

Q & A

Q 1: Why do we have a Council of Churches in South Australia?

A: SA Council of Churches [SACC] was formed as an ecumenical council nearly 70 years ago [24/6/1947] "to represent South Australia in the World Council of Churches and to function as an integral part of the Ecumenical Movement".

SACC continues to exist through the membership, commitment and active participation of eleven Churches in SA in their desire for greater manifestation of their unity in Christ.

Q 2: What is the current focus for SACC?

A: The focus is on the ecumenical council as a place of gathering for the Churches where their **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

The current Core Purpose and Priorities are described in *2015 Onwards*

http://www.sacc.asn.au/en/index.php?rubric=en_Core_Purpose_Aim_Priorities

Q 3: How does the nurturing and nourishing occur?

A: It happens formally, and informally, through the creating of spaces for conversation, learning, exploring and resourcing on ecumenism so that the Churches at all levels - 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 their unity in Christ, from within as well as across their institutions.

An SACC Ecumenical Facilitator, with support from an Office Administrator, is appointed to assist the churches in their ecumenical responsibilities.

Q 4: What does the 'formal' look like?

The establishment of five main areas were agreed by the churches, through General Council, to respond formally to the core purpose and the chosen priorities, and to ensure good stewardship of the resources.

1. General Council – which meets twice a year at General Meetings
2. Community for Ecumenical learning
3. Community for Local Ecumenism
4. Ecumenical Partners for Justice and Peace
5. Executive Committee [a committee of leadership and management, with one sub committee: Finance Committee]

Q 5: What is the purpose of General Council?

General Council has responsibility for the vision, direction and overall stewardship of the resources of SACC. Further information about the General Council is given at Clause 8 of the Constitution. For additional detail, see http://www.sacc.asn.au/en/index.php?rubric=en_who_constitution

Q 6: When are Meetings of General Council held?

A: Generally twice a year, in May and November, on a Saturday morning. Dates are set 6-12 months in advance, following consultation across the churches to minimise any clash with Synods, key church/civic events [no miracles guaranteed!]

Q 7: Where are General Meetings held?

A: Various local church communities are invited to host a meeting. Efforts are made to ensure that each Member Church has this opportunity equitably, and that locations take account of rural as well as metropolitan Adelaide.

Q 8: Why does General Council meet only twice a year?

A: Following a re-articulation of the core purpose of SACC in 2008, a clear emphasis emerged on **ecumenism as a journey of listening and learning**. In order to assist appointees to take advantage of opportunities through SACC and elsewhere for listening and learning, as well as practical engagement, it was decided to reduce the meetings of General Council from three times a year to at least twice a year.

Q 9: How many people can my church appoint to General Council?

A: Each Member Church can appoint **three people**, regardless of the size of the church State-wide. This is so that the ecumenical council reflects a discipleship of equals and the need expressed by the churches for a closer relationship.

Prior to 2008, the 'larger' churches, in accord with the Constitution, could appoint more people than the 'smaller' ones.

In addition to these appointments the designated Leader of each Member Church may be a part of the General Council, together with SACC President, Vice-Presidents and two people elected from each Standing Committee.

Q 10: How long are appointments to SACC?

Prior to 2008, appointments were made annually. Since 2008, appointments are generally for two years, after which people may be re-appointed for a further two years. The hope is that members may be able to participate more meaningfully than is possible in one-year blocks, as well as reducing time spent on administration of the appointments in the Churches, General Council and at SACC.

Q 11: How is the Agenda for meetings of General Council developed?

A: There are usually three components:

- Opening and Closing Prayer and Sharing of Story by the host community, with process and content decided by the host community, following discussion by and consultation through SACC Executive Committee.

- Business/Stewardship: eg. reports, including budget and finance as required by the Associations Incorporation Act [see SACC Constitution].
- Sharing of Stories including conversations about the progress and challenges of SACC Priorities, opportunities for celebration, aspects of concern – locally and beyond. All appointees are invited to offer items. The process and content are decided following discussion by and consultation through SACC Executive Committee.

Q 12: What can newly appointed members expect to assist them in participating and in fulfilling their role meaningfully?

A: Various opportunities exist. For example:

- The Member Church through its leaders and Ecumenical network/group:
 - a. is provided with details of the five areas of the SACC's activities to make available to people interested in being appointed. Details are also on www.sacc.asn.au
 - b. may arrange for a briefing gathering for, and/or a commissioning of, the people it appoints.
 - c. may set regular times [at least once a year] for sharing insights from Appointees as well as identifying areas for raising through SACC or for action within the Member Church
- On receiving appointment details, SACC Ecumenical Facilitator offers further briefing face to face, individually or alongside others.
- SACC distributes a weekly E-Newsletter with information about Ecumenical Resources, News & Events.
- A summary of each meeting of General Council is prepared within a couple of weeks and distributed to assist people with sharing news from the meeting. The minutes follow later and are more formal.
- Invitations are extended from time to time specifically to General Council to participate in key events.

Q 13: What processes and structures are in place for the Churches to hear about the progress and challenges encountered through the SACC as their Ecumenical Council?

A: *Some ways include -*

- The most important channel – which is directly from the people themselves – you and others appointed by your church to SACC.
- Annual Reports are written and sent to all General Council and Church Leaders.
- SACC responds additionally to specific requests for Reports for Church Synods, State Meetings etc.

Q 14: And, finally... who are the Member Churches of The South Australian Council of Churches?

A: The following are currently Member Churches:

1. Anglican Church of Australia: Diocese of Adelaide and the Diocese of Willochra
2. Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide and the Diocese of Port Pirie
3. Churches of Christ in South Australia/Northern Territory Inc
4. Coptic Orthodox Church - Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions
5. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia – District of SA and NT
6. Lutheran Church in Australia, SA District

7. Religious Society of Friends South Australia Regional Meeting
8. Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of Australia and New Zealand – Adelaide Parish
9. Salvation Army South Australia Division
10. St Urael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church in South Australia Inc
11. Uniting Church in Australia - Synod of South Australia

GH/General Council 2016/Review of General Council June 2016