



Assembly of
Confessing Congregations
of the Uniting Church in Australia

Cross Cultural Commission Statement

Since its first meeting in June 2007, the members of the Cross Cultural Commission (CCC) have had opportunities to reflect on the key role of the CCC, that is, *to develop and maintain an environment where Indigenous and migrant ethnic congregations can confidently participate in the life of the ACC within the UCA in Australia.*

We see the Assembly of Confessing Congregations (ACC) as giving our people some hope to remain within the Uniting Church, declaring our commitment to the Scriptures but opposing the direction that the UCA leaders have been taking us.

The decisions at the last two National Assemblies of the UCA on Sexuality and Leadership (R84 in 2003 and R108 in 2006) showed that the voice of Indigenous and migrant ethnic people has been ignored. The circumstances surrounding the acceptance by the General Assembly of the R84 and R108 resolutions clearly indicate that the UCA had sought to canvass the views of its Indigenous and migrant ethnic people as a matter of courtesy and PR window-dressing without any bona fide intention to listen to, accept and act on their concerns.

- Attempting wherever possible to exercise Christian loving pastoral care to all people including homosexuals, upholding their dignity and standing alongside them against any forms of violence and unfair stereotyping directed towards them.
- Confessing, with the whole church, our sins and failure to live as Christ's faithful disciples.
- Seeking to unify and build up our church.
- Relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in seeking God's holiness and seeking to live our lives in conformity with Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.
- Adhering to the faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church as witnessed to in the UCA's Basis of Union.

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We are therefore saddened by the UCA's rejection of the voice of the Gospel through its Indigenous and migrant ethnic people as well as through the wider church as a whole, in favour of a politically convenient view that is clearly a departure from its historic, biblical and theological position.

Further, we are also deeply saddened by the UCA's attempt to control the voice of migrant ethnic people by labelling opponents of R84 and R108 as disloyal and trouble-makers within the church. This is not only divisive amongst our members but also displays a lack of pastoral sensitivity in this already difficult time for ethnic Congregations.

The Cross Cultural Commission would like to point out the major flaws in the arguments perpetuated by the supporters of the Assembly decisions on R84 and R108:

- The promotion of 'diversity' as the new spiritual yardstick based upon which any action, conduct and behaviour (sexual or otherwise), with the exception of those that are deemed illegal/criminal behaviours in our society, can be justified and tolerated in the name of God's love and new cultural trends. This we believe is against the Gospel of Christ who calls us to be one as he is one with the Father.
- The argument that 'unity' is more important than biblical truth. We believe that 'unity' is a wonderful Christian virtue but unity for unity's sake is contrary to Christian truth. We believe that the purpose for which we are united is more important than unity in itself. Christian unity must be based on Christ and the truth as revealed in the Scriptures. Our unity is based solely on our union with Christ who calls us to be members of his body.

- The idea of 'grace without corresponding repentance' on our part is biblically baseless and theologically unsound (cheap grace). We reject the UCA's attempt to affirm homosexual practices in our church in the name of Christian love and justice. We are constantly challenged by God's grace to aspire to 'holiness', (particularly as expounded by John Wesley, whose sermons are commended to us by the Basis of Union).
- The recognition of committed homosexual relationships as being of equal status with that of 'chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage' by the UCA is a departure from the UCA historic position and that of its ecumenical partners.

The deliberate underestimation and underplaying by some UCA leaders of the significant decline in church membership since 2003 as shown by different surveys and in the last census (2006) is lamentable. Some who left the UCA were very dedicated and spiritually gifted members, including migrant ethnic members.

The Cross Cultural Commission wishes to affirm the faith of Jesus Christ by:

- Urging its members to promote and preach the gospel with love and truth following the teaching of Jesus Christ.
- Challenging its members to honour and adhere to the reformed, evangelical and orthodox understanding of Scriptures. We see R84 and R108 as the first steps taken by UCA on a new and dangerous teaching of the Scriptures.
- Encouraging its members to uphold the historical stance on 'chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage' as the right relationship for Christians according to the teaching of the Scriptures, and to reject the attempt to remove homosexual practices from the category of sin.