



Report from

Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee

Report

The Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee (SERC) has undergone a process of regeneration with some new members and discovered some new opportunities for ecumenical engagement while continuing to nurture existing relationships through Queensland Churches Together and other groups.

About our Committee

The Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee (SERC) assists and advises the Synod Standing Committee in fulfilling its commitment to encourage a culture of ecumenism throughout the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church. It consists of the Moderator and up to ten (10) members appointed by the Synod Standing Committee.

Some tasks are essentially functional, for example processing nominations to other groups including Queensland Churches Together and the Ecumenical Tertiary Chaplaincy Committee and maintaining links with the Assembly and other Synods.

It also has a wider brief to act as a catalyst for the Biblical, theological and practical consideration of ecumenical matters within Synod, its Presbyteries and Congregations.

Focus since the last Synod

Functional activities

The committee has maintained an active interest in our relationships with other churches through Queensland Churches Together, and the involvement of the Moderator in the Heads of Churches Group and Religious Instruction network.

The Committee also interacts with the Synod Interfaith Relations Committee in an annual get together and through our joint involvement with similar committees associated with the Catholic and Anglican Archdioceses.

Ongoing activities

The committee continues to participate in the annual Ecumenical Dinner arranged in cooperation with the Anglican and Roman Catholic Ecumenical Committees and the annual Bishop Michael Putney Memorial Lecture.

Activities as Catalyst

- Working towards a website offering resources and helpful information
- Workshop with presbytery ministers and other key leaders held in October last year
- Conversation with the principal of Trinity College Queensland

Highlights:

Achievements:

- Workshop with key leaders, October 2019.
- Initiated a positive conversation with Trinity College Queensland through its principal, Paul Jones around a paper “Forming the Ecumenical Mind: Being Church in a Polarised World” (Bp Michael Putney Memorial Lecture delivered by Rev Dr Ray Williamson in 2015)
- Regeneration of the committee through addition of new members
- Transition to a new committee secretary
- Participation in online conversations hosted by the Assembly to re-establish links with Ecumenical Relationships Committees in other Synods.

Learnings:

- Religious Education is an important arena for ecumenical co-operation.
- A statewide conversation of church leaders (Heads of Churches) representing Queensland’s regional diversity as well as a wide diversity in theological thinking has resumed this year.
- Reception of ministers from other denominations is an important ecumenical interface.
- The appointment of a new General Secretary for Queensland Churches Together represents a strategic opportunity for renewal.
- The Assembly’s Seeking Common Ground Circle provides information relevant to ecumenical activism but is less successful in overseeing the bilateral and multilateral dialogues which challenge existing assumptions, provoke thoughtfulness, and offer accountability within the universal church.

Project Plenty

Members have participated through the Project Plenty engagement. The committee per se has not engaged but offers relationships with other denominations as a means of supporting mission action groups, progressing relationships with the First Peoples, and the discipleship priority.

Challenges/risks as we progress

1. To retain and renew the *Basis of Union* vision to be a Uniting Church at mission in a polarised world.
2. To rediscover the missional basis of the ecumenical vision in a church as a foundation for continuing to wrestle with a diversity of doctrinal understandings which impede that mission.
3. To renew the traditional ecumenical structures and develop new expressions of ecumenical engagement.

For consideration

The Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee recognises the valuable contribution of Rev David Baker as our Chairperson during his term as Moderator. We affirm the decision of Queensland Churches Together to appoint David as its General Secretary commencing January 2020 and look forward to a renewed association with him in that new role.

Rev. Dr Clive Ayre concludes his term of service to the Ecumenical Relationships Committee at the end of this year. Clive has been steadfast in his commitment to the ecumenical vision and a very loyal contributor to the Committee. The achievements of the committee are in no small way attributable to his insightfulness and diligence.

Proposals to the 35th Synod

It is proposed that the 35th Synod receive this report.

Contact for report questions

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