



Annual Report July 2017 – June 2018

President

An annual report is an opportunity to reflect and review as well as say farewell and thank you. For over a decade I have had the privilege of being part of the SACC team effort and the honour of being elected President for this year 2017- 2018. I sought to be a facilitating President.

During the years 2006-2007 SACC undertook a period of discernment and review in the name of Christ. A new constitution was written and adopted 2008, updated 2011. The purpose of SACC was defined: “to serve the Churches of South Australia in their deeper engagement in ecumenism”; to nurture and nourish the understanding, spiritual growth and practice of ecumenism across the Churches in SA, so to respond to the prayer of Jesus “that they all may be one” (John 17: 21).

A shift in thinking and a new way of being emerged. The role of the SACC is to help eleven member Churches be ecumenical rather than doing ecumenical things for the Churches. During the decade this different way of being was practised more and more. Through reflective leadership practice, adjustments to SACC structures and ministry practice were made. Emmaus Meals began. The Executive Officer became known as the Ecumenical Facilitator. Some began to call the SACC the Council of *the* Churches. The practice of ecumenical learning grew. The approach of Receptive Ecumenism became understood and began to influence the practice of ecumenism.

“The question Receptive Ecumenism asks is: what can we - and what do we need to - learn and receive, with integrity, from the other traditions?” The importance of that question cannot be overstated. It defines the approach of Receptive Ecumenism as listening to and learning from the other, rather than telling the other.¹

Paul Murray writes that Receptive Ecumenism provides an appropriate organising principle for contemporary ecumenism.

This is the principle that considerable further progress is indeed possible, but only if each of the traditions, both singly and jointly, make a clear, programmatic shift from prioritising the question ‘What do our various others first need to learn from us?’ to asking instead, ‘What is it that we need to learn and can learn, or receive, with integrity from our others?’²

Now, in 2018, the Member Churches of SACC move towards another period of discernment and review in the name of Christ. Serving the member Churches seems to require SACC to “ease and reshape” some of its relationships and structures. A working party may make recommendations. Amending the Constitution is being considered. SACC and Church leaders are in conversation. New directions are evolving based on the nurturing of relationships and conversation in the Spirit of Christ. Communication, cooperation and collaboration across churches have a new potential. The ground is fertile for new growth in the “spring” of the ecumenical movement acting in the cause of Jesus Christ for visible signs of unity. Church unity networks are in the process of changing the ecumenical institutional landscape across churches in SA. Conversation, conversation and more conversations will point to ways forward.

1 South Australian Council of Churches, *Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands: The Promise and Potential of Receptive Ecumenism*. 1, at http://www.sacc.asn.au/data/Healing_Gifts_for_Wounded_Hands_May_2014.pdf, Accessed 25 August 2018.

2 Paul Murray, “Introducing Receptive Ecumenism”, in *The Ecumenist, a Journal of Theology, Culture and Society*, 51/2 (2014), 1.

In the last decade a climate of Christian learning has continued to grow amongst the SACC community; with invitations to participate in interactive ecumenical learning and encouragements towards deep learning outcomes through the use of learning community processes informed by Receptive Ecumenism.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in the hard work of and dedicated commitment to ecumenism in the life of the Member Churches of SACC; the amazing and creative collaborative contributions of the General Council members, the Executive, Geraldine and Melanie, the Finance Committee, the Community of Ecumenical Learning, the Community for Local Ecumenism, the Ecumenical Partners for Justice and Peace, those who hosted SACC meetings and the many friends. All are part of the “body of Christ” on God’s mission in Jesus Christ.

Thank you and farewell to those who are concluding their involvement in SACC formal structures. Thank you and farewell to Geraldine Hawkes, Ecumenical Facilitator, Executive Officer (2006-2019), friend, colleague, collaborative and theologically reflective visionary team leader, as she moves to other landscapes next year. Thank you Geraldine for your valuable, longstanding, wise and effective facilitating leadership of the SACC community of many individuals, groups and churches; your insights; your spirituality; and your sense of pilgrimage on the journey, walking, working and praying together, in the Way and in the ways of Jesus the Christ.

Shalom.

John Littleton
President



Annual Report July 2017 – June 2018 Ecumenical Facilitator - Executive Officer

Ecumenism today is not merely about 'doing things together'. Ecumenism today includes especially the potential for renewal and reform both within as well as across our churches, leading into the greater flourishing in the Way of Christ.

Receptive Ecumenism offers pathways and processes for such renewal, reform and flourishing. It does this through the relationships that develop, the methodology it fosters, the disposition it requires and engenders, and the integration of the learnings and discoveries that flow.

Below are some examples of how SA Council of Churches has nurtured and nourished this possibility across the Member Churches during this year, building on the systematic introduction of and engagement with Receptive Ecumenism during the past ten years. Each aspect relates especially to SACC Priorities 1 & 3 **Formation and Education for Leadership in Ecumenism in the Spirit of Christ** and **Receptive Ecumenism**, while permeating the other Priorities:

Fourth International Receptive Ecumenism Conference (RE IV) November 2017 in Canberra

SACC initiated arrangements for Australia to host RE IV. Twenty-three South Australians participated (out of 140 world-wide), and several gave papers at plenaries or in workshops, and led sessions, indicating that RE is developing deeply and widely in SA. On return from RE IV, SACC hosted conversations with SA participants regarding possibilities in their respective arenas - formation for ministry, congregations, synods, inter church councils, theological colleges, schools, bi-lateral dialogues. Planning for the Fifth International RE Conference has begun, to be hosted by the churches in Sweden in June/July 2020.

SACC also arranged a **Mini-Conference**, with keynote speakers from RE IV; gave **Presentations** in range of places, including parishes (country and metro), Graduation Address at University of Divinity <https://divinity.edu.au/blog/2017/11/30/2017-adelaide-graduation/>, Anglican Centre of Rome Fundraising Dinner (Adelaide); continued to develop and share **Resources**; facilitated a range of **Conversations**; assisted and guided people with activities and possibilities.

Publication: Receptive Ecumenism – *listening, learning and loving in the way of Christ*

Vicky Balabanski, Flinders University, and I, as co-editors, have gathered thirteen articles from several authors in Australia and overseas and have submitted these to publisher, ATF Press, for peer review. The publication is intended as a resource for any who are interested in the method and possibilities of RE, and is expected to be available by the end of 2018.

Some other contributions during the year in nourishing and nurturing the understanding, growth and practice of ecumenism across the churches in SA include:

Ecumenical Partnership in the Mission of Christ (Priority 5)

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

In February 2017 SA Council of Churches (SACC) shared news of a bequest it had received to assist in the work of refugees and displaced persons. SACC is grateful to the donor, Yvonne Button, formerly of St Saviour's Anglican Church, Glen Osmond, and a member of SACC Refugee and Displaced Persons Task Force for many years. Five quite diverse projects which received funding were recently completed. Story and details at www.sacc.asn.au

In what ways does your church act with other Christians on education, advocacy and fundraising to help alleviate poverty, oppression and injustice in Australia and overseas? SACC invited the churches to respond to this question. Following consideration of responses, SACC wrote offering insights and suggesting resources to assist Member Churches in developing and deepening ecumenical partnerships as a way of being alongside our world, especially people whose lives are marked and diminished by poverty, oppression and injustice. See March 2018 letter to Member Churches at www.sacc.asn.au

Growing Together in Discipleship: Journeying Together in Mission formed the main focus for SACC General Council in May 2018, when the meeting was held on the train from Adelaide-Gawler-Adelaide. See Summary at www.sacc.asn.au

Conversations to advance Christian Unity and deepen the churches place in culture/society (Priority 2): Promoting relationships and stories in the local arena, and participating in and responding to communications and activities with Government, NGOs and the wider community.

Formation and Education for Leadership in Ecumenism in the Spirit of Christ (Priority 1)
Ecumenical Lenten Resource 2018: A Lenten Pilgrimage to the Heart: May we be always ready to give up what we cannot keep in order to gain what we cannot lose.

Leaders of Christian Churches SA (LoCCSA)

SACC has an advisory role with LoCCSA as well as offering Secretariat. A more clearly stated alignment between the desire of LoCCSA for shared conversation and action and SACC Priorities emerged early February 2018. This has led to various conversations and cooperative actions, especially with reference to the Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Other activities include dialogue between Churches and Members of Parliament, and conversations on church planting and renewal in the local/neighbourhood arena.

Relationships and Methodology

In all these examples, I wish to draw attention to the continued methodology inherent in each one of them, namely that of ongoing theological reflection and the value and importance of team: every project and activity occurs within a collegial and collaborative framework.

For your further information:

- SACC Priorities http://www.sacc.asn.au/en/detail.php?nr=4250&rubric=en_Core_Purpose_Aim_Priorities&
- SACC issues a weekly E-news and regular communications with Church Media.
- The Diocese of The Murray – cessation of SACC Membership.
- Substantial reduction in SACC budgeted deficit achieved due to reduced staff hours.

Challenge for the journey ahead: 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: daily life is complex, and our world remains divided and dualistic in so many ways. The contribution of the Church, as disciples in mission together, with the disposition, virtues and behaviour that our shared journey needs and engenders, appears to be a gift the Church has to offer, in, with and for our world.

Geraldine Hawkes
 Ecumenical Facilitator-Executive Officer



Annual Report July 2017 – June 2018 Community for Ecumenical Learning [CEL]

Membership and conversations

The Committee met five times during the year 2017-2018; 17/10/17, 6/2/18, 10/4/18, 26/6/18 and 14/8/18. Conversations went from 11am-12.30pm on a Tuesday with preparation before and follow up afterwards.

Members: Rev'd Dr John Littleton, Anglican; Dr Marie Loller, Catholic; Ms Mary Camilleri, Catholic; Ms Carol Assaad, Coptic Orthodox; Dr Heshmat Keroloss, Coptic Orthodox; Envoy Ted Wright, Salvation Army; Ms Geraldine Hawkes, SACC Ecumenical Facilitator.

Ecumenical Lenten Resource: Prepared during 2017 and used in 2018

Review, Evaluation, Feedback, Decision

The first Ecumenical Lenten Study was in 1972 (46 years) and it has been created every two years since then. It has moved from a study (printed booklet) to a resource (on-line).

The Ecumenical Lenten Resource for 2018 was prepared by a team from the South Australian Council of Churches Community for Ecumenical Learning, and is available at www.sacc.asn.au. It was promoted widely by SACC through E-news, SACC network including church leaders, Church media, SACC website, interstate ecumenical bodies and individuals directly. It is difficult to assess the impact due to on-line nature. It is not possible to fully assess its reach.

However, SACC received notification from 23 individuals/groups from various churches that they intended to use the Resource. The resource was deeply appreciated by those from whom we heard. For example, a Woodville Uniting Church Bible Study group and the Salvation Army Campbelltown Congregation Bible study group used the resource. Both groups found the resource very useful. Others used it individually and spoke highly of the content.

There are many other denominationally prepared resources available in Australia and sometimes these receive greater promotion by a Member Church than the one prepared by SACC.

On balance, the CEL members decided to continue every two years as before, since Lent is a key time in most churches and a time when it is possible to gather as Christians, with freedom from any denominational 'restrictions'. (Lund Principle: that churches should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately.)

After the review and evaluation of this significant resource, planning for 2020 began.

We agreed that a letter, signed by John, Mary and Geraldine, be sent to the Leaders of Member Churches:

- a. Advising of commencement of preparations later in 2018 of the Ecumenical Lenten Resource for 2020 (continuing a tradition that has occurred every two years since 1972);
- b. Inviting appointment of someone to be part of the writing team: the focus being producing a resource for theological reflection and conversation on the Beatitudes;
- c. Suggesting that in the spirit of Receptive Ecumenism and taking the opportunity to actively lean into the Spirit together, each of the Member Churches in SA consider and promote the Ecumenical Resource 2020 on the Beatitudes as their key Lenten resource for 2020.

A Receptive Ecumenism Mini Conference was held on 28 July, 2018 at the Catholic Education SA Centre, 116 George Street, Thebarton. This was seen as a key opportunity to follow up on the Fourth International Receptive Ecumenism Conference held in Canberra, November 2017. Twenty seven people enjoyed the interactive and participatory processes presented by the two keynote speakers from the International Conference:

- Dr Antonia Pizzey, Lecturer, School of Theology / Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, Australian Catholic University (Brisbane Campus)
- Rev Dr Vicky Balabanski, Senior Lecturer in New Testament at Flinders University Department of Theology and Co-Director of Biblical Studies at the Uniting College for Leadership and Theology

A key question was: *As churches continue to respond as communities of disciples to the place of church in the neighbourhood and in the world, what might we learn from our ecumenical other?* The conference offered pathways for new relationships and renewal. Themes across the day included:

- The Receptive Ecumenical Spirit: The Role of the Virtues in Guiding Receptive Ecumenical Discernment and Decision-Making. The four virtues presented and discussed were: love, hospitality, humility and hope.
- Ecumenical Bible study & discussion. Colossians 3, 11-17; “Christ is all, Christ is in all.”
- Relationship of Receptive Ecumenism to ecclesial identity and church renewal in the world. Ecumenism is an essential part of church reform as churches consider their own identities. Fidelity to Christ is the challenge. Christian identity is Christ-centred.

Receptive Ecumenism Publication 2018

Building on the energy from the 2017 Canberra RE Conference, a volume is to be published, edited by Vicky Balabanski and Geraldine Hawkes. The publication entitled: *Receptive Ecumenism – listening, learning and loving in the way of Christ*, published by Adelaide Theological Forum (ATF Press) consists of thirteen articles from several authors from South Australia, Australia and overseas. It is expected the volume will have wide appeal, across a number of arenas, given the range of contributors, the distribution facility and likely cost of \$25. Keep an eye out for it.

SACC Serving the Member Churches

Preparations are underway for two events.

Following the effectiveness last year of combining the use of a learning question and interactive ecumenical learning processes, and after the SACC consultation with Church Leaders in South Australia during June 2018, we decided to tackle other suggested topics through the use of a similar method. The importance of nurturing relationships and encouraging respectful conversations in the work of SACC was noted.

Exchange of Gifts event for 2018 involves a conversation around the Learning Question: *How does your Church arrange for the experience of ecumenical learning in education and formation of ordination candidates/theological students?* Principals of the various South Australian Church Theological Colleges and those involved in Ministry Formation Leadership were invited to participate.

An Exchange of Gifts event for 2019 has been planned around the Learning Question: *How does your Church form people as disciples?* The process for the conversation is ready. Church leaders will be invited to participate.



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Ecumenical Partners for Justice and Peace [EPJP]

The Ecumenical Partners for Justice and Peace (EPJP) Standing Committee, in collaboration with others, assists in promoting, encouraging and celebrating ecumenical partnerships on matters of justice and peace across the churches with a view to helping *alleviate poverty, oppression and injustice in Australia and overseas* (SACC Core Purpose, Priority 5).

The Standing Committee met as a whole on 4 occasions during the period of this report and in groups on 3 occasions. Geraldine Hawkes and Melanie Rain continue to give outstanding support and encouragement for the work of the committee and this is very much appreciated.

The following activities have occupied our energies and time.

Bequest

The late Yvonne Button, member of SACC Refugee and Displaced Persons Task Force for many years, was committed to working alongside people from across the churches in welcoming and supporting people who had sought refuge or were experiencing displacement. She made a generous bequest to SACC. EPJP developed criteria for disbursement of the bequest and invited applications from organisations working with refugees and displaced persons in South Australia.

The projects that were supported by the Bequest were:

1. *Community Garden Coffee Connect* – a project of the Amazing Grace Gospel Church, Andrews Farm. They used the funds to purchase a container to serve as a lunch room for refugees, “work for the dole” participants and volunteers who work in the community garden. This is probably the only lunch room in Australia where “work for the dole” participants share African cuisine with refugees from the African continent.
2. *Helping link Refugees in Salisbury and Playford to an Australian friend or family* – a project of Baptist Care (SA) Inc. Stories of individuals and families sharing not only life, but many laughs, especially when using google translate. “*Sharing cuisine and cultures to build relationships*”.
3. *Sand Play Therapy* – a project of Circle of Friends Incorporated – Circle 111. Sand Play therapy is being used successfully across Australia to help children who have been traumatized in detention to find peace, and develop confidence to socialize with others.
4. *Asylum Seekers – understanding their lives and their contribution to our community* – a project of Justice for Refugees SA. Australians were interviewed about how they felt about refugees and refugees were interviewed about why they were here and what they expected. A key finding was that most refugees want to work because they are eager to repay Australians for their generosity, and keen to contribute to Australia as Australians.
5. *Affordable Rental Accommodation Project and Asylum Seeker Assist* – a project of Migrant & Refugee Centre, St Vincent de Paul Society SA Inc. Three refugees told their stories about their experience in finding a place to live with limited resources and knowledge of the rental market.

The five groups which received funding were invited by SACC, in partnership with Morialta Uniting Church, to share the story of their projects at a Peace Expo as a way of inspiring us on paths to justice, healing and peace. Other groups who were part of the Expo were Act for Peace and the Peace Lamps and Doves project which is also supported by EPJP. An expanded report is available at www.sacc.asn.au

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

The Holy Land peace lamp project continued during the year. An article was placed in SACC E-News, indicating that speakers were available to visit congregations to promote and widen the scope of the project.

At the invitation of Pastor Andrew Dockerill, St Paul's Lutheran Church, McLaren Vale, Dawn and John Sullivan spoke during the service on Sunday 17 September, the commencement of World Week of Peace. They shared their experience of visiting the Holy Land and how they became involved in the Peace Lamps and Doves Project. After the service 1 lamp and 11 doves were purchased by the parishioners.

On Sunday 10 December, 2017 at the invitation of Pastor Greg Page, Dawn and John spoke during the service at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Murray Bridge. Again they shared their story about their visit to the Holy Land and how they became involved in the project. After the service they sold 4 lamps and 14 doves to the parishioners.

Altogether 950 peace lamps and doves have been placed in churches, offices and homes across Australia. \$3,600 has been sent to the Holy Land to support local projects providing aged care and Christmas gifts for the last 350 Christian families in Gaza. It is expected that another \$2,500 will be sent before Christmas. Visits to parishes planned for before Christmas 2018 may mark the completion of the project.

Palm Sunday March

EPJP members joined in the Palm Sunday March on 25 March 2018. The March was organized by Justice 4 Refugees SA and featured singing and stories by refugees, including the new multicultural officer for the Crows. Over 1,000 marchers from 25 organisations walked from Victoria Square to Parliament House and were led by members of churches, behind the Pilgrim UC banner. People sang as they progressed down King William St, led by "Rise Up Singing Adelaide".

Palm Sunday Marches used to be about honouring peace but nowadays Palm Sunday is an occasion to reveal the human reality of how we treat refugees. While marching may appear to be ineffectual in the face of bipartisan and popular support for Australia's refugee policies, the marchers bear witness that the Australian community can wear a compassionate face.

Collaborative Advocacy Forum on Refugee Rights, 1 May 2018

EPJP members participated in the gathering of leaders of ecclesial bodies with leaders of organisations involved in acts of care and justice, unity, peace and transformation. The idea of the gathering was to begin building an effective South Australian coalition and develop a coordinated advocacy campaign to improve the lives of refugees and people seeking refuge in Australia. The meeting was chaired by John Haren from Justice for Refugees SA. There were 61 people from 41 groups in attendance including service providers, Unions, Community and Religious organisations.

Three highlighted issues were the ending of off-shore detention, replacing temporary visas with permanency, and ending the cuts to the Status Resolution Support Services.

There are plans to follow up with further meetings. EPJP intends to remain in the conversation to see how we might be involved.

In addition to participating in specific activities of the Standing Committee members participated in a range of ecumenical activities including:

- Community for Ecumenical Learning- *Exchange of Gifts: Reimagining our Unity in Christ through Receptive Ecumenism*, July 2017
- *Candle Light Vigil*, July 2017
- *IV International Conference on Receptive Ecumenism*, November 2017, Canberra
- *SACC General Meeting*, April 2018
- *Opening service for the Parliamentary Year*, May 2018, St. Peter's Cathedral
- *Conversation - SACC serving the Member Churches:2018 onwards*, June 2018

The Committee members are 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 and Peace Issues), Ms Pamela Jones (Justice and Peace Issues), Ms Dawn Sullivan (Justice and Peace issues), Mr John Sullivan (Justice and Peace Issues)