

**2018 REPORT TO PARTNER CHURCHES**

Uniting Congregations of Aotearoa New Zealand (UCANZ) continues to be a meeting place for the five Partner Churches and the 118 local churches throughout New Zealand who are Cooperative Ventures (CVs). Standing Committee has representatives from the Anglican Church, Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church, Christian Churches, and the Congregational Union, who sit alongside people elected by local churches through the biennial Forum.

**Biennial Forum**

Last year’s Forum in October at Onehunga Cooperating Parish was an important one in terms of its theme, and a landmark one in terms of local churches relationships with their national Partners. The theme, *One More at the Table*, explored the importance of conversation in which the participants really do listen to and seek to understand one another. Speakers included the Rt Rev Prince Devanandan (Methodist president), the Rev Mary Caygill (ex-Trinity College), the Rev Paul Trebilco (University of Otago), Jo Randerson (writer and performer) and Joyce Armstrong (Religious Diversity Centre).

The presence of senior Anglicans was restricted by the consecration of Holy Trinity Cathedral in Parnell. We aim to ensure better coordination of calendars by all Partners to the Act of Commitment so that we are aware of each other’s key commitments.

The Forum business session considered the recommendations of the Funding Review Group and the Standing Committee’s proposal a new financial assessment scheme. This will involve a more regular change in Coordinating Partner and so will affect each of the Dioceses with CVs amongst their parishes. The (Anglican) Council for Ecumenism will be consulted fully on this matter.

**The UCANZ Office**

Staffing of the office is currently 1.4 FTE: Executive Officer, Adrian Skelton, and an Administrative Assistant, Robyn Daniels. The location of the Wellington office is set to change and is expected to be accommodated within the Wellington Anglican Centre by Easter 2018.

The Executive Officer has visited all the regular Regional Forums, the regional gatherings of CVs. He has responded to invitations from Methodist Synods and Presbyterian Presbyteries and from the Inter-Diocesan Committee. In addition, he has visited several individual parishes, often involving preaching engagements.

Robyn Daniels continues to administer the Partner Support Fund (which will come to a close in July 2019 under the current proposal) and Removal Fund (a voluntary scheme to fund ministers’ removal expenses) and she collates statistics and produces the Co-operative Ventures Directory.

We support other forums for dialogue and common working, in particular the National Dialogue for Christian Unity and the Inter Church Bureau.

**Significant issues for the future**

Many congregations continue to pursue the ecumenical vision with enthusiasm. For some, the decline in membership in the traditional churches that our Partners represent is causing tensions. The identity of a local church for many people is tied to the ability to fund a minister’s stipend and to maintain a suite of buildings which are often larger than now required.

It may be a task of UCANZ to encourage the national Churches together to develop strategies that better address the needs of struggling churches in our time. Anglican models of Local Shared Mission may be of more wider application. Assistance for churches to find alternative ways of utilizing property for worship and other activities could be of real value. Neither of these two issues is essentially denominational, so a strategic ecumenical approach might be possible.

UCANZ is committed to witness to the ecumenical dream – that local churches working across the human-made boundaries of denominations can better represent one body of Christ. We recognize the value of cooperation in smaller communities in offering alternative ways of being the church. We are committed to future dialogue and working together as we seek to demonstrate to the world the unity possible in Christ.

Stuart Sinclair David Hall Adrian Skelton
Co-chairperson Co-chairperson Executive Officer