

South Australian Council of Churches Inc



Annual Report July 2016 – June 2017

Ecumenical Facilitator - Executive Officer

Healing our Broken Life: *Living More Fully our Love and Unity in Christ - in, with, and for our world*

Stories of the main activities during the past twelve months are described in the enclosed Reports from the President and Committees, and will be available at www.sacc.asn.au from mid-October 2017. I encourage you to read them as being informative, comprehensive and encouraging. They reflect the work of many people, especially those appointed by the member churches to the ecumenical council. On behalf of us all, I extend my gratitude for their vision, collaboration and action.

I also refer you to ***Ecumenical Landscape***, which forms the main substance of my Report to you this year, and which is attached to this paper. (Also available at www.sacc.asn.au).

Ecumenical Landscape describes the relationships, recent action and developments around the five SACC Priorities, commitments for the next three years, and what each Church can expect of other SACC Member Churches through being part of an ecumenical council.

General Council, Committees (5), Leaders of Christian Churches SA, and various project groups remain a key part of the work of SACC. Additionally, many individuals, agencies, local congregations, councils, committees and ecumenical bodies across the churches have direct contact with SACC.

As I reflect on the past twelve months at SACC, I am encouraged by all that is being done towards making our unity in Christ more manifest, but also by **who we are becoming as disciples of Christ**.

It seems more than ever that our unity (in diversity) matters. There are many challenges facing the Church in Australia, as there are facing people generally today. Given the complexity of daily life, in a world that remains divided and dualistic in so many ways, the contribution of Christian unity, with the disposition and behaviour that our journey together engenders, appears to be much needed, within and beyond the churches.

Certain words that have marked this year – such as **gift, pilgrimage, hospitality and learning**. Each is apparent in SACC conversations and gatherings, and the following offer a few examples:

SACC 70th Birthday celebrations: Saturday 29 April 2017

Four Adelaide churches - Pilgrim Church [Uniting], St Francis Xavier Cathedral [Catholic], St Mary Magdalene's Church [Anglican] and St Stephen's Church [Lutheran] - welcomed more than 100 people from nine different denominations, leading prayer and offering hospitality, as SA Council of Churches gathered for pilgrimage and story-telling in celebrating 70 years as an ecumenical council.

World Council of Churches – visit of Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary: 14 October 2016

SA Council of Churches, together with 80 local and national church/ecumenical leaders, welcomed Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary, World Council of Churches, to SA for a day of prayer, friendship, conversation and learning. We were hosted by St Mary and Anba Bishoy Coptic Orthodox Church who extended generous and gracious hospitality in many ways.

Port Pirie Diocesan Assembly 2017: 4-5 April 2017

Around two hundred and twenty people gathered for Port Pirie [Roman Catholic] 21st Diocesan Assembly. The focus was ***Building Bridges of Peace (500 years since the Reformation)***. The two days included the presence and active participation of people from several other traditions, a session was dedicated to a panel conversation with leaders from six different churches, and there was prayer together in the Cathedral. I'm unclear as to how often an entire Assembly/Synod is given over to Christian unity, and I was delighted to be invited to be part of the gathering, as a speaker and as a facilitator.

There are many stories to be told from the Assembly, and I was reminded of the words of Bishop John Stead, from the neighbouring Diocese of Willochra [Anglican], who said at SACC AGM November 2016, "Ecumenism happens naturally in rural areas due to dependence on others. Could this need for the other, this dependence, be learned by those in metro areas?"

Receptive Ecumenism - *Leaning into the Spirit: discernment, decision-making and reception*

Last year I expressed the hope that many from SA would participate in the Fourth International Receptive Ecumenism Conference [RE IV], to be held on 6-9 November 2017 in Canberra. At the time of writing, twenty people from South Australia have registered, seven are giving papers, and SACC has been directly involved since pre-concept stage through to planning and arranging content and processes for this international gathering. Conference details: <http://arts-ed.csu.edu.au/centres/accc/projects/2017-conference-receptive-ecumenism>

This year, as we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, the enclosed reports together with *Ecumenical Landscape* illustrate a little of the road the churches have travelled together. May our journey, our **pilgrimage**, continue to be marked by **gift, hospitality and learning**, and lead us to gaze on one another more lovingly, in the same way as God gazes on each one of us.

Geraldine Hawkes

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August 2017

SACC Executive Committee (June 2017)

Mr Peter Burke: Anglican, Chair of Executive

Ms Jill Gallio: Catholic

Ms Ngaire Llewellyn: Churches of Christ

Mr Refaat Georgy: Coptic Orthodox

Fr Silouan Fotineas: Greek Orthodox

Mr Gilbert Materne: Lutheran

Rev Rob Williams: President/Ecumenical Delegate

The Rev'd Dr John Littleton: Vice-President/Ecumenical Delegate

Dr Marie Loller: Vice-President

Mr Neil Traeger: Treasurer

Members of South Australian Council of Churches

Anglican Church of Australia - Dioceses of Adelaide and of Willochra; Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide and Catholic Diocese of Port Pirie; Churches of Christ in SA/NT; Coptic Orthodox Church-Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia – District of SA & NT; Lutheran Church of Australia - SA/NT District; Religious Society of Friends SA/NT Regional Meeting; Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of Australia/New Zealand – SA Parish; Salvation Army SA Division; St Urael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church in SA Inc; Uniting Church in SA

SA Council of Churches - nurturing and nourishing the understanding, spiritual growth and practice of ecumenism across the Churches of SA