

SYNOD INTER-FAITH RELATIONSHIPS COMMITTEE

Context:

The Synod Interfaith Relationships Committee has been tasked with encouraging throughout the Synod an understanding of other religious faiths and promoting relationships with members of other religious faiths. The Committee meets six times per year. Current membership of the Committee: Rev Kaye Ronalds (chairperson), Rev Heather Griffin (secretary), Mr John Agnew, Rev Dr Clive Ayre, Mr Neil Ballment, Revs Mark Cornford, Ann Hewson, Garth Read, Ray Richmond, Don Whebell, David Won Kim. In addition to our connection with the Assembly Relations with other Faiths Working Group, we have within the membership of the Committee, people involved in a variety of interfaith areas and local initiatives. The Committee acts to raise awareness, and to respond to issues of an interfaith nature, as well as growing our own and the wider Queensland church’s understanding of and interaction with people of other faiths.

Responses to our Vision since last Synod	Working towards our Vision in the future
<p><i>Forming active and accountable disciples of Jesus</i></p> <p><i>Confident in sharing faith</i></p>	
<p><i>Interacting with other areas of the Synod</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presbytery Minister’s Meeting: Information is exchanged and awareness raised at annual meetings with presbytery ministers. The WCC, Vatican and WEA paper “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct” was highly recommended for study. • There is awareness building and interaction with the work being done by Dr Aaron Gilhoni of Trinity Theological College. The College offers courses on religious pluralism which provide opportunity for visiting worship sites and meeting members of other faiths. • There has been some work (more needs to occur) in interacting with Uniting Church chaplains working in a variety of interfaith and multicultural contexts. Committee member Rev Mark Cornford works as a chaplain at the University of Queensland and Rev David Won Kim advises on multicultural aspects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the information exchange currently happening so that members of the Uniting Church may be further equipped to share the principles of our own faith and to understand the faith of others • Develop relationships with, and promote the stories of Uniting Church chaplains working in multifaith settings

<p><i>SIRC Website</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our website (www.interfaith.ucaweb.com.au/) has had a major overhaul. Through it we provide a variety of useful links regarding upcoming events, recommended resources, recent happenings, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop the website
<p><i>Assembly Relations with Other Faiths Working Group</i> (Synod representative Rev Heather Griffin)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee discussed with interest the Paper Friendship in the Presence of Difference which was presented at the 2012 Assembly, and looks forward to the release of study guides for this paper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage Uniting Church members to engage in study around the issues of friendship and difference
<p><i>Engaged in Authentic community relationships</i> <i>Reaching out and speaking out for justice and peace</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Moderator (our chairperson) attends a number of community events which have a multi-faith dimension e.g. Refugee and Migrant Week Multi Faith Prayer Service, Refugee and Asylum Seeker Discussion, Australia Day Celebration of Faiths, Royal Commonwealth Day Observance • The Moderator wrote to members of the Muslim community in Queensland after the riots in Sydney. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to participate in community events which provide opportunity for meeting and developing friendships with leaders of other faith traditions
<p><i>Assembly Relations with Other Faiths Working Group</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at the invitation of the President, several members of the Committee attended a gathering of Uniting Church Ministers and Imams at the Auburn Mosque, Sydney 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the work of the Assembly in the interfaith area

<p><i>Queensland Churches Together</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland Churches Environmental Network. Committee: member Rev Dr Clive Ayre has been instrumental in the formation of this group which includes within its mandate an interfaith approach to environmental issues • Forum for Christians, Jews and Muslims Rev Heather Griffin is a member of this group which meets monthly at the Multifaith Centre at Griffith University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for opportunities and projects in which people of different faiths can work side by side to address significant community issues
<p><i>Other Interfaith Initiatives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee member Rev Garth Reed has devoted a great deal of time and energy to furthering the interfaith movement in Queensland and beyond. He is a member of the Aspley Uniting Church and Coordinator of The North Brisbane Interfaith Group which has recently launched an excellent interfaith website (www.interfaithinaction.org.au) • Several members have, through the gracious initiatives of the Multifaith Multicultural Centre, Toowoomba (Pureland Buddhist), attended multifaith conferences in Bangkok and in Toowoomba which have had a strong focus on peace and harmony. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and promote local interfaith initiatives • Seek to develop an ongoing relationship with the interfaith scene in Toowoomba and elsewhere in the State
<p>Key achievements/initiatives: The work of SIRC since last Synod has principally been to listen to stories, to disseminate information, promote the interfaith work of the Uniting Church and QCT and to support initiatives, gatherings and groups of other organisations in which various of our members are involved.</p>	
<p>Challenges/risks as we progress: The scope is broad and the time available for the Committee to pursue options for developing relations with Queensland people of other faiths is limited. We don't want to duplicate what others are currently doing. We need to continue to discern what we can realistically do well, to be of most benefit to ordinary members of the Uniting Church in Queensland.</p>	

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