

South Australian Council of Churches Inc

Affiliated with the National Council of Churches in Australia



Annual Report July 2016 – June 2017

Community for Ecumenical Learning [CEL]

The Committee met five times during this period. The following topics occupied our energy and time. The Community for Ecumenical Learning [CEL], in collaboration and consultation with others, helps to encourage, facilitate and nurture the formation of an ecumenical disposition, the growth of ecumenical learning and the practice of ecumenical leadership, for individuals and institutionally across the member churches.

The existence of the CEL represents a considerable development in the life of the SACC. A “community” of ecumenical learners (as distinct from a “committee”) moves within the activities of the SACC. Many people from the member churches participate in ecumenical learning.

Ecumenical Learning

Two definitions of ecumenical learning published by the World Council of Churches are:

Learning which enables people, while remaining rooted in one tradition of the church, to become open and responsive to the richness and perspective of other churches, so that they become more active in seeking unity, openness and collaboration between churches.

Ecumenical learning is a process by which:

- diverse groups and individuals;
- well-rooted in their own faith, traditions, cultures and contexts;
- are enabled to risk honest encounters with one another before God;
- as they study and struggle together in community;
- with personally relevant issues;
- in light of the scriptures, the traditions of their faith, worship and global realities;
- resulting in communal action in faithfulness to God’s intention for the unity of the church and humankind, and for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation (Oxley 2002, 12-13).

Ecumenical learning is learning from Christ’s prayer, learning an ecumenical attitude from Christ in John 17: 20 – 23. One description of an ecumenical attitude used within the life the SACC is, “An attitude of hospitality, openness to the Spirit and respect for one another in the name of Christ”.

As will be noted in the events mentioned in this report, ecumenical learning is as much about communal/community learning, when we encounter with the “other”, as it is about individual learning.

Visit to Adelaide of the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC), The Rev’d Dr Olav Fykse Tveit.

On his Australian tour last year the General Secretary, an ordained pastor in the Church of Norway, joined about 80 people at the St Mary and Anba Bishoy Coptic Orthodox Church in Cowandilla, Friday 14th October, 9.30am-3pm, 2016. This was an enriching time of ecumenical learning, Coptic Orthodox worship and hospitality, a presentation by Dr Olav, a panel conversation and a discussion with Church leaders. In his new book, Dr Olav wrote about an outcome from his own ecumenical learning, namely the concept of mutual accountability, which functions as a key criterion for the quality of relations

within the Christian fellowship of churches across the world; holding each other accountable as members of the “body of Christ.” He defined **Mutual Accountability**:

Mutual accountability comprehends reliability, faithfulness, trustfulness, solidarity, openness, ability to give and take constructive critique and receptivity. These elements are interrelated and to some extent integrated.
(Tveit 2016, 333).

SACC 70th Birthday Celebrations with the Theme: *An Exchange of Gifts on the Journey towards Unity* was held on Saturday 29 April 2017, 10am-3.30pm, over 100 people participating. SACC had invited the communities of four city churches – Pilgrim (Uniting), St Francis Xavier (Roman Catholic), St Mary Magdalene’s (Anglican) and St Stephen’s (Lutheran) – to host a pilgrimage to enable General Council and people from across the churches to gather and celebrate these seventy years. This Pilgrimage experience of walking, conversing, eating and worshipping together was impressive, positive and inspirationally grounded in the Presence of Christ evident amongst the participants and in all the Churches visited. Thank you. It was fun.

A CEL event entitled *Exchange of Gifts: Reimagining our Unity in Christ through Receptive Ecumenism* was held 8 July, 2017, 9.30am-12 noon at St John the Baptist Parish Centre 342 Anzac Highway, Plympton. This was an holistic, collaborative and reflective learning process using a fishbowl technique, capably facilitated by Geraldine Hawkes. The interactive conversation amongst the 21 participants from member churches focused on the learning question: How does your Church welcome newcomers, nurture hospitality and nourish an active congregation? Four responders (from the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Uniting Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church) opened the conversation by sharing what they had learnt about the learning question from listening to answers that people from other churches gave. Other participants then entered the conversation, which gradually moved through information and content learning towards deep ecumenical learning on hospitality, welcoming and growing an active congregation.

The Fourth International Conference on Receptive Ecumenism will be held in Canberra 6-7 November 2017. ELC members supported the SACC Ecumenical Facilitator in the ongoing conversations about the planning of this exciting REIV Conference in Australia. The Conference is entitled *Leaning into the Spirit: discernment, decision-making and reception*. Publicity about the Conference is available. So far about 80 participants have registered and that number includes 20 from South Australia (SA); seven from SA are presenting seminar papers too. Expect to hear more from Conference participants in a follow-up activity next year.

2018 Ecumenical Lenten e-Resource

The SACC Ecumenical Lenten Resource Team has prepared a resource for 2018 entitled, *A Lenten Pilgrimage to the Heart*. For six weeks the Gospel for the Sunday is read through the Trinitarian and Christological vision. Reflections and discussion starters are provided for each week. Guidelines for group leaders and participants are available. This online resource will help participants to undertake their Lenten journey and grow in their faith.

Ecumenism: then and now

A question asked by individuals and churches in a previous era of ecumenism (pre 2008) was:
What do others need to learn from us, from our church, if we are to make real progress?

A question asked by churches and individuals in the present era of ecumenism is:

What can we – and what do we need to – learn and receive, with integrity, from the other Christian traditions?

The second question is examined in more detail in the SACC 2012 Publication *Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands: The promise and potential of Receptive Ecumenism*.

Questions for anyone reading this Report to answer (voluntary)

How am I going with my ecumenical learning as a member of the SACC Community for Ecumenical Learning?

Over the last year do you believe that you personally have grown in your ecumenical learning? (in terms of your knowledge or understanding or application or all three aspects)

Tick a response below.

- No growth
 - Little growth
 - Some growth
 - Much growth
 - Very much growth

Membership

We thank all those who have led, participated in and enabled the CEL activities. The seven members of the working group are:

Rev'd Dr John Littleton [Anglican Diocese of Adelaide]

Dr Heshmat Keroloss [Coptic Orthodox-Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions]

Ms Carol Assaad [Coptic Orthodox-Diocese of Melbourne & Affiliated Regions]

Dr Marie Loller [RC Archdiocese of Adelaide]

Ms Mary Camilleri [RC Archdiocese of Adelaide]

Envoy Ted Wright [Salvation Army SA Division]

Mrs Geraldine Hawkes [SACC Ecumenical Facilitator]

References

Oxley, Simon. 2002. *Creative Ecumenical Education: Learning from One Another*.

Geneva: Risk Book Series, World Council of Churches Publication.

Tveit, Olav F. 2016. *The Truth We Owe Each Other: Mutual Accountability in the Ecumenical Movement*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.

21/8/2017

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SA Council of Churches: nurturing and nourishing the understanding, spiritual growth and practice of ecumenism across the Churches of South Australia



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Community for Local Ecumenism [CLE]

In the past year the Members of Community for Local Ecumenism have met bi-monthly with most members attending most meetings, apart from some trips overseas. We have had a consistent agenda (meeting structure) with alternating responsibilities (convenor, study leader, prayer & note-taker) which were rotated amongst all members. Over the last year we have undertaken a study of Antonia Pizzey's "God is Love - Ecumenism of the Heart". This has opened us up to deeper meanings inherent in the practice of Receptive Ecumenism, where ecumenism is:

- About building the kingdom of God through communion with Him and my "neighbour",
- Hospitality towards the other, not a competition where I *must* defend my denomination, and where hospitality is expressed via practical implementations as an outward reflection of "hospitality of the heart". This in turn is...
- A reflection of the abundance of the Lord, and above all a true reflection of ecumenism which centres around and is completely described by...
- God is Love

We have discovered that committing the time to this study has edified us spiritually and brought us closer to God as well as each other. Rather than being a very formal and rigid time, our meetings have become a time of opening up, studying, exchanging viewpoints, building understandings, spiritual growth, exploring new spiritual depths and being hospitable to one another.

Discussing opportunities for ecumenical encounters in our local communities means sharing ideas, with encouragement to try new approaches. Some of the events in our local communities have included a 'church crawl', a country town fair with affordable goods, World Day of Prayer, 'Blue Christmas', and ecumenical Christmas services. Despite the fact that some of these events have been met with apathy and resistance to change by some, they were received keenly by the communities. We pray that the Lord help us in spreading His word and His love via Local Ecumenism.

On another level, and in a spirit of receptive ecumenism, deep discussions take place about the different practices and beliefs common to our individual faiths. Topics have included:

- Coptic Advent or "kiahk",
- Discovering other churches on the 70th anniversary pilgrimage,
- Communion – a personal decision or a church decision and conservatism in religion.

The study of Antonia Pizzey's paper has edified us and made us grow deeper in our knowledge of God and of each other. It has also raised more questions than answers! We can only take this as divine encouragement to delve deeper into:

- The knowledge of our loving God,
- Universal ecumenism (that all may be made one in Him) and
- Knowing and understanding my "neighbour"

To that effect, we have decided upon the book titled, "*The Communion of Love*" by Fr Matthew the Poor, with a forward by Henri Nouwen. We ask that the Lord guide us in this book study and work for the glory of His Holy Name, Amen.

Community for Local Ecumenism

Rev'd Dr Jane Lee-Barker [Anglican]

Ms Bridgid Medder [Catholic]

Mr Pierre Magar [Coptic Orthodox Church – Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions]

Rev Leon Rosenberg [Lutheran]

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Ecumenical Partners for Justice and Peace [EPJP]

This was the first full year of operation of the Standing Committee re-formed as Ecumenical Partners for Justice and Peace (EPJP) with its planned foci for 2016-2018 being:

1. Regular prayer for justice and peace.
2. Promoting justice and peace, especially through the Peace Lamps Project [Middle East] and the Journey to Recognition.
3. Promoting and reviewing stories, events and resources related to justice and peace.
4. Remaining aware of and connected with justice and peace developments and trends in one's own church as well as in the work of others.

This is the current articulation of how, in conjunction with others, we are aiming to promote and celebrate SA Council of Churches (SACC's) Core Purpose: Priority 5.

It was very pleasing that 5 Member Churches were able to appoint members passionate about justice and peace to this committee and meetings have been well attended. We thank retiring member Ms Julie Staszyc (RC Archdiocese of Adelaide) for her contribution to the committee.

The major activity has been 2 fold: the Peace Lamps Project and the Refugee Bequest.

Ecumenical Bequest to assist in the work of Refugees and Displaced Persons

As mentioned in the last annual report, the SACC was left a generous bequest to support activities focussed on refugees.

EPJP developed criteria for disbursement of the bequest and invited applications from organisations seeking funding. Emphasis was placed on projects that would continue, and enhance, the applicant's work with refugees and displaced persons in South Australia.

A small Bequest Committee oversaw the process and reviewed the applications before making recommendations to EPJP. These were subsequently approved by the Executive Committee.

The Bequest Committee will maintain contact with each of the six successful applicants until the projects are completed in 2018.

It is proposed to hold a community celebration during August/September 2018 to feature the outcomes from the projects and highlight the work of the successful applicants and the EPJP.

Peace Lamps and Doves: Symbols of Peace in the Holy Land

We continue to support the Holy Land Peace Project. The aim of the Project is to place a peace lamp in every church in the world and to unite Christians and people of faith in praying and working for peace in the Holy Land. The lamps and doves are hand crafted by young people in Taybeh, a Christian town in Palestine (West Bank). This provides them with not only meaningful work but also with a sense of purpose and mission.

During November/December 2016, Dawn and John Sullivan sold the lamps and doves at an ecumenical event conducted during the Glenelg Christmas Pageant. They also sold them at the Glenelg Catholic parish church after each Mass over a weekend in December. Dawn and John have made themselves available to churches and congregations to explain the Project and to sell the lamps and doves. The Project is promoted regularly on SACC E-News and sales result from this also.

During the past year, 25 lamps, 33 doves and 34 soaps were sold. The total from the sales was approximately \$2,000 with \$100 also received in donations.

For more information, stories or order forms concerning the Project, visit the SACC website www.sacc.asn.au.

Thanks to everyone who bought items or promoted the project.

Journey to Recognition

The Journey to Recognition project has not been a focus at this stage, except for information sharing about the new phase of work being developed by RECOGNISE since the recent milestone of The Uluru Statement from the Heart and the Referendum Council's report to government.

Our main way of promotion has been by inclusion of justice and peace information in the weekly E-News and by adding resources and stories to the website. There seems potential to expand on this in future, especially with resources suitable for Parish newsletters etc.

The committee has been blessed by the sharing of trends and resources in each other's churches, in particular with new insights about the Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee (ACT) and perspectives from the Coptic Orthodox tradition.

We have appreciated the input and support which Geraldine and Melanie continue to give to this committee.

Ecumenical Partners for Justice and Peace

Ms Sarah Moffatt [Catholic]

Ms Kathy McEvoy [Catholic]

Ms Ngaire Llewellyn [Churches of Christ]

Mr Refaat Megalli [Coptic Orthodox Church – Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions]

Ms Millie Stein [Religious Society of Friends]

Dr Jenny Stock [Religious Society of Friends]

Dr Colin Cargill [Justice & Peace Issues]

Ms Pamela Jones [Justice & Peace Issues]

Ms Dawn Sullivan [Justice & Peace Issues]

Mr John Sullivan [Justice & Peace Issues]

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