

## EDITORIAL

The Bishop's 2003 Social Justice Statement *"A Generous Heart in the Love of Christ – Challenging Racism in Australia Today"* is a timely reminder to reflect and review the basic attitudes we hold in relation to racism. When the word racism is cited images of intolerance, prejudice, rejection, discrimination, inequality and unfairness spring to mind.

These images are ones we do not like to dwell on, nor do we wish to experience. The images of thousands of people wandering aimlessly in dry, barren areas, living in make-shift shelters, wide eyed children, aged persons too weak to walk, are beamed into our lounge rooms each night. So too, are those vivid images of people in our own detention centres who have come to Australia in the hope of being welcomed and making a new home for themselves devoid of fear and violence.

These people are different from us, and difference often brings rejection and discrimination. The responsibility we have as a baptised people is to "welcome the little ones, to feed the hungry, give rest to the weary". Why do we find it so difficult to do? *"How can the baptised claim to welcome Christ if they close the door to the foreigner who comes knocking?"* (Jubilee of Migrants and Itinerant People Homily of Pope John Paul 11, June 2000)

Breaking down the barriers of rejection and discrimination is central to the work of ecumenism and interfaith relations. To encourage dialogue and conversation about the differences in culture, values and beliefs is to proclaim our Baptismal faith. It is possible to be united in diversity. But it takes patience.

Patient dialogue, leads to understanding differences of opinion, not stand-offs and judgmental racist attitudes. Patient dialogue opens a vista of new experiences, of worlds and traditions that have not touched us before. Suggestions need no longer be mutually exclusive, or selfishly held, but can be complementary, ensuring co-operative understanding and acceptance.

Each of us is identified by the language we speak, the culture, the religion we practice and the nationality to which we belong. As we engage in dialogue with each other, stranger or friend, let us be mindful that to be different does not hold the meaning of exclusion. Rather, to be different is to *"look into another's face, engage them in conversation and see in that face a God who loves all human beings"*. (Jubilee of Migrants and Itinerant People Homily of Pope John Paul 11, June 2000)

Let us be the heart of Jesus in the local church as we break down barriers and welcome an era that embraces the differences of all people. We will embrace them because they are first and foremost *"made in the image and likeness of God,"* and in that image the face of God is reflected back to us.

Gay Williams o.s.u.  
Acting Executive Officer, Office for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations

Sr Gay Williams is completing her time as the Acting Executive Officer for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations. Margaret Naylan will be working in a full time capacity as the new Executive Officer for Interfaith Relations. We wish both Gay and Margaret all the best as they continue their work in different fields for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations.

Date Claimers:

Dr Paul McPartlan – 10 July 2004, 9:00am – 1:00pm  
14 July, 7:30pm – 9:00pm

### Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations



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*Feedback and articles for publication are welcome.*

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# COMMISSION NEWS

The Commission's August meeting was this year transformed into a very successful formation day for a wider range of people involved in ecumenical and interfaith activities. Members of the Commission's various subcommittees, as well as interested people from parishes, were invited to share in the "ecumenical smorgasbord" on offer at the Canossa Spirituality Centre at Oxley.

The opening session was led by Rev. Don Whebell, Acting General Secretary of Queensland Churches Together (QCT) and a former Moderator of the Uniting Church. Don explained some of the history leading to the establishment of QCT in 1991 and detailed the work in which it is currently involved. One of the major arms of QCT is the Churches Together Indigenous Peoples Partnership (CTIPP), which focuses on promoting reconciliation by educating non-indigenous people in indigenous spirituality.

Christian World Service (CWS), another commission of QCT, plays an active role in aid and development in Third World countries. QCT is also in the process of establishing commissions dealing with liturgy and women's issues.

After morning tea, participants were given the opportunity to read and discuss Cardinal Walter Kasper's paper on "The Current Situation in Ecumenical Theology". Cardinal Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, was touring Australia in July to deliver this year's Helder Camara lecture and at the same time was guest speaker at the National Conference of Diocesan Ecumenical Commissions in Melbourne. It was at this Conference that he presented the paper on Ecumenical Theology. His emphasis on spiritual ecumenism and the need for all of us to be open to the working of the Spirit in the Church gave everyone plenty of food for thought.

The third session of the day provided an excellent opportunity for everyone to be brought up to date with activities of the various sub-committees, as well as ecumenical and interfaith happenings at local and diocesan level.

It is at this time of year that we begin to see some changing faces on the Commission. At our October meeting we were delighted to welcome four new members: Donna Anderson, Natalie L'Huillier, Michael Chambers and Greg Gilmore.

We were, however, very sorry to farewell Veronica Ross. Veronica joined the Brisbane Commission in 1999 after being actively involved for some time on the Townsville Commission. She has worked tirelessly on the Newsletter Subcommittee, especially in the last twelve months, to ensure reports on a wide range of ecumenical and interfaith issues and to maintain its high editorial standard. She has also been a very active member of the Catholic/Jewish Subcommittee promoting its activities and keeping everyone informed via the minutes and other communication. As well as all this, she has also found time to be a valued member of the Executive of the Commission over the past two years. While she is retiring due to increasing family commitments, Veronica hopes to continue some of her Subcommittee work. We will miss her greatly and thank her most sincerely for the amazing contributions she has made to the work of ecumenism and interfaith and to the life of the Commission.

Margaret Naylor  
Chair of the Commission

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## Catholic Jewish Subcommittee Report

Since the formation of the Interim Council of Christians and Jews last year this Commission Subcommittee has reflected on its future role and on how it can best serve the community. It was decided to focus on consciousness-raising in the wider Catholic community; e.g. publication of articles in *The Catholic Leader* and through parish contacts.

The Passover document to be distributed to schools and parishes has undergone another revision. It was decided to approach the Liturgical Commission as being a more appropriate source for the distribution of the document.

At the end of October some members of the Subcommittee attended an evening at the Margaret Street Synagogue which was primarily an information night for teachers and students of Religion in High Schools. Talks were given by Messrs Laurie Rosenblum and Garek Fysch, leading members of the Jewish community, which focused on sacred scripture and ethics.

An article has been prepared for publication in *The Catholic Leader* explaining the historical origin of the Jewish Festival of Lights (Hanukkah) which is celebrated in Judaism at the end of December.

Veronica Ross



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## Catholic Muslim Subcommittee Report

Because Interfaith discussion was in its early stages when the Interfaith Subcommittees were inaugurated only a very loose mandate was provided and groups were encouraged to produce their own terms of reference. As the process of discussion and the making of contacts within the different faith communities has changed the direction of procedure it is now generally felt that more definite terms of reference need to be established. These will be developed in 2004 with guidance and support from the Commission.

In October the Catholic/Muslim Subcommittee widened its activity, which has been mainly at a theoretical level, by hosting a "Dialogue in the Park", whereby people were invited to bring a friend and a plate of food to share at Mott Park in Holland Park. A welcome was extended by Haj Sultan Deen, Chairperson of the Islamic Council of Queensland and Dr Nasir Butrous of the Catholic Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations.

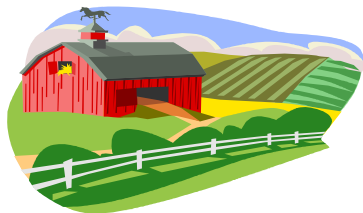
The informality of the venue and the goodwill of the participants lent themselves to the fostering of friendly relations between members of the two communities. This is a positive step towards understanding and acceptance and hopefully will be the foundation of cross-culture friendships in the future.

Nasir Butrous



## LOCAL NEWS

### NAMBOUR



August: "The harvest is plentiful – labourers are few". This was the central focus of a presentation given by Mrs Joan Cuddihy from the St Vincent de Paul Nambour Conference at the annual ecumenical service and luncheon, celebrated during Seniors' Week at St Joseph's Catholic Church in Nambour.

In an inspiring address to a gathering of around seventy representatives from our neighbouring faith communities, Mrs Cuddihy proved that age was no barrier to the various tasks required of the many willing labourers who continue today to work in "Vinnie's" area of the Lord's fields.

"The only criteria for volunteers, is the desire to help those in need and try to make a difference in someone's life. This will eventually lead to a deeper understanding that in serving the poor and the underprivileged, we are but living out our call as true followers of Christ, sharing with others the same values of compassion and unconditional love."

Mrs Cuddihy outlined many of the services available, their source of funding, citing some personal and rewarding experiences gained in her area of welfare assistance, offering social and practical support.

She concluded – "As labourers for the Kingdom, our serving ministry ensures a rich harvest!" to which the assembly responded in song to Dan Schutte's "Come with Me into the Fields". Several visitors participated in this lay-led service based on Psalm 67, "The Land Will Yield Its Harvest" and "God Our God Will Bless Us".

A concert party of twenty-five Anglican/Catholic friends travelled by bus (courtesy of St John's Catholic College) to St John's Anglican Cathedral in Brisbane for the 2003 matinee performance of Prom Praise: a feast of inspirational classical and sacred music, spectacular artists and a massed choir from Anglican schools and parishes of the diocese.

Artistic/Music Director was Emily Cox and Marie-Louise Theille was compere.

Monies raised from the matinee/evening performances benefited Anglicare and the National Trust St John's Cathedral Completion Fund.

September: Feast of the Triumph of the Cross.

In the evening glow of soft candlelight, a small group from the wider faith community gathered once again in the chapel at Najara, centre for Spirituality and Ecology in Nambour to share and experience the spirit of Taizé through Scripture and the silence of contemplation, communal prayer and simple chants of praise.

October: The Nambour Uniting Church, Adult Fellowship hosted a musical morning tea and pre-loved fashion parade to raise funds for Blue Care and Lifeline Counselling Services. A small group from St Joseph's enjoyed the social interaction with their Uniting Church friends.

Joan Pobjoy  
St Joseph's, Nambour

### KENMORE

Our Lady of the Rosary Ladies' Fellowship held their usual ecumenical winter social in August. Ladies from the Kenmore/Brookfield Anglican and the Chapel Hill Uniting Churches joined them to enjoy a Pot Luck Lunch at St Catherine's Community Centre, Moggill. Rather than having a Guest Speaker, as is the usual practice, it was decided to enjoy a relaxed social gathering so as to get to know one another on a more personal level.

The Pot Luck Lunch was a great success! It presented the opportunity of tasting a variety of delicious dishes and was enjoyed in the spirit of friendship.

A similar shared lunch following an ecumenical service conducted by the Rev. Beverley Bell, Parish Priest of the Kenmore/Brookfield Anglican Church, was held the following month, this time hosted by the Anglican Church Mothers' Union. Representatives from the three churches, Anglican, Catholic and Uniting, gave a short summary of the different activities in which their parishes are involved; e.g. the Anglican visitation programme, the OLR ongoing faith education program and the Chapel Hill Uniting Church's Heritage Bus Tour. The ongoing net-working between the fellowship groups often leads to participation in the spiritual programs run by the individual churches; e.g. Alpha courses, Lenten discussion groups and Renewal programs, as well as coming together for ecumenical church services to worship together.

Amy Deans

### CALOUNDRA CHURCHES TOGETHER

Caloundra Churches Together conducts monthly meetings with delegates from the Anglican, Baptist, Church of Christ, Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Uniting Churches and issues an open invitation to all visitors. They hold quarterly ecumenical services in one of the participating churches with the sermon being preached by the minister of one of the other churches. As well there are regular inter-church fellowship meetings at which each church presents an item for entertainment.

At an extraordinary meeting in August a visiting speaker, Mr Robert Gallacher, spoke on the concerns members of the Uniting Church had following the outcome of a recent synod relating to homosexual clergy. The address was informative and well received.

At another extraordinary meeting Mr Geoff Fletcher spoke on the Year of the Child Project. Churches involved in this Project have Sample Bags to be distributed to their children which contain material to teach the Bible and the tenets of Christianity.

This year the Catholic Lenten Programme, "Attending to the Sacred", and the Social Justice Sunday's focus on the environment were taken up as the basis for discussion at the monthly meetings.

The final activity of CCT for the year was the annual Liturgy of Remembrance on 11 November, hosted this year by the Catholic Church.

Arnim Scheer  
CCT Treasurer





## LOCAL NEWS

### BARDON

Parishioners are involved with members of other Christian denominations in a variety of interlocking activities.

Although these activities are organised by different ecumenical groupings and community organisations, the people from different Christian denominations see, pray and work with each other in a variety of contexts, so relationships and trust begin to build up over time.

World Day of Prayer is celebrated with local Bardon churches, Ecumenical prayer services are held at St Paul's Villa and an annual Christmas Carols Service is also shared among the various traditions. Planning is well underway for sharing the Lenten Programme next year. Together with the local Anglican Church, healing services and prayer meetings are also held.

An Ecumenical Pantry has been established, and people from within the region participate in this activity. The Ecumenical Pantry works in conjunction with the Red Hill/Paddington Community Centre to meet community needs. An Ecumenical Affordable Housing Committee is also active within the region.

The community based Meals on Wheels (which recruits volunteers through Church Newsletters) affords another opportunity for meeting and working together with the people we've come to know from the above ecumenical activities. Good friendships have evolved from this and our Christian faith is supported by working together to help others in need.

A Bardon Parishioner

### BRISBANE CATHOLIC EDUCATION

KidsGames is a worldwide phenomenon which commenced in India when a Christian woman had an idea to link children, the Bible and sports. Each event is unique to the place that runs it. This is done entirely by volunteers. Carole Danby was appointed by the Archbishop to be the Catholic representative on the organising committee. Her task was to sell the idea to as many Catholic parishes as possible.

During the second week of the September school holidays some Archdiocesan Catholic schools participated in the ecumenical holiday program, KidsGames, which was enjoyed by children from all Christian denominations in Brisbane and regional schools.

This week long, fun-filled program for children run by local churches attracted about three thousand children. It commenced with regional Opening Ceremonies using an Olympic theme and culminated with the entire five thousand participants (which included leaders and parents) in a Closing Ceremony held at the Boondall Entertainment Centre.

The Catholic parishes who participated in the Archdiocese were Carina (led by Carole Danby), Upper Mt Gravatt (led by Ricci and Jaye Barros) and Redcliffe (led by Helen Dowling). This kind of activity is new for most Catholic parishes but, though it involved very hard work on the part of the organisers, the outcome was so satisfying they are committed to offering holiday activities for children in the future organised around a Bible theme, to attempt to link children with their local faith community.

Carole Danby  
Field Officer, State Schools, Parish and Family RE Team

### JUBILEE ECUMENICAL SCHOOL "Faith Learning Unity"

Recently a parent came to the office and asked me if we could spend some time interceding in prayer for the school community. So there and then we spent time in prayer. From that I asked through the school newsletter if any parents wanted to meet regularly to pray. Now there are five or six parents praying together at the school on Friday afternoons. These parents are from different Christian traditions, but they recognise our common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps this incident reflects what led to the establishment of Jubilee Primary, and continues to be apparent to those working in this community: Christians from different local denominations desire to faithfully worship God, and that means serving God in ministry and mission together.

The ecumenical vision of denominations at the northern end of the Gold Coast led in 1999 for an invitation to be offered from St Mary's Catholic Community to other local Christians to join them in a joint venture ecumenical school. (It must be noted that this was only possible through the ecumenical commitment of Archbishop Bathersby and Mr David Hutton, Executive Director of Brisbane Catholic Education). Three local denominations accepted the gracious invitation, Helensvale/Coomera (now Coomera and Pacific Parks) Uniting Church, Father's Heart Family Church (Apostolic Church of Australia) and Gold Coast North Anglican Church. They covenanted together for wide Christian cooperation. A school was build and is part of the Brisbane Catholic Education network of schools.

This is an ongoing story. Every month the ministers leading the four denominations covenanted to the school meet with the Principal and Assistant Principal Religious Education to pray, discuss, share, plan and have fellowship together. The same is true of the Pastoral School Board and the Pastoral Care Group. Each is made up of members of local churches and parents who are seeking to serve. It is a wonderful working team of Christians committed to sharing the Gospel with the community of this district.

The school staff must be commended since they have chosen to work in a challenging and unique ecumenical venture (Emmaus School, Jimboomba is another ecumenical school in Brisbane Catholic Education). The teachers are to be faithful to their own Christian tradition, and to the other traditions, in their teaching, prayer and leading in worship. The partnership between school, teacher, parent, local church and church community is highly valued and fostered. The students know not only the four local ministers but also leading lay church members. In the school, students will learn of their own tradition and also the traditions of others. Parents and local denominations are responsible for the full induction of children into their own sacraments and rites.

"Faith Learning Unity" is the school motto. The words were chosen to be taken as three singular words or as a phrase expressing our desire to be people of faith willing to be taught what it means to be one in Christ. Our prayer continues to be that we may be faithful in service and true to the union we have in Christ.

Trevor Sketcher  
Assistant Principal Religious Education, Jubilee Primary School,  
and member of Gold Coast North Anglican Church



## LOCAL NEWS

### TAIZÉ IN BRISBANE A personal reflection

For me, being involved in Taizé Prayer Services was a very new experience. I'd never, ever been involved in anything quite like it.

I first heard of the Taizé community when I was a teenage member of a Presbyterian Youth Group. We heard about this place and these people who came from a Protestant background setting up an ecumenical monastery towards the end of World War II as a courageous initiative for peace and compassionate support for Jewish people. And that was about all I knew about it.

My personal Protestant history saw prayer and worship as being very activist, cerebral and wordy. A minimum (preferably none in some places!) of religious imagery and symbols. The predominant colour in our worship was black – and not a cross in sight, let alone a crucifix!

In more recent years, I discovered a prayer by Taizé's Brother Roger in *Uniting in Worship* – the worship resource book of the Uniting Church. It is, of course, a prayer for peace in the world. I got to using it at each peace-prayer opportunity.

Then came Brother Ghislain.

This quiet, humble man, with something about him of the simple, strong spirit of the Christ we all seek to follow.

Being in the role of Acting General Secretary of Queensland Churches Together, I was – with Pam, my wife – involved in the three Prayer Services in Brisbane.

The first one was at New Farm Uniting Church. It was well attended and present were many UCA people I knew, as well as some from other churches whom I got to know. The evening grew on me. The candles. The quiet. The silences. The chants. The singing. The contemplation on Scripture. The togetherness-in-Spirit. No sermon – just letting God speak and breathe his word of life and love into us. Led by this man on his knees. Out of sight, we could not see him, but could glimpse the presence and grace of God.

Then to St Stephen's Cathedral – now that's quite a long way from my Sandgate Presbyterian youth group! The place was crowded. The hush of expectation in the air, the Taizé Cross, the candles and that powerfully evocative figure of the crucified risen Christ above everything drew me into the kind of prayer that does not have much to say – but has a lot to listen for. The singing was not repetitive choruses that shout to God, but the sung prayer that listens for the God who acts and speaks to us.

My third Taizé encounter was in a lounge room at Margate, at Andy and Patricia's home. A small, intimate gathering of friends who meet regularly for the kind of prayer service that reflects the spirit of Taizé I experienced in the services in New Farm UCA and St Stephen's. In gatherings large and small, the Spirit of Christ, there to enter into our lives, our hearts, and asking us to share God's concern for the poor, the homeless, the refugee, the marginalised, and that sharing can only be ecumenical.

Taizé is about prayer. Prayer together in a pilgrimage that unites with Christ and with each other as Christians. Prayer that is a living encounter with the living Christ who calls to us in our various church communities to share his peace-giving love with a broken and divided world.

Rev. Don Whebell  
Acting General Secretary, Queensland Churches Together

### A REPORT ON THE MT GRAVATT ECUMENICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP

The Mt Gravatt Social Justice Group is an ecumenical initiative established under the auspices of St Bernard's Catholic Parish Church in Upper Mt Gravatt with the aim "...to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God."

The group was officially launched by Archbishop John Bathersby on October 11th 2002 in the presence of Fr Dudley McMahon (St Bernard's Catholic), Rev John Nicholls (St John's Anglican), Rev Bruce Johnson (Mansfield Uniting Church) and representatives from the Village Avenue Church, Romero House and Kyabra Community Association.

At the first meeting after the launch members considered the areas of need in the community and settled on the three priorities: poverty, support of refugees and the environment.

The main thrust of the engagement in Social Justice work is for people involved in the group to be the "drivers" in their area of interest, thus tapping into their energy, passion, interest and motivation. As a small group with limited resources members feel they have achieved a lot.

Their first venture was the donation of bicycle helmets (in collaboration with the Village Ave Church and the Romero Centre) to Temporary Protection Visa holders. There have been several "one off" ventures such as the donation of Christmas hampers; the signing of a petition in relation to child asylum seekers; a Candlelight Vigil for Peace on the eve of the war in Iraq; the bussing of people to the City Hall for a public rally and attendance at the dialogue between members of the Muslim and Christian faiths held in the City Hall.

Before Christmas 2002 the group was approached by a man, now an Australian citizen, who had just found his extended family in a refugee camp in Malawi. The Uniting, Anglican and Catholic churches, with the assistance of The Society of St Vincent de Paul, raised more than \$8,000 to bring the family to Australia and establish them here. The support of this family is an ongoing venture.

Another new and continuing initiative is the Koinonia (Greek for 'community') Savings and Loans Scheme. In an attempt to address poverty in the community the group aims to make it possible for people not only to develop the habit of saving but also to borrow small amounts with dignity. The sum is paid back, without interest, in affordable amounts. It is hoped that in this way large interest debts can be avoided. The group currently has three cells or sub-groups up and running and looks to increase numbers in the months ahead.

The challenge for the future is to involve more interested people of other denominations and to work collaboratively with other groups in the community.

The Mt Gravatt Ecumenical Social Justice Group is young and small but is enthusiastic and creative and dedicated to working towards social justice in the local community.

Nancy Johnston



## LOCAL NEWS

### RUGBY WORLD CUP 2003 ~ ECUMENICAL MINISTRY OUTREACH

The participation of representatives from Christian Churches in activities associated with the Rugby World Cup (RWC) 2003 reflected the benefits of sports ministry as an effective form of personal evangelisation and public Christian witness. The following range of sports ministry activities were promoted across the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane during the period (11 October – 9 November) of 2003 Rugby World Cup matches at Suncorp Stadium, Brisbane.

#### Brisbane Combined Churches Outreach – Face Painting at Suncorp Stadium

The provision of free face-painting at all RWC venues was negotiated nationally by the Salvation Army with the IRB/ARU. In Brisbane the Salvation Army (Major Julie Alley) led a core co-ordinating committee with representatives from the Anglican Church at Milton (Rev Owen Strong), Brisbane Catholic Archdiocese (Chris Ehler), Youth With A Mission (Jim Borman) and Citipointe Christian Outreach Centre (Pastor Andy Gourley). Approximately two hundred volunteers across nine matches at Suncorp Stadium provided free face-painting and distributed approximately seven thousand copies of the *Rugby World Cup 2003 Souvenir Edition of St Mark's Gospel (The Game Played in Heaven?)* published by the Bible Society. During the majority of these face to face conversations each volunteer painter, wearing a distinctive *Salvation Army T Shirt*, was able to speak about the free gift of the face painting, the free Gospel of Mark, their own Christian faith or the faith of high profile Rugby players. The outreach was a successful witness of ecumenical collaboration, best characterised by the frequent small group prayer before and after each face painting session.



#### Christ Church Anglican Parish Festival Site

Prior to each of the nine matches the Combined Churches RWC Committee created a festival atmosphere in the grounds of the Milton Anglican Church beside the southern entrance of Suncorp Stadium. The grounds were decorated with a dozen large flags of the competing countries and various live rock bands provided free entertainment to the thousands of match attenders who walked across the plaza and southern entrance precinct. Prior to each of the weekend matches a special Anglican Service was conducted in the church. Following each match the thirty face painting volunteers were provided with a bar-b-que meal on the site before each de-briefing session. For those people who gazed upon this heritage listed church it was always obvious that the Christian community was joining in the celebrations of the tournament and witnessing to the connection between their faith and this special sporting event. The magnitude of the Stadium structure towering over the smallness of the church building reflected the challenge for all Christians in their mission in a seemingly overpowering secular world. It resembled the story of David and Goliath. In this case the church and stadium representatives have developed a harmonious relationship.



Members of the Combined Churches RWC Ministry Outreach Committee at the Anglican Church beside Suncorp Stadium.



# LOCAL NEWS

## RUGBY WORLD CUP (continued)



### Home Hosting of International Visitors

The Salvation Army co-ordinated a home hosting program for family members of some of the visiting Rugby teams as well as for members of the Rugby World Cup Choir. All requests for home hosting were met with sufficient volunteer homes from Christian families across many denominations. Even the elderly mother of the South African Captain availed of this gesture of Christian hospitality.



### Local Ecumenical and Interfaith Activity

Many Christian parishes and other faith groups embraced the spirit of the tournament by staging "Big Screen Events" at which people could watch one of the games on a big television screen. These were effective community building activities which demonstrated the willingness of the church/faith communities to outreach to people during these special sporting events. This form of celebration is ideal for local Christian churches and Interfaith groups to join together in a spirit of religious harmony (especially if people support opposing teams).



### Personal enrichment and deepening of faith

Across all of the RWC activities the feedback indicated that everyone who became involved experienced significant personal enrichment in their sense of mission and a deepening of their Christian faith. Across Australia there has been thousands of Christians from many denominations who have touched the lives of tens of thousands of "Rugby Fans" who have been confronted with the Christian message. A grace-filled moment in Brisbane occurred immediately after the match between South Africa and Samoa when all team members linked arms, formed a large circle on the field in front of the fifty thousand spectators and knelt on one knee to pray. Media commentators describe it as a sign of friendship and unity. For the world watching it was a powerful witness of the place of God in the lives of these sporting heroes.

**Chris Ehler**  
Chair and Catholic representative on the  
Brisbane Combined Churches RWC Ministry Outreach Committee

## MT GRAVATT

In September, Rev Roy Cowin from St Mark's Uniting Church led his last Prayer on the Mount. This gathering started as a result of Christians In Dialogue and enabled parishioners from our local Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran and Uniting Churches to meet bi-monthly to reflect on God's Word and pray for our City.

Roy's official Closure Service saw the ecumenical community join the St Mark's Uniting community in celebration. Extra seating did not cater for all those who attended so the St Marks's hall was used to accommodate the overflow via a video link. It was encouraging to see so many familiar faces from gatherings held in the area over the previous seven years.

During that time Roy has been a driving force in the ecumenical movement. In addition to leading the Prayer on the Mount, he led the local Ministers Fraternal, was a dedicated member, sponsor and Spiritual Director of the Emmaus Community, initiated an ecumenically run Alpha Program, was heavily involved in Christians in Dialogue and ecumenically run Lenten Programs and he consistently made a real effort to "keep the Churches talking". He will be surely missed and it will be challenging for the rest of us to ensure his ministry has not been in vain.

Also in September, St Bartholomew's Anglican Church hosted a meditation evening where thirty attendees watched a slideshow synchronized to music presented by Ted Cornish. This evening gave those who participated in the Lenten Program during Easter an opportunity to revisit the beauty of God's creation with photographs of Australia's majestic landscapes.

In the second week of the September holidays, St Bernard's hosted forty children attending KidsGames at Clairvaux McKillop College. The KidsGames program was run at fifty-five venues across Brisbane with eighty churches representing every Christian denomination participating. (See page #4)

In October, St Bernard's Upper Mount Gravatt hosted the annual World Community Day service. This is one of three services each year, which are sponsored by the local Christian women's groups and bring together seven of the Anglican, Catholic, Salvation Army and Uniting Church communities in the Mount Gravatt area.

The first service is, of course, World Day of Prayer held in March. In July, Fellowship Day combines shared prayer and social interaction with support for the Winifred Kiek Scholarship. Winifred Kiek was the first ordained woman minister in Australia and the scholarship helps to fund theological training for a woman in the Oceania/Asian region.

The World Community Day service this year was prepared by the A.C.T. branch of Australian Church Women. It included the Fellowship of the Least Coin and support for East Timor and Crossroads Community. The guest speaker was Fr Dudley McMahon, Parish Priest at St Bernard's, who gave a challenging and thought-provoking homily on the gospel of the Good Samaritan.



## LOCAL NEWS

### WESTERN SUBURBS INTERCHURCH COUNCIL (WSICC)

"Fanning the Ecumenical Flame". This was the title of an ecumenical forum presented in September at St Thomas' Anglican Church Centre, Toowong. An impressive panel of speakers representing the four mainstream Christian churches gave personal testimonies of their ecumenical journeys, followed by a question and discussion time.

Rev. Marian Free, Parish Priest of St Thomas', welcomed about sixty people on behalf of the WSICC. Fr Chris Jenkins (St Ignatius, Toowong) acted as Chairperson.

In his introduction Fr Chris explained that the Council was moved to present the forum because of the present concern – common to many ecumenists worldwide – that the ecumenical movement is in crisis. The big question is how to reinspire it – "May they all be one...but how?" to appropriate the title of the international conference held at St Alban's, UK, earlier in the year.

The first speaker, Pastor Tim Jensch, past President of the Lutheran Church of Australia, said that in his early ministry there was great anxiety regarding ecumenism in the Lutheran Church. Apart from Ministers' Fraternal contacts, ecumenical High School Chaplaincy and the occasional ecumenical service he was not an experienced ecumenist. After coming to Brisbane this experience gradually widened through, for example, dialogue with other clergy on documents like the BEM documents, the "Common Ground Covenant" experience with the Anglican Church, and finally, when he joined Queensland Churches Together and became part of the planning group for Christians in Dialogue. He feels shaped by God through his ecumenical experience and hopes that the Lutheran Church will more widely acknowledge and celebrate ecumenism in the future.

Dr Rosemary Gill, Anglican theologian and lecturer in Church History at the Brisbane College of Theology (BCT), had no "bad" ecumenical experiences in her childhood. Her ecumenical interest and experience began in earnest when she joined BCT and learned about dialogues with other churches in Brisbane, e.g. *For the Sake of the Gospel* with the Uniting Church and *Common Ground Covenant* with the Lutheran Church. These two dialogues signify a shift in ecumenism from the theology and ecclesiology of, say, the ARCIC dialogues, to the immediacy of mission unity as a theological category. Dr Gill commented that at the fiftieth anniversary last year of the Lund Principle (which challenged world churches to enter into conversation with each other) a Greek Orthodox theologian said that the Orthodox Churches have not found a way to communicate.

Bishop Michael Putney, Roman Catholic Bishop of Townsville, acknowledged French priest and instigator of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Fr Paul Courtourier, as "the father of my ecumenical journey". The heart of the ecumenical movement is spirituality (prayer). It is the work of the Holy Spirit which Christians are privileged to be part of. Ecumenism is not dead – it's just got to the boring stage. The honeymoon is over so now love must sustain it. Mother Theresa said, "God does not ask success of us, only faithfulness". Bishop Michael injected a note of optimism by citing the many ecumenical breakthroughs, on international, national and local levels, that have taken place in recent years. He exhorted churches not to centre on the present impartial communion but to start living the partial communion that has been achieved.

Christians have to keep working at both the theological level and at the grass roots level and to try to keep the two levels connected.

Rev. Don Whebell, past Moderator of the Uniting Church Australia and at present Acting General Secretary of Queensland Churches Together, spoke of his negative ecumenical experience beginning in 1945 when Protestants and Catholics weren't on (polite) speaking terms, through the years leading up to the formation of the Uniting Church of Australia, when three Protestant churches worked separately and together to understand their own churches as well as each other's. Contact with Roman Catholics grew gradually through personal experience as well as ground-breaking events such as the setting up of the Heads of Churches meetings, the inauguration of the Brisbane College of Theology and Queensland Churches Together. Out of this have grown such things as Christians in Dialogue and the Stanley Rivers Ecumenical Pastoral Council among many other ecumenical ventures which would have been impossible fifty years ago. Don is challenged by the Basis of Union of the UCA to discover unity in Christ with others and works towards this in both his personal and official ministry.

After morning tea the panel reconvened to answer questions. Some outcomes of this discussion time were:

- Ecumenism – Ecumenical relationships are in Christ and are aimed at unity in Christ.
- Interfaith Relations – Not to be viewed as "other churches"; relationships are aimed at collaboration not unity.
- World peace depends on peace between religions and Christians have a responsibility to seek and work for peace. Otherwise they will be used for economic and political causes.
- Fear of fundamentalism e.g. in Islam – Christians must help establish good relations with Islamic people because the best control of fundamentalism is within Islam.
- Difficulties – How to reinspire congregations? How to inform the wider public? The diaconate.
- Acting on the Lund Principle – No church today should set up a separate enterprise – whether it is a new church building or a new agency for relief or development – when it is possible to meet the situation by acting together with other churches. When we act separately in such situations we are dividing the Body of Christ.
- Tension between theory and practice of ecumenism – Need both at all levels; need to be constantly reshaped and reformed; law has real value as a servant of truth and love; need loving truth and truthful love; lack of truth means vagueness; lack of love means dogmatism.
- Church schools – Capacity for ecumenical experience for staff and students – most are open to wider ecumenical community; need to teach continuity of the Christian life.

Veronica Ross  
Catholic Commission for Ecumenism & Interfaith Relations.

# QUEENSLAND CHURCHES TOGETHER

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM in August of Queensland Churches Together opened as usual with worship in the chapel. This was led by members of the Uniting Church and the homily was preached by Lt Col Ed Dawkins of the Salvation Army.

President, Rev. Dr Ray Reddicliffe, welcomed everyone, especially those who were attending for the first time.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE AGENDA

#### Membership application – Salvation Army

The meeting voted unanimously to accept the Salvation Army as subscribing members (Category B status) of QCT. The General Secretary will inform all churches of this decision. It applies to all of Queensland.

#### Panel Presentation – "In the Spirit of Koinonia"

Representatives from member churches spoke on significant events in their churches since the last AGM. The panel raised a multiplicity of matters currently central to the life of QCT Member Churches. These included (but were not limited to):

- Existing bilateral dialogues – especially those involving the Anglican, Lutheran and Uniting Churches.
- Issues related to sexuality and sexual abuse.
- Ethnic diversity and the value of mono-ethnic congregations.
- Challenges arising from ageing congregations and fewer people attending public worship.
- The pursuit of peace locally and globally.
- International connections.
- Extraordinary events e.g. recent Synod of the Brisbane Catholic Archdiocese.

Delegates then met in non-denominational groups to discuss what matters from the panel discussion might be fruitfully developed ecumenically and furthered through conversation in the Member Church meetings. Arising from these discussions the General Secretary invited the Member Churches to consider:

- Should QCT have a mandate to work across our Member Churches, in a multicultural context, to seek to build ecumenical connections among 15–30 year olds in their relationships within the church and in the interaction with their peers in the wider community?
- What would be the content of such a mandate? Does it include the organisation of particular events e.g. a "rally"?
- In a mission context, what are the ecumenical implications of being church now?

#### General Secretary's Report

- Before speaking to his report Russell paid tribute to John Wishart for his many years of generous service to QCT as auditor.
- QCT location 2004 and beyond is still under discussion though it will probably continue to be located at "Old Bishopsbourne".

#### Election of Officers

- President: Bishop Brian V. Finnigan, DD
- Vice Presidents: Bishop Ron Williams & Pastor Tim Jensch
- Treasurer: Andrew Musial
- Auditor: To be decided by Executive.

## DEALING WITH THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE



*Much violence is based on the illusion that life is a property to be defended and not a gift to be shared. (Henri Nouwen)*

For the past twelve years a small ecumenical committee has worked to give clergy and pastoral care workers the knowledge and confidence they need when confronted with domestic violence within their congregations.

The Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Project (JCDVPP) recognised that when violence occurs in church families people react with shame, guilt and fear. When they find the courage to speak out, it is important that the person they share their secret with can respond in a way that helps them to face up to what is happening, and to take whatever steps are needed to protect their family.

Members of the JCDVPP committee run one-day and four-day courses in which they share their hard-won experience and knowledge of these tragic situations and how this can affect a church community. They have developed a Train the Trainer Manual which won a national award, and that is given to all participants to help 'spread the word' within church communities.

Two members of the committee have been directly affected by domestic violence – one as a perpetrator, another as a victim. They now speak out to help others understand how this can happen, even to those trained to work for the church. As well, Lutheran pastor Keith Stiller shares his experience as a pastor who searched for answers as to how to help those affected by domestic violence.

Other presenters include police spokespeople, people who have worked in women's shelters, a psychologist who has studied gender issues and violence in society and a theologian who takes a challenging look at what it can mean to a domestic violence victim to hear a sermon on 'turn the other cheek'.

The final four-day training program for 2003 was held in mid-November at Trinity College, Auchenflower.

Enquiries until April, 2004 to Judith Pembleton on 07-3374 3364.

Judith Pembleton



# NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES AUSTRALIA

## UNIYA REFUGEE & MIGRANT SUNDAY STATEMENT

Sr Patty Fawcner, the Director of Uniya Jesuit Social Justice Centre, offered the following reflection as Australian Christians prepared to celebrate Refugee and Migrant Sunday at the end of August.

"As we reflect upon the worldwide phenomenon of migrants who choose to leave their country and refugees who are forced to leave, we find wisdom and challenge in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

In the Bible there are two key events which shape the identity and destiny of the people of Israel – the Exodus and the Exile. Alienation, hostility to the stranger, and the pain of flight and exile, are common in both cases. Israel knew what it was like to be a stranger in Egypt and then in exile. Subsequently, we find in the Bible acute sympathy for the alien, a sympathy that is expressed in language of abundant generosity. "You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" says the book of Deuteronomy. Israel, and all people who live by the biblical book, is called to give the stranger the same care that God gives.

Our honesty forces us to admit the challenge of such an injunction. We in Australia recognise that the arrival of economic, religious and political refugees is not without problems. There are real issues of security, border protection, and social harmony. More fundamentally we are confronted with our own deep-seated hostility and latent racism towards the stranger, the other, the one who is different.

Like the people of Israel, however, we can be helped to accept the stranger by recalling that white Australians are descendants of convicts, immigrants and refugees. And together with our indigenous brothers and sisters we are all descendants of boat people of this Great South Land. Parodying the words of Deuteronomy we can say, "You shall love the stranger who now comes from Asia and Afghanistan, from Iraq and Iran, for you or your ancestors were once strangers in this land when they first came from England, Ireland, Italy, Vietnam and Bosnia."

The biblical tradition goes further reminding us that which indigenous peoples have always known, that the land, any land, is not ours to own. The Book of Leviticus summarises this succinctly: "Land must not be sold in perpetuity, for the land belongs to me, and to me you are only strangers and guests". In our country and on the planet which we call home, all of us are strangers and guests, stewards and sojourners. All of us are children of the one God."

Uniya Media Release

## NCCA GENDER COMMISSION

The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) Gender Commission was formed in 2001. It grew out of the previous NCCA Network on Women and Gender Relationships which had been established in 1996.

This Commission was established in recognition of the ongoing struggle of women and supportive men within the various church traditions and structures to develop inclusive models of community, education and ministry. It has developed out of the awareness that the role and place of women in society and Church is often limited by oppressive structures.

### Rationale:

- INCLUSIVITY – women's perspective needs to be promoted and valued.
- DIVERSITY – the rich diversity within denominational traditions re women's issues needs to be recognised, honoured and valued.
- CREATIVITY – the creative gifts evident in the community need to be embraced in the NCCA.

### The NCCA Gender Commission:

- is inspired by the Gospel of Jesus who recognised and honoured the role and place of women in His society.
- will reflect on and discern how the Gospel message is being lived out in our member Churches.
- is challenged by the Gospel of Jesus to act with dignity and wholeness in all its decision-making.
- empowered by the Gospel vision, will encourage dialogue between Churches and act to encourage the development of justice and equality.

NCCA Gender Commission Brochure  
[www.ncca.org.au](http://www.ncca.org.au)

## MATTERS OF INTEREST

Website: The NCCA update website [www.ncca.org.au](http://www.ncca.org.au) is now operational. Content has been increased and is being constantly updated. Links lead to a variety of interesting locations. Well worth a visit!

Over This Violence Thing: The Youth Department of the NCCA has created a CD-ROM entitled "Over This Violence Thing". It includes resources on how young people can find alternatives to violence within their homes, schools and communities. The resources include stories, poems, pictures, film clips, prayers and bible studies.

The CD is presented in easy-to-use style with step-by-step instructions and funky colours. It has been designed by young people for young people.

Copies were distributed to every Catholic Parish with the Christmas Bowl 2003 kit. For more copies or further information contact Johnathan Jones 02-9299 2215 or [jjones@ncca.org.au](mailto:jjones@ncca.org.au).

"Safe Church" Working Group: The working group was established to a national consultation on sexual misconduct and abuse in Australian Churches. The group has planned a three day invitation-only gathering to be held in Canberra in early 2004 which will offer a combination of plenary input sessions and specialist area workshops.

Interfaith Dialogue: Meetings of the Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews (ANDCMJ) continue to be productive. In December the Christian representatives will present the concept of the Trinity to the group. Past presentations have covered Jihad and Zionism.

Partnerships: The NCCA is a member of APERO, the Australian Partnership of Ethnic and Religious Organisations. APERO is an initiative of the Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. It brings together a wide range of ethnic and religious communities. NCCA participation in APERO enables the churches to network with a large variety of groups and work more deliberately for community harmony and peace in line with our Gospel values.



## INTERFAITH

### REPORT OF THE 'VISIT TO A JEWISH SYNAGOGUE'

The Interfaith Subcommittee of the Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations' recently hosted an evening at the Margaret Street Synagogue. The purpose of the evening was to give people an opportunity to be inside a synagogue and to hear a Jewish understanding of scripture, rites of passage, ethics and spirituality. Cantor Garek Fysch (from the Camp Hill Synagogue) and Mr Laurie Rosenblum (Governor, Qld Jewish Board of Deputies) were the two speakers on the night.

All who attended enjoyed the opportunity to experience a synagogue, to see its structure and design and to appreciate the symbolism and many traditions within.

Garek and Laurie provided all present with a real sense of the ritual life of Jews, especially Jewish rites of passage. Significantly, they conveyed the links between Jewish rituals and their scriptural foundations.

Particularly interesting was hearing that Judaism was very much a tradition of the home. Whilst some Jews may not worship in the synagogue regularly, without doubt their faith is ritually observed in the home.

To finish the evening, visitors to the synagogue had an opportunity to ask any questions of Garek and Laurie. After ninety minutes, people felt they had been immersed in Judaism in a way that provided much more enrichment than any book ever could! Indeed, it was a great night of inter-religious dialogue!

**Michael Chambers**  
Interfaith Subcommittee

### FRIENDS OF SABEEL AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

"Friends of Sabeel Australia Incorporated" is an ecumenical organisation that seeks to give support to "Sabeel". "Sabeel" is an ecumenical grass roots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, "Sabeel" seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity among them, and lead them to act for justice and love. "Sabeel" strives to develop a spirituality based on justice, peace, non-violence, liberation, and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities in the region.

The members of "Friends of Sabeel Australia Inc." are Australians who wish to support "Sabeel". Members seek to raise awareness, particularly amongst Australian Christians, of the identity, presence and witness of Palestinian Christians, as well as of their contemporary concerns.

Members of "Friends of Sabeel Australia Inc." also receive a regular issue of "Cornerstone", the journal produced by the "Sabeel Centre" which has an office in Jerusalem and a branch in Nazareth.

Enquiries c/- Rev. Dr Ray Barraclough, P.O. Box 1261, Milton Qld 4064.

**Rev. Dr R. Barraclough**  
President, "Friends of Sabeel"

## A NEW GROUP IS BORN

Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy in Queensland Hospitals took a decisive step forward in October, with the formal establishment of a *Multi Faith Council on Spiritual and Religious Care*.

The Council comprises representatives of the Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist faiths, as well as the Anglican, Assemblies of God, Baptist, Catholic, Lutheran, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Quaker, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventist and Wesleyan Methodist traditions. Council members share a common concern for the compassionate care of the sick, and in coming years will work together to further enhance this commitment, learning with and from each other.

The origins of the Multi Faith Council lie in a seminar for over two hundred pastoral carers, organised in 2000 by Dr Judith Murray (University of Queensland), Dr John Barletta and Dr Heather Beattie (Australian Catholic University) and Ms Paula Bowman (Senior Policy Advisor, Queensland Health). At that time, the stage was set for developing multiple partnerships in pastoral care, between the academic world, Government, private hospitals and pastoral carers themselves. A Steering Committee was established in 2001, with the task of furthering the vision. Integral to the vision was the opportunity to develop working partnerships within and between the Faith groups who are actively involved in hospital pastoral care. Already, Queensland Health has signalled an intention to fund a long-term research project on chaplaincy/pastoral care with Dr Judith Murray, Dr John Barletta and the Multi Faith Council.

Seven members were elected to the Multi Faith Council Executive: Fr John Chalmers (Chair, Catholic), Fr Owen Strong (Deputy Chair, Anglican), Mrs Noreen Owens (Secretary/Treasurer, Catholic), Venerable Yeshe Khadro (Tibetan Buddhist), Rev. Allison Forster (Assemblies of God), Imaam Yusuf Peer (Islamic Council of Queensland) and Mr Barrie Barlow (Anglican).

Fr John Chalmers





# INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## ORIENTALE LUMEN II: AUSTRALASIA AND OCEANIA

In July, the Australian Catholic University (ACU) campus at Strathfield in Sydney was the venue for the second *Oriental Lumen* Conference. The Conference takes its name from the 1995 Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, in which the Pope proposed that, for its own health and restoration, the Western Church has a great deal to learn from Eastern Christians. The Conference has links with similar overseas gatherings including what has become almost an annual event in the USA, and other *Oriental Lumen* Conferences in Britain and other parts of Europe.

As it was organised by The Centre For Early Christian Studies of ACU, the conference naturally had a scholarly approach. However, lay people, with an interest in ecumenism, were welcome and for those of us with a minimal knowledge of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Catholic theology and practice, the experience was enriching, challenging and certainly well worthwhile.

The theme of this year's meeting was "An Exchange of Gifts: Western and Eastern Churches Face Their Post-Modern Context" and it attracted a number of high profile international speakers, including Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

While the focus was on East/West relations, with the West being predominantly the Roman Catholic Church, the ecumenical spectrum was certainly much broader. The moderator for the conference was Rev. Prof. Robert Gribben, a Uniting Church minister and staff member at the United Faculty of Theology (UFT), Melbourne. The Opening Address was presented by Rev. Dr Duncan Reid, an Anglican priest also from UFT, Melbourne, and was a very clear analysis of the post-modern view of the world and the place of religion in this context.

Cardinal Kasper gave an amazingly broad survey of the history of East/West relations and highlighted some of the many riches, particularly in liturgical and other practices, which the Orthodox Churches have to offer the West. Archbishop Seraphim, Greek Orthodox Bishop of Canada, spoke from his own background of rich ecumenical experience. He began life as a Lutheran, was for a time an Anglican priest and now holds many significant positions within the Orthodox Church in North America. He warned that for an exchange of gifts to take place there was need for "a certain mutual comprehension" to avoid further hurt and misunderstanding. Much repentance and forgiveness is necessary to overcome the problems of the past, and sensitivity, particularly in regard to the Eastern understanding of history, is vital if trust is to be restored.

Something of the pain experienced by Eastern Rite Catholics was expressed by Archimandrite Serge Keller of the Greek-Catholic congregation of Dublin in his paper on "The Balamand Statement: What Went Wrong?" The Balamand Statement came out of the Seventh Plenary Session of the Joint International Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church on 23 June 1993. This dialogue was held at the Balamand School of Theology in Lebanon. The very existence and functioning of Eastern Catholic Churches, particularly in areas which the Orthodox would consider historically and culturally Orthodox, has always been a cause of great division in East/West relations. The Archimandrite described the Eastern Catholic Churches as "children of divorced parents" whom neither parent particularly wanted. The major hurt was that the Balamand Statement spoke specifically about Eastern Catholics without actually involving them in the consultation. Since Balamand there has been no progress on that aspect of dialogue.

On a more positive note, the Conference was also given a detailed account, with video, of the Pope's visit to Athens and meeting with the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church. On this occasion the Pope apologised for the behaviour of the Roman Church towards its Orthodox brothers in the past and sort forgiveness. The atmosphere at the meeting showed a growing sense of trust and a definite thawing in the relationship with hope for the future.

The Conference, for me, was an extremely valuable experience as it opened a number of areas of ecumenical endeavour of which I knew little or nothing and certainly broadened my horizons. My thanks to the organisers for a very powerful and well-run conference.

Margaret Naylor

## "THE PASSION" – WHAT SHOULD WE BELIEVE?

The movie has not even been released, and already there are contradictory messages flying thick and fast – messages both for and against the movie, the script, and the producer-director. Film superstar Mel Gibson is financing, producing and directing "*The Passion*", a film depicting the last twelve hours before the death of Christ, and intends to release the movie around Easter 2004.

Among those who have praised the film are Cardinal Castrillon Hoyos and Archbishop John Foley of the Vatican, Michael Medved, a well-known US film reviewer and writer, David Horowitz, both Orthodox Jews, and the President of the US National Association of Evangelicals.

However, a group of US Christian and Jewish scholars has raised concerns the film might inflame anti-Jewish sentiment especially in the Middle East and Europe. A spokeswoman hoped it might encourage churchgoers to deepen their study of biblical texts but she is concerned the film may exploit the Passion narrative "...because violence sells".

Also, the Vatican is distancing itself from the comments of its two officials who praised the film. Cardinal Walter Kasper who is the Vatican liaison with the Jewish community has declared the comments as "purely personal" views which bear "no official status". He spoke of the continuing commitment of the Catholic Church to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council in promoting understanding and reconciliation with the Jewish people. His statement was seconded by Fr John Pawlikowski, Director of the Catholic/Jewish Studies Program at Chicago's Theological Union.

Out of concern that the movie might undercut the official Catholic teaching, Pawlikowski said, the bishops' conference has posted guidelines on Passion Plays on its Web-site. In addition, Pawlikowski said, plans are being drafted for a more comprehensive educational effort in case the film "*erodes the official Catholic position on Roman responsibility for the death of Christ.*"

Ecumenical News International, Bulletin  
September 2003

PS: The Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College has provided links to a comprehensive collection of resources to assist Catholics understand the church's position. (See The Mouse House in the FYI Section on page #15)



# INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## INTERRELIGIOUS MESSAGE OF PEACE

*"There aren't that many extremists. Most Muslims want peace, but they want peace with justice."*

Thus said Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, while acknowledging that the war in Iraq has caused an increase in tension in the Islamic world.

*"In some parts of the Islamic community, there's a sense of frustration and a tendency to express that frustration in violence."*

*"But there are many who are against this violence."*

But, according to Vatican officials, there is a tendency in the media to focus almost exclusively on the dramatic – especially on acts of violence – rather than the quiet stories of peaceful coexistence.

A prime example concerns India, where recent bombings, blamed on an Islamic militant organisation, left more than fifty people dead.

Yet, Archbishop Paschal Topno of Bhopal says *"most Christians and Muslims get along fine. We are all against the violence."*

Archbishop Fitzgerald recently returned to Rome from an historic dialogue session in the Philippines, involving more than one hundred Asian religious representatives – Catholic bishops, other Christian pastors and "ulama", or Muslim scholars, from thirteen countries, including Indonesia, Bangladesh and India.

Participants discussed their concern over increasing forms of religious extremism, and the final document strongly condemned extremism, oppression and terrorism.

For Archbishop Fitzgerald, the fact that the meeting took place at all underscored the progress that's being made on the dialogue front.

Yet major media gave no coverage to the August interreligious dialogue session in the Philippines.

Rather, the big story out of the region was the sentencing of an Islamic cleric in Indonesia, who was convicted of participation in the bombing of seventeen Indonesian Christian churches on Christmas Eve 2000.

Predictably, the cleric's trial generated TV images of his angry supporters, vowing to press ahead with the radical Muslim struggle.

To counter the media tendency to picture religions in terms of conflict, the Pontifical Council works with all architects of interreligious dialogue to keep sending a simple message:

*"Violence is not approved by religions, religions should be factors of peace, and the perpetrators of violence in the name of religion are, in fact, offending against religion."*

They know their message won't make the headlines, but they hope it eventually makes a difference.

**The Catholic Leader, 14 September 2003, p.10**

## MESSAGE FROM THE SECOND WORLD GATHERING OF INTERCHURCH FAMILIES, ROME 2003

- To the churches within which we belong,
- To all Christian believers, especially to interchurch families,
- To those who long for ways toward reconciliation.

From eleven countries in three continents and at least seven denominations we came together for our Second World Gathering of Interchurch Families held in Rome in July.

We were more than three hundred participants, interchurch couples, clergy, ministers and many children and young people whose participation was an inspiring and significant part of our gathering.

We reflected on our unity in baptism and marriage in which God calls us to a common life in the Church for the reconciliation of our churches.

We as interchurch families have a unique perspective on Christian unity from our privileged position.

We give thanks to God for the vocation to which we have been called.

We invite all Christians to explore with us the joy, enrichment and challenge of living our differences in unity under one roof.

We hope:

- to be recognised by our churches as committed partners in offering our experience as a modest but significant contribution to the ecumenical process.
- to become living bridges by exercising a ministry of hospitality at home and in our communities.
- that a growing number of Christians will share and feel more and more deeply the pain and scandal of division in order to be energised to work for unity.
- that the wealth of official ecumenical agreements between the churches, which we are eager to live in our families, may be fully received into the pastoral education and the life of our churches for the good of all.
- that as part of their advance in ecumenical understanding, the churches will work together on the pastoral issues of interchurch families, and for their pastoral care.
- that until full communion is realised, pastoral solutions will urgently be extended to meet the real need of interchurch families, and others in particular need, for reciprocal eucharistic sharing.
- that we can share the gifts we receive in our God-given diversity, and celebrate them together in the One Body of Christ, as a witness to reconciliation in the world.

We offer these hopes to God our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit.

[Cardinal Walter Kasper, Archbishop John Bathersby (Roman Catholic Anglican Commission for Unity and Mission), Archbishop Giuseppe Chiaretti (President of the Episcopal Commission of the Italian Bishops' conference for Ecumenism and Dialogue) and Archbishop Rowan Williams (Archbishop of Canterbury) all sent messages of support to the gathering.]



## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### POPE PLEASSED WITH ECUMENICAL EFFORTS OF PONTIFICATE

Pope John Paul II has indicated his satisfaction with the ecumenical efforts undertaken during his pontificate, but asked the faithful to pray that remaining obstacles to Christian unity can be overcome.

The pope sent a message to the participants in a plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity.

In his message, the Holy Father said that many past offences against unity still have a cumulative effect. He stressed the importance of humility as a necessary precondition for overcoming the obstacles to unity, and renewed his plea for mutual reconciliation among all Christian groups.

At the same time, the Pope remarked that the ecumenical progress of the past twenty-five years has been substantial. While differences certainly remain, he said, respectful ecumenical discussions have enabled Christians to see those differences clearly, and sometimes to find ways to overcome them.

Catholic World News/EWTN

### ANGLICAN METHODIST COVENANT

Early in November the Anglican Methodist Covenant in England was signed at a national celebration in the presence of Her Majesty The Queen. The Covenant was earlier this year strongly endorsed by the Methodist Conference of Great Britain and the General synod of the Church of England.

The service of celebration began at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster in front of an invited assembly from both Churches as well as ecumenical and civil guests. Afterwards there was a short service of thanksgiving and dedication at Westminster Abbey conducted by the Dean of Westminster, The Very Reverend Dr Wesley Carr.

The Covenant was signed on behalf of the Church of England by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Reverend Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of York, the Most Reverend Dr David Hope, and the Secretary General of the Archbishops' Council, Mr William Fittall. The Methodist Church signatories will be the President of the Methodist Conference, the Reverend Dr Neil Richardson, the Vice President of the Conference, Mrs Judy Jarvis, and the General Secretary of the Methodist Church, the Rev David Deeks.

Source: [http://www.westminster-abbey.org/anglican\\_methodist.htm](http://www.westminster-abbey.org/anglican_methodist.htm)

## i FOR YOUR INFORMATION

### IN ANCIENT CYBER TIMES

In ancient Israel, it came to pass that a trader by the name of Abraham Com did take unto himself a young wife by the name of Dot. And Dot Com was a comely woman, broad of shoulder and long of leg. Indeed, she had been called Amazon Dot Com.

She said unto Abraham, her husband, "Why doth thou travel far from town to town with thy goods when thou can trade without ever leaving thy tent?"

And Abraham did look at her as though she were several saddle bags short of a camel load, but simply said, "How, Dear?"

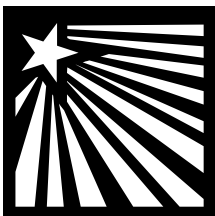
And Dot replied, "I will place drums in all the towns and drums in between to send messages saying what you have for sale and they will reply telling you which hath the best price. And the sale can be made on the drums and delivery made by Uriah's Pony Stable (UPS)."

Abraham thought long and decided he would let Dot have her way with the drums. The drums rang out and were an immediate success. Abraham sold all the goods he had at the top price, without ever moving from his tent.

But this success did arouse envy. A man named Maccabia did secret himself inside Abraham's drum and was accused of insider trading. And the young men did take to Dot Com's trading as doth the greedy horsefly take to camel dung. They were called Nomadic Ecclesiastical Rich Dominican Siderites, or NERDS for short.

And lo, the land was so feverish with joy at the new riches and the deafening sound of drums that no one noticed that the real riches were going to the drum maker, one Brother William of Gates, who bought up every drum company in the land. And indeed did insist on making drums that would work only with Brother Gates' drumheads and drumsticks.

Dot did say, "Oh, Abraham, what we have started is being taken over by others." And as Abraham looked out over the Bay of Ezekiel, or, as it came to be known, "eBay" he said, "We need a name that reflects what we are," and Dot replied, "Young Ambitious Hebrew Owner Operators." "YAHOO", said Abraham. And that is how it all began.



May the light of Christ be the light that shines in our hearts this Christmas. May the peace of Christ be our gift to each other in 2004.

## THE MOUSE HOUSE

A very topical site at the moment is the one maintained by the Centre for Christian – Jewish Learning at Boston College to provide direct access to some key resources for making an informed judgment on the forthcoming film *The Passion*, due for release by Mel Gibson before Easter 2004:

[http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/education/PASSION\\_resources.htm](http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/education/PASSION_resources.htm)

The page is a simple list, pointing to a mixture of official Catholic documents, plus some material written specially to inform intending viewers of the film, because of the concerns that the messages given by the film may not be positive, accurate or in keeping with Catholic teaching.

1. Excerpts from Roman Catholic Magisterial Teaching Documents on the Crucifixion.  
Quotations from official Catholic documents that concern teaching, preaching, and dramatising the story of the crucifixion of Jesus.
2. [U.S.] Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatisations of the Passion (1988).  
The full text of specific standards to be used in assessing whether dramatic presentations of the crucifixion conform to Roman Catholic teaching.
3. Dramatising the Death of Jesus: Issues that Have Surfaced in Media Reports about the Upcoming Film, *The Passion*.  
A statement by four Catholic professors who read a version of the screenplay of the movie. It contains cautions about using extra-biblical materials, such as the writings of Anna Catherine Emmerich, in dramatising the crucifixion, whose writings clearly shaped the composition of the screenplay, together with three explicit questions to ask in regard to any script's use of New Testament narratives.
4. Problematic Elements from Emmerich.  
The previous item referred to some aspects of Emmerich's writings. This is a list of specific citations of her work that, if they appeared in the theatrical release of *The Passion*, would directly contradict Catholic teaching.
5. "Hype vs. Hope: Some Reflections on Mel Gibson's Film on the Passion of Jesus".  
An analysis of the rough cut of the film by the Most Rev. Stefan Soroka, Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the USA. and Archbishop of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia.
6. Furor Over Gibson's *The Passion*: What is This All About?  
A thoughtful essay by Bruce Williams, O.P. on some of the implications of *The Passion* controversy.
7. A Comparison of *The Passion* Narratives.  
A chart that shows the differences and similarities among the four gospel passion narratives. Unless it is simply a reenactment of one of them, any dramatisation of the death of Jesus must select from among these options to construct a coherent narrative. Catholic teaching states that a combination of the individual gospels' "anti-Jewish" aspects is to be avoided.

Of course, if you are looking for material on Judaism and Christian-Jewish relations, this Boston College site has plenty to keep you busy, and well read. The home page of the Centre [www.bc.edu/research/cjl/](http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/) is clear, and well organised, with both news and resources offered to those who will not be interested in undertaking any of their courses, events or conferences.

Another site well worth visiting for information is the Institute for Christian & Jewish Studies [www.icjs.org/](http://www.icjs.org/) – it has documents and links to other organisations and site available via the internet.

Of course, there is the Vatican web site of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/interelg/index.htm](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/index.htm), but the material pointed to directly here is limited. The Vatican site is extremely extensive in toto, but you need to search for material carefully, as it is not intuitively organised, and there are not as many cross references to relevant documents as might be expected. For instance *Nostra Aetate*, the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (1965) is located at the following address: [//www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html) but you cannot get there directly from the web page for the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue. You must search for it specifically, and even then it is not early on the search engine's returns. Nevertheless, this is the official source for electronic copies of many Catholic documents.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Church accepts the Baptism of the follow ecclesial Communities:

- All Eastern non-Catholic Churches (Orthodox)
- African Methodist Episcopal
- Amish
- Anglican
- Assembly of God
- Baptists
- Church of God
- Church of the Brethren
- Church of the Nazarene
- Churches of Christ
- Congregational Church
- Disciples of Christ
- Episcopalians
- Evangelical Churches
- Evangelical United Brethren
- Liberal Catholic Church
- Lutherans
- Methodists
- Old Catholics
- Old Roman Catholics
- Polish National Church
- Presbyterian Church
- Reformed Churches
- Seventh Day Adventists
- United Church of Christ
- Uniting Church of Australia

Many of these ecclesial communities are located in the United Kingdom or in the United States of America. Most can be found via the Internet

## DID YOU ALSO KNOW?

*Islam, Judaism and Christianity are three monotheistic religions. Muslims, Jews and Christians are all the children of Abraham.*

The primary focus of the Prophet Muhammad's teaching is that there is only one God and that human beings have a duty to 'submit' to God's will.

God's revelations to the Prophet were made over a period of twenty-two years and collected in a book known as the Qur'an. This is the holy scripture of Muslims. According to the Qur'an men and women are equal before God.

The key beliefs of Islam are: There is only one God; that God has sent prophets and messengers to all the peoples on earth; that God gave scriptures to prophets; that God created special beings called angels with certain functions and duties; that life will come to an end, and at some point the Day of Judgement will come and that God has full knowledge of the past, present and future.

The five pillars of Islam are: the declaration of faith, prayer, charity in the form of almsgiving, fasting and pilgrimage to Mecca.

Sunni and Shi'i are the two major branches of Islam. The differences began as political, but grew to become more theological and ideological. Both groups hold the Qur'an as the sacred text.

Friday is the day Muslims gather in the mosque at noon for special congregational prayers. Ramadan is the most sacred month of the year

There are 1.3 billion Muslims in the world – 22% of the world's population. Australia's Muslim population according to the 2001 census is 281,578.

Australian Muslims are not all Arabs and Australian Arabs are not all Muslims.

The religious leader of a mosque is called the imam and in Australia is roughly equivalent to a minister of religion.

Muslims are allowed to consume all foods except alcoholic drinks, the meat and by-products of pigs, and meat of an animal that has died of natural causes.

Muslims and Christians share many religious beliefs and attitudes to human rights and economic justice.

UNIYA Jesuit Social Justice Centre

## THE LUND PRINCIPLE

This was propounded by Oliver Tomkins at the Third World Conference on Faith and Order at Lund, Sweden, in August, 1952, and it was written into the Conference Statement entitled "A Word to the Churches:

"We would, therefore, earnestly request our churches to consider whether they are doing all they ought to do to manifest the one-ness of the people of God. Should not our churches ask themselves whether they are showing sufficient eagerness to enter into conversation with other churches, and whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?"

Robin Boyd, former Chairperson of the Uniting Church Assembly's Christian Unity Working Group, when reflecting on the fiftieth anniversary of the Lund Conference, was reported in *In Unity* (July, 2002) as stating: "No church today should set up a separate enterprise – whether it is a new church building or a new agency for relief or development – when it is possible to meet the situation by acting together with other churches. When we act separately in such situations we are dividing the Body of Christ. Fifty years ago, in unmistakable terms, Lund showed us a better way. It is time we got back on track."