



INTERFAITH

Asia Pacific Youth Workshop

In the week following Easter, the Multi-faith Centre at Griffith University (Nathan Campus) hosted a workshop for thirty young adults from the Asia Pacific region, including Australia. These young people, ranging in age from 18-25 years, came from diverse faith backgrounds but all shared an interest in Interfaith Dialogue.

The purpose of the workshop was to give them the opportunity to live and learn together and to build up networks, which would help promote interfaith relations. The program included a dinner and panel discussion on Wednesday, 14 April, with panelists all experienced in Interfaith dialogue.

On Thursday, the Uniting Church at Aspley hosted a "Festivals, Food and Faith" evening. Participants were provided with samples of the various foods used at Passover, Easter and Ramadan and explanations regarding their symbolism and the importance of these celebrations in the lives of the faith communities were given. This was followed by talks from Rev. Prof. James Haire, President of the National Council of Churches in Australia and Director of the new Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in Canberra and Prof. Toh Swee-Hin, Director of the Multi-faith Centre at Griffith.

A visit to the Catholic Church's Centre for Multicultural Pastoral Care at Rosalie was on the agenda for Friday. Centre staff, José Zepeda and Mary Gavin, and Margaret Naylor from the Office of Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations spoke to the workshop participants about their respective roles before leading a tour of Sacred Heart Church, Rosalie.

Imam Visits Cathedral

Cardinal George Pell of Sydney welcomed Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf to St Mary's Cathedral for a lunchtime Interfaith Prayer Service on Thursday, 1 April. Imam Feisal was visiting Sydney at the invitation of Premier Bob Carr who was also in attendance at the Service.

Born in Kuwait of Egyptian ancestry, Feisal Abdul Rauf has been Imam of Masjid al-Farah in New York City since 1983. In 1997 he founded the ASMA Society, a not-for-profit, non-political, educational and cultural organization dedicated to creating bridges between the American public and American Muslims. He teaches Islam and Sufism at the Centre for Religious Inquiry at St Bartholomew's Church in New York City, and at the New York Seminary. He was also one of the three American imams interviewed on the CBS program "60 Minutes" shortly after the attacks of 11 September 2001.

The Imam told the congregation at St Mary's of the task of "shaping shared convictions" that Muslims and Christians must "strive to accomplish together".

We intend to deepen our belief that effective public engagement around difficult issues can include, and in fact, requires, religious voices. From our own experience, we affirm that multiple religious voices praying and working together can serve our deepest common good when joined together to represent the conscience of our communities.

For Imam Feisal, the events of 11 September mean that **inter-religious dialogue is no longer an option, but an imperative.**

Cardinal Pell said the task for Christians within Australia is to uphold the rights of minority groups within the community including Muslims.

Just as we Christians rightly demand that the lives and civic rights of Christian minorities in, for example Indonesia and the Middle East are respected, we must be equally vigilant that all minorities in Australia are treated with respect and made to feel welcome as fellow Australians. (CathNews)



FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: 23-30 May

Don't forget this wonderful annual opportunity to celebrate the unity, which has already been achieved, and to pray for strength and courage as we continue the journey. Why not make a special effort in your area this year as a means of celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Decree on Ecumenism? Worship material and a resource kit are available from Queensland Churches Together:- + P.O. Box 2045, Milton BC Qld 4064

(07) 3369 6792

È (07) 3369 8573

¿ qctadmin@tpg.com.au

Week of Prayer City Service

Come and pray for Christian Unity at St Andrew's Uniting Church, cnr Ann and Creek Streets on Thursday, 27 May at 12:30pm.

Church as Communion

As a follow-up to the Week of Prayer, why not organise some home discussion groups in your area? "Church as Communion" is a three-session small group discussion resource based on the ARCIC II document of the same name. While it comes out of Anglican/Roman Catholic dialogue, the program is suitable for much broader ecumenical involvement. It is an initiative of Archbishop Bathersby and a cooperative effort between AUSTARC, based in Melbourne, and Faith Education Services (FES), Brisbane Catholic Education. It is available from FES: (07) 3840 0599, È (07) 3844 5101.

Dr Paul McPartlan, July 2004

Dr McPartlan, ecumenist and theologian of the Westminster (London) Diocese will be in Brisbane for most of July. He comes at the invitation of the Archbishop as one of the initiatives resulting from Synod 2003, and will lead a number of courses and seminars.

Two of these are being sponsored by the Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations:

- A Formation Day for members of the Commission, Subcommittees and Parish Contacts. Topic: "What's the springboard to re-ignite, inform and practise ecumenism in our parishes and deaneries?"
- And a session open to all those interested on Wednesday, 14 July 7:30-9:00pm, Nolan Hall, Leslie Street, Nundah (beside St Joseph's Primary School). Topic: "A step beyond coffee, carols and conversation. What is central to ecumenism?"

For further information please contact Margaret Naylor on (07) 3336 9354.

The Mouse House

The parish website of Herston, Ashgrove and Newmarket parishes hosts a web page for Local Christian Churches. It contains photos of the churches, service times, contact details and the names of the ministers. It can be found at: ¿ www.parishes.bne.catholic.net.au/han/Local_Churches.htm

For background information on the Eastern (Orthodox) Churches and the work of CNEWA, a papal agency for humanitarian and pastoral support, see ¿ www.cnewa.org/



Archdiocese of Brisbane

Issue # 1 ~ 2004

EDITORIAL

Revisiting Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism 40 Years On

The fortieth year after the promulgation of the Second Vatican Council's *Decree on Ecumenism* (Unitatis Redintegratio (UR), 21 November 1964) is an opportune time to revisit this document and the event that brought it to light. What follows presents a couple of notes of the pre-history of the formation of the Decree and what I consider to be an important and perduring aspect of this document with regard to how the Church understands itself, as we continue to pray and work in the Spirit of Jesus Christ towards full Christian unity.

In difference to the words of Pius XI in 1928 that "[t]he Catholic Church takes no part in 'Ecumenical' conferences or meetings," the 1949 document of the Holy Office, *The Catholic Church*, saw the acceptance of at least limited dialogue between Catholics and other Christians. This nascent opening was advanced with John XXIII's founding of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (1960) in preparation for Vatican II and then this Council's decision to develop a separate decree on the issue of ecumenism and the Catholic Church's understanding of and participation in the movement toward full Christian unity.

Both John XXIII and Paul VI, the popes of the conciliar period, emphasised the central place of ecumenical activity in the church, and the imperative for ecumenical endeavour is a theme that runs through the council's documents. The opening words of first conciliar document, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, names the four-fold purpose of Vatican II of which the third is to "promote union among all who believe in Christ." The theological and pastoral foundations and practice of ecumenism by the Catholic Church are taken up then, for example, in the documents on the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, the *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity* and the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*: they are articulated most fervently in the *Decree on Ecumenism*.

The decree acknowledges that Christ founded "one church only," so that division "openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalises the world, and damages the most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature," the decree develops in three chapters: "Catholic Principles of Ecumenism," "The Practice of Ecumenism" and "Churches and Ecclesial Communities Separated from the Roman Apostolic See."

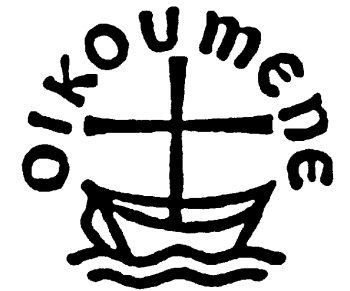
However, that this decree exists at all I consider is based on a central shift made by Vatican II in how the Catholic Church understands itself. That is, what it is to be the Church of Jesus Christ, while finding its fullness in the Catholic Church, is not exclusive to this church: there are other bodies of Christians, churches and ecclesial communions that have the qualities of the Church of Jesus Christ. They contain for example, "the written Word of God, the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, with other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements," and these churches are seen to be means of salvation. This shift opened the way to dialogue between the Catholic Church and other churches.

The above neither does justice in a sense to the Decree, the Council nor to the vast consequences seen in the ecumenical dialogues and actions made between Christian Churches since Vatican II. However, it might offer a simple reminder that a key to understanding what it is to be the Catholic Church is to be and act with an ecumenical perspective and for that matter heart.

There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion. For it is from the newness of attitudes of mind, from self-denial and unstinted love, that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way. We should pray to the Holy Spirit for the grace to be genuinely self-denying, humble, gentle in the service of others and to have an attitude of brotherly (sic) generosity toward them (UR 7).

Fr David Pascoe
Chair of the Commission

Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations



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**Feedback and articles for
publication are welcome.**

The Commission has begun the new year with some significant changes both in membership and in roles. Margaret Naylor, who has chaired the Commission for the past two years, is now working full-time in the Office at the Catholic Centre as the Executive Officer. Fr David Pascoe, back from his six months sabbatical overseas, has taken over the role of Chair. At the October meeting last year we welcomed four new members: Donna Anderson, Natalie L'Huillier, Michael Chambers and Greg Gilmore. At this year's February meeting they were joined by Patricia Blundell rsm and Fr Frank O'Dea representing the Priests' Council. (Biographies of these new members will appear in this and later issues of the newsletter.)

There is a busy year in store for the Commission as we look at ways of celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Decree on Ecumenism from the Second Vatican Council. Several ideas have been proposed and are in the planning stages, so stay tuned for further details.

Of course we are also very involved with the implementation of the Archdiocesan priorities, which came out of last year's Synod. A Subcommittee has been set up to look at ways of assisting parishes to do their pastoral planning from an ecumenical and interfaith perspective. This group is very conscious of the demands already made on parishes and is hoping to make its ideas as practical and user-friendly as possible. Also a significant component of the February meeting was devoted to responding to the Commission for Evangelisation and Pastoral Planning Consultation on proposals to support parish life and mission.

The visit of Dr Paul McPartlan, ecumenist and theologian from the Westminster (London) Diocese in July will be another high point for the year. The Commission is sponsoring two workshops by Dr McPartlan. Details of these appear elsewhere in this issue.

A joint meeting of the Ecumenical Committees of the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran and Uniting Churches will be held in May. We are hoping to share some of our stories of ecumenical experience, exchange ideas on directions for the future and look at ways that the Committees might work together.

Margaret Naylor
Executive Officer – Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations

Subcommittee Report

The **Young Adults Ecumenical Subcommittee** has met twice this year with increased membership and renewed energy. As well as clarifying the group's name and purpose, members are planning two practical projects aimed at informing young Catholics about Ecumenism and establishing networks among young people of different Christian traditions.

The first project is a Poster Campaign. The aim is to produce professional posters, which will raise awareness of ecumenism and provide strategies and ideas for parishes and groups to implement ecumenical activities locally.

The group also plans to hold a Coffee Shop Series. These will be informal gatherings where guest speakers will address a range of topics. The audience will be drawn from young adult groups from across the Christian Churches.

In order to cover some of the financial expenses involved in these projects, the group has applied to Queensland Churches Together for a grant from the James Warner Memorial Trust.

Biographies



Bishop Brian Finnigan welcomes Greg Gilmore, Natalie L'Huillier, Michael Chambers and Donna Anderson.

Greg Gilmore is Pastoral Associate of Herston, Ashgrove and Newmarket Catholic parishes. He has previously worked in youth ministry for St John's Wood/The Gap parish and Darra-Jindalee parish. He is married to Anna; their daughter, Ella, was born in 2002. Greg's experience in ecumenism includes studying at Brisbane College of Theology (including the History of the Reformation and the History of the Ecumenical movement); being an active member of ecumenical ministers' fellowships in every parish in which he has worked; teaching state school religious education in collaboration with other churches; and organising ecumenical activities at a parish level.

Patricia Blundell is a Sister of Mercy and, since 1994, has been Ecumenical Chaplain at Griffith University. From 1995 to 2002, she was involved with the establishment of the Multi-Faith Centre at the Nathan Campus at Griffith. This project included representatives of the Aboriginal, Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Muslim communities. Patricia has a particular interest in inter-religious relations and last year convened the Australian Association for Studies of Religion Conference, which featured a strand on Multi-Faith Dialogue. She has also lectured in New Testament at Brisbane College of Theology.



Demonstration Passover Meal

The Catholic Jewish Sub-Committee hosted a Demonstration Passover Meal at the Staff Centre, Villanova College, Coorparoo on Wednesday 31 March. The celebration was led by Cantor Garek Fysch of the Camp Hill Synagogue, who explained the significance of the various parts of the service and the special foods used. While it was a wonderful religious experience, it was also very clear that, for the Jewish community, it is a great family celebration. Children have a strong involvement and the singing is done with much gusto and enthusiasm. Everyone has a good time at Passover!



Anglican/Roman Catholic Dialogue: Where Are We?

There has been significant media coverage in recent months of happenings within the worldwide Anglican Communion and the implications this can and will have on Anglican/Roman Catholic dialogue. Perhaps this is a good opportunity to look briefly at the history of the ecumenical relationship between the two Churches and to consider the present situation.

One of the major historic steps in the dialogue was taken in March 1966 when Pope Paul VI and the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Michael Ramsey, met in Rome and produced a Common Declaration. This led to the establishment of the Anglican/Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission. It was the decision of this Commission that major common study should be undertaken on the three related theological problems of most concern to both Churches: Eucharist, Ministry and Authority.

This task was given to the first Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission, founded in 1970, which produced Agreed Statements on *Eucharistic Doctrine* in 1971, *Ministry and Ordination* in 1973 and *Authority in the Church* in 1976. Phase Two of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) dialogue was mandated in 1982 by Pope John Paul II and Archbishop Robert Runcie and has itself produced four Agreed Statements: *Salvation and the Church* (1987), *Church as Communion* (1991), *Life in Christ* (1994) and *The Gift of Authority* (1999).

It is this last document, which received media coverage recently, when it was revealed that it would be debated at the General Anglican Synod in February. The Telegraph (UK) highlighted the significance of this debate when it was quoted as saying: "The Church of England is being asked to take its biggest step towards accepting the primacy of the Pope and the concept of infallibility since Henry VIII broke from Rome 450 years ago."

While this debate goes on, ARCIC continues its work. Its current area of study is the role of Mary. The CathNews report (05/02/04) notes that the "Church's understanding of Mary has been a subject of deep controversy between Anglicans and Roman Catholics", however ARCIC "has agreed on a methodology based on Scripture and theological reflection in its attempt to fix a strategy to go behind what it describes as 'entrenched

positions' on the Virgin Mary." At its February meeting in Seattle, the Commission completed work on the statement "Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ", which will now be submitted to the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, to the Archbishop of Canterbury and to the Anglican Consultative Council.

It is worth noting the significant Australian presence on this dialogue. Taking up the role as Anglican co-chair of ARCIC at the end of last year was Archbishop Peter Carnley of Perth. Melbourne priest Dr Peter Cross has been one of the nine Roman Catholic members for some time.

Archbishop Carnley's new role comes as the result of the resignation from that position of Bishop Frank Griswold, primate of the Episcopal Church in the United States. Bishop Griswold was presiding bishop at the ordination of Bishop V. Gene Robinson to head the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire, an event which has caused major concern and division within the Anglican Communion. Bishop Griswold believed that his resignation from ARCIC was "in the interest of not jeopardising the present and future life and work of the commission." (Catholic Leader 14/12/03)

Bishop Robinson's ordination has also affected the work of the other Anglican/Roman Catholic forum, the International Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission (IARCCUM), of which Archbishop John Bathersby is co-chair.

This group is a relatively new formation and had planned to publish a common statement of faith. Bishop Farrell, Secretary of Council for Promoting Christian Unity is quoted as saying (Zenit 25/01/04) that IARCCUM "will not meet as a body, but will work through a special subcommission to harvest from already agreed-upon statements the ecclesiological principles that might be of help at this time."

Bishop Farrell concludes by saying: "As you can see, far from weakening our dialogue, this time of challenge has brought a new intensity to our ecumenical exchange."

Margaret Naylor

The Pope and the Jewish Community

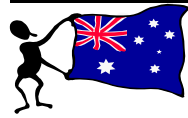
Since the beginning of his pontificate Pope John Paul II has worked tirelessly to mend the previously fraught relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish community and to promote greater understanding and cooperation. His efforts have been acknowledged recently in a number of ways.

In December last year, John Paul II was presented with the 2003 Simon Wiesenthal Center Humanitarian Award for his "lifelong friendship" with the Jewish people and his efforts to promote Catholic/Jewish understanding. Rabbi Marvin Hier, founder and dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Jewish human rights organisation, visited the Pope at the Vatican with other representatives of the Center. They spent time with the Pope discussing issues of concern to the Jewish people worldwide, especially international terrorism.

On the other side of the world, Rabbi Raymond Apple of the Great Synagogue in Sydney was interviewed on ABC Radio National, "The Religion Report" by Stephen Crittenden on 22 October. In response to Stephen's question "Well, would you agree...that after his (Pope John Paul II's) contribution to the fall

of communism, the efforts that he's made in relation to the Jewish people, ...are in fact the greatest contribution he's made in his papacy?" Rabbi Apple replied: "I believe this is one of the two greatest contributions he's made. The other contribution, which perhaps the world doesn't even realise, is that he has made the papacy into a spiritual and moral leader of the world. ...Now, without question it is the Pope to whom the world turns when they want a statement, when they want guidance, when they want a steadying hand, at one of those constant moments of crisis that beset our generation."

Rabbi Apple went on to say: "His very skilful use of the media is part of it; his travels, which have meant that he has encountered people from many countries, many backgrounds and many creeds and ethnicities; but over and above that, I think the world is in need of this kind of personality. We have leaders, but in many cases they are people who lack...the power to inspire. ...But the fact that there is a personality, if you like a religious figurehead who has the respect of the whole world, is if not the first great achievement of his papacy, then certainly the second."



Matters of Interest from the
NATIONAL COUNCIL of CHURCHES in AUSTRALIA
Executive Meeting – March 2004

The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

For the first time, the NCCA executive meeting was not held in Sydney, but at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in Canberra. Rev. James Haire, the new NCCA president, is living and working there after finishing his term as national president of the Uniting Church in Australia.

The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACCC) is located on six hectares in the Parliamentary Triangle of the National Capital. At the heart of the site is an area of conservation native grassland with a panoramic view of Lake Burley Griffin. Wandering around this is a Pilgrim Walk, a guided pathway which moves around the grasslands. A towering steel cross that is lit up at night stands sentinel over the area.

The first stage of the building program is completed. It comprises a multi-use worship space, seating 250 inside and another 250 in a courtyard outside, an intimate prayer room and a fully equipped meeting area. Stage two is the Collegiate Wing, a suite of academic, creative and administrative offices and facilities that will house the developing community of the centre. Construction is due to commence next year. Stage three will be a worship space seating 2000 people, which opens onto an alfresco amphitheatre seating a further 3000.

The centre will be a place: for the study and expression of the diverse Christian traditions and expressions of faith which exist in multicultural Australia; encounter and dialogue between Christian denominations and between Christianity, Judaism and other religious faiths; the exhibition and performance of the arts, exploring their interaction with the Christian faith.

Pre-Meeting Events

The national Heads of Churches and members of the NCCA executive were invited to a reception at Yarralumla by the Governor-General on the evening before the executive meeting. On the same evening, the induction service for James Haire as Professor of Theology at Sturt University and as Executive Director of the ACCC was held in the chapel at the Centre.

Christian World Service

The Christian World Service link from the NCCA website www.ncca.org.au opens up a lot of attractive and informative material about the work of CWS. Well worth a look!

At The Cross Roads: Living in a time of change

The fifth NCCA Forum will be held at Lincoln College in Adelaide South Australia from 9-13 July 2004. The special guest is to be the Rev. Dr Sam Kobia, newly elected General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.

Safe as Churches Conference

This three-day gathering held in Canberra in March to share knowledge and experience on addressing sexual abuse was a great success. Many of the sixty participants are involved in the formation and implementation of church policies on sexual abuse and misconduct. They represented the Anglican, Catholic, Uniting, Lutheran, Salvation Army, Greek Orthodox, Quaker, Churches of Christ, Coptic Orthodox, Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist and Presbyterian churches.

The consultation was seen as a step in developing best practice among the churches by encouraging and resourcing Australian churches to deal with complaints in the best possible way, to protect the innocent, and change any elements of church culture that encouraged abuse or protected abusers.

Journey of Promise

From 29 January to 4 February thirty young Christians, Muslims and Jews lived together at the Uniting Church Conference Centre at Elanora Heights, Sydney in an attempt to explore in greater depth the diverse life and faith of communities in Sydney.

Their "Journey of Promise" began towards the end of last year when they met at the Zetland mosque to participate in prayers as part of the Eid Ul-Fitr (end of Ramadan) celebration. The next function was at the Great Synagogue in Sydney for the Jewish celebration of Chanukah.

Rev. Dr Jon Inkpin, coordinator of the project said: "Each of our faiths proclaims peace to all at the heart of our festivals, and in sharing these special occasions together, we therefore wish to affirm all that unities us and to light candles together to dispel the darkness and ignorance of our world."

The "Journey of Promise" project has been developed jointly by the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, the Executive Council of Australian Jewry and the National Council of Churches in Australia. The experience is being professionally recorded by Karl McPhee Productions and will be available on video.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission

NATSIEC has produced a card featuring Lowitja O'Donoghue's 10 Point Plan for Human Rights. To order, contact the NATSIEC Office on (02) 9299 2215 or email natsiec@ncca.org.au. Orders of 50-100 will incur a cost of \$5 (including GST) and 100 or more of \$10 (including GST) for postage and packaging.



Queensland Children's Ministry Network

In order to support children's ministry in your church, a new cross-denominational initiative called Queensland Children's Ministry Network (QCMN) has recently been launched.

The draft Purpose Statement is: "To stimulate and support excellence in ministry with children and families across churches throughout Queensland, with particular focus on leaders of children's ministry teams."

It is early days at this stage. A steering committee has been formed, chaired by Terry Williams of Scripture Union, which includes representatives from Catholic, Baptist, Churches of Christ, Presbyterian and Assembly of God churches. The aims for this year include:

- To pursue and promote a possible website for people involved in Children's Ministry. This website will act as a conduit for ready resources for Children's Ministry Leaders.
- To coordinate, promote and encourage regional cross-denominational networks to support people involved in Children's Ministry.
- To plan and prepare for a Children's Ministry Expo in early 2005.

The Catechumenate – Ecumenical Collaboration

One of the attendees at the 2003 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults State Conference in Brisbane was Pat Strong, the Catechumenate resource person for the local Anglican diocese. She works two days a week assisting Anglican parishes with training of teams and personnel. Pat's attendance at the conference follows a long tradition of friendly cooperation and mutual sharing between our two Christian traditions since the early days of the Catechumenate's introduction in Brisbane in the early 1980s. After the conference, Pat suggested a meeting of key Brisbane representatives of Catholic, Anglican and Uniting Churches involved in the Catechumenate.

Our group – Elizabeth Harrington (The Liturgical Commission), Pat Strong, Rob Bos (National Assembly, Uniting Church in Australia) and Rob Cosgrove (Catholic Adult Education) – has agreed to meet every three months as a means of supporting the endeavours of our churches and providing an exchange of information about resources and developments. Rob Bos had recently returned from the US where he attended a conference of The North American Association for the Catechumenate. This is an ecumenical organisation working to promote and provide training for their member churches. For more information see their website with the amazing URL <http://www.catechumenate.org>

Rob Bos is planning a conference in Adelaide to assist Uniting Churches implement the Catechumenate in Australia. Sometimes it can be revelatory and energising to witness a 'new beginning' with fresh eyes. When writing about the Inquiry Phase, Rob mentions characteristics that would be very familiar to us such as hospitality, stories, testimony, dispelling fears, answering questions, invitation, trust, honesty and openness. Rob has decided to avoid the term Mystagogia and instead use the term 'Integration Phase' followed by the last stage, 'Continued growth in the Christian life'. Sums in up rather nicely, I think!

Rob Cosgrove
Catechumenate Committee, Brisbane

Redcliffe

The dream of one woman to have her musical composition published has led to an enriching and enjoyable experience for many people on the Redcliffe Peninsular. Once her children had grown, Eithne Shrimpton, a former nurse originally from Wales, found the opportunity to develop a so-far-unused talent for musical composition. She set about writing a Cantata, based on St Matthew's Passion, which she entitled "Daughters of Jerusalem". Finally, after many years hard work, it was completed last Easter, but, before publication, she was keen to hear it in performance. This led to a discussion with the local Uniting Church minister whose response was immediate and very generous: the use of church facilities for rehearsal and a commitment to host the first performance on the afternoon of Palm Sunday 2004.

Then came the major effort of putting together a choir. Many of the experienced singers in the Redcliffe area were already committed to other choirs, however a canvassing of local churches managed to unearth a couple of dozen experienced voices and many more enthusiastic novices. Members are drawn from Anglican, Church of Christ, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Uniting and Wesleyan Methodist Churches and the connection with the latter church has led to a second performance scheduled for Wednesday, 7 April at the Everton Hills Wesleyan Methodist Church. A grant from the Regional Arts Development Fund has helped to meet expenses.

Another example of how one person's dream can bring together people from diverse church backgrounds to share their gifts, praise God and bring enjoyment to the wider community as well as themselves.

Harmony Day Celebrations

The National Living in Harmony Initiative challenges us to:

- take a stand against racism, prejudice and intolerance;
- help build a peaceful and productive future for our children by setting an example of how to live in harmony, making the most of our racial, cultural, social and religious diversity;
- put into practice the best of traditional Australian values – justice, equality, fairness and friendship.

This year National Harmony Day was celebrated on Sunday, 21 March and various local communities took the opportunity to commemorate the occasion.

In Pine Rivers the Baha'i community, under the sponsorship of the Pine Rivers Shire Council, organised the activities at the Millennium Peace Garden, Dixon Street, Strathpine. Proceedings began at 9:00am with a Tree planting ceremony and then representatives from world religions were invited to offer prayers for World Peace. At 10:40am student peace ambassadors from Shire schools were recognised for virtues which lead to harmony and peacekeeping, and this was followed by a community picnic.

Across town, Logan City also hosted celebrations with an Interfaith Prayer Service to start the formal ceremony in front of the Logan Art Gallery, followed by a Peace Walk to nearby Logan Gardens for a multicultural entertainment. This year they included a poetry competition in three categories: primary, secondary and open, as well as Harmony Day Awards to individuals and groups.

Kuraby Mosque held an Open Day and, of course, there were celebrations at Southbank.



Coorparoo

Mount Carmel Parish at Coorparoo is planning an Interfaith Forum on Prayer as part of a faith education initiative. This will be held at the Queen Alexandra Home, Old Cleveland Road, Coorparoo on Saturday, 19 June at 7:30pm. Speakers from the Buddhist, Christian, Jewish and Muslim traditions will share their experiences and understanding of prayer.

Victoria Point

Organisers at St Rita's Parish had to go in search of extra seating when over 260 people arrived to celebrate World Day of Prayer on 5 March. A spokesperson, who was obviously delighted with the response, credited the success on the excellent network of contacts that had been built up over the years. Participation came from a broad range of churches including the Assembly of God, Church of the Nazarene and Seventh Day Adventist. Representatives of all the local churches have met over the years for prayer groups and morning teas and have put together an extensive list of interested people who can then be invited to ecumenical functions. Hence the huge crowd at the World Day of Prayer Service.

Ecumenical Easter Brochure

In 2003 our parish, together with four other local congregations, published and letterboxed an Easter brochure. It contained an abridged account of the resurrection from Luke's gospel, Easter service times and contact details for the participating churches. The purpose was threefold: to remind people of the real meaning of Easter; to be a visible sign of the friendship between local churches; and to give people information about Easter Service times.



We had the brochure professionally printed and letterboxed to 13,000 households, at a total cost of around \$1,300. We had some extra brochures, and I took some of these to local businesses, who were happy to have them on their counters. Some hesitated until they realised that it was not for just one church but most of the local churches.

People received it in their letterboxes in the week leading up to Palm Sunday, and this meant that the final proof had to be at the printers soon after the Second Sunday of Lent. It took a lot of phone calls, e-mails and other conversations to get a sufficiently large consortium of congregations together by the deadline, with the necessary approval of finance committees, parish councils and whatever, and to get the information about the service times finalised.

Greg Gilmore

Pastoral Associate – Herston, Ashgrove and Newmarket Parishes

Believing Women for a Culture of Peace

Vision:

In a time when differences of religious faith serve as a key factor in the growth of a culture of fear, distrust and hostility, locally and globally

Believing women find themselves called to:

- build alliances that will counter the prevailing divisiveness,
• contribute to a lasting culture of peace, and
• collectively acknowledge and celebrate the bonding power of religious faith.

Goals:

- to build respectful relationships and mutual support among women of different faiths:
• to work in ways that enable all women to contribute towards peace;
• to build intercultural and inter-religious understanding and appreciation;
• to enable those who participate to develop self-awareness through sharing

Strategies:

- invite all women seeking to create a culture of peace on a spiritual or religious faith basis;
• organise faith-based information-sharing, study and dialogue;
• provide opportunities for informal social gatherings and organise special activities targeting relevant commemorations or events;
• facilitate activities for wider audiences, including youth and children;
• exercise a public/political voice when needed and appropriate;
• network with national and international women's peace initiatives;
• develop a collaborative administration and resource infrastructure.



For further information please contact:

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http://sao.criq.org.au/alliance.html

What's happening in your area?

We really want to hear stories of ecumenical and interfaith activities in YOUR local area. Share your good news, however humble, with others. Contact Margaret Naylor on:-

(07) 3336 9354 or
ecum@bne.catholic.net.au



General Meeting

The General Meeting of QCT was held as usual on the first Saturday in March at St Francis' Theological College, Milton. The opening service was led by Bishop Brian Finnigan (Catholic) with Rev. Helen Mills (Uniting Church and inaugural General Secretary of QCT) preaching the homily. During the service the Salvation Army was formally welcomed into QCT as the newest Member Church.

QCT President, Bishop Brian Finnigan, opened the meeting and introduced the agenda.

Highlights of the Agenda

Christian World Service Report

Michele Knight spoke to her comprehensive written report but, for the meeting, concentrated on the Pacific – mainly the islands of Melanesia and East Timor. She added an illuminating Power Point presentation illustrating some of the unique problems of these countries.

Christian World Service, whose great strength is that it is an ecumenical agency, offers practical support and Christian leadership through people like Emele Duituturaga, last year's Christmas Bowl Visitor. Emele chairs the Social Empowerment Education Programme in Fiji where they are working on a Fiji model of community development.

Churches Together Indigenous People's Partnership

Joan Hendriks, CTIPP Co-ordinator, in her written report shows that her work in education and reconciliation has taken her from Ballarat and Melbourne in Victoria to Mareeba and Townsville in North Queensland, presenting workshops and setting up "conversations".

An exciting invitation has been extended through the International Presentation Sisters' Assembly to present a paper at the United Nations gathering on indigenous issues in New York in May. Joan's attendance will depend on available finance.

Guest Speaker

Professor Toh Swee-Hin, Director of the Multi-Faith Centre at Griffith University, addressed the meeting on the importance of interreligious dialogue as a means of overcoming violence in the world.

Professor Toh stressed that interfaith dialogue is a basis for the development of intercultural respect and trust. Because we come from a common humanity we need to discover common values, which will lead us to engage in common actions to solve common problems. He went on to make the following points:

- Peace accords have wide-ranging results; e.g. faith institutions in the Philippines engaged in challenging military expenditure.
• Spirituality of Resistance (promoted by the World Council of Churches and the Pope) challenges globalisation, which marginalises the poor; e.g. victimisation of workers in poor countries to produce Olympic sports clothes, etc.
• Love and compassion must lead to social action – no peace without justice, global as well as local.
• Interfaith dialogue leads to strengthening not dilution of faith – we are enriched by the strengths and wisdom of other faiths.
• Need for Intra- as well as Inter-faith dialogue – there are gaps in our own faiths which need to be re-thought.
• Principle of non-violence, which exists in all faiths, needs to be revisited – active non-violence.
• In Australia: Truth in Reconciliation needs much preparatory education. Forgiveness is a basic principle of all faiths.

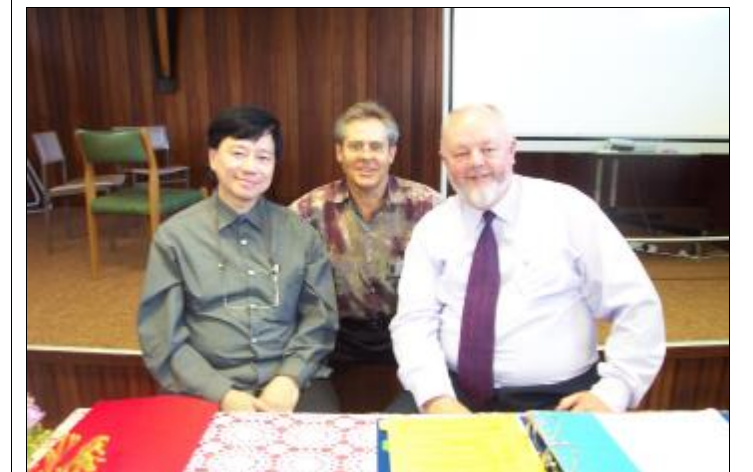
- Bodies like QCT and National Council of Churches in Australia can promote dialogues at local levels to build culture of respect between religions. This could lead to collaborative projects for the promotion of peace and justice.

Rev. Dr David Pitman, Uniting Church in Australia (UCA), responded to Professor Toh. He endorsed the points made in the address, adding that we can also be enriched and strengthened by our differences as well as by what we hold in common. Christianity needs to repent and ask forgiveness for its exclusiveness, which has created a deep sense of offence and hurt to those of other faiths.

Other responses were made by invited guests Rev. Garth Read (UCA), Ven. Surendra Prasad of the Hindu community and Peter Clark of the Brahma Kumaris Raja Yoga Centre.

Farewell to Russell Morris

At lunch, a farewell address and presentation was made to Russell Morris who, after seven years as General Secretary of QCT, left at the end of March to commence ministry with the Burwood/Croydon Related Congregations of the Uniting Church in Australia, Presbytery of Sydney. Bishop Ron Williams (Anglican) spoke on behalf of all QCT members, thanking Russell for his wise and efficient stewardship and wishing him well in his future ministry. At the end of the meeting a farewell blessing led by Dr Rosemary Gill was prayed over Russell.



Prof. Toh Swee-Hin (Multi-faith Centre, Griffith University), Rev. Russell Morris (General Secretary of QCT) and Rev. Dr David Pitman (UCA).



Rev. Helen Mills (former General Secretary of QCT), Major James Condon (Divisional Commander of the Salvation Army), Rev. Russell Morris and Bishop Brian Finnigan.