

“Ecumenism – the fellowship of Christian churches as a sign of hope for the world – is not a building project whose state we can describe in a neutral and objective way, but a living process with which we must engage if we want to understand and appreciate it.”

(Konrad Raiser, former General Secretary, World Council of Churches, 2003)

This day event will celebrate the activities of InterChurch Councils, ecumenical initiatives in the community, and in public life. There will be guest presenters and a thought-provoking keynote address from Victoria Turner.

Grassroots ecumenism is one aspect of the ecumenical movement, a living relationship between Christians in the local context. Its focus is less on a deep dive into theological understandings and negotiating differences. Rather it is learning about and with each other. It is also a practical embodied form of ecumenism between churches, and in the public space. It invites reflection on the what we can do better together than apart. Across differences in ethnicity and religious traditions, the things we do together locally may focus on shared worship and prayer, as well as on social justice, eco-justice, advocacy and compassionate community care. It may be expressed in institutions such as prison ministry, hospital chaplaincy, and schools.

Grassroots ecumenism puts a face to the unity for which Christ prayed: Father, just as you 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 17:20,21)

“Grassroots ecumenism, bringing people together in local settings, despite and without effacing their religious differences, is often a yearning, an ideal and a hope of highly valued religious unity and spiritual fellowship. Rarely is it a firm, unchallenged accomplishment”. (Richard Werbner, 2018)

This event is one of a series of three planned to acknowledge the 75 years of the Victorian Council of Churches. This flyer provides essential information with a request to ‘save the date’ and promote it in your networks. More information will be forthcoming, including price and how to register. The cost for the Saturday event will be kept low to encourage maximum participation, and will include a light lunch.

The other two related events are:

Friday 9th August

A day of presentations, papers and conversation on the theme: *Ecumenism-in-Migration: Movement in the Ecumenical Movement*.

Keynote speaker: Victoria Turner.

Venue: Pilgrim Theological College, Parkville

Saturday 10th August (evening)

A dinner to celebrate the VCC silver jubilee.

Cost: \$50

Seating for 100 guests - register and book early!

Keynote speaker: Victoria Turner

Venue: Treacy Centre, Parkville

(note: the day event will conclude in time for people planning to attend the dinner)

For more information contact:

Victorian Council of Churches

(Executive Officer: Rev Deacon Sandy Boyce)

E: vcc@vcc.org.au M: 0499 726 213

W: <https://vcc.org.au>

The VCC website will be updated with information with links on the home page, and registration details.

Victorian Council of Churches

Saturday 10th August
A one day event
to acknowledge 75 years of VCC

Theme: Local Grassroots Ecumenism



Keynote address

Receptive-or-Restricted Ecumenism: Re-establishing Vulnerability in Relationship

This keynote critiques a recent method of ecumenism prominent in the Western world (receptive ecumenism), espousing its distance from the local and also distance from key decision makers. It also prioritises comfortable exchange over costly exchange. This talk gives an alternative model of ecumenical relationships and how we should go about embracing “otherness” within our own traditions from being blessed by the “other”.



Victoria Turner is a Lecturer in Theology and Mission at Ripon College (UK) and associate lecturer at the University of Oxford, and an associate tutor at Westminster College, Cambridge. She is co-editor of the International Journal of the Study of the Christian Church with Rev Dr Stephen Burns and book review editor for the journal, *Modern Believing*. Her PhD is in World Christianity from the University of Edinburgh and explored the shifting models of mission in the 20th century through researching the Iona Community (1938) and the Council for World Mission (1977 – previously the 1795 London Missionary Society). Victoria has three edited books with SCM Press and multiple book chapters and journal articles. She won the Lombard Essay Prize from the World Communion of Reformed Churches for her essay on transformative ecumenism.

Presentations by ecumenical groups in Victoria

The program will be available on the website of the Victorian Council of Churches as the program takes shape. It will include the keynote address and presentations by various ecumenical groups and networks and activities in Victoria which will be a catalyst for discussion and conversation, and celebration!

Examples of ecumenical groups and networks connected to the Victorian Council of Churches, as well as ecumenical activities in the wider church and community:

Palestine Israel Ecumenical Network
Christmas Bowl
Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce
World Day of Prayer Australia - Victorian Committee
Australian Churches Library Association - Victoria
Winter Shelters
Intergeren - children's and family ministry
VCC Emergencies Ministry
The work of Interchurch Councils
Ministry Renewal Retreats Victoria
Australian Student Christian Movement
Korus Connect
Ecumenical advocacy networks & eco-faith networks
We also recognise ecumenical initiatives in the wider community:
Ecumenical university chaplaincy
Ecumenical prison and hospital chaplaincy
General Religious Education initiative
Pax Christi
Five Leaf Eco-Awards
We also welcome other suggestions of local grassroots ecumenical projects and initiatives.

Let's celebrate the very diverse expressions of local ecumenism here in Victoria!

Who wears that ... and why?

Immediately after lunch we are planning a session when there will be an opportunity to hear about clerical vestments - who wears what and when, and why? And why do some of our Christian communities have no particular clerical clothing?
Not exactly a fashion parade nor a fashion statement. We are intending this session to be fun and engaging, and provide an opportunity to listen and learn, ask questions and find out some of the history, traditions and meaning of the clerical clothing of our ecumenical friends.

