

## 16. Ecumenical Affairs Commission

<i>Acting Convenor</i>	Dorothy Carey
<i>Ex Officio</i>	Rev David de Kock
<i>Members elected by Synod</i>	Rev Frances Hadfield (resigned February 2018)
	Rev Pearl McGill (resigned December 2017)
	Alana Moorman (country member)
	Rev Dr Sonny Rajamoney
	Rev Justine Wall
	Rev Marie Wilson

### 1. AIMS

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

Ecumenism is at the heart of the Uniting Church. As a committee we have a strong commitment to this but recognise other groups in our church structure that are ecumenical in their actions. We are encouraged to ask how we are engaging with others in all our activities and to intentionally plan for this. How can we share our stories that others may be inspired?

### 2. ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH AWARDS

This award was designed to encourage, recognise and celebrate the ecumenical and interfaith initiatives of our congregations, schools and agencies. Each year it becomes difficult to determine the winner. In 2017 the award was presented to South Perth Uniting Church for their Women's Weekend Away where women of faith from all walks of life gather for a spiritually empowering weekend. From its early beginnings over 50 years ago it has grown to include leaders from the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Uniting churches and other women who have worked in some very challenging positions. This annual event enables women of all ages to celebrate ecumenism/interfaith activities and encourages further experiences. Thank you, South Perth Uniting Church, for your story.

### 3. COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF WA (CCWA)

The Uniting Church is a very active member of the Council of Churches with three members on the Executive and up to ten members on the Council. In mid-2017 Simone Micke, a Lutheran was appointed as Ecumenical Ministry Officer. Simone has upgraded CCWA's Facebook page and the Newsletter where events, invitations and activities hosted by CCWA and a wide number of churches can be accessed. Check out their website. To receive emails contact [ecumenical@churcheswa.com.au](mailto:ecumenical@churcheswa.com.au)

Some of the Ecumenical Affairs Commission were fortunate to attend the Fourth International Receptive Ecumenism Conference in Canberra in November and returned enthused to see how we can use the knowledge and experiences gained to advantage here (see footnote). The Pilgrimage for

Unity was not held this year due to the difficulty of the dates, but it is being planned for 2019 in a different form based on insights from Sweden.

The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) continues to make resources available for worship and study. These are available on the NCCA website [ncca.org.au](http://ncca.org.au).

The World Council of Churches (WCC) promotes Christian Unity in faith, witness and service for a just and peaceful world. This year WCC celebrates 70 years since it was formed in 1948. Today WCC represents more than 550 million Christians in over 120 countries.

#### **4. ACT FOR PEACE**

The 2017 launch of the Christmas Bowl Appeal was held at Mount Hawthorn St Peter and Emmaus Church with the General Secretary of NCCA, Sister Elizabeth Delaney as the guest speaker. This was a shared activity with the Uniting Church WA and CCWA and we are very grateful for the support CCWA provided financially and through the leadership of the Ecumenical Ministry Officer.

Helen Beeby has been appointed recently as Relationships Fundraising Partner for Act for Peace with responsibility for Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia. We expect her to visit WA later this year or early next year to report on Act for Peace and the Christmas Bowl Appeal.

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

In November 2017 the commemoration of Kristallnacht was held in the Penrhos College Chapel. This was the final time the Governor, Honourable Kerry Sanderson, was present in her role as Patron.

The Annual General Meeting was held in February with the new Chief Rabbi of Perth Hebrew Congregation as guest speaker, providing us with some insights into his English-Jewish background. The annual worship at St Georges College, with music from the Winthrop singers using music common to both Christians and Jews was followed by dinner and a fireside chat with Archbishop Kay Goldsworthy, Diocese of Perth Anglican Church of Australia.

The film this year, *Fiddler on the Roof*, was screened at John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School.

In July a panel consisting of Rabbi Dan Lieberman, Dr Norm Hoffman, the most Reverend Peter Carnly and Rev Gareth Hughes spoke on "Why a Council of Christians and Jews." This was very well attended and certainly enhanced our aim to bring understanding and respect for our different traditions as we enter into dialogue

#### **6. RELATIONS WITH OTHER FAITHS**

In our Synod Report last year we quoted from Michael Barnes from the then Assembly Relations with Other Faiths Working Group: "As Christians we believe diversity is a part of God's creation. Our faith in Christ calls us to live together in peace and love and to engage in genuine dialogue with people of other faiths. In Australia today, there is much work to do healing divisions caused by ignorance and fear, but by reaching out to people of other faiths, we can make a difference."

This year we responded to this call. Ramadan is a significant and sacred time for Muslims marked by fasting, one of the five pillars of Islam. The Iftar meal is the 'breaking of the fast' at sunset each day throughout Ramadan. The sharing of the meal between Muslims and non-Muslims has become a powerful symbol of solidarity and unity. In June we co-hosted an iftar meal with a Muslim group from the Intercultural Harmony Society. About 60 people, half Uniting Church WA members and half from the Muslim society met late on a stormy Saturday afternoon at Mount Hawthorn St Peter and Emmaus Church and waited until the sun set for the Muslims to break their fast and then we shared a meal. We ate, talked, shared our stories, listened and learnt from one another. This was an enriching experience and we would encourage other congregations to reach out to people of other faiths.

The National Assembly Seeking Common Ground Circle invites people to learn about and participate in the ways the Uniting Church is in relationship with other churches, other faiths and

those of no institutional faith. You can find out more and join the circle at [uniting.church/seekingcommonground](http://uniting.church/seekingcommonground)

## **7. LOOKING AHEAD**

We commenced 2018 with a very small committee. For health reasons Frances Hadfield and Pearl McGill found it necessary to resign. We thank them sincerely for their contribution to ecumenism over many years.

With a smaller committee and geographically distanced, we began meeting on a Saturday morning every second month. We are now in the process of changing the structure of the Ecumenical Affairs Commission to broaden the scope of activity. The entries for the Ecumenical and Interfaith Award have highlighted the ecumenical sharing that is happening in the congregations. The Commission is planning to set up a network of interested people, hopefully representative of all congregations to encourage and resource ecumenical activity. Though this new structure will not be approved before Synod, we will keep you posted. If you are interested in joining the network you could leave your name and contact details in the box provided in the foyer or email me (see details below).

**Dorothy Carey**  
[dcarey@westnet.com.au](mailto:dcarey@westnet.com.au)

*Receptive Ecumenism represents a remarkably simple but far reaching strategy that seeks to draw out a value that has been at work, to some degree at least, in all good ecumenical encounter and to place it centre-stage now as the appropriate organising principle for contemporary ecumenism. This is the principle that considerable further progress is indeed possible, but only if each of the traditions, both singly and jointly, makes a clear, programmatic shift from prioritising the question “What do our various others first need to learn from us?” to asking instead, “What is that we need to learn and can learn, or receive, with integrity from our others?” (Paul D Murray)*