

Message from the General Secretary

Redesigned website

During the past weeks we have been working on a new NCCA website. We were delighted that it went live in time to celebrate 21 years since the inauguration of the NCCA.

Do check it out. Importantly, you might like to provide news or information that can be included. Its two key purposes are to serve our nineteen member churches and to tell the good news of ecumenism more broadly, inviting others to join us in prayer and action.

Communications Audit

We are also looking at the broader picture of how the NCCA communicates its mandate, mission and activities. A short survey has been prepared which you will receive by email. Here is the link if you want to access it directly: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GGPY7YN>

We would really appreciate your feedback and suggestions. Please feel free to share it with others in your networks, too. Please let us know what you think by **Friday 31st July**.



Uniting Church in Australia Assembly – 12 -18 July

Please continue to pray and intercede for the 14th Triennial Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) which is taking place in Perth this week.

The opening service included the installation of the new President of the UCA, Mr Stuart McMillan. The NCCA gives thanks for the leadership of Revd Professor Andrew Dutney who has served as President for the past three years. His example and teaching have been a blessing for all of us.

The Assembly has elected Ms Colleen Geyer as the incoming General Secretary, to replace Revd Terence Corkin who will retire at the end of 2015 after 15 years in the role.



I was welcomed by Incoming TCC President Jeff Gray (L) and outgoing President, David Morris (R)

Tasmanian Council of Churches

On the last weekend in June I headed to the Apple Isle to be present as the Tasmanian Council of Churches held its annual general meeting. This was a time of celebration but also one tinged with some sorrow.

Some farewells

Mr David Morris completed a two year term as President of TCC. Fr Mike Delaney, a past president and an active participant in TCC for thirty years, (and a member of the NCCA CWS commission for nine years) needs to limit his involvement in TCC because of his many other church commitments. Beside Fr Delaney, the TCC also recognised two people, Dr Rosemary Dobber and Mr Paul Dobber who have been very actively involved over forty years.

In presenting the Act for Peace Report, Jeff Wild thanked Revd Bob Faser, for his significant contribution in supporting Act for Peace. Revd Faser concluded his role as Liaison Officer just three days after the AGM.

The Tasmanian Council of Churches is able to continue because of the wonderful commitment of a number of people who have led and guided it for many years. Like other councils the TCC faces the challenge of engaging others committed to ecumenism when they are already carry multiple commitments in their churches. It was a privilege to join them.

(For new office bearers see note under **State Councils**).

Death of His Beatitude Nerses Bedros XIX Tarmouni

The Armenian Catholic Church is mourning the passing away of His Beatitude Nerses Bedros XIX Tarmouni, Catholicos and Patriarch of Cilicia for all the Armenian Catholics. His Beatitude died as a result of heart failure. He was born in Cairo in 1940 ordained on 15 August 1965. He was ordained bishop on 18 February 1980 and was elected Catholicos Patriarch on 17 October 1999.

The message from Pope Francis which was read at the funeral service is available at:

<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-s-message-at-funeral-for-patriarch-nersex-bedros-xix-tarmouni>

Visit of Bishop Angaelos, Moderator of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland



His Grace Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom and Moderator of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland visited family members in Australia and made a special visit to the NCCA Secretariat on Monday 29 June. He spoke with NCCA staff and visitors from the NSWEC and the Coptic church on the response of Christians to violence. He encouraged all to respond with love and forgiveness and urged churches to use media to respond publicly to suffering.

You might like to hear Bishop Angaelos speak on this:

<http://www.bishopangaelos.org/content/here-make-difference>

L to R: Sr Elizabeth, Bishop Angaelos, (Moderator of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Revd John Barr (President of the NSW Ecumenical Council), Fr Shenouda (General Secretary of the NSW Ecumenical Council).

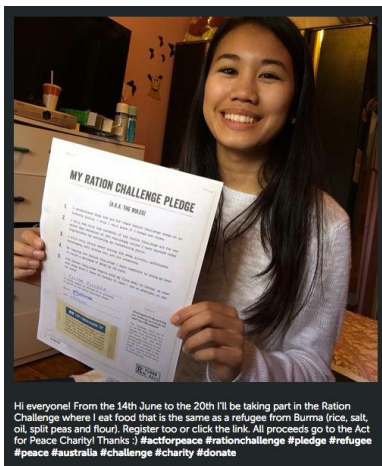
Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

I commend to your prayer the consideration, discussions and discernment currently taking place on this most important issue of recognising the First peoples in Australia's constitution.

Elizabeth Delaney sgs

OUR ACTIVITIES

Act for Peace



People from all over the country came together last month in an act of solidarity that proved Australians want to do more for refugees.

1,600 dedicated Act for Peace supporters signed up for the Act for Peace Ration Challenge which took place during Refugee Week in June. For seven days they ate exactly the same rations as a Burmese refugee living in a camp on the Thai-Burma border - just a small amount of rice, split peas, flour, salt, fish and oil. That's it. No meat, coffee, or alcohol!

Thanks to the generosity of friends and family who sponsored them, they raised an incredible \$420,000 which will help provide rations, seeds, tools and training to make sure refugees from Burma have enough to eat, and help refugees around the world to build safe, just and dignified lives.

As well as raising vital funds for the world's most vulnerable people, they also shared their powerful experience with family and friends, bringing the refugee struggle closer to home in a way that was impossible to ignore – raising awareness and changing attitudes (including their own).

We've been humbled and inspired at the stories and messages of each and every Ration Challenger who put their money where their mouth is, and took a stand for refugees. Thank you for making a difference!

Some comments from participants:



I emerged from the challenge extremely grateful and appreciative of the countless blessings we are privy to in this nation, and with a renewed urgency and determination to prevent people from having to live without adequate nutrition. I'll always remember this experience. Extremely glad I participated in this challenge! *Kirsty Sharneil, Albion Park*



I only had to do the challenge for a week, unlike many others who eat like this every day. It made me realise how thankful I am to live in Australia and proud that I was able to raise awareness of this issue.

Karen, Kirrawee

I really enjoyed the opportunity to have conversations with people about refugees and asylum seekers. Many people only engage with popular media and only ever

see negative portrayals designed to dehumanise and demonise. I felt the ration challenge gave me a really positive platform to engage people and try to gently get them to open their eyes. *Kirsty, Seville Grove*

EAPPI

Here's a reflection from Liam Grant, an EAPPI volunteer...

The Israeli judge spoke some words to the boy in Hebrew and his mother, who sat beside me in the courtroom, broke down in tears. The boy, Mohammad, must have been fourteen at most. He sat in his box, chained at the hands and feet, head down to hide his tears. He was malnourished and bruised from mistreatment and torture. The mother wailed and tried to reach her chained son, to hold him one last time, but she was quickly subdued by the guards. Mohammad had just been sentenced to life imprisonment for throwing a stone he never threw. Picked randomly out of a line-up of young boys, Mohammad was the unlucky one, chosen to be the scapegoat, the underage terrorist who justifies the military occupation of Palestine.

It was this scene that touched me most during my time in Occupied Palestine. I don't know why. Perhaps I saw into the heart of the Occupation – the vile machine which sought to destroy the spirit of children, to control the Palestinian masses through complex, discriminatory and unjust bureaucracy. Perhaps it was because, no one would ever hear about this back home. A life was destroyed successfully in secret.

I was in Palestine for three months, volunteering with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine/Israel (EAPPI). Working with Israelis and Palestinians who ached for the end of the Occupation. I walked Palestinian children to school – saw bullet holes paint the classroom walls and shepherded children away from the billowing tear gas thrown by Israeli soldiers. I monitored the checkpoints as thousands of Palestinians attempted to enter Israel for work, to see loved ones, to get medical treatment. They were processed like cattle, squeezed into catwalks so tight that death by crushing was commonplace. I spent my nights in a tiny West Bank village, Yanoun, West of Nablus. A town that was slowly dying, as illegal Israeli settlements violently took more and more of their land, so they could no longer afford to plant crops to feed themselves, or safely take their sheep out into the mountain pastures. And I heard stories, so many stories from Israelis and Palestinians for whom violence, injustice and fear were an everyday reality.

I also grew hopeless, tired of the guns, the tear gas and the religious fundamentalism. Why was I there? What difference was I making? I asked myself. It was not until I sat in that courtroom that I knew the answer. Watching a child, tortured, abused and sentenced to life imprisonment and a mother, forever carrying a void in her heart where her child should be. I knew I was there to tell these untold stories, uncover this hidden evil that must be seen, named and ended, *insha'Allah*.



For more information on becoming an Ecumenical Accompanier, please visit <http://www.ncca.org.au/index.php/departments/eappi> or send an email to: eappi@ncca.org.au.

OUR CHURCHES

Climate Encyclical Pope Francis: *Laudato Si*

-Video of Yale Panel: On April 8, Yale University hosted a panel discussion entitled “Pope Francis and the Environment: Why His New Climate Encyclical Matters” on how this encyclical on the environment could transform the global climate debate not only for Catholics but for all people. The panel, chaired by John Grim, included six Yale-affiliated experts who addressed the implications of the encyclical from their disciplinary perspectives, followed by an audience discussion. The video is available at:

<https://environment.yale.edu/news/article/pope-francis-and-the-environment-why-his-new-climate-encyclical-matters>

-Uniting Justice responds to *Laudato Si*

<http://www.unitingjustice.org.au/environment/news/item/1015-pope-call-for-action-on-climate-change>

OUR STAFF

Hi. My name is Sharon Edington, and I joined Act for Peace (AfP) in February 2015, as the International Programs Coordinator for the Africa region. Before that, I had worked in international development and humanitarian aid for nine years, through which I came to hear about and become interested in AfP’s fantastic work engaging with countries threatened by conflict or disaster around the world.

I wanted to work with Act for Peace because of its focus on empowering communities through a long-term partnership approach which supports people to claim their rights and take control over decisions that affect their lives.

While my focus is now on Africa, I’ve previously worked in Papua New Guinea, Palestine, the Chilean Atacama desert, the Republic of Georgia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lebanon, and Sierra Leone with different non-Leone with different non-government or not-for-profit organisations. My roles have focused on women’s empowerment work, strategic planning and capacity building amongst other things.



From 2013-2014, I was sponsored by the Rotary Foundation to undertake my Masters studies in the UK at one of their seven peace centres around the world. As a Rotary Peace Fellow I undertook various placements; I worked with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Sarajevo and was given the opportunity to support a local Lebanese agency with their work in helping Syrian refugees in Shatila camp in Beirut. I also volunteered with the British Red Cross’s service for destitute asylum seekers and refugees in England and joined the Shelterbox emergency deployment roster to provide help to people experiencing natural disasters or conflict.

I also published an article and co-authored a book chapter regarding displaced populations in the Balkans and in Cambodia with the Director of the Rotary Peace Centre, which will be published in a textbook next year. Since finishing my studies, I’ve continued my relationship with Rotary including through attendance at the Rotary Peace Symposium in Brazil in May, and I’m working to link Rotary peace projects with the work we do here at Act for Peace. I’m passionate about working with vulnerable communities to identify and support their own solutions, so I feel like I’ve found my place at Act for Peace – I’m learning something new every day, and really enjoy my job.

STATE COUNCILS



Tasmanian Council of Churches

New leaders elected at Annual General Meeting

Rev Jeff Gray was elected President for a two year term. Rev Ross Ellwood was re-elected as Vice President. Others continuing on the executive include Mr Paul Hewston, Mr James Hughes and Sr Elizabeth Vagg pbvm.

INTERFAITH NEWS

Bridges, the newsletter of the Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations – a work of the Columban Mission Institute, has an interesting insert addressing Principles for Interfaith Dialogue and Interfaith Attitudes by Fr Ron Rolheiser OMI. Click here to download:

<http://www.columban.org.au/assets/files/bridges/2015/bridges-june-insert-2015.pdf>



EVENTS

July

1-17 - Ramadan continues

3 - NCCA Anniversary

5 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday

5-11 – NAIDOC Week

August

2-9 National Missing Persons Week