

**History of SACC
1947—2007**

**The South Australian
Council of Churches Inc.**

*“When the
Spirit of
God meets
the spirit
of people
wonderful
things
happen”*

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The Scene was set

The years immediately after the 2nd World War were great ones for the ecumenical movement. Wartime situations and the need for post-war reconstruction had found the churches of different denominations working in new partnerships. Returned service men and women who had been thrown together with people of different faith backgrounds, often for the first time, and who had experienced the ministry of Chaplains from various denominations, no longer thought in narrow denominational terms.

In the universities, the Student Christian Movement had broken down barriers and brought young men and women into a wider fellowship, while the YMCA and YWCA played a similar role in the larger community. Renewed opportunities for travel after the war brought as visitors to our shores Christian leaders from many places and allegiances and 1947 saw that ecumenical milestone, the inauguration of the Church of South India.

And then came the World Council of Churches. As plans were being made for the first great Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948, throughout the world regional councils for the WCC were being formed and 'Friends of the WCC' were being enlisted.

The Regional Committee for South Australia of the World Council of Churches (Australian Section), whose jubilee we have celebrated, was part of this whole ecumenical movement. At first, it seemed a very small part. It was a committee that looked very different from what it grew into, the South Australian Council of Churches that we know today.

The Beginning

Early in 1947 a group of church leaders met at the invitation of the Lord Bishop of Adelaide (Church of England), and plans were made for a Regional Committee similar to those being formed in other States of Australia. A subsequent meeting got down to the task of spelling out the objective, 'to represent in South Australia the World Council of Churches and to function as an integral part of the Ecumenical Movement', and the proposed membership and method of operation.

The Inaugural Meeting was held on 24th June 1947 and was Chaired by Bishop Robin. The Membership, appointed by their respective churches, was:

Church of England	9	Congregational	2
Methodist	5	Presbyterian	2
Baptist	2	Salvation Army	1
Churches of Christ	2	Society of Friends	1

The Bishop was Chairman (later President) and the Rev Louis Schmidt, then Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of SA, was appointed Secretary. (The Minutes for the first years of the Committee were written in very Presbyterian fashion e.g. those present were the *Sederunt*.)

That first Committee would not have looked much like today's Council. Not only was it much smaller, but all the Members were male and all except two or three were clergymen. Every Member was appointed to either the Faith and Order Committee or the Life and Work Committee.

Initially, the Baptist Church held provisional membership, but it withdrew in 1949. The Lutheran Churches declined to join the Regional Committee, but the Rev Dr J J Stolz (UELCA), who had participated in the initial planning meetings, continued to attend as a 'visitor'. Indeed, in 1948 we find him acting on behalf of the Committee in welcoming Baltic migrants to South Australia, sometimes together with the Rev Louis Schmidt.

In 1948 the representation of the Salvation Army and the Society of Friends was increased to two for each body.

During the first year of the Regional Committee's life, the pre-Amsterdam study booklet 'Man's Disorder and God's Design' was used; plans were discussed for a united religious service to mark the forthcoming Royal visit: Quaker Relief to Central Europe was assisted; and the forced repatriation of 14 Malaysians brought letters to The Advertiser and the News and a protest letter to the Prime Minister.

Concern was expressed when the Minister for Immigration spoke of the entry into Australia of the Japanese bride of a serviceman as 'polluting' our country. The Committee resolved to 'watch the Minister's attitude' in this regard. The Australian Committee for the WCC issued a statement regarding 'The Peace Settlement with Japan' and this was studied and publicised. There was concern that the Australian Government had objected to the presence of Japanese at ecumenical conferences and support was expressed for the presence of Japanese at the WCC Amsterdam Assembly.

However, it was decided that Aboriginal issues were 'outside the scope' of the Regional Committee.

The Next Years

Naturally, the attention of the Committee was focussed on the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam in 1948. A Day of Prayer was organised to coincide with the meeting and a great post-Amsterdam service was held in St Peter's Cathedral, attended by some of the Australian delegates, with the Rev Dr Alan Watson from Melbourne as preacher.

Meetings of the Committee were increased from quarterly to bi-monthly, with an average attendance of 16. The two sections, Life and Work and Faith and Order, worked separately. Life and Work was occupied particularly with matters regarding migrants and the Immigration Act. It sounds strange to us now, but they were very much in favour of Protestant child migration. Questions related to Christianity and Communism were debated at length by Faith and Order, with some disagreement among members particularly with regard to the role of capitalism.

When asked to recall the events of the late 1940's and 1950's, those who were active in the ecumenical scene in those years now find it hard to distinguish between activities of the Regional Committee and those of the World Council of Churches Fellowship and of the Student Christian Movement. Overseas and interstate visitors invited by one group usually also were involved with the others. And there were many such visitors in those years.

The World Council of Churches Fellowship was an initiative of the Australian Committee rather than the SA Regional Committee and operated separately. When in 1951 the Heads of Churches were asked to encourage individual and corporate membership of the WCCF, the Members of the Regional Committee also had to be urged to become active Members. However, in 1955 Mr Ivan Hull was appointed Convenor of a 'special sub-committee to increase membership of the WCCF' and, while still operating independently, the Fellowship came much closer to the Regional Committee, particularly since Ivan Hull also did deputation work for the Committee. A portion of the subscriptions paid to the WCCF was allocated to the Regional Committee.

The 'Conference of the Laity'; at Retreat House in 1951 brought the Regional Committee closer to lay church members, but the Committee itself continued to be overwhelmingly clerical and of course, male. In 1952 the Rev Winifred Kiek of the Congregational Church was present at one meeting by invitation, accompanying D T Niles of Ceylon, and in the following year she was invited to report on the Oxford Conference on the Status and Work of Women in the Churches. In 1954 another woman, Society of Friends representative Miss C Williams, appeared briefly on the Committee and the Life and Work Committee, but she seems to have been replaced by a man the next year. In 1955 the number of representatives from some churches was increased, bringing the total membership to 29 and providing more opportunity for lay membership.

Secretaries

When the first Secretary, the Rev Louis Schmidt, moved to a country parish in 1948, the Rev W Reginald Steadman (Methodist) took his place. Then the Rev Arthur Muriel (Congregational) served as Secretary for three years until mid 1953 when Mr Steadman took up the office again, continuing until 1958.

At that time it was decided to appoint a fulltime Secretary who would serve the State Council and Inter-Church Aid. Mr Gordon Davidson, then Organising Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of SA, agreed to act until the appointment could be made; and because of funding delays he served from 1958 until the first fulltime Secretary, the Rev A Alan W Gray took up the position in 1962.

InterChurch Aid

1950 saw the Christmas Bowl of Remembrance Appeal for the WCC programme of Rehabilitation of European Churches. Almost all the 'non-Roman' Churches in South Australia cooperated. However, the Members of the Regional Committee were upset by the appointment of an appeal organiser for SA, Miss W Shorney, by the Australian Committee without consultation with them. They did give her permission to act (although not unanimously) but requested a different procedure in the future.

Shortly after this, in 1951, the InterChurch Aid A Committee for South Australia was formed, to work in cooperation with the Australian InterChurch Aid Commission. The South Australian Committee comprised three representatives of the Regional Committee plus three from each Member Church, appointed by the Churches. The Chairman was the Bishop and the Secretary Rev Ernest Woollacott (Methodist). So began an extremely significant work of ecumenical cooperation in South Australia.

Who Remembers This??

After a successful **Christian Christmas** campaign in 1956—a tableau in Elder Park, encouragement of cribs in shop windows and radio and press adverts urging attendance at Christmas Church services—the Council decided to do something about Easter. Advertising slides were shown in picture theatres, with a picture of Christ on the Cross and the words 'Remember Holy Week and Easter'. The cost of the slides was £140 and was covered by donations from churches, including Roman Catholic, Baptist and Lutheran. The slides were used for several years.

Newcomers to Australia

A congregation of White Russians, the Slavic Independent Pentecostal Church at Queenstown, had an elderly pastor who could not speak English. His people were distressed because the Attorney General would not register him as a Marriage Celebrant. The Council intervened successfully on his behalf.

Housing applications for travel loans, help with problems and misunderstandings, contact with Government Departments—all part of the service offered to migrants by the Council in the 1950's and 1960's.

Visitors

The Minutes of the 1950's and 1960's record a great stream of overseas and interstate visitors for whom the Regional Committee arranged meetings and other occasions. One visit that is still remembered is that of a World Council of Churches delegation in 1956. The visitors were Dr W A Visser 't Hooft, the General Secretary of the WCC, Dr O Frederick Nolde and Bishop G Bromley Oxnam and Mrs Oxnam.

Pentecost Conventions

The ecumenical enthusiasm generated by the National Conference of Australian Churches held in Melbourne in February 1960 and attended by 40 South Australians led to the first of the Pentecost Conventions. On the Saturday during the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity ecumenical groups met for worship and Bible Study in five suburban locations—Unley Church of England, Norwood Congregational, Woodville Presbyterian, Prospect Methodist and Glenelg Salvation Army. Several hundred people were involved. In the evening a rally was held in the city, in the Pirie Street Methodist Church. Similar events continued to be held each year until 1965.

People involved in the first Pentecost Convention at Glenelg were so enthusiastic that the Glenelg United Churches Bible Study Group was set up. This was the beginning of the Council of Churches that has been so significant in that area. Mrs H M Tunley was the leader of the group. She became Assistant to the Secretary, Mr Gordon Davidson, that year and served the Council as Office Secretary until 1968. She was Acting Secretary of the Council during the nine months vacancy that occurred between Secretaries Mr Graham Pemberton and Rev Chris Mackaay.

New Name - New Secretary

1962 was the year in which the Committee became the South Australian Council of Churches. It was the year in which the first fulltime Secretary was appointed. He was the Rev A A W Gray and his coming marked the beginning of a most significant time in the life of the Council.

A State Conference was held that year, attended by 130 people. The Guest Speaker was Rev Paul Verghese from the WCC and Rev James Peter was the study leader. The Opening Service was held in St Peter's Cathedral.

Mr Gray's wide experience of the Christian world and ecumenical enthusiasm, added to his gifts of patience and humour, enabled him to help the various Churches of the Council better to understand each other and to come closer together. His appointment was to both the SACC and Inter-Church Aid. By 1965 Inter-Church Aid had been integrated with the Council and while each still had a separate identity and work there was an integrated budget.

During Alan Gray's Term of Office relationships were consolidated with the Council of Christian Education (group life laboratories, seminars, concern about RI in schools), the Christian Youth Council (work camps etc.), the Women's United Church Association and the United Churches Social Responsibility Board. WCCF continued to meet from time to time for fellowship teas or luncheons and when Alan Gray became the Secretary of the group it came closer to the rest of the Council's life. Numbers grew only slowly, although they compared favourable with other States.

By the time Alan Gray's Term of Office concluded at the end of 1965, the Council was recognised as the Council of Churches, belonging to the Churches of South Australia, acting on their behalf and answerable to them.

Church and Life

The new Secretary, Mr Graham Pemberton, began early in 1966 and immediately was thrust into activity related to the Church and Life Movement. While this was an initiative of the Australian Council of Churches, the State Councils carried responsibility for local planning including recruitment and training of leaders, publicity and follow-up.

Preparations had begun during the previous year under Alan Gray's leadership, but the pace increased in 1966. By the time the seven weeks of ecumenical house group meetings were held in June and July, 270 churches in SA had registered as participants and 1200 leaders had been trained. Over 600 groups met with approximately 8000 participants in most parts of the State. Perhaps not so many unchurched people were involved as had been hoped, but the group members were excited and enthusiastic and many worthwhile united activities and projects resulted from the meetings as well as in increased level of ecumenical understanding and participation.

While the Member Churches and individuals were divided in their attitude to the Billy Graham Crusade in 1967 and to the Vietnam protests, they were united in their affirmation of the right to protest, their call for peace in Vietnam and their support for the YES vote in the Referendum 'as a declaration of regret for the past and intention to give every necessary assistance to people of the Aboriginal race to enable them to take their place in the nation'.

Testing Years

When Mr Graham Pemberton indicated that he did not wish to seek reappointment in 1969, the position of Secretary was again advertised. The successful applicant was Rev Christian J P Mackaay, a man whose experience of the ecumenical movement went back to participation in the WCC Amsterdam Assembly as a young man. He was a Presbyterian Minister who had come to Western Australia from Holland and had been lecturing in Old Testament studies in Perth.

Concern for world development came onto the Council's Agenda in 1970 and the ACC/RC study programme Action for World Development was a major activity in 1972.

Aboriginal concerns surfaced periodically—land rights, racism, development of mineral deposits. Disquiet was expressed about events in Rhodesia and Korea. South Africa and the Vietnam War were ongoing concerns. These matters and activities of the ACC and the WCC, particularly the Programme to Combat Racism, drew much criticism. A great deal of misinformation that was circulated led to abuse and vilification of the Council. As the Secretary travelled extensively in country South Australia and the Northern Territory, he encountered much criticism and opposition.

On the positive side, there was the reinvigoration of Faith and Order (at that time renamed the Department of Studies) with Lutherans included in its membership; a growing relationship with the Roman Catholic Church who were seeking greater involvement in ecumenical activities; fewer but longer Council Meetings, including overnight meetings with stimulating studies and speaker; increased numbers of representatives on the Council and the revision of the Constitution.

Chris Mackaay resigned at the end of 1973. His scholarship, international outlook, administrative ability and 'continuing enthusiasm in the face of disappointments and setbacks' were a valuable gift to the Council.

The new Secretary was the Rev Murray Couch, a Methodist Minister and qualified accountant who had ministered in a united parish in SA and in Fiji. He served the Council for three years, 1974-76, bringing us a new understanding of the problems of the third world, including exploitation in the Pacific. It was fitting that at this time promotion of forceten became part of the Secretary's work.

Racism and questions of violence and non-violence, war and peace remained on the Agenda. The Rev Dr D'Arcy Wood represented the Council in a television debate on the subject of grants to Africa.

Social questions were being pursued actively by almost all the churches and the Council established the Commission on Social Questions in 1976 to enable communication between the Churches so that research could be shared and work coordinated. The CSQ was authorised to prepare and circulate study documents to Member Churches but not to issue any statements or publications without the endorsement of Member Churches. Catholics, Lutherans and Baptists were involved in this.

New People, New Interests

Rev Peter Holden, a Methodist Minister from NSW who had been working with the ACC, was appointed Secretary from 1977. Peter brought a particular interest in and knowledge of Indonesia and other parts of Asia and valuable contacts with the Christian Conference of Asia.

The Membership of the Council changed in 1977 when the Romanian Orthodox Church joined the Council and the Uniting Church in Australia was inaugurated. The Presbyterian Church that continued later withdrew from Membership.

The ACC General Meeting was held in Adelaide in 1978, with the SACC as hosts providing various services. The meeting was based at Lincoln College with the Opening Service in St Peter's Cathedral. Archbishop Edward Scott, Primate of Canada, was guest speaker.

Peter Holden helped us to face questions of the SACC's purpose, structure, programmes and administration. Improved office accommodation and equipment were obtained, a part time Development Education Officer was appointed for 1978 and other part time staff shared the work in the following years.

Our contacts with and knowledge of the Asian churches increased. As part of the Christian Conference of Asia's dialogue programme, a consultation on 'Spirituality in an Affluent Society' was held in Adelaide in 1979, with 40 participants and overseas resource people.

The Executive of the CCA met in Adelaide in 1980 and an exhibition of art, the work of a group of Asian artists brought together by the CCA, was mounted at Scots Church Adelaide during the Festival of Arts. Later this exhibition was taken to Pt Pirie, Pt Augusta and Whyalla and then to Melbourne. A great deal of planning and work behind the scenes went into these events and the SACC earned the gratitude of the CCA.

The ACC had invited the Christian Conference of Asia and the Pacific Conference of Churches to implement a regional study/action programme related to tourism. With WCC funding, Peter Holden undertook this during late 1980 and early 1981. The Rev Walter Stafford acted as Associate Secretary of the Council during this period.

Other interests and activities in the early 1980's included increasing contact with Indochinese refugees; an ecumenical Lenten study programme; the promotion of One World Week; the WCC Mission and Evangelism Conference in Melbourne, with visitors to SA, and the establishment of the Council's Commission on Mission and Evangelism.

There was increased contact with the Orthodox Churches. The Membership of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the contribution of its priest, Father Constantine Iana, enriched the Council. Then in 1980 Bishop Ezekiel appointed Mr Con Theodorou to represent the Greek Orthodox Church on the Executive Committee and the Council. Two years later a General Meeting of the Council was held at the Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Offices at Glenelg, including vespers in the Archdiocesan Chapel of St Panteleimon.

After five years as Secretary in South Australia, Peter Holden left to take up a position with the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism. He had challenged the Council in many ways and brought us to a deeper awareness of the church's mission in the world.

The new Secretary was an Anglican clergyman, Rev Richard Chance. When he came in 1982 the churches—and the Council—were faced with many social issues; war and peace; conscientious objection to military service; racism; prostitution, the breakdown of family life; IVF. Richard gave good leadership as the Council wrestled with these.

Through his Term of Office, Richard Chance kept in touch with Aboriginal people and was an advocate for them. He made a valuable contribution when he appeared before the Parliamentary Select Committee on Maralinga Land Rights.

A new location with new likeminded friends

After several fairly cramped locations in Epworth Building, the Council moved in 1985 to 155 Pirie Street. Here the SACC joined with other groups—Amnesty International, Development Education Group, World Workshop and Uniting Nations Association of Australia—to form the 'One World Collective'. This facilitated networking and sharing of resources and each gave the others a higher profile amongst their constituents.

Father Richard Chance's time as Secretary concluded at the end of 1985. His had been a busy, active term with many contentious issues that he tackled ably, always in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The new Secretary, who was now to be known as the Executive Officer, was a Uniting Church lay woman, Mrs Janet Wood. She was already well known to many South Australian Churches as a clear-thinking and theologically well-informed person with teaching skills and an outstanding ability with words. She undertook the tasks of the Council with enthusiasm and determination.

1986 was South Australia's Jubilee 150 year and so Janet's term began with the ecumenical Lenten Study programme 'Land of Promise? Visions of Freedom'. Later, the Jubilee 150 Ecumenical Celebration 'Fire in the Rock' was of high quality although numbers were disappointing.

For some years the SACC had co-sponsored the Palm Sunday Peace March until 1985, when it was changed to a Disarmament March and Rally and the Council withdrew, believing that the movement had become too politicised and the focus had become too narrow. In 1986 the Council organised a Peace Service before the March, with up to 1200 people. The SACC was one of the sponsors of a Christian Peace Festival in the November of the same year.

Janet Wood was really putting the SACC on the map in Adelaide. As she spoke to church congregations, her pleasant, friendly manner and ability to speak with authority but without threat made people warm to her and therefore to the Council. Her newspaper columns were widely read and appreciated.

The needs of refugees were increasing. A new position was created in the Council in 1988, Refugee Advocacy Case Worker, a joint appointment of the SACC and the Refugee Council of Australia. Appeals by refugees for permanent resident status were assisted and the crisis in China in 1989 brought many such applications and other problems.

Two coming events began to preoccupy the Council. The 1990 ACC General Meeting to be held in Adelaide and, in early 1991, the World Council of Churches Assembly in Canberra, with its accompanying 'Year of Ecumenical Sharing'.

When her husband, Rev Dr D'Arcy Wood, was appointed to a church in Canberra, Janet Wood resigned, concluding her term at the end of 1990. She had used her wide-ranging talents well in the service of the Council, encouraging the involvement of young people through the Ecumenical Youth Forum, giving strong support to the Romanian Church during a crisis in 1990, enlisting the aid of innumerable volunteers to assist with special events and the day to day life of the Council, and generally encouraging the ecumenical family.

The Catholic Church joins the Council

Father Anthony Kain spoke at the July 1986 General Meeting of the Council, telling about the forthcoming visit of the Pope which was being seen as a visit to all Australians and the Church as a whole, not just the Roman Catholic Church. Rev Dr D'Arcy Wood, President of the ACC, also spoke as the non-Catholic representative on the Papal Visit Committee. Later in this meeting, it was agreed to communicate to the Catholic Diocese the SACC's 'fervent desire for their membership' as well as prayers for them and for the Pope's visit.

The President, Bishop Rosier, then raised the matter with Archbishop Faulkner and Bishop de Campo (Pt Pirie), pointing out the value of Catholic participation in Council events and working groups that already was being experienced. Dialogue proceeded. Catholic observers joined the Executive and the General Meetings. Finally, in March 1988, the Catholic Diocese of Adelaide was received and warmly welcomed into the SACC.

The 1990's

The Rev Dr Malcolm McArthur, took up his position in 1991. An educationalist and Minister of the Uniting Church, like his predecessors he brought new interests and a new range of contacts into the Council.

A submission on behalf of the churches regarding the Multi-Function Polis was lodged in 1991, highlighting community aspects of the proposed development. The Executive Officer was invited to join the SA Heads of Churches Committee as a non-voting member. This meant that the two bodies would be kept in touch with each other and avoid duplication.

The WCC Canberra Assembly brought new enthusiasm for ecumenical activities and interest in new issues. Enthusiasts were recruited to serve on task groups and commissions. The People with Disabilities Task Group and the Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation Commission were created. Local inter-church Councils were supported and the Commission on Local Ecumenism mounted a successful 'Expo' in 1992 which further encouraged regional activities.

The inauguration of the National Council of Churches in Australia, successor to the Australian Council of Churches and with a wider membership, brought rejoicing. The Executive Officer ably steered the Council through questions regarding new relationships and ways of working together.

The question of low cost housing was raised in various ways and the Annual General Meeting in March 1992 recommended the formation of the Inter-Church Housing Unit. This was duly established and funding was obtained from the Government, the SA Housing Trust and contributions from churches. Mr Greg Walker was the first Manager, with Mr Don Hopgood as Convenor. It took some time to establish the work but now it is bearing fruit as housing is being erected on land contributed by local churches and church agencies.

The Executive Officer has been able to see both the wide picture of the Council and all the detail of so many aspects of its work. Someone has called Malcolm McArthur 'an ideas man'. Certainly his capacity to produce innovative ideas has enriched the work of the Council in recent years.

Christian World Service

Christian World Service—Inter-Church Aid—by whatever name, this most important activity deserves its own history. It has been touched on only briefly in this document simply because the story is so vast. It has never ceased to be active and has had the highest profile of any part of the ecumenical work in this State. Who had not heard of the Christmas Bowl? How many millions of dollars have been circulated to the various other appeals?

A great many members have served the Commission over the years, served faithfully and sacrificially; but special mention must be made of three who chaired the group for many years—Senator Gordon Davidson, Mrs Heather Crosby and most recently Br Trevor Dean. To all who shared the work, The Council thanks God for you.



Undoubtedly, Christian World Service continues to be a top priority and has the highest profile of any of the SACC's activities, with its flagship the Christmas Bowl. Hosting overseas visitors, fundraising trips and exposure tours, Badge Day and other special events and the on-going work of publicising *forcten/Partners4Peace*, Christmas Bowl and other appeals has been an enormous task willingly and ably undertaken by Br Trevor Dean and his team. The fact that, in monetary terms, South Australia has consistently performed better than other Australian States is a tribute to the work of our Executive Officers and members of our Christian World Service Commission.

Jubilee

12th July 1997 was the date chosen for the celebration of fifty years of the life of the SACC and the official opening of the new offices. The celebrations began with a "banner walk" with people processing from several nearby city churches to Victoria Square, where the Salvation Army Band was playing on the steps of the Torrens Building. At 11:00am the Premier of South Australia; the Hon. John Olsen officially opened the building and presented a key to SACC. This was followed by a liturgical celebration and then a time of fellowship in the central courtyard. Later in the day 150 people enjoyed a progressive "midwinter dinner: moving between Bishops Court, Luther Campus and Aquinas College in North Adelaide.

The whole day was an exciting time and received TV and other media coverage. President Ken Allison, Executive Officer Malcolm McArthur, Chair of the Ecumenical Jubilee Trust Fund Angelo Fantasia and all those who had worked so hard planning the event could feel satisfied that the next fifty years had begun well.

A BROAD AGENDA

The staff and volunteers settled in to the new offices and friends appreciated the very accessible location. The presence of so many other non-government agencies and welfare groups in the building was a bonus.

Current concerns about land rights and the stolen generations meant that issues relating to Indigenous Australians were high on the agenda. They were the focus of the annual Friday Forums in August 1997 arranged by the Justice, Peace and Creation Committee. The Commission on Christian Education hosted reconciliation workshops and the Director of the NCCA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission addressed a General Meeting in 1998.

The People with Disability Task Group were exhibiting a rising level of expertise in advocacy. In May 1998 they conducted a conference "Beyond the Ramp" and they were responsible for an ecumenical course at the Adelaide College of Divinity.

A new Task Group – Rural Ministries – was established to explore possible areas of cooperation in rural districts, seeking common approaches and practical sharing that could be accomplished without impinging on doctrinal issues.

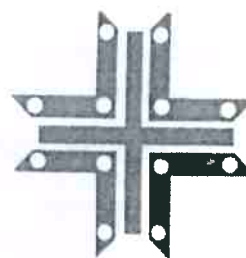
The Faith and Order Commission's name was changed to Faith and Living, reflecting "the juxtaposition of Scripture and being (living) to which we aspire". During 1999 they explored what faith and worship meant to young people and gathered stories and reflections on how the 'options generation' experience the church. This resulted in the publication "Deeper Waters", launched in 2000.

The Lutheran Church had decided nationally to join the National Council of Churches in Australia and in this State the Rev'd David Paech and others attended the SACC November 1997 General Meeting as observers and entered into conversations regarding membership. After detailed discussion on various questions, the Lutheran Church in South Australia agreed to join the Council as from 1st January 1999, with their church having four members on the Council and one on the Executive Committee.

SA HEADS OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

The relationship that Malcolm McArthur had established with the Heads of Christian Churches had proved so valuable that the HOCC resolved that the Executive Officer of the SACC should be an observer at their meetings 'in perpetuity'.

The Lenten Studies are an example of the unique cooperation between the Heads of Churches and the Council. Produced biennially, each series has involved up to ten thousand people, most of who have studied in ecumenical groups. As well as English, the 1998 study book was printed in Italian and Vietnamese. However, that year concern was expressed regarding the number of parishes not participating or only using the study internally and the total of 6,000 books sold and 1,000 given away was some thousands less than in previous years. In 2000 the study "Hope for the New Millennium" saw a rise in participation.



It was agreed at a HOCC meeting in August 2006 that to help strengthen ties between HOCC and SACC the SACC would take on the role of Executive Secretary/Minute Secretary to the HOCC for a trial period of twelve months.

INTO THE NEW MILLENIUM

The Rev'd Malcolm McArthur retired in January 2000. He had brought many gifts to the Council, not least his world view. Having lived and worked in Papua New Guinea and travelled widely in Europe, Asia and the Pacific, he introduced us to the needs and aspirations of Christians of many lands and helped us to relate the word church with something of his passionate concern for justice and peace. A gifted communicator and educationalist, Malcolm's ability to address both broad issues and administrative details served the Council well.

The new Executive Officer was the Rev'd Vikki Waller, a minister of the Uniting Church in Australia, who brought creativity, energy and enthusiasm to the task. She was commissioned at the Annual General Meeting in March 2000.

At that same meeting, members joined in small group discussion with members of the various Commissions and Task Groups concerning the main focus of each group and its future work. From this, a Vision Statement for 2000 – 2005 was developed, with goals, objectives and strategies for (1) Building on each other's strengths, (2) Interacting with the wider community, (3) Broadening the Council's membership base and (4) Working in partnership with the National Council of Churches in Australia and Christian World Service.

Issues related to the Sudan were on the agenda continuously in the new millennium. In 1999 Nick Kerr, who visited the New Sudan Council of Churches following the Nairobi WCC Assembly, brought members of the Sudanese Community of South Australia to a General Meeting, where they spoke of the sufferings of the people of Southern Sudan. The Ecumenical Sudan Support Group was formed to relate to the growing community of Sudanese refugees in Adelaide and undertake advocacy, education and communication on their behalf. Initially this was a sub-group of the Social Questions Liaison Group but later became a Task Group of the Refugee and Displaced Persons Committee.

The Commission and Committees at Work

The Refugee and Displaced Persons Committee (the name changed from Refugee and Migrant Issues to be consistent with the national programme) was increasingly active as public debate about asylum seekers increased. Denis Voight took up the position of Refugee and Displaced Persons Project Worker after Christine Loveday's resignation in 1999. His brief was not to be a direct service provider but through theological reflection, communication and networking, to educate and motivate the churches to engage in the issues and to encourage them to relate to refugees in the community and groups supporting asylum seekers. In 2000 and 2001 a part-time worker was employed to coordinate work with Temporary Protection Visa holders. The Executive Officer visited the Detention Centres and contact was made with Government Ministers and Members of Parliament. Controversy in the community and pressure from the media made heavy demands on the SACC staff.

The Christian Education Commission was disbanded in 2002 as most of its former tasks were being covered by other bodies and so, despite its long history, there seemed no reason to continue its existence.

The People with Disabilities Task Group changed its name to Task Group on Disability Issues. A study kit "In the Shelter of Each Other" was produced and launched in December 2002.

Vikki Waller had attended the launch of WCC Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace (DOV) in Berlin and the South Australian launch was held at St Mary Magdalene Church on 23rd October 2001. The SACC formed a Decade to Overcome Violence Task group which arranged seminars with a major emphasis on non-violent living and the Faith and Living Commission produced a series of pamphlets on peace and overcoming violence for use primarily in local congregations and community groups.

After completing this, Faith and Living commenced a new project, the production of discussion pamphlets on aspects of worship, to encourage congregations to reflect on current worship practices.

2004 saw the unification of the Justice, Peace and Creation Commission and the Decade to Overcome Violence Task Group into a single meeting to optimise both energy and time. A number of creative and significant activities resulted. JPC had worked with Dr Norm Habel to write the "Song of the Earth Liturgy" which focused on the seven days of creation. This was presented as part of the Adelaide Fringe Festival and the group went to prepare and promote it as a worship resource for local congregations.

The Social Questions Liaison Committee continued to share information between their churches concerning their attitudes and activities on issues such as poker machines and gambling, refugees and asylum seekers, the Murray/Darling river basin and reconciliation and justice for Indigenous Australians.

The Commission for Local Ecumenism kept in touch with Inter-Church Councils and other bodies and produced a detailed Information Kit in 2003.

The Inter-Church Housing Unit continued to be concerned at the decline in housing provision for low income people and brokered a number of joint venture agreements between churches and the SA Community Housing Authority.

The National Council of Churches in Australia held its National Forum in Adelaide in July 2004, so staff and volunteers put a great deal of time, energy and enthusiasm into preparations for the Forum and associated events. Special guest was Dr Sam Kobia, General Secretary of the WCC and a highlight was the Declaration of Intent contained in the Covenanting Together document signed by the leaders of each denomination at a great ecumenical service in St Peter's Cathedral, reaffirming the churches' commitment to each other as they continue on an ecumenical journey.

The General Meetings held three times a year introduced members to a variety of settings where we heard stories of various congregations and denominations and shared in worship from different traditions.

A Turning Point

After six years, Vikki Waller retired. Her years with the Council had been busy and creative. Constantly on the move, she had been speaking and leading worship all around South Australia and had travelled with delegations overseas and had audited work funded by the Christian World Service in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Fiji, Nairobi and Kenya (Kakuma Refugee Camp). She attended WCC meetings and other international gatherings. In the aftermath of 11th September she initiated very important contacts with the Muslim community, particularly with women, and gave invaluable leadership to the Christian Community. With sincere appreciation of the gifts she had brought to the Council, Vikki was farewelled at the end of 2005.

A new Executive Officer was not appointed immediately. Instead Geraldine Hawkes was invited to become part-time Interim Manager of the SACC combining this with her role with St Paul's City Ministry. Geraldine was familiar with the Council, having been Vice-President and Moderator of the Executive and served as Acting Executive Officer during Malcolm McArthur's long service leave.

Concern was being felt about the difficulty of recruiting new members, the apparent weariness of some who had served long and faithfully and a general lack of clarity regarding the future of the Council. At the April 2006 Executive Committee Meeting the Executive Committee recommended that the SACC enter a time of discernment prior to making decisions for the future and the process was launched in September.

This can best be described in the words of Geraldine Hawkes in her 2006 Annual Report:

*The focus is on encouraging the development of a disposition of openness to the Spirit by making space and providing for a range of opportunities for people to engage in **prayerful discernment of the Spirit, formation, education and discussion**. A programme of events, activities and resources have been developed and it is hoped that, as people engage in these, the movement of the Spirit will illuminate the way forward for SACC as it considers its core purpose, its priorities and the resources it needs to achieve this.*

So at this point in the life of the South Australian Council of Churches we give thanks to God for the last sixty years and look forward in faith to whatever the future holds.

Rev Norah Norris

March 2007

The Presidents

1947	Rt Rev Bryan Robin	Church of England
1954	Rev Principal E S Kiek	Congregational
1956	Very Rev J Ralph Blanchard	Presbyterian
1957	Rev Grosvenor T Inglis	Methodist
1959	Rev Leslie C Parkin	Congregational
1962	Mr Stanley Neighbour	Churches of Christ
1963	Rev John D Bentley	Presbyterian
1965	Rev Mervyn C Trenorden	Methodist
1967	Colonel R W Smith	Salvation Army
1968	Rt Rev Thomas Reed	Church of England
1969	Rev John H Bennett	Congregational
1970	Rev John D Bentley	Presbyterian
1971	Mr Michael J Tolley	Society of Friends
1973	Mr Ken Dawson	Churches of Christ
1974	Rev Donald J Howland	Methodist
1975	Rt Rev Lionel E W Renfrey	Church of England
1976	Rev Paul C Parkin	Congregational
	Rev Norah A Norris	Presbyterian
1978	Rev Dorothy Wacker	Uniting Church
1980	Rev Fr Constantine Iana	Romanian Orthodox
1981	Mrs Alder Hall	Anglican
1983	Mr J Bruce Whyatt	Churches of Christ
1985	Rev John D Bentley	Uniting Church
1986	Rt Rev S Bruce Rosier	Anglican
1988	Mr Colin G Dredge	Churches of Christ
1989	Major Derrick Jessop	Salvation Army
1990	Mr Colin G Dredge	Churches of Christ
1991	Rev Fr Denis Edwards	Catholic
1993	Miss Ruth Grey-Smith	Anglican
1994	Dr Jenny Stock	Society of Friends
1995	Rev Peter Whittington	Uniting Church
1997	Mr Ken Allison	Churches of Christ
1999	Major Howard Smith	Salvation Army
2001	Bishop Phillip Aspinall	Anglican
2002	Rev David Paech	Lutheran
2004	Rev Margaret Polkinghorne	Uniting
2006	Major Ross Lewis	Salvation Army

In the Office

No matter what else has been happening, the work of the office has gone on. The Council has been very well served by the Office Secretaries and all who have worked with them. Those who have served for long terms are:

Mrs H M Tunley	1960-1971	Mrs Nance Brice	1971-1974
Miss Nan McKenzie	1974-1981	Mrs Neita Carroll	1982-1987
Mrs Joan Housego	1987-1997	Ms Leah Johnson	1998-2000
Ms Julie Wright	2000-	Miss Daina Pocius	2001-

We also remember others who were in junior or part-time positions and gave faithful service to the Council. Then there were people employed to carry out special projects and, over the years, a very large number of volunteers who helped in so many ways. The Council has valued them all, recognising the sacrificial nature of much that has been given and the motivation of those who wanted to serve Christ and His Church in this way.

The Torrens Building

220 Victoria Square, Adelaide

The Torrens Building was designed to meet the requirements of the Public Works and the Registrar-General's Department. It was conceived as a huge building and covers an entire town acre on the corner of Victoria Square and Wakefield Street which was purchased by the Government in 1876. As usual with public buildings, a design competition was held and a Melbourne architect Michael Egan won. Egan had recently designed a 140,000 pound, government building in Melbourne. He had also won the University of Adelaide design competition and the Mitchell Building by William McMinn incorporates many of Egan's ideas.

The South Australian Register, 1 December 1877 described Egan's Torrens Building proposal as a handsome, substantial looking building, by no means monumental and simple in style. Egan reported that the elevations were in the Italian style and designed to group with the Supreme Court, the General Post Office and other public buildings facing the square. No tower was provided as this was unnecessary 'in sight of the post office.

Every convenience was provided for. The complex formed a quadrangle with a central court. The fronts facing Victoria Square and Wakefield Street were faced with 'freestone' (ashlar sandstone), but to save costs, the sides were rendered brick. The internal elevations were plain brick. The first storey was described as Doric, the second Ionic, the third 'simply pilastered'. The windows of the ground floor were arched, the upper windows square headed.

'The central feature of the facade to Victoria Square was finished with the Royal Coat-of-Arms. The design generally is simple in treatment, variety has evidently not been considered an essential in giving good elevations'.

Egan's design for the new government offices was, with some improvements and modifications, carried out by the architect-in-chief, Edward John Woods. The foundations and cellars were constructed of Glen Osmond stone by Robert Huckson. James Shaw tendered successfully to build the superstructure for 55,795 pounds in November 1879. The building was completed and occupied by December 1881.

Despite the many internal alterations and additions to the back of the building and the 'temporary' additions within its quadrangle, the main facades fronting Victoria Square and Wakefield Street remain very much as completed. The building is an impressive classical structure and a prominent feature of Victoria Square.

