the meantime, we will ask Synod to extend the terms of office of the Presbytery entities.

2.6 Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse

This is more fully addressed in the WA Synod Task Group report, but it is worth noting the ongoing work regarding redress. The Uniting Church takes seriously our responsibility towards those who have or are suffering as a consequence of sexual abuse. General Council received the National Framework for Redress in prepared by the National Assembly 2015 December 2015 and approved its adoption in June 2016. A disclaimer approved by the Assembly Standing Committee in July was accepted by General Council in August. Discussions with our schools and agencies regarding the application of the National Framework is continuing.

General Council also adopted a Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders and circulated the document to congregations.

2.7 Financial Matters

In June 2016, General Council agreed that the proceeds of Westminster House (the former Uniting Church Centre) be transferred to the Westminster Trust Fund and be used to purchase the current Uniting Church Centre at 85-89 Edward St, Perth from the Uniting Church Investment Fund.

In August, General Council received and noted the 2017 budget and sent it forward for approval at this meeting of Synod.

2.8 Staff Changes

In October 2015, Rev Ruth Vertigan was appointed as Rural Ministry Co-ordinator for a period of 12 months, to fill the vacancy left by the call of Rev Lorraine Stokes to Willetton congregation. Paul Montague was also appointed as Interim First Third Co-ordinator for 12 months, to fill the vacancy left by the call of Rev Rick Morrell to New South Wales.

Paul resigned with effect from 30 June 2016 to devote his attention to his studies for the ministry. Rev Mark Illingworth, had his contract as Pastoral Care Worker extended to 31 December 2016 on a full time basis. Rev Neville Campbell retired as General Manager of BKI from 30 June 2016.

Rosemary Hudson Miller concluded her placement as Associate General Secretary on 31 July 2016.

In December, it was agreed to extend the appointment of Rev Prof Bill Loader as Principal of Perth Theological Hall until the Director of Education and Formation was appointed. Rev Dr Anne Wright, Dr Bill Leadbetter, Rev Dr Geof Lilburne, Rev Dr Rick Barret-Lennard and Rev Dr Gregory Seach were appointed as Sessional staff at Perth Theological Hall, and General Council received the resignation of Rev Dr Alex Jensen.

At a Special Meeting of Synod held on 6 February 2016, Rev David de Kock was elected as General Secretary to commence on 1 March 2016. The induction took place on 8 April at Applecross St Stephens Uniting Church.

In April, General Council approved the Position Description and Position Requirements for the Deputy General Secretary. This role is responsible for the Worship, Witness and Service of the Uniting Church Western Australia, and together with the General Manager Resources and General Secretary forms the Leadership Team in the Uniting Church Centre. After an extensive search and selection process, Rev Dr Ian Tozer was appointed as Deputy General Secretary from 1 July 2016.

Rev Izak Cronje was appointed as Chair of PR&PC to replace Rev David de Kock who had accepted the call to the role of General Secretary role. Rev John Barendrecht's term as Pastoral and Placements Unit Manager was extended to 31 July 2017, and the title of Assistant General Secretary (Resources) was changed to General Manager Resources.

2.9 Ministers' Stipends

The review of Minister's Stipends took place as usual in December and it was agreed to increase stipends and other benefits by 2.3%. This was advised to Church Councils, Congregation Treasurers and Ministers.



2.10 Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee reports changes to boards, committees, commissions and working groups at each General Council Meeting. These are all reflected in the Nomination Committee Report in these papers and are regularly updated on the website. Sometimes commissions “co-opt” members outside of the given parameters, or, more likely, appoint members without following the proper processes. The Nominating Committee and General Secretary are streamlining the process to ensure that proper procedures are followed.

2.11 Moderatorial Nominating Committee

This year, we once again come to one of the significant and exciting parts of the church’s life – the election of a new Moderator. The Moderatorial Nominating Committee has been carefully and prayerfully selected by General Council and consists of:

Rev Ken Williams (Chair)
Steve Higgins
Fiona Bentley
Jan Alvin Gunawan
Rev Lorraine Stokes
Margaret Martin
Rev Ken Devereux.

General Council at its meeting in February and April prepared a note for the Moderatorial Nominating Committee on the needs and issues for the Church during the 2017 – 2020 Triennium. These are attached to this report. Please pray for guidance as we seek to discern God’s will for a new Moderator.

Rev David de Kock
General Secretary
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General Council Advice to the Moderatorial Nominating Committee Needs and Issues for the Church during the 2017 – 2020 Triennium

At its meetings on 8 February and 11 April 2016 the General Council discussed the forward vision for the Uniting Church in Western Australia and requested the General Secretary to prepare this advice for review by the General Council and to pass it on to the Moderatorial Nominating Committee in accordance with By-Law and Rule 6.5.4(b). In addition to needs and issues of the Church during the next triennium, the General Council also made some more general observations about the role of Moderator and these have been included in this advice. The advice should be read and considered in the context of the relevant Regulations, By-Laws and Rules.

Needs and Issues of the Synod for the Next Triennium:

- **Broad Needs and Issues of the Church**
 - The Moderator gives spiritual leadership to the Church and is expected to take a lead role in encouraging her ongoing expression of her faith in Christ throughout her daily living
 - We are in a ‘new world’ in which people do not relate to the church in the way to which we have been accustomed.
 - As part of this, the demographic of the Uniting Church has changing, with implications for the age profile, the number of congregations, the size of congregations and the ‘traditional’ form of congregational life.
 - So the Moderator will need to be able to think with imagination about missional leadership that will help the Church “to confess the Lord in fresh words and deeds” (Basis of Union, Paragraph 11). He or she needs to have a Fresh Expressions mindset.
 - Another way of putting this is that the Church needs someone who is passionate about the future, able to think into the future, engender hope, encourage innovation and, especially, engage with young people and with those in our migrant ethnic communities and multi-cultural congregations.
 - There is a strong challenge to step up in the areas of worship, witness and service – to find new life.
- **Particular Circumstances and Events**
 - The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse will have completed its work and the outcome proposals will have been released. The President and the Moderators of the various synods are the key spokespersons for the Church and the Moderator will need to be comfortable with this role.
 - A new structural framework for both governance and management designed to address the Four Strategic Directions (Open Communication, Community Engagement, Education and Training, and Faith Formation) and the prospect of a new Congress Presbytery will be in place. In particular, the design of the structure is specifically geared to resource and enhance the mission of the Church (Worship, Witness and Service) through excellent management of resources.
 - There is a conscious shift to engage congregations in the life and future of the Church. The Synod Office will become less of a “Head Office” and engage more in resourcing and encouraging congregations to take ownership of the worship, witness and service of the Church in their sphere of influence with the backup of the Councils of the Church.

More General Observations about the Role of Moderator:

- **The Particularity of the Uniting Church in Western Australia**
 - Broadly, the Moderator needs to understand the complexities of leading the Uniting Church in Western Australia in a changing context.
 - As part of the governance restructure, the Moderator will cease to be the Chairperson of Presbytery, and a second Congress Presbytery may be formed. The Moderator needs to be well aware of the implications of working with the Chairperson(s) of Presbytery. This involves being

well oriented to the distinctive responsibilities of each role and how to manage the boundaries between them. In particular the Moderator will need to recognise the unique and special relationship which exists between the UCA and the UAICC in the establishment of a Congress Presbytery.

- This requires flexibility, wisdom and an ability to grasp the complex issues with which the Church has to deal, including complex legal, ethical, business and accountability issues.
- The work of our schools and agencies, and their relationship with the wider Church is of crucial significance. The Moderator has a role as Visitor to these instrumentalities and is expected to be the primary figure in building the strength of a relationship with them and ensuring an ongoing bond.

- **The Boundaries of the Role**

- The Moderator needs to be able to engage in a collaborative manner at the top level, able to engage in conversation and then having the ability to separate himself or herself from the conversation, knowing whether or not to make a decision and how to judge the timing of crucial decisions.

- **A Team Player**

- It is important that the Moderator be a 'team player' - one who can generate within others a commitment to being team players, within the ethos of the Uniting Church.
- In particular, the Moderator must be able to work well with the General Secretary who, under the By-Laws and Rules of the Church in Western Australia, is the chief executive officer of the Synod and Presbytery and the head of the Church Office. So it is important that the Moderator understands the executive role of the General Secretary and the boundaries between that role and the role of Moderator.
- There are other important team relationships as well, with persons or bodies whose roles are important in the life of the Uniting Church and who represent valuable sources of wisdom and support for the Moderator. These include:
 - The Standing Committee of Synod;
 - The Synod Boards;
 - The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress,
 - Chairpersons of Schools and Agencies;
 - The President of the National Assembly; and
 - The Ex-Moderators and past Moderators.

- **Public Role and Relationships**

- The Moderator is a significant public figure and leader within the community of Western Australia and it is important to both the life of the community and the work of the Church that this role be embraced and the many opportunities taken to develop good relationships. These relationships include those with Her Excellency the Governor, the Premier and members of Cabinet, members of State and Federal Parliaments, civic leaders, consular staff and visiting dignitaries, and the media.
- Multicultural and cross cultural understandings and relationships need to grow and the Moderator needs to make connections and lead the Church in its appreciation of this.
- In addition to the well-understood importance of ecumenism, which for the Moderator includes developing strong relationships with the Western Australian Heads of Churches and their Association, the Moderator must also understand the contemporary importance of developing relationships with leaders of other faiths and of working in an interfaith context.

- **Long Term Leadership**

- And finally, it is important that nominees for election as Moderator understand the long term leadership responsibilities that are involved with being elected Moderator. For a start, there is a

formal seven-year commitment as Moderator elect, Moderator and then Ex-Moderator, before becoming one of the Church's past Moderators. In an important sense, having once become a Moderator, one never ceases to be a Moderator.