

Thankyou

- Thankyou for your co-operation as regards the request from the Prime Minister for us to ring Cathedral and Church bells on the Thursday MH17 National Day of Mourning.

Bells rang out all over the country!

The PM's office were very grateful. On the day we received a call from ABC Radio.

To view the story go to:

http://blogs.abc.net.au/queensland/2014/08/bells-ring-out-to-honour-victims-of-mh17.html?site=capricornia&program=capricornia_afternoons

- **A recent conversation with AEON members** conveyed insights into the good work taking place, State by State.



For example

SACC reports on energising discussions as regards **Receptive Ecumenism**. This theological perspective is helping to refresh their ecumenical purpose. Its relational focus fits with a view that our Australia Churches have something necessary and important to offer our society in terms of healthy relationships.

The healthier we are together, "speaking the truth in love", the better can be our "leaven in the lump" for a society in which we see so many fractured, conflicted and dishonest relationships. More on Receptive Ecumenism can be found: www.sacc.asn.au. It is a very helpful gathering of insights and resources.

Relatedly: Longing, Listening, Learning and Loving in the Way of Christ: the promise and potential of Receptive Ecumenism – a Mini-conference

Friday 17 October 2014, 7.30pm-9pm & Saturday 18 October 2014, 9:15am-12.45pm
Room S1, Adelaide College of Divinity, 34 Lipsett Tce, Brooklyn Park

Guest Presenters include:

- Professor Catherine Clifford, St Paul University, Ottawa, Canada
- The Rt Rev'd John Stead, Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Wilochra
- Rev Professor Denis Edwards, Australia Catholic University
- Rev David Smith, Immediate Past President of Baptist Churches of SA, & Pastor at West Beach Baptist Church

Through prayer, theological, reflection, presentations, conversation and morning tea, to consider and explore the promise and potential of Receptive Ecumenism. Cost: (full/concession) Friday \$15/\$10 / Saturday \$20/\$15 both sessions \$35/\$25

For more information, see Flyer www.sacc@picknowl.com.au or to register email Geraldine Hawkes sacc@picknowl.com.au or phone: 82150300.

Centre for Ecumenical Studies – Five Day Summer School

Looking beyond Division is a five day Summer School introducing the study of Ecumenism on Monday the 16th to Friday the 20th February 2015 in Canberra at the Australian Centre for Christianity & Culture (ACC&C) More details from Rev'd Ray Williamson

http://www.5icm.org.au/Attachments/2015_Ecumenics_Summer_School_Brochure-Canberra.pdf

Sad passing of Bishop Ted

Bishop Ted Collins, sadly passed away on Friday 8 August 2014. He was a great friend to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, walking beside them all on a journey of self-determination and equality. A number of ecumenical friends were able to attend his funeral in Sydney.

Theology Forum - Centre for Ministry –1st – 4th August 2014: Report by Ken Summer, National Director (NATSIEC)

NATSIEC and the Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) decided to hold a Theology Forum together in the hope to gather more people and to begin participating in this area of ministry ecumenically. We planned to have our forum in August and at that same time it was also announced that there was going to be a Theology Forum on Post-colonial Engagement with Indian theologians R.S. Sugirtharajah and his wife Sharada Sugirtharajah. So we decided to participate in the postcolonial Engagement forum and have R.S. Sugirtharajah present with us on Monday 4th August.

I was privileged to participate in the theology forum at the Centre for Ministry in North Parramatta. The theme for the forum was Post-colonial Engagement: Politics, Religions, Scriptures. The main speakers for this forum were, R.S. Sugirtharajah (affectionately known as “Sugi”) and his wife Sharada Sugirtharajah.

“Sugi” is a renowned theologian on post-colonialism and has written several books and Sharada specialises in Religions. There were several other speakers, both Aboriginal and non-aboriginal which added to the whole forum.

The forum began with an Acknowledgement of Country to the Aboriginal owners of that particular area.

ev. Neville Naden an Aboriginal minister originally from the Dubbo area and who now ministers in Broken Hill began the forum with his topic, “The Issue of Land and Australia's First Peoples” he said, “over the past 220 or so years, since colonisation, the First Nations peoples of this land have fought for the **recognition of land custodianship**” he goes on to say, “all Federal and State Governments and the Church have benefitted greatly as a result of dispossessing the First Nations Peoples

of the land that God had apportioned them". Rev. Naden endeavoured to outline a theological framework for people who would argue that colonisation of this country was God's will.

This was a great discussion to begin with and there was a lot of dialogue as we discovered the many difficulties associated with colonisation particularly for the First Australians and also, how we live together in this country equally in reconciliation.

Mr. Graeme Mundine, an Aboriginal man originally from the Bunjalung People of North Coast NSW, is now the Executive officer of the Sydney Archdiocese's Aboriginal Catholic Ministry (ACM) who also participated in the forum with his topic, "The Mission Field to the Mission Force?: The Catholic Church, Inculturation and Assimilation"

Mr. Mundine said that, "since its inception, the Catholic Church grappled with the relationship between culture and faith, or inculturation. Fifty years ago the second Vatican Council, known as Vatican II, clarified Church teaching on the relationship between the essential 'truths' of faith while allowing for local cultural expressions", he goes on to say, "in Australia, inculturation is not an abstract concept. The Catholic Church's complex relationships with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples were long bound up in colonisation and were driven by the Church's mission to evangelise. One legacy of the missions is that today, a third of the 73% of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples who identify as Christian are Catholic".

Mr. Mundine continued, "with reference to fifty years of Church teaching on inculturation his paper examines inculturation from an Aboriginal perspective. In particular, the paper addresses how the practice of Catholicism continues to be bound to the cultural practices of the dominant non-indigenous cultures and how that perpetuates cultural assimilation instead of enabling authentic cultural expressions of faith.

To listen to these two Aboriginal men's perspective and experience about the colonisation of Aboriginal Peoples with the sometimes inappropriate use of the Gospel challenges me greatly and I am left still reflecting.

The other Aboriginal person who presented was Mrs. Denise Champion, an Adnyamathanha woman from the Flinders Ranges of South Australia who has a gift in Aboriginal Storytelling and relating them to the Gospel stories. Denise is currently the State Development Officer for the Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress and also the Covenanting (Reconciliation) Officer with the Uniting Church Synod of South Australia.

Along with Rev. Dr Chris Budden, a Uniting Church minister, Denise took us through the Uniting Church's Preamble to their Constitution which acknowledges God in this place before European colonisation. An acknowledgement that many theologians has struggled with, from early missionary times.

From the forum there has been much food for thought and as I struggle with the challenges of theologising in my context, keep me in your prayers.

Grace and peace,

Ken Sumner

Response from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Regarding Christians in Iraq, our letter of 23rd July:



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

11 August 2014

Bishop Philip Higgins
Acting General Secretary
National Council of Churches in Australia

Very Reverend Father Shenouda Mansour
General Secretary
New South Wales Ecumenical Council

Level 7, 379 Kent Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Bishop Higgins and Father Mansour

Thank you for your letter dated 23 July 2014 regarding the situation of Christians in Iraq. Noting that this correspondence was also sent to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The Australian Government is deeply concerned about the recent escalation of violence in Iraq, and reports of the persecution of members of religious and other minorities, including Assyrian Christians and Yazidis. Recognising the humanitarian impact of the crisis, Foreign Minister, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, has announced a \$5 million package of support to Iraq.

Australian officials have repeatedly raised these issues at senior levels with the Government of Iraq. On 14 July, Australia's Ambassador to Iraq, Lyndall Sachs, called on the Chaldean Patriarch in Baghdad to discuss the effects of the conflict on Christian communities. Most recently, on 19 July, Ms Sachs met with the Director of the UN Human Rights Office in Iraq and raised concerns about the treatment of minorities.

Australia contributed to a United Nations Security Council press statement on the persecution of minorities in Iraq on 21 July 2014, and to two further statements on 5 and 7 August addressing the most recent ISIL assaults targeting communities in Iraq's north. These statements condemn in the strongest terms the systemic attacks on minority ethnic and religious communities in Iraq and refer to the plight of Christians in Mosul. The Government will continue to identify appropriate opportunities to raise the situation of religious minorities in Iraq at international fora including the United Nations.

The resettlement of Iraqis who have fled their home country remains a priority within Australia's offshore Humanitarian Programme. In the last 10 years, around 22,000 Iraqis have found a new life in Australia. Over this period, Iraqis were the single largest nationality granted visas under the Programme. The majority of these have come from minority Christian communities, including many Assyrians.

The 2014-15 offshore Humanitarian Programme will have 11,000 global places, to be shared between refugees referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other people who have fled their home country and who are proposed by close family members in Australia under the Special Humanitarian Programme (SHP). The Government is making more places available to those people seeking to join their family in Australia. This will provide a further pathway, including for Iraqis, to be permanently resettled in Australia.

Although there are provisions within the Humanitarian Programme for people who remain inside their country of usual residence, such as Christian Iraqis who have fled to other parts of Iraq, these are only used in limited circumstances and where it is possible for the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to undertake processing of these applications. Unfortunately, it is not possible for departmental staff to enter those areas of Iraq where there is continuing conflict to interview applicants and process their applications.

Australia's current focus in respect of resettling Iraqis in the Humanitarian Programme is for refugees referred by UNHCR and those who have close links to Australia and who have fled to neighbouring countries such as Syria, Turkey and Jordan. More than 2,000 Iraqis were granted visas in the 2013-14 Programme and it is expected that similar numbers of Iraqis, including many from the Assyrian community, will be resettled in Australia during 2014-15.

Yours sincerely

Marc Innes-Brown
Assistant Secretary
Middle East Branch

Prayers for Peace, Sunday September 21- UN International Day of Peace

AT the NCCA in Sydney, we met this week with the United Nations International Day of Peace Co-ordinator. On their website you will see ideas and initiatives, www.dayofpeaceaustralia.com

We are asked to offer prayers for peace in Sunday worship services on September 21. Where possible, an ecumenical service, a candlelight vigil or a noon prayer might be organised.



There are many prayers for peace. Here is one I have written for September 21.

It complements the **Opening Prayer and Reflection (attached)**. I offered to our Act for Peace, Marketing and Communication Team last week.

Prayer for Peace, September 21, 2014

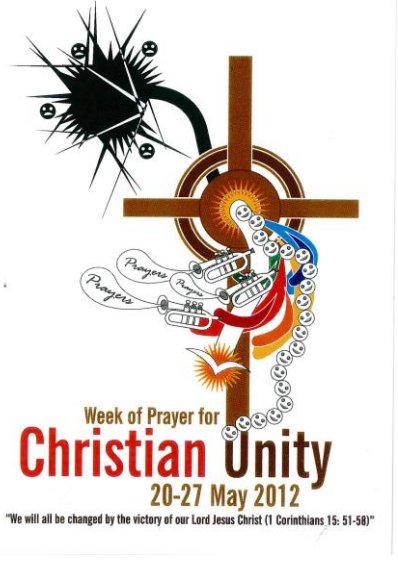

Gracious God,


In our Risen Lord Jesus
You gift us with your peace.
Your radiant peace is beyond our understanding.
Your peace is of a beauty
we know the world, as it is, cannot give us.
We give thanks afresh for this gift of your peace,
We pray to better honour your call in Jesus
that we be peacemakers.
We pray for the peace of those
In troubled places.
We pray for the raising up of
Peace-makers.
We pray for the work of the United Nations and for all agencies of relief.
This and the many prayers of our hearts for peace
We gather and pray,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen


We have just completed a simple NCCA Staff survey.

An overwhelming message is just how much we all want to deepen and strengthen our unity. In this context, we have gathered our Prayers for Christian Unity, from recent years:


	<p>Life-giving God, through Jesus' death and resurrection you have given us new hope, and the promise of eternal life.</p> <p>As we strive for the full visible unity of your Church, may our hearts and minds be conformed to the likeness of Christ.</p> <p>We renew our commitment to participate gladly in Christ's victory through humble service in the world.</p> <p>By your Spirit's power, may our life in Christ always be open and joyful.</p> <p>May we embrace the gifts we receive from and offer to one another, and fully witness to your plan of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.</p> <p>Amen.</p>  <p><small>National Council of Churches in Australia Faith and Unity Commission www.ncca.org.au</small></p>
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<p>WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 1 - 8 June 2014</p>  <p>Has Christ been divided? <i>(1 Cor 1:1-17)</i></p> <p><small>National Council of Churches in Australia</small></p>	<p>God of wholeness, We recognize, with sorrow, our divisions with each other and with you.</p> <p>As we seek to recover our unity in Christ we recognize the diversity of gifts, talents, understandings and expressions of faith that abound in the life of your churches.</p> <p>May we see this diversity as an encouragement and inspiration as together we witness and minister to the needs of your world.</p> <p>May your Spirit continually guide and lead us as we grow in grace with each other and with you through Jesus Christ our Lord.</p> <p>Amen.</p> <p>Further information and resources: www.churchestogetherinprayer.org.au</p> <p><small>National Council of Churches in Australia Faith and Unity Commission</small></p>
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Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
5-12 June 2011




"One in the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer." (Acts 2:42-47)



Lord Jesus Christ,
you prayed to the Father
that all should be one.
By your gift of the Holy Spirit
you make us one in the apostles'
teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread
and prayer.
May that same Spirit move our hearts
and help us to remain true to this calling
so that the barriers still dividing us
may crumble.
Fill us with your love and bind us
together in that unity which you share
with the Father and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

*In 2011 the call for unity comes to churches
all over the world from
Jerusalem, the mother church.*

Further information and resources:
www.churchestogetherinprayer.org.au



In 2015 the resources are based around "Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'" (John:4:7) To order materials online visit: www.Geii.org/order

Turning 80 with gratitude

In our morning prayers we were reading Acts 1, 24-26 where Matthias was chosen after the disciples prayed, "Lord you know everyone's heart.." As it happens. Last Sunday was at a St. Matthias Church which has a Chinese congregation. One gentleman was turning 80.

He had written a prayer song of gratitude for his new life in Australia. His background story includes the suffering times of the Cultural Revolution.



His poem follows:

Australia Australia Au-Shi_Cui_Lu-Ya
Bright green land
I gave my best to another land,
Yet you welcomed me,
You held our your hand,
You offered sanctuary,
The sea is wide enough for fish to jump,
The sky is high enough for birds to fly,
You have been blessed, And so have I,
You nourished your first sons and daughters,
From the riches of country,
New people over the waters,
Came for your treasures,
Opportunity, The hungry, the frightened, the grieving,
The outcasts, the poor, the survivors of war,
Broken by land they were leaving,
Seeking refuge, seeking more,
The sea is wide enough for fish to jump,
The sky is high enough for birds to fly,
You have been blessed, And so have I,
You have us hope,
A bright green spring, Fresh start, new life,
Australia Australia A reason to sing,
Au-Shi_Cui_Lu_Ya Bright green land.

Today at the NCCA we are meeting with invited leaders of Churches with deep links to the many troubled places of the Middle East. A report on the outcome of this important meeting will follow in coming days. Fr Shenouda Mansour, Alistair Gee and Janet Cousens are helping me to resource and support those who will gather with us.

Grace and Peace in Jesus

+ Philip Huggins
Interim Secretary General

P.S. With great help from the Rev'd Tara Curlewis, we have been updating the NCCA website. It includes the Social Justice Sunday, September 28 resource: "Gambling and its impact on Australia"