

Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands is a work-in-progress. Please send your stories, learnings, insights and suggestions to [sacc1@picknowl.com.au](mailto:sacc1@picknowl.com.au) - thank you!  
May 2014

## Healing Gifts for Wounded Hands



### *The promise and potential of Receptive Ecumenism...*

The preparation of this booklet was inspired by Professor Paul D Murray, a lay Roman Catholic theologian, who visited Australia and New Zealand in mid-2012. Paul is Professor of Systematic Theology, and Dean and Director of the Centre for Catholic Studies, at the University of Durham, UK. His many interests and commitments include being a member of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission III. He is Editor of *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism* (Oxford: OUP, 2008).

Paul's visit encouraged and offered hope-filled possibility to many people across the Church in Australia & New Zealand and led to the desire of the South Australian Council of Churches to keep alive the conversation and action on the promise and potential of Receptive Ecumenism. We are grateful to Paul who offered wonderful insights, wisdom, words and images during his time with us, several of which are included in this booklet. We hope that people across the Church, in whatever land and at whatever stage or level of involvement, will feel inspired to a new disposition and spirit-filled action on unity in Christ through the way of Receptive Ecumenism.

This booklet is a work-in-progress: we invite you to share with us the fruits of your own deliberations and actions.

South Australian Council of Churches



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# “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” *St Augustine*

Your notes

## 1. Principal characteristic of Ecumenism to date

*What do others need to learn from us, if we are to make real progress?*

The question is understandable – being committed to the gifts and understandings of our own tradition and discovering more about one another across the traditions is appropriate. We give thanks for the many positive initiatives that have grown through the ecumenical movement and we rejoice in the many people who have shared their gifts and resources and responded to Jesus’ prayer for unity. We trust that action together will continue to occur.

However, conversion/inner change and resultant growth has remained generally at the individual level, with seemingly little impact on *corporate* conversion – leading to the wellness, or healing, across the structures, systems, processes and practices of the life and mission *within* each tradition.

## 2. What is Receptive Ecumenism?

The question Receptive Ecumenism asks is:  
What can we – and what do we *need to* - learn and receive, with integrity, from the other traditions?

There is a growing awareness that if we were all asking and acting upon this question, we might be moving in ways that could open up new possibilities in relation to our unity in Christ. The question, therefore, invites us all to consider and address the challenges within our own tradition through learning from other traditions.

**Receptive Ecumenism** starts from a yearning, with the awareness or a frustration that some practice or structure or process within one’s own tradition may be an inadequate, or a painful, or even an ‘absent’ manifestation of the fullness of Trinity.

**Receptive Ecumenism** invites us, through a spirit of humility, and a desire for healing, to share the pain, the woundedness, the felt-absence, with our ecumenical other.  
“Healing gifts for wounded hands.” *Paul Murray*

**Receptive Ecumenism** encourages us to make a safe space for learning, for receiving the giftedness of the other, for conversion and for growing more fully into who God made us to be, of becoming more authentically what God has called us to be.

**Receptive Ecumenism** speaks to all layers of the Church, without one waiting on/for another, and can be carried out at the level of

- ❖ Local Parish or Congregation, e.g. Church Council ...
- ❖ Agency, e.g. Welfare, Education, Finance ...
- ❖ Governance/Decision-making body, e.g. Synod, Diocese, Bishops Conference, Assembly, Board...

**Receptive Ecumenism** offers an approach that includes the potential for change, *including and especially*, across the structures and the practices of the various traditions – and even the way we serve the world - “...*they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me*”. *John 17:21*

“**Receptive ecumenism** is more about self-examination and inner conversion than convincing the other; Anglicans and Roman Catholics can help each other grow in faith, life and witness to Christ if they are open to being transformed by God’s grace mediated through each other.” *ARCIC III Media Release May 2011*

**Receptive Ecumenism** is about letting the Light of Christ shine on those parts of our Church – people, practice, processes, systems, structures - where we may feel shame, sorrow, confusion or absence.

**Receptive Ecumenism** is about Leaning into the Spirit...about Longing - Listening – Learning – Loving... in the way of Christ.

## Member Churches of South Australian Council of Churches



- ❖ Anglican Church of Australia, Diocese of Adelaide
- ❖ Anglican Church of Australia, Diocese of The Murray
- ❖ Anglican Church of Australia, Diocese of Willochra
- ❖ Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide
- ❖ Catholic Diocese of Port Pirie
- ❖ Churches of Christ in SA/NT
- ❖ Coptic Orthodox -Diocese of Melbourne & Affiliated Regions
- ❖ Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
- ❖ Lutheran Church of Australia - SA/NT District
- ❖ Religious Society of Friends SA Regional Meeting
- ❖ Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of Australia/NZ - SA Parish
- ❖ Salvation Army South Australian Division
- ❖ St Urael Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in SA Inc
- ❖ Uniting Church in Australia - Synod of South Australia

### Want to learn more...?

For the names of people in your Church appointed to the Executive Committee of SA Council of Churches, see below or, contact

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## Executive Committee of South Australian Council of Churches (April 2014)

Amy Mikhail, Coptic Orthodox

Anne Hewitt, Uniting – Vice-President

Drew Thomas, Religious Society of Friends

Gilbert Materne (Lutheran)

Graham Jones, Treasurer

Jill Gallio, Catholic – Vice-President

Ngairé Llewellyn, Churches of Christ

Peter Burke, Anglican – President

## What it's not...

Receptive Ecumenism is not about

- ❖ Settling for less than the churches already are
- ❖ Diminishing the heritage of our particular churches
- ❖ Conducting a program: it's a movement of the Spirit.

## Receptive ecumenical awakening...

“Receptive ecumenical awakening is properly a **matter of the heart before it is a matter of the head; a matter of falling in love with the experienced presence of God in the people, practices, even structures of another tradition** and being impelled thereby to search for ways in which all impediments to closer relationship might be overcome.” Paul Murray

## Key words and phrases

- ❖ **Broken sign value** to the world of our divisions
- ❖ **Lean into the Spirit**, the agent of the ecumenical journey
- ❖ Offering our **wounded hands** – rather than offering our best china?
- ❖ **Run at the horizon and the horizon expands**
- ❖ **Surprised by joy** – expectant and penitent joy, realising we are on Holy ground fed by the presence of Christ
- ❖ Receptive Ecumenism – a **Movement ...a virtuous virus...**
- ❖ A journey of **continuing growth** on each side
- ❖ **Promise-filled invitation...hope-filled imagination...**
- ❖ Start with the **part of the garden we're responsible for...**



## 3. What are the principles that mark Receptive Ecumenism?

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. *Ephesians 4: 2- 6*

*Rev Dr Denis Edwards, Archdiocese of Adelaide, has suggested the following criteria for receiving into one's own church the institutional gift of the Spirit, of charism, that we see exemplified in another church.*

1. It can be recognized by the receiving church as an authentic expression of *biblical and apostolic faith*
2. The proposed institutional charism leads to *Christ*, and to authentic *discipleship*
3. It is not opposed to the *deepest self-understanding* of the receiving church
4. It can be seen as an *organic development* of the faith of the receiving church
5. It brings to the receiving church a *renewed energy and life*
6. It is accompanied by the *fruits of the Spirit* – “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” *Gal 5:22*

#### 4. So, how do we offer our wounded hands...?



##### Some Activities

“Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” *Matthew 11:28-30*

Each of the following suggested activities may be commenced **within** each tradition, by members **of** that tradition, at any level of Church e.g. the local Congregation, the Church Council, the Synod, the Board, the Deanery/Presbytery, Regional Meeting, Neighbourhood Church/House Group, Agency. Further steps will follow by taking the aspects that have emerged and offering them – our wounded hands – to another tradition with a view to letting the other minister to us, in the hope of learning from the other, for our healing and greater flourishing. In this way each part of the body of Christ may become more, not less, than it is already.

##### Activity 1: Ecclesial Examination of Conscience

“Receptive ecumenism’ surely signifies, not only that we should be receptive in relation to our fellow Christians, but also, and much more fundamentally, that we should be receptive in relation to God. Our horizontal receptiveness presupposes, as its source and inspiration, a vertical receptiveness.” *Kallistos Ware, Metropolitan of Diokleia, at St Mary’s Catholic Church, Chelsea, November 2007.*

This is a prayerful process especially for any grouping within a tradition to:

- ❖ Name its woundedness, where the Church is ‘stuck’, where it is lacking... in relation to the people, practices, processes and structures
- ❖ Recognise its vulnerability
- ❖ Take steps to share its woundedness with the other
- ❖ Receive the gift of the other
- ❖ Open itself to conversion – to bring about healing and wholeness

The first step is **silent prayer**. ‘Be still, and know that I am God.’ *Psalms 46:10*

The second step is to **give thanks** for our own tradition and all that it has offered us in coming to a deeper experience of God’s unconditional love.

The third step is to **acknowledge** an occasion, a process, a practice, a system, a structure...in our tradition where it has diminished, obscured, ignored or overlooked the light of Christ and God’s grace to the world.

The fourth step is to reflect on one of these and pray for the Holy Spirit to **direct the group to something that God thinks is particularly important**.

The fifth step is to **ask for the grace** to take a step with another, to be open to receiving the loving support and gentle, wise companionship and giftedness of another.

‘God is love.’ *1 John 4:8*

##### Prayer for Christian Unity

‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8)

- ❖ Loving and eternal God, you continually delight in all of humanity and beckon us all on to our best possibilities.
- ❖ We rejoice with you at the many manifestations of our unity in Christ and we give thanks for the openness of those around us to be companions on the journey.



- ❖ We regret the times when we have overlooked or diminished the prayer of Jesus that we may all be one “*so that the world may believe that you have sent me*”.
- ❖ We ask the Holy Spirit to help us recognise any place within our own denomination in need of healing, especially as it pertains to our structures, practices, systems or processes.
- ❖ Help us to let our gaze rest lovingly on one another, sisters and brothers in Christ, and on all our world, in the same way as your gaze rests on each one of us.
- ❖ May we live enfolded in your love, so that in every encounter and in every event we may be aware of your presence and move from fractured witness to healing, wholeness and unity in Christ. We ask this through Jesus Christ who came as brother and servant to us all. Amen.

## Resources

For more information and various links on **Receptive Ecumenism**:

- ❖ *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*: Edited by Paul D Murray, Durham University  
Contact Oxford University Press [Australia Customer Service Team: Ph: 1300 650 616 Fax: 1800 813 602 Email: [cs.au@oup.com](mailto:cs.au@oup.com) ]
- ❖ *Review of Professor Paul D Murray's Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning* by The Right Reverend Paul Richardson, Assistant Bishop of Newcastle  
<http://www.centreforcatholicstudies.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/review-c-of-e-newspaper-9-april-09.pdf>
- ❖ *Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham University* <https://www.dur.ac.uk/theology.religion/ccs/>
- ❖ *South Australian Council of Churches* [www.sacc.asn.au](http://www.sacc.asn.au)
- ❖ *A New Ecumenical Wave* by Gerard Kelly, Archdiocese of Sydney  
[http://www.ncca.org.au/files/Forum/7th/Documents/Ecumenical\\_Address.pdf](http://www.ncca.org.au/files/Forum/7th/Documents/Ecumenical_Address.pdf)
- ❖ *De Margerie Series on Christian Reconciliation and Unity*  
[http://saskatoonrcdiocese.com/sites/default/files/DeMargerie\\_Series.pdf](http://saskatoonrcdiocese.com/sites/default/files/DeMargerie_Series.pdf)
- ❖ *The Gift of Each Other: Learning from Other Christians [a Parish Workbook]*  
<http://www.nswec.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/The-Gift-of-Each-Other-Order-Form.pdf>
- ❖ *Churches Together in England*  
[http://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/91312/Home/Group/aaaaaaaaaa/Web\\_areas\\_TO/Worship\\_and\\_reflection/Receptive\\_ecumenism.aspx](http://www.cte.org.uk/Groups/91312/Home/Group/aaaaaaaaaa/Web_areas_TO/Worship_and_reflection/Receptive_ecumenism.aspx)
- ❖ *Society for Ecumenical Studies - various papers including:*  
  
*Learning from Others: - Baptists and Receptive Ecumenism* by Paul S Fiddes, Regents Park College, Oxford University  
  
*Receptive Ecumenism: - An Orthodox Perspective* by Kallistos Ware, Metropolitan of Diokleia –  
  
see <http://sfes.faithweb.com/0711receptive.html>



I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. *Ephesians 3:16-21*

See also **An Examination of Conscience** by Very Rev Denis Stanley, Archdiocese of Melbourne  
[www.sacc.asn.au/ data/Receptive Ecumenism An Examination of Conscience.pdf](http://www.sacc.asn.au/data/Receptive%20Ecumenism%20An%20Examination%20of%20Conscience.pdf)

## Activity 2: Receiving the Gift of the Other



This activity can be carried out by one church alone or in an inter church gathering - see [www.sacc.asn.au](http://www.sacc.asn.au) for a Worksheet to assist you.

1. Quiet pondering: from your own experience, what is the gift that you have received from another tradition?
2. In small groups (3-6 people)
  - ❖ Share insights – name the gift(s) you have received from another Church.
  - ❖ What appears to be one of the distinctive gifts/charisms of that Church?
3. Plenary
  - ❖ Share insights with each other on these gifts
  - ❖ What does this have to say to **our** tradition?
  - ❖ What might **we** in our tradition do differently in the light of what we have heard?
  - ❖ How do **we** take that step?
  - ❖ With whom do **we** take that step?

## Activity 3: The Curiosity Box

The purpose of this activity is to elicit a spirit of curiosity, enquiry, learning and receptivity and so engender a Receptive Ecumenical awakening. Possible Questions that one Church at whatever level may pose to another are below. Other questions will, of course, emerge from the lived experience and/or from prayerful reflection and conversation.

(c'td)

**Questions** may lead to a one-off conversation with another or may be ongoing for a period of time.

- ❖ What are the structures and processes that promote the transmission of Christian identity, faith and mission in your Church to young people, to adults?
- ❖ How does your Church nurture an active congregation? How does it welcome newcomers?
- ❖ In what ways does your Church respond to the formation and education of lay/clergy?
- ❖ How does decision-making occur in your Church? Who participates? What processes are used?
- ❖ What collections do you take up...how are they disbursed/shared?

#### Action

In selecting a question and through prayer, conversation and listening:

- ❖ What have you heard that sets your heart on fire...what would you like to learn more about in relation to leadership, context, systems, processes?
- ❖ What might your tradition learn, or receive, with integrity from another which may facilitate your own tradition's growth into deepened communion in the way of Christ?

### Activity 4: Signposts

You are invited to consider any place **within your own church tradition** that may be 'fractured' or 'wounded', which is in need of healing, of being drawn more closely to Christ. The fracture or wound that you discern may be in the people, the structures, the practices, the systems or the processes. These 'signposts' may be our major strength which may also have a flipside weakness.



For example:

- ❖ Our tradition has always focused on the Word of God. Sometimes that's accompanied by a level of arrogance.
- ❖ Our structures and systems have a habit of taking away the voices of people at the edges.
- ❖ We tend to place too much authority in the hands of our leaders that when things go wrong it becomes difficult.
- ❖ We are suspicious of those that think they can hear God's voice.
- ❖ We have minimised major issues of justice by focusing on 'being saved.'
- ❖ Our processes and systems feel like they have become so committee-ised that we seem to seldom ever move forward.
- ❖ We have isolated ourselves from other traditions thinking that we have nothing to add to the conversation and that we're too different to be able to be understood anyway.
- ❖ We have placed so much emphasis on the clergy that lay people sometimes feel powerless and unheard.
- ❖ We tend to focus on congregational decision making at the expense of visionary leadership.
- ❖ When discussing issues of morality we quickly lose our ability to dialogue.

We invite you to share your ideas and insights on any of these Activities with those across your community and with South Australian Council of Churches – [sacc1@picknowl.com.au](mailto:sacc1@picknowl.com.au) so that we may learn together

## 5. Quotes and Resources to nourish and nurture us in the way of Receptive Ecumenism

### Quotes

Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking with us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us? *Luke 24:32*

The Church receives the fullness of the Spirit only in the totality of gifts made by all her members. *Yves Congar*

...if there is to be a real reception of one another in faith and life, then the personal and relational is prior. There has to be a real getting to know one another at all levels of the life of the two communions, a real appreciation of the gifts the other has to offer, and an inclination to receive as well as to give. *Dame Mary Tanner*

I am to see my Orthodox identity as a gift of grace from God, for which I am profoundly grateful. But I am to repent of the fact that I am such a poor and inadequate member of the Orthodox Church. I am to repent because my understanding of Orthodoxy is so petty and restricted. I am to repent, that is to say, not only of my moral failings but of the narrowness of my imaginative vision. *Kallistos Ware, Metropolitan of Diokleia*

Dialogue carried out in a spirit of humility and patient self-examination, is the preferred course of action toward reform and unity. *Professor Catherine E Clifford*

Timothy Radcliffe OP, in *Towards a Humble Church*, speaks of the diverse ways of assisting in the building of a more inclusive and unified Church "which lifts people up into the mystery of loving equality, which is the life of the Trinity".

If we are practising Receptive Ecumenism well, then we will end up being more Baptist. It is not about learning all about other traditions...it's more about learning *from* other traditions. What is it that the Catholics can teach us about a life in Christ that will not only help us, but help us to be more Baptist. *Rev David Smith, President (2010-12), Baptist Churches of SA*