



Report from

Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee

The Ecumenical Context

The Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee (SERC) is called to assist the Queensland Synod in responding to an important dimension of the *Basis of Union*:

The Uniting Church in Australia lives and works within the faith and unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The Uniting Church recognises that it is related to other Churches in ways which give expression, however partially, to that unity in faith and mission.

In the changing context of the present time, that is not always easy to express in reality. One dimension of that is the fact that the current General Secretary of Queensland Churches Together (QCT) the Rev Canon Richard Tutin will retire next year, and the position description is being reviewed. This therefore becomes a “kairos moment” for the church.

Membership

The membership currently consists of Rev David Baker (Moderator, ex officio), John Agnew, Rev Dr Clive Ayre, Rev Nathan Barton, Levon Kardashian, Rev Russell Morris and Fiona Patterson. Since the last Synod, a number of active members of SERC have had to withdraw due to changes in their situation: Pastor David Busch, Rev Sunil Kadaparambil, Neil Ballment and Pastor Richard Lance. Consequently, SERC does not currently have a full complement of members.

Functional activity

Part of SERC’s role is essentially functional in nature, and involves processing nominations for groups such as QCT and its committees. It also includes maintaining relationships with other Synods, the Assembly and other branches of the Christian church. Reports are given and received on a regular basis.

On-going programs

Some of the significant programs in which SERC participates are on-going from year to year, such as the annual Ecumenical Dinner arranged in cooperation with the Anglican and Roman Catholic Committees or the annual Bishop Michael Putney Memorial Lecture.

Key achievements and initiatives

Several initiatives were quite significant:

1. An ecumenical youth summit which enabled a new generation to engage with the issues at hand. By all accounts this was a very successful event, as reflected in the report that was issued. It also became the basis of some interesting discussion at the annual Ecumenical Dinner hosted by the Uniting Church in 2018.
2. A retreat early in 2018, while somewhat disappointing in attendance terms, was nevertheless an important spiritual opportunity for the group.

Challenges/risks as we progress

A number of challenges can be identified quite readily:

1. The danger of settling down to a relatively comfortable status quo and thereby losing the vision of the *Basis of Union*.

2. The difficulty of engaging younger generations in the ecumenical vision.
3. The re-structuring of the Assembly and the loss of the Christian Unity Working Group has made aspects of our work much harder, and communication nationally has decreased.

Issues to be addressed

There are various ways in which the key issues may be expressed, but in essence they would include:

1. The need to wrestle with the current and future direction of the ecumenical vision. What are the ecumenical questions we should be asking?
2. The exploration of the relationship between traditional ecumenical structures and new expressions of ecumenical engagement via mission.
3. The relationship between ecumenism and mission more broadly.
4. The way in which we can build on precious initiatives such as the “One in Christ” vision, the use of the book *Intercession* and the “Prayer wall” concept.
5. The way in which we can support prayerful and practical ecumenism across the life of the church.

Proposal

It is proposed that the 34th Synod receive this report.

Contact for report questions

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