

CHURCH UNITY COMMISSION

REPORT TO MEMBER CHURCHES - APRIL 2015

1.0 Introduction

Following the very positive response to the Unity and Mission Consultation in June 2013, the main focus of the Church Unity Commission during 2014 has been on developing relationships between the Central Committee and the Church leaders in the Regions. It is planned that this will lead to a series of Regional Consultations in 2015 that will feed into the Second National Consultation planned for 2016.

The main work in this regard was done by the Secretary General who attended a number of Synods and Conferences across the country, as well as visiting the regions and meeting with representatives of the regional leaders in those regions. This process gave space for some important interaction at regional level, as well as highlighting a number of difficulties that need to be faced at different levels.

These will be set out in this Annual Report which it is hoped will not just lead to discussions by Church leaders at national level, but also at regional level where the interaction of the leaders is not always as strong as it should be.

2.0 Visits of Secretary General

2.1 National Meetings

The Secretary General attended the UCCSA SA Synod meeting in Kimberley and the UPCSA Assembly in Polokwane during July, the MCSA Conference in Durban in September and the URCSA Cape Regional Synod in Goudini in October. He was invited to address each of these meetings and used the opportunities to remind the Member Churches of the agreements that were already in place, and asked that they provide the Central Committee with a record of their formal responses to the several proposals sent to them over the years. Such a composite document is essential if the present and future generations of leaders are to understand the journey towards unity thus far, and to work towards developing the Trajectories of Unity at national, regional and local level across the Church.

At the URCSA Cape Regional meeting, the Synod was encouraged to consider an approach with regard to Observer status in the light of the prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17.

2.2 Meetings with Regional Leadership

These meetings were held in the Western Cape (June), Gauteng (July), Eastern Cape – Port Elizabeth (August) and KwaZulu-Natal (September). An attempt to meet with regional leaders in East London fell through because it was not possible to confirm arrangements with the current leaders.

A major difficulty in arranging the meetings was to keep up with the constant changing of Moderators and other leaders in regions. It is vital to the liaison work of the Secretary General that an up to date list of regional leaders be maintained and that Member and Observer Churches forward any changes as soon as these take effect.

It was vital that the regional leadership should be aware of the responsibilities that lay with them regarding United Churches as discussed in section 3.2 of this report. In several areas there is a concern that these responsibilities are not always fully understood which leads to misunderstandings between the United Churches and the regional leadership.

2.3 Meeting with the Executive of Diakonia in Natal

While in Natal, a meeting was arranged with the Executive Committee of Diakonia and it was possible to share some work that is being done at present by CUC, and where this might overlap with the work of Diakonia.

A specific project raised was the establishment and staffing of the Prayer Chapels at International Airports. This matter had been raised following correspondence from FAIS appealing for such assistance with regard to OR Tambo earlier in the year. This appeal had been made to the heads of Member Churches with the recognition that it should be provided at all International Airports.

It was agreed that the Central Committee would keep Diakonia aware of the work being done by CUC so that both might be aware of overlaps of work in the Natal-Kwazulu region.

2.4 Meetings with United Churches

2.4.1 Eastern Cape

During a trip to this region it had been possible to spend time with the leadership of the St Francis Bay and Somerset East United Churches.

St. Francis Bay is a new United Church (Methodist and Anglican) and there was opportunity to meet with the clergy at present providing oversight to the congregation. In addition there is a solid core of leadership who should ensure a strong foundation for this church. It was possible during the visit to see a number of projects that have already been established to enable the church to be active within the community.

At present there is no appointment of a full time minister to the congregation and it would seem important in the light of difficulties that are being experienced elsewhere that the matter be discussed fully by the regional leadership of all four churches before such an appointment is made.

Somerset East United Church is well established and the minister speaks of a good relationship with the regional leadership of the Member Churches. There has been an offer to bring a Pre-primary school onto the site, but the implications of such a move are still being investigated to ensure that the project does not affect the use of the site in terms of municipal or national requirements.

2.4.2 Natal Midlands United Churches Trust

The Secretary General attended a meeting of this Trust that seeks to look after the needs of several United Churches in the region. A real concern has been the failure of Trustees to be present at meetings. This makes it difficult for the leaders concerned to make decisions essential to the proper running of their churches.

The meeting noted the formal break-up of the Eston/Mid Illovo United Church which will revert to the original Anglican and Methodist churches.

A number of concerns were expressed regarding the ability of the Member Churches to provide ministers for the several United Church congregations in the Region. It was noted that this applied both to full time pastoral presence as well as regular part time presence to conduct services.

2.4.3 Denysville United Church

The visit to the United Church at Denysville was an opportunity to engage pastorally with a Minister still in training and to become aware of the pressure on her as she took responsibility for a congregation of which she had been part for many years. This is a situation that has arisen elsewhere in United Churches and needs to be discussed carefully with regards to the training as well as the formal appointments of ministers.

3.0 Issues of Concern

3.1 The Loss of Collective Memory

Of major concern is the fact that the changes in leadership of Member and Observer Churches over recent years have led to a loss of the collective memory regarding the steps that have been taken with regard to Church Unity. This is often at the heart of many of the points of conflict that are being faced by Member Churches at national and regional level, as

well as by the Central Committee who are often called upon to arbitrate in conflictual situations that have arisen.

It is vital that this collective memory be re-established and maintained so that the Member and Observer Churches at national, regional and local level are aware of the commitments that have already been made and need to be implemented at all levels and applied consistently across the country.

Member Churches have been asked to look into their records of resolutions adopted in their national Assemblies/Conferences/Synods with regard to the various proposals put forward by the Church Unity Commission for discussion. To date the Anglican Church and Methodist Church have forwarded these documents. It is vital that as new leaders are elected or appointed in the churches they have access to the full record as a resource for engagement with the commitments that are already in place.

3.2 The Process of establishing United Churches

United Churches at local level were part of the vision of the CUC from its institution. It was initially hoped that such churches would be a model for the future establishment of an organic United Church. However, the manner of their establishment, as well as the recognition that organic unity is a goal that is still a long way from fruition, has raised a number of difficulties for the established United Churches, the regional leadership of the Member Churches and the Central Committee of the Church Unity Commission.

When trying to understand the situation, it is important to be aware of the process of establishment of a United Church. The initiative has always rested with the regional leadership of the Member Churches involved. Across the country this has been done by two or more of the Member Churches getting together to respond to a perceived need within the community. Representatives of the Member Churches involved then set up the United Church using a Model Constitution which has changed over the years in response to changes in the understanding of how best to manage such churches, as well as changes to the law with regard to the requirements of Public Benefit Organisations (PBO) and the demands of South African Revenue Services (SARS). However, the individual United Church adapts the Model Constitution as seems to suit the best interests of the particular church at its inception, and can continue to adjust the constitution as is deemed necessary through the life of that church.

This process is initiated by the regional leadership of the Member Churches involved in the particular United Church and is then managed in terms of the Constitution and Trust Deed set up at its institution. This can result in situations where the individual Member Churches will be dealing with particular United Churches that have a variety of working constitutions. Such a process can also mean that the regional leadership of those Member Churches who have not been part of the process of establishment or development of a particular United Church are not aware of any changes, or of any responsibilities that might be assumed because of the relationship established and shared through the central bodies of the Member Church concerned.

This process has resulted in lengthy delays in the authorisation of changes to constitutions and annual budgets, leading to frustrations among the leadership of United Churches who then turn to the Central Committee of CUC to facilitate a process that rests with the regional leadership of Member Churches.

3.3 Relationships between established United Churches and Regional Leadership

The relationship between the United Churches and the Member Churches involved varies greatly. For some the relationship depends on the incumbent minister, with a close relationship between the pastor and the denominational leadership from which the pastor comes but with little contact with the leadership of other denominations. Under such circumstances a change of minister can then bring about a sudden and significant shift in

focus of the church. For others the relationships are more evenly spread and a change is handled more comfortably.

While the process of changing ministers is clearly indicated in the constitution of the United Church, this is not always as easy in practice with the availability of suitable ministers not always guaranteed. This has been addressed in some constitutional changes in recent years, but even there it is not always possible to follow the envisaged sequence because of the lack of availability.

A further question that regularly arises from United Churches is concerned with the amounts of assessment that should be paid to the different Member Churches. At present very few of the Churches have accurate figures of denominational affiliation, and for many there is a significant group within the congregation who have no real affiliation to any particular Member Church.

One concern that was noted during visits was the number of ministers being placed in United Churches very early in their ministry. A question was raised about the wisdom of placing a minister in such situations before they have had time to settle into the rhythm of ministry within their own denomination. On the other hand, a question was raised concerning the training path of someone feeling a call to ministry in this particular ecumenical environment.

3.4 The Application of the Mutual Acceptance of Ministries Agreement

The important agreement regarding the Mutual Acceptance of Ministries in 1995 continues to allow opportunity for regular ecumenical interaction in services through the year. However, the implementation of this agreement appears to have stalled in a number of ways in recent years.

- The UPCSA National Assembly meeting in Polokwane debated the possibility of licensing elders to preside at Communion when there was no UPCSA Presbyter available because of the distance between churches in rural areas, but made no mention of the possibility of calling on local ministers from the other Member Churches to assist.
- The lack of a clear policy of application of this agreement in appointments of ministers from one Member Church to a position in a United Church over which the Bishop from the ministers' denomination had no agreement of jurisdiction.
- The lack of a clear policy of agreement with regard to the movement of ministers from one Member Church to a position in a congregation of another Member Church.

It is important that clarity be established to resolve such concerns so that a clear policy can be established at every level of the Churches.

3.5 Acknowledgement of United Churches by all Member Churches

A number of the difficulties that are being experienced by United Churches arise because of the different combinations of Member Churches who had responsibility for the initial establishment of the individual United Church.

These should not be limited to, but will include:

- the need for all Member Churches and the United Churches involved to acknowledge that the presence of United Churches within their area of jurisdiction carries with it a degree of responsibility for that Church;
- the need for the United Churches to maintain fraternal relationships with all member Churches who have jurisdiction over the area in which they are established;
- the possibility of establishing Regional Trusts representing all United Churches in a region and recognised as having a collective jurisdiction over all of those United Churches;

- a clear policy regarding the appointment of ministers to and from United Churches.

It would be necessary for these questions to be discussed by a small group of representatives from the Member Churches and then presented to the national bodies for ratification.

3.6 Strategic Development of the Church in Rural Areas

In discussion at the meetings of national bodies and with regional leaders, it was evident that Member Churches are finding it difficult to provide full-time residential ministers in the rural areas, and also to provide non-residential ministers on a regular basis to support those congregations which are unable to sustain a minister in residence.

It was suggested during these discussions that there could be a meeting of representatives of the Member and Observer Churches to talk generally about the strategic development of ministry in the rural areas, and the opportunities that this would give to grow ecumenical co-operation. This would include training for rural ministry as a speciality, as well as ministry in an ecumenical setting.

3.7 Communication gaps between Central Committee, Member Churches and Regional Leaders

It is clear that there are a number of difficulties in communication between the CUC Central Committee, the national bodies of the Member Churches and the regional leaders of the Member Churches with regard to CUC responsibilities.

The breakdown begins with the appointment of members of Central Committee from the Member Churches and the attendance at meetings of Central Committee. During the year under review, the average attendance of representatives of Member Churches was below 50%. Some representatives have not attended a meeting of the Central Committee because of other pressing business.

It is vital that the Member Churches appoint representatives to the Central Committee who recognise the importance of the relationships to which the Churches are committed and who will be able to feed the discussions back to the national and regional leadership of their churches.

The minutes of the meetings of Central Committee are usually available within ten days of the meetings and can be circulated to Heads of Churches immediately. In addition a short newsletter is circulated with those minutes that can be distributed to media people within the denomination for a wider readership.

3.8 Relationships with the SACC

In recent years there has been little contact between the CUC and the SACC. Attempts in recent years to set up a meeting between the executives of the two bodies have not materialised. It is hoped that the new signs of life within the SACC will move towards a renewal of the presence of an Observer of the SACC at meetings of the Central Committee of the CUC will be resumed.

4. Development of Trajectories of Unity

4.1 Mission and Ministry at Local Level

It is important to make people aware of the importance of building relationships between congregations at local level. Too often the relationships are dependent upon the local ministers and with the movement of clergy within denominations this can mean that the lay members of congregations are often not part of any ecumenical activities.

Of particular importance are opportunities for congregations to meet together on occasions such as the Women's World Day of Prayer, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Ascension to Pentecost), Maundy Thursday, Ash Wednesday. Such occasions are a wonderful witness within the community.

There is also merit in developing opportunities for congregations to combine together in projects serving the community – food kitchens, environmental projects, school after care. It is hoped that many such projects will be showcased at regional and National Consultations over the next two years.

4.2 Development of Common Preaching and Liturgical Resources

The Central Committee has strongly supported the publication of “Word and Worship” and “Woord en Fees”. This includes encouraging writers for both publications as well as the distribution of the finished product. For both products steps are being considered to enable the electronic distribution of the material for the next edition.

In association with Ekklesia and the Calvin Institute of Worship, a Worship Conference has been planned for March 2015, with the possibility of this becoming the first in a series of Conferences.

4.3 Co-operation in Training Students and Continuing Ministerial Education

At the November meeting of the Central Committee there was a general discussion about this area of ecumenical endeavour. It has been recognised that the questions that have been raised regarding the closure of ecumenical training avenues at FEDSEM and Rhodes University still needed to be answered and dealt with using some form of reconciliation service. It was noted that UNISA and TEE College are the only ecumenical bodies involved in pre-ordination training.

This discussion was broadened to a general discussion that resulted in the Chairman being mandated to initiate a gathering of significant and interested role players in Theological Education in the first quarter of 2015 to explore ways in which opportunities could be developed to encourage cross-pollination across denominations during pre-ordination training. This should also include an exploration of ways in which ministerial formation could be included in such an exercise.

4.4 Centres of Hope

4.4.1 Introduction

Work has continued in the Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng and the North West. Some interest has been indicated from Southern KZN, Lesotho and Swaziland. In Lesotho and Southern KZN, the major emphasis revolves around issues of poverty, whereas the Swaziland context indicates a more political and justice oriented focus.

4.4.2 Methodology

There is no tight one size fits all method of undertaking this work and the invitations into communities have varied from a Church-centred approach to a facilitation through NPO's or through informal conversations that have led to a formal interaction in the community. In some cases engagement with communities has resulted from the direct request of political leadership. Some of this leadership has involved the ruling party and in other instances has engaged emerging political formations or pressure groups.

In most engagements some mapping of the context is required and it is through this that very specific areas of focus often emerge. Broadly speaking the work sought to address issues of poverty, youth empowerment, partnership development, education, health and in some instances engaging a therapeutic intervention.

4.4.3 Overview of Various Engagements

a) North West Province

A fairly significant relationship has been established with the Seriti Institute and this has involved an engagement with the mining industry. What began as a service delivery crisis in Bekkersdal in 2013, compounded by it taking place when matrics were writing their examinations, has developed into the beginning of a skills development programme involving

agriculture and the prospect of creating tertiary education institutions that would empower young people and provide employment for them.

One of the critical functions of the ministry, however, has involved a constant need for mediation between officialdom, industry and the community. In addition, the disparity within Bekkersdal between people in informal settlements and those within the settled community has called for a focused programme to reconcile families where violence has taken lives. This has involved individual counselling and will also hopefully progress to a community healing intervention. The Anglican and Methodist Churches have co-operated strongly in this context.

Interventions have continued in the Marikana context. Meetings with the community at Wonderkop have explored how the community can liberate itself from the domination of the mining industry and create jobs, particularly for families of migrants and foreign nationals.

One of the unique tensions that has emerged here concerns a clinic that is meant to serve 27 000 people. Tribal tensions between the indigenous Tswana people and the Nguni speaking migrants has resulted in discrimination and a growing anger from the locals who perceive that migrant labour receives preferential treatment from the mining industry.

In addition, it is necessary to mediate between the local Chief and the ANC Councillor in the area, as well as to intervene in the relationship between the ANC Councillor and a growing EFF support base.

Sessions are now being asked for by the community at Marikana in the light of many people complaining of symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Some of the most vicious murders in the area have been connected to people whose psyche has been violated and who have not had opportunity for debriefing or any intervention that would address profound levels of anger.

Additional visits have been conducted to several other communities within the platinum belt. Of particular concern was a struggle for service delivery in the Majakaneng village. This community, established in 1994, has approximately 6 000 residents. Very little work has been done by the municipality to ensure recreation and community development. A result is complaints about young people struggling with alcoholism and drug abuse.

It has been possible to engage mining management in trying to address a crisis in water delivery. The Legal Resources Centre have played a part in this context in trying to bring an urgent application to the High Court in regard to water rights. On several occasions attempts to engage the municipality have been treated with humiliating rejection. Consultation with the mining houses has been difficult with the constant threat of closure if continued protest and strikes hinder their operation.

Initial discussions with communities in Schweizer Reineke and Bloemhof in terms of poverty alleviation and youth development have begun. This work came as a result of an initial engagement with mothers whose children had died allegedly because of contaminated water. This particular tragedy has been referred to the Human Rights Commission, whose initial response to the mothers was appropriately empathic. Unfortunately, it has been impossible to connect with the official that dealt with the matter and although hopes were raised of some further action nothing has transpired.

In co-operation with the Seriti Institute some creative work is beginning to be done in the Bokfontein and Brits area, in terms of the development of agriculture. The North West Department of Agriculture have facilitated a meeting with emerging black farmers in the area to start exploring how they can be supported in effective harvesting of crops and further trained in management, marketing and quality control skills. The Department of Agriculture of the Pretoria University are also to be engaged in providing expert counsel to the area in trying to develop co-operatives and ensure products that can be considered for national and international distribution.

b) **Gauteng**

Consultations with Church and community leadership have been conducted in Olievenhoutbosch and Alexandra. In Olievenhoutbosch a major concern has been the exponential development of a residential area with inadequate provision of services, particularly with regard to health and youth empowerment. Unemployment raises the concern of crime proliferation and leaders in the community are particularly engaged in wanting to explore skills development and small entrepreneurial projects to address issues of hopelessness.

The initial call to the Alexandra Community came from threats of xenophobia. Peace Action has been particularly engaged in this situation in trying to understand the community's attitude to foreign nationals and to analyse the sources of anger causing violence. Some of the apparent motivators seem to come from the criminalization of foreign nationals by officials as well as a sense of "stealing our jobs and occupying our space" among locals.

Further developments with the community on issues of job creation have begun to explore questions around land ownership and restitution. This conversation will lead to engagement with several of the factories bordering Alexandra.

Quite obviously the ministry to refugees in the inner city has created a place of hope for foreign nationals as well as displaced South Africans seeking refuge from poverty and discrimination. A primary focus in this ministry has been to provide skills training, education and job opportunities with the intention of integrating those who are marginalized into the wider South African community.

c) Free State

In 2013 an outbreak of xenophobic violence led to an introduction to the Zamdela community, a township outside Sasolburg. Unfortunately Church leadership in this context has not co-operated in any shape or form with the attempt to intervene but through connections with the Khulumani Support Group, access to community leadership made dialogue possible.

Besides raising the consciousness around xenophobia in the community and alternative ways of dealing with these issues, the community also exposed the fact that an entire RDP village has been constructed with no ablution facilities. Some attempt has been made to engage with the Premier, but this has not led to resolution. The Legal Resources Centre are exploring legal alternatives for the community.

Work in cooperation with attorney Richard Spoor has engaged us in a class action against industry relating to high incidence of respiratory disease and leukaemia resulting from unsuitable work conditions. Obviously, the work of the class action involves far more communities than just Zamdela.

An invitation has also been received from clergy in Bloemfontein who want to explore further the implications and possibilities of the creation of places of hope in that area.

d) Eastern Cape

Work in the Eastern Cape was initiated through a community leader from Cradock confronting the dilemma of poverty. After many sessions of discussion with community members and leaders from the business forum there is the hope that Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Rhodes University and Fort Hare University will engage in an exploration of what circular economy can be established in Cradock to create jobs and enable the community to benefit from economic development in the Karoo. Furthermore, the exploration into the establishment of a TVET College with training in appropriate skills for the developments planned in the area is being investigated.

In Walmer township in Port Elizabeth work is being done among young people to try to help them to take responsibility for development in their community. One of the most difficult issues to overcome here is the fact that so many attempts have failed in this township that

levels of cynicism and anger complicate the creative dialogue that must be held to open spaces of hope.

Trevor Jennings has initiated interaction with approximately eighty clergy, amongst them leaders of denominations. This work envisages the training of religious leaders in more effective community interaction and mediation skills. It is also hoped that careful planning aimed at ensuring that each ward in the Nelson Mandela Metropole has at least one representative in this work will come to fruition. The partnership involved here includes the Project for Conflict Resolution and Development (PCRD), NMMU, SAFA and Medius (a mediation facility).

In cooperation with the LRC and PCRD, engagement with communities on education needs has been undertaken. Idutywa, Pearston, Nieu Bethesda, Kirkwood and Jeffreys Bay have been the focus of this interaction. Equal Education has indicated that they would want to explore further avenues of partnership.

Jeffreys Bay and Nieu Bethesda do not have secondary schools in their communities and learners experience severe difficulties in accessing transport to school, or accommodation in areas which allows learners access to schooling. Towards the end of 2014, there was anxiety as to whether the school in Pearston could be kept open because of issues of staffing and financial viability.

Problems in the Transkei pertain to early childhood development, inappropriate facilities and inadequate staffing. In Kirkwood the major concern is overcrowding and inadequate facilities for learners.

As in places in the other provinces, service delivery problems have dominated attention. For instance, in Kirkwood the irresponsible lack of maintenance of the sewage works has resulted in sewage contaminating drinking water. As in Zamdela RDP houses have been constructed without proper sanitation infrastructure. There is no doubt that the Sundays River Valley could fall victim to a health disaster if proper repairs are not undertaken urgently. Attempts are being made to engage in mediation role in Kirkwood with the Municipal Manager.

Work on development and issues relating to poverty have begun to be discussed in the communities of Hankey, Patensie, Humansdorp, Jeffreys Bay and Kirkwood. What is emerging is an urgent need for the development of a cadre of facilitators who can intentionally continue work on the feelings of desperation within communities between visits by developers from the networks in Port Elizabeth.

4.4.4 Conclusion

There is no doubt that the present injustices exposed by poverty and particularly the dangerous levels of alienation experienced by large numbers of young people who face no real opportunity for their future, must confront the Churches with an existential crisis. There could hardly be institutions in society with more potential than that which gathers in our churches Sunday by Sunday and yet the present disparities are an insult to the integrity of the gospel.

Furthermore, speaking pragmatically, the present dangers to the stability of our country will lead to violence and tragic loss of life as people ultimately think that they have nothing more to lose. Our petty differences as denominations continue to bedevil our effectiveness and our insignificant power struggles belie the potential of our truth. Our imperative remains to preach good news to the poor.

4.5 Doctrinal Issues including Questions of Oversight

Dr. Jim Harris has agreed to chair the Doctrine Commission which will be exploring questions of oversight and full communion as well as a number of projects referred to the CUC by Member Churches. The full list includes:

- Ministry of Oversight

- The Question of Full Communion
- UPCSAs Statement on Sexism and Language
- The Problem of Indiscriminate Baptism

Member Churches have been asked to nominate three members each to this committee which plans to meet in the Western Cape.

5. Regional and National Consultations Planned

6.1 Regional Consultations – 2015

The preparations for the second national Unity and Mission Consultation have already started, and it was suggested to each of the four meetings with regional leaders during 2014 that it would be helpful if during 2015 they arranged a Regional Consultation at which they could discuss particular issues pertaining to the region, and also begin to think about the theme, “What will the Church look like in 2040?”

The Regional Consultations would be an opportunity for the regional leaders and representatives to spend time considering particular aspects of ecumenical work in the region, a look ahead to 2040, and to identify projects that could be showcased at the National Consultation in 2016.

Suggested dates for these Consultations were:

- Western Cape May
- KwaZulu-Natal June
- Gauteng August
- Eastern Cape September

It is suggested that these Consultations be held on a Friday afternoon and Saturday. The Friday afternoon could be an opportunity for regional leaders to spend time together looking at issues that they need to address, while the Saturday would be an opportunity for clerical and lay representatives to discuss together:

1. The Trajectories of Unity and their application to the Region;
2. An awareness of the needs of the local communities;
3. Examples of best practice in the Church’s Mission in the local communities;
4. Interact with the United Churches in the Region.

6.2 Second National Consultation – August 2016

The Second National Unity and Mission Consultation is planned for August 2016, and it is hoped that the Member Churches and Observer Churches will appoint representatives to continue with the engagement with the Trajectories of Unity as we look towards the shape of the Church in 2040. The official representatives would be joined by any additional persons who might contribute to those discussions.

It is also planned that this Consultation will also provide a platform for presentation and discussion around best examples of local practice of the united Church serving the needs of the local communities in which they are established.

As happened in 2013, it is also hoped that there would be fair representation from United Churches to promote discussion around the relationship between the United Churches and the Member and Observer Churches.

6. Women’s Committee

With the number of attendees at our meetings dwindling, it was decided to embark on a new path to try and encourage the women to embrace the ministry of Church Unity. Feedback received was that the formal structure of our meetings was not inspiring the ladies to go back to their organisations and report on the work carried out.

Following this new approach, two very successful workshops were held. The first was presented by Revd. Glynis Goyns (UPCSA) and considered ways in which local congregations could engage

with the environmental challenges that faced us all. The workshop was very well attended, and those present participated in the discussions with great interest and insight. A large number of the ladies who attended, have shown interest in the work of the WCUC and have requested to be placed on our mailing list for any future meetings/workshops. Whilst the Group reports were rather diverse in ideas, there was one voice as to the role women should play going forward. Revd. Glynis Goyns is to be thanked for facilitating an amazing and enlightening morning.

Revd Keith Griffiths very kindly presented a workshop on Liturgy at our July meeting, and I would like to thank him, most sincerely, for his time and most interesting insight. This was a very exciting step forward and in view of the response we received, I would like to see this workshop repeated in perhaps a year from now.

The change in format of our meetings has definitely rekindled interest in the work of the WCUC. Going forward, we would like to continue along the current lines and be very aware of what the women's organisations, within the CUC, will find them encouraging, uplifting and practical.

7. Election of Office Bearers - 2014- 2016

At the March meeting the Central Committee elected new Office Bearers for the next three year term. The following persons were elected:

Chair	Revd. Peter Langerman	UPCSA
Vice-Chair	Revd. Thulani Ndlazi	UCCSA
EXCO	Revd. Paul Verryn	MCSA
EXCO	Ven. Vicentia Kgabe	ACSA

The appointment of the Ven. Kgabe as principal of the College of the Transfiguration in Grahamstown will necessitate the secondment of a representative of ACSA to the EXCO at the first meeting of the Central Committee in March 2015.

8. Conclusions

2014 was a very busy year for the Central Committee, much of which was identifying areas that needed attention. These have been set out in this report which will be circulated to the Member Churches for response and action where applicable.

It is hoped that there will be feedback and suggestions as to the best way in which the areas of concern will be able to be addressed directly with the Central Committee as well as through the Regional Consultations during 2015 so that the second Unity and Mission Consultation planned for August 2016 will help to provide additional impetus to the movement towards the unity for which our Lord prayed in John 17.

Keith Griffiths
Secretary General

Peter Langerman
Chair: Central Committee