



COMMISSION FOR ECUMENISM & INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

“It is the Commission’s responsibility to highlight the importance of the Church’s commitment to Ecumenism & Interfaith Relations, to liaise between members of the other churches and other religions and to encourage parishes and Diocesan Councils to initiate grass roots activities and prayer services where appropriate.”

As stated in the Directory of the Diocese of Parramatta

On the 23rd March, 2007 Bishop Kevin Manning of the Diocese of Parramatta reconstituted the Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue and invited Mrs. Lorraine Murphy oods to take the chair. Lorraine had been involved in Interfaith Relations since 2000 and a member of the commission since the end of 2005.

On the 18th July, 2007 the following were invited to be members of this new commission: Rev. Fr. Paul Slyney, Rev. Fr. Walter Fogarty, Sr. Suporna Rozario smsm, Dr. Gideon Goosen, Mrs. Caroline Goosen, Mrs. Yvonne Malouf and Mr. Peter Murphy. [Since that time, three members have moved onto other ministries and been replaced by Fr. Herman Roborgh SJ, Fr. Suresh Kumar MSFS, Ms. Amanda Turner, Mr. Mark Stewart and Ms. Alice Priest.]

In order to raise the profile of the commission within the diocese a brochure was designed [see attached] and distributed to all parishes with an invitation to all parishes to appoint two parish representatives for ecumenism and interfaith dialogue. A description of the role of a parish representative was also included.

The commission then proceeded to conduct two diocesan seminars for the Parish Representatives and anyone else interested. The hope was that the seminar in March would encourage parish representatives to take the initiative and plan and participate in an event for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The September seminar would focus on Interfaith Relations.

It was out of these seminars that the idea was muted that the commission conduct “The Parramatta Certificate in Ecumenics and Interreligious Dialogue” [flyer attached] The certificate would be conducted over a two year period comprising four units: [Interreligious Dialogue, Church: A Community of Believers (2 Units) and History and Theology of Ecumenism]. The Parish Representative Seminars were incorporated into this certificate course and conducted under the auspices of the Diocesan Institute for Mission. The commission appointed Dr. Gideon Goosen as Education Officer to liaise with Bishop Kevin Manning and The Institute for Mission in this matter. The first graduands of this certificate course will occur in February 2010.

Other outcomes of the Parish Representatives Seminars have been the involvement of participants in ecumenism through the planning and conducting of ecumenical prayer services in their local areas eg Taize, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and Ecumenical Prayer Evenings.

Commission members are actively involved with the NSW Ecumenical Council-Churches Together with representatives serving on the Executive Council and on the Theological Commission, Commission for Partnership for Development and the Local Initiatives Commission.

On the level of Interfaith members have been actively involved in the Women's Interfaith Network [W.I.N.] conducting a workshop at the Congregational Religious of Australian Conference which was very well received. The theme of this Conference was "Australian Religious in a Multifaith Society: Reality, Gift and Challenge". Our Bishop Kevin Manning gave one of the key addresses at this conference. Members also participate in the annual Women of Faith Dinners and other events through the Affinity Intercultural Foundation. The Hills Interfaith Dialogue Group [H.I.D.G.] is an ecumenical endeavour with other faiths conducted monthly in the Baulkham Hills Senior Citizens Centre. The Companions in Dialogue [C.I.D.] was initiated by Fr. Herman Roborgh SJ earlier this year and meets monthly in Blacktown.

During 2008 Bishop Kevin Manning also commissioned a work on "Christian-Muslim Relations" – Guidelines for Catholics in the Diocese of Parramatta. This was written by Dr Vivienne Keely CHF [Diocesan Research Officer] and Fr. Herman Roborgh SJ [Diocesan Interfaith Relations Delegate]. This booklet was launched in July, 2008. A PowerPoint version has since been made available for use in our schools.

During 2008 the Diocese also hosted "The Imam & the Pastor from Nigeria" through the sponsorship of Initiatives of Change. This was held at Blacktown Civic Centre and was very well attended.

On 2nd August, 2009 the Diocesan Commission participated in the steering committee of the pre-WPR Sydney Event held at Lachlan's in Parramatta Park. Over two hundred people participated in this colourful event.

Also in August the Diocese hosted the delegates from the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel [ICCI]. ICCI also serves as the Israeli chapter of the World Conference of Religions for Peace [WCRP] and as one of the Israeli members of the International Council of Christians and Jews [ICCJ]. The delegates were Dr. Deborah Weissman [Jewish] Rula Shubeita [Christian] and Issa Jaber [Muslim]. Members of the Commission participate with the NSW Council for Christians and Jews [CCJ].

We are currently in the process of upgrading the webpage of the Commission in the hope of raising the profile of our endeavours. We also publish a report of our activities and upcoming events in the Diocesan publication "Catholic Outlook" each month.

Mrs. Lorraine Murphy ocds
Chair – Commission for Ecumenism & Interfaith Dialogue
Diocese of Parramatta

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