

South Australian Council of Churches Inc

Affiliated with the National Council of Churches in Australia



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SACC Annual Report 2019 – 2020

Rev Anne Hewitt, Ecumenical Facilitator & Executive Director

South Australian Council of Churches rejoices in our diverse and friendly community. We celebrate the deep connection with our Member Churches, and the Living Faith expressed by each. As churches together, we are active and very positively engaged in the wider community in South Australia.

Renewal in Faith-filled Friendship

At the Annual General Meeting in 2019, we affirmed the response of our Members through the two-year Consultation process. We chose to move to Churches Together SA, that reflects our calling as the family of God and the whole body of Christ. The Consultation conversations overwhelmingly identified an awareness of being a welcoming community, with warming hospitality and friendliness at our heart. We choose to gather together, practising Receptive Ecumenism. We meet with the specific intention of listening with respect and love for the other, so that we learn together, and grow in our faith and understanding through the Wisdom of the Spirit, as we strive to live in the Way of Christ.

Churches Together South Australia Ltd name will be formally ratified at a Special Resolution General Council Meeting on Thursday October 22nd. Throughout this year, we have been developing a new Constitution and implementing the formal requirements that need to be in place as we move forward. This has been delayed many months, and numerous times, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected our's and State and Federal government processes. Therefore, it is taking much longer than we had hoped. CTSA will have a refreshed structure, with a focus on ecumenical energy through Receptive Ecumenism while enabling CTSA to meet best practice governance.

We are indebted to the guidance and clarity, great wisdom, practical assistance and tireless energy of Mr Bruce Linn AM, as he assists us as an organisation to navigate through this time of change and renewal. We give thanks for the lawyers who have assisted in the development of the Constitution and formal process of change. We are grateful for the generosity of interstate Church Councils sharing wisdom and resources from their similar journeys. We particularly acknowledge the support and affirmation of the SACC Member Church Leaders, who have responded with grace, commitment and practical assistance. Together, our Member Churches identify the unity in our diversity, and celebrate the gifts each church offers. Through this, we glimpse and partake in the wholeness as the family of God. Ecumenism is alive and well in South Australia, as is the energy to draw on our common calling and serve our God through this ecumenical family.

Unexpected Sojourns

This has been another year of significant change. SACC moved to a new economical office space in Sturt Adelaide late last year, after over a decade at Flinders St. We sadly farewelled Melanie Macrow in April this year, and thanked her for her strong commitment and all that she brought to this ecumenical space. She is following her ministry calling to work in schools with a specific educational unit for behavioural and troubled young people. We welcomed Emma Stephenson as Office Manager, who brings energy and commitment to ecumenism and offers strong skills in administration and particularly in the area of IT. We have farewelled long term ecumenical friends, and welcomed new appointees.

Planned events with visiting local and international presenters, a Coptic theologian and a brother from Taizé, were cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic. While other plans for this year's events were unravelling, unexpected significant missional work arose. SACC has been a point of contact for SA Government agencies to share information to our church and faith communities. We continue to

SA Council of Churches: Listening, Learning and Loving in the Way of Christ, as encourage and support the understanding, spiritual growth and practice of ecumenism across the Churches of South Australia

support and pastorally care for many in our community, as they grapple with adapting church practices to suit the current and changing regulations. Flexible delivery and agile adaptation have seen worship, pastoral care and mission work continue across our churches. The blessing of online engagement has enabled new ways of being and doing church and mission.

After many months of lock-down, SACC began holding hybrid meetings in our new office to enable 'gathering' in a new way, particularly in this COVID season requiring physical distancing. This format is proving to offer a more inclusive way of meeting, enabling those who live a great distance away, or who are unable to attend for family reasons, an opportunity to fully participate. With the COVIDSAFE restrictions likely to continue well into 2021, we are planning events that will be both ROOM & ZOOM, regulations permitting. An example is the recent 'The Gospel of Mark' Event on Tuesday 14th October. This was very well attended, with 32 people in person and 25 online, including attendees from regional South Australia and interstate. Recording the event also enabled those who were unable to attend, to view the event on Churches Together SA YouTube Channel. The next day, there were a further 19 new views. The gift of doing things differently, is enabling a wider community to engage.

We have also been in the process of building a new Churches Together SA website. It will be formally launched at the Special Resolution Meeting in October 2020. This offers viewers up-to-date accessibility, current events, E-news and Spirit & Life writings, links to contact our Member Churches and Networks, and easy access to SACC CTSA resources and information. Events will be updated on the Home Page, as will Spirit & Life from weekly E-news. We have retrieved resources from the previous website and created a library, in which these can now be stored. There will also be a Donation option and a Search bar. This is still a work in progress, and we will be able to manage it through our office thanks to Emma's skills in this area. We are very thankful for the generous support and gracious assistance from the web-designers, DIY Digital. They have been very flexible in approach, considerate regarding specific needs of SACC CTSA, and have been very patient with the extremely arduous delays and difficulties we have experienced transitioning from the old site to the new.

SACC looks with hope to the horizon. While restrictions and uncertainties are still with us, God goes before us, covering us with grace, guiding us through new beginnings and enabling us to rise towards each sea-change. The bobbing, blue boat of the SACC is traveling across the waves of change. Moving to Churches Together SA brings a sense of renewal. The pandemic has brought heart ache and fatigue to many churches. Yet, it also has made us look at doing things differently that actually enables inclusivity, wider connections and audiences, different directions on which to focus and a renewed vitality, while unveiling the treasures of a spiritual and faith-filled life when we approach each other through Receptive Ecumenism.

May we continue to walk this Emmaus journey together.



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