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NEWSLETTER OF THE NSW ECUMENICAL COUNCIL INCORPORATED

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“What Does It Mean to Be Ecumenical?”

A Conference organised by the NSWEC’s Theological Reflection Commission



It has become customary for the Theological Reflection Commission (TRC) to mount a conference each year on a topic of current interest. And while this was considered for 2020, as we worked around the pandemic the main activity for that year was the production of the volume *A Celebration of Ut unum sint: The 25th Anniversary*. Co-edited by the signatories of this article, as the TRC convenors, the volume was finalised in time for its formal launch at the Heads of Churches meeting on 2 December 2020, held at the Armenian Apostolic Church of Holy Resurrection in Chatswood. It was published by the NSWEC as an ebook, where it continues to be available on its website. As a consequence, in 2021 the TRC has largely focused on following up matters arising from the book. The idea of capitalising on this impetus by way of this year’s TRC conference came naturally.

The conference “What Does It Mean to Be Ecumenical?” was held online via Zoom, on Saturday, 9 October 2021.

It began with Dr Timothy O’Hearn’s (TRC) welcome and acknowledgment of country, followed by the opening prayer offered by Major Clayton Spence (TRC) and the introductory remarks of Rev. Dr Raymond Williamson OAM (Past-President NSWEC) briefly outlining the history of the ecumenical movement.

The conference consisted of two panel sessions moderated by the TRC convenors, Professor Emerita Diane Speed and the Rev. Assoc. Professor Doru Costache, respectively. The first panel offered reflections on the volume *A Celebration of Ut unum sint*:

The 25th Anniversary. Speakers on this panel were Rev. Myung Hwa Park (President NSWEC), Fr Claude Mostowik msc (NSWEC), and Mr Doug Hewitt AM (NSWEC). The second panel debated the challenge of increasing polarisation in our society and the potential role of the ecumenical movement in addressing this.

Speakers to this panel were Rev. Dr Josephine Inkpin (Pitt St Uniting Church), Rev. Dr Michael Jensen (St Mark’s Anglican Church Darling Point), and Ms Brooke Prentis (Common Grace).

More than thirty enthusiasts for Christian unity attended, with the conversation and the debates going far beyond the two recorded sessions (available at https://youtu.be/_Ps9AgGtwRk), through the very active chatroom. The convenors and the TRC team are grateful for the lively response of the audience. The conference was concluded by a word from Diane Speed and the final prayer offered by Rev. Paul Weaver (TRC).

The six conference panelists gave such interesting presentations that the TRC agreed to invite them to provide a written version for inclusion in a revised version of *A Celebration of Ut unum sint*, to be released in 2022. There is also a possibility that a few others who were not able to contribute to the book in 2020 might like to do so this time, and some of the contributors may perhaps want to revisit their original offerings. This will all be discussed early next year. Until then, the TRC’s convenors and members hope that the 2021 conference will generate a renewed conversation about Christian unity at the grassroots.

DORU COSTACHE & DIANE SPEED

