

South Australian Council of Churches Inc

Affiliated with the National Council of Churches in Australia



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*In the Name of the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit,
One God, Amen*

Letter to SACC Member Churches and Inter Church Councils (May 2018) from Community for Local Ecumenism

Christ is Risen... Indeed He is Risen...

First and foremost, we at Community for Local Ecumenism (CLE) would like to wish everyone a very happy Easter-tide as we follow the steps of the risen Lord in our everyday life as Christians.

CLE is an integral part of the SA Council of Churches (SACC) and as such forms part of the SACC General Council. As a community, we have the responsibility of "Encouraging, Promoting and Fostering a spirit of Local Ecumenism", at the local level, including the Inter Church Council level. As a community, we have come a long way in the journey of ecumenism but still feel that we have not even scratched the surface. Some of our activities have included studying papers and books, initiating conversations with each other, accepting each other's hospitality with gratefulness and integrity while always being ready to give an account to everyone that asks us concerning the hope that is in us. In that spirit, we have completed studying and "digesting" Dr Antonia Pizzey's paper, "God is Love: Ecumenism of the Heart" (www.globethics.net/documents/4289936/13403236/GE_Global_12_web.pdf/351b2e1c-8926-4710-ae1a-c159b9a88cf7).

A suggested process is also available at [www.sacc.asn.au/ data/God is Love Ecumenism of the Heart - suggested process.pdf](http://www.sacc.asn.au/data/God%20is%20Love%20Ecumenism%20of%20the%20Heart%20-%20suggested%20process.pdf). This study has led to our growth as a community and as individuals in the following areas:-

1. Our Love for Christ, our Lord which has been widened and deepened,
2. Mirroring this Christian love to each other in the community,
3. An aching and a longing for this love to be manifested to the wider community, shared by them and lived to its full extent as far as is humanly possible, according to the capacity of each individual,
4. A readiness to learn from the other. This has definitely deepened our faith, broadened our horizons, enriched our lives and touched us in ways that words cannot explain,
5. Given us an awareness, a holy zeal, a meek and humble disposition and an ever-present readiness to give an account to all those who ask us for the reason of the hope that is in us.

You see, ecumenism, we've found, is "just another word" for open, unconditional love and acceptance of the other; particularly where "multi-denominational" interactions take place and especially where Christ is the Focal Point in our lives as Christians. We, CLE, have found that Receptive Ecumenism is not so much carried out in the second or third person as much as it is a first person experience; only enabled by a humble, meek, willing-to-learn mind which is enriched, backed by and resonating with a loving heart which is quite open to accepting the other and learning from them. It is not so much a

stance of "defending" "my faith" by each person as it is a willingness and openness to uncover the unity that already exists among us as Christians; and working on enhancing, expanding and furthering that unity, one step at a time. Surely, by now the pressing question is, "What is the point of belonging to one particular church / denomination then? Why don't we all just become one big melting pot? A 'super-church', if you will?" You see, multi-denominationalism is not so much a schism as it is an enrichment - if we live in harmony. The geographical, physical, environmental, psychological, social and indeed political surrounds have shaped each denomination into what it is now. This "variety" is only ever divisive if we cling to our differences and guard them "against everything and everyone"; However, if we live in harmony and learn from one another, the many individual, distinct denominations are **united in Christ** and works towards further unity.

To that effect we invite you all to study the paper by Dr Antonia Pizzey prior to the RE (Receptive Ecumenism) IV mini-conference which is being organised by SACC and which will be taking place on July 28th, 2018.

Dr Antonia Pizzey will be the keynote speaker in this conference. Also, among other speakers in this mini-conference, is the Rev Dr Vicky Balabanski who will also share some of her work.

We encourage you all to share this letter widely within your parishes, hang it on your notice-boards and invite people to come along to our meetings, especially the mini-conference in July.

We, at CLE feel that the calling for Christians is expressed by our Lord, Jesus Christ in His prayer:

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." John 17:21-23

We pray that our Lord help us comprehend His prayer to the Father, live by it and act upon it throughout our 'transient' lives here on earth, to the glory of His Holy Name.

The peace of the Risen Lord be with us all,

Amen.

Your sisters and brothers in Christ,

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]

Community for Local Ecumenism - a Standing Committee of SACC

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