

# Reforming

## Broad Sympathy for the Reforming Alliance

### The Resolutions

The resolutions of the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Melbourne in July 2003 regarding Ministry and Membership (P84) have evoked much discussion and a wide range of response in and beyond the UCA. For many members of the UCA, the implications of these resolutions represented a contradiction of core beliefs and values. Beyond sexual ethics, they raised many questions about the interpretation of scripture, the faith of the Church and the processes of the Church.

### The Birth

The Reforming Alliance was born out of a gathering of concern individuals from across the nation who met in Sydney (Sept 2003). It was with concern for the crisis in the Uniting Church's life and faith that a national summit of evangelical/orthodox leaders and theologians of the UCA was called.

Those gathered were 73 people in total:  
34 were EMU members and 39 were not  
38 were minister or lay pastors  
2 were students at UCA theological colleges  
18 were Anglo lay persons  
1 represented the UAICC  
14 were from migrant ethnic congregations.

At the prayerful Summit, three different approaches emerged which we believed to be mutually enhancing. This brought to mind Ecclesiastes 4:12, "A three stranded cord is not easily broken." As we wrestled in prayer and discussion, we became aware that all three approaches could, and should, function under the umbrella of a new group, "The Reforming Alliance within the Uniting Church".

### The Three Strands

Strand 1) For those who feel they must stay and work wholeheartedly for change within the current structures.

Strand 2) For those who feel they must stay but move to parallel structures to bring about change.

Strand 3) For those who feel they have to leave and come out from the current structures of the UCA but will remain members of the Alliance in a mutually beneficial relationship.

### The Future

These groups within the Reforming Alliance are flexible and will function simultaneously.

Let us move forward together into God's future for us.

## Special points of interest:

- > Broad Sympathy
- > Three Strand Cord Not Easily Broken
- > Strand 1
- > Strand 2
- > Strand 3
- > Yes, I Want To Be Involved

## Reforming Alliance: Strand 1

For those who are committed to living and working within existing UCA structures to bring reform. Director: Rev Dr Ian Breward.

### The Strand 1 Forward Plan

- 1) To advise congregations on ways of effectively responding to the ASC in the Assembly process from February to April 2004.
- 2) Supply information assisting congregations to carry out this process effectively, working together with church councils to produce valuable comments on P84 and resolutions for the future direction of the Church.
- 3) Assist congregations to set up a task force to ensure that the Scriptures and best thinking on issues of sexuality are heard.
- 4) Provide information sessions in every Presbytery.
- 5) Advise Presbytery members on formulating resolutions to ASC which focus on the fundamental issues in the roadmap.
- 6) Encourage congregations to join the Reforming Alliance

7) Encourage congregations to send your story of the impact of resolution 84 on your congregation for inclusion on our website.

8) Seek ASC support for circulation of our materials with theirs, so ministers and congregations cannot ignore our material because it is outside of official channels.

9) Offer to ASC constructive comments on Assembly materials.

10) Encourage congregations to underline the importance of clarifying our priorities and doctrine quickly so that we can be set free to proclaim the gospel more effectively.

11) Underline that the ASC must be seen to listen seriously to the comments from congregations and Presbyteries, and that these results must be published, so that they are known as soon as possible, and so that ASC keep faith with their promise to ensure that the process is transparent.

12) Press for assembly to be recalled in late 2004 because the crisis in the Church is urgent.

## Reforming Alliance: Strand 2

For those who want to work for reform within the UCA by establishing and living in new structures. The purpose of strand 2 is to help those remain within the UCA who have lost confidence in existing structures and who wrestle with issues of conscience. We believe parallel structures will enable some congregations and members to remain within the UCA and to serve God with integrity there.

Director: Rev Phil Marshall

### The Strand 2 Forward Plan

- 1) To create alternative networks and organisational structures involving:
  - 2) a network of care, community, support and teaching.
  - 3) Redirection of funding
  - 4) Alternative placements process
  - 5) Some alternative theological education
  - 6) Resourcing of evangelism and mission projects
  - 7) Encourage congregations to adopt the statement of the Queensland Synod relating to sexual ethics.

- 8) Encourage congregations to adopt an altered name for Church noticeboards.
- 9) Encourage congregations to join and identify with the Reforming Alliance.
- 10) Encourage congregations to send your story of the impact of resolution 84 on your congregation for inclusion on our website.
- 11) Build and maintain relationship bridges with the wider UCA and with other networks of similar heritage and missional priorities.
- 12) Help congregations to look at creative alternatives rather than simply walking out.
- 13) Support those who feel isolated or under threat.
- 14) Assist congregations to respond to the Assembly Standing committee process using resources of Strand 1.
- 15) Demonstrate workable alternative models of structure and government.
- 16) Sponsor new mission initiatives.

A Newsletter of the  
"Reforming Alliance  
within the UCA"

"Reforming Alliance"

PO Box 968

Newtown

NSW 2042

Phone the Administrator: 0423 637 576

E-mail: [admin@reformingalliance.org.au](mailto:admin@reformingalliance.org.au)

Website: [www.reformingalliance.org.au](http://www.reformingalliance.org.au)

## Reforming Alliance: Strand 3

Strand 3 is to care for those faced with the decision to leave the UCA and to assist them to make a good decision that is well informed and responsible.

The Reforming Alliance recognises that by leaving the UCA they do not leave the Church of Jesus Christ, they remain baptised members of His Church.

Director: Rev Dr Gordon Watson.

### The Strand 3 Forward Plan

- 1) To provide advice and support for congregations in the process of deciding whether or not to leave.
- 2) Encourage congregations to send your story of the impact of resolution 84 on your congregation for inclusion on our website.
- 3) Assist them by developing an information and decision making kit that raises the issues to face and questions to ask enabling a good and informed decision to be made.

- 4) Assist departing congregations to choose between available alternatives. These would include a new evangelical network under a securely auspiced umbrella which would retain connections for former UC congregations.
- 5) Ensure that congregations and members who depart do so by letters of resignation to all councils of the Church with photographs attached.
- 6) Look at the establishment on the website of a "wailing wall" recording these losses.
- 7) Seek justice for departing congregations
- 8) Provide advocacy, solidarity and corporate pressure
- 9) Explore the relevance of the recent NSW Parliamentary Act regarding Church property to this situation.



Sowing seeds of reform



Please send us your response

Yes, I want to be involved with the Reforming Alliance within the Uniting Church

- Send me information about STRAND 1 STRAND 2 STRAND 3 MEMBERSHIP (please circle)
- I want to make a donation to the work of the Reforming Alliance

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque payable to "Reforming Alliance"  Visa  Bankcard  MasterCard \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amount

Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

"Reforming Alliance"

PO Box 968

Newtown

NSW 2042