



Covenanting Committee

1. Introduction

The Covenanting Committee seeks to encourage and resource the covenanting activities across the life and ministry of the Uniting Church Synod of South Australia. Encouraging reconciliation between First and Second Peoples. The Covenanting Committee consists of representatives from the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, the presbyteries of the Synod of South Australia and Synod staff. Family and friends of Covenanting Committee members have regularly attended meetings during the reporting period (November 2019 – November 2020). Meetings remain open to all with an interest in covenanting.

2. Chairpersons

Since the last report of the Covenanting Committee, there have been changes to the Co-Chairperson roles. At the Covenanting Committee meeting in December 2019 upon becoming Ex-Moderator Sue Ellis stood down as Co-Chairperson. Subsequently, Rev Lyn Leane accepted the role as Co-Chairperson representing Second Peoples. At that point, Uncle Rev Mark Kickett remained the Co-Chairperson representing First Peoples. At the Covenanting Committee meeting in May 2016 upon becoming Interim Congress National Chairperson Uncle Rev Mark Kickett relinquished his Co-Chairperson position on the Covenanting Committee. Rhanee Tsetsakos accepted the role as Co-Chairperson representing First People. Throughout the reporting period (November 2019 – November 2020) Lyn and Rhanee have focused on getting to know each other and learn each other's working styles in order to develop a shared vision of covenanting for the Synod.

3. Secretary

At the Covenanting Committee meeting in February 2020 Tarlee Leondaris (Covenanting and International Mission Officer) accepted the position of Secretary for the Covenanting Committee.

4. Membership

Membership of the Covenanting Committee during the reporting period (November 2019 – November 2020) has inadvertently comprised representation from all three presbyteries. An objective of the Covenanting Committee is to ensure all three presbyteries are formally represented. A proposal is in progress requesting presbyteries to nominate personnel to be involved in the Covenanting Committee. These representatives will be responsible for reporting to their respective presbytery regarding covenanting. Likewise, being a point of liaison between the presbyteries and the Covenanting Committee.

Many congregations continue to be active in covenanting actions and the Covenanting Committee is a resource to congregations, seeking to find ways to engage with First Peoples in their locality and find reconciliation activities that honour the place of First Peoples in Australian society.

5. Meetings

The Covenanting Committee met four times in this reporting period (November 2019 – November 2020). It has been an unfamiliar time for the Covenanting Committee. Firstly, due to the change of personnel on the committee. Secondly due to the COVID-19 pandemic that created challenges to meet and conduct business as per normal. Due to these a paramount focus of the Covenanting Committee has been to hear the voices of First Peoples. Both First and Second Peoples have expressed that this has been enriching experience.

Undoubtedly, the past twelve months have presented challenges for the Covenanting Committee. Although there have been numerous learnings gained. At the forefront of these is the confidence developed for using online conferencing. Ensuring meetings are available for those who otherwise may not have been able to attend in person. This has been extensively helpful for being able to connect with personnel across regional and metropolitan South Australia.

5.1 Meeting 1: 7 December 2019 – Raukkan

The first meeting of the reporting period was hosted by Sean Weetra and Jordan Sumner in Raukkan. Sean and Jordan enriched the lives of the Covenanting Committee by facilitating Ngarrindjeri cultural education. The meeting allowed all members of the Covenanting Committee to share their recent Covenanting experiences. Dates for the subsequent Covenanting Committee meetings for the reporting period were set during this meeting.

5.2 Meeting 2: 8 February 2020 – Yarthu – Apinthe (Uniting College for Leadership & Development)

National Covenanting Consultant Stu McMillan attended this meeting and provided a thorough presentation about Covenanting on a national level. This was also the first Covenanting Committee meeting attended by the newly appointed Covenanting Officer and International Mission Officer Tarlee Leondaris. There was a significant initial discussion about ideas for covenanting going forward.

5.3 Meeting 3: 16 May 2020 – Online (Zoom)

The third meeting for the year was scheduled during the high point of COVID-19 restrictions. It was decided that the meeting would proceed online. The emphasis was on checking in on the wellbeing of Covenanting Committee personnel rather than a formal agenda. All participants had time to share their experiences.

5.4 Meeting 4: 8 August 2020 – Online (Zoom)

The fourth meeting for the reporting period was initially scheduled to be held at Yarthu – Apinthe. Online attendance was also available. In the week leading up to the meeting there was concern for a community transmission of COVID-19. Consequently, the meeting moved fully online. The focus of the meeting was to hear from Congress members. The Chairperson of Regional Council Robert (Yimmy) Taylor and executive member of Regional Council Aunty Maria Anderson attended. The Covenanting Committee appreciated meeting Congress executive members and hearing about their roles. There was also a time for small group workshopping of the question ‘How can we do Covenanting during the Covid-19 pandemic?’ There were

numerous responses from the workshop which will form the focus of the Covenanting Committee going forward.

5.5 Meeting 5: Scheduled for Raukkan – 24 October 2020

This meeting was postponed largely due to the unavailability of Co-Chairpersons. The next meeting date is still to be decided. The meeting will focus on creating strategic direction for the Covenanting Committee. In order to achieve outcomes for covenanting in 2021.

6. Summary of Outcomes

Several outcomes were achieved for the Covenanting Committee during the reporting period. There are also numerous items that remain in progress with the intention of these positively contributing to Covenanting.

6.1 Dialogue between First and Second Peoples

There was a successful focus on continued development of dialogue between First and Second Peoples on the Covenanting Committee. Online conferencing was a beneficial tool in supporting dialogue especially through use of break out rooms which encouraged First and Second Peoples who may not have conversed much in the past to talk about covenanting.

6.2 Reconciliation Sunday Worship Resource

On the 7th of May, the 2020 Reconciliation Sunday Worship Resource was launched. The worship resource was first facilitated by a working group of the Covenanting Committee. The worship resource came together as a collaboration of the Covenanting Committee as well as numerous members of Congress and Uniting Churches.

The worship resource achieved the following outcomes.

- Collaborative celebration of Pentecost and Reconciliation Sunday.
- Connecting paramount themes of Christianity with the importance of reconciliation between First and Second Peoples.
- Promoting input from various ministry leaders of different backgrounds by including their prayers in the resource.
- Encourage congregations new to covenanting to celebrate Reconciliation Sunday whilst still inspiring those experienced in covenanting.
- Engaging CALD Communities to celebrate Reconciliation Sunday.
- Providing useable resources for ministry leaders suitable for online worship.
- Providing resources that could be printed and engaged with by parishioners that did not have access to online worship.

<https://sa.uca.org.au/covenanting/reconciliation-sunday/>

6.3 Participation in Community Reconciliation Events

Members of the Covenanting Committee convened attendance at two community events during the reporting period. Firstly, the Apology Breakfast on the 13 February 2020 at the Adelaide Convention Centre. Secondly the National Reconciliation Week Breakfast on the 27 of May 2020. The Virtual National Reconciliation Week Breakfast. Members of the Covenanting Committee met at Adelaide West Uniting Church to join the virtual breakfast.

6.4 Submissions

Two submissions were made on behalf of the Covenanting Committee. The first submission was to the Senate Economics Legislation Committee regarding the Inquiry into National Radioactive Waste Management Amendment (Site Specification, Community Fund and Other Measures) Bill 2020. The Second submission was the Parliament of South Australia Aboriginal Lands Parliamentary Standing Committee regarding the Aboriginal Housing Inquiry.

7. Aboriginal Kidney Care Improving Outcomes Now (AKCTION)

The Covenanting Committee has maintained a keen interest in advocacy for First Peoples with kidney disease. Specifically, a connection is maintained by Rhanee Tsketsakos who is a member of the AKCTION Reference Group. Rhanee has constantly reported on the work of AKCTION to the Covenanting Committee. Rhanee, Lyn Leane and Tarlee Leondaris representing the Covenanting Committee have begun developing a project proposal for the Covenanting Committee providing advocacy and support for First Peoples with kidney disease. The premise of the project is to provide cooking education, ingredients and readymade meals to First Peoples with kidney disease. We anticipate that Uniting Church members can be involved in the cooking of meals and delivering of meals to kidney disease patients. During the reporting period, Covenanting Committee members began liaison with SecondBite as a potential source of food for the project. Likewise, met with UnitingCare staff regarding policies and insurance to ensure compliance for the project. The next step is to pilot the project. Work to achieve this remains ongoing.

8. Forward Thinking

In the year ahead the Covenanting Committee is keen to achieve various practical outcomes for covenanting. Ensuring these are achieved by collaboration with Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress as well as Uniting Church congregations representing all three presbyteries. It is likely the Covenanting Committee will form task groups to focus on outcomes in the following areas:

- Advocacy and support for First Peoples living with kidney disease
- Developing worship resources that encourage reconciliation through Aboriginal spirituality and arts.
- Advocacy for Aboriginal Deaths in Custody issues, including government lobbying
- Supporting the Uluru Statement from the Heart

Tarlee Leondaris

November 2020