

Report for 31st Queensland Synod October 2014



Report from **Synod Interfaith 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.

Current membership of the committee: Rev Kaye Ronalds (chairperson), Rev Heather Griffin (secretary), John Agnew, Neil Ballment, and Revs Ann Hewson, Garth Read and Sue Pickering.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Enabling a demonstrated commitment to the shared Call and Vision

One valuable aspect of interfaith work in the life of disciples of Christ is that as we listen to people of other faiths, aspects of our own faith come into sharper focus. We are challenged to consider the question "What do I, as a Christian and a member of the Uniting Church in Australia, believe about this particular issue and why?"

Since the 30th Synod, members of the committee have sought to grow in their understanding of their own faith as well as to share with others through attendance/participation in such events/organisations as:

Uniting Church Assembly Relations with Other Faiths Working Group
Mission in World Religions Symposium and public forum at the Griffith University Multi-Faith Centre in February 2014 (book edited by Dr Aaron Gilhoni of Trinity College to be released this year)
North Brisbane Interfaith Group
Queensland Forum for Christians, Jews and Muslims
Griffith University Multi-faith Centre (now the Centre for Interfaith & Cultural Dialogue) events
Indooroopilly Uniting Church Adult Education Committee.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

The committee has limited resources to do the work it would like to do in the future. This includes, as an important priority, encouraging and enabling Uniting Church members to be confident and respectful in sharing their faith with those of other faith traditions and in return, listening to people of other faiths as they share the insights of their own traditions.

We are seeking in the next 18 months to focus on one or two events which will enable opportunities for Uniting Church members to interact further with people of other faiths.

We are looking to promote courses run by Trinity College Queensland which focus on further understanding the perspectives of those of other faiths.

We are open to requests from individual congregations or agencies for speakers on interfaith topics.

Our website needs further attention to continue to provide relevant resources for current issues.

Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

Engaging in opportunities for intentional, open community connections and partnerships

Many of the events mentioned above, in addition to increasing our own understanding, have provided good opportunities for interacting and networking with people of other faiths.

In addition to our connection with the Multi-faith Multicultural Centre at Toowoomba, we have within the membership of the committee people involved in a variety of interfaith areas and local initiatives.

One member, Heather Griffin, was asked to speak at the Griffith University Centre for Interfaith & Cultural Dialogue on a multi-faith panel on our religion's understanding of marriage. We have been invited to speak about our faith to Year 12 students within their Studies of Religion course.

Garth Read, in his work with the North Brisbane Interfaith group, has organised a number of events including a Jewish, Christian, Muslim Relations and the Global Interfaith Movement, an Interfaith Sikh Langer (in association with the Mission in World Religions Symposium) and speakers from Interfaith Scotland (in association with Believing Women for a Culture of Peace).

Heather Griffin is a member of the Queensland Forum for Christians, Jews and Muslims and in that capacity is involved in such things as the QFCJM stall at Eidfest at the Rocklea showgrounds, and the *One G_D Many Voices* concert (David MacGregor is one of two Christian acts this year).

The committee is gradually developing a wider network of contacts and relationships with other groups within the wider community.

Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

We would like to further the relationship we have with the people of the Multi-faith, Multicultural Centre of Toowoomba. We would also like to continue to increase our interaction with people of other faiths in areas throughout Queensland and to hear stories of local congregation and agency members who are doing this.

Key achievements/initiatives

Since the 30th Synod the committee has met on three occasions. In December, a brainstorming session was held with the Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee on the roles and future of the committees. That meeting decided, among other things, that we should have one or two projects to work towards. In April the committee exchanged information and shared in a profitable discussion with the Goodwill Committee of Toowoomba, a group containing people from a variety of faith and community perspectives. In August the committee was privileged to offer, in association with the Pureland Learning College of Toowoomba, a workshop led by noted scholar and field worker Dr Joseph Paul Ozawa entitled *Managing a multi-faith response to disasters*.

Challenges/risks as we progress:

We need to be very intentional in what we do, given that our people and time resources are limited. We are intent on conveying to people that the work we do is a reflection of our commitment to Christ and his love for all people. If anything, our work has strengthened us in our love for Christ and his ways. We are determined that our work lead to further understanding and hospitality.

Issues to be addressed:

Further reflection and discussion need to take place on the way in which interfaith work is organised within the life of the Synod.

Contact for Report questions:

Name: Heather Griffin

email: hgriffin@internode.on.net phone: 0438 795 304