



13 March 2018

Letter to SACC General Council and Committees, including Member Church Leaders

Dear Friends in Christ

Ecumenical Partnership in the Mission of Christ

Appointees to SA Council of Churches have consistently expressed the importance of *Ecumenical Partnership in the Mission of Christ*, one of the five SACC Priorities.

Over several years, SACC has developed resources and activities to assist the churches together on education, advocacy and fundraising to help alleviate poverty, oppression and injustice in Australia and overseas. Some examples include *Prisoners, Prisons and Respectful Relationships*; *Domestic Violence Handbook*; Indigenous Recognition, Reconciliation and Relationships; Peace in the Middle East; Churches Welfare/Community Organisations; and, responding to needs of Refugees in a variety of setting with a range of partners.

Current Research

Late last year, we invited you, appointees to SACC General Council and its Committees, to gather examples of **how their church acts with other Christians on education, advocacy and fundraising to help alleviate poverty, oppression and injustice in Australia and overseas.**

Five Member Churches out of a possible 11 responded and these responses were circulated and discussed at SACC AGM in 2017. We thank all who contributed.

Responses were, of course, highly varied, with some describing a range of excellent ecumenical initiatives. We noted, however, that the provision of material support and practical resources through programmes and fundraising were the dominant activity. Such initiatives generally involved more than two churches and occurred most often across local congregations/parishes.

While it is widely recognised that education and advocacy often weave through or emerge from involvement in fundraising and the offering of practical programs, we received very few examples of advocacy or education by churches together to address poverty, oppression and injustice, either locally or state-wide.

There may be various reasons for this: Member Church appointees may not be aware of the full scope of their church's activity in this regard: or, each church and its agencies may consider it is covering advocacy and education sufficiently well and that collaboration with another is not needed; or, some churches may not have the resources to address advocacy and education; or, it may be that the lack of examples indicates a gap and, therefore, an opportunity for further conversation and action together across the churches.

Possibilities

SA Council of Churches notes the many recent and increasingly frequent expressions by people, including church leaders, of their desire to have intentional conversations on “how we work together, share resources and draw on existing capacity to share, using the methodology of Receptive Ecumenism”.

Two aspects of church life in particular are most often named alongside this expressed desire – Discipleship and Mission.

SA Council of Churches affirms both the desire for intentional conversations and for the use of the way of Receptive Ecumenism. SACC believes Receptive Ecumenism methodology has the potential and the capacity to break open new and appropriate ways of and attitudes towards discipleship and mission, where our being shifts to a deeper leaning into the Spirit, imbued with listening, discerning, serving, and receiving the other as gift, for the greater flourishing of all.

Resources

Various resources already exist and continue to emerge across individual churches on Discipleship and on Mission especially. SA Council of Churches draws your attention to some of these, in case you are not already aware. Especially, we encourage you to promote and to share them widely across the various areas in your church, including education, mission, ministry formation, caring/welfare and social justice:

Discipleship

A bible study entitled *Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship* has been developed for the World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism. “Moving in the Spirit brings the notion of pilgrimage, of an on-going journey of all believers, led and guided by the Holy Spirit. This is a pilgrimage that is characterised by constant hope for a transformed world of justice and peace and a commitment to renewal in Christ. This theme offers a prophetic message amidst the complexities of today’s world.” Refer

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/bible-studies-for-conference-on-world-mission-and-evangelism-are-available>

Mission

World Council of Churches publication: *Together towards Life Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*. A few extracts are at Appendix A, with link to the full text.

Receptive Ecumenism

SA Council of Churches has developed a range of resources. Some are available on SACC website www.sacc.asn.au others on request or developed according to need. See Appendix B.

Covenanting

There is an ongoing conversation among the Anglican Diocese of Willochra, the Lutheran Church in SA and the Uniting Church in SA about “how best to work together to ensure vitality within the Church of God in the N-W of the Eyre Peninsula. A series of conversations have occurred most particularly with ACA, LCA and UCA congregations in Wudinna, Streaky Bay and Ceduna with the three denominations moving towards establishing a Covenant”.

NCCA Act for Peace

Many of us are familiar with Act for Peace, and especially Christmas Bowl and the Ration

Challenge. Its focus is on learning, taking action and giving, across the churches, including NCCA Member Churches. Details at <https://www.actforpeace.org.au/>

SA Council of Churches trusts that these insights and suggested resources will assist you and others across your church in developing and in deepening ecumenical partnerships as a way of being alongside our world, especially those people whose lives are marked and diminished today by poverty, oppression and injustice.

Yours sincerely



Rev'd Dr John Littleton
President



Dr Colin Cargill
Ecumenical Partners for Justice & Peace



Ms Geraldine Hawkes
Ecumenical Facilitator

Together towards Life Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes**Extracts**

Para 11. This statement highlights some key developments in understanding the mission of the Holy Spirit within the mission of the Triune God (missio Dei) which have emerged through the work of CWME. It does so under four main headings:

- Spirit of Mission: Breath of Life
- Spirit of Liberation: Mission from the Margins
- Spirit of Community: Church on the Move
- Spirit of Pentecost: Good News for All

Para 29: Authentic Christian witness is not only in *what* we do in mission but *how* we live out our mission.

Para 41: The dominant expressions of mission, in the past and today, have often been directed at people on the margins of societies. These have generally viewed those on the margins as recipients and not as active agents of missionary activity.... Mission from the centre is motivated by an attitude of paternalism and a superiority complex.

Para 93: ...authentic mission makes the “other” a partner in, not an “object” of mission.

Full text:

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes>

March 2018

Appendix B**Receptive Ecumenism - SACC Resources & Activities (a selection, past and proposed)**

Resources developed by SA Council of Churches and available on SACC website www.sacc.asn.au or on request:

- *Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands*
- *Exchange of Gifts: Reimagining our Unity in Christ through Receptive Ecumenism (to be uploaded)*
- *Gifts of Healing: Longing, Listening, Learning and Loving in the Way of Christ - a suggested process in applying the principles of Receptive Ecumenism (to be uploaded)*
- *Receptive Ecumenism Workshops process for Inter Church Councils and for Congregations/Parishes*
- *Receiving the Gift of the Other: worksheet*
- *Receptive Ecumenism: Encounter with Beauty, Truth and Love - presentation*
- *Gifts of Ecumenism in, with and for our world, focussing on love and humility – presentation* <https://www.divinity.edu.au/news-events/2017/11/30/2017-adelaide-graduation/>

Resources developed by others and available on SACC website:

- *Exploring the Promise and Potential of Receptive Ecumenism* by Paul D Murray
- *God is Love* by Antonia Pizzey: See *Insights from the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute [Global Ecumenical Theological Institute – GETI]*
- *The Gift of Each Other: Learning from Other Christians* Resource for Parishes

Plus:

- *Introducing Receptive Ecumenism* by Paul D Murray [https://las.depaul.edu/centers-and-institutes/center-for-world-catholicism-cultural-theology/World-Catholicism-Week/Documents/MURRAY,%20Paul His%20background%20article.pdf](https://las.depaul.edu/centers-and-institutes/center-for-world-catholicism-cultural-theology/World-Catholicism-Week/Documents/MURRAY,%20Paul%20His%20background%20article.pdf)
- *Enhance Learning in Parishes: A Learning Community Approach for Church Congregations* by John Littleton, published by MediaCom Education Inc <http://www.tjhlittleton.com.au/library/pdf/a-new-book-by-john-littleton-2017.pdf>

Activities

- Workshops
- Conversations (formal and informal, in various arenas)
- Nurturing repentance and spirit of humility
- Sharing the learnings from RE IV – various places during 2018
- State events 2018; national event 2019; international event 2020

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