

Ecumenical Landscape of SA Council of Churches

Healing our Broken Life

Living more fully our love and unity in Christ – in, with, and for our world

May 2017

South Australian Council of Churches



Overview

SA Council of Churches has been in existence for nearly 70 years (since 24/6/1947) and is formed by the commitment, membership and active participation of several Churches in SA (currently eleven denominations/thirteen ecclesial bodies).

The focus for the ecumenical Council is as a place of gathering where the Churches' understanding, spiritual growth, disposition and practice of ecumenism can be nurtured and nourished, in response to the prayer of Jesus that "they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me". *John 17:21*

Relationships

This nurturing and nourishing occurs especially through the creating of spaces for conversation, learning and exploration on ecumenism so that the churches in all arenas (congregations, parishes, agencies, state/diocesan leadership, schools and ecumenical organisations, as well as individuals) may be drawn into deeper expressions of love and more visible expressions of Christian unity from within as well as across their institutions.

In order to assist the Churches as conversation partners, SACC appoints an Ecumenical Facilitator/Executive Officer (EF/EO). The EF/EO is currently a full time role and supported by an Office Administrator (part time). SACC Office is rented from Flinders St Baptist Church and is located at 65 Flinders St, Adelaide.

Priorities

Since being (re)formed in 2008, SACC General Council and the various Standing Committees have continued to evolve. During the early part of 2016, each was invited to consider the direction/possibilities of their responsibility. The result is a fresh description for action during 2016-2018, and the potential for deeper collaboration, collegiality, theological reflection and flourishing for the work of ecumenism.

Especially, SACC will encourage, facilitate and nurture conversation and action on the following inter-related areas in all arenas of church as previously stated:

One: Formation and Education for Leadership in Ecumenism in the Spirit of Christ

The ongoing shaping and development of ecumenical consciousness/disposition and leadership, individually and institutionally, is considered to be an essential aspect in the journey towards more visible signs of our unity in Christ.

Examples: Community for Ecumenical Learning (a standing committee of SACC, comprising people appointed by the Member Churches); Ecumenical Lenten Resource (every two years); Emmaus meals; conversations, workshops and presentations; consultancy – individual leaders and for Assemblies/Synods etc; development, distribution and review of resources.

During 2015, SACC invited the Member Churches to describe how their church is shaping and developing ecumenical consciousness and leadership. As well as areas of strength, some recommendations emerged. SACC has written to each Church, encouraging their further action in order to deepen their commitment to unity in Christ, alongside their brothers and sisters in Christ. SACC looks forward to hearing more from the Churches during 2016/17.

See http://www.sacc.asn.au/data/Formation_and_Education_Letter_April_2016.pdf

Two: Conversations to advance Christian Unity and to deepen the place of church in culture and society

Responding to and assisting people, individually and institutionally, to explore and discover - through a reading of the signs of the times - opportunities for more visible expressions of Christian unity, from within as well as across the churches in SA.

Examples: Community for Local Ecumenism (a standing committee of SACC, comprising people appointed by the Member Churches); initiating conversations on matters of concern across the churches; arranging celebrations and assisting in preparation of ecumenical services; gathering and distribution of stories.

Three: Receptive Ecumenism

Encouraging, promoting and facilitating the movement of Receptive Ecumenism, especially institutionally, for the greater flourishing of the life and mission from within as well as across the churches in SA.

Examples: conversations, presentations and workshops; development of projects and of practical resources to assist engagement and learning in a variety of arenas; Community for Ecumenical Learning interactive event “Exchange of Gifts” July 2017; adviser for Fourth International Conference on Receptive Ecumenism (November 2017, Canberra).

Four: Pastoral Care and Support to Witnesses of Ecumenism

Nurturing a spirit of care, hope and practical support among people involved in the journey towards Christian unity in churches, individually and institutionally, so that the work of the Holy Spirit through Ecumenism may be a source of inspiration and delight in and for our world.

Examples: weekly e-news & reflection; participation in Member Church events such as Synods, Assemblies, Sunday and other times of worship, church council events, and key celebrations/commemorations; regular reports to Member Churches; articles/interviews for religious press.

Five: Ecumenical Partnership in the Mission of Christ

Exploring, encouraging, and facilitating a range of ecumenical partnerships in the mission of Christ to enable people in churches, individually and institutionally, to act as Christians together on education, advocacy and fundraising to help alleviate poverty, oppression and injustice in Australia and overseas.

Examples: Ecumenical Partners for Justice & Peace (a standing committee of SACC, comprising people appointed by the Member Churches); conversations and action especially on Refugees, Recognition & Reconciliation, and Peace in the Middle East, especially through the Peace Lamps project.

The following additional standing relationships embrace two or more of the above Priorities

- a) **SACC General Council** (comprising people appointed by the Member Churches) - twice yearly meetings for decision-making on priorities; formation & education; sharing, support & advice; encouraging relationships and action across and within the churches.
- b) **SACC Executive Committee** (comprising people appointed by the Member Churches) - management of SACC resources, and leadership on Christian unity;
- c) **Leaders of Christian Churches SA** - Advisory role plus Secretariat, liaising across the churches, with Premier, Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentarians in SA, ecumenical organisations, not for profit and community organisations; arranging bi-monthly plenary meetings, annual retreat and other gatherings as needed.
- d) Project groups as required.

SACC is additionally committed during the next three years to:

- a) Continuing to build relationships with Member Churches in the various arenas, and seek opportunities for relevant understanding, engagement and growth, so that there is a broadening and increasing interaction between and among Member Churches.
- b) Supporting the formation of networks or organisations within each Member Church with substantial responsibility for Ecumenism in order to ensure the ongoing shaping and development of ecumenical consciousness and leadership, and to deepen and enhance the focus, energy and action on unity in Christ.
- c) Continuing to develop resources and activities to assist each community of faith – whether church council, parish, office, leadership team, agency, or committee – to grow in its openness to ask, not ‘what do we have to tell the other’, but rather, ‘what do we have to learn from the other’, so that each church at all levels may be drawn into deeper expressions of love and more visible expressions of Christian unity from within as well as across the life and mission of each.
- d) Ensuring the continued regular and frequent communications to Member Churches, and SACC Council and Committees, including weekly e-news, website, monthly church media, minutes of meetings, formal reports and notices of events, and as requested.
- e) Encouraging and establishing processes and systems for communicating and evaluating ecumenical engagement by the Member Churches, especially in regard to their mutual accountability to one another, and to the Priorities selected by SACC General Council.

What can each Church expect of the other SACC Member Churches?

The Journey ahead in light of progress so far and the 500th Commemoration of the Reformation

1. If unity in Christ is to continue to grow and flourish, the gracious and generous commitment of each Member Church towards the other in whatever arena continues to be vital.
2. For the ecumenical council, the selection, appointment and support of people by the Member Churches is one sign of this commitment.
3. It is further extended when each church has a recognised group of people with responsibility for ecumenical relations and for ensuring that unity in Christ is revealed in its life and mission.
4. Each Member Church is also dependent on the financial contribution that each makes so that their journey towards Christian unity through their ecumenical council may continue and contribute to ongoing conversion/*koinonia*.

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

SACC Executive Committee (as at May 2017)

Mr Peter Burke: Anglican – Chair of Executive Committee

Ms Jill Gallio: Catholic

Mr Refaat Georgy: Coptic Orthodox

Ms Ngaire Llewellyn: Churches of Christ

Fr Silouan Fotineas: Greek Orthodox

Mr Gilbert Materne: Lutheran

Rev Rob Williams: President/Ecumenical Delegate/ Uniting

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

Dr Marie Loller: Vice-President/Catholic

Mr Neil Traeger: Treasurer

Ms Geraldine Hawkes, Ecumenical Facilitator/Executive Officer

For further information:

See Q&A http://www.sacc.asn.au/data/Review_of_GC_June_2016_Q_A_for_website.pdf

Visit www.sacc.asn.au for news, activities and resources as above, or contact Geraldine Hawkes.

Contact Geraldine Hawkes, Ecumenical Facilitator – Email: sacc1@picknowl.com.au / Tel: 8215 0300

