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August 30 2006

## PRESBYTERY SECRETARIES

Dear Colleagues,

As many of you will be aware the Reforming Alliance has been proposing to develop an organisation known as the Assembly of Confessing Congregations. The information shared in meetings, the media and through official Reforming Alliance and EMU channels has raised a number of questions about the objectives of the organisation and how this group will relate to the official Councils of the Uniting Church.

Less well known, but certainly communicated through the Reforming Alliance and its members, is the fact that Reforming Alliance has received legal advice. This advice leads Reforming Alliance to claim that the decisions of the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly in relation to sexuality and leadership are invalid or irregular.

The National Executive of Reforming Alliance wrote to the Assembly Standing Committee and made a series of requests in the light of their legal advice. The Assembly Standing Committee meeting held over the weekend of August 25 to 27 addressed itself to the correspondence received from the Reforming Alliance dated August 1 and 25, and to consideration of the legal advice provided to it by the National Executive of the Reforming Alliance. Having received advice from the Assembly's legal advisers the Standing Committee denies the validity of the claims made by Reforming Alliance.

The Standing Committee gave serious consideration to the issues and questions that were put before it. After long and careful discussion the Standing Committee came to the views that are expressed in the resolution that is enclosed with this letter. The Standing Committee decision indicates its willingness for representatives to meet with representatives of the National Executive of the Reforming Alliance to discuss this resolution and additional questions that the Standing Committee has in relation to the proposed Assembly of Confessing Congregations. When the Assembly has a response to these questions it will offer further advice to the Church. The proposed Assembly of Confessing Congregations has no status within the church.

Members of the Assembly Standing Committee were very concerned for the pastoral dimensions of this issue. They are very aware that there are members of the church who are still working through the way they can live and work within the worship, witness and service of the Uniting Church. Standing Committee believes that clear guidance is one of the pastoral responses that it can offer to the church.

I request that you make this correspondence and the resolutions of the Assembly Standing Committee known to Ministers, persons serving in the Specified Ministries and Church Council Secretaries.

Grace and Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Terence Corkin". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Terence Corkin  
Assembly General Secretary

Cc: Extract from the unconfirmed minutes of the Assembly Standing Committee.

Unconfirmed minute of the Assembly Standing Committee, August 25 – 27 2006.

The Assembly Standing Committee resolved to:

1. receive the report on the meeting held between representatives of EMU, Reforming Alliance, the Assembly and Synods held in Sydney on 21 August 2006;
2. receive the correspondence from Reforming Alliance dated 1 and 25 August 2006;
3.
  - (a) note that it has received from Reforming Alliance a copy of a legal opinion obtained by Reforming Alliance which asserts that decisions of the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly in respect of sexuality and leadership are invalid or irregular;
  - (b) note Reforming Alliance's request that the Assembly and Reforming Alliance make a joint approach to a Court for a determination on the validity of decisions of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Assemblies in respect of sexuality and leadership;
4.
  - (a) note the advice received from the Assembly's legal advisers denies the validity of the claims made by Reforming Alliance;
  - (b) concur with the advice received from the Assembly's legal advisors;
  - (c) affirm the belief that it is not appropriate for members of the Church to take their theological differences to a civil court, nor would such action be a helpful witness to the reconciling work of Christ;
  - (d) decline the request of the Reforming Alliance to make a joint approach to a Court for a determination on the validity of decisions of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Assemblies in respect of sexuality and leadership;
5. inform the presbyteries and wider church of this decision;
6. advise Reforming Alliance that its requests to establish a commission of inquiry to look into doctrinal questions on sexuality; to rescind ASC minute 03.69.03.01; to provide copies of video recordings and transcripts of the meetings of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Assemblies; and to establish a tribunal to address disagreements about the Constitution are declined;
7. subject to advice from our legal advisers offer the National Reforming Alliance Executive and other persons determined by the Assembly Officers a copy of the opinion received from the Assembly's legal advisors on the same conditions under which the ASC received a copy of their legal opinion;
8. invite representatives of the National Reforming Alliance Executive to meet with ASC representatives to discuss further questions on the proposed Assembly of Confessing Congregations and this resolution;
9.
  - a) advise members and councils of the UCA that the proposed Assembly of Confessing Congregations has no status within the councils of the Church; and
  - b) authorise the Assembly Officers, after receiving further information from Reforming Alliance, to make a statement to guide members, congregations and presbyteries in relation to the proposed Assembly of Confessing Congregations.