

MCCIA Convenor's Annual Report

2017 was another busy and productive year for the MCCIA.

Way of the Cross

The largest event, as usual, was the annual Way of the Cross pilgrimage walk held on Good Friday 14th April, with participation by almost all the member churches along the route. The Police estimated an attendance of over 4,500 people for Easter 2017 (up from 3,000 in 2016).

MCCIA has been hosting this hugely popular event for over 2 decades: it is obviously a great 'coming together' of Christians from all over Melbourne and elsewhere to participate together in this deeply significant day in the Christian calendar, openly expressing our shared faith as we walk the city streets.

We also encouraged MCCIA churches to join the Palm Sunday Walk for Justice for Refugees, and a number of our members did participate.

Blessing of the Nativity: Christmas in the City

We jointly hosted the Blessing of the Nativity Scene in City Square at Christmas last December with the City Council.

This year, the Blessing of the Nativity will be moved to Federation Square, due to the Metro Tunnel excavations in City Square.

The 2017 event will be held on Wednesday 13th December, and the Lord Mayor hopes to be able to attend. Clergy from all the city churches are encouraged to attend, and remind people of the origins and meaning of Christmas.

Reformation 500: 'Re-discover'

MCCIA supported the commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation on Saturday 28th October with an event titled 'Many Voices One Song', organised by Christoph Dielmann of the German Lutheran Trinity Church, and held in St Paul's Cathedral, featuring 9 multi-cultural choirs to a packed church.

This was followed by a cross-cultural event in Federation Square.

The day ended with a combined Catholic and Lutheran choral service at St Johns Southgate.

Lord Mayor's Morning Tea

On 1st November this year the Lord Mayor hosted a gathering of all the MCCIA member churches' senior clergy. Issues discussed included homelessness and rough sleeping in the city, security, the aftermath of the Bourke Street incident, planning concerns.

Next year the Lord Mayor has invited the MCCIA Senior Clergy for a longer luncheon. We will be following up with him to arrange this.

Bible Study Series: *Truth in a Post-Truth World*

We ran a three-part Bible Study series on the future of truth in a post-truth world, looking specifically at Jesus' references to truth in the gospel of John. Attendances ranged between

15 and 30 people from many city churches and faith experiences, with animated conversation over dinner and after each presentation.

- Wednesday 28 June focusing on John 1:14, with Father Brendan Byrne SJ, Emeritus Professor of New Testament.
- Wednesday 23 August, focusing on John 8:32, with Rev. Dr Sean Winter, Associate Professor in New Testament at the University of Divinity
- Wednesday 11 October, focusing on John 14:6, with Rev. Ian Smith, Executive Officer, Victorian Council of Churches.

Sandy Yule and Jim Barr are working on a new series for 2018.

Administrators' Luncheon

MCCIA hosted a 'thank you' luncheon at St Paul's Cathedral in November for church administrative staff, attended by 9 people from four churches, with several more churches sending apologies.

Publications

We published 3,000 copies of the 2016 Advent and 2017 Easter brochures listing all the city church services over these holiday periods, distributed by hand to all hotels and tourist offices in the city, Docklands and Southbank.

Stefanie is about to assemble the 2017 Advent brochure. Offers of help gratefully received.

Website

We continued to update the new website, mccia.org.au, to assist visitors and newcomers to Melbourne to locate churches and services.

Anyone who would like to assist in keeping the website up-to-date would be most welcome. A 1-hour training course will be arranged with the website developer in St Kilda.

New members

Two new congregations have opened their doors in the inner city this past year: the Coptic Orthodox Church is now meeting in new premises in LaTrobe Street; and the Quakers have a new meeting house in William Street. We are delighted that they have sought to join MCCIA.

Conclusion

MCCIA through its members aims to foster the spiritual life of the city, support policies and programs that address injustice and disadvantage, and strengthen the bonds of Christian fellowship between us. These are our aims, and with your support we will continue to strive towards them.

Rev. Ric Holland

Convenor, MCCIA