

Illawarra Interchurch Covenant

DECLARATION OF INTENT

We, the people of the Christian churches in the Illawarra,

RE-AFFIRM our commitment to one another as partners on the journey towards unity of the church;

BELIEVE that we are being blessed in our generation to witness the action of the Spirit in drawing the Churches in a common search for a fuller expression of unity;

REJOICE in all we have in common and GIVE THANKS for the richness of our diversity, though recognising that our disunity is a hindrance to the Church's mission;

RECOGNISE ONE ANOTHER as Communities of Faith, Hope and Love, committed to following Christ and pledged to serve God's kingdom; and therefore

MAKE A COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER to engage in an ongoing process of growing together (covenanting), not knowing what visible form unity, which is God's will and gift, may take, but believing that, by taking the steps to which we now commit ourselves, we shall be led to grow ever more deeply into that unity.

THE AGREEMENT

First Dimension

We AGREE together

- To join in common prayer with one another (e.g. World Day of Prayer Services)
- To intercede and care for one another.
- To welcome each other as honoured guests at each other's services.
- To explore with one another our Christian convictions and their present application.

Additional Dimensions

Some Participating Churches may be able to include also one or more of the following additional dimensions.

i. Decision Making

We AGREE together

- To consider prayerfully, in all our decision-making processes, the question "can *this* be done with our covenanted partners?", so that no major decisions are taken without consultation with each other.
- To continue to develop methods of decision-making in common.

ii. Shared Use of Physical Resources

We AGREE together

- To support initiatives for sharing physical resources, such as buildings, and to encourage consultation between the appropriate governing bodies of our churches before new major developments are undertaken.

iii. Common Strategies for Mission

We AGREE together

- To explore with one another issues and strategies for mission, so that the possibility of common mission is recognised as a priority, information is shared, issues of mission are discussed, and strategies for evangelisation are planned in consultation. "Never do alone what could be done together!"
- To co-operate with one another in Christian education, especially in the public school system

iv. Common Witness

We AGREE together

To engage in ministry together as we are able, so that the potential for common witness is realised through the development of joint ministries (*such as youth ministry, responding to need in the local community*) and the search for reconciliation and social justice.

v. Baptism

We AGREE together

To witness to our common baptism

- By recognising the sacrament of Baptism administered in each other's church.
- By using the ecumenically agreed Certificate of Baptism.
- By celebrating the sacrament of Baptism jointly on occasions.

vi. Eucharist

We AGREE together

To invite and welcome members of each other's church to share in the Eucharist according to pastoral need.

THE FUTURE PLEDGE

To continue to discuss and articulate within our churches the meaning and significance of our involvement in the quest for a more visible expression of unity and the possibilities for further engagement in ecumenical partnership.

To explore such further steps as will be necessary to make more clearly visible the unity of all Christian people in the Illawarra.

AFFIRMATION OF COMMITMENT

On behalf of our churches, we affirm our commitment to this covenanting process

At this point in our journey towards visible unity, we confirm below those places in this document that we can covenant together.

First Dimension

Additional Dimensions

i. Decision Making

ii. Shared Use of Physical Resources

iii. Common Strategies for Mission

iv. Common Witness

v. Baptism

vi. Eucharist

Church name: _____

Signed: _____

Senior Minister

Congregational Representative

Note. This document is based on the NCCA document *Australian Churches Covenanting Together* and its Preamble which includes an explanation of Covenanting in Australia as well as offering a Biblical Basis of Covenant and Implications of Covenant. These documents and examples of some Australian interchurch covenants can be found at <http://www.ncca.org.au/about-faith-unity/covenanting>.