

Message from the General Secretary

Mourning the passing of Daphne Siva



We are deeply saddened by the death of Daphne Siva, Finance Director of NCCA since 2011. Daphne was a member of the Roman Catholic Church and had ecumenical experience with a number of other denominations both in her working life, as an inter-church family and local ecumenical involvement. She held a Masters of Business Administration from the Australian Graduate School of Management and was a Certified Practising Accountant. She had more than 20 years' financial experience, including 10 years working for the Board of Finance and Property of the Uniting Church Synod of NSW and ACT. Her many interests included travel, music, reading and theatre. She was a quiet, gentle woman who continued to find peace in her final months. She will be missed by all involved in NCCA.

Jim Mein AM, Past Uniting Church Synod Moderator and former Executive Director of the Board of Finance and Property, the Trust Association and Uniting Resources, knew Daphne well. He reflects on her life:

I first met Daphne at the NSW Synod Board of Finance and Property of the Uniting Church in Australia, about the early 1990s. She was the Synod Insurance Manager. She worked with me for over ten years during which time she became a Certified Practising Accountant. She was promoted to Manager of the Synod's Trust Association, the Synod's Treasury and investment banking operations. In that role she earned a MBA from UNSW with her major works built around the operations and structure of her role and the Uniting Church as a whole. I thoroughly enjoyed being interviewed by her on this very revealing, insightful and invaluable task. She was a pleasure to have working with and for me.

Daphne was a very effective manager with incredible energy, insight, collegiality, professionalism and outcomes - one of the best staff I ever had over fifty years of working. It was an immense joy to have known her and I am still coming to terms with her death.

I was delighted when she asked me to be a referee for her application to work for the NCCA. By all accounts, she benefitted the NCCA as she did us".

Tricia Ryan, Commissioner on Act for Peace, noted "Daphne will be sorely missed and to the commission her quiet assurance will be a great loss".

Chey Mattner, Executive Secretary, Australian Lutheran World Service, commented "Daphne was a true humble servant at Act for Peace, and it was a pleasure getting to know her at Commission meetings. She has left an indelible impression on us as a courageous, intelligent and compassionate human being."

May she rest in peace, in the arms of the God of love, as we continue to pray for her family and those grieving.

Communications news

The Communications Audit sent out in mid-July has so far received 64 responses. Your input and suggestions have been received with thanks. Our Communications Consultant, Marita Winters, who prepared the survey, will now prepare a report with recommendations on how the NCCA can better use the media, including social media, to communicate to our member Churches and beyond.

NCCA Facebook and Twitter Accounts are again active. You will find us at: www.Facebook.com/NCCA.au and www.twitter.com/NCCAComms. Both of these will soon also be visible from the redesigned NCCA website. Please find us and like and follow according to your own social media usage.

One of the advantages of social media is that we can communicate events ahead of time without waiting for

formal communications channels like this newsletter. As an example, we were able to post last week on Facebook the invitation from the WCC to join in prayer on Sunday 9 August for peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula. We hope to do much more of this without forgetting our traditional forms of communication.

Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews



This group met last week to look back at the past and look to the future. We asked ourselves: 'Is it helping our peak bodies to act more responsibly? Are we aware of our commonality, interchange, lack of fear and greater respect?'

Visit of Vice President of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC)



Bishop Amos Ndhumbi, Vice President of the ZCC visited the NCCA offices in Sydney in late June. Bishop Ndhumbi is pictured here with myself and Sharon Edington, International Programs Coordinator for the Africa Region at Act for Peace.

Holy Ground

As the last NCCA newsletter was disseminated, I was present at the Uniting Church Assembly. I experience this as a privileged position. On two previous occasions I have been present for the Assembly of the Uniting Church; likewise on three occasions I have experienced the privilege of being present for the General Synod of the Anglican Church. During these times, the words, 'Where you stand, is holy ground' remain with me.

On each of these occasions, I have wished that others could share the experience! What I have seen are wonderful leaders, who have enabled the Church members, having listened to the Spirit to move forward. I have heard people speak the truth as they understand it, with courage, and then with humility, to accept an alternative position be accepted by those present. During these times I have experienced the most generous trust, hospitality and friendship from church members.

These times continue to remind me that the issues that our churches face are very similar. With this appreciation comes challenges and I find myself asking, 'What could we address together? How can we share either (or both) our wisdom, our gifts? Can we not witness to our faith in Christ by acting together? Is the Lund principle constantly before our eyes?

As I sat with the Uniting Church, in prayer, in celebration and in sorrow, I was conscious of other Churches who will meet later this year: the Congregational Federation, and the Lutheran Church in Australia (29 September – 4 October). Please tell us if you would like our member churches to remember you in prayer during significant events.

The definition of Marriage debate

The debate about the definition of marriage, and the consideration by the Federal Parliament, is a matter on which there are a number of different opinions, including among our member Churches. As a result, the NCCA will not be taking a position on the issue. However, there are a number of our Churches who have published opinions and statements explaining how the debate might affect members of their congregation. Here are some:

Presbyterian:

Church may overhaul its rules of marriage - <https://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/wa/a/28769619/church-may-overhaul-its-rules-of-marriage/>

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/presbyterian-church-considers-withdrawing-from-marriage-act-if-gay-marriage-allowed-20150706-gi68kf.html>

<http://www.presbyterian.org.au/images/downloads/various/Marriage-Brief-single-pages.pdf>

Catholic:

<https://catholic.org.au/acbc-media/media-centre/media-releases-new>
<http://catholicleader.com.au/spirituality/understanding-marriage> (Archbishop Coleridge)
Four preconditions for supporting marriage equality -
<http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=45316#.VdJ1kfmqpBc>

Lutheran:

<http://www.lca.org.au/statement-to-the-members-of-the-lca-on-marriage.html>

Interfaith:

Australian Christian, Muslim leaders against marriage change - <http://cathnews.com/cathnews/22329-marriage-release>

May we hear differing views with respect.

Elizabeth Delaney sgs

OUR ACTIVITIES

Act for Peace - Saving lives when disaster strikes



Moana is a woman on a mission. Growing up in Tonga, she knows all too well the death and destruction that tropical cyclones can cause. But as a Community Disaster Risk Manager with Act for Peace's local partner, the Tongan National Council of Churches, she's also seen how the right training and preparation can save lives. With extreme weather events on the rise, she won't rest until all Tongan people have the knowledge and skills they need to stay safe when emergencies hit.

176 small islands make up the Pacific nation of Tonga. The 100,000 people who live there are extremely vulnerable to devastating natural disasters – in fact it's the second most at risk country in the world – and that risk is increasing every year as a result of climate change. Tropical cyclones are the biggest threat. They bring heavy rain, strong winds, large storm surges and leave widespread destruction.

Most Tongans have experienced the terror of a cyclone. Many have lost their homes and known friends or family members who have been killed or injured by a cyclone in the past. As well as the damage to buildings and crops, without disaster plans in place, remote communities were also often left without safe drinking water or adequate food supplies.

But recently, thanks to your support and the passion of people like Moana, communities have been able to develop strategies for extreme weather events that are minimising the destruction and loss of life caused when disaster strikes.

In the case of Tropical Cyclone Ian, which struck Tonga in January last year destroying 90 per cent of homes in the Ha'apai Islands, this preparation saved countless lives.



"Ian was really damaging because it was a Category 5 storm. I have never seen anything like the damage of that cyclone before. But, luckily the work that we had done with Act for Peace in disaster training meant lives were saved. The degree of the hurricane was so bad, was so huge and very strong, but we managed to have only had 2 people die."

Moana travels from island to island on small boats training village leaders in disaster preparedness. She's often away from her husband and two twin sons, aged 10, for days on end. It is a tough job, but she's extremely dedicated to it.

"I'm even more committed to doing this kind of work after seeing the positive outcome after Ian. I like to work with my team passing on the messages to the people out there who don't know a thing about how to reduce their risk associated with disaster. I know in the future this will keep them safe."

Moana works with community leaders to design and implement emergency action plans specifically for their village. This often includes building evacuation centres (or restoring old ones) and ensuring there is access to safe, clean water by installing water tanks or setting-up water catchment areas. She then runs training to ensure everyone knows and understands their village action plan. The training is focused on practical things families can

do to keep themselves safe, ensuring people know what to do before, during and after a cyclone, and how to evacuate.

Tongan culture places a lot of importance on personal relationships. Moana has a double degree in Management and Industrial Relations, but it's her warm personality and way with people that makes her so good at what she does. She's welcomed with big smiles and open arms in every community she works with. This trust is crucial to the success of the program, and reflects just how much people value the support she's giving them.

"I like working with people from all walks of life. They appreciate what we do in terms of raising people's awareness on disaster...they also appreciate that we pass on knowledge to them and help them build and grow in their own villages."

OUR CHURCHES

Churches of Christ in Australia - National Youth Ministry Convention (NYMC)

From 7-10 October 2015, our dream is for all people who work with youth and young adults to gather for a time of refreshment and encouragement, professional development and training, connecting and networking. Whether they work in schools, Churches or the community, whether as volunteers or paid, whatever denomination or ministry philosophy they come from, we want to love, equip and help these key leaders.

The vision of the NYMC is to encourage, train and connect Christian youth workers so that their ministries achieve greater longevity and fruitfulness, in order to help more young people come to follow Jesus. The four-day NYMC event strives to create an environment that will achieve these goals.

In 2015 we will gather again at Twin Towns on the Gold Coast, just 4km from the Gold Coast airport. The area is family-friendly, views are spectacular, accommodation excellent, facilities fantastic and the options far superior to any other venue we could find.

NYMC15 will be an excellent place for people of all backgrounds and denominations to gather together and grow in their capacity to do ministry with the emerging generation. Many tribes are utilising the event well by adding an 'in-house' gathering at the beginning of the event and then blending into the broader convention. If you would like to do the same please contact the NYMC15 team and we will gladly arrange a space for you to do the same.

To register and find out more information go to www.nymc.org.au



New Armenian Catholic Patriarch of Cilicia

The Armenian Catholic Synod of Bishops elected Bishop Krikor Ghabroyan (pictured left) as the new Armenian Catholic Patriarch of Cilicia. He will be the 20th Armenian Catholic Patriarch of Cilicia, succeeding His Beatitude Nerses Bedros XIX.

Bishop Ghabroyan, who assumes the name Gregoire Pierre XX, was installed on August 9 as the new Patriarch at the patriarchal headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon.

Source: <http://armenianweekly.com/2015/07/27/new-catholic-patriarch-of-cilicia/>

OUR STAFF

EAPPI



Hi – I’m Bek Christensen and I’m the chair of the EAPPI-Australia Committee, EAPPI standing for Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel. EAPPI (<http://www.ncca.org.au/index.php/departments/eappi>) is an international accompaniment programme of the World Council of Churches. Our Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) offer protective presence for vulnerable communities, monitoring and reporting human rights abuses. We engage with local Palestinians and Israelis who nonviolently pursue peace. We advocate for a just peace based on international law.

I’ve been involved with EAPPI since 2010, when I was Australia’s first volunteer to join the program on ground in the West Bank. I lived for three months in a small Palestinian village that is surrounded by illegal Israeli settlements. Since the late 1990s, the illegal settlements have systematically and steadily advanced on the village, so that now it is left with less than 5% of its original land. Like many others, this village suffers ongoing harassment by armed settlers and members of the Israeli security forces. Over the years this has included destruction of crops, mutilation of livestock, contamination of water, and attacks on people including children.

Our presence as EAs in this village and with surrounding communities helps to give a voice to their plight, and provides immediate relief in their daily life as international observers help to deter violence and harassment.

It is no understatement to say that being an EA changed my life, and I continue to be actively involved in the program by helping to coordinate the continued involvement of Australian volunteers because I believe in the impact of the program – both for the vulnerable communities we work alongside, and for our EAs.

My involvement with EAPPI is also a wonderful complement to my professional life, where I work with ecosystem researchers and managers across Australia to develop new collaborations, partnerships, and opportunities to ensure the best science and knowledge is available to inform and influence the decisions we make about how to use and conserve our natural environments.

Both of these contexts involve very passionate and skilled people, sometimes controversial subjects, and outcomes that can make a real difference for communities – I find it really exciting and energising to be able to be involved in both of these areas and hopefully contributing to a more positive future locally and globally. If you’d like to know more about how you can be involved in supporting the work of EAPPI-Australia please visit: <http://www.ncca.org.au/index.php/departments/eappi> or email Bek at eappi@ncca.org.au

INTERFAITH

New Interreligious Dialogue Website launched by the Columbans



The Missionary Society of St Columban has launched www.columbanird.org, a new website on interreligious dialogue (IRD). It contains a wealth of information on interfaith relations, conveniently grouped under menus, including latest news, Columban stories, teaching documents, multi-faith action on social issues, practical guidelines, resources and basic information on selected world religions.

www.columbanird.org is a useful resource on interreligious dialogue for Christians, believers from other religions and concerned citizens, especially teachers, students and interfaith activists. It will assist people to grow relations with people of other faiths and to build a just, harmonious society based on mutual respect and understanding.

EVENTS

World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel (20-26 September) – resource available

The World Council of Churches encourages churches around the world to pray and act for peace for Palestine and Israel during the week of 20-26 September. This year the theme is “God has broken down the dividing Walls”, focusing on the wall that Israel has built – variously known as the ‘security barrier’, the ‘separation wall’ and the ‘annexation wall’. For more information including worship resources, see <http://pief.oikoumene.org/en/world-week-for-peace/invitation-to-participate>

Anti-Poverty Week (11-17 October)

Poverty and severe hardship affect more than one million Australians. Around the world more than a billion people are desperately poor. Anti-Poverty Week is a time when we can all help fight poverty and hardship. Suggestions are that church communities might mark the occasion by organising:

A display, stall or award?

A workshop, lecture or forum?

A fundraiser, fact sheet or petition?

For more ideas and information, visit: <http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au/> or call 1300 797 290.

August	3-9	Homelessness Prevention Week
	6	Transfiguration of Christ
	8	St Mary of the Cross MacKillop
	9	International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
	9	Prayer for peace and reunification of the Korean peninsula
	12	International Youth Day
	19	World Humanitarian Day
	23	International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition
	26	Abraham Conference 2015 (see ad to the right)
	30	World Day of Migrants and Refugees
September	1	World Day of Prayer for the Environment
	6	Father's Day
	9, 10	Safe as Churches? 7
	5-13	National Child Protection Week
	13	Child Protection Sunday
	21	International Day of Prayer for Peace
	20-26	World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel
	23	Eid-ul-Adha
	23	Yom Kippur
	27	Social Justice Sunday