

Ecumenical Affairs

Convenor
Ex Officio
Members elected by Synod

Rev Ruth Vertigan
Rev David de Kock
Dorothy Carey
Rev Frances Hadfield
Rev Pearl McGill
Ian Passmore
Rev Marie Wilson

1. AIMS

- To promote dialogue with other Christian denominations
- To encourage dialogue with other faiths
- To maintain links with the Council of Christians and Jews
- To make available resources for local discussion regarding co-operation
- To share news of ecumenical activities around the state
- To be a liaison with the National Church's dialogues with other denominations
- To communicate worldwide trends in ecumenism and to be a link to activities within the World Council of Churches as well as the National Council of Churches in Australia and the Council of Churches of WA

Ecumenism is at the heart of the Uniting Church. We are encouraged to ask how we are engaging with others in all our activities and to intentionally plan for this. This committee can be a gatherer of stories that may inspire others.

2. ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH AWARD

Again we were greatly encouraged by the quality of entries received for the annual award. This Award was designed to encourage, recognise and celebrate ecumenical and interfaith initiatives of our congregations, schools and agencies. In 2016 it was a difficult choice to determine the winner so the award was shared by year 9 students at Methodist Ladies College who had engaged in learning activities with students of an Islamic school and Scarborough Uniting Church who

hold regular Saturday night meals followed by a film with people from neighbouring churches and the local community.

3. COUNCIL OF CHURCHES WA

The Uniting Church is an integral, active member of the CCWA with longstanding commitment to field three members to the executive and up to ten for general membership. The Ecumenical Ministry Officer of CCWA, Rev Frances Hadfield retired at the end of June. On behalf of the Uniting Church, we would like to thank Frances for all the work she has done in promoting ecumenism. In particular she set in place a regular newsletter of open events, invitations and activities hosted by a great variety of churches. This can be accessed at: www.churcheswa.com.au or if you would like to receive the emails contact ecumenical@churcheswa.com.au.

Following the initiative of CCWA last year, a Pilgrimage for Unity was again held this year coinciding with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and concluding on Pentecost Sunday. Pilgrims participated in services and meetings at many city churches of different denominations; to participate in some planned events during the week – worship, or talk and tour – and to reflect on the experience. The Orthodox Church visits proved especially popular.

4. CHRISTIAN UNITY WORKING GROUP NATIONAL DIALOGUE

Each year we send at least one delegate to this national UCA conference, which supports ongoing dialogue with Anglican, Lutheran, Orthodox, Salvation Army and Roman Catholic churches both nationally and at the

international level. The conference also gives a chance.

for the States to hear from each other and to review UCA relationships with many ecumenical bodies such as the World Council of Churches, the Christian Conference of Asia, the Global Christian Forum, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the World Methodist Council.

5. COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS IN WA (CCJWA)

The council of Christians and Jews aims to promote understanding between people from the Jewish and Christian communities in WA. This involves education and developing personal relationships. There are normally five events a year organised to bring people together. One very special meeting held every year on 9 November is Kristallnacht Commemoration "Night of Broken Glass". Last November this was held at the Perth Hebrew Congregation. The speaker, Shirley Atlas gave an illustrated talk about spiritual resistance during the Shoah.

In February the 2017 Annual General Meeting was held at the Redemptoris Mater Seminary, Morley, where the guest speaker was Kevin Vigus from The Friends of Israel Gospel group. He combined music with his talk on Communicating Covenant love to God's Covenant people. In May, evening worship with the Winthrop Singers, St George's College Chapel was followed by a meal at the college and a fireside discussion with students at the college.

A special meeting in June was held to farewell and give thanks to Rabbi David Freilich who is retiring as Rabbi of Perth Hebrew Congregation and Honorary President of CCJWA. The Rabbi spoke to a packed hall on Religion – Tolerance or Respect.

6. LOOKING AHEAD

We know there are many ongoing instances where the Uniting Church engages in ecumenical activities - for instance in Drug Arm, Finucare, Hope Community Services, and Chaplaincy in hospitals, schools and prisons. Godly Play training and the Fresh Expressions ministry are also ecumenical in

nature; and we have a robust and life-giving involvement in the Social Justice Round Table. There are certainly other examples we'd love to hear about.

It is through sharing time with each other as well as in acting together that relationships grow, which are there to be called upon when needed.

7. ACT FOR PEACE

The service to launch the Christmas Bowl in 2016 was hosted by Willetton Uniting Church and led by Rev Lorraine Stokes. A choir group from Beth Shalom provided musical entertainment during afternoon tea. The UCA continues to generously support this ecumenical appeal.

The launch this year will be held at St Peter and Emmaus church, Mount Hawthorn on Friday 24 November with a meal starting at 6 pm. Sister Elizabeth Delaney, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches will be the guest speaker so please note this in your diary and show your support.

8. RELATIONS WITH OTHER FAITHS

Interfaith September is an opportunity to build understanding and friendship with people of other faiths. Our WA Synod has made a commitment to Sustainable September so we encourage people to use this resource at some other time – perhaps even October. It would be good to take some action with others in the community and tell the committee what has happened so we can spread the good news.

Michael Barnes from the Assembly Relations with Other Faiths Working Group writes:

"As Christians, we believe diversity is a part of God's creation. Our faith in Christ calls us to live together in peace and love and to engage in genuine dialogue with people of other faiths.

In Australia today, there is much work to do healing divisions caused by ignorance and fear, but by reaching out to people of other faiths, we can make a difference.

On behalf of the Assembly Relations with Other Faiths Working Group, I extend a

personal invitation to your congregation to take part in Interfaith September this year.”

You can participate in any way that suits you. You may follow the worship resource each week, theme a sermon, use a suggested hymn or host an event. You may choose another time of year that is more suitable. It is up to you.

Resources can be downloaded at:

<https://assembly.uca.org.au/interfaithseptember2016/>.

Please get in touch and tell us how you plan to participate.

Perhaps you can organize an event that meets the criteria for the Interfaith and Ecumenical Award for next year.

How is your congregation, school, agency or board engaging with other denominations or faiths? Do share! And do consider nominating for the Ecumenical and Interfaith Award.

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