

The South Australian Dialogue of the Roman Catholic and Uniting Churches



...to study, reflect, pray, communicate, respond, liaise...

CHARTER OF THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN DIALOGUE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC AND UNITING CHURCHES

1. Preamble

The South Australian Dialogue of the Roman Catholic and Uniting Churches has been meeting since 1979. Some fruits of the Dialogue have been:

- a deeper appreciation of each other's traditions
- discussion of many topics of mutual interest,
- the preparation of several papers and
- efforts to communicate with the wider Christian community.

In 1989, the Heads of both Communions, at the request of members, initiated a review of the Dialogue. While affirming the efforts of members and the fruits of their discussions, they reconstituted the Dialogue in keeping with the provisions of this Charter.

2. Name

The revised name of the Dialogue is the "The South Australian Dialogue of the Roman Catholic and Uniting Churches."

3. Ecumenical Visions of the Two Churches

"The Uniting Church in Australia lives and works within the faith and unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The Uniting Church recognizes that it is related to other Churches in ways which give expression, however partially, to that unity in faith and mission. Recalling the Ecumenical Councils of the early centuries, the Uniting Church looks forward to a time when the faith will be further elucidated, and the Church's unity expressed, in similar Councils. It thankfully acknowledges that the uniting Churches were members of the World Council of Churches and other ecumenical bodies, and will seek to maintain such membership. It remembers the special relationship which obtained between the several uniting Churches and other Churches of similar traditions, and will continue to learn from their

witness and be strengthened by their fellowship. It is encouraged by the existence of United Churches in which these and other traditions have been incorporated, and wishes to learn from their experience. It believes that Christians in Australia are called to bear witness to a unity of faith and life in Christ which transcends cultural and economic, national and racial boundaries, and to this end the Uniting Church commits itself to seek special relationships with Churches in Asia and the Pacific. The Uniting Church declares its desire to enter more deeply into the faith and mission of the Church in Australia, by working together with and seeking union with other Churches.”

(Uniting Church in Australia, *Basis of Union*, 1992)

“The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to people as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but they differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ himself were divided. Certainly, such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the gospel to every creature....

”Today in many parts of the world, under the influence of the grace of the Holy Spirit, many efforts are being made in prayer, word and action to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires. The sacred council exhorts, therefore, all Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism.”

(Vatican II: *Decree on Ecumenism*)

4. Purpose of this Dialogue

The overall purpose of the Dialogue is to contribute at the State level to the search for mutual understanding leading to the fullness of Christian unity.

In particular:

- to study together the historical traditions and theological perspectives of each Communion and their inter-relatedness
- to reflect together on documents emanating from other Dialogues
- to communicate the fruits of the Dialogue by giving public witness in each other’s churches and where appropriate, providing resources. However, it is the responsibility of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission of the Archdiocese of Adelaide, the appropriate body responsible for ecumenical affairs in the Catholic Diocese of Port Pirie, and the Uniting Church Synod of South Australia to promote and guide initiatives within parishes
- to study and respond to issues that emerge from the local church
- to liaise with other RCUC Dialogues at state, national and international level.

5. Membership

The membership consists of six representatives from each Communion. Members of the Uniting Church in Australia will be appointed through their South Australian Synod. Catholic members will be appointed by the Archbishop of Adelaide, through the Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission, and the Bishop of the Diocese of Port Pirie.

Membership is drawn from a cross-section of Christian life and includes some people trained in the disciplines of theology.

Since 2007, the Dialogue has also included representatives from regional South Australia.

The Dialogue may co-opt appropriate people to assist with specific tasks.

6. Qualities

Members are to possess the following qualities:

- an openness to, and support of the ecumenical movement
- a keen desire to explore the content chosen by the Dialogue
- a willingness to participate in theological discussion, and an openness to further theological formation
- preparedness to give time to the Dialogue.

7. Structure

The Dialogue is to have two co-chairpersons appointed by the respective Communion. They will monitor the affairs of the Dialogue between meetings while their role within meetings will be determined by the Dialogue.

The Dialogue may appoint a Minutes Secretary from outside its membership. Associated incidental expenses will be the responsibility of the Uniting Church Synod of South Australia and the Catholic Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission.

8. Status and Accountability

The Dialogue is accountable to the Uniting Church Synod of South Australia, the Archbishop of Adelaide through the Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission and the Bishop of Port Pirie. The Dialogue will report to their respective churches on a regular basis.

The South Australian Dialogue of the Roman Catholic and Uniting Churches is independent of the national UC-RC Dialogue but keeps the national Dialogue informed of its outcomes.

The Uniting Church Synod of South Australia and the Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission of the Archdiocese of Adelaide will assume responsibility, in consultation with the members of the Dialogue, for disseminating the findings and fruits of the Dialogue to members of their respective Communion.

(Revised, March 17, 2011)