



Sharing



NEWSLETTER OF THE NSW ECUMENICAL COUNCIL INCORPORATED

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From the Editor's Desk

I find myself in this very unexpected role. It is fifteen years since I last arranged an edition of Sharing. I am helping the Council to continue to function while the General Secretary, Fr Shenouda Mansour, recovers from Covid. We have been very concerned about him, as he has been on sick leave for five months, during which time he has been very ill. Thankfully, he now is much better and continues to recover, though slowly. We hope he will be sufficiently well to return to this desk in the new year.

After being away from the Council for over eleven years, it was a privilege to be invited to be the President and to serve in that role for a three-year term. Now, it is a pleasure – though unexpected – to assist for a further few months, working with the new President, the Reverend Myung Hwa Park, who is the former Moderator of the Uniting Church NSW/ACT Synod. We were able to welcome her as President at the AGM three months ago.

In the pages that follow, you will find many examples of ecumenical engagement – events and projects that have happened and are happening, and others which are being planned for the coming year. I commend them to you for your interest in and support for the ecumenical endeavour through this Council.

It has been said that ecumenism is nothing less than a way of looking at the world that refuses to accept things as they are. Ecumenism is a way of living that dares to think globally and to live trustfully with differences in community, not because of polite tolerance, but on the basis of our common commitment to, and experience of, the creating, redeeming and sustaining God. Ecumenism is a way of seeking truth that recognises that truth is seldom discovered in isolation, but rather through relationships and dialogue in diverse community, where there is risk and vulnerability, but without which the joyous and transforming new life will not come to be.

The basic ecumenical impulse – the impulse behind the ecumenical movement (at its best) – is a call to compassionate living. The essence of compassion is the ability to empathise, to see the world as another person or another community sees it, to feel the hurts and anxieties and joys of another as if they were your own.

I hope you can see in these pages some signs of ecumenism as understood in these ways.

I hope that you also can see in these pages something of the promise that is the message of Advent. Advent is a time of expectation, anticipation, looking forward; it is a time of promise. Advent reminds us that, over against our greed and self-interest, our neglect of the vulnerable, our conflicts and divisions, our destruction of the earth and its eco-systems, promise is fulfilled by the miracle of saying 'yes' to God. Advent brings us the story of Mary's 'yes', her being open to God's surprising grace, because she knew the reality of God's Spirit present in her life and in her world. Mary's 'yes' opened the door to unimaginable things for herself and the world. Mary's story, which we hear in Advent, reminds us that, through the presence of God's Spirit, there is promise and hope, that God presents us with possibilities for new birth and, like Mary, we are invited to carry these possibilities to full-term and to nurture them in challenging times, in our troubled world, in our own lives and in our church.

RAY WILLIAMSON



*"Long time ago in Bethlehem, so the Holy Bible said,
Mary's boy child, Jesus Christ, was born on Christmas day.
Hark, now hear the angels sing, a king was born today,
And man will live forever because of Christmas day."
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8amHW-xdbzE>*



A much-loved Christmas song by the 70's popular pop group Boney M said almost everything important about Christmas in just a few lines!

A fragile child born in a stable in Royal David's City was the Messiah, a long-awaited king. The birth of Mary's child wasn't in a flash palace fit for a prince but in a smelly, lowly place where animals were kept on a cold winter's night. A select few, the angels from heaven, the shepherds from the fringe of the society and the wise men from the foreign land came to sing glory to God, to worship the child and offer gifts, but for the rest of the world went by with them unaware of the birth of a king through whom humankind will live forever.

Since early 2020, almost the entire human population on Earth have been under severe attack by the Covid pandemic. This silent, invisible virus has taken more than 5 million lives worldwide. And sadly, the pandemic is not yet ended while the world continues its ongoing battle with global warming, which not only threatens human lives and but also destroys the environment, which is the homes for birds, wild animals, fish and all other living creatures, sisters and brothers of humanity.

Mary's child laid in a manger is the gift of God for the world to be the light in the darkness. God, who chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, chose what is weak to shame the strong, chose what is low and despised in the world to nullify the things that are esteemed (1 Corinthians 1: 27-28), chose to bring hope for the world in this fragile baby.

Mary's child, born on Christmas day, proclaimed the reign of God, preached that peace and justice are the two guiding principles for God's kingdom where love is the currency for eternal life.

In an ever conflicted and divided world, the birth of Jesus long time ago in Bethlehem once again reminds us of the fulfilment of God's promise, so we say;

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!"

**THE REVEREND MYUNG HWA PARK
President, NSW Ecumenical Council**



THE RIGHT REVEREND DR MARK SHORT

Bishop, Anglican Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn

The events of the past 18 months have reminded us of the importance of physical presence in sustaining and strengthening relationships. Online and distant relationships are at best a substitute for the connection that happens when we meet face to face.

The incarnation of the Word assures us that this intuition is no accident. At Christmas God encounters us face to face that we might have power to become children of God. At a time when our world desperately needs connections that transcend all that threatens to divide us this good news is our hope and our inspiration.



THE RIGHT REVEREND DONALD KIRK

Bishop, Anglican Diocese of Riverina

I was walking down the main street of Griffith where I live the other day noticing the way in which all the businesses were seeking to make the most out of Christmas. As I did so, I heard the Christmas Carols and songs that were being piped up and down the street as the City Council's contribution to the festive season.

There was one song that struck me which I had not heard in a long time. It was Freddie Mercury singing his Christmas song. As part of the lyrics, we heard him sing:

**"Thank God it's Christmas
Can it be Christmas?
Let it be Christmas
Every day"**

We all know that Christmas is celebrated once a year, but what is it that we celebrate at Christmas? God's love for humanity is supremely revealed in the birth of a child to an ordinary human mother who had shown great faith and trust in God when she said yes to the Angel Gabriel. The Blessed Virgin Mary bore Jesus, the Son of God, into the world. He was God Incarnate, 'God-with-us', who had come to redeem humanity.

While we may celebrate this event once a year the truth is that through Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection, God is with us every day. Freddie was on to something! God's loving presence is with us always; Jesus' presence through the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us strengthens and guides our lives always and not just one day a year. Celebrating Christmas is celebrating that truth.

May you have a happy and blessed celebration this Christmastide!



HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN BASILIOS KODSEIE

Antiochian Orthodox Church

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, ‘God with us’”. (Matthew 1: 23)

The Nativity of Christ in the flesh – Christmas is the new start towards Divinity after ignoring His command through sin. The Creator of the universe came to dwell among us. He came to be united with human race, to share our pain and struggles, in order to lift us up into a new reality.

Jesus Christ did not come as an angel or as a prophet who simply spoke the word of God. God become one of us, “and dwelt among us”. (John 1: 14). He incarnated, He came to our world with a real birth from the Ever-Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit in order to remain eternally with us and like us humans in every way except a sin. Jesus Christ became an integral and eternal part of our human family. His presence is not related to just His time, but His presence is eternal. He is truly with us and among us. And we believe in His words, when He says: “I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.” (Matthew 28: 20). And it is good to know that Christ is not with us only during our hours of prayer, peace and happiness, but even more so in our turbulent days of doubt and weakness, in our hours of fear and uncertainty. The awareness of our Lord Jesus Christ’s presence should strengthen and inspire us at all times, especially during these days of pandemic, during these days of instability and unrest. But always remember what the Angels told the Shepherds the day of the Nativity of Christ: “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2: 10-11)

The message of Christmas is this: in the midst of pain there is good news, in the midst of suffering there is joy and in the midst of disunity Jesus Christ has a message for all people. But nowadays Christmas for some is a time of family, friends and blessing. Yet for others, Christmas is tainted by the sadness of loss, financial hardship and disappointed dreams. This year we are approaching the Holy Season with an obvious heaviness in our hearts. Stay in the hope, approach Him with trust, and you will feel His presence and His peace shadowing our hearts and lives. And during these blessed days, we cannot forget our Frontline Workers who gave themselves, day and night, to keep us safe during this pandemic. We pray to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Immanuel, to grant them and all of you His heavenly blessings, and to protect the whole world and our beautiful country Australia.

Wishing you a Holy Nativity Feast and a New Year 2022, full of the grace of God, peace, seasonable weather and prosperity.



HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP HAIGAZOUN NAJARIAN

Primate, Armenian Apostolic Church

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill among men”

Once again, it’s the Christmas season, a time for renewal and a time for hope.

In the past year our faith and stamina were tested to the limit. The whole world order was shaken to its foundation. In the four corners of the world there were many earthquakes, fires, floods, wars, and famines. On top of all these we had to cope with Covid-19; there were tens of millions who suffered agony and pain, more than five million perished; because of isolation people still face psychological distress and economic hardship. It will take a while until the world might return to its usual way of life. One wonders if it will ever be the same.

As Christians we were barred from communal worship. Baptisms, weddings, requiem services were postponed throughout the year. It was not possible even to give communion to our believers.

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:8-9).

As Christians we cannot give up hope, we do not accept defeat, we fight the evil whatever form it takes because we do not trust in ourselves, but in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those of us, clergy and laity, who are entrusted with the church, we did our best to reach out to our faithful, people who had technological skills extended their help. New situations require new solutions. We shared the Divine Liturgy and the Sermon by live streaming and our Bible studies and talks on Zoom. We encouraged our faithful to be steadfast in their faith through personal conversations on the phone. We tried to communicate to everyone that even in our seclusion we were not alone, as a community of believers we are together as one family having Jesus, the true shepherd as our eternal leader.

May the light emanating from the manger in Bethlehem through the new-born Jesus renew our faith, fill us with hope and His eternal peace and love dwell in our hearts making us true children of light.

With Blessings to all.



THE REVEREND SUJIT DAVID

Church of South India

The first Christmas reminds us of the Holy family in Bethlehem, looking for a place to have their baby. They found no room, no room for the Christ child to be born. The blessed family found the comfort of a manger to have their baby boy. Joseph and Mary travelled to Bethlehem upon the decree of Caesar Augustus that a census be taken in the land. Bethlehem was Joseph's ancestral home; it is surprising to note that he cannot find room in his own hometown. Joseph for sure would have known people in Bethlehem who would have understood his predicament and offered some room. Why was Joseph looking for an inn when he could have looked for a relative or friend who could have given him a room? Is there something beyond the rush of the census that explains why Joseph and Mary found no room?

Mary was carrying the social stigma of being a pregnant virgin, Joseph, a man who still wants to keep Mary knowing that she is pregnant before marriage. In the eyes of the society, Joseph and Mary did not conform to the norms and ideals of the people. What a tragedy!!! How wrongly did the community judge Joseph and Mary!!! They failed to see the purpose of God unfolding through these simple and ordinary people? When human minds stood judging the unfolding of God's salvation for humankind, it was the rest of creation that stood around witnessing the great act of God's love for all people and the whole creation.

It is interesting to note that it was the powerful who were threatened by the birth of Jesus. Herod could not accept the news that the king of the Jews was born. Yet another wrong judgement!!! The people rejected Joseph and Mary; and the powerful king resorted to destroying baby Jesus. In his insecurity he decreed that all male babies be killed. He cared less about the women who had given birth to their precious sons. Indifference and insecurity at its peak!!!

What does the Christmas story remind us today? What does it say to a society that is materialistic, self-centred and unwilling to move out of its comfort zones. It could well be possible that we stand with placards saying, "No Room" or "Get Rid", showing that we have 'no room' for the weak, for those that are different from us, for those who fail to live up to our expectations. And 'get rid' of those that make us uncomfortable, those that threaten to be more powerful than us?

Christmas is the story of the manger, a place where all of creation congregates, where there is no class and caste, where the human and the divine are in sync. May our heart, our homes, our churches and our society be the manger that unites to discover God's gracious acts of love and grace.



MALAK AND HER FAMILY FLED THE VIOLENCE OF WAR IN SYRIA TO FIND SAFETY IN JORDAN. YOUR GIFTS FOR PEACE ARE HELPING HER FAMILY, AND FAMILIES JUST LIKE HERS, BUILD A NEW LIFE. IMAGE: JOEL PRATLEY/ACT FOR PEACE.

Give to the Christmas Bowl this year

Since 1949, compassionate Christians like you have followed Rev Frank Byatt's legacy, coming together each Christmas across Australia and the world to provide safety in exile for people forced from their homes by conflict and disaster. Your gift through the Christmas Bowl will support local partners to meet urgent needs and help create a world where uprooted people have a safe place to belong.

Share food, shelter and lifegiving support with a refugee in Ethiopia

Help provide urgently needed food, shelter and health supplies for displaced families in Afghanistan

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Act for Peace - International Aid | Confronting Injustice Together
<https://www.actforpeace.org.au/>

Or telephone: **Free Call 1800 025 101**

Act for Peace is the International Aid Agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia
Confronting Injustice



THE MOST REVEREND MICHAEL MCKENNA

Roman Catholic Bishop of Bathurst

May the celebration of Christmas this year bring you the gifts of healing and hope that we all need.

The harmful force of the pandemic that we have been living with for almost two years has affected everyone. Some of us have suffered physically; all of us have suffered mentally and socially. We need healing in our minds and in our relationships. We need to find the ways of patience and kindness with one another.

How can we hope to do that? The light shone to send the shepherds to Bethlehem and led the wise men to the same place and the same child. This child is Emmanuel, God among us, entering our broken world to heal us and make us whole.

This child started his earthly life as a refugee. In this year's Christmas Story art exhibition for senior primary students, I was struck by William Horton's painting of the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt. It brought back poignant memories of recent pictures from Afghanistan, with desperate people clinging to the wings of planes taxiing away without them.

Jesus is present in the eighty million people displaced from their homes in our world today. He is present in your family member, workmate or friend who is suffering. He is most present to you in your times of trouble.

May finding him, who can heal all our woe, be your best gift this Christmas; and may the compassion he will share with you be your best gift to others.



DIOCESE of
PARRAMATTA

THE MOST REVEREND VINCENT LONG

Roman Catholic Bishop of Parramatta

Peace and Joy to you all, as we celebrate the birth of our Saviour, Jesus of Nazareth.

After nearly two years of the pandemic and months of hard lockdown, we rejoice as the country slowly recovers and we regain our freedoms thanks to the great work of getting people vaccinated.

During this special season of thanking God for becoming one of us, let's reflect on how the God of love makes himself known to us in our daily lives.

Christmas is God coming to us in human form and showing us that we are loved inherently, abundantly and eternally. As a Franciscan, I believe that the incarnation was not an accident of history. It was not plan B because we messed up plan A.

Jesus is the fullness of God's revelation of love for us and for all of creation. This means that no matter who we are: male or female, black or white, straight or gay, rich or poor, high or low, citizen or refugee etc... God's love embraces us and reverences us all.

The incarnation also means that God has embraced the world and the cosmos. Jesus is not only God's yes to humans but God's yes to all forms of life.

We need a radical new way of relating and living that facilitates the diversity, harmony and sustainability of all of life. We humans are part of the interconnected cosmic web of creation and we need to live a new paradigm of communion with all that is.

Long ago, Francis of Assisi grasped this fundamental reality. He intuitively understood the importance of living not as a self-centred individual but as part of the larger whole. He championed the art of living in deep harmony and communion.

Inspired by his namesake, Pope Francis says the awareness of God incarnate in the world that can "motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world" and an "ecological conversion". We must learn that 'less is more'.

We must learn to envision a new economy that shifts away from consumption and exploitation to one that celebrates radical interdependence and reciprocity within diverse webs of life. Only by taking less from the earth can we move to an alternative model of living in radical harmony and deep connection with the planet.

The pandemic has highlighted how vulnerable and interconnected everyone is. If we do not take care of one another, starting with the least, with those who are most impacted, including creation, we cannot heal the world. Let us follow the footsteps of Jesus as we listen and respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

I wish you my blessings and prayers for a Christmas season filled with peace, joy and hope.



MIRIAM GLUYAS (LT COL)

The Salvation Army Australia Territory

What a year it has been! COVID has certainly impacted our lives, in so many ways, sometimes good and sometimes not so good. Who would have thought?! Unexpected indeed!

We are blessed to live in this nation. Some of my friends in PNG have passed away, and it seems that most people know someone in a developing nation who has passed away from COVID. We need to pray for our world.

If I was to think of what has been good throughout the year, it wouldn't be hard for me to name those things....

- Learning new, good, rhythms of life
- Enjoying unrushed time with God each day
- Walking and noticing the beauty of this world each day
- Not rushing to the office and around the state constantly (even though I love being with people)
- Enjoying Sabbath rest
- New, creative ways to be the church
- Sending parcels and letters to family and friends
- Blessing those who have needed it
- Getting to know my neighbours and their story

And, there have been those things that have not been so good....

- My beautiful mum passing away, and not being able to be there to say goodbye, or with my family, or at her funeral. (Perhaps some of you have also experienced loss)
- Missing time with family and friends.
- Not being able to travel

Who would have thought?! Unexpected indeed!

It's often in the unexpected that God does some magnificent work! Moses at the Red Sea, Elijah at the cave where God comes to him in an unexpected way and whispers to him, Daniel in a lion's Den, Noah on an ark, the disciples in an upper room, and so many more stories that fill the Bible.

Who would have thought?! Unexpected indeed!

And, then this unexpected, amazing story of the birth of Jesus.

- Mary hears from an angel. She's going to have a baby
- Mary and Joseph are not married (what?)
- They head off on a donkey for the census
- Jesus is born in a trough in a stable
- A lot of unexpected people appear
- He is "God with skin on his face"
- He comes to show us how to live like Him and for Him
- He becomes the Saviour of the world

Who would have thought?! Unexpected indeed!

Interesting, isn't it, that often in the unexpected, God appears. God with us, God in us, God for us!

I encourage you to see this Christmas in that way. In the midst of a year where we might think.... Who would have thought?! Unexpected indeed! He is still with us, in us, for us!

"Emmanuel" – God is with us. In the midst of COVID, in the midst of losing someone, in the midst of loneliness and isolation, in the midst of whatever I am going through. He is still with us. And, how we thank Him because He is.

Who would have thought?! Unexpected indeed!

An Advent Resource



This year the 'Christmas Alert' from Kairos Palestine includes Human Stories from Palestinians in all areas of Palestine: the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, the 1948 occupied Palestinian cities and the Diaspora. Each story gives a glimpse of Palestinians' life inside and outside Palestine and highlights the unity in struggle, resistance and hope among Palestinians.



Kairos Palestine is a Christian Palestinian movement, born out of the Kairos Document, which advocates for ending the Israeli occupation and achieving a just solution to the conflict.

The Kairos Document is the word of Christian Palestinians to the world about what is happening in Palestine.

To download this brilliant resource, go to <https://www.kairospalestine.ps/images/kairos-palestine-christmas-alert-2021.pdf>

Read Cry for Hope on cryforhope.org

Christmas Gift ideas

With Christmas just around the corner, why not purchase products from Palestine. The Palestinian Fair Trade Australia have a new selection of gift boxes and hampers available and the Palestine Centre for Peace likewise have an excellent range of products sourced from Palestine. This is a great, subtle way to raise awareness about Palestine, plus support the local producers and Australian advocacy networks.

Sponsor an Olive Tree

The Joint Advocacy Initiative's Olive Tree Campaign distributes olive saplings to Palestinian farmers, which are sponsored by individuals throughout the world. This gift in kind is another great way to show solidarity to Palestinians, who this year have not only continued to suffer under occupation but have had their economies and livelihood greatly impacted by COVID-19 and a lack of tourists to the Holy Land. To find out more about the campaign click here.



The Climate Crisis

Recently, the NSW Ecumenical Council had a meeting for Church Leaders, at which there was a panel presentation and discussion on 'climate change in a post-Glasgow world'. The panellists were Mr Jamie Isbister, Australia's Ambassador for the Environment, Ms Jessica Morthorpe, Founder of Five Leaf Eco Awards, and Dr Philip Kariatlis, Academic Director, St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College. From the panellists, we were challenged "not to give up hope". At Glasgow, the "needle moved", and the move was due to everybody's efforts, including the faith leaders who were there. We all need to continue to work for change, and the churches have an important role as bridge-builders, enabling people to listen to one another, to gain a deeper understanding of fears, anger and polarization, to bring people together towards a better future.

We heard a splendid presentation on the theology of the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, that undergirds his deep concern for the environment. It is a theology that challenges us to look beyond ourselves, that draws us into a broader view of reality so as to see the whole creation imbued with the presence of God, to see all creation as a sign of God, to have a eucharistic disposition whereby we see the world as a sacrament of thanksgiving, an icon through which we see the mystery of the divine. From the panellists, we also heard a call for the Church to be the prophetic voice helping society to learn again what it means to live in harmony with the earth and with the Creator. If that voice was spoken by the churches together, ecumenically, it would be an authentic sign of the alternative so urgently needed. We heard, too, of many local churches around Australia promoting practical actions for reducing their carbon footprint and caring more responsibly for the environment.

Eco Church Building



If your local church is not already doing so, begin to take some practical action.

The first step is to Conduct an Energy Audit

However, at this stage, it does not need to be a professional energy audit, just a simple survey by a member of your church.

The second step is to Take three actions to reduce your resource use.

For example: (i) Change to more efficient lights (CFL's, LEDs); (ii) Install timers on hot water units; (iii) Seal up drafts to keep heat in; (iv) Switch to GreenPower; (v) Install a water tank; (vi) Switch to 100% post-consumer recycled paper

For further information and advice, contact: fiveleafecoawards@gmail.com

The Five Leaf Eco-Awards are an Australian ecumenical environmental change program specifically designed for churches and religious organisations. Using a series of non-competitive awards the program assists, inspires and rewards faith communities for taking environmental action and becoming more sustainable in response to God's call to care for creation.

“What Does It Mean to Be Ecumenical?”

A Conference organised by the NSWEC’s Theological Reflection Commission



It has become customary for the Theological Reflection Commission (TRC) to mount a conference each year on a topic of current interest. And while this was considered for 2020, as we worked around the pandemic the main activity for that year was the production of the volume *A Celebration of Ut unum sint: The 25th Anniversary*. Co-edited by the signatories of this article, as the TRC convenors, the volume was finalised in time for its formal launch at the Heads of Churches meeting on 2 December 2020, held at the Armenian Apostolic Church of Holy Resurrection in Chatswood. It was published by the NSWEC as an ebook, where it continues to be available on its website. As a consequence, in 2021 the TRC has largely focused on following up matters arising from the book. The idea of capitalising on this impetus by way of this year’s TRC conference came naturally.

The conference “What Does It Mean to Be Ecumenical?” was held online via Zoom, on Saturday, 9 October 2021.

It began with Dr Timothy O’Hearn’s (TRC) welcome and acknowledgment of country, followed by the opening prayer offered by Major Clayton Spence (TRC) and the introductory remarks of Rev. Dr Raymond Williamson OAM (Past-President NSWEC) briefly outlining the history of the ecumenical movement.

The conference consisted of two panel sessions moderated by the TRC convenors, Professor Emerita Diane Speed and the Rev. Assoc. Professor Doru Costache, respectively. The first panel offered reflections on the volume *A Celebration of Ut unum sint*:

The 25th Anniversary. Speakers on this panel were Rev. Myung Hwa Park (President NSWEC), Fr Claude Mostowik msc (NSWEC), and Mr Doug Hewitt AM (NSWEC). The second panel debated the challenge of increasing polarisation in our society and the potential role of the ecumenical movement in addressing this.

Speakers to this panel were Rev. Dr Josephine Inkpin (Pitt St Uniting Church), Rev. Dr Michael Jensen (St Mark’s Anglican Church Darling Point), and Ms Brooke Prentis (Common Grace).

More than thirty enthusiasts for Christian unity attended, with the conversation and the debates going far beyond the two recorded sessions (available at https://youtu.be/_Ps9AgGtwRk), through the very active chatroom. The convenors and the TRC team are grateful for the lively response of the audience. The conference was concluded by a word from Diane Speed and the final prayer offered by Rev. Paul Weaver (TRC).

The six conference panelists gave such interesting presentations that the TRC agreed to invite them to provide a written version for inclusion in a revised version of *A Celebration of Ut unum sint*, to be released in 2022. There is also a possibility that a few others who were not able to contribute to the book in 2020 might like to do so this time, and some of the contributors may perhaps want to revisit their original offerings. This will all be discussed early next year. Until then, the TRC’s convenors and members hope that the 2021 conference will generate a renewed conversation about Christian unity at the grassroots.

DORU COSTACHE & DIANE SPEED



Safe Homes Safe Families Forum



The NSW Ecumenical Council's Domestic Violence Project (the Project) has been providing resources to empower and equip religious leaders on domestic and family violence in the community.

With the restrictions and lockdowns in place, the project was tailored to host online forums, inviting religious leaders from across the state to attend and meet with professionals from various fields.

One of the Project's aims was to reach out to religious leaders in particular Local Government Areas (LGAs), where family violence reporting is prevalent. Blacktown, Parramatta and Canterbury-Bankstown were among the first few LGAs where we invited the majority of the attendees.

Our most recent online forum, with the theme 'Safe Homes Safe Families', which coincided with the 16 Days of Activism was held online with guest presentations from Victims Services NSW, NSW Police Force, Jesuit Refugee Service and the Domestic Violence Pilot Program. Our program commenced with remembering and praying for the lives of innocent victims lost in family violence cases, with 43 women and 16 children in Australia in family violence incidents as of October 2021.

A focus of the forum was the key to recognising the important of healthy relationships and what the bible teaches

us, as well as understanding the impact of family violence on women and children, abuse to the elderly and what support services are available for male perpetrators. We launched the Declaration of Unity and invited participants to become signatory to this great cause and stand united against domestic and family violence.

With a great number of registrations of 55, we delivered a 2-hour session and received a lot of positive feedback from the attendees. Which requested future sessions to continue.

We have also been able to develop contact with various religious leaders across the state, who have requested to attend future sessions we host, attendees made orders of our new Domestic Violence Resources, which includes a plethora of services available for victims, and attendees also requested that we host tailored sessions for their own groups.

We look forward to continuing to present forums and conferences in the future, with plans to host a face-to-face Conference in 2022.

If you have any questions or are interested in attending a forum, requesting our resources or to present to your community group, please feel free to contact Oliver via email: Projectofficer@nswec.org.au



ON BEHALF OF THE ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

We wish you a blessed Christmas and best wishes for 2022

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

We look forward to working with you in 2022

AN IMPORTANT DATE IN 2022
SUNDAY 5TH JUNE 2022

observe the

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

We saw his star in the East

Worship Service

5.30pm

St Hurmizd Cathedral

7-9 Greenfield Road, Greenfield Park

Preacher: The Reverend Myung Hwa Park

President, NSW Ecumenical Council

FUND RAISING DINNER

of the NSW Ecumenical Council

7.00pm

Edessa Hall St Hurmizd Cathedral

7-9 Greenfield Road, Greenfield Park

Keynote Speaker: TBA

Guest Speaker: Archbishop Mar Meelis Zaia AM

Assyrian Church of the East

Hear information about the NSW Ecumenical Council:

its theological work

its project for overcoming domestic violence

Enjoy an Indian choir and Assyrian dancers

Tickets: \$60.00



**An invitation to
Join the Ecumenical
Network NSW**

**BECOME AN AMBASSADOR FOR CHRIST...
AN ECUMENICAL FRIEND**

Members are invited to meet with overseas visitors, attend ecumenical dinners and other times of celebration. You will receive regular updates on ecumenical events and the News Letter. The Globe is now in Australia. Experience the Ecumenical movement. Experience the voice of Christ, "that they may all be one...that the world may believe" (John 17:21).

BE UPDATED AND JOIN!

Members are asked to pledge to contribute regularly.

Send your details to the General Secretary at smansour@ncca.org.au

Postal Address: NSW Ecumenical Council, Locked Bag 199, QVB, NSW 1230

Direct Deposit: NSW Ecumenical Council
(ANZ Bank) BSB 012 006 Account No. 5256 42292

God loves a Cheerful Giver 2 Corinthians 9:7

How you can be involved!

Pray with Jesus 'that they may all be one!'

ENGAGE

Let us know what is happening in your area or through your church

Help promote ecumenical activities in your area or through your church

Help arrange an ecumenical forum, dinner or other activity in your area (NSWEC representatives are always willing to share something of our work or to help in other ways)

PARTICIPATE

Join one of our Commissions or working groups
Join us as a volunteer

RESOURCE

Support our work financially
Check out our website at www.nswec.org.au
You can make a big difference!

**Join the Team and make it happen
for the Kingdom of Heaven!**



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