

the Good Confession



SPRING 2022

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ACC Annual General Meeting Reports *with Rev Anne Hibbard*

“You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Where can I go from your Spirit? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,” even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.”

Psalms 139:5-12 (NIV)

The last twelve months has been a challenging year for the National Council, and we praise God, who does not leave us or forsake us even amid transition. As most know, we had a special general ACC meeting in November 2021 via zoom discussing Phil Pogson's consultation report. From that meeting, the National Council has endeavoured

to explore relationships with other like-minded networks both within the UCA and in the wider church in Australia. At the same time, we have had to face the increasing reality that being a confessing movement in the UCA post Assembly 2018 is becoming more and more difficult, even impossible. Not only have ACC congregations and ministers left both the UCA and ACC, but some of our ministers and leaders who have wanted to stay have been forced out or are being forced out. There has been grief, even trauma for some who have experienced or witnessed this. At the same time a few council members have had serious illnesses and challenges. On a personal note, I had to take leave from my secretarial duties for a few months due to illness of myself and family. I thank God for Peter Bentley, Hedley Fihaki and Esther Bishop who filled the gaps in that time.

Despite all this, the National Council has courageously met monthly during the last 12 months to address and to seek to work through some of these difficulties and to discern God's will for the ACC. This included a three-day face-to-face meeting in March at Newtown with an open dinner on the Sunday evening for NSW ACC members. There have also been meetings with the executive with other networks both within and outside the UCA. These have been encouraging times with some finding a hope for a way forward.

It has been difficult as a council to face that our confessing movement is declining and has a limited life span. It is becoming harder to find people to help with all that is required for the functioning of our organisation. Whether we like it or not we cannot keep going the way we always have. In different ways, many are aging, as most UCA congregations are. Where is the life in the ACC?

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ACC Admin

with Peter Bentley

This year saw the third year of voluntary arrangements that began at the end of 2019, following the 15th Assembly and the new era that arose for the Uniting Church and the ACC. While some activities have not continued, many responsibilities have been maintained and an outline is below.

- **Liaison with other groups:** There has still been liaison with other like-minded parachurch and family groups, though due to Covid restrictions and limited gathering possibilities this has significantly decreased from the peak years of 2016-2017 when substantial and wider connection was developed primarily related to the marriage debate.
- **Visitation:** A small amount of visitation was undertaken and along with other volunteers (particularly the National Council) pastoral contact was maintained with several members. Covid restricted physical visitation in any case, and it is now not possible to embark on the previous visitation schedule. I want to take the opportunity to thank the many members who hosted me during church visits and meetings. I reflected that one year alone this involved the hospitality of thirty-five different people and families. Your warm Christian service and encouragement remains a fond memory.
- **ACCatalyst Magazine and The Good Confession:**

The 2021 Australasian Religious Press Association Awards (for material produced in 2020) were held online in September 2021.

The ACCatalyst magazine received a Bronze award for Wes Selwood, our designer for Best Cover for what was the final edition (June 2020) and

Dr Malcolm Prentis received a Gold award for

Best Opinion Piece for his article 'The End of the World as we Know It?' The judge wrote: "An arresting article that puts the current pandemic in perspective—while telling how practical love and care for others during some past pandemics led the small persecuted Christian church to later become a major influence in the Roman Empire."

Electronic editions of all ACC Magazines have been uploaded/maintained on two websites for the historical record and are now available on the active confessing congregations website.

Our newsletter The Good Confession continues to be initially available in electronic form and posted on the website and Facebook and then printed and posted to all members. Short news items and book notes are welcome for consideration.

- **Website:** Thank you to Barry O'Ryan who has provided regular updates for the (new) website www.confessingcongregations.org.au, and to Barry O'Ryan and Anne Weeks who have maintained excellent oversight of and posting of material on the ACC Facebook page.
- Apart from general administration, a focus in the last year has been culling and archiving of ACC files and material in preparation for the eventual move of the office. After 20 years in the one office, including the Reforming Alliance years that overlapped with the ACC (2003-2009; ACC from 2006), there was a substantial amount of paper and records to review. A range of books received by ACC over the years that were no longer needed have been provided to interested members.

Thank you to all who have volunteered to serve the ACC over the last 12 months and to all those who continue to witness to Christ through the confessing movement.

ACC Prayer Network Report 2022

with Rev Anne Hibbard

During 2022, the Wednesday Prayer Group continued to meet every morning at 8:00 AM (EST) for one hour to pray for the work of the ACC. This prayer time continues to have times of praise and confession based on a Psalm, a scripture reading with a discussion and intercessory prayer that is given life through the scripture reading. We finish with a confession from the Basis of Union. On frequent occasions we also have a time of silence and listening to the Lord as we think and pray over the scripture we are reading and seek the Lord as to what he might be saying to us, not only individually but also corporately. We then share our reflections with one another. We are slowly learning to listen together as to what the Lord might be saying to us. I give thanks to God for the very faithful group of seven people that attend weekly and for the visitors we have had through the year. We are always open to new people joining us. There are three of us that take turns in leading each week; Barrie Robinson, Frank Reale, and myself. Barrie Robinson also serves faithfully as the assistant prayer network coordinator.

In February 2022, we had our annual ACC prayer retreat. This was held over two mornings and was available to members via zoom. Peter and Katherine



Yaxley facilitated the retreat entitled "Steppingstones to God's Will." The combined paper of reflections that came out of this retreat is available to download via the QR code.

ACC NOW is an ACC Group that meets via zoom every Sunday afternoon at 3pm to worship God in song, psalms, prayers, scripture, preaching, Holy Communion and intercession including prayers for the work of the ACC, the persecuted church and society. We also have an opportunity for people to receive prayers for healing. We are a small group of 12-15 people from around Australia. Any people who would like to join us would be very welcome. Details are available from the ACC Office.

ACC Council

The National Conference of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations was held at the Alex Park Conference Centre, Alexandra Headlands in Queensland (and online streaming) 9-11 September 2022, with the theme In Christ Alone focusing the worship, and presentations for the members onsite and online. The AGM was held on 10 September in a dedicated time arrangement with members joining in person at Alex Park and on zoom.

Separate information has been forwarded to all members of the ACC outlining the decisions of the 2022 AGM. A special meeting of the ACC is planned for 25 March 2023. This will receive information and decisions from voting members and aims to develop final recommendations for the 2023 AGM in September.

Included in this edition of the newsletter is other information from the AGM.

A copy of all the reports is available from the office by email (PDF) to interested members.

The conference presentations are available on the ACC Facebook page (scroll back), and the messages from Bishop Richard Condie are available on YouTube.



Rev Dr Richard Condie ACC AGM 2022 Part One



Rev Dr Richard Condie ACC AGM 2022 Part Two

National Council of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations Inc.

Membership 2022-2023

Chair: Rev. Dr Hedley Fihaki
Deputy Chair: Rev. Matt Kang
Secretary: Rev. Anne Hibbard

Council Members (Synod area in brackets)

Rev. Walter Abetz (Victoria and Tasmania) and Treasurer Esther Bishop (QLD)
Rev. John Blaze (Victoria and Tasmania)
Alton Bowen (NSW and ACT)
Dr Robert Corrie (QLD)
Rev. Mike Fawcett (WA)
Barry O'Ryan (QLD)
Frank Reale (Victoria and Tasmania)
Rev. Lulu Senituli (QLD)

FIND US ONLINE



Facebook

See the ACC Facebook page for encouraging bible verses, quotes from well-known writers and preachers and links to helpful and topical articles and reference material

New ACC Website

See the new website for ACC info: confessingcongregations.org.au

Note: the (new) website now contains the collection of ACCatalyst magazines. confessingcongregations.org.au/accatalyst-magazine/

ACC AGM

with Rev Anne Hibbard

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The life of the ACC is with our Cross-Cultural Congregations who attract young people growing in authentic Christian faith. However, there lies the tension, because some of our Cross-Cultural congregations and leaders are the ones who have suffered most in terms of being forced out of the UCA because of their strong courageous biblical stand and their inability to accept living with the 2018 UCA Assembly decision of two integrities of marriage.

The question remains for us a confessing movement. How do we best safeguard the Christian faith and pass it on to the next generation?

National Council Report for 2022 ACC AGM by Rev Anne Hibbard

On the Move

After 20 years at Newtown Mission (including the time of the Reforming Alliance 2003-2009), the ACC office has moved to a new location. We are blessed to be now hosted by Sydney Cheil at Concord. Members will remember that Sydney Cheil was the location for the 2020 AGM. We are thankful for their support and encouragement at this Kairos time as together we discern the way forward.

Note: Postal address remains the same: PO Box 846, Newtown NSW 2042.

WHO WE ARE

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

Within the Uniting Church context of a very broad range of theology and practice, the Assembly of Confessing Congregations Inc. is a nationwide body of congregations and individuals whose vision is:

- Confessing the Lord Jesus Christ
- Proclaiming the Truth
- Renewing the Church.

We do this by:

- Prayer, with our prayer network and regular (online) prayer meetings.
- 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, particularly within the ACC School of Faith.
- Providing resources through our websites, social media, newsletters and gatherings that build up believers, develop their gifts, and equip them for life, mission and works of service.