

ECUMENICAL RELATIONS COMMISSION

The Commission met annually over the past three years. A major focus has been the re-establishment of the Anglican-Lutheran Dialogue and the Anglican-UCA Dialogue. Commission members continued to engage with the National Council of Churches and its various commissions.

GSERC membership:

Archbishop Jeffrey Driver (Convenor), Archbishop Glenn Davies, Bishop Tim Harris, Bishop John Parkes, Bishop Doug Stephens, Rev'd Jane Lee Baker, Rev'd Erica Mathieson and Ms Alison Preston.

Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue

While both our traditions are challenged by structural, theological and ethical issues, the trust and fellowship experienced within AUSTARC has allowed dialogue members to share both pain and hope. Meetings are always timetabled to allow dialogue members to grow closer personally. The Eucharistic president is alternatively Anglican and Roman Catholic. It is here that the reality and pain of separation becomes apparent; as all share in prayer, but only half those present receive the sacrament.

The primary activity for the past two years has been to examine the theme of holiness in the Australian context, inspired by the canonisation of St Mary of the Cross (McKillop). During the latter part of 2012 and through 2013, papers have been presented and discussed. During 2014 a booklet will be finalised on this theme and offered to our respective churches. The booklet will have four chapters, each followed by two outbreaks (examples of holy lives) and three questions. The proposed chapter headings are:

Holiness in an Australian context, Biblical basis for holiness, Systematic theology of Holiness, Practical theology of Holiness.

In addition to this major work, it was decided that the work of AUSTARC must be better disseminated and promoted. Following some considerable discussion it was decided that an immediate step was to seek a web-host and to build a website.

A subsidiary activity has been the search for connection with the wider Anglican Roman Catholic dialogue through ARCIC and IARCCUM. The intention of IARCCUM at its formation was (1) to promote initiatives that witness to and carry further the level of agreement already existing between Anglicans and Catholics (2) to encourage the common life that flows from our deep sharing of faith. IARCCUM is keen to see the establishment of links between the various national ARCs and to this end we have participated in an IARCCUM information exchange.

Membership:

	<u>Roman Catholic</u>	<u>Anglican</u>
Co-chair:	Archbishop Chris Prowse	Bishop Doug Stevens
Secretary:	Rev'd Denis Stanley	Archdeacon Philip Newman
Members:	Dr Greg Brett	Ms Coleen Arnold-Moore
	Dr Denis Edwards	Rev'd Scott Lowrey
	Prof Anne Hunt	Dr Craig D'Alton
	Dr Catherine Playoust	vacancy

Anglican-Lutheran Dialogue

A new round of the Anglican-Lutheran Dialogue commenced in 2013, and has met twice (February and September 2013) to outline the possible focus and direction for this round of dialogue. Three members of the Anglican participants have been involved in previous dialogues, while the Lutheran participants are all new participants.

Given the substantial agreements articulated in Common Ground (*Covenanting for Mutual Recognition and Reconciliation*), it was decided to focus on encouraging closer relations at local and regional levels – to 'live into' the framework provided within that document. In particular, the major focus for this dialogue will be exploring in greater detail the two churches' respective theological understanding and praxis of missional ministry. It was noted that *Missio Dei* is a common term ecumenically and in Anglican circles, but does not enjoy wide use in the Lutheran Church of Australia.

Common Ground has only one paragraph relating to mission (Clause 19):

19 *A Common Hope and Mission*

We share a common hope that Christ who is Lord of all will come again, and that all things will be united in him and God's saving purposes will be perfectly fulfilled. In this hope we believe that we are called to make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that Jesus has taught us. We are called to work now for the furtherance of justice, to seek peace and to care for the created world, and to live responsibly in all areas of life. The obligations of the Kingdom are to govern our life in the Church and our concern for the world.

It was noted that the relationship between the first two and the last two sentences raised some issues from a Lutheran perspective (largely relating to a range of Lutheran understandings on Luther's 'two kingdoms' theology). Anglican members articulated an Anglican understanding of mission with reference to the 'Five Marks of Mission' (as updated at ACC 15).

It is anticipated interaction with the WCC mission statement 'Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes' will bring a focus to the dialogue.

Membership:

Co-Chairs: Rt Rev'd Dr Tim Harris (Anglican) and Rev'd. Dr Steen Olsen (Lutheran).

Anglican: Rev'd Jane Lee Baker, Rev'd Martin Bleby, Rev'd Michael Hillier, Rt Rev'd Gary Weatherill

Lutheran: Rev'd Mark Henderson, Rev'd Stephen Pietsch, Rev'd Ben Pfeiffer, Rev'd Matthew Thomas.

Anglican-Lutheran International Coordinating Committee

The first meeting of the Anglican-Lutheran International Coordinating Committee was held in Finland, September 19-25, 2013 (Sofia Cultural Centre, Helsinki). This is a new body, the successor to the Anglican-Lutheran International Commission (ALIC), which has received a mandate from the Anglican Consultative Council. The Rt Rev'd Dr Tim Harris is one of five Anglican representatives to ALICC. In its report to the Anglican Consultative Council, ALIC wrote:

“In our work we have discovered a number of theological topics which require further exploration. However, we consider that the priority at this time for Anglicans and Lutherans at the international level is to promote closer relations at all levels. Thus we do not recommend at this time the establishment of an ALIC IV but rather a Co-ordinating Committee.”

Anglican-Uniting Church Dialogue

The Anglican-Uniting dialogue lapsed for a time following the last General Synod. In re-establishing the dialogue it was important at the outset to hear the great disappointment felt by the Uniting Church team at the failure of the earlier covenant proposal. It is clear that another failure to make progress through this round of conversations would effectively sound a death knell to any further attempts to find common ground, at least in the foreseeable future.

In considering the way forward, there was agreement on the following points:

- Ecumenical cooperation between our churches is a missionary imperative, not just a convenience in places of pressing need. This conviction contrasts with emerging missiological trends in both churches where ecumenism is marginalized.
- The dialogue group was clear from the outset about the limits to what can realistically be achieved. Members had no desire to reproduce the same work that has proven unfruitful in the past.
- The dialogue is optimistic that a different sort of goal may be achievable. A document focused on stimulating local cooperation between our churches, and providing a consistent framework to support this, was regarded as being something able to be commended to both churches' national governing bodies, and this would be a valuable step forward.

This document has been completed and signed by the co-chairs of the dialogue. It is an appendix to this report and will be presented to the UCA Assembly of 2015.

The document prepared seeks to address the following:

- building upon, rather than replicating, the work of previous dialogues;
- explicitly does not seek to bring about organic union or mutual recognition of ministries;
- focuses on the possibilities for cooperation within existing levels of agreement;
- registers what has been learnt from the experience of cooperation in parishes, theological colleges and other bodies;
- gives permission and guidance for groups wishing to cooperate further; and
- acknowledges the limited vision of the present process and is open to a future that is as yet unimagined.

Membership:

The Anglican representatives are Bishop John Parkes (co-chair), Bishop Peter Danaher, Rev'd Canon Dr Colleen O'Reilly and Ms Helen Baddeley.

The Uniting Church representatives are The Rev'd Prof. Christiaan Mostert (co-chair), Rev'd Margaret Blair, Rev'd Martin Wright and Ms Maureen Postma.

WCC Assembly Busan

The WCC Assembly was held in Busan from October 30 - November 8, 2013. Delegates and representatives from the Anglican Church of Australia were: Archbishop Phillip Aspinall, Archbishop Jeffrey Driver, Archdeacon Karen Kime and Ms Alison Preston who was there as a member of the Central Committee.

In addition to those representing the Church in this way, Archbishop Phillip Freier and Bishop Phillip Huggins presented a seminar on Refugees. The full report of the assembly is available on the WCC website: <http://wcc2013.info/en>.

At its 2013 meeting GSERC considered the WCC document "The Church Towards a Common Vision" and recommended to Standing Committee that it be referred to the Doctrine Commission for consideration and also to each of the Anglican Theological Colleges.

NCCA

The Primate, Archbishop Jeffrey Driver, the General Secretary, Mr Martin Drevikovsky (as alternate to the Primate), and Rev'd Dr Erica Mathieson have continued to represent the Anglican Church of Australia on the National Council of Churches Executive. Ms Rose Elu was elected to the Executive at the 2013 Forum. Archbishop Driver is a member of the Executive Standing Committee.

Representatives of the Anglican Church of Australia on other NCCA bodies are:

Act for Peace – NCCA Commission

The Rt Rev'd Philip Huggins Anglican
Ms Alison Preston

Eco-Mission Project

The Rt Rev'd Tom Wilmot

Faith and Unity Commission

The Rev'd Dr Cathy Thompson
The Rt Rev'd Doug Stevens
The Rev'd Jane Lee Baker

Finance Committee

Mr Michael Nicholls

National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission

The Rt Rev'd Saibo Mabo
The Rev'd Gloria Shipp

NCCA Ltd Directors

Mr Martin Drevikovsky

Safe Church Network

Mr Garth Blake SC

Social Justice Network

The Very Rev'd Dr Peter Catt

+Jeffrey Driver

March 2014

ECUMENICAL RELATIONS COMMISSION REPORT

APPENDIX



*Anglican and Uniting Churches
Working Together*



Weaving a New Cloth

WEAVING A NEW CLOTH

Anglican and Uniting Churches Working Together

PREAMBLE

This document proposes a framework for local cooperation between Anglican and Uniting churches throughout Australia.

Local cooperation is the most promising avenue for ecumenism today, with growing numbers of congregations working and worshipping together. Increasingly, it is here that fruitful “ecumenical space” is to be found, in which different Christian communities can walk together in the way of Christ, and each discover the gifts the other tradition has to offer.ⁱ

The Joint Working Group of the Anglican Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia offers this framework in the hope that it will assist both our churches to encourage and support cooperation at the local level. In doing so, we build upon the work of previous dialogues, trusting that the benefit of many years’ conversation will be more fully realized in time to come.

This document honours each church’s understanding of the relationship that can exist between us, setting out what is possible, and what is not, within current constraints. At present, this includes eucharistic hospitality but precludes formal intercommunion and the mutual recognition of ordained ministries. It seems to us that this is a constructive ecumenical step that can be taken now, in openness to whatever future directions might emerge for conversation out of a strengthened experience of locally shared worship and mission.

A BIBLICAL VISION OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

The unity of Christians is a gift from God before it is a task for the church. Our unity is in Christ. He is our peace, creating in himself one new humanity across humankind’s divisions, reconciling Jew and Gentile to God in one body through the cross (Eph. 2:14-16). In Christ we are built together spiritually, across our differences, into a dwelling place for God (2:22). This is a spiritual unity, grounded in the unity and mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son and in the unity of believers with the Son and the Father (John 17:20-21).

However, the unity of believers with each other, for which Jesus prays, a unity in diversity, is also a visible unity. Moreover, not an end in itself, it is a missional unity.ⁱⁱ The unity of Christians serves the mission of the triune God: that the world may believe that the Father has sent the Son (John 17:21) and the Spirit (John 14:26). To fail to make this unity visible and concrete is to dishonour the gift of God in Christ.

All Christian churches are called to give expression to this gift. Together with other churchesⁱⁱⁱ, our two churches have pledged, through the “Covenanting Together” process of the National Council of Churches in Australia, “to explore such further steps as will be necessary to make more clearly visible the unity of all Christian people in this country”. The possibilities outlined in this document, approved by our two churches at national level, are significant steps for Anglican and Uniting parishes and congregations to consider taking together in their local worship, education and mission.

THEOLOGICAL AFFIRMATIONS

1. Each of our churches stands in the continuity of the apostolic faith, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.
2. Each of our churches is part of the one holy catholic and apostolic church. Acknowledging our failure to enact fully our calling, both our churches witness faithfully to the gospel and seek to be more fully engaged in God's mission in the world.
3. In each of our churches the Holy Spirit gives to the whole people of God gifts for the upbuilding of the church and for its continuation in the mission of Jesus Christ.
4. The ordained ministry in both our churches is given by God as an instrument of grace, notwithstanding our different understandings of it. By this ministry, the people of God are called to faith, strengthened to witness to the gospel and empowered to serve in hope and love.
5. In each of our churches the word of God is faithfully preached and the sacraments of baptism and holy communion are duly administered in accordance with each church's tradition.
6. Personal, communal and collegial oversight (*episcopate*) is exercised in both our churches, albeit in different forms, to serve the church's unity and its faithfulness to the gospel.

FORMS OF COOPERATION

Local inter-church covenants across Australia give expression to the commitment of church people to make visible the unity that we have in Christ.

Possibilities listed below are not sequential but have developed out of particular circumstances—some out of ecumenical commitment, others because of changed conditions. In all situations, consideration must be given to every aspect and implication of cooperating arrangements and the different approvals and agreements required for different levels of cooperation.

HOSPITALITY

Hospitality can take many forms. Anglican and Uniting Church members are welcome to attend services in each other's churches. Eucharistic hospitality may be offered to baptized and communicant members of each other's churches. Hospitality can also include the sharing of buildings, and shared activities are encouraged as common witness and mission in local communities.

SHARED WITNESS

A stronger visible expression of the unity we share as a gift from God is seen as we deepen our relationships in shared worship, bible study and fellowship groups, and these occasions give witness to the Christian faith we hold in common. Formal shared events are more meaningful when planned by representatives of both church communities.

SHARED MINISTRY IN MISSION

In some circumstances, Anglican and Uniting churches decide to share resources to better provide ministry and pastoral services. These resources may include staff or volunteers, buildings or finances. Ministry may be for specific communities, e.g. chaplaincies in schools or aged care, or for the wider community within a specific geographic area.

The vision for such shared ministry may come from the local community, or the missional imperative from the leadership of either church in a specific area. Where the impetus comes from local congregations, plans for these shared ministries are presented to the relevant Anglican Diocesan Bishop and the relevant Uniting Church Presbytery.

JOINT CONGREGATIONS

The establishment of a joint congregation, i.e. one congregation made up of members of the two ecclesial traditions, requires the agreement of the local councils of both churches and the approval of the appropriate governing bodies of the two churches. Each of the original congregations retains its separate identity, membership and links (spiritual, doctrinal, sacramental, liturgical and financial) to its church, according to the provisions and degree of collaboration. They share resources such as church buildings and ministries, and unite in local mission.

Agreement must be reached within the Anglican Parish Council and Uniting Church Congregation and Church Council. Approval is also required from the relevant Anglican Diocesan Bishop and the relevant Uniting Church Presbytery. Depending on circumstances, approval of the relevant Property Trusts may also be required.

PLANNED COMMON WITNESS

In areas of new growth or rejuvenation it is possible for both churches to work together to construct buildings for shared usage, common witness and ministry. Constitutional issues of both churches must be addressed, but the witness of the unity we have in Christ to the wider community presents opportunities and challenges which are invaluable.

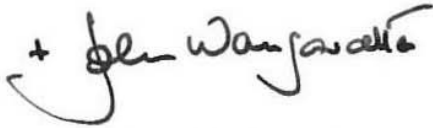
CONCLUSION

Arguably the most significant development in the last decade or so for ecumenism has been the development of the concept of Receptive Ecumenism. At the heart of this endeavour is the conviction that the primary ecumenical responsibility is to ask not "What do the other traditions first need to learn from us?" but "What do we need to learn from them?" If our two churches were asking this question seriously and acting upon it, then we would be moving in ways that would both deepen our authentic respective identities and draw us into more intimate relationship.

The Joint Working Group offers "Weaving a New Cloth: Anglican and Uniting Churches Working Together" for the prayerful consideration of our two churches. We remain convinced that, building on the work already undertaken between our churches, the most fruitful next step in our ecumenical journey is the fostering of local cooperation between us. This will offer tangible evidence of our commitment to the relational unity which is both the desire and the command of our Lord (John 17:20-23). We commend the report to the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia and the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the report “Weaving a New Cloth: Anglican and Uniting Churches Working Together” be received and endorsed.
2. That the report be commended to Dioceses and Presbyteries for their further action.



The Rt Rev'd John Parkes AM



The Rev'd Prof. Christiaan Mostert

Co-chairs of the Joint Working Group

Date: 27.2.2014

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Notes

- i. The recent encouraging development of “Receptive Ecumenism” is helpfully discussed in Gerard Kelly, “A New Ecumenical Wave”, public lecture, National Council of Churches Forum, Canberra, 12 July 2010. (www.ncca.org.au/files/Forum/7th/Documents/Ecumenical_Address.pdf).
- ii. The emphasis on the church’s unity as spiritual, visible and missional is borrowed from the ‘Biblical Reflection’, Section 3 of the draft report of the Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity in Mission (AMICUM), 2013.
- iii. The following Churches have signed the Future Pledge of the Covenanting Document: the Anglican Church of Australia, the Antiochian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Assyrian Church of the East, the Churches of Christ in Australia, the Congregational Federation of Australia, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, the Indian Orthodox Church, the Lutheran Church of Australia, the Mar Thoma Church, the Religious Society of Friends, the Roman Catholic Church in Australia, the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Salvation Army and the Uniting Church in Australia.
www.ncca.org.au/files/Departments/Faith_and_Unity/Covenanting/2010_July_Australian_Churches_Covenanting_Together.pdf

For Further Information

Covenanting

<http://ncca.org.au/departments/faith-unity/covenanting>

<http://toorak.unitingchurch.org/aboutus> and

<http://saintjohnstoorak.org/#/about-st-johns-toorak/community>

More Covenants and Agreements are listed in 'When Churches Join' (see below).

Shared Witness

<http://www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org>

<http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/faith-unity> for 'Week of Prayer for Christian Unity' resources

Shared Ministry

<http://www.pastoraljournal.findaus.com>

<http://www.ecumenical.ucaqld.com.au/ecumenical-schools>

<http://www.bendigoanglican.org.au/parishes/central-mallee>

<http://www.anglicanrock.org.au/churches/winton.html>

<http://www.bathurstanglican.org.au/parishes/canowindra>

Joint Congregations

<http://www.ucalpine.org.au/history.html> and

<http://snowyanglicanparish.weebly.com/>

<http://www.cckensington.org.au/history.html>

<http://www.wa.uca.org.au/mthawthorn/about>

(The search for St. Peter and Emmaus Church on the Anglican website leads to this UCA link.)

Planned Ecumenical Witness

<http://www.seafordecumenical.org.au>

<http://www.emmanuel.unitingchurch.org.au> (the website listed by both the Anglican Diocese and the Uniting Presbytery)

Further Resources:

- **Anglican-Methodist International Commission for Unity In Mission (AMICUM) Report**, due to be made public in 2014. Access to this report will be publicized in due course.
- The **Trinity Declaration and Code of Practice** for Local Co-operation in Victoria between the Anglican Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia.
<http://assembly.uca.org.au/unity/when-churches-join/item/953-developing-ecumenical-co-operating-partnerships>
When Churches Join (a good summary of issues that arise as Christian communities begin to discuss developing ecumenical cooperating partnerships, plus listings of Covenants and Agreements).
<http://assembly.uca.org.au/unity/when-churches-join>
- **The Gift of Each Other; Learning From Other Christians, a Parish Workbook on Receptive Ecumenism**, published by the New South Wales Ecumenical Council, 2013.
www.nswec.org.au

Membership of the Joint Working Group

Anglican

The Rt Rev'd John Parkes AM
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The Rev'd Canon Dr Colleen O'Reilly

Uniting

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