

NCCA – Commissioning of the General Secretary

Welcome to the first Newsletter for 2015 – a much overdue Newsletter. It is my hope that we will have a Newsletter at least once a month from now onwards.

The past three months have been rich with meeting people, individually and members of both NCCA groups and others who wish to engage with NCCA, celebrating with individuals and churches and praying in sorrow with others.

Wednesday 4 March was a most moving occasion – the day of my commissioning as General Secretary. Present were people from all areas of our ecumenical activity and beyond, Heads of Churches, members of the NCCA Executive, General Secretaries of state councils, former General Secretaries, members of NCCA Commissions and councils, staff, volunteers, friends, members of my family and Sisters of the Good Samaritan. This assured me, were I ever to doubt, that I am well supported by many, many people – both in action and in prayer. I am most grateful.

Elizabeth Delaney sgs



Act for Peace – Vanuatu Emergency Response

On 14th and 15th March, Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu bringing mass destruction across the island nation. Some areas were battered by winds of over 300km per hour; many communities lost shelters, water tanks, schools, clinics and gardens. In a country where around 80% of the population relies on subsistence farming for survival, the impact of this category 5 cyclone has been devastating.

Vanuatu's considered the most disaster affected country in the world. Over the last six years, Act for Peace and the Vanuatu Christian Council have worked together on programs which assist communities to prepare for disaster, providing training on how to identify risks and then to mitigate them, establishing disaster response plans, and setting up disaster response committees. We've also provided small grants to 9 communities to assist them to address risks related to climate change, including access to fresh water.

Act for Peace is working with the Vanuatu Christian Council to respond to the immediate needs of communities affected by Cyclone Pam, whilst preparing longer term programs to assist recovery. Staff and volunteers have distributed emergency relief items, and teams are now completing community assessments. Garden kits will be provided to enable households to replant their vegetable gardens, ensuring they can return to providing their own food in the near future. We will soon move to help communities restore water access mechanisms and repair church evacuation centres. And the Vanuatu Christian Council is chairing the first ever Church Cluster – part of the formal government and NGO response mechanism.

This work is possible because of the support offered by our supporters, church and other organisations who have so far donated close to \$318,000 of funds and goods worth over \$425,000. We're hopeful of raising another \$500,000 at least to enable the vital long term recovery effort. Special thanks go to Global Mission Partners (Churches of Christ), Transform Aid Australia (Baptist Churches), Lutheran World Relief and Give to Vanuatu for their donations. Pledges have also been made by members of the ACT Alliance which are not represented in this figure, and Act for Peace has funding applications in with another 4 agencies.





Act for Peace and the Vanuatu Christian Council are both working closely with other agencies responding to this disaster. We're members of the in-country emergency response mechanism, and are the lead agency in the ACT Alliance Appeal prepared by members of the ACT Pacific Australian and New Zealand Forum. We're chairing an information and ideas sharing forum with agencies in the 11 member Australian Church Agency Network and are working with Anglican Board of Mission (ABM), Uniting World, Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) and Transform Aid International (Baptist World Aid) to look at developing a joint funding mechanism for Ni-Vanuatu church agencies to support long term recovery work.

The generosity of church agencies and the broader Australian public has enabled us to work in a truly ecumenical way through this response. Thank you to everyone who's supporting this Appeal through prayer or financial giving, both of which bring encouragement and hope to our neighbours in Vanuatu.



NATSIEC

Recognition of Aboriginal People in the Australian Constitution

The Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples was established to inquire into and report on steps that can be taken to progress towards a successful referendum on Indigenous constitutional recognition. The Committee invited a representative of the NCCA to attend a public hearing on 20 February. After consultation with the Chair of NATSIEC and representatives from several churches, Sr Elizabeth Delaney agreed to participate.

OUR ACTIVITIES

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 17-24 May 2015 , Jesus said to her, 'Give me to drink.'

The ecumenical team from Queensland that has adapted the Week of Prayer materials for Australia is inviting us to reflect on these initial questions to give shape to the celebration:

- Which is the path of unity, the route we should take, so that the world may drink from the source of life, Jesus Christ?
- Which is the path of unity that gives proper respect to our diversity?

See more and details of the resources at <http://www.ncca.org.au/component/content/article/25-wopcu/786-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2015>

The **NCCA ECO MISSION PROJECT** (EMP) recently came together at the international conference, 'Rediscovering the Spiritual in God's Creation', held in McLaren Vale, South Australia, and hosted by Tabor Adelaide. It was a wonderful opportunity for the NCCA EMP to connect face-to face for the very first time, and to present a conference paper, 'A Local, National and Global Ecumenical Vision for the Care of the Earth'. The paper was presented by Jacqui Remond and Clive Ayre, and explored how 'Eco-Mission' requires a consistent and holistic approach, with collaboration and participation sitting at the heart of dialogue that is ecumenical and interfaith.

OUR CHURCHES

Coptic Orthodox Church and Ethiopian Orthodox Church

We grieve with a number of churches for their members who have died at the hands of extremist Muslim groups. In February 21 members of the Coptic Orthodox Church were slain in Libya. Again on last weekend up to 30 members of the Ethiopian Orthodox church were slain. These people died because they were Christian. We give thanks for their lives and for their faith. We pray for their families and friends who grieve for them.

Assyrian Church of the East

At the recent meeting of the NCCA Executive His Beatitude Bishop Mar Meelis Zaia spoke of the situation of his people in north-eastern Syria. In pre-dawn attacks just weeks ago residents of the 35 contiguous Assyrian villages along the Khabur river in north-eastern Syria awoke to burning churches, deserted homes and martyred soldiers as extremists swept through the majority Assyrian Christian area on a destructive rampage.

To date, more than 200 Assyrians have been kidnapped with recent reports placing the number even higher. These include a large number of women, children and the elderly.

In the days and hours following the assaults, in excess of 3000 people fled their homes in panic, fear and despair and are now displaced and spread across the major neighbouring regions of Hassaka and Qamishli. Many hundreds of these people took refuge in St Mary's Cathedral of the Assyrian Church of the East in Hassaka.

These recent events come on top of forced displacements of many families in northern Iraq, with families fleeing to Diana where now 67 children having fled their homes are now receiving an education with the support of the church's relief agency, ACERO.

These events also follow the Islamic State's takeover of Mosul and surrounding areas in mid 2014 that led to Assyrian Christian families fleeing the Northern Iraqi town of Telkaif and seeking refuge in Istanbul, Turkey. In Kurtulus, Istanbul there are 57 families who have lived for 5 months in difficult circumstances with no work permits, no medical support and no official documentation. Having locked their doors, families left their homes, and ran in any safe direction to escape capture by terrorists. They now spend their days waiting for a miracle, many fearing they will have no choice but to go back to Iraq. Read more <https://www.theacero.org>

Armenian Apostolic Church of Australia

Marking one hundred years since the tragedy, the Armenian Church are remembering the Armenian Genocide. Today these people will be recognized as martyrs. During the coming month a number of events will take place in remembrance of the 1.5 million martyrs. On Friday 24 April at 1.00 pm all churches are invited to join the Armenian apostolic Churches to toll church bells 100 times in their memory.

On Saturday 2nd May at 11.00 am His Grace Bishop Haigazoun Najarian will celebrate Holy Mass at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.

OUR PEOPLE



Sadie Moore is the Head of Community Fundraising, Act for Peace.

The 2015 FIA Awards for Excellence in Fundraising were announced in February. One of the major awards, Most Effective Creative Campaign, was won by **Act for Peace - Act for Peace Ration Challenge** – a project that was designed by Sadie. It also won the award for Special Events – under \$5 million revenue.

Sadie introduces herself:

I joined the community fundraising team at Act for Peace in November 2013. Since graduating from university I have always worked in the area of fundraising in the non-profit sector and I consider myself very lucky to have found a career I am so passionate about, where I have the privilege of helping people in real need.

I am from England, and before coming to live in Sydney I was working as a Senior Fundraising Manager at Macmillan Cancer Support, looking after community fundraising in Bristol and Bath. Before this I was an Account Executive at CLIC Sargent, the UK's leading children's cancer charity, working on their national fundraising partnerships.

I like to think of community fundraising as people-powered fundraising as it's all about connecting with motivated people and groups in the community, building relationships and trust, and supporting and encouraging them to raise money with their friends, family and congregations in a way they would enjoy. Some of the best ideas come from the communities themselves!

Here at Act for Peace we are gearing up for our new community fundraising event -The Ration Challenge. It takes place during refugee week, from 14-20 June and we're really excited about the event! We are challenging people in Australia to survive on the same rations as a Burmese refugee for one week and get sponsored to do it. The money we raise will help make sure these refugees have enough to eat. And by sharing this powerful experience with those around you, you can bring the refugee struggle closer to home in a way that's impossible to ignore.

We truly believe that together we will create a more compassionate society and we would love you to be involved. Find out more about the Ration Challenge, and how to sign up on our website: www.actforpeace.org.au/rationchallenge I am always looking out for the next great fundraising idea, and keen to talk to anyone who would like to find out more about supporting Act for Peace. Please feel free to get in touch by emailing me at smoore@actforpeace.org.au or giving me a call on 02 8259 0837.

OUR PARTNERS

Common Grace, an initiative launched on 5 December 2014, receives funding through the Glenburnie Programme. National Director, Jarrod McKenna, Operations Director, Jessica Smith, and Communications Director, Kylie Beach, work with two Campaign teams: Asylum Seeker Campaign Team, led by Justin Whelan, and Climate Change Campaign Team, led by Jody Lightfoot.

A crowd funded gift of solar panels to Kirribili House highlighting the need for a strong renewable energy target served as a practical reminder that *as Christians, we long to see a flourishing world, but our chance to pass on a clean energy future to our children is quickly slipping by.* We note that the gift of solar panels was not accepted by the Australian government.

Check out the website: www.commongrace.org.au

See also Common Grace's 'Black Matters' petition to the Western Australian government urging a cessation of any decision to close 150 Indigenous homeland communities. <http://www.commongrace.org.au/sosblakaustralia>.