
97.32 TASK GROUP ON THE REVIEW OF MINISTERIAL EDUCATION

The report was presented by Chris Budden (convener) and members of the task group.

The Assembly resolved:

97.32.01 to receive the report;

97.32.02 to affirm that the vision for all education for Ministry in the Uniting Church includes:

- participation of the whole people of God in the mission of God revealed in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit;
- the centrality of the Scriptures in the life of the Church and the work of ministry (Basis of Union paras 5 & 11);
- the importance of lifelong learning and formation in the Christian life for all people;
- the shared ministry of the people of God;

97.32.03 to affirm the six goals for Ministerial education set out in section 5.1 of the report, noting that the Uniting Church seeks to form Ministers who:

- (a) have a deep faith in Jesus Christ, are committed to growth in their own faith and to a spirituality that will sustain their lives;
- (b) have a critical understanding of the nature of ministry and mission, and an appreciation of the importance of a conscious commitment to and participation in the task of mission through worship, witness and service;

- (c) have a critical knowledge of the Christian tradition, and are able to help the Church shape its future in the light of that tradition;
- (d) are equipped to help the Church discover its identity and lead the Church in mission in a rapidly changing and diverse cultural and social context;
- (e) have skills for the practice of day-to-day Ministry, and the quality of being and awareness which gives integrity to the exercise of such skills;
- (f) are able to engage the tasks of Ministry with critical imagination, courage, theological judgement and self-reflection;

and who exercise this Ministry within the ministry of the whole people of God;

97.32.04 to affirm the essential principles set out below, which are detailed in section 6.1 of the report:

- (a) Ministry involves individual and social formation in a number of dimensions including spiritual, personal, theological and vocational;
- (b) Ministry education is a lifelong process;
- (c) Ministry education needs to involve appropriate adult education processes;
- (d) the discernment of God's call is an ongoing personal and communal process;
- (e) Ministerial education needs to occur within an inclusive community;
- (f) people bring a wealth of previous experience and learning which needs to be acknowledged;
- (g) mentoring is crucial at each stage of preparation for ministry;
- (h) assessment needs to be based on evidence that a person has achieved certain agreed outcomes;
- (i) people should receive appropriate recognition for completion of each stage of preparation for ministry;

97.32.05 to adopt the four phase framework of education for specified Ministries set out in section 6.2 of the report as the program to be followed in Ministerial education:

- Phase One: a period of discernment
- Phase Two: the core program
- Phase Three: the licensed year
- Phase Four: continuing education;

97.32.06 to ask each Ministerial Education Board to explore how more flexible patterns of training in phase two may be implemented to assist candidates from isolated areas or for whom travel to a theological college is not easy, such as "block attendance" or "intermittent attendance" coupled with distance theological education;

97.32.07 (a) to request the Standing Committee, on the advice of the Legal Reference Committee, to approve the following amendments to Regulations:

- (i) the method of selection of candidates (as in Section 10.3 of the Report), and authorisation of presbyteries to license candidates preparing for ordination, to provide

oversight as they undertake a year of Ministry, and to share in the assessment of their readiness for ordination on completion of that year;

- (ii) additions to Regulation 3.4.4 (the responsibilities of presbyteries), to include the task of presbyteries regarding the licensed year (Section 6.2.3);
 - (iii) amendment to Regulation 2.2.16 to provide for membership of the Ministerial Education Commission as set out in Section 12.2 of the Report;
- (b) to request the Standing Committee to explore the possibility of national co-ordination and/or networking regarding the number of candidates for Minister of the Word, Deacon and Youth Worker;
- (c) to request the Ministerial Education Commission to:
- (i) ensure that all colleges provide for the study and practice of the theology and planning of local mission and evangelism and that this study be compulsory for all candidates;
 - (ii) ensure that each theological college demonstrate to the Ministerial Education Commission how the college's developing curriculum, educational methods and variety of courses enables the Church to achieve its goals for Ministerial education, with particular reference to the way people develop their understanding of Scripture as evangelical word, to mission and evangelism, and to the practical skills needed for Ministry (Section 6.2.2 (b) of the report);
 - (iii) ensure that each college continues to develop adult learning processes in the planning and presentation of courses, and enables college staff to extend their skills in adult education principles and processes;
 - (iv) explore ways in which the appointment of a Deacon Education Co-ordinator may be made to assist all colleges to prepare annual events and to keep an up-to-date listing of resources, and to report to the Standing Committee (the need for the position to be reviewed after five years by the Ministerial Education Commission) (Section 7);
 - (v) explore ways in which the appointment of a Youth Worker Education Co-ordinator may be made to assist the colleges and Ministerial Education Boards, and to report to the Standing Committee (the need for the position to be reviewed after five years by the Ministerial Education Commission);
 - (vi) report to the Ninth Assembly on the changes that have occurred, and what further changes are required;
- (d) notwithstanding Regulation 2.2.18(a), to provide for membership of the executive of the Ministerial Education Commission for one member of the Task Group for a period of three years;

97.32.08 to require all Ministers and Youth Workers to enter into three to five year continuing education agreements with their presbytery or other appointing body in order to fulfil their responsibility in section 3.4(a) of the Interim Code of Ethics;

97.32.09 to request synods, Ministerial Education Boards and colleges to consider as a matter of urgency ways of takings up the issues discussed in Section 9 of the report;

97.32.10 to recommend to synods and college governing bodies that they adopt the following policies:

- (a) that, wherever possible, the colleges continue to provide education for ministry in an ecumenical context (Section 10.7);
- (b) that faculty appointments normally be made for an initial term of seven years and that following review re-appointments for terms of five years may be made. The review of appointments should keep in mind the university and ecumenical contexts, and the range of expertise available across all the colleges in the UCA (Section 10.2);
- (c) that guidelines for study/sabbatical leave be in place (with particular consideration given to some leave being taken in a parish or other settlement) and that one of these guidelines is that staff be required to provide a report to the college and Ministerial Education Board/Commission at the completion of the leave (Section 10.2);
- (d) that colleges formally and systematically encourage those who are suitable to undertake postgraduate study, to offer advice about areas of study that may bring benefit for the life and mission of the Church and, with the synod, seek funds to assist this study (Section 10.5);

97.32.11 to refer to the Ministerial Education Commission the proposal:

that all colleges provide for the intentional study of the theology and practice of ecumenism, and that this study be compulsory for all candidates;

and that the MEC report to the Standing Committee, and that the Standing Committee be authorised to take decisions;

97.32.12 to recommend to synods that they consult together on the levels of Educational Assistance Grants, so that the differences between synods may be lessened;

97.32.13 to commend the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress for the work that it has done in assessing theological education for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders and encourage the Congress to continue to:

- (a) assess the character, skills and knowledge which will be needed by Aboriginal and Islander candidates for ministry in each region of the Congress;
- (b) hold discussions with Nungalinga College and other Uniting Church theological colleges about any additional options needed in theological education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander candidates, particularly those who will minister in non-traditional cultural situations;
- (c) make recommendations to the Ministerial Education Commission (Section 8).

97.33 **UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHRISTIAN CONGRESS and COVENANT STEERING COMMITTEE**

The Assembly was addressed by Sir Ronald Wilson, President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and former Assembly President, and by Sealin Garlett, Congress Minister in Western Australia who was separated from his family as a child.

The reports were presented by Shayne Blackman (national administrator), John Brown (national covenant coordinator), and other members of the Congress and committee.

The Assembly resolved: