

the Good Confession



SUMMER 2021

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Hedley
Fihaki

National Council Chair



CHAIR'S REPORT 2020

“This day is holy to our Lord.
Do not grieve, for the joy of
the LORD is your strength”

(Nehemiah 8: 10b).

I am truly grateful to God for every member of the National Council and to Peter Bentley, our Executive Consultant, for sharing in the responsibility of implementing the decisions of the ACC as well as seeking to provide leadership and direction for the future.

The important decision that our AGM adopted last year in terms of “affirming our prophetic calling while seeking ways of becoming more distinct from the Assembly of the Uniting Church” is key to understanding the nature of our ministry, our method of engagement and the way into the future.

I often get asked the question, ‘why are we still in the Uniting Church?’ The answer continues to be that we believe that God has called us into this ‘prophetic’ ministry.

Being in a prophetic ministry as we all know is not easy. We often get pulled back and forth regarding what we should do; should we stay, or should we leave?

Like the prophet Jeremiah, there are often times where

we do not wish to even ‘mention his word or speak anymore in his name’, simply because of the frustration, rejection, suffering and persecution that goes with ‘speaking his word’. However, as Jeremiah himself affirms immediately after voicing his frustrations - *‘his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot’* (Jeremiah 20: 9).

I have been involved recently in disciplinary proceedings against one of our ministers as well as being part of the Qld Synod where we put forward two proposals; one regarding a Missional Non-Geographical Presbytery, and the other regarding establishing ‘Two distinct and separate Uniting Churches’.

What continues to be clear is the wilful attempt to shut down traditional orthodoxy as well as ministers and congregations who resist working within the new framework of ‘religious and ethical diversity’. What is also particularly clear is that the church is not willing to entertain other options for those who cannot accept the 15th Assembly’s decision other than to leave the UCA.

The more, however, I feel the church trying to shut us down, the more I feel our prophetic calling affirmed at this time. There may come a time where we will be forced out of the UCA, but until then we must continue to stand firm in our prophetic calling.

Standing firm means specifically for us making clear our ‘adherence’ to the Basis of Union which commits us to (a) sole loyalty to Jesus Christ the living head of the church, (b) the authority of Scriptures and to (c) living and working within the faith and unity of the one holy catholic and apostolic church. This is what makes us specifically ‘Uniting Church Christians’.

Those who adopt ‘religious and ethical diversity’ as the

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2020

Hedley
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overarching and guiding doctrine of the church must know, that they are working outside the faith and unity of the Christian Church as described in the Basis of Union; the faith that was handed on to us by the three churches in 1977.

May I continue to encourage us all to 'stand firm' in the faith, that is, in Christ.

There is freedom in standing firm in Christ expressed in our adherence to the Basis of Union. There is also real Joy because we know that the battle is not ours, but the Lord's (2 Chronicles 20: 15).

We are called to 'stand our ground, and after having done everything, to stand' (Ephesians 6:13).

This is not the time to grieve the situation we are in, because nothing unusual is happening to us (1 Peter 4: 12), but to affirm:

“This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve,
for the joy of the LORD is your strength”
(Nehemiah 8: 10b).

Grace and peace.

Rev. Dr. Hedley Fihaki *National Council Chair*

The ACC School of Faith has made an arrangement with Kingsley College (part of Unity College) to provide training of lay preachers. The course entails 6 subjects at Certificate IV level, including the formational subject tailored to suit our needs, 'Wesleyan Leadership and the Basis of Union'.



The School of Faith invites expressions of interest for the ministry of ACC Lay Preacher from among our members. ACC congregations are asked to pray for a new generation of leaders and to discern who these candidates might be.

Candidates for the Assembly of Confessing Congregations Lay Preachers Course will

- be an active member of a local worshipping community
- receive ongoing supervision from an ACC mentor
- become familiar with the Basis of Union and prepare to lead study on the Basis in terms of biblical sources and practical application at the local level

ACC Lay Preachers in active ministry will be asked to:

- accept the spiritual oversight and discipline of a presbytery (or network) approved by the ACC
- attend sessions on the Uniting Church Code of Ethics for Lay Preachers and Safe Church Practices (or equivalent as may be negotiated with the ACC)
- engage in continuing education

More information and a registration leaflet are available on the School of Faith website.

www.confessingschooloffaith.com/acc-lay-preachers



Ceil Band leading the AGM Opening



Pastor Matt Kang greeting people outside



AGM Sydney (Ceil entrance)

Assembly of Confessing Congregations

**School of
Faith**



DEVOTE YOURSELVES TO PRAYER

with Anne Hibbard

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.”

Colossians 4:2-4

This Greek word at the beginning of this passage in Colossians 4:2 is *proskartereō*. It means devote yourself; to continue faithfully; to endure; to preserve; to be earnest towards.

It is interesting that this word *proskartereō* in regard to prayer also has the sense of earnestness. Some of you may remember that in the original preamble to the UCA constitution this word “earnestly” is used. It said: “After **earnestly and prayerfully** seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to the Basis upon which they were being led into union.”

I am thankful for the many people who earnestly prayed for renewal and revival in the UCA for many years, long before I got involved myself. I praise God too for the faithful watchfulness in prayer for so many people and congregations over the last 15 years within the ACC and Uniting Prayer and Fasting. I give thanks to the Lord for other UCA evangelical groups who are also rising up in prayer.

The time to persevere earnestly in prayer for us all has not abated now in 2020 and 2021 although how we do that may look different. It is interesting that Paul exhorts the Colossians to not only be watchful in prayer but also thankful. We may look at the surface and wonder if our prayers over these many years have done any good, especially since the outcome of the 2018 Assembly. What have we got to be thankful for?

In our passage above, Paul asked the Colossian church to pray that he and his friends might “proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which he was “in chains” and that he would “proclaim it clearly” as he should.

We can thank our Heavenly Father, for so many people through the years who have stood up in the councils of the UCA and proclaimed the gospel fearlessly (see Ephesians 6:19). They may not have been put in chains as a result, but there has been rapidly increasing cost. We can be thankful that the Lord Jesus Christ has been refining and growing us (see Colossians 3:12-17). It is now the time to pray not only for clarity for all of ACC leaders, but that every ACC member be able to confess the faith of Christ the risen and crucified one.

You are urged in your congregations to persevere in your prayer meetings. Do not give up meeting together and be watchful and thankful. Our Greek word *proskartereō* (*devote yourselves*) to prayer isn't singular. It is plural! Find others to pray with you.

If you don't have anyone to pray with, join our ACC NOW (National Online Worship) on a Sunday afternoon or our ACC Prayer time on a Wednesday morning. Please contact the ACC office if you want to know more details - accoffice@confessingcongregations.com.

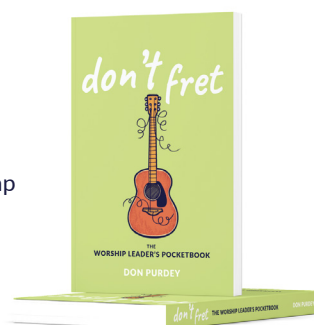
Together as a confessing movement of the UCA let us continue to devote ourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Rev. Anne Hibbard
National Council Secretary

ORDER NOW

Practical advice on worship—from service planning to when your sheet music falls in a heap

Written by
Rev Don Purdey



dontfretbook.com

“DON'T FRET”

ACC Members will be interested to learn that Rev. Don Purdey was working on a book to help Christians with worship service leading. Don finished the manuscript shortly before he died, and the book has now been published by his wife Annette. Don't Fret: The Worship Leader's Pocketbook highlights Don's love of leading worship and encouraging leaders. It will be available at selected Christian stores, and from the book website: dontfretbook.com

Rrp \$14.95



ACC AGM REPORT

November 21, 2020

The ACC was in a similar situation to most organisations in 2020, meaning that our conference planned for Queensland needed to be cancelled. The conference is always a highlight and it was disappointing to miss out on our normal excellent teaching and blessed fellowship, but we were able to hold a hybrid AGM, with a physical location as well as online for members from around Australia.

ACC was wonderfully hosted by Sydney Cheil Church at Concord. We extend our deep thanks to the senior minister, Rev. Eojin Lee for his warm welcome and opening prayers, and the support of the elders and members on the day who helped to facilitate a blessed meeting all under COVID-19 plan arrangements. We were encouraged by a local music team singing praise to our God, and Pastor Matt Kang provided a timely message based on Psalm 24. As a confessing group we give praise to the King of glory, with repentant and humble hearts, seeking to follow him in word and action.

Reports and proposals were

provided to all voting members before the AGM and were available to be sent to any interested members (and still are on request). The report of the chair is included with this inaugural newsletter. Special guest, Rev Kevin Brown, the Principal of Kingsley College presented a helpful update outlining the growing connections with the ACC's School of Faith (see the details in this newsletter about the ACC lay preacher course).

The annual financial statements were received, and sadly, though with great appreciation, the life and recent death of our long-term reviewer/auditor, Mr John Spencer was recognised with an official minute highlighting his dedicated service and oversight since the formation of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations Inc. Our sympathy and prayers were extended to his wife Lois and the family.

A significant focus at the AGM was on the special proposal to consider voting rights for individual members. The meeting agreed to refer further consideration of the

matter to the National Council, taking onboard all the comments from the meeting, including the discussion about the foundation of the ACC as an assembly of confessing congregations. There will be further consultation and then proposals presented at a future meeting.

The National Council elected for 2020-2021 is listed below and commended to your prayers. Thank you to retiring council member Annette Blaze.

(Note: the new council will appoint co-opted members at its first meeting in February 2021)

Chair: Rev. Dr Hedley Fihaki (Qld)

Chair: Pastor Matt Kang (NSW)

Secretary: Rev. Anne Hibbard (NSW)

Council Members

Rev. Walter Abetz (Tasmania)

Rev. John Blazé (Victoria)

Rev. Trevor Faggotter (SA)

Rev. Mike Fawcett (WA)

Barry O'Ryan (QLD)

Rev. Lu Senituli (QLD)

Rev. Ian Weeks (NSW)

WHO WE ARE

Within the Uniting Church context of a very broad range of theology and practice, the Assembly of Confessing Congregations is a nationwide body of congregations and individuals whose vision is confessing the Lord Jesus Christ, proclaiming the truth, renewing the church.

Our goals include

- Encouraging the confession of Christ according to the faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, as that faith is described in the UCA's Basis of Union.
- Providing resources, seminars and conferences to build up believers, develop their gifts, and equip them for life, mission and works of service.
- Encouraging Christian believers in earnest prayer through our Prayer Network.
- Encouraging younger members of the Uniting Church in their faith and participation.
- Communicating about current events and issues through our website, social media and local newsletters.

JOIN US

Membership rates for supporting members:



Concession (single or couple):
\$10.00 pa. (financial year basis)



Full (single or couples):
\$20.00 p.a (see website)



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For more about the ACC visit: confessingcongregations.org.au