



muylathina takila-ti Le:wun tunk-ungai tuldangk tunk-ungai  
Ola ma tumau i le alofa' 사랑 안에서 살기 Tinggal di dalam Kasih  
Nofoma'u i he Ofa 愛中合居



## Member Proposal

### 41 Moving Forward in Being a Multicultural Church

That the Assembly resolve to:

1. Adopt the 3rd Sunday in July (or another date best suited to the local setting) as 'Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday', to celebrate UCA being a Multicultural Church and to create an opportunity for congregations and faith communities to connect and build relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in their neighbourhoods. This Sunday is to replace One Great Sunday of Sharing\*.
2. Request the Assembly Standing Committee to develop a process to create liturgical, theological, and practical materials as resources for the wider church in its celebration of Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday and seeking to be an Intercultural Neighbourhood Church within the current triennium, in consultation with National Conferences and relevant Assembly Circles.
3. Request the Assembly Standing Committee, liaising with other parts of the Church, to move towards simpler, friendlier, and more equitable church structures, processes, and ways of working that foster CALD participation and intercultural partnership by:
  - (a) Reviewing the NATIONAL PROPERTY POLICY FOR THE UCA with regard to clause 1.2.: "Where a UCA congregation is sharing property with a non-UCA congregation, Faith Community or Fellowship Group"; and,
  - (b) Reviewing the Regulations relating Faith Communities (3.9.2) and produce an Assembly Protocol/Guideline for receiving/recognising Faith Communities/Congregations from other CALD churches.
4. Encourage Synod Placement Committees and Presbytery Pastoral Relation Committees to review and revise the Minister Leadership Profile Form and Congregation Placement Profile to reflect the ethos and characteristics expressed in Living with the Neighbour Who is Different (9th Assembly, 2000) and One Body Many Members: Living faith and life cross culturally (13th Assembly, 2012).

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## Rationale:

The Uniting Church seeks to be open to changes that the Holy Spirit will bring to the church because of the creative contributions of people of different racial and cultural groups to its life (We Are A Multicultural Church, 1985).

The Uniting Church in Australia declared itself a multicultural church in 1985 and has always encouraged and supported growth in cultural diversity across the Church. In response to Australia's increasingly multicultural contexts and led by the Holy Spirit, the Assembly has adopted three key statements and accompanying policies and resources: We Are A Multicultural Church (4th Assembly, 1985); A Church for all God's People (11th Assembly, 2006); One Body, Many Members: Living faith and life cross culturally (13th Assembly, 2012). In his 2015 Presidential message for the 38th Anniversary of the inauguration of the Uniting Church in Australia, Rev Prof Andrew Dutney said:

“God is calling us to be a church which is culturally and linguistically diverse at its core –not essentially British with add-ons from other cultures. The church is called to be “a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole” (The Basis of Union, paragraph 3) and that includes the “diverse gifts” showered upon us through being a multicultural church.”

In 2020 the Assembly Standing Committee approved a new three-year Assembly Strategic Plan (2020-2023), which was developed over a series of sessions with the Standing Committee and an online survey to which over 500 people responded. In it, “Intercultural: Learn from and enable diverse cultural groups within the church to flourish together” is one of five pillars. It has four action plans: Engage National Conferences, Develop A Vision for Intercultural Ministry, Collate and Publicise Language Resources, and Support Engagement of Congress with National Conferences.

Because of global migration and the presence of growing migrant and Diaspora CALD churches who came from across the globe and from all Christian traditions, Australian Christianity has become a microcosm of World Christianity. Yet the Uniting Church in Australia at local contexts still lag far behind their neighbourhoods and other community institutions in reflecting cultural diversity within the life of the Church. According to 2016 National Census, the Uniting Church has a small proportion of its people born overseas compared to other churches or the general population. A recent research shows that there are significant gaps between the high level of support for the UCA's vision of being a multicultural church and the actual extent of the implementation of the Church's statements and resolutions at its local congregational levels (See a research report from SA Synod, Mapping Intercultural Neighbourhoods in SA: CALD-Intercultural Ministry Survey 2021). In response to these challenges, we need to discern where God is taking the church on the next stage of its unfolding journey in shaping the future of the Church.

For moving forward in being a multicultural church, it is vital for local communities of worship, witness, service to connect and build relationships with CALD communities (both UCA and non-UCA) in their neighbourhoods. Thus, it is recommended to foster an intentionally intercultural engagement and ecumenical-missional partnership with CALD faith communities in local neighbourhoods based on a “unity of faith and life in Christ which



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transcends cultural, economic, national and racial boundaries” (The Basis of Union, paragraph 2) that is characterised by reciprocity, receptive ecumenism, just hospitality and interculturality. Interculturality moves beyond a multicultural approach and aspires to more intentional embracing of our diversity in the Body of Christ: bring people of various cultures together to learn from one another, giving equal value and power to each culture, preserving cultural differences, celebrating and integrating them in forging a new culture within a community.

To bridge the current gap between the Church’s aspirations in the above-mentioned Assembly statements and its embodiment in local congregational life and ministry, it is recommended to review and revise the Minister Leadership Profile Form and Congregation Placement Profile to reflect the commitments and characteristics expressed in the relevant Assembly declarations.

A shared use of property is the main connecting point with CALD faith communities, and it can/should be taken as opportunities for forming relationships. Among 55 participating UCA congregations in 2021 SA Survey, 17 congregations (30%) have a CALD faith community who are worshipping at their church premise. But only six of their congregations are engaging with those CALD groups or undertaking combined/shared activities. ‘Tenant-Landlord’ type of relationships are still dominant. More than 20 Uniting Church congregations in South Australia have a non-UCA CALD group meeting for worship at their church premise. For the last two years, two CALD groups in SA have applied to become a Faith Community and been recognised by Presbyteries, and one CALD church is seeking to become part of the UCA. In response to increasing engagement of non-UCA CALD faith communities in the life of UCA, careful review of related Property policies and relevant Regulations are needed to move towards simpler, friendlier, and more equitable church structures, processes, and ways of working that foster CALD participation and intercultural partnership. It enables both Anglo-Celtic congregations and CALD faith communities to flourish and participate in the mission of God as co-pilgrims toward a promised goal that is a renewed and reconciled world.

**\*Note:**

The One Great Sunday of Sharing was initiated by Rev John Mavor and held first on 21 July 1996. Commemorating the Assembly's declaration that the Uniting Church in Australia is a multicultural Church, the idea was to experience cultural diversity and a cross-cultural event through members becoming involved in bilingual worship and sharing with culturally different congregations. The Assembly Committee on Multicultural Ministry (CMM) resolved in November 1997 that this great event should continue and requested that the ASC approve it as a national multicultural Sunday of the Uniting Church. (Minutes of the CMM, 29 November 1997, 5-6.) The approval was given in May 1998 (Minutes of the CMM, 11-13 May 1998, 4-5). Of the 55 participating congregations in SA 2021 survey, 58% responded they never observed this One Great Sunday of Sharing; 25% observed some years and 15% once. Only 2% said they are observing every year.