

GENERATION 20/20: Agents for Change

Two interfaith forums @ Café Royale, Square Edge

— where Palmerston North's young leaders talked about changing the world they will inherit.

Global Climate Change

4 August 2020

Racism

11 August 2020

including

**The Story of Interfaith
Dialogue in Palmerston North**

by Mary Eastham



A Palmerston North Interfaith Group Event

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by Mary Eastham

Edited by Bob Skipp

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Palmerston North Interfaith Group

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Introduction: History in the Making

BOB SKIPP

It should come as no surprise that the topics chosen for our August 2020 young leaders' forums were 'Global Climate Change' and 'Racism'. Both inspire a lot of passion in young people, not wild and aimless, but channeled with intent to understand and forestall crises that will inevitably shape their future. Both are also central concerns of our diverse faith communities, and hence of the activities of Palmerston North Interfaith Group. Mary Eastham's account of the story of interfaith dialogue in our city, the second section of this volume, vividly illustrates how sharing the views of our faith communities has created so many opportunities for wider public awareness. This awareness, both of the issues themselves, and of the validity of views and actions informed by the teachings of faith, adds a human and spiritual depth to that provided by science and politics.

Few who had attended the forums would have left without realising that they had been listening to some fine young people whose honest and insightful views, the 'courage of their convictions', were rooted in their strong personal faith. But what was said is just as important as our transient impression of our young orators. Now, with this little book, we have it 'all in writing' so that we can revisit and reflect and see where 'new ground is being broken'.

We will find much that is fresh and new in the following contributions. They certainly reflect the diversity of ethnic and faith traditions of our city. But through it all, our responsibility to treat Creation as sacred and to treat each one of our human family with justice and kindness, emerge as common understandings and convictions.

These convictions have pervaded all the Interfaith Group's events over the preceding nine years and, in fact, the two series of community conversations that inspired, and eventually led to, the Group's formation. "Talkback on the Terrace", as they were called, took place on Monday nights in May in the autumns of 2010 and 2011 in *Coffee on the Terrace* café at the far end of Broadway. The initiative came from Rev Jim Symons, a minister from the United States who was temporarily leading St David's Presbyterian Church in Roslyn. Jim's vision grew out of a life rich in dramatic experiences. He had marched with Martin Luther King Jnr. in Selma, Alabama and had been minister of a church in Columbine, Colorado at the time of the High School shootings. His desire to talk about important things within the community was highly infectious. The 2010 Talkback series, "Our planet is changing: what on earth are we going to do?" focused on climate change and global degradation. Developing the programme, and assembling an array of knowledgeable and inspiring teachers, was largely achieved through the efforts of Dr. Kevin Tate. Kevin went on to be the guiding light for subsequent events on climate change. The collection of our young leaders' contributions to the Global Climate Change forum held on August 4th 2020, which follows, is dedicated to Kevin, and includes an article he wrote for the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. As Mary Eastham relates in her Chapter "Beginnings", the 2011 Talkback series, "Varied Viewpoints", was the catalyst in Palmerston North for real faith-related conversations on major issues, resulting in the formation of the Interfaith Group. Having seen what would grow from small beginnings in a Terrace End coffee house, it has been a poignant experience to be part of these forums held amid the smell of fresh coffee and the hiss of the espresso machine at *Café Royale*. Who knows where all this may lead?



Hopefully, we will find clues in the following pages. Several contributors show us that these issues had struck at the heart of their personal mana and identity. Another contends that rather than being dispassionate bystanders with their sights only on 'higher things', faith communities, particularly if they act together, can be at the forefront of remedial action. Yet others show that young people need to talk to each other about pathways to a better future, creating opportunities to contribute to society and helping others to flourish as they flourish themselves.

Older people need young teachers. This has been our experience in past years, talking with informed young activists, and again when listening to these two forums' speakers. It is tempting to think how much those contributors might have gained if they had been able to come to all our earlier forums on climate change and discrimination. However, nine years is a long time in young lives, and some of our speakers were still in primary school when we started. The lesson for now is that, just as discovering that diversity of faith has presented unimaginable opportunities for increased understanding and co-operation within our community, how much more awaits us if we add the diversity of age? These forums have taught us that we need settings in which we can all share our thoughts and dreams, where we can have conversations and find ways of working together. It's up to all of us to make this happen.



Editor Bob Skipp with Elza Gibu Joseph, Klem McJarow-Keller, Deputy Chair Gerry Lew, Jasmine Pai and Treasurer Margaret Sinclair-Jones



EST 2020

CLIMATE CHANGE

YOUTH FORUM: OUR FUTURE

YOUTH PANELISTS:

GRACE FAKAHAU,
KLEM MCJARROW-KELLER,
AGHA WAJEEH, JASPREET SINGH.

MODERATOR:

TEANAU TUIONO
CLIMATE CHANGE ACTIVIST, MEMBER OF
PARLIAMENT AS A GREEN PARTY REPRESENTATIVE.

COVER DESIGNER @HAUTUTU.DESIGNS
PHOTOGRAPHY IZSI SAMUALS



Grace Fakahau



**Tongan; organiser of Student Strike for Climate Change;
Student at Amanaki Stem Academy and
Palmerston North Girls' High School;
Palmerston North Youth Council Chairperson.**

For My Islands, I Raise My Voice

GRACE FAKAHAU

“Ignoring climate change is Pacific genocide”.

1980. My grandmother sailed across the moana, just like my ancestors, from the friendly islands of Tonga, to the land of the long white cloud. Leaving my mother, aunts and grandfather behind, she made a living here to provide a lifestyle for her family there, while building a life for her and her family in New Zealand.

1991. My mother, aunts and grandfather too sailed across the moana, just as my grandmother did, to live a life filled with endless opportunities in the ‘white-man’s-land’.

2003. I was born.

At young ages, and still today, my grandfather tells me about our Pasifika heritage. He tells me about the days of climbing the coconut trees, the days of telling my mother off from climbing the coconut trees. He tells me about the joyful days he spent at the beach with the family, the days of showering in the rain, the days of taking my mother and aunt to school. He waits for the day I head to my home I’ve never been to, Tonga. He waits for the day he can give me a tour of his village, show me how he grew up, how he climbed the coconut tree, how he swam through the sea, he waits for the day we head to the friendly islands together.

But how long does he have to wait for our island to find itself underwater? How long does he have to wait, to find out that our island is gone? How long do we have left for the island to stay afloat? How long do we have left to bury our elders in their homelands, soon we will focus below, as we tulo before their headstones. How many stories will it take, how many islands will it take, before you listen to declare a ‘Climate Emergency’ that lies in front of us.

My people and my Pacific Islands face the effects of climate change today, with increasing food and water shortages, rising cases of malaria, flooding and storm surges, losing land and being forced from homes. My islands continue to sink into the sea as the government continues to sink into their thrones. The sea will rise, and my islands will sink, my ancestors’ lands will soon become extinct unless our government in this developed nation here in New Zealand declares a ‘Climate Emergency’.

Will our islands be another story to tell? Will my grandfather’s hands be the only connection I have to my homeland? Will I even be able to visit my islands, a home where my ancestors lay and my people pray? Pray for the water to keep from rising, to keep from sinking our islands. The water that connects our islands, will sink our islands, if an emergency is not declared.

I have this fear of losing my Pacific Islands. More than the little dots on the map, more than just the beaches with clear water and skies, more than the coconut trees and the wavering sea, more than your tropical holiday home, but my islands who bury my ancestors’ headstones, I fear of losing them. The homeland of my own, Tonga, I fear of losing her.



You see the gold bling from our teeth when we smile, we smile as we sink, but don't mistaken smiles of resilience as a sign that we're okay.

This climate crisis is more than just the trees falling and sea rising. It is the children laughing and giggling to each other as they walk through the floods up to their waistline, holding bags of fruit above their heads, it's the father who holds his son as he prays before the cyclone hits their village, it's the food and houses that is shared around the village for people to utilise. These actions of resilience, don't mistake them as a sign that we're okay.

As Pacific communities face impacts from Covid-19, they also prepare for Category 5 Cyclone Harold. A climate crisis which will cause loss and damage from a problem the Pacific has not caused. Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Fiji prepare for a humanitarian response. As they do so, we remember that both these crises highlight the inequality perpetuated by an economic system which puts profit over people and just how critical system change is towards a just recovery.

This is not only an economic issue, but a political one too.

To further the efforts of international diplomacy I will urge all neighbouring states to declare a Climate Emergency in their countries.

The system we live in was built to benefit the white men who colonised our islands, not their indigenous people or their lands. This colonial system that we were built on, continues to influence our laws and policies today.

My indigenous Pasifika learnings will finesse the system. It will diminish a system that was built to degrade us into a system that uplifts us indigenous people.

We're taught to be ashamed of our roots, strangers to silver spoons, but I have come to remember that there is beauty in my land and my people around me. Surviving in a system built to break minorities like myself is proof of how worthy we are, and, with the values of resilience and respect, how capable we are of bouncing back but without the void of retaliation.

I found out about the first School Strike for Climate the day before it happened. I rushed home after school with my sister and coloured in black 'Vivid' on the back of our dad's calendar, because we had no cardboard, "Stop Climate Change". My sister did the same on a cereal box.

We went and, just as we thought, there were no other Pasifika people there. Just my sister and I. We thought just how ironic that was.

How ironic it was that we found out through hearing some girls at our school talk about it, so we asked what was happening?

How ironic it was that most of my family in Auckland who wanted to attend the strike couldn't because of the clash with Poly Fest, the largest Pasifika Festival in New Zealand, where the majority of Pasifika people from all over New Zealand attend?

How ironic that a strike for climate change, a crisis that we are at the forefront of, is on the one day that our culture is recognised and celebrated?

How ironic that the people who suffer from climate change the most are pushed to the back of the climate conversation?

This is more than you drinking out of a paper straw, more than you visiting our Pacific Islands for your holiday homes, yet ignoring the effects of us sinking through this climate change. This is about society giving us a place to speak. This is about society understanding that we are the ones at the front lines of the climate crisis, so we need to be included in this conversation.

For the third School Strike for Climate, I didn't want the same repercussions of the first and second strike occurring where we were 'shoved to the back of the crisis we are at the forefront of'.

So we called out to our people ourselves. When a call is put out, the village comes in clutch. Warrior hearts beating in sync with the drum beats. Echoing through the sea. And making its way to the next generation so we can do it all over again.

For the third strike, we disrupted, diversified and decolonised the strike. We were pushed to the back of the march, so we shoved ourselves to the front. We, the minority, made up the majority of the strike, and that is what fighting against climate change to me looks like. In a system that is built to break my people and our struggles, we will turn around and break the system.

as my ancestors above me look over me, they ask why I am crying.
they ask why their islands are dying.
I try to explain this climate crisis as a whole,
but I'm focusing below, as I tulo between their headstones, sinking.
as my voice breaks to save our islands, my ancestors ache as they
sink into the dirty sea in silence.
I will fight to save them. I will fight to save the Pacific.

For my ancestors who sailed the moana, who were raised in their homes and on the streets, hoping for a lifestyle filled with endless opportunities for me, I raise my voice.
For my islands where my family live and ancestors buried, sea levels rise as our land sinks in a hurry, I raise my voice.

For my islands that you book for your 'tropical' holiday, but ignore the effects of us sinking through this climate change, I raise my voice.

For my brown, Tongan, minority-raised, child of immigrant parents, second youngest of four, Salvation Army, Good Will, holey socks and shoes self, I raise my voice.

For my ancestors, for my islands, for the hood, for the 676, for myself.

I raise my voice in hope of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, in hope of the government declaring a Climate Emergency.



Klem McJarrow-Keller



From St. Peter's College and the Catholic community.

Having Faith Does Make a Difference

KLEM McJARROW-KELLER

The opportunity to speak at the interfaith climate forum on August 4th meant a lot to me, and allowed me to understand the climate crisis we are facing better from a number of perspectives, including that of my own faith. I'm excited to share my thoughts from my talk at the forum in this proceedings volume as well. This is a slightly modified version of the talk I gave. In my talk, I discussed what I think the place of religion is in this discussion. Leading on from that, I discussed Catholic views as I understand them on the root causes of climate change and the moral basis for action. Finally, I talked about local action and its place in the movement.

First of all it's important to clarify why religion should even be included in this discussion, because on the surface it does feel strange to bring in a religious perspective on such a technical and political problem. My view is that, firstly religions are valuable in that for any discussion, diversity is strength. Having contrasting views creates more robust and comprehensive solutions to problems. You are less likely to overlook useful avenues, less likely to overlook potential flaws, and often end up with a lot more ideas, options and skills at your disposal to put to work reaching the goal. Religions are not only massive parts of the diversity of our communities, but they also represent some of the oldest institutions of collected wisdom and thought from around the world. Having religious representation in discussions is important so that we can tap into this inherited wisdom. Having a wide range of perspectives in our discussions also means that the results will have more of an impact, as it will be more likely people see themselves and their beliefs represented in the movement. This is especially important on a local level in New Zealand and Palmerston North with the incredibly multicultural communities we are blessed to have.

Religious groups as organisations can also be especially well placed to make real change in the fight against climate change. One of the most difficult parts of tackling the climate crisis is that it requires motivation that is in some part based on morality. There are few easy to see monetary benefits to changing your company to be more eco friendly, for example. Also, Government representatives, although we love them, can sometimes be more interested in keeping their jobs than doing the right thing when those things come into conflict. However, religious institutions are specifically built around morality, doing the right thing no matter how hard it is, and fighting climate change is hard. We have to change for reasons that are not immediately tied to our immediate comfort or needs, but require a dedication to a collective goal. Faith, for those who hold it, can provide the mindfulness and dedication needed to have a genuine impact.

There's also the simple fact that religions are made up of collections of individuals who can unite in their dedication to a common cause. Having 'armies' of dedicated people willing to support each other to push for action is really useful in tackling a problem where the barriers to change are relatively high, often almost by design. That kind of collective dedication can also rub off on others who want to do something but don't know what to do or how to overcome those barriers. And finally, faith groups are good at organising people. Take, for example, the very interfaith forum this volume documents. Faith communities know how to mobilise people efficiently to where they are needed. They have had many years of practice, after all.



The Catholic Church, in particular Pope Francis, has had a lot to say about the issue of climate change. Within the context of the Catholic faith, we are meant to care about three things. The first is *God*; the second is our *Neighbour*, our fellow human beings; and finally, *Creation*. Realistically, climate change hits all three of these points. In terms of God, within Catholicism humans don't 'own' the earth we live on, it is more being 'leased out' to us. So, by polluting and degrading our gift from God, we're disrespecting God. The second part is people. Christ calls on us to protect and help those who are most in need, and avoid doing others harm. I don't think I need to preach too much on the effects rising sea levels and more extreme weather will have on the lives and livelihood of people all across the world, particularly those without the resources to cope with them. Catholics are called to take action against climate change. The last part is our duty to creation itself. I myself think that this can occasionally be overlooked; creation is seen solely as a vehicle for human improvement rather than valuable in itself. We have particular duties to protect the ecosystem just for the sake of it, and to protect the creatures that live in those places.

Now for those root causes of climate change. Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si* points to two main roots of the current crisis.

The first is consumerist culture. This values profit for the sake of profit, rather than valuing profit as a vehicle to do good for others, and which values possession over utility. This has prioritised the seeking after short term profits and 'progress' irrespective of the cost to people, and to the environment. Fighting back against this requires some sacrifice: buying less of what you don't need, buying things that will actually last and taking care of them so that they do, and knowing the impacts and ethical implications of what you are buying. It's never easy to change, but particularly for those of us who can afford it, these sorts of personal sacrifices will be necessary to help save the planet and encourage others to do the same.

Secondly, there is the problem of failing to address circumstances for which you can't see the direct consequences. You do not see the air around you warming and the sea rising as you drive down the highway, and this makes it difficult for us to appreciate the consequences of what we do. In the end, the solution to ignorance is understanding. We need to know the consequences of our actions, do what research we can and listen to the experts, and use our privilege as members of a wealthy democratic nation to help further the cause of climate action across the globe.

While I don't think I have the wisdom to talk about a full game plan in terms of local climate action, I had thought it would be good to at least talk about why I think it's important. Local action is critical for any large scale movement, particularly one pushing for real and difficult change. This is because every level of society, from the local community to the international, is required to enact effective and lasting change on such a huge and wide-reaching issue. This 'snowball' effect happened when in the 1980s New Zealand stood up to the world's global nuclear powers and their tests. This was not solely a government movement by any stretch: it encompassed communities, towns, cities, right up to the national government. It was this drive on all levels of society that made the movement the powerful force that it was. Moreover, local action can spark national action, even when powers larger than us are at first against us. Again looking to New Zealand, the protests at the 1981 Springbok Tour were a case of local activism having its voice heard and sparking real change in attitudes in New Zealand and South Africa, despite significant forces opposing them. One of the things that is required for this to work though, is continued dialogue. Public forums and discussions like the one we

held in August are essential to the success of climate activism – to keep everyone in the community engaged, to adapt to the obstacles that will inevitably block our way, and to maintain the fighting spirit of all involved.

Despite all the doom and gloom that can come along with talking about such a devastating crisis, one of the things I was struck by, reading and hearing Pope Francis, is that even when he talks about such a sad subject, he keeps talking about hope. He frames the causes of the problem and the things we are doing to our earth not as an excuse for giving up but as ways for figuring out how to fix the issue. He continually emphasises that we still have time to act. Those actions won't fix everything, but that's not the point: we still have time, and we need to use it.



Agha Wajeeh



From Palmerston North Boys' High and the Muslim community.

Climate Change: What We Can Learn from Science and Islam

AGHA WAJEEH

Praise be to God, who brought forth creation through His omnipotence, dispersed winds and made firm the shaking Earth with rocks because of His compassion, whose worth cannot be measured or described by speakers, whose bounties cannot be calculated, whose claim (to obedience) cannot be satisfied by those who attempt to obey, whom the height of intellect cannot appreciate and the depths of understanding cannot comprehend. He for whose glory and reverence, no limit has been laid down, He whose existence isn't fixed, He for whom no eulogy adequate and no time ordained.

My name is Agha Wajeeh. I am studying at Palmerston North Boys' High in Year 13 and I am part of the Muslim community here in Palmerston North. Today I will be discussing one of the most concerning aspects of today's modern world, and some of the questions that can have the power to determine the future of this world.

What does Science teach us?

'Climate change': What is it? How did it come about? Where is its beginning? What can it really bring about? What are the potential sinister disasters that we really face from it? 'Climate change' – it's more than just two words – more than just scientific terminology about how the environment seems to be changing quite dramatically. Climate change is a terrifying threat to us, to marine wildlife – wildlife in general – to entire species... To the very core of life on this planet – the very core of the life on this once beautiful planet that was engulfed in serene nature from the north to the south, from the east to the west. Climate change, itself, has been happening on this planet for many years; after all, it is a part of the natural cycle of this Earth. However, the biggest cause of worldwide concern now is when we see the rate and the magnitude of climate change that is occurring. The root of this increased rate of climate change over the past few years and the concerns it has raised, the root of this downfall behind the curtains of development, progress and growth... is a disrupted balance; a balance disrupted by humans; by us. Disruption in the balance of what, you may ask... Disruption in the balance of *everything, everywhere*. The balance between: this world's climate, this world's food, this world's medical state; in the very ecosystems, in the very biodiversity, in the very biosphere of this planet – and our emotional, social, and economic greed.

Ever since the Industrial Revolution, human activities, such as burning down forests to utilise land and burning fossil fuels (e.g. coal, oil and natural gas) have led to higher concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that have, in turn, led to more heat retention and an increase in temperatures at the Earth's surface.

When climate change became front-page news 30 years ago, people started raising concerns about the potentially disruptive impact of heat-trapping emissions from burning fossil fuels and rain forests. But since then, in the time it took to build the case that climate change is a pollution problem, it has become unnervingly far more than that. The entirety of approximately 8.7 million species and 7.8 billion humans face what can only be described as 'approaching doom'. So what is really happening? The temperature of water in the oceans has risen all around the world and more and more ice has melted away in



both the Arctic and the Antarctic regions. As the rate of emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases continues to increase and contaminate the Earth's atmosphere, more of the Sun's heat gets trapped and global temperatures rise. As a consequence, glaciers in Asia melt at a faster rate than ever documented in historical records, and risks of flooding and rock avalanches from destabilised slopes increase markedly.

Despite seeing all of that happen, many people still do not understand the true danger that accompanies climate change. The more our global temperatures rise the more we put our ecosystems, our wildlife and our marine life at risk. But so many people just have not come to that realisation yet, or are just choosing to ignore it. According to the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) 2019 Global Climate Summary,¹ the combined land and ocean temperature has increased at an average rate of 0.07°C per decade since 1880. However, the average rate of increase since 1981 has been 0.18°C per decade, which is nearly three times as great. Now that may not sound like a lot but to have that occur across the entire combined span of 510 million square kilometre land and ocean is truly a tremendously frightening statistic. Moreover, if it keeps on increasing at that exponential rate, in a 100 years that average rate may increase to 1°C per decade or even more. That would undoubtedly lead to a clear increase in chances of extinction of many species we consider to be a normal part of wildlife today.

Right now, Africa is very vulnerable to the impact of climate change due to the existing environmental, economic, social and political issues that the continent currently faces. Issues such as poverty, political conflicts, and ecosystem degradation² that, together, result in significantly low adaptive capabilities, mean that it is much more difficult for Africa to adjust to climate change than any other continent. Climate change is projected to severely compromise food security through its impact on agricultural production. And, by 2050, 350-600 million people are projected to experience increased water stress due to climate change as well.

But it's not just Africa that faces impending peril due to climate change; a steady drop can also be seen in the thickness and extent of glaciers and ice sheets of the Arctic. This has, and will continue to cause changes in natural ecosystems, leading to detrimental effects on many animals including migratory birds, mammals, and higher predators. With a reduced extent of sea ice and permafrost, many adverse effects on human settlements in Arctic regions (e.g. Alaska) can be expected. This can include all sorts of things: changes to ice road transportation and winter activities such as ice fishing, damage to infrastructure, negative impacts to roads, pipelines, and buildings, as well as water distribution. And, in fact, continued permafrost degradation is projected to make unstable infrastructure a reality... before the start of the 22nd century.

In Asia, climate change is projected to decrease freshwater availability in the central, south, east and southeast regions, particularly in large river basins. Additionally, with population growth and increasing demand from higher standards of living, this decrease could have a negative impact on more than a billion people by the 2050s. Correspondingly, the sickness and mortality rate due to diarrheal disease is predicted to increase in east, south, and southeast Asia due to projected changes in the hydrological cycle associated with climate change.

¹ <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/201913>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regional_effects_of_climate_change#Impacts_on_Africa

Water security problems in Oceania, that includes us in New Zealand, are projected to intensify by 2030 in southern and eastern Australia, and in the northern and some eastern parts of New Zealand. As well as that, rise in sea levels, more severe storms and coastal flooding will likely impact coastal areas. Coastal development and population growth in places such as Cairns, Southeast Queensland and Northland, would put more people and infrastructure at risk. Moreover, by 2030, increased drought and fire caused by climate change is projected to cause declines in agricultural and forestry production over much of southern and eastern Australia and parts of eastern New Zealand as well.

The adversities that climate change has caused, and will cause, on this Earth are countless and the list just goes on.

Human beings are one of the most intellectual and advanced creatures on this planet with the power of articulate speech and great wisdom as well... "But these very intellectual creatures", to quote Jane Goodall, renowned primatologist and anthropologist, "are the ones destroying their only home at such an alarming rate. Have we lost the wisdom passed on to us; have we lost the wisdom that some indigenous people showed in the past in making decisions based on how they will affect our people and the generations ahead?" Why must we compromise on the future of the generations ahead because of our laziness and our personal needs?

What does Islam teach us?

Islamic Scholar Ayatollah Nasir Makarim Shirazi mentions: "It is a universal principle, that the events in this world are linked together like a chain; the earthquakes, storms, hurricanes, floods and many other natural disasters as well." This means everything has a cause and effect, so any action that we take – any decision that we make – is going to impact what happens in the future. And depending on those actions and decisions, this world might very well see an end to life during the time of the 5th or 6th generation after us... I don't think anyone here would want that.

Quran on climate change:

As a Muslim I truly believe in what Islam's holy book, the Quran, says – that God sent humans to the Earth to protect it.

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness]."

Throughout the Islamic tradition, the Quran and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, there is clear evidence we must take care of this Earth. Thus, it is our duty to work to prevent climate change. In Islam, there is a clear call for action against climate change. I, as a Muslim; I, as a person, and all of us as human beings, cannot idly stand by as the condition of this Earth deteriorates.

Islam condemns even something as simple as needlessly plucking out a leaf from a tree branch or injuring or killing an animal without reason.



And not just the Quran, Prophet Muhammad has said:

“The Earth is green and beautiful, and God has appointed you his stewards over it. Do not waste water even if you were on the bank of a flowing river.”

In today’s modern world, this “bank of a flowing river” is synonymous with how people in first world countries like New Zealand have easier access to water than some others but, like the prophet said, that’s no reason to be wasteful about it. Every little bit helps, from turning off the tap while brushing your teeth, to reducing the time you take in the shower. I will admit I’m guilty here as I do sometimes lose track of time in the shower but I’m sure that’s something a lot of us here can improve on. It is exactly those little things that make a big difference when we all do them collectively. As people of faith, as people who are grateful for this magnificent privilege – this beautiful Earth – that we have been given, we have a responsibility to preserve it, and we can no longer play a passive role in the fight against climate change. As long as the fossil fuels coal and oil are still plentiful and cheap in many parts of the world, both are likely to be consumed by industry so long as it pays to do so. We must ask ourselves the questions: “Why do I have to bring about change? Why must I be responsible for a mess created by other people and generations before me?” Perhaps I need to answer myself: “Even if I am not playing a large part in, or intentionally causing climate change, being a bystander can be just as bad, since I might have been the one who could have done something, could have put a stop to some of it – maybe even a lot of it. By being a passive bystander, I can never avail myself of any of those opportunities.

From what we have discussed so far, it seems to be clear that the root cause of all of this is an imbalance between what we need and what we utilise.

Islam presents two basic concepts regarding our problems of living in an unbalanced world –

1. The first one is Justice of God.

Prophet Muhammad has said: “It is by means of justice that all of the heavens and earth exist.”

The extensive meaning of the word ‘justice’ can be similar to giving what is deserved, putting or assigning everything to its rightful place, thus, setting everything in balance and equilibrium. And that is exactly what Prophet Muhammad refers to when he taught us about God’s justice.

Accepting this meaning or sense of justice, we can see that it exists in and naturally rules over the entire universe; from the balance of the galaxies to the balance that holds a solar system in place, to the balance of the structure of an atom to the balance of the structure in a human being’s, an animal’s or plant’s existence. And that very justice existed on this planet as well, but we have rid this world of that justice – we have violated it – what we and our predecessors have done to this Earth is injustice.

So, for our sins and our good deeds, we will receive our respective rewards or punishments and those rewards or punishments will only benefit or agonise us depending on what we have done in the past, what we are doing and what we going to do in the future. And I’m not necessarily referring to heaven or hell either; we will receive our reward or our punishment in this very world depending on what we do from here on and how we go about fighting climate change. We will either receive our reward and get to prolong life on this planet... or, by continuing to violate the just balance of this world, we will receive our punishment and witness the beginning of the end of this planet.

2. The second one is to Abstain from being extravagant.

Imam Jaffar Sadiq, one of the main leaders in Islam from the lineage of prophet Muhammad, said “Man when he transgresses and exceeds his limits, needs what pains him and makes him suffer so that he may refrain from his faults and turn back to the right path of good and guidance.”

We can clearly see this happening to us because the only ones that are going to be in pain and are going to suffer from carelessly sucking dry the resources of this Earth... are us. So I put this question: do we really need what pains us and makes us suffer to get our eyes to open or can we come to realise our dire straits caused by climate change? Or, can we stop it before it stops all of us - stops all of humanity - stops all life?

What are the Solutions?

I hope I have sparked enough ardour to provoke the question: “Now that we have heard you constantly rant on about how terrifying climate change is, nothing is too small and whatnot, what exactly is it that I can specifically do to bring about change?”

Be more energy-efficient, by:

- Unplugging computers, TVs, or any other electronics while you are not using them.
- Using electricity from renewable sources rather than gas or other fossil fuels, e.g., use an electric stove – electric cars are the way of the future.
- Hang-drying clothes whenever you get the opportunity instead of using the dryer.
- Changing to energy-efficient light bulbs; LED light bulbs use 75% less energy than a traditional incandescent bulb – that’s a huge saving.

Try out a more climate-stable diet by:

- If you can and like gardening, growing some of your own vegetables and fruits.
- Having more meat-free meals. That may prove to be more challenging for some, myself included.
- Not letting any food go to waste.

Go green, if you may, with your commute, by:

- Riding a bike.
- Using public transport more.

“Reduce, reuse and recycle” offers the simplest ways to reduce the environmental stress we place on this planet.

For example, you can set up a compost system for your kitchen scraps and garden waste. Around half of the waste that ends up in New Zealand landfills is organic material and when that decomposes, it produces methane. Methane is a very potent greenhouse gas and far less is produced when organic matter is broken down during aerobic composting than under anaerobic conditions in a landfill.

Currents increasingly bring to our shores annually some of the eight million tonnes of plastic waste that has ended up in the sea, choking sea life along the way. That is why we should try to make things better from our side. We all have access to tap water so we should all use that as much as possible rather than bottled water. Also use reusable bags as much as possible instead of plastic bags or paper bags.



These are all things a person can still make time for while managing a busy schedule. In fact you don't even have to do all that if you really don't feel like it; you can just do something simple such as raising awareness. That can be enough to set off the 'butterfly effect' motivating many others to conserve the resources of this Earth. Simply starting conversations about climate change can raise awareness. Or you could... lead a grand strike that, hopefully will inspire everyone around you and lead them to wholeheartedly support your cause and make a magnificent first step towards this long-term goal. It is up to you.

There are already many people, many groups, many organisations, many industrial companies, and even political parties who are working to reduce their environmental footprint, working for this one sole cause - stopping climate change. None of these people started out with a big group from day 1, they started by themselves and built it up as they went on. We cannot afford to stay in the mentality that one person cannot make a difference. If we admit defeat and despair so easily, we have failed before we could even start. Do not think of it as fixing the mess of your predecessors, think of it as giving back to something that you inhabit, use and take away from, in order to thrive and lead a prosperous life. Do not think of yourself as just one person putting in a lot of effort with very little overall result. Instead, think of this effort being added to a much larger collective effort of the many heroes that are continuing to work towards a vital goal – know that you'll have thousands of people working alongside you for this cause. To quote David Takayoshi Suzuki, Canadian academic, science broadcaster and environmental activist, "In a world of more than seven billion people, each of us is a drop in the bucket. But with enough drops, we can fill any bucket."

Our entire community of Palmerston North needs to join the fight against climate change – from someone who takes less time in the shower, to someone who uses less electricity in their house, to someone who organises climate awareness strikes – if we just combine our efforts, we can accomplish something truly awe-inspiring and miraculous.

No matter how small, or how big, an effort we make, I urge everyone to lend a helping hand to make this world a better place than we found it – for our own sake and for those who come after us.

Jaspreet Singh



**Researcher at AgResearch, a Crown Research Institute;
born into the Sikh faith;
founding member of Palmerston North Interfaith Group;
member of Green S Welfare Force;
active environmentalist, interested in history of places and migration.**



Climate Change Action - Connecting with Young People

JASPREET SINGH

It was a wonderful experience to be able to be part of both the climate change forum and the racism forum.

It is always good to meet talented and passionate people from all walks of life. Being a panelist on the climate change forum, beside people being interested in work of Green S Welfare Force, I got to know and make friends with the moderator for the night, Teanau Tuiono, and my fellow speakers. It was amazing to see people were willing to take the initiative to be part of protecting Mother Earth. I gained knowledge about climate change and environment conservation from Catholic, Islamic and Pacific Islands' perspectives. I have become more determined than ever to connect with young people and invite them to be part of the work I do for the environment, and vice versa.

Climate change is a common household topic which is impacting life worldwide. Here are some facts about climate change – examples of projected consequences for people, lifestyle choices leading to excessive carbon emissions and simple steps to reduce our personal impact. By 2050, sea levels are projected to rise by 30 cm and, by 2100, about 100 cm. This would result in about 150 million people, whose home countries were in areas vulnerable to inundation by the sea, such as the Pacific Islands, Bangladesh, Mauritius, being made climate refugees. Our dietary habits, particularly in the affluent west, increase our carbon footprint. Research has shown that the carbon footprint of producing 1kg beef can be equivalent to a person flying from London to New York and back³. We can start taking small steps such as changing old incandescent bulbs for LED ones and that should save up to 70% of the energy.

I was born into the Sikh faith which originated in north west India in the 15th century. The first Sikh leader, Guru Nanak, travelled far and wide to spread a message of equality and care for Mother Earth. He has recited holy sermons for all the humanity describing earth as Mother, air as Guru and water as Father.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first embodiment of Divine Light in the Sikh tradition, laid the foundation for a sacred vision for the environment when he composed the salok as second *Mehala*:

'Pavan Guru Pani Pita, Mata Dharat Mahat !'

ਪਵਣੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਿਤਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ ।।

(Air is the Guru, Water the Father, and the Earth is the Great Mother)

All Sikh Gurus maintained the same level of commitment to the conservation of nature. In this current time, I am member of 60 million strong Dera Sach Sauda and the aim of this organisation is to initiate actions to mitigate climate change and other welfare works for the betterment of humanity (<http://derasachasauda.org/>). All over the world every year millions of saplings are planted and looked after. So far over 45 million plants have been

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/22/festive-christmas-meal-long-haul-flight-meats-damaging-planet>

planted worldwide. Here in New Zealand, our group of Green S Welfare Force volunteers travel on weekends and have been planting native trees all over the country for about eight years. We are about 40 volunteers who have planted over 400,000 plants during this time. Apart from planting trees, we are also involved in 'cleanliness' campaigns all over the world (<https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/seven-sharp/clips/tracksuit-wearing-volunteer-group-helping-give-blood-and-plant-trees>). In India, 31 metropolitan cities have been cleaned in a matter of hours by about 500,000 volunteers, and also a 50 km stretch of the Ganges river. In Auckland, we have been involved with the cleaning of the Whau river, where members of Green S and other volunteers have pulled out tyres, shopping trollies and lots of plastic waste to clear the waterway and give it a new lease of life. In Manawatu, we have been planting trees in many places including Edwards Pit Park, Linklater Block, Anzac Park, Linton Army Camp, and the path of the new cycleway along the Manawatu river. I would be keen to be involved in more projects in our region to help protect Mother Earth.

In Hindu and Sikh religions dead bodies are cremated and the ashes are dispersed in waterways. DSS has come up with an alternative that is more beneficial for the environment. The ashes are buried in a pit filled with gravel and soil and a plant is planted on top in memory of the person. This way the ashes provide the plant with nutrition and the deceased person is still serving the mother Earth after death.

I have had the added bonus of being asked to be moderator for the Racism forum. It was an amazing experience. I got to learn a lot from Teanau and Gerry, they were my mentors for the night. I can connect to the panelists now as family members. Tessa's talk about knowing one's neighbourhood and doing good in the community was very inspiring. It was a lovely experience to see that our little kind gestures can go a long way in promoting good understanding and good values in the neighbourhood. Youth can play a very important part in this. Elza's talk gave an insight to her life and experiences in New Zealand and the Middle East; there was a lot to learn and absorb. The talk was powerful and inspirational. It was good to see Elza has worked hard as a volunteer who has left a positive impact on the society. Jasmine's talk was a powerful one; I could connect to her talk about being unique and using this as one's strength. Jasmine took us through a journey of growing up and being appreciated in the society for one's own cultural values. Agha's wise words were very influential. Some examples he used to express equality of people have stuck with me, such as 'people being like teeth of same comb', and the comparison of new and old coins – although they look different they have exactly the same value.



Dr. Kevin Tate – *IN MEMORIAM*



Distinguished Climate Scientist, the late Dr Kevin Tate, speaking at the People's Climate March in The Square, Palmerston North on 28 November 2015. The march was organised by Youth Action Group Manawatu as part of a nationwide demonstration of concern ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris.

Climate Change – Our Greatest Moral Challenge

KEVIN TATE FRSNZ

(adapted from an article published in Candour (8) 2013, PCANZ)

Natural Climatic Change

Life has existed on Earth for about 4.5 billion years, and during this time the earth's climate has changed many times due to a complex interplay of many natural processes such as changes in the earth's orbit and tilt in relation to the sun, solar and volcanic activity, and natural releases of greenhouse gases (trace gases in the atmosphere like carbon dioxide and methane that absorb heat). There have been times when the earth has been very much hotter than today and other periods when ice covered much of the earth (glacial periods, or ice ages). During these switches between glacials and interglacials (warm periods), temperatures and the concentrations of atmospheric trace gases like carbon dioxide (a potent greenhouse gas) have fluctuated in close synchrony. It is now clear that these natural changes in climate largely drove successive human migrations across the globe during the past 120,000 years. Over the past 10,000 years, human civilisations developed as the climate warmed after the ice retreated. The work of 19th century scientists including Sven Arrhenius showed that carbon dioxide gas absorbs heat (hence the term greenhouse gas). During the past 10,000 years, carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (e.g. methane, nitrous oxide, water) have helped to keep the earth's temperature about 30 degrees warmer than it would have been if they were absent from the atmosphere. In fact, without them the earth would have been covered in ice, severely limiting the development of life. Even during this so called Goldilocks period, natural climate changes between 1500-1800 were the main driver of large scale human crises including economic downturns and conflicts.

Humanly-Induced (Anthropogenic) Climatic Change

So, if the climate has always been changing, why do we need to be concerned today? The answer to this question is complex, but put simply, during the period up to about 1800, concentrations of these greenhouse gases had remained quite stable, and were very much lower than they are today. The onset of the industrial revolution about 1750 marked a major expansion in human populations around the globe, and the associated expansion in agriculture and deforestation began to increase the atmospheric concentrations of these gases. This effect of humans on the atmosphere is sometimes called the "enhanced" greenhouse effect. These increases were rapidly accelerated when new energy sources – coal, followed later by oil – began to power industry, unlocking carbon stored for millennia to fuel even more rapid human population as well as economic growth. These developments have brought many millions out of poverty, but in the process, have raised greenhouse gas concentrations to levels not seen on earth for about 3-5 million years. For example the last time atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations reached the current level of 400 ppm (parts per million), forests extended to the arctic ocean which was almost ice free, and sea levels were metres above what they are today. The observed long-term upward trend in global surface temperatures over the past 100 years has raised global mean temperatures by nearly one degree, with some parts of the globe (e.g. high latitudes) rising over 5 degrees. Over the past decade or so atmospheric temperatures have not risen as fast as in earlier decades as a result of factors including solar dimming and increased aerosols (e.g., from coal use in China and India) that reflect sunlight. A further reason is that most of the extra heat has been stored in the oceans. One consequence is



that at both poles ice is now melting at an unprecedented rate, most glaciers around the world are in rapid retreat, and sea level rise is accelerating. Globally, human activity has now overtaken natural processes to become the major driver of environmental change, and so the current epoch has become known as the Anthropocene.

Although my brief was to discuss climate change, there are many other ominous signs globally including depleted fish stocks, deforestation, loss of productive soils and clean water that together show how much we have pushed the earth's systems beyond sustainable limits. Our burgeoning greenhouse gas emissions have now trapped so much heat, mainly in the oceans, that we are experiencing major changes in weather around the globe. These changes come at a cost, both economically and in human terms. For example, the heat wave in Europe in 2003 resulted in 52,000 deaths. In 2013 Cyclone Haiyan struck the Philippines, killing 10,000 people and making millions homeless. Extreme weather events have now become almost daily news, including floods, droughts and forest fires. Damage from the two severe storms to hit New Zealand so far this year together has been estimated to cost NZ\$100m. NASA has called the developing El Nino a Godzilla event that will have impacts around the globe.

Impacts on Human Societies

These events are increasing in number, intensity and frequency, causing the global Insurance industry to state in late 2010 that “the data is clear: weather-related disasters have become significantly more frequent and more extreme in recent decades and this trend will not cease anywhere in the mid-term future. Ambitious action on reducing greenhouse gas emissions remains critical in order to keep climate change within boundaries not dangerous for human development”. They also demanded public-private action on climate change adaptation in developing countries. This is because these countries are being most affected and are least able to adapt. In our own region, the island states of Tuvalu and Kiribati are two examples, where sea level rise and associated storm surges are causing increasingly serious affects on their infrastructure and food production. Some wealthy countries by contrast are spending millions to meet these changes. Examples are the Thames barrage in the UK, and huge investment in the Netherlands to shore up their sea defences.

So, we are now over a decade into the new millennium, and the irrefutable scientific evidence compels us to ask not whether the climate is changing due to increasing greenhouse gas emissions but rather, what we can do about it and whether we should bear the costs now or later. It is now inevitable that future generations will have to deal with global warming and other consequences of our unwillingness to “care for creation”. This is why leading climate change scientists like James Hansen consider climate change to be the biggest moral challenge we face this century. A recent conference in Europe concluded that it is inevitable that in one or two generations most people on earth will experience water shortages. And yet here we frequently hear scorn being poured on those who plead for action for environmental protection. This flies in the face of what the science is telling us about the destructive path we are on, and devalues the environment in the name of progress and economic growth. Indeed, around the world governments actually subsidise fossil fuels and their damaging environmental effects by about US\$400-500 billion each year. If all 7 billion people on earth had similar lifestyles to those of us in wealthy countries, we would need the resources of more than three earths!

Practical Responses

So, in the absence of political leadership, what can we do as individuals to avert the coming crisis? And what role can the church have?

Framing the first question more succinctly – Is there a better way to be better off? We can begin by consuming less and becoming more careful about what we consume. David Robinson, in a recent book entitled “The Poised Century”, answers this first question with a firm “Yes”, provided we develop a new economic system that values who we are over what we have and that values being over accumulation of goods. He goes on to insist we must establish a new prosperity that meets the needs of all citizens, not just the wealthy minority. Here I refer to Ian Harris’ thought provoking article, “*A World on the Brink and God?*” (Ian Harris, *Music in the Air*, Summer / Autumn 2013. Publisher: John Thornley, 15 Oriana Place, Palmerston North) in which he asks whether in the midst of hope and fear, peril and opportunity our Christian heritage has anything useful or distinctive to offer us? He argues that it does, so long as we are willing to expand our understanding of religion to encompass a new story of creation, and accept the challenges we face, and the new responsibilities that this century presents. Caring for creation demands that we live today as if tomorrow mattered. A modern understanding of God within our new story of creation, coupled with a resolve to live lightly in partnership with nature, has much to offer to a world on the brink. Two examples leading the way are A Rocha, and the World Wildlife Fund’s (WWF) Sacred Earth program. Firstly, A Rocha is an international environmental programme with a Christian ethos. A Rocha, meaning “the rock” in Portuguese, was founded in 1983 by Anglican minister Peter Harris and his wife Miranda. It is completely interdenominational, governed by a Board of Trustees with wide qualifications in life sciences, relief and development, and financial and risk management. A Rocha aims to protect the environment through local, community-based conservation, scientific research, and environmental education, and they have “a track record of successes”. A Rocha is now working in 19 countries, including New Zealand, and has a strong branch in Palmerston North.

In the second example, the WWF Sacred Earth program is building a global dialogue with religious leaders and faith institutions on ways to develop and enrich societal aspirations, values, and lifestyles that are ecologically sustainable and spiritually principled. They support the work of faithful Christian congregations that seek to become better stewards of Creation, of Buddhist monasteries that practice compassion toward the Earth as part of their Bodhisattva vow, and of Muslim imams who see the protection of nature as a trust from Allah.

What these organisations are doing in the 21st century would have been very familiar to the ancients millennia ago, who understood how much their lives depended on being good stewards of the land. This is clearly evident in the following writing in Sanskrit from over 4000 years ago.

“Upon this handful of soil our survival depends. Husband it and it will grow our food, our fuel, and our shelter and surround us with beauty. Abuse it and the soil will collapse and die, taking man with it”.

The need to urgently develop a universally accepted strategy to sustain Earth’s life support system against the stresses imposed by us is one of the greatest research, policy and personal challenges we have ever faced. Our maxim should be to live today as if



tomorrow mattered but time is running out for making the necessary changes to avert a climate crisis later this century. The hope of millions will be carried by world leaders when they meet in Paris in December to hammer out a new global agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. They will need to set a target to achieve zero CO₂ emissions by 2050 if we are to limit increases in global mean temperatures to 2°C by 2100.

EST 2020

RACISM FORUM

THE VOICE OF YOUTH

*"In a racist society,
it's not enough to be
non-racist.*

We must be ANTI-RACIST!"

Angela Davis ♡

YOUTH PANELISTS:

JASMINE PAI, ELZA GIBU JOSEPH,
TESSA MA'AUGA, AGHA WAJEEH.

MODERATOR:

JASPREET SINGH

PHOTOGRAPHY @MERLEPHOTOGRAPHS

COVER DESIGNER @HAUTUTU.DESIGNS



Jasmine Pai



**Māori Bahá'í and Graphic Designer
who stands with her people of Tainui and Te Arawa.**

My Name is Jasmine – I am Māori

JASMINE PAI

“Ka mahi au, ka inoi au, ka moe au, ka mahi au, ano.”

“I work, I pray, I sleep, I work again.” - Te Puea (quote from her biography).

The beauty of her words and the values she has about her people and the power of relying on God. Wow, how beautiful!

Thankfully, from these conversations tonight, and, I hope, my experience, you will find a new path to either walk or admire. Thank you to these other rangatahi who have spoken about their experience of racism and thank you for filling my heart with your mana that you took this challenge and decided to talk about it. My name is Jasmine Pai. I am a 24 year old Maori Bahá'í who is a graphic designer. I want to talk to you about my own experience of racism and how I was able to overcome some times of need; but also look at the learnings of these experiences. I hope that you will look at it through the lens that I am now able to understand racism better.

The year 1996, I was born. At a young age I realised my world was different from others. My name is Jasmine Pai Ahau and I am a Māori Bahá'í who stands with my ancestors, who are the people of Tainui and Te Arawa, and in the face of today I stand. I already knew that people would treat me differently because I was ready to become unapologetically Māori. To others it was too scary, but for me it is the lifestyle I would not be sorry for. I was lucky enough to be put in kaupapa Māori spaces, meet people of other ethnicities, learn about what they loved about their people and why they loved being who they are. And I think at this time it made me more aware of the prejudice against my people, against other people and even myself. I knew people were going to look at me differently, ask me about my relationship with te ao Māori, look at me sideways in a supermarket or even follow us around just to make sure everything was okay in the store. These were the first signs of racism that I started to feel in my daily life. I have been told “you are in a better time than we were”, and to hear that from those who were no more than 10 years older than me, that hurt. I now live in a world where I have more privileges – to learn, to speak and to be Māori – but a lot of us are still under attack from racism. I have seen the effects of racism and how it affected my great-grandparents’ generation, and how they had witnessed how our families were affected. But now, my generation is the generation of healing, taking back what belongs to us, and working out how we can change the mindset of those who want to take our mana, our identity. I believe that the future generations are going to tackle the problem and hopefully start weaving a new mat for us to sit on – share the stories of how we got this far, and of our efforts to untangle the hatred that racism has created between our people and many others. I know it won't be easy, but I believe that with all our diversity and indigenous knowledge and modern function, we can overcome the past and create a brighter future – through either small actions like conversations that target racism, or bigger acts like re-claiming who we are as Māori, mana whenua of our land. I knew I wanted to study, to learn more about my world and what I can do to contribute to my people. What I didn't see was the expectations and tokenism I would get for being an ‘educated Māori’. I left school to become an artist. So I became a designer instead.



I'll probably look at my experience of racism, growing up in a community where racism was such a problem; we couldn't tell the difference whether it was between attempts at humour or personal attacks. I learned about the subtle effects of racism. My schooling was very whitewashed, I guess. I faced small challenges every single day, because the culture of racism was quite normal. The person you were was set because your name was called Jasmine – but I told them my name was Jasmine Rangi. Jasmine was easier for all of us. That was my education. In high school, I faced the challenges of trying to understand whether I was Māori enough. I felt that I had to achieve something higher, so that I subconsciously didn't know what I was searching for. I knew I was always searching for identity, searching to be accepted by society to prove to them I was more than the statistic. I wanted to be Māori but like everyone else I was facing that barrier of not being my own person. It was hard, it was awkward trying to be society's version of Māori because everyone else had ideas of what Māori was. You were either 'dumb and hori', or 'white Māori' – because you chose to be educated. Me, I was arrogant, I was angry at the racism that was always underlying my choice of action. These were the challenges that I had to face in these spaces.

Sometimes now in the workplace, I feel tokenised because I'll be the only Māori there. They'll try to encourage us to use our cultural design, use our paths that we learn from our whakapapa. I guess what I'm trying to say is that I've been quite lucky as a Bahá'í, to really, truly understand that there is an Atua, there is a God, that He is the one that says, "We are one".

But aren't we lucky to have this understanding of Atua, or whakapapa. And working with young people, you truly understand that your vision is going to be their vision. You want the betterment of your own people, you want the betterment of your own culture.

For me as a young person, having these spaces and conversations like in this forum tonight, are so important for us – to reflect, to answer questions, for you guys to ask questions, to create a safe space where we talk about racism and the culture we're trying to change in our communities, because it does start at the grassroots. And understanding how we naturally as humans work together, we naturally want to care and love people, whether we do have different beliefs and understanding, because at the end of the day, we know that communities are here to be changed.

Understanding the culture of racism at a young age, understanding that my name could push me forward or push me backward, understanding that being from Tainui, Te Arawa, you know, us Maori, we have this culture to clash with one another. But why? Well, that's what people tell me; that we are so tense about our iwi or that is who we are as people. Time has shown us that we should be united instead of against each other. The qualities I love being Te Arawa: we love to talk, to create ideas and even challenge people to see how confident and strong they are in their ideas. My Tainui whakapapa has shown me many leaders, wahine who are not apologetic about who they are, strategic people who influenced many. So when I share korero, I know I'm not speaking alone. I know my ancestors are sharing their knowledge with me. But when I speak from my personal heart from a Māori Bahá'í perspective, I believe that the teachings have shined a light on my perspective of community – that the betterment of our community can be raised by our own youth – but this belief also comes from the knowledge of our kaumatua. I've been quite lucky because I do workshops with all different ages. I understand that no age can be lost but each age is limited to sharing their own special resources with us, like Te Puea. I saw her role in society as an effort to bring and seek unity of people, thought and love

and the efforts she made were to help her people to learn, create opportunities, just like how I hope I've done today. But the purpose behind this is to raise this idea that WE CAN have these conversations and spaces like this. I've been quite lucky now that my village is open, my village is gaining new perspectives and understanding. It does take a village to raise a child and I feel quite lucky that maybe one day I'll be able to help raise the village kids.

Nga mihi whanau, aroha mai, I just speak from the heart.



Elza Gibu Joseph



**Service freelancer; trained Indian classical dancer;
has given free lessons for events
(last year taught 35 students and coordinated 2 programmes);
Media coordinator for a number of events;
Leader/organiser of 'Focus Youth Group';
Teaches Bible Studies for the kids at St. Mary's Catholic Church;
student at St. Peter's College.**

Moving Forward Without Dropping the Ball

ELZA GIBU JOSEPH

“An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.” – Mahatma Gandhi.

Hi, my name is Elza. I'm an Indian, born in Saudi Arabia where I spent much of my foundation years, then moved to New Zealand at the age of 14. I am a year 12 student at St. Peter's College and am a service freelancer representing the Catholic community.

So what is racism, why and how did racism begin? When I thought about it; this is what I came up with. From olden times, I would say, since the world was created, people everywhere have made the choice to migrate to different places. There have been many reasons, from famines and natural calamities to seeking more and wider opportunities in jobs and education. But say, if we had never known migration, we would have remained within a bunch of like-minded, same-cultured people, little different from each other. We would have never seen or experienced the differences that exist among people. But that is not the case today; all who have migrated have come to live in a different place where we serve and work hard to earn a living, where we experience the differences in colour, racial groups, and where we may experience racial discrimination.

Racism is rooted in a failure to acknowledge the human dignity of people of different ethnic backgrounds. It does not reflect the love of neighbour that the Lord calls us to have. It denies the beauty of the diversity of God's plan. Racism manifests itself in sinful individual actions, which contribute to structures of sin that perpetuate division and inequality. One area where racism perpetuates division and inequality is evident in the way that the United States has approached the issue of migration, historically and even today. Worldwide, one in every fifty human beings – more than 150 million persons – live outside their countries of origin as migrants or refugees. They are highly vulnerable to racism, xenophobia and discrimination. They are the subject of various opinions and questions about where they belong. And this is how racist attitudes start. I believe that this is an issue that is not OK, it's just not about black and white. Anytime one is questioned about one's race or colour it may reflect underlying racism. People may blurt out racist comments and generalise about people pretending that they were just being funny and it was not seriously said. That is not OK. Myself, today, amongst young people being agents for change, I know that racism shouldn't be OK and that we represent the present and future generations who should take immediate action. This is my reflection, my perspective and my experiences of what I think needs to be changed. This is what I will be covering throughout my talk and in its suggestions for our wider community to bring awareness on this issue.

A short disclaimer before I start my talk. Most of the incidents that I will be mentioning are based on the problems that I have faced, mostly in India and Saudi Arabia. But that doesn't mean racism is just within these places I mention. I have millions of stories to share but what really matters is what you reflect today from this discussion.

Colourism

Recently, I was scrolling through Instagram and found a poster that said “Badass & Lovely” that came under the hashtag #endcolourism. Scrolling through the description,



I was amazed to find that it was nothing but a clear sign of racism. Here we are judged on the basis of our skin colour. I dug deep into this to find what the story was and here it is. There is a well-known range of 'fairness cream' products in India named "Fair and Lovely," which have long been criticised for promoting negative stereotypes against people with darker skin. They, and many other beauty manufacturers, have now decided to bring diversity to beauty by taking off all the words that apply to fairness and whitening. Thus this Indian company has changed its product name to "Glow and Lovely." The move comes as cosmetics companies have seen an increasing amount of backlash on social media in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement. But let's be honest, I have a wheatish complexion, so I got used to hearing all this, but I can't imagine how difficult it would be for the girls whose skin colour is more on the darker side. Often the people who make such remarks are not affected by it but the people about whom they make remarks often don't respond, because they are conditioned to feel that inferiority, constantly reminding them that they are not good looking enough. And to the ones who are getting bullied in the name of colourism: "you better know that you are as beautiful as any other person on this planet – don't let anyone make you feel otherwise – no matter what!" For a fact, "Fair and Lovely" needs to do better than just change their brand name. And this applies to every other situation where racism is prevalent. Often social media and commercials greatly convince the society which includes each one of us. Celebrities need to stop promoting skin lightening brands and speak up about colourism in the community. Stop with these backhanded compliments insinuating that they would be prettier if they were lighter. Stop perpetuating the idea that dark skin equates to being unsuitable. I think this itself can be the stepping stone to eliminate racism. Well you might be thinking: OK we all know racism, it's all about colour, it's about black and white – but actually it's not just about colour and I have got my experiences to prove that is not the case.

Racism – persecution and tolerance

As I have mentioned before, I lived in Saudi Arabia my whole life and I have seen the difference between colourism and racism. Yes, colourism is part of racism but that's not what it is all about. Well-founded allegations of racism in Saudi Arabia extend to imprisonment, physical abuse, overwork, and wage theft, especially of foreign workers who are given little protection under the law. From my personal experience, I always felt we were not at all accepted to be in their culture. However, when we moved to New Zealand, you all accepted us without hesitation! Kiwis helped us to earn a living and to live peacefully. Let me give you an example from both places. In Saudi Arabia recently, an Indian (a good friend of ours) got arrested because he took some goods that were apparently left for free outside a house. But later when he got arrested he understood that the things he took belonged to a Saudi man who had set out to trap him and cause him harm. Alternatively in New Zealand, our Prime Minister, Honourable Jacinda Ardern asks us to help anyone who is in need, irrespective of religion, colour or belief, rather than trapping them. A fantastic example of this is how New Zealanders have become more engaged with the Muslim community in the year since the Christchurch shootings. Among those speaking during the prayer service was Al Noor mosque survivor Farid Ahmed, whose wife Husna was killed in the attacks. "Hate does not achieve any gain for the hater, or for anyone," he said afterwards. "If there are any differences, there is another way, and that way is the peaceful way. We should talk, we should dialogue, we should ask one another questions, and we should not be afraid of one another."

We didn't know – nobody told us

As we see here, racism has different dimensions. This leads us to one of my greatest concerns which is a question that I hope we all take away today to think about. "Is every racism issue getting heard?" "Are there again differences in who gets heard?" You never know, maybe if the death of George Floyd hadn't been recorded, it would never have been heard about ... and the death of George Floyd would remain represented by the higher authorities as a natural death resulting from approved police practices. Recently an issue occurred in South India which still continues to see widespread demands for justice for Jayaraj and Fenix, the father and son who were tortured to death by the police. In this case, the world didn't know about this incident just because, initially, it was not addressed in English. Notice was taken when a video was posted by radio host, Suchitra who starts off by saying, "Hi I am a south Indian and I hate how every south Indian issue becomes a south Indian issue just because we don't talk about it in English, so this video is in English." This issue I feel has eventually impacted the wider society, where not every event is known to the world, once it was addressed in English. And yes English is a dominant language all around the world. But just because certain issues weren't addressed in English, shouldn't mean they don't get to reach the wider society. I'm stressing this because I myself probably wouldn't have cared about it if it had happened before the Black Lives Matter movement made people take notice of what is going on. But now people all around the world talk about these sorts of events and issues, and react to them. I think now every issue needs to be considered, whether it be Indian, American or New Zealand, despite the differences in language and culture, and we must get answers.

But even when I try to portray New Zealand as a better place, which stands strong against racism, I can say there has been racism prevalent here as well – and it feels like I have been a victim too. When we were in the process of moving to New Zealand, everything seemed so simple, from getting a visa to residency. The government stressed how skilled migrants are wanted by society, so that my dad thought moving in at the age of 45, with a family of 4 was 'a piece of cake'. But when we came here things had changed. The tables had been turned. The government who convinced us to come here, had changed and we were no longer regarded as being a 'priority'. Due to these discriminatory changes, 12,000 migrant applicants have been struggling for the last 19 months in this country now, and that includes us.

There are many like us, not just Indians but people of different nationalities and backgrounds. An example of the scale of the problem is the number of pages and groups that can be seen on Facebook where people update others about their difficulties, and how they can find a way to somehow survive here. Day by day the number increases, but it seems that the government is not addressing the problems of migrants or the people trying for a residency/visa. While I write this update I can see that some changes have taken place in the past 2 months where the elected government has started to make the process quicker.

I am often worried about my future, not being secured. Our biggest dream is to get a home of our own because we are tired of changing from apartments to houses. We have a longing to have a house of our own and had great hopes of getting one in New Zealand, but now that I have a year left of studies and I will be off to a different place for university, I don't know if I will be able to live in a house that we own. The immigration rules are changing day by day. I can't think of a day when all four of us will be settled in our home, not worrying about the future. And yes this needs immediate action, there are many out



there like us who are struggling to establish themselves here. This problem needs to get resolved and everyone's voice needs to be heard.

Finding a way forward

I feel racism is something that we all experience in our different phases of life. It doesn't always have to be colour, being judgemental about someone's looks or character itself is a different perspective of racism. This needs an answer, indeed it should be a right that these prejudices be addressed since they determine the essential 'belongingness' of all our residents and citizens. We all have the right to be treated fairly, with respect and to be free from unwelcome racial discrimination. Colour doesn't define anyone; moreover, it is their attitude and a good heart that really matters.

This leads me to suggest some solutions to think about. From a Catholic perspective, "love your neighbour" is a suitable phrase to explain how to combat racism. The Catholic Church encourages diversity. An example of this is St. Mary's Church here in Palmerston North. They have dedicated months for people of different cultures to celebrate mass in their own individual ways. It's really so good to find everyone proudly representing their culture in unity celebrating the mass together. One of the other things I need to bring into our consideration is to educate and bring in awareness about racism. Even though we don't experience it much here, we the young people are going to get exposed to the wider world in the future. Rather than scaring them with what happened in the past, teach them to face it.

So my reflection from all this, and a simple step for all of us to follow, is: love, respect and appreciate. Love one another; it brings peace. Love above all; love your neighbour just like yourselves. Love one another. Respect and embrace the differences. Embrace the strengths of our various ethnicities. Embrace the uniqueness of our people. Embrace the differences we all bring to New Zealand. We all can embrace these things by lifting each other up and supporting the views of each other. Appreciate and accept everyone into one diverse society. Our leaders are doing a great job to accept everyone into one society, one love, into racial unity. We often accuse other cultures of what they have done in their past, but after all, "they are us". Last year when we all heard "Assalamu alaykum, Peace be upon you" spoken by our Honourable Prime Minister, Jacinda Arden ... "they have left us humbled, and they have left us united".

During this time together let us all take the opportunity to learn from our past mistakes to rebuild a loving and stronger society. After all, we all are fighters who fight against racial discrimination to bring in what we call race unity, where no one is judged for where they come from.

We all need to continually work together to encourage and lift up each other – regardless of ethnicity, religion or belief, to really believe that **"they are us"**, we all need to stand together, we are one. And we are in the same fight.

Tessa Ma'auga



Art student and member of the Bahá'í community involved in the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme.



The Role of Youth in Creating Constructive Change to Combat Racism

TESSA MA'AUGA

The period of youth

The period of youth stands out as the choicest time in the life of the individual. During this time youth have the most energy, time, freedom, adaptability, optimism, and a fresh perspective on the contradictions in society. They also have a strong desire to contribute to the betterment of society and an acute sense of justice. While youth are endowed with such wonderful qualities, their energy needs to be channelled meaningfully; otherwise their misbehaviour can become a cause of much social distress in society. The prime role of young people is actually to spearhead change at the level of culture within the community. Their leadership can be shown in taking responsibility for the education of the young, through service to those young and old, as well as in reflecting on outdated cultural habits that may be permeating the community through the conduct and attitudes of adults and institutions, directing the way towards positive cultural change. Changes in the norms of society can occur through constructive action that seeks to bring neighbours together in spiritually empowering environments centred on meaningful conversations, action and reflection.

“In the young people of the world, then, lies a reservoir of capacity to transform society waiting to be tapped. And the release of this capacity should be regarded by every institute as a sacred charge.”⁴

Layers of racism

The source of racism is ignorance. Lack of experience and misunderstanding of people of different backgrounds leads to racial prejudices, fear of others, and a weakened ability to collaborate and cooperate with others. Without creating opportunities to interact with people of different backgrounds, racial prejudices continue to be present in the minds and reflected in the structures of society. As racial and cultural diversity is increasing in the world, the younger population is in a favourable position to foster racial harmony.

“Racism is a profound deviation from the standard of true morality. It deprives a portion of humanity of the opportunity to cultivate and express the full range of their capability and to live a meaningful and flourishing life, while blighting the progress of the rest of humankind. It cannot be rooted out by contest and conflict. It must be supplanted by the establishment of just relationships among individuals, communities, and institutions of society that will uplift all and will not designate anyone as “other”.⁵

Youth as initiators and builders of unity

Youth can create opportunities to interact with people of different backgrounds within the community. Spaces for interaction in themselves can help to foster mutual understanding and appreciation across different cultures. When conversations within these spaces can

⁴ From a letter written by The Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 12th December, 2011.

⁵ From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the United States, 22 July, 2020.

be channelled meaningfully, they can create even stronger bonds of trust and friendship across cultures. Youth are in a particularly unique position to bring people in the community together. Their pure hearts are attractive not only to those younger than them but also to the adults who are eager to see youth make positive and selfless action. They are the role models for younger children and can teach them effectively when committed to that arena of service.

“But they [young people] may also come from any one of a number of educational backgrounds with all the hope in their hearts that, through strenuous concerted effort, the world will change. Irrespective of particulars, they will, one and all, share in the desire to dedicate their time and energy, talents and abilities, to service to their communities. Many, when given the opportunity, will gladly devote a few years of their lives to the provision of spiritual education to the rising generations.”⁶

Systematic, sustained, constructive change within the community

Combatting racism requires constructive action and the fostering of racial harmony. Our history is filled with approaches of blame, protest, and counter-racism which only serve to increase the flame of racism. Racism must be combatted with constructive, harmonious, and systematic, long-term action within the local community. It needs to be filtered out at the level of culture. Local communities need to build individual and collective capacity to converse together, across cultures, about their own well-being. Then communities need to reflect on their own cultural practices, identify what needs to change, and make concerted effort through action. While such constructive and integrative action seems difficult or overly optimistic when considering the norms in behaviour amongst youth and neighbours within the community, such action requires no funding or resources except spiritual resolve and the mustering of spiritual energy – qualities at everyone’s reach. It may also require the reprioritising of one’s time towards the nurturing of spiritually empowering environments within the community, but when one considers the benefits of nurturing and educating the young and creating a harmonious and productive community for the future, there is nothing to lose from sacrificing one’s own personal time. Learning to draw upon the power of courage and friendliness to visit one’s neighbours to have a meaningful conversation is a capacity that anyone can acquire with a little volition and a pure heart. Accompanying others to do the same is a source of encouragement and strength for those who might feel shy to reach out. Helping young people build capacity to show kindness and friendliness to the neighbours, to become accustomed to and learn the art of bringing friends together, showing hospitality and generosity, channelling meaningful collective conversation, can enable them to spearhead and continue the work towards diversity and inclusion that must be done.

Educating children about the beauty of diversity and about how to cooperate with others is an important job that requires no qualifications, building or resources essentially. It merely requires one to dedicate one’s energies to doing so, and to prioritising one’s time honestly towards what is most selfless, what is most important, and what is most effective. When youth are assisted to channel their energies in this way, to work as builders of unity within the neighbourhood, they not only develop their own talents and capacities, but they create positive patterns of culture within the community. A pattern of culture that includes visiting each other, replaces conflict with kindness, negligence with educational activities for children, self-interest with selfless service to others, and frivolity with a

⁶ From a letter written by The Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 12th December, 2011.



purpose in life: to develop our own spiritual qualities through serving to contribute to the betterment of our community. Youth whole-heartedly take on this responsibility and purpose when given the opportunity, time and accompaniment: they long for a way to contribute their talents to creating positive change and justice.

“Ultimately, the power to transform the world is effected by love, love originating from the relationship with the divine, love ablaze among members of a community, love extended without restriction to every human being. ...You are channels for this divine love; let it flow through you to all who cross your path. Infuse it into every neighborhood and social space in which you move to build capacity...”⁷

⁷ From a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the United States, 22 July, 2020.



Agha Wajeeh



From Palmerston North Boys' High and the Muslim community.



Islam's Answer to Racism

AGHA WAJEEH

Bismillah..... Praise be to God, who brought forth creation through His omnipotence, dispersed winds and made firm the shaking Earth with rocks because of His compassion, whose worth cannot be measured or described by speakers, whose bounties cannot be calculated, whose claim (to obedience) cannot be satisfied by those who attempt to obey, whom the height of intellect cannot appreciate and the depths of understanding cannot comprehend. He for whose glory and reverence, no limit has been laid down, He whose existence isn't fixed, He for whom no eulogy adequate and no time ordained.

My name is Agha Wajeeh. I am a student of Palmerston North Boys' High in year 13 and am part of our City's Muslim community. I took part in the previous forum on climate change but I was inspired by my mother, who is a student of Islamic theology, also to contribute to this forum on racism.

Racism is a very sensitive topic so I have tried to discuss it to the best of my abilities and knowledge.

By broad definition, racism is an act of prejudice and bigotry towards an individual, a group of people or a nation, based on their race, language, religion, sex, or anything else. We can think of it as being like choosing a \$2 coin that is shiny over the one that is slightly faded – because it looks better. It is meaningless because, in the end, their monetary value is exactly the same.

The United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights after World War II, which Peter Fraser, New Zealand's prime minister at the time, played a key part in drafting, states in Article 2:

"Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedom set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty."

This expresses the ubiquitously known fact that there are hundreds of nations, thousands of languages and so much diversity in people – and that should be respected; such is the beauty of this world.

Chapter 30 verse 22 of The Quran roughly translates to:

"And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth and the diversity of your languages and colours, indeed in that are signs for those of the knowledgeable."

So, is the real issue having a variety of different colours, races, nations, languages and creed, or is it something more than that? We do not choose the place, nationality, language, race, colour, or family we are born with. It is something God-given and out of our control. It is in a human being's nature to love good virtues like being truthful and just. It is in

our nature to be repelled by what is immoral, such as being discriminated against for any reason whatsoever. Yet we are open to being influenced – taught, shaped, moulded into learning how to do otherwise – like discriminating against someone unjustly.

I would like to quote the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, Imam Jaffar al Sadiq, as he says:

1. People are equal (in social rights and with each other, like the teeth of a comb).
2. An individual can turn into a great society together with his brothers and sisters.
3. It is not right to associate something to someone that they do not wish for themselves.

This shows that the most vital need of a person living in a society is to have respect for, and form strong social bonds with, the society and embrace the togetherness of being in a society. It is a dangerous threat for someone, or a group to have a strong feeling that they are being side-lined. It can seriously affect the mental and physical abilities of an individual and that is not healthy for a society at all. Togetherness and social cohesion plus unity, reaching out to and respecting each other, are some of the crucial, beautiful ingredients that make a strong society and a powerful nation. Robust technology, the world's best and most advanced infrastructure, and a powerful economy by themselves aren't enough to bring complete happiness to a society. For social stability and happiness, everyone must be treated with equality, given equal opportunities for education, health care, justice and employment. No one should ever feel marginalised.

Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him, said in his final sermon:

“All mankind is from Adam and Eve and an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab over an Arab, a white person has no superiority over someone black nor someone black over someone white except by means of their piety and their good actions.”

Chapter 49 verse 13 of the Quran roughly translates to:

“Oh mankind, indeed, we have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you.”

This means the criteria of being superior is piety, he who shows goodness towards his fellow human beings and he who is always conscious of God's presence in his life will reach incredible heights and will be loved by God.

There is no harm in being proud of yourself or your family based on the ethical and social values of you and your family and the goodness you show towards others with modesty, but that pride should not make you feel superior.

Prophet Muhammad says:

“Respect someone who is older than you for they might have done more good deeds than you, respect someone who is younger than you for they might have committed less sins than you, respect someone of your equal age for you are sure about your bad deeds, but not theirs.”

As soon as we hear the word 'racism', a lot of us think of a white person treating a black or brown person with discrimination, but is it really that simple? Racism is always associated with discrimination and that can be against anyone. Let us take an example from the West Indies where people may discriminate against each other on the basis of colour, yet they are all dark-skinned. Or in any country with predominantly brown people; does that mean there will be no racism among them? No, there will probably just be other means



of discriminating against each other, like on the basis of height, which part of the country they are from, their financial status and so on.

Racism exists in human mentality. It is a kind of sickness, a disease, a spiritual disease.

Envy, arrogance, ignorance, an inferiority complex or the feeling of insecurity may cause someone to demonstrate some form of superiority in offensive ways: 'that I am better than you', 'that I am better than everyone else'. We may tend to believe that we are better than the person standing in front of us, better than the people around us. This is a problem we have because of our lack of spirituality. We have made tremendous progress in the material, physical world, from a nano chip to an Airbus A380, from a needle to world class hospitals and what not. This is all to benefit our body, our materialistic body. But have we done enough for our spiritual body?

Racism is corruption but we don't consider it that. In simple words, corruption is dishonest behaviour by those in a position of power. We have anti-corruption laws to stop that corruption, mainly motivated for financial gain or political influence. But because we often forget to consider racism a form of corruption, we don't do anything about it. If a person is racist towards someone and has the power to influence their selection for any job, task, business assignment or any other opportunity, the decision is likely to be biased by racist preferences rather than on merit or capability.

So what can we do?

1. We need to do more than just talk about it, but we do need to talk. We need to have in our everyday lives more multicultural and interfaith conversations to help us understand each other; we need to refrain from being judgmental; we need to convince ourselves that, if we have had a bad experience with one member of a community, we must not judge and define the whole community by that experience.
2. We can challenge the media. Media play a vital role in promoting or suppressing potential racism. There are 'black sheep' in every community and group, and if something bad is done by one of them, the media can report the incident without disclosing that person's ethnic, religious or political identity, suppressing the potential racism factor, or, they could do the opposite, ending up by promoting racism.
3. We can travel. Travel around the world, observe and experience different cultures, races, nations, religions, and learn about their history and their heroes.
4. We can condemn movies, shows and other entertainment materials that portray a particular designation of a belief as a negative character. While complete lack of restraint and censorship of content is regarded as the right of 'freedom of speech', I believe that no one should have absolute freedom of speech. We are not free to choose where we are born; we are not free to choose who our parents are; so can we really say that we are free to say anything we want . . . even if it may be something that slanders or defames someone? A person is born with a few basic rights, rights over their body, rights over their property or belongings and rights over their self-esteem. And no one should have the right to hurt any of those things. We also have a right to freedom of speech but we should treat it as a privilege. We should all have freedom of speech until we start violating these basic human rights. Once we do that, that's where we deserve to lose that freedom of speech.

Prophet Muhammad demonstrated removing racism, which was at its peak at the time, from society in a very practical way. When he settled his government in Medina, he introduced a system of brotherhood and formed the bonds between the migrants and

the locals without any preference of status, tribe or anything else; the honour of *being* the very first person nominated for reciting the prayer calls was of a man of black descent named Bilal.

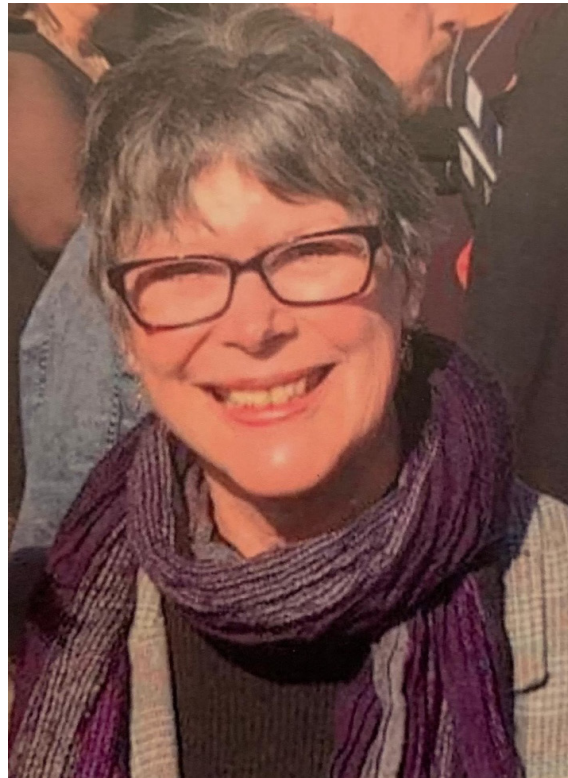
Imam Ali, the Son in Law of Prophet Muhammad, when he was caliph, head of state, said that any person is either your Brother in faith or equal in humanity, which means he was declaring that any person in this regime should be treated as a brother or equal, and that cuts to the root of any discrimination and hence racism.

So, let's stand together and let us make a difference.



The Story of Interfaith Dialogue in Palmerston North

MARY EASTHAM



Mary Eastham has a Ph.D. in Ethics, Religion and Public Life from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. She is a member of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Committee for Interfaith Relations, and has chaired the planning committee of the Interfaith Group since 2011. She has been a member of the Association of Practical Theology in Oceania since 2005.

Chapter One

Beginnings

MARY EASTHAM



Palmerston North Interfaith Group

*Associated with the National
Interfaith Network Aotearoa
New Zealand*

OUR LOGO

The logo is simple, elegant and meaningful. It was designed by Tom Parkes, the grandson of Peter MacGillivray⁸ from St. David's Presbyterian Church and reveals the vision of the group. A white koru against a blue border, symbolising new life, growth, strength and peace. Its shape conveys the idea of perpetual movement, while the inner coil suggests returning to the point of origin⁹ ... like returning to the vision of a spiritual leader to make the vision new against the challenges of the day.

The rainbow above the word "Interfaith" symbolizes HOPE and HARMONY. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the rainbow reminds us that God has promised never again to destroy the world by flood. But this does not mean that people with the gift of free will, cannot misuse this gift, and thus bring calamity upon the world by their own actions.

There are eight traditional symbols of faith traditions¹⁰ on the right of the koru, set against the colour blue, the coolest colour in the colour spectrum. We see it in nature, in the colours of the sky, lakes and oceans. In ancient Egypt, lapis lazuli, a beautiful blue gemstone, represented heaven. The meaning of the colour blue is peace, calm and spirituality. Blue is also uplifting. It is the colour that connects us to our spiritual side and the energy of the universe.

⁸ Peter MacGillivray is a founding member of the Palmerston North Interfaith Group. He was a lecturer in farm management at Massey University and director of the Diploma of Agricultural Studies. Peter was 2011 recipient of the Massey University Distinguished Alumni Service Award. In the Interfaith Group, he was treasurer from 2011 to 2016 and on the planning committee from 2011 to 2018. Peter organised hospitality for three major interfaith events, 2015-2017, and has been our liaison person with Marise Clark at Pit Park.

⁹ "Māori creation traditions". Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage / Te Manatū Taonga. Retrieved 14 March 2010.

¹⁰ The symbols in the left and right groups of four represent top to bottom: the Sun Cross, frequently found in the symbolism of Paleolithic cultures; the Star and Crescent, a symbol of the Islamic faith; the Cross symbolises the Christian faith; the Wheel of Dharma, a common symbol of the Buddhist philosophy; the Star of David, a common symbol of the Jewish faith; the Om or Aum, a symbol of the Hindu faith; the Khanda, the symbol of Sikhism; and the Torii Gate, a symbol of the Shinto faith. (Cf. Sacred Symbols by Robert Adkinson (Editor), Annice Jacoby (Editor) 2009). Unfortunately a symbol for the Bahá'í faith was not included when the logo was designed. Since 2013 the Bahá'í have made an invaluable contribution to interfaith dialogue in Palmerston North. An appropriate symbol would probably be the Nine Pointed Star, shown on the right below the body of the logo. While the star is not a part of the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith, it is commonly used as an emblem representing "9", because of the association of number 9 with perfection, unity and Bahá'. (Cf. Smith, Peter (2000), "greatest name", A concise encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith, Oxford: Oneworld Publications)



Taken together, the eight symbols represent the encounter between the wisdom of the East and that of the West. This encounter is more important now than ever before given the current devastation to the planet, and the constant state of war which has created the greatest refugee crisis the world has ever seen. As of 20 June 2018, World Refugee Day, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people around the world had topped 65 million. This is a catastrophe.

What can people of faith do about this? A lot, actually. If we can establish bridges of understanding and trust between people of different faiths and cultures, we can model to world leaders how they themselves can build bridges rather than barriers of hatred and fear. Hope and harmony might replace despair and conflict.

ORIGINS

In May 2011, Rev. Jim Symons, inspirational Presbyterian minister from California, USA, brought this vision to St. David's Church in Palmerston North.¹¹ He organised a lecture series called "Talk Back on the Terrace: Varied Viewpoints" at the Coffee on the Terrace café, which paired two speakers from different faith traditions to address three crises confronting the human family. The challenge of "Consumerism" was addressed by the late Prof. John Flenley¹² and the late Gen Kelsang Demo, resident teacher at the Amitahba Buddhist Centre. Dr. Nasser Shehata¹³ and Dr. Mary Eastham¹⁴ addressed the topic of "Population" from a Muslim and Catholic Christian perspective respectively. Helen Chong from the Council of Jewish Women¹⁵ and Ahmed Zaoui,¹⁶ discussed the controversial issue of "War" from a Jewish and Muslim perspective, and Prof. Jim Veitch from Victoria University in Wellington spoke about religious pluralism. Closing remarks were given by Dr. Christopher van der Krogt from Massey University's Department of Religious Studies.

The seminar attracted some 50 people every Monday night for four consecutive weeks to engage with these speakers and these issues in a spirit of good natured but earnest intellectual exchange. The organisers of the event: Dr. Robert Skipp¹⁷ and Peter MacGillivray, speakers Mary Eastham, Helen Chong, John Flenley and Gen Kelsang Demo, as well as other participants became the foundation for the Palmerston North Interfaith Group, established in July that year. Adding impetus for the prospects of increased interfaith dialogue at this time, Mary Eastham was appointed as Bishop

¹¹ I am told that Jim Symons organised interfaith conversations wherever his ministry sent him in the USA and other parts of New Zealand as well.

¹² Rev. Deacon Prof. John Flenley was Professor of Geography at Massey University; he was ordained a deacon in the Anglican Church in 2009, with special responsibility for the Environment. He ran the local branch of A Rocha, the Christian Conservation organisation.

¹³ Dr. Nasser Shehata is a gynecologist who was born in Egypt and practiced medicine at Palmerston North Public Hospital.

¹⁴ Dr. Mary Eastham has a Ph.D. in Ethics, Religion and Public Life from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. She was Director of the Pastoral Centre from 1996 - 1999 and Catholic Tertiary Chaplain from 2001 - 2004. She has been a member of the Association of Practical Theology in Oceania since 2005. She has chaired the planning committee of the Interfaith Group since 2011.

¹⁵ Helen Chong was President of the Manawatu branch of the National Council of Women from 2013-2017. She is a member of the Wellington Progressive Jewish congregation and contributes discussion/ commentary on the Torah portion read on that day. She is a founding member of the P.N. Interfaith Group.

¹⁶ Ahmed Zaoui is an Algerian who claimed refugee status in New Zealand in 2002. Before coming to New Zealand, Mr Zaoui was an associate professor of theology at the University of Algiers and imam of his local mosque. He was democratically elected to represent the Algerian Islamic Front for Salvation in December 1991.

¹⁷ Dr. Robert Skipp graduated from Imperial College, London, moving with his family to New Zealand in 1977 to conduct research in Plant Pathology at AgResearch (formerly DSIR) Grasslands, Palmerston North. He is an elder in the Presbyterian Church and a founding member of the Palmerston North Interfaith Group. Bob has played a major leadership role both in the planning committee, as Secretary since 2011, in communication and in liaising with other community groups. He has designed many flyers for interfaith events, and contributed to writing funding applications and accountability reports.

Peter Cullinane's representative on the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Committee for Interfaith Relations.¹⁸

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE BEGINS

The Palmerston North Interfaith Group began meeting on a regular basis from July 2011 and almost immediately engaged in every dimension of interfaith dialogue as illustrated below: 1) *The Dialogue of Religious Experience*; 2) *The Dialogue of Theological Exchange*; 3) *The Dialogue of Action*; and 4) *The Dialogue of Life*.¹⁹

The Dialogue of Religious Experience

The dialogue of religious experience occurs: "When persons grounded in their own faith traditions, share riches, for instance, with regard to prayer and contemplation, ceremonies and places of worship".²⁰ On 27 October, 2011 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, a multi-faith prayer service took place to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the first Assisi World Day of Prayer, a landmark moment in the interfaith movement. At Assisi, Pope John Paul II convened representatives of the world's religions²¹ to gather at the Church of Saint Francis of Assisi, in Italy to pray together for the first time in history. In his remarks to religious leaders, the Pope said:

"The form and content of our prayers are very different, and there can be no question of reducing them to a kind of common denominator. Yes, in this very difference we have perhaps discovered anew that, regarding the problem of peace and its relation to religious commitment, there is something which binds us together."

At the Cathedral in October, 2011, the multi-faith prayer service²² reflected the richness of our Maori heritage and the depth of five faith traditions, all praying for peace in their own way. Manaki Tibble called people to attention with the majestic sound of the *putara*. The *karanga* was performed by Maru Karatea-Goddard, after which Rev. Deacon Danny Karatea-Goddard greeted the congregation warmly with his *whaikorero*. Participants Hadassah bat Avrohom uVatsheva²³ (Helen Chong), Gen Kelsang Demo, Nirmala Nand from the Palmerston North Indian Cultural Society, Dr. Ibrahim Al Bahadly from Massey University Islamic Centre, Rev. Chris Purdy, Army chaplain and Presbyterian minister, Venerable David van Oeveren, Anglican Archdeacon of the Manawatu, and Emeritus Bishop Peter Cullinane presented prayers of peace or meditation from their respective traditions, and in so doing, touched the centre of the Assisi World Day for Peace, and made it new.

¹⁸ This committee was established in 2009 by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference. Inspired by "Nostra Aetate" (*In our Age*), the landmark document from the Second Vatican Council, members of the Committee representing the six dioceses of Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin embrace the mission to promote dialogue, understanding and mutual respect between the Catholic Church and members of the world religions in New Zealand, and to work together for the common good.

¹⁹ *Promoting Interfaith Relations in Aotearoa New Zealand 2009*, second edition, is a 2018 publication of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Committee for Interfaith Relations which describes at length these four expressions of interfaith dialogue. These guidelines were adapted with permission from the Archdiocese of Melbourne, Australia. The first edition of the Melbourne Guidelines was launched on 21 August 2007.

²⁰ *Promoting Interfaith Relations in Aotearoa New Zealand*, op. cit., p. 9.

²¹ These representatives included: African animists; Amerindian animists; Bahai's, whose faith stresses universal brotherhood; Buddhists; Christians; Jains, whose beliefs resemble Buddhism; Jews; Hindus; Moslems; Shintoists, a Japanese sect that emphasises the worship of nature and ancestors; Sikhs; and Zoroastrians, who believe in the continuous struggle of good against evil. Among those attending were the Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan Buddhist leader; the Most Rev. Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of the Anglican Communion; Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev, who represented the Russian Orthodox Church; and Muneyoshi Tokugawa, president of the Shinto Shrine Association of Tokyo.

²² The 25th Anniversary Commemoration was organised by Mary Eastham from the Bishops' Committee.

²³ Hadassah bat Avrohom uVatsheva is Helen Chong's Hebrew name.



Since visiting the places of worship of our partners in dialogue is a very important dimension of the dialogue of religious experience, we were very honoured to visit the Sikh Temple in Awapuni in 2011. Jaspreet Singh²⁴ made this visit possible for us.

Other very enriching visits to places of worship of our partners in dialogue included:

- * 2014, attending the Bat Mitzva of a young woman at Temple Sinai in Wellington, made possible by Hadassah bat Avrohom uVatsheva.
- * 2015, visiting the Amitabha Buddhist Centre for a talk and guided meditation on “Stillness” facilitated by Gen Kelsang Demo.
- * 2016, a multi-faith prayer service at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in response to the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, called by Pope Francis, and observed by Catholics, ecumenical and interfaith groups around the world from 8 December 2015 until 20 November 2016.²⁵ Standing shoulder to shoulder and presenting prayers of mercy and forgiveness from their sacred texts were: Maru Karatea-Goddard, Rev. Danny Karatea-Goddard, Sam Te Tau from the Bahá’í faith, Dr. Mohammed Tellaway from the Manawatu Muslim Association, Hadassah bat Avrohom uVatsheva, Wibha Desai from the Hindu faith, Kelsang Deden from the Amitabha Buddhist Centre, Jaspreet Singh and Gurveer Kaur from the Sikh community, and Emeritus Bishop Peter Cullinane.
- * 2017, celebrating Eid Al-Fitr with our Muslim brothers and sisters at the Cook Street Mosque, facilitated by Mohammed Tellaway from the Manawatu Muslim Association; we also celebrated the bicentennial of the birth of Baha’u’llah, the Founder of the Bahá’í Faith, facilitated by Joanne Wilson from the Bahá’í faith.

The Dialogue of Theological Exchange

The dialogue of theological exchange occurs when dialogue partners deepen their understanding of their own religious heritage as they also seek to appreciate the spiritual beliefs and practices of other faiths.²⁶ By 2012, the Palmerston North Interfaith Group had established partnerships between members of the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh communities. We could establish, therefore, a monthly programme of interfaith education beginning from 1 February, the first day of World Interfaith Harmony Week, until the Week of Prayer for World Peace, which always takes place around the world the third week of October. The programme in 2012 included:

- * World Interfaith Harmony Week in 2012, attracted contributions from Dr. Bob Stewart²⁷, Jaspreet Singh, Ibrahim Al-Bahadly, Hazim Arafah²⁸, Bishop Peter Cullinane, Bob Skipp, Peter MacGillivray and Mary Eastham.

²⁴ Jaspreet Singh from the Sikh community, is a researcher at AgResearch, a Crown Research Institute, specializing in plant-microbe interactions. He is an active environmentalist for Green ‘S’ Welfare Force which is engaged in tree planting and other community supporting activities. He is a founding member of the Interfaith Group and is interested in the history of places and migration.

²⁵ The New Zealand Catholic Bishops’ Committee for Interfaith Relations organised similar events in all six dioceses.

²⁶ *Promoting Interfaith Relations in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2009, op. cit., p. 8.

²⁷ Dr. Bob Stewart was Professor of Human Development and Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji. He is also founding Editor of “Social Behaviour and Personality: An International Journal”. This is a worldwide journal in social psychology published 10 times per year on the web and in print (1973-present).

²⁸ Hazim Arafah was President of FIANZ, The Islamic Federation of New Zealand from 2015 to 2019. Hazim holds a Bachelors Degree, with Honours, in Plant Science from the University of Jordan. He has been working for 22 years in the vegetables industry in NZ as well as overseas. Hazim manages the Lower North Island and Upper South Island areas for Seed and Field Services LTD. He can assist growers in choosing varieties, crop protection and nutritional programs. He also runs a robust variety trial program in conjunction with the main seed companies.

- * A talk from the late Dr. Scott Eastham²⁹ on the principles of interfaith dialogue from the life's work of Raimon Panikkar.³⁰
- * John Flenley gave a talk on "The Experience of Landscape: Exploring the Meaning and Symbolism of Landscape".
- * Sociologist Paul Green from Massey University led a discussion on "Science and Theology: The Sources of Cultural Pluralism."
- * The meaning of Ramadan was explained by Dr. Ibrahim Al-Bahadly of Massey University Islamic Centre.
- * Bob Skipp and Mike Christensen organised the Midwinter Interfaith Festival Evening. Without verbal commentary, Bob used beautiful music and art inspired by the Biblical account of the birth of Jesus to open up the ancient symbolism of Christmas as events that are recreated every day. Not just symbols of light and the tree, but profound cross-cultural expressions of humanity as represented by spiritual revelation, the Holy Family and the massacre of the Holy Innocents, recognised even today in countries ravaged by war, and the plight of refugees in detention centres.
- * Also in 2012, we were honoured with a visit from Sr. Milada,³¹ a Missionary Sister of Charity, who shared experiences of her life with Mother Teresa of Calcutta.
- * Helen Chong facilitated a beautiful conversation on how life cycle rituals at birth, coming of age, marriage and death reflect the many ways that divine blessing and human responsibility interact.

Furthermore, on 3 October, 2012, Bob Skipp, Helen Chong, Jaspreet Singh and Mary Eastham signed the Constitution of the Palmerston North Interfaith Group, written by Helen and Bob. 3 October was the Eve of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, considered by Catholics to be the patron saint of interfaith dialogue, and the third day of Sukkot, which for Jews commemorates the forty years of passage from bondage in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. For a group dedicated to sharing the message of peace, religious freedom and celebration of religious diversity, it was fitting indeed to sign our Constitution on that particular day.

2013 - 2014: Peace, Compassion and the Care of the Disabled

In 2013, the major public event, "Making Peace with Abraham, our Father in Faith" was organised by Mary Eastham on behalf of the Bishops' Committee for Interfaith Relations and took place at the Sound and Vision Centre of Palmerston North City Library. Some 200 people attended to hear Helen Chong, Bishop Peter Cullinane, Dr. Ibrahim Al-Bahadly and Sam Te Tau share firstly with each another and then everyone present the contribution of each Abrahamic branch to making peace today. For many people in Palmerston North, it was the first time they saw four members of different Abrahamic traditions occupy the same podium and talk about peace.

²⁹ Poet, philosopher Dr. Scott Eastham lectured in the Department of English and Media Studies at Massey University, Palmerston North, from 1993 to 2012; he was the English editor of Rev. Prof. Raimon Panikkar for thirty years.

³⁰ Panikkar was the son of a Spanish Roman Catholic mother and a Hindu Indian father that belonged to an upper caste Malabar Nair family from South India. He is considered the father of interreligious dialogue.

³¹ Sr. Milada was from Czechoslovakia and met Mother Teresa in Calcutta when she was in the process of making her first vows to Christ within the mission set out by the Missionary Sisters of Charity. She now works in Porirua, New Zealand with people in nursing homes who experience the "poverty of loneliness."



In 2014, the theme of Compassion featured prominently. Rev. John Hornblow and Jenny Hornblow presented an evening on interfaith activities, especially those combatting modern slavery and human trafficking. We also organised the ecumenical and interfaith event, "Prisms of Light: An Interfaith Conversation on how Compassion Transforms our Communities." This theme, proposed by Dr. Bob Stewart, was explored with reference to four dimensions of the call to compassion for the 21st century, namely, Compassion for the Poor: The Question of Poverty; Compassion for the Human Race: The Question of World Peace; Compassion for the Earth: Our Responsibility to Nature; and Compassion for Future Generations: Our Responsibility to the Next Generation. The facilitated panel included Helen Chong, Rev. Rilma Sands (Presbyterian minister), Gen Kelsang Demo, Jaspreet Singh, Sam Te Tau, Sreejith Sreekumar (from the Hindu faith), Bishop Peter Cullinane and two Catholics from Rwanda, Thomas Kigufi and Antoinette Umugwaneza.

- * In 2013, another programme on the theme of compassion was interfaith perspectives on the care of the disabled facilitated by Mike Christensen and Rev. Anne Bennett.
- * In 2013, Jaspreet Singh made a presentation on Earth Day about compassion for the Earth.

The Dialogue of Action

This dialogue occurs when people of faith motivated by sincere good will towards one another collaborate for the preservation of the environment, and for the integral development and liberation of people.³² A great example was the voluntary planting of 1400 trees under the Green Corridors project for the City Council on 13 May, Mother's Day in 2012. This project was initiated by Jaspreet Singh and his colleagues from the Green 'S' Welfare Force. In July, they planted over 3000 native plants at Edwards Pit Park, Palmerston North.

In 2014, the Interfaith Group was invited by the Manawatu Multicultural Council to participate in the "Bring Back Our Girls Movement", an international protest to raise awareness about the plight of the young Chibok girls kidnapped by Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Sharing Care of the Earth

By 2015, the group felt confident enough to host the North Island Regional Interfaith Forum.³³ With a wealth of talent to draw from within the interfaith and university communities, the forum: Sharing Care of the Earth: Science - Faith - Action was held at Te Waiora Centre at Massey University³⁴. Experts in the science of Global Climate Change explored together with people of Islamic, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Bahai'i and Maori spiritual traditions ways in which our world's faiths shared the view that human beings have a sacred responsibility to care for the Earth, its people and all living things. Science and faiths thus shared the same hope: that we could develop a common will to

³² *Promoting Interfaith Relations in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2009, op. cit., p. 7.

³³ The National Interfaith Forum and the Regional Interfaith Forums take place every other year, respectively. If a Regional Forum is held, a National Forum is not held. Regional Forums alternate between the North and South Island.

³⁴ Programme see Appendix 1.

solve problems threatening the future of our planet. The late Dr. Kevin Tate³⁵ gave the key note address and provided invaluable assistance to the organising committee. Other eminent speakers included Dr. Anwar Ghani, Dr. Alec Mackay, Prof. Ralph Sims and Prof. Marjan van den Belt. To present an interfaith theological vision on the care of the Earth was Dr. Paul Blaschke and David Zwart from the Jewish faith; Martin de Jong from Caritas Aoteaora; Jaspreet Singh³⁶ and Gurveer Kaur; Gen Kelsang Demo, John Maats from the Bahá'í faith, Hone Morris on Maori spirituality; and Sreejith Sreekumar from the Hindu faith. Paul Stock, from Massey's chaplaincy Centre opened the event with a prayer and Heather Tate, from St. David's Church; Sam Te Tau, Dr. Mohammed Tellaway, Gurveer Kaur, Dr. Todd Nachowitz (Hamilton Interfaith Council) offered beautiful prayers from their own faith traditions to close the Forum. We were honoured that Dr. Sita Venkateswar from Massey University was MC for the day; and Jill White, former mayor of Palmerston North, facilitated the afternoon discussion session which composed the Forum Statement.³⁷

The Forum Statements affirmed: We

1. Acknowledge that, if we hope to ensure the future of life on Earth, we must urgently change from the path we are on
2. Reject the theological understanding of a disposable earth and the incessant drive for limitless growth motivated by a relentless focus on profit
3. Affirm that the economy should benefit humanity within the bounds of a sustainable earth
4. Acknowledge the interconnectedness of all life on earth
5. Welcome people displaced by climate change
6. Urge our faith communities to explore ways to minimise fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions
7. Commit ourselves to share resources and material that will help educate and inform our local and faith communities on climate change issues so that they can become agents of transformation.
8. Commit ourselves to engage with governments, business sectors and the wider civil society in shaping and implementing policies in the areas of energy and climate change.

In 2015, we also participated in Palmerston North People's Climate March organised by Youth Action Group Manawatu. At our AGM later that year, Prof. Marjan van den Belt and her daughter, Kaia Costanza van den Belt were guest speakers. Joining Kaia was Hannah Higgison from Youth Action Group Manawatu (YAGM).

³⁵ Dr. Kevin Tate began his scientific career teaching chemistry at Victoria University in Wellington before becoming a soil scientist at the New Zealand Soil Bureau, DSIR, in 1968. Following a number of years leading major research programmes on greenhouse gas exchange with the terrestrial biosphere, Kevin retired in 2005 but continued working at Manaaki Whenua-Landcare Research as a Research Associate. In retirement he applied his research to the development of mitigation technologies for greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture. Kevin was the essence of a great scientist, as well as a mentor, with a strong commitment to family, and a lifelong Christian faith. His vast intellect, and his dedication and passion for research led to major breakthroughs in our understanding of the complexities of the importance of carbon in plants and soils. He kept New Zealand soil science at the leading edge through his research on soil organic matter.

³⁶ Here is the youTube link to the video of the Green 'S' Welfare Force for the 2015 Regional PNIG forum, "Sharing Care of the Earth" Forum - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvXYbvjggnQ>.

³⁷ Behind the scenes was the planning committee, comprised of Dr. Kevin Tate, our resident scholar, Bob Skipp, Peter MacGillivray, Sr. Cecily Finucane RSM, Mary Eastham, Wibha Desai, Sam Te Tau, and Stephen Close. Bob in charge of communication; Peter organising lunch. Margaret Sinclair-Jones joined the group for the first time and prepared the folders for participants; Stephen Close collected driftwood for all participants which Peter inscribed with "Share and Care".



Closer Collaboration with our Pasifika Brothers and Sisters

As one of the 2015 Forum Statements reminded us of our responsibility to welcome people displaced by climate change, we vowed in 2016 to enter more deeply into dialogue with our Pasifika brothers and sisters. The forum: Climate Change is Here! The Pacific Island Story emerged from this commitment. For this endeavour, we collaborated with the Papaioea Pasifika Community Trust³⁸ and Pasifika students from Massey University. Organised by the Christian and Bahá'í members of the Interfaith Group, this forum attracted some 60 people to learn what is happening in Pacific Island nations by listening to people who once lived there and now call the Manawatu home. Setting the stage, Dr. Pala Molisa, Victoria University lecturer from Vanuatu, detailed how the broken neo liberal economic system was responsible for climate change, the mass extinction of life within the oceans and the deepening inequality between rich and poor. This said, locals Brent Barrett, newly elected Green councillor for the City, and then eighteen year old Hannah Higgison, co-founder of Youth Action Group Manawatu, claimed that people from white middle-class New Zealand society can and must work with Pasifika people to implement policies that protect the environment. Activities like the People's Climate Change March, for example, inspire social action and long term commitment. *Caritas*, the Catholic Agency for Social Justice, Peace and Development provided the *State of the Environment Report for Oceania: Hungry for Justice, Thirsty for Change*, released on 4 October 2016 to forum participants.

Particularly moving were stories by Massey Pasifika students and Lily Arahanga from the Bahá'í community, who lived on the island of Kiribati. They made the terrifying effects of superstorms shockingly real. Local Pasifika leader, Ivor Kaisami from Fiji was MC for the day; beginning the afternoon workshop by describing his experiences over 23 years of living and working in Tuvalu, Kiribati, Fiji and the Marshall Islands. The event was held at the Catholic Diocesan Centre.

Later that year Dr. Litea Meo-Sewabu was guest speaker at our annual lecture, which preceded our AGM and guided us through the complex web of the cultural and spiritual heritage of the "People of the Ocean", their intergenerational wisdom and community resilience, and the knowledge, sensitivity and humility needed by any organisation which seeks to engage with and assist community development in the Pacific region.

Funding for this event was provided by the Catholic Charities Allocation Committee of the Diocese of Palmerston North and the Palmerston North City Environmental Trust (PNCET). Julia Panfylova, co-ordinator for PNCET, was so impressed with the students' presentations that she invited us to make a short film to debut at the Reel Earth Environmental Film Festival the following year. And so we did.

On 20 May 2017 as part of the Reel Earth Environmental Film Festival, some 70 people gathered at Te Manawa for the film debut of "Making Waves: Stories of Courage and Hope"³⁹. The video was produced by Mr. George Procter of Video Graphic Productions under the banner, 'Inspirational Pasifika Films', through active consultation and co-operation amongst the three supporting organisations: Papaioea Pasifika Community Trust, the Palmerston North City Environmental Trust and the Interfaith Group. The film featured six Pasifika Massey students from Tonga, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Fiji, Vanuatu

³⁸ The planning committee included local Pacific Island leaders: James Etuale, Ivor Kaisami, Sunlou Liuvaie, Dr. Litea Meo-Sewabu and Maruna Engu from the Papaioea Pasifika Community Trust.

³⁹ Poster see Appendix 2.

and Papua New Guinea sharing personal stories about the devastating effects of climate change for their homelands and their loved ones. Sunlou Liuvaie and Dr. Tracie Mafileo from Massey University narrated the film.

The film, “Making Waves: Stories of Courage and Hope”, provided the focus for a forum to look for ways to support Pasifika communities at home and in Palmerston North as they face a very bewildering and uncertain future. In his keynote address, Pasifika environmental activist, Teanau Tuiono,⁴⁰ addressed the connection between the island home-lands and the diaspora communities living in New Zealand. He drew attention to the great disparity in the eligibility of inhabitants of different Pacific Island countries to come to New Zealand once their own lands become uninhabitable. Some have New Zealand passports by right, others may have to submit to the complex processes faced by other would be immigrants, and under current rules would be likely to be denied entry. Auckland is the Polynesian capital of the world and an important hub for Pasifika peoples around the region. He also stressed the need to encourage bold leadership in reducing carbon emissions noting that the intensive weather events like those experienced in Edgecombe in 2017 were signs that climate change had already arrived on New Zealand shores.

In response to the workshop question, “What do Pasifika people need from us – the community of Palmerston North?”, two answers kept emerging. Firstly, make it possible for more Pasifika people to resettle in Palmerston North if they are obliged to leave their homelands. Secondly, our City needs to make the necessary life style changes to lower green house gas emissions.⁴¹

The Dialogue of Life

The dialogue of life occurs where people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows.⁴² Edwards Pit Park has a special significance for the Interfaith Group. As previously mentioned, Jaspreet Singh and his colleagues planted approximately 4400 native plants at Pit Park in 2012. We share the ecological vision of Marise Clark and the Pit Park People to serve the Earth, and thus are happy to support them in their efforts to transform the Edwards Pit Park into a thriving habitat for indigenous biodiversity and an enjoyable recreational space for people. Because it’s a wonderful place for picnics, the Interfaith Group has met there in 2014, 2016 and 2017 to share food and fellowship at the end of our calendar year.⁴³

Pit Park has also become a kind of sacred place for the group where trees of remembrance have been planted to honour members who have passed away: Scott Eastham in 2013, Kevin Tate and John Flenley in 2018. They all shared a life long passion to care for the Earth as well as a commitment to interfaith dialogue.

⁴⁰ Teanau Tuiono has over 20 years’ experience as an activist, advocate and organiser at local, national and international levels on social justice and environmental issues. In Pasifika communities he is known for his work in the education sector and climate change advocacy. In Māori communities he is known for his indigenous rights activism. He has an interest at working at the intersection of indigenous rights and environmental issues where he has worked with remote indigenous communities on the front lines of climate change and biodiversity loss.

⁴¹ Palmerston North City Environmental Trust nominated the Interfaith Group for a ‘Trust Power Community Award’ in recognition of our community involvement via the ‘Making Waves’ Forum with Pasifika people.

⁴² *Promoting Interfaith Relations in Aotearoa New Zealand*, 2009, op. cit. p. 7.

⁴³ In February 2018, we had a picnic at the Victoria Esplanade to celebrate World Interfaith Harmony Week and Trieste Te Awe Awe was our special guest.



“A Mighty Totara Has Fallen”

The Māori people have an expression to honour a great man who has contributed greatly to his community when he passes away. It is: “A Mighty Totara Has Fallen.” First in 2014 and then in 2018, members of the group gathered at Edwards Pit Park with families of those who had passed away to plant trees in their memory and to celebrate their lives. Names plates with special messages associated with each person were engraved either on a plaque placed in front of their tree, or, in the case of Scott Eastham, on a totara log in front of his memorial tree. Engraved on Scott’s plaque was the message: “Love and Light” with which he signed all correspondence; on Kevin Tate’s name plate, the powerful statement: “He believed good will and science could save the Earth from destructive climate change”; and on John Flenley’s, the profound message: “Almost anyone can plant a tree and lead the fight against climate change.”⁴⁴ Bob Stewart also planted a tree in John Flenley’s honour.⁴⁵ Since in many faith traditions, the tree is believed to be the embodiment of life in all its realms: the point of union between heaven, earth and water, nothing could be more meaningful than this beautiful ritual to honour these three special people. This very special event was organised by Peter MacGillivray.

The Interfaith Women’s Group and 2017 AGM

In 2017, the Interfaith Group organised the forum: “Interfaith Women Resist the Climate of Hatred and Fear: Sharing Different Faith Perspectives on Building Bridges of Trust, Friendship and Love.” On 24 August 2017, women from seven faith traditions addressed, in public discourse, the climate of hatred and fear which legitimates destructive attitudes and violent behaviours towards people considered “other”. That these attitudes and behaviours were taking place in secular religiously pluralist countries whose constitutions protect the religious freedom of all citizens and guarantee the free exercise of religion, indicate the absolute necessity of moral leadership from elected public servants and religious leaders.

When the language of hatred and fear is used in public discourse, women and children are always the most vulnerable to its message of exclusion and discrimination. This is especially true for women whose religious and cultural convictions oblige them to wear distinctive garments in public, like the hijab for Muslim women.⁴⁶

The great world religions are repositories of wisdom distilled through many years of lived experience and reflection on all aspects of human life, such as what causes hatred and fear within human beings, and how people of faith can transform these destructive emotions into creative avenues of justice and peace.

Contributors to the forum were: Hadassah bat Avrohom uVatsheva from the Council of Jewish Women; Wibha Desai from Massey University Hindu forum; Heba Hegazi from the Muslim community; Joanne Wilson, representative from the Baha’i faith; Gurveer Kaur from the Sikh community; Jenny Boyak from All Saints Anglican Church, and Jan McPherson from the Amitabha Buddhist Centre. They were teachers, wives, mothers, healers, musicians, artists and community workers as well as being recognised leaders in their faith communities. They had pondered deeply the causes of hatred and fear within

⁴⁴ We must thank Peter MacGillivray for organising these three exquisitely thoughtful memorial events.

⁴⁵ At John Flenley’s funeral, native trees from the local branch of A Rocha, the Christian Conservation organisation which John ran, were given to all so that everyone could plant a tree in his memory and so lead the fight against climate change.

⁴⁶ Countries across Europe and even Canada have been wrestling with the issue of the Muslim veil - in various forms such as the body-covering burka and the hijab, which covers the face apart from the eyes. The debate concerns religious freedom, female equality, secular traditions and even fears of terrorism. The veil issue is part of a wider debate about multiculturalism in Europe, as many politicians argue that there needs to be a greater effort to assimilate ethnic and religious minorities.

our world today from the perspective of their faith traditions, and suggested creative ways to build bridges of trust, friendship and love.

The forum was held at Events Central, Palmerston North Central Library; some 200 people attended, including journalist Carly Thomas, who wrote a feature of the event for the Manawatu Evening Standard.⁴⁷

At our 2017 AGM, Joanne Wilson was our guest speaker. In her talk: “From Fear to Friendship: Healing our world in these days of anxiety, distress and confusion,” Joanne used quotations from Bahá’í teachings and other faith traditions to affirm the purpose of the interfaith movement which invites us to let go of fear and allow ourselves to befriend and be befriended by others who are also creations of God.

During the planning of the 2017 women’s interfaith forum, the women involved spoke of the need to keep the conversation going after the event itself.⁴⁸ If the goal was to build bridges of trust and friendship amongst one another, then it was important to meet on a regular basis, have a coffee and share our joys and sorrows. After the August inaugural event, the interfaith women met only a couple of times because of the complexity of other commitments, but at the formal book launch of the Proceedings Volume⁴⁹ on 22 August 2018, the women put forward the following broad objectives⁵⁰:

1. To create ongoing opportunities for women to get together to know one another.
2. To respond to the needs of refugee and migrant women.
3. To respond to the continued presence of hatred and fear toward women, particularly Muslim, Indian or Bhutanese women whose distinctive dress make them a target for discrimination and prejudice.
4. To share meals and gatherings that could be held on those occasions when specific women’s events are celebrated nationally and internationally, for example, 25 November, the International Day for Ending Violence Towards Women.

Since its formation, the Women’s Interfaith Group has realised almost all these goals.

The Week of Prayer for World Peace

Every year since our formation in 2011, the Palmerston North Interfaith Group has participated in the Week of Prayer for World Peace.⁵¹ It is based on the conviction that the

⁴⁷ Cf. link to Carly Thomas’ article: “Worshippers finding common ground despite their differences.” <https://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/lifestyle/96994119/manawat-worshippers-finding-common-ground-despite-their-differences>.

⁴⁸ Margaret Sinclair-Jones assumed responsibility for organising a database for the women’s interfaith group and has co-ordinated the Women’s Interfaith Group since 2017. She became actively involved in the Interfaith Group in the 2015 Regional Forum on Climate Change. Since 2016, Margaret has been on the planning committee and was elected Treasurer in 2016. She designed the programmes for both the 2016 and 2017 Pasifika forums and personalised “thank you” cards as well. She was our IT technician in the 2016 Forum. Margaret is from Glasgow and for the first 4 years of her life was brought up in an orphanage which was home to 2000 children. At age 4, she was adopted into a musical family and her family encouraged her to compete in singing competitions in Gaelic (Scottish language). She won many prizes and sang unaccompanied. She married her Kiwi husband, Brian in 1984 and emigrated to New Zealand in 1989. They became members of St. David’s Presbyterian Church. After Brian passed away in 2008, Margaret remained in Palmerston North where she contributes her many gifts and talents.

⁴⁹ Margaret Sinclair-Jones did the lay out and design of the Proceedings Volume, and Mary Eastham the editing. To download a copy of the Proceedings Volume, contact Margaret Sinclair-Jones at margaretsinclairjones55@gmail.com. or <https://pndiocese.org.nz/news-and-events/palmerston-north-interfaith-group/>

⁵⁰ Attending the launch of the Proceedings Volume were: Joanne Wilson, Wibha Desai, Heather Tate, Kaye Castell, Jenny Boyack, Margaret Sinclair-Jones, Cecily Finucane, Janice Viles, Helen Chong, Mary Eastham.

⁵¹ A Christian initiative led to the founding of the Week of Prayer for World Peace in 1974, but it soon became an interfaith activity. There are three guiding principles: First, the different words we recite are said by neighbours in the same town and the same street every week, and by sharing together we simply bring under one roof what happens anyway under the same sky. Second, organisers share the conviction that there is only one humanity praying to one supreme consciousness, with whatever different opinions we may have on what that may be. Thirdly, we recognise that interfaith partnerships does not itself imply agreement. cf <http://www.weekofprayerforworldpeace.com/>



peace of the world must be prayed for by the faiths of the world”, and this continues to be the basis of our work today.

The first Week of Prayer for World Peace was organised by Rev. Ken Wall at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church and Rev. Chris Carey-Smith at St. Matthew’s Anglican Church from 16-20 October 2011.

From 2011 until 2017, Sr. Cecily Finucane, RSM, Bob Skipp, Steven Close, and Sr. Maureen O’Hanlon, OP have assumed leadership roles⁵² in organising the week long prayer service. Both All Saints Anglican Church and the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit have been venues for community, ecumenical and interfaith prayer.⁵³

In 2017, Rev. John Hornblow initiated the Week of Prayer for World Peace at All Saints Anglican Church and Jan Vaughan and Beth Greenwood from the Baha’ i faith led prayers for the day, as did Cecily, Bob, Sr. Maureen and Mary.

Dialogue with New Zealand Interfaith Councils

The National Forums take place every two years. Since 2012, the Palmerston North Interfaith Group has been represented at the following Forums:

- * the 9th annual Interfaith Forum in Hamilton, 18-19 February 2012.⁵⁴
- * the National Youth Forum on Cultural Diversity, held 17-20 August 2013 in Auckland sponsored by the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO and the Human Rights Commission.⁵⁵
- * the 2014, National Interfaith Forum in Dunedin. The theme was “Unity in Diversity”.⁵⁶
- * In 2016, the National Interfaith Forum in Auckland. The theme was “Building Bridges: Hearts, Communities, Humanity.”

Thank you

Since 2012, the Catholic Charities Allocation Committee of the Diocese of Palmerston North has provided financial support for programmes organised by the Interfaith Group to assist communities in their work with marginalised people, build healthy sustainable communities and provide resources to assist Catholic and community groups in their work of education. Our programmes dedicated to the dialogues of theological exchange, religious experience, the dialogue of action and the dialogue of life, endeavour to realise the important goals and priorities established by the Catholic Charities Allocation Committee. We thank them and all our wonderful partners in dialogue from the ecumenical and interfaith community in Palmerston North who so generously contribute their time and talents towards building a world of hope and harmony.

⁵² Sr. Susie Logan, OP, was also part of the planning committee from 2012 to 2015.

⁵³ A leaflet has been produced by the New Zealand organising committee with prayers, readings and affirmations from many faiths to use each day. The theme of the leaflet is developed for worldwide distribution by the Week of Prayer for World Peace multi-faith committee based in Great Britain. Religious communities throughout New Zealand are encouraged to celebrate the Week both in their own observances and together with people of different faiths. CF <http://www.interfaith.org.nz/PDFs/WPWP%20flier%202017.pdf> Paddy Payne from the Bahá’í faith co-ordinates the Week of Prayer for World Peace in New Zealand.

⁵⁴ Mary attended the Women’s Forum; Peter MacGillivray, the Men’s Forum.

⁵⁵ Jaspreet Singh represented the group.

⁵⁶ Mary Eastham represented the group in the 2014 and 2016.

We live in a time of human emergency: a time of savage violence, degradation of the Earth, and erosion of civil liberties, human rights and the care of the most vulnerable in precisely those liberal democratic societies which traditionally cherished these values. But we also live in a time in which we are witnessing the emergence of a new humanity dedicated to healing, understanding, respect and compassion. The Interfaith Movement worldwide shares these values, so too the Palmerston North Interfaith Group.

It has been a great privilege to be part of chapter one of this wonderful story of faith and friendship in Palmerston North. My most sincere thanks to Bob Skipp, for editorial revisions and providing many helpful comments.



Chapter Two

“The glue that holds the community together”⁵⁷

MARY EASTHAM

2018 - A NEW ERA DAWNS

A Celebration of the Diversity of Faiths in our Community

Without a doubt, the year 2018 marked a new era of interfaith co-operation in Palmerston North. An interfaith event initiated by the New Zealand Sikh Society (Palmerston North) was facilitated by the Palmerston North Interfaith Group (PNIG) through a planning committee drawn from the Sikh, Buddhist, Bahá'í, Muslim, Hindu and Christian (Pacific Island, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Methodist, Presbyterian and Catholic) faith communities in Palmerston North. The event, *A Celebration of the Diversity of Faiths within our Community*, expressed simultaneously ‘the dialogue of theological exchange’, ‘the dialogue of religious experience’, ‘the dialogue of life’ and the dialogue of action’.⁵⁸

This event marked many ‘firsts’, all worth noting. To bring such an ambitious event to life, the planning committee needed to grow in size and representation. Harminder and Karl Gill of the New Zealand Sikh Society joined the team. It was their original suggestion that such an interfaith activity be attempted. Further additional members were: Dr. Zulfiqar Haider-Butt and Dr. Mohammed Tellaway from the Manawatu Muslim Association; Mervyn Dykes and Elder Peter and Sister Sheryl Stanford from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints; John Thornley from Wesley Broadway Methodist Church; Roy Tankersley from Presbyterian New Church (previously the parishes of St Marks and St Andrews, and St Davids); Joanne Wilson and Gerry Lew from the Bahá'í faith; Julie Randall from the Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Spirit; Leigh Scott from the Amitabha Buddhist Centre; and Maruna Engu, representing at that time the Papaioea Pasifika Community Trust.⁵⁹ Most of these faith leaders remained on the planning committee in 2019, and many into 2020. They became integral to envisioning and organising future interfaith events.

A Celebration of the Diversity of Faiths in our Community marked a shift in our own, and the public’s perception of our interfaith family. We were now perceived as being a unique multi-cultural community promoting social cohesion through interfaith harmony and celebrating religious diversity. This special role was evident in the tenor of remarks made by our community leaders: MP Iain Lees-Galloway; Tangi Utikere, Deputy Mayor, and City Councillor responsible for multicultural affairs; and Councillor Lew Findlay.

⁵⁷ In 2019 Karen Tutt from Environmental Network Manawatu said that groups like the Palmerston North Interfaith Group were the “glue that held the community together.” Environment Network Manawatu fosters and encourages the environmental initiatives of its over fifty member organisations in the Manawatu, ranging from sustainable living to wildlife conservation. The context for this statement was the action project at Edwards Pit Park associated with *Faith Family Feast* that will be discussed further below.

⁵⁸ These four dimensions of interfaith dialogue have been described in chapter one.

⁵⁹ Secretary Bob Skipp, Treasurer Margaret Sinclair-Jones and Chairperson Mary Eastham were delighted to embrace these new additions to our interfaith family. Katherine Lauchland-Farquhar was also part of the planning committee from 2017 to 2018.

Our *kaumatua*, Wiremu Te Awe Awe , who opened and closed the event with a *karakia*, reinforced this with the spiritual Māori view of this being the place where we all belong.

Financial support from the Welcoming Communities Initiative⁶⁰ was yet another indication that the Interfaith Group was seen to embody four key principles⁶¹ essential for creating a more welcoming and inclusive community between newcomers and existing residents:

1. Inclusive Leadership
2. Connected and Inclusive Communities
3. Civil Engagement and Participation
4. Culture and Identity

Another 'first' was the time required to organise this event. Our 17 person planning team⁶² worked together for seven months as equal partners in decision making. During this time each member of the planning committee worked within their own faith community to craft unique expressions of their faith and culture. They composed sacred words and music that would ultimately reveal those core values that sustain life in all communities, like compassion, respect, love, hope and peace. The great diversity in contributions is evident in the event's programme.⁶³

It was also the first time that two different Buddhist communities⁶⁴ participated in an interfaith event as well as five different branches of the Christian tradition, named above.

Another first was the donation of vegetarian curry and rice for some 200 people by the Amesbury Sikh society, along with 400 donuts baked personally and donated by Maruna Engu.⁶⁵

It was also notable that the koha collected at *Celebration of the Diversity of Faiths in our Community* was shared by the Red Cross and the Manawatu Multicultural Centre (MMC) to assist settlement of refugees and support migrants. The money contributed to the purchase of craft materials for an art therapy group for refugee women and a white board for English language classes for MMC. Thanks to generous grants from the Welcoming Communities Fund and the Catholic Charities Allocation Committee of the Diocese of Palmerston North, none of the koha needed to be used for the event's expenses.

A Celebration of the Diversity ... demonstrated all four dimensions of interfaith dialogue: *the dialogue of religious experience* through prayer, chanting and song; *the dialogue of theological exchange* through appreciation of the riches of another's faith; *the dialogue of life*, through sharing food that has been lovingly prepared; and *the dialogue of action*, by contributing to the support of refugees and migrants.

⁶⁰ I would like to thank both Stephanie Velvin, Director of the Welcoming Communities Initiative, for support and encouragement. Also, Jeremie Corroenne from the Welcoming Communities staff, for attending and actively assisting the organising team in facilitating the event.

⁶¹ Cf Welcoming Plan, 2018 - 2019, PALMERSTON NORTH, Te Kaunihera o Papaioea, Palmerston North City Council, Prepared by the Palmerston North Welcoming Communities Advisory Group May 2018, pp. 8-13.

⁶² Not everyone could attend every meeting, of course, but there was always representation from all faith traditions listed.

⁶³ The programme for this event was designed by Bob Skipp in dialogue with contributors, and can be found in the Appendix 3 of this Proceedings Volume.

⁶⁴ The Cambodian Buddhist Trust - Theravada Buddhism participated along with the Amitahba Buddhist Community.

⁶⁵ Funding by the Catholic Charities Allocation Committee of the Diocese of Palmerston North made possible the additional purchase of a vegetarian cake from Indian Flavours restaurant, so that vegetarians could also have dessert.



Other Interfaith Conversations in 2018

Although *A Celebration of the Diversity ...* required extensive preparation, other interfaith conversations also took place that year.

- * Helen Chong from the Council of Jewish Women, facilitated a conversation about rites of passage from an interfaith perspective. Helen had introduced us to this subject in 2012 but was invited to repeat the exploration since more people had become interested in interfaith dialogue by 2018. Significant rites of passage discussed were: birth and becoming an adult, betrothal and marriage, and death and dying. Since these rites mark crucial milestones in everyone's life cycle, people were easily able to share personal stories about the importance of names, the privileges and responsibilities associated with becoming an adult, and rites associated with the spirituality of dying.
- * Wibha Desai educated us about the spirituality of food from a Hindu perspective. The phrase "you are what you eat" took on a much deeper meaning when we learned that what we eat determines our mental as well as physical state. Eating sattvic (pure) food helps us to become sattvic ourselves. If we eat animal and intoxicating foods, we may develop animal qualities: killing animals for food is also regarded as bad karma with negative consequences for everyone involved, including those eating the food.
- * Thomas Nash⁶⁶, a recently repatriated New Zealander, gave a fascinating talk about his work to promote peace internationally. His role in a global campaign to abolish nuclear weapons earned him and his team a Nobel prize in 2017, while an international campaign to ban cluster bombs resulted in the signing of an international treaty in 2008. Equally absorbing was our discussion of all the ways in which New Zealand could champion the "decolonisation" process through our adoption of principles of *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*⁶⁷, leading to just reciprocal relationships between Maori and the Crown, as a model for other nations. Decolonisation is about shifting the way indigenous peoples view themselves and the way non-indigenous people view those who are indigenous. Indigenous peoples are increasingly reclaiming the family, community, culture, language, history and traditions that were taken from them when they were colonised. Some communities are reclaiming control via self-government agreements, treaties, or other negotiated agreements.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Originally from Palmerston North, Thomas Nash studied in Wellington and returned to New Zealand three years ago after almost 15 years working on international disarmament campaigns in Canada, Peru and the United Kingdom. Thomas Nash was part of a team which won a Nobel Peace Prize advocating for nuclear disarmament. He worked overseas for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and secured a social entrepreneurship position at Massey University. His lengthy work on humanitarian and disarmament campaigns overseas left Nash himself feeling distant from the everyday citizen, leading him to come back home. Cf. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/115598359/nobel-peace-prize-winner-thomas-nash-wants-a-seat-on-greater-wellington-regional-council>. Thomas now has a position in the Greater Wellington Regional Council.

⁶⁷ *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* is New Zealand's foundation document ... The signing of the treaty formally confirmed European settlement in New Zealand ... The cumulative impact of introduced legislation and policies led to systemic colonisation which provoked consistent and unwavering Māori protests at treaty violations. The introduction of the 1975 Treaty of Waitangi Act and its 1985 amendment gave us the Waitangi Tribunal, which allows for a process to hear claims about breaches of the treaty, typically the taking of land and resources from Māori ... A long-standing education campaign about the Treaty of Waitangi has also helped non-indigenous New Zealanders to appreciate the significance of the treaty relationship. Most discussions on treaty settlements or on the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi generally include the following: duty to act in good faith, reasonably and/or honourably; principle of partnership; principle of protection or active protection ... New Zealand's constitution demands that robust public policy gives expression to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. This has led to the redesign of Crown agencies which must now be culturally responsive to the aspirations of Māori and actively innovate solutions to reduce the glaring social disparities where Māori are disproportionately represented. Cf. Sandra Morrison, University of Waikato and Ingrid L M Huygens, University of Waikato, *The Significance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi*, 7 February 2019, <https://www.waikato.ac.nz/news-opinion/media/2019/the-significance-of-te-tiriti-o-waitangi>

⁶⁸ <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/a-brief-definition-of-decolonization-and-indigenization>, 29 March, 2017.

Visiting the Sacred Places of our Partners in Dialogue

Since our beginnings in 2011, one of the delights of our interfaith family life together has been sharing our sacred places and the diverse experiences of worship. By 2018, we had visited the sacred spaces of nearly all our partners in dialogue both in Palmerston North or in Wellington, or shared with them important holy days. Memorable visits in 2018 included:

- * Celebrating Naw Ruz, the Bahá'í New Year, with our Bahá'í friends. Thanks to our Bahá'í sister, Joanne Wilson, for making us feel so welcome.
- * Celebrating Buddhist Enlightenment Day at the Amitabha Buddhist Centre with the late Gen Kelsang Demo, who gave a beautiful talk on Enlightenment and led us in a meditation.
- * Celebrating Vaisakhi, the traditional Sikh New Year, with the Amesbury Sikh community. Thanks to Karl and Harminder Gill for their gracious hospitality.
- * Celebrating Eid Al Fitr, the End of Ramadan, with our Muslim friends at the Islamic Centre on Cook Street. Dr. Mohammed Tellawey invited us, greeted us warmly and gave a short talk on the meaning of Ramadan. Sr. Lina Jaffar then took the interfaith women “under her wing” explaining Muslim protocols to us, and making sure that we were first in line to be served dinner, after children, of course. We were to discover later that Sr. Lina was on the leadership team of the Islamic Centre with special responsibilities for women and children, greeting newly arrived Muslim families in Palmerston North, and reaching out to young mothers with children.⁶⁹ In 2019 the Interfaith women established a close friendship with Sr. Lina and other Muslim women in response to the 15 March 2019 terrorist shooting at Al Noor and Linwood Mosques in Christchurch.

2019 - SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

15 March 2019, The Darkest Day in New Zealand History

Probably everyone in New Zealand knows exactly where they were when they heard the news that a lone gunman entered Al Noor and Linwood Mosques in Christchurch and murdered 51 men, women and children while they were on their knees at prayer. This horrific act shattered the image of New Zealand as a safe place for migrants and refugees to live and worship in peace. What made news of the massacre even more unimaginable was that 15 March began with such promise.

At 10am that very morning, hundreds of Palmerston North high school students gathered at The Square to participate in the Student Strike for Climate Change. Inspired by the example of young activist, Greta Thunberg,⁷⁰ students protested inaction of local and

⁶⁹ Sr. Lina's efforts to reach out to young mothers with small children is not motivated solely or primarily to prevent social isolation, but is rather an expression of love and hospitality. It must be noted, however, that a very important secondary effect of her loving outreach is preventing social isolation among newly arrived immigrant women, who because of family responsibilities, cultural and religious attitudes and language barriers, might easily fall prey to social isolation.

⁷⁰ Greta Tintin Eleonora Ernman Thunberg (Swedish: [grɛːta ˈtʏːnbærj] (About this soundlisten); born 3 January 2003) is a Swedish environmental activist who has gained international recognition for promoting the view that humanity is facing an existential crisis arising from climate change. Thunberg is known for her youth and her straightforward speaking manner, both in public and to political leaders and assemblies, in which she criticises world leaders for their failure to take sufficient action to address the climate crisis.



national governments in New Zealand to enact policies and encourage societal changes to avert and mitigate further irreversible damage to the Earth, sea and air. Heather Tate from the Women's Interfaith Group was very involved in raising awareness of this event. Members of the interfaith group who attended shared in the concern and enthusiasm of young people from Palmerston North.

And then, just hours later, everyone in New Zealand learned via a 1 News Special broadcast that a massacre had taken place at two Mosques in Christchurch, and that the victims were completely vulnerable men, women and children during their Friday jum'ah prayer. Shock and horror!

At once the nation began a period of mourning and soul searching. The shooter was Australian, not a New Zealander, and yet New Zealand too confronts the social evils of racism, Islamophobia and white supremacy. Indeed Christchurch is home to an active white supremacist community. Like every other interfaith group in New Zealand, PNIG responded immediately, sending messages of condolence, and organised a multi-faith vigil at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit on 17 March, just two days after the tragedy.

That we were able to organise a multi-faith vigil within 24 hours indicated that our interfaith group had come of age, achieved a maturity to act quickly and decisively. Our host, Emeritus Bishop Peter Cullinane, most graciously gave pride of place to Heba Hegazi⁷¹ from the Muslim community and the Women's Interfaith Group to lead us in prayer. Heba's powerful, heartfelt words are quoted in their entirety:

... It is with great sadness we gather tonight to support, share and heal each other after the tragic terrorist attack on the innocent young, old, women and men worshippers in Christchurch last Friday 15.03.19

We are here to condemn, reject, and resist this inhuman and planned act of terror against humanity in a peaceful calm and multicultural country like New Zealand. I can find no words to describe the devastation, fear, horror and loss for those who witnessed the crime first hand and those who saw it on the media, including the inhuman live recording of [this] crime. I am here tonight as a woman, mother, wife, daughter, midwife and community member, and, on top of that, a devoted New Zealander and woman of faith to express that we all need to be fighting this rising climate of hatred by all means for our next generation to exist.

While praying for those affected, their families, missing ones and the wider community, let's not forget those who are not as privileged to get heard or seen through the biased or blind media. Let us pray for those unfortunate and oppressed trapped and humiliated [people] in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the occupied land of Palestine, Burma, India, borders of China ... etc. and the rest of the world ... we are with you.

I pray to Allah (God) the only and one God who created humankind to have mercy and blessing on all of us here and everywhere in the world. I pray to God to forgive and accept our dead in His heaven and Paradise. I pray to Allah to heal all the wounded and those who are critically ill here and everywhere in the wider world. I pray to God

⁷¹ You may recall from chapter one that Heba Hegazi was on the Interfaith Women's Forum: "Interfaith Women Resist the Climate of Hatred and Fear: Sharing Different Faith Perspectives on Building Bridges of Trust, Friendship and Love", held at Events Central on 24 August, 2017.

to bring peace and blessing on you, your families, our New Zealand society and the wider world. I pray to Allah to guard, protect, heal all the believers in any faith from any background any where to feel free to be who they are wherever they are lawfully existing.

May Allah forgive and accept us all. Amen

After Heba spoke, the congregation stood and surrounded her with “*aroha*”, singing aloud the tender Maori song, “*te aroha, Te whakapono, Me te rangimarie, Tatou tatou e*. Bishop Peter Cullinane followed with a prayer for healing after which the congregation stood and sang together the Prayer of St. Francis, “*Make me a channel of your peace*”. Stuart Schwartz from the Jewish community offered a beautiful prayer in English and Hebrew to honour the victims, pray for them and call for peace. This was followed by chanting and prayers from the New Zealand Sikh Society. Gerry Lew from the Bahá’í community presented a moving prayer for Mankind, followed by soulful chanting from the Hindu tradition from our sister, Wibha Desai. Leigh Scott from the Amitabha Buddhist Centre introduced Gen Kelsang Demo who led us in a meditation, which preceded the lighting of 51 candles, “each one representing a life lost, and a family and the Moslem community devastated by shock and grief.”⁷²

Also presenting special prayers and songs were Rev. Sande Ramage from the Anglican community, Rev. Pamela Tankersley and singers from St. Davids, St. Andrews and St. Marks accompanied by Roy Tankersley on the piano. Angela Coleman from the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit read a poem of grief and sorrow, specifically composed for this occasion.

Special recognition must be given to Julie Randall, director of music at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit for organising the music and Power Point visuals for this multi-faith vigil after 9:30 am Mass on the same day the vigil was to occur.

The multi-faith vigil attracted some 400 people from all walks of life, and united the city in grief, mourning and prayer.⁷³ Dr. Zulfiqar Haider-Butt, then President of the Manawatu Muslim Association, said that the outpouring of love and support was truly meaningful to the Muslim community.

This “liturgy”⁷⁴ has been described in more detail than other multi-faith vigils we have organised because it was a real response to a real tragedy that affected people we had come to know and love, people who were our friends. New Zealand is a small country and the Muslim community living here is even smaller. Therefore, our friends at the Manawatu Muslim Association had been personally affected by this tragedy because they have family and friends who live in Christchurch. They would have been devastated by what had happened, and we were devastated as well, because we loved them. This multi-faith vigil was not an intellectual abstraction, i.e, praying for peace in the world. It was a real “liturgy”, a work of the interfaith community of Palmerston North, wanting

⁷² Quote from Rev. Anne Bennett, 18 March, 2018, email correspondence with Mary Eastham.

⁷³ Thanks to Mervyn Dykes for writing a lovely report of the event for the Manawatu Standard. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/111360835/manawat-faith-groups-express-solidarity-after-killings-in-christchurch>

⁷⁴ “Liturgy” is the customary public worship performed by a religious group. As a religious phenomenon, liturgy represents a communal response to and participation in the sacred through activity reflecting praise, thanksgiving, supplication or repentance. It forms a basis for establishing a relationship with a divine agency, as well as with other participants in the liturgy ... The word liturgy, derived from the technical term in ancient Greek (Greek: λειτουργία), leitourgia, which literally means “work for the people” is a literal translation of the two words “litos ergos” or “public service”. Every aspect of the 17 March multi-faith vigil was a “work for the people”, a “public service.”



to express their love and support for their Muslim brothers and sisters in their grief and sorrow. A beautiful email message from Rev. Anne Bennett indicates that the multi-faith vigil represented an expression of grace from people who truly cared:

THANK YOU most sincerely for organising last night's very moving memorial service to remember the victims of last Friday's horrific massacre in Christchurch. The fact that these people were praying in a place of worship when they were slaughtered is abhorrent.

Having leaders of the different faiths sharing in last night's service was a powerful reminder of the great diversity within our city – and gathering together was a wonderful experience of unity through diversity. Hearing people pray and chant in words of their own faith tradition was deeply moving.

The choice of songs was brilliant. I'm sure many of those present will never have sung all 4 verses of our national anthem. The words are powerful. We need to sing them more often.⁷⁵

The periods of profound silence in such a crowd was very powerful – especially during the lighting of those 51 candles, each one representing a life lost, and a family and the Moslem community devastated by shock and grief.

Many of us will not have heard of the Decalogue of resolutions⁷⁶. It was a lot to take in - and needs careful consideration - but despite many of us not having seen it before, it was wonderful to hear all those present speaking out with such conviction ...

Many of us got a shock to find armed police outside the cathedral when we left last night - a grim reminder that life has changed in Aotearoa-New Zealand in the last week.

Grateful thanks to the Bishop and Cathedral for opening their doors to people of all faiths to be together last night.⁷⁷

It is said that good can come out of evil. Perhaps the closer bonds of friendship and collaboration that blossomed between the Interfaith group and the Manawatu Muslim Association is an example of this. The Muslim women's support group, the visit of Professor Douglas Pratt from Auckland, whose academic speciality is Christian-Muslim dialogue as well as interfaith dialogue, and the Islamic Centre's hosting days three and four of the Week of Prayer for World Peace are beautiful examples of closer bonds of friendship and camaraderie. More on each below.

Working at Four Levels of Society Simultaneously

If 2018 marked a new era of interfaith co-operation in Palmerston North, 2019 marked a new era of service within New Zealand. PNIG made significant contributions at four

⁷⁵ Consider verse 2 of the New Zealand National Anthem: ***Men of every creed and race, Gather here before Thy face, Asking Thee to bless this place, God defend our free land. From dissension, envy, hate, And corruption guard our state, Make our country good and great, God defend New Zealand.***

⁷⁶ The Decalogue of Resolutions, or the Proclamation of the Decalogue of Assisi for World Peace, can be found in the Appendix 4 of this Forum book.

⁷⁷ Email correspondence between Rev. Anne Bennett and Mary Eastham, 18 March, 2018.

levels of society: local, regional, national and international. Locally, we delivered another major public event, *Faith Family Feast*⁷⁸ which realised all four dimensions of inter-faith dialogue.

Held at Ross Intermediate School on 16 November,⁷⁹ this event invited faith communities to connect with the theme of Environmental Cooperation through meditation, chanting and prayer, or song and dance. The spiritual mandate to care for the Earth along with justice for the most vulnerable, were key themes woven through all presentations. Supper was a most joyful event in that we shared as a family the bounty of the Earth, i.e. food lovingly prepared by members of faith communities themselves. Likewise we committed ourselves to engage in a service project at Pit Park to care for the Earth in a practical way mindful of Rene Dubois' famous maxim, "Think globally, act locally."

We acknowledge with gratitude that Gen Kelsang Demo graced us with a beautiful opening meditation intended to create a peaceful and positive mind which is the cornerstone to all interfaith endeavours including our care for the environment we live in.⁸⁰ The complete programme of Faith Family Feast can be perused in the Appendix.⁸¹

Bob Skipp deserves special recognition for designing all promotional materials and producing the programme/interfaith resource, *FAITH FAMILY FEAST* with its complete record of statements, and words to prayers and songs used by the contributors.

The following Saturday on 23 November, the action part of this event took place. At Edwards Pit Park, our task was to prune dead leaves from a grove of cabbage trees. Applying themselves to this task was our interfaith family, which included Jaspreet and his wife Gurveer Kaur⁸², their daughter, Amreen, along with Jaspreet's parents. His friends also came along to plant trees after the job of pruning, sweeping and carrying the dead leaves to the tip was finished. Members of the interfaith family involved in this action project were Christians John and Gillian Thornley, Peter MacGillivray and Mary. From the Bahá'í faith were Beth Greenwood, Josie Randall, Joanne Wilson and Beth Lew. Karen Tutt from Environmental Network Manawatu also joined us, describing the group as "glue that held the community together." This expression so endeared itself to me that I have borrowed it as the title for this chapter.

Another dimension of the action portion of this event was that all of the koha was equally divided and given to the Red Cross, the Manawatu Multicultural Council and the Papaoiea Pasifika Community Trust.⁸³ This was possible since a generous grant from the Catholic Charities Allocation Committee of the Diocese of Palmerston North enabled us to meet all the event's expenses.

⁷⁸ Bob Skipp coined the alliteration, Faith Family Feast, as the most appropriate title for our 16 November 2019 major public event, in which faith communities connected with the theme of Environmental Cooperation through meditation, chanting and prayer, or through song and dance.

⁷⁹ The date 16 November was chosen because it was the United Nations International Day for Tolerance.

⁸⁰ Gen Kelsang Demo passed away on 28 November. She was a founding member of the Interfaith Group in 2011, and participated in every major programme and multi-faith vigil since 2011. We remember her gentleness, her knowledge, her compassion and her kindness.

⁸¹ CF Appendix 5.

⁸² You may recognise Gurveer Kaur's name in association with the Women's Interfaith Event, "Interfaith Women Resist the Culture of Hatred and Fear: ...," held at Events Central, on 24 August, 2017.

⁸³ Because our Pasifika sisters and brothers are on the front line of climate induced devastation in their homelands, we wished to provide some financial support to them as well for their mission in the community.



Other Interfaith Conversations in 2019: Community, National, International

At the community level, PNIG again visited almost all the sacred spaces of our partners in dialogue. One of the most important ways to achieve the spiritual foundation of interfaith harmony has been to gather together to pray. This has provided many profound opportunities to understand and appreciate how other faith traditions reverence the divine presence in our midst. Listed below are moments we have savoured within the four aspects of interfaith dialogue.

The Dialogue of Religious Experience

- * A wonderful celebration of Eid al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha was held in conjunction with Palmerston North City Council. Our gratitude to our Muslim friends, especially Br. Riaz Rehman, Sr. Lina Jaffar and Br. Shabbir Shah Hashmi for their wonderful hospitality on the occasion of this festival.
- * The Walk in the Park Devotions, initiated by our Bahá'í sister, Beth Lew, for members of the Women's Interfaith Group, and later expanded to include the entire interfaith planning committee. Beth prepared inspirational texts from the world's great religions for us to read and ponder while we savoured the bounty of nature.
- * A truly meaningful visit to Temple Sinai in Wellington where Rick Sahar from the Progressive Jewish community led us through sacred texts from two of the holiest days for our Jewish brothers and sisters: Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Thanks to Helen Chong, also a member of the Progressive Jewish Community in Wellington, for facilitating this event with Rick. Maruna Engu and Mary provided transport to Wellington.
- * Celebrating with the Bahá'í community the BiCentennial Celebration of the Birth of the Bab, the co-founder of the Bahá'í faith, complete with a moving tribute to the work of the Bahá'í community worldwide through the film "The Dawn of the Light".
- * The incredible honour of being invited to the Puja of Gen Demo Kelsang at the Amitabha Buddhist Centre, to celebrate her life and to mourn her passing.
- * Observance of the Week of Prayer for World Peace. As noted in chapter one, the Interfaith Group has always observed the Week of Prayer for World Peace, an international expression of solidarity between people of faith and committed humanists working for peace, justice, healing and reconciliation. Our observance in 2019 was a wonderful expression of interfaith cooperation because we gathered at three different sacred places, and were led in prayer by five partners in dialogue.

Thanks to the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit for hosting days one and two. Thanks to Julie Randall from the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit for leading us in prayer for day one, where the theme was "Celebrating Unity"; to Leigh Scott from the Amitabha Buddhist Centre for incorporating the riches of Buddhist meditation into our prayer for the Environment and Climate Change on day two. Thanks to the Islamic Centre for hosting us in prayer on day three, when we prayed about "Sharing our Resources" and day four when we prayed for "animals and insects". Our sincere thanks to Br. Riaz Rehman, Br. Hazim Arefeh and Dr. Aamer and Sister Lina for incorporating the riches of Islam into the prayers for all living creatures, and the prayer for peace. Thanks to Presbyterian New Church, Roslyn

for hosting days five and six, and to Bob Skipp and Margaret Sinclair-Jones for leading us in prayer about Gratitude. Gerry Lew from the Bahá'í community led the prayers on Friday for Friendship. The contribution of Mervyn Dykes from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints must also be acknowledged; Mervyn wrote a marvellous article for the *Evening Standard* informing the public about our week of prayer for world peace.⁸⁴

The Dialogue of Theological Exchange

Four significant and very diverse conversations in 2019 enriched the interfaith group and the broader community on topics that ranged from Christian/Muslim dialogue, issues in religious diversity and inclusivity, the depth dimension of Christmas symbolism and the spirituality of African-American music from Spirituals to Hip Hop. Let's look more closely at each.

- * The visit of Prof. Douglas Pratt was a highlight of the year. He not only delivered the Annual Public Lecture called "*Being Faithful, Being Open: the Journey of Interreligious Dialogue*", but also engaged with the Muslim community on the topic of Christian/Muslim dialogue the previous day. John Thornley introduced us to the work of Prof. Pratt and helped organise this event with Dr. Zulfiqar Haider-Butt from the Manawatu Muslim Association. We are also grateful to the Islamic Centre for their hospitality, and to Genny Vella from Palmerston North Public Library for her gracious hospitality and support of the work of the Interfaith Group.
- * Our Group collaborated with the Religious Diversity Centre in Auckland to deliver an important workshop that was being delivered nationally: the '*Belieforama Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Workshop*'. Twelve of our members attended the workshop which was facilitated by Mary Eastham and Ricky Waters (Chief Coordinating Chaplain at Massey University's Albany campus, Unitec and Manakau Institute of Technology, and Trustee with the Religious Diversity Centre). Its purpose was to enable citizens to be conscious of issues in diversity and inclusivity, and apply their knowledge and skills to actively create inclusive social environments. Three articles from the 'National Statement on Religious Diversity', written by the Human Rights Commission, underpinned our conversations. *First*, that New Zealand is a country of many faiths and our increasing religious diversity is a significant dimension of our public life. *Second*, having no established or official religion, New Zealand is dealing with all religions with equal recognition and respect. *Third*, the reality of our religious diversity is that people differ, sometimes dramatically, in their beliefs about the world and values they hold dear. Debate and disagreement are inevitable. The benefits of this workshop for participants from Palmerston North were to learn more about the religions of people we engage with locally, address manifestations of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination related to religion that affect them, and develop skills for creating inclusive intercultural environments. Those who attended were enriched. Our sincere thanks to the PNCC Welcoming Communities Initiative for providing funding and to the Diocesan Centre for providing the venue.
- * Bob Skipp, assisted by Margaret Sinclair-Jones, presented a very powerful musical/visual offering of a Northern Hemisphere winter Christmas, which had inspired great art and music. This presentation, appropriately entitled "In the Bleak Midwinter", was offered in June, in the middle of a New Zealand southern hemisphere winter, to

⁸⁴ CF. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/116545607/prayers-for-peace-at-places-of-worsh>



coincide with Matariki, a great festival for interfaith celebration. Bob emphasised the bleakness of many peoples' lives from the time of "The Massacre of the Innocents" until today – a divergence from the typically joy-filled portrayal of Christmas.

- * Finally, in July, August and September 2019, John Thornley gave three lectures at Events Central: July 14th: African-American music from the Spirituals to Hip Hop; August 11th: Bob Marley – religion and politics; September 8th: 60s Jazz – Parker, Davis, Monk and Coltrane. Without a doubt, John's commitment to the group as well as his theological range is an enormous gift to Palmerston North.

The Dialogue of Life

Both the Women's Interfaith Group and the Women's Support Group at the Islamic Centre embody the dialogue of everyday life. This dialogue encourages people to come together to develop deeper bonds of friendship, to pray together and to enjoy one another's company. The Women's Interfaith Group is a marvellous example of community and camaraderie. Formed after our 2017 Women's Interfaith Forum: *Interfaith Women Resist the Climate of Hatred and Fear...*, the Women's Interfaith Group met four times in 2019, hosted by Heather Tate from Presbyterian New Church, Beth Lew from the Bahá'í community, and Mary Eastham from the Catholic community. Margaret Sinclair-Jones keeps the group together through email correspondence.

The Women's Support Group at the Islamic Centre has been the most wonderful expression of the dialogue of life and love and laughter. After the heartache of 15 March, the interfaith women were most eager to embrace their Muslim sisters in whatever capacity would enable them to feel our love, ongoing support and to feel safe. Initiated by Sr. Lina Jaffar, this group met every Monday from 10am to 12pm at the Islamic Centre. This was perceived as a safe place for Muslim women, many of whom still felt very vulnerable after the terrorist attack in Christchurch, particularly as wearing the hijab in public made them a visible target for people who might wish them harm.

Many of our Muslim sisters have brought their children and grandchildren with them so this wonderful support group has enriched many lives, not least the interfaith women who have come to offer their support. Over many cups of tea, good conversation, plenty of laughter and wonderful food, close friendships have been formed. We have sat in a circle and chatted while we knitted or crocheted traditional women's crafts. Toward the end of the year, Sr. Lina introduced sewing classes assisted by Heather Tate. As the holidays approached, Margaret Sinclair-Jones brought materials for making greeting cards.

An important secondary benefit from the support group for those Muslim sisters recently arrived in New Zealand (either as the wives of skilled migrants or as refugees) was increased confidence in speaking English. Moreover, young mothers were able to talk to each other and other mothers and grandmothers – Muslim, Jewish and Christian - about concerns common to us all. A group like this becomes a very special "glue that holds the community together" in that it provides a remedy for social isolation so often experienced by newly arrived people who feel vulnerable because they have left behind everything that is socially and culturally familiar, and who need to embrace a totally new way of life. Since many of the interfaith women are themselves skilled migrants, they could readily identify with all the challenges associated with "belonging" in a new country and culture. We must acknowledge the contribution of Presbyterian New Church Meeting Point for

donating wool as well as blankets, hats and mittens for children. Also, the interfaith women who attend on a regular basis: Helen Chong from the Council of Jewish women, Heather Tate and Kaye Castell from Presbyterian New Church; June Hurley, Ethne Mayer and Mary Eastham from the Catholic community. A special vote of thanks to Margaret Sinclair-Jones, from Presbyterian New Church, for email correspondence with the group, as well as giving knitting lessons and instructions in making greeting cards. To Sr. Lina Jaffar, we owe so much, for initiating this group, email correspondence within the Muslim community, providing transport for Muslim women and young children, and, most importantly, being a loving friend to all.

The Dialogue of Action

We recall that the Dialogue of Action asks all people of good will to collaborate with others, in furthering the universal human values of peace and justice, integrity and truth, and in caring for the Earth. Perhaps there is no greater satisfaction for ‘intentional communities’⁸⁵ like ours than to know that the good we seek to do at the local level can have a national, or even international, impact.

Those who attended the 2015 Regional Interfaith Forum organised and hosted by PNIG, ‘Sharing Care of the Earth: Science, Faith, Action’, will recall the marvellous contributions of Dr. Paul Blaschke and David Zwartz⁸⁶ who presented a theological vision on the care of the Earth from the Jewish perspective. In 2019 Dr. Blaschke⁸⁷ drafted a submission to the Environment Select Committee at Parliament regarding the Zero Carbon Bill that he hoped all Interfaith Councils would support. PNIG was delighted that Paul included significant portions from the summary statement of the 2015 Forum⁸⁸. Also included was a substantive contribution from Teanau Tuiono, keynote speaker for our 2017 Pasifika climate change forum, *Making Waves: Stories of Courage and Hope*.

Moreover, Dr. Blaschke asked both Teanau and Mary to be part of the panel to make a presentation to the Environment Select Committee at Parliament on 26 August 2019. The other participant was Anglican Bishop Richard Randerson CNZM.⁸⁹ On 17 November 2019, New Zealand lawmakers approved a bill committing the country to being carbon neutral by the year 2050. The measure, which passed 119 votes to 1, demonstrated the cross-party support that climate protection has in our Pacific Island nations. How wonderful that PNIG might be part of ‘the glue keeping the planet together’.

Later that year, Beth Lew from the Bahá’í community invited members of the Interfaith group to view the movie, “Tomorrow - Take Concrete Steps to a Sustainable Future,” created in 2017 by French film makers. Brent Barrett from the Green Party and Palmerston North City Council, attended subsequent meetings, along with Dave Mollard from Awapuni Gardens, to discuss concrete actions the group might take to create a sustainable future project in the Manawatu region. The name, “Growing Gardens and Communities Project” was decided in December, and in 2020, the project took off, and is a wonderful illustration of the dialogue of action. Members of the Interfaith Group participating in this project are Sr. Lina, Margaret, John Thornley, Leigh Scott, Mary, Beth and Gerry Lew,

⁸⁵ At the core of “intentional communities” are relationships of sharing.

⁸⁶ Mr. David Zwartz was awarded a Queen Service Award in May 2020 for services to the Jewish and interfaith communities. David Zwartz was President of the New Zealand Jewish Council from 1998 to 2005 and is Chair of the Wellington Jewish Council.

⁸⁷ Dr. Paul Blaschke is Environmental and Ecological Consultant at Blaschke & Rutherford Environmental Consultants, Wellington, and former Board Chair, Wellington Progressive Jewish Congregation.

⁸⁸ These are listed in chapter one.

⁸⁹ I also wish to acknowledge that John Thornley made his own personal submission to the Zero Carbon Bill.



of course. Without a doubt, this project is a magnificent testimony to Beth's ability to organise as well as her commitment to serve the Earth and the local community. More on this important project when we talk about the challenges and achievements of 2020.

2020 - INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IN A WORLD IN TURMOIL

The world is always in turmoil. Somewhere in the world, every day, people are being killed or exploited. The innocent starve and die from preventable illnesses. The effects of a changing climate are wreaking havoc on the planet, with fires out of control, flooding, and dramatic weather events, like hurricanes, occurring with increasing frequency. In 2020, the world was brought to its knees by a virus, more like a "plague", which signalled decisively that nature and humanity were out of balance.

COVID-19 is now a household word. The pandemic forced us to stop, stay at home, think about our lives, think about the Earth.

On May 25, 2020 the world witnessed the shocking death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old African-American man in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA, while being arrested by four police officers for allegedly using a counterfeit bill.⁹⁰ The event united humanity in horror and outrage and reinforced the Black Lives Matter⁹¹ movement.

2020 will also go down in New Zealand's history as the year in which the terrorist, whose name will go unmentioned, was sentenced in the New Zealand High Court for his crimes against the Muslim people. During this long year of grief and pain, New Zealanders witnessed the incredible resilience of the Muslim community, their capacity to forgive the man who had hurt them so horribly, and their determination to turn this tragedy into a source of strength. Their courage and decency inspired the world. Rather than vengeance or hatred against the perpetrator, we heard instead profoundly gracious words of forgiveness. What an incredible testimony to their Muslim faith.

The Interfaith programme for 2020, drafted at our final meeting in November 2019 was framed by these concerns, even though the national lockdown between March 25 and May 13 obliged us to communicate only by email, text message and ZOOM. We had agreed that support for our Muslim family was our paramount concern in 2020, followed by an interfaith youth forum on the issues of climate change and racism and an intergenerational family lunch to enhance our sense of togetherness as a faith family.⁹² These concerns are documented in the following events, beginning with the dialogue of religious experience.

⁹⁰ During the arrest Derek Chauvin, a white police officer with the Minneapolis Police Department, knelt on Floyd's neck for several minutes after he was already handcuffed and lying face down. Two police officers, J. Alexander Kueng and Thomas Lane, assisted Chauvin in restraining Floyd, while a further officer Tou Thao prevented bystanders from interfering with the arrest and intervening as events unfolded... Floyd had complained about being unable to breathe prior to being on the ground, but after being restrained he became more distressed, and continued to complain about breathing difficulties, the knee in his neck, and expressed the fear he was about to die and called for his mother. After several minutes passed Floyd stopped speaking. For a further two minutes, he lay motionless and officer Kueng found no pulse when urged to check. Despite this Chauvin refused pleas to lift his knee until medics instructed him to do so. Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Killing_of_George_Floyd.

⁹¹ The Black Lives Matter movement originated with the killing of Trayvon Martin in 2013.

⁹² After lockdown ended in mid-May 2020, the Interfaith Group met on 10 June to plan for the rest of the year. Even though a decision had been made at the November 2019 meeting not to hold a major public event in 2020 because of the time and energy involved to organise them, in reality, every event in 2020 turned out to be a major public event considering the effort involved in organising them: including securing funding and venues, designing promotional materials, communication with participants, organising members of the planning committee to assist on the day, and so on. The only difference between the major public events organised in 2020 from those of previous years was the time constraints imposed on organisers because of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

The Dialogue of Religious Experience

Multi-Faith Vigil to Honour the Victims of the 15 March Terrorist Attack on its First Anniversary

On 15 March from 10.30am to 3pm, the Islamic Centre hosted an open day for the people of Palmerston North to learn more about the treasures of their faith, which had sustained them during this year of grief and sadness, and strengthened their community. Thanks to Brother Riaz Rehman and the Manawatu Muslim Association for organising this beautiful and memorable event.

Later that day, a Multi-faith Vigil in Memory of the Victims of the Christchurch Terrorist Attack was held at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. This vigil was carefully planned in consultation with Br. Riaz Rehman and members of the Manawatu Muslim Association, Stephanie Velvin and Jeremie Corroenne from the Welcoming Communities Initiative and other PNCC staff plus Bob, Margaret, Mary and Julie from the Interfaith Group. This vigil was the sole civic remembrance service in Palmerston North and thus, Mayor Grant Smith, gave an eloquent address following prayers from the Interfaith Family: Br. Hazim Arafah and Br. Riaz Rehman from the Muslim community; Stuart Schwartz from the Jewish community; Gerry Lew from the Bahá'í community; Wibha Desai from the Hindu community; Margaret Sinclair-Jones accompanied by Roy Tankersley from Presbyterian New Church, and Leigh Scott and Birgit Saunders (newly appointed resident teacher) of the Amitabha Buddhist Centre. Other celebrants were our *kaumatua*, Wiremu Te Awe Awe, Korty Wilson from the Diocese of Palmerston North, who welcomed us in with a *kairanga*, and our host, Rev. Joseph Grayland from the Cathedral. Rev. Andy Hickman from All Saints Anglican Church, graced us with a closing prayer. Sr. Lina led the candle lighting ceremony in which 51 candles were lit for those lives lost and their families and the Muslim community for whom we prayed fervently for healing. Br. Riaz Rehman, President of the Manawatu Muslim Association, presented an absolutely moving statement of love, resolve, healing and peace which is quoted in its entirety:

Brothers and Sisters

I greet you with the greetings of the Heart

Assalaamu Alaikum warahmtullah wabartkathu

(Peace Be Upon You)

Today we gather once again, a Year On from that dark day in History, we gather to contemplate the scenes we witnessed with the loss of so many lives from our community.

And today We come together to experience the Blessings of Peace, The Beauty of Hope, The Spirit of Love (Aroha) and the Comfort of Faith.

New Zealand has been home to our Muslim community for over 150 years and we have shared values that has been at the heart of all New Zealanders – Values such as compassion, generosity and empathy.

More than ever, it is critical that we embrace these values as we work together for a more peaceful and a compassionate world. As Muslims, we feel immensely grateful and we are so very thankful that we live in a country like New Zealand which has responded in a way that none of us will ever forget. We made it clear to the world who we really are. Community spirit both here and around New Zealand has remained very strong. We have been moved by the scenes of a united community coming together, not only to



mourn the death of our brothers and sisters and children killed in Christchurch on that day but to issue a strong message of unity and cohesion with people of other faith.

Our thoughts today are also with religious believers who endured many trials and hardship. It has been a rough period of time. Our hearts are also filled with grief for our Christian brothers and sisters who were killed in Sri Lanka, those brothers and sisters who were killed in a synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018 and our brothers and sisters who are killed on a daily basis in other places around the world.

Together in Unity we can defeat the evils of terrorism and religious persecutions, so all can live by the faith that flows from their hearts.

Brothers and sisters, I feel ultimately hopeful, that as a community, as people, as a nation, we are now sure about the path we want to walk. The values that hold us together and the Spirit that binds us all.

These values of our society, values of Peace, Forgiveness, Love (Aroha) hope and tolerance are the spirit today.

“They are important messages today and will remain long into the Future”

Brothers and Sisters . . . one Year ago on the 15th of March, a terrible act took place but I ask us all to consider this . . .

*“FROM THIS HATE HOW MUCH LOVE (Aroha) WE SHARED,
FROM THIS CALLOUSNESS HOW MUCH COMPASSION WE SHOWED,
FROM THIS DESPAIR HOW MUCH HOPE HAS SPRUNG.
AND OUT OF THIS DARKNESS HOW MUCH LIGHT HAS BEEN SPREAD”*

Finally, let us pray for a future of harmony and Peace. Let us ask Allah swt to forever shine his goodness and blessings upon us and let us continue to build this spirit of oneness, a future filled of Hope and Goodwill for our children and all the people of the world.

With this message and on behalf of the Muslim Community we thank you for taking your time out and being with us tonight. We are indeed honoured by your presence and strengthened by your friendship.

Salaamu alaikum warahmatullah wabarkathu

Thank you, Brother Riaz, for this eloquent statement of love, unity and hope. Thanks to the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit for hosting this event, as ours was one of the few vigils that actually occurred in New Zealand. Concerns about the community transmission of COVID-19 shut down memorial services in Auckland and Christchurch.⁹³ Thanks to Julie Randall for designing the beautiful order of service booklet, included in the Appendix of this Forum book.⁹⁴ Special thanks also to the Islamic Centre for providing delicious savouries for supper after having already provided hospitality earlier in the day for several hundred people. Our most sincere thanks to Stephanie Velvin from the Welcoming Communities Initiative of Palmerston North for designing the flyer and for facilitating the provision of vegetarian and vegan finger food. Thanks also to Beth and Shabbir from the Interfaith Group for performing COVID-19 safety protocols before the event.⁹⁵

⁹³ Indeed, the COVID-19 shutdown was announced on 25 March, and thus we considered ourselves very fortunate to be able to hold this very important event of remembrance and healing.

⁹⁴ Cf. Appendix 6.

⁹⁵ The event was covered by the Manawatu Evening Standard. Cf. article: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/120298260/palmerston-north-gathers-for>

On 25 March, 2020 New Zealand went into a lockdown in order to stop the community transmission of COVID-19. Throughout New Zealand, a spirit of grateful co-operation with our Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, and our Director General of Health, Ashley Bloomfield, was evident as Kiwis could see from our vantage point in the Southern Hemisphere the devastating impact of COVID-19 in the rest of the world. We were incredibly grateful to the wisdom of our government for making the decision to “go early and go hard.”

Meanwhile interfaith dialogue continued to blossom in Palmerston North.

Local and International activities

- * Before lockdown, Margaret Sinclair-Jones and John Thornley organised the World Day of Prayer, held on 6 March, 2020 at St. Matthews Anglican Church and The Lychway. Julie Randall led the assembled in song. Attendance was 32 and 26 people at the respective venues. This year’s WDOP was organised by a committee from Zimbabwe who had produced a Liturgy for the prayer sessions which included moments of very moving testimony of the disruption and suffering experienced in Zimbabwe.
- * During lockdown, Beth Lew reached out to the interfaith group with weekly interfaith devotions via Zoom.
- * Wibha Desai engaged the group in a beautiful candle lighting ceremony that we could do at night in our own homes to pray for the healing of those afflicted by the deadly virus and to pray for the end of the pandemic.
- * Mervyn Dykes circulated healing prayers and messages as did Heather Tate, Kay Castell and Mary.
- * The contribution of Birgit Saunders of an exquisitely lovely Buddhist message of healing⁹⁶ to the World Day of Prayer video is an outstanding example of the dialogue of religious experience at the international level. The YouTube video was organised by Matthew Gardner⁹⁷ from the New Zealand Catholic Bishops’ Committee for Interfaith Relations. The context for this production was the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* written by the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity (HCHF) as its founding document. It was signed by Pope Francis of the Catholic Church and Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, on 4 February 2019 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The Document is a joint statement born of fraternal open discussion between Francis and Tayeb, and is meant to be a guide on advancing a “culture of mutual respect”.⁹⁸ HCHF called on religious leaders and faithful around the world to enter into a day of fasting, prayers and supplications for the good of all humanity on Thursday, May 14 to end the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The call was an invitation to people around the world to lay their differences aside and come together as brothers and sisters, against this virus, a true enemy of humanity in this era.

⁹⁶ CF link <https://youtu.be/uebxsqmJU1I>

⁹⁷ Matthew Gardner is the Bishop’s representative from Christchurch on the New Zealand Catholic Bishops’ Committee for Interfaith Relations.

⁹⁸ **A Symposium on Human Fraternity** was to be held in Christchurch was to be held on 13 March. Mary was invited to Moderate a Panel Discussion about “*Citizenry State and Peace Making: The New Zealand Model*” at a Symposium on Human Fraternity organised by the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates. Unfortunately the event was cancelled because of COVID-19.



Multi-faith Vigil to Overcome Racism

A very moving multi-faith vigil was organised in just 48 hours after the murder of George Floyd. The vigil was inspired by Beth's interfaith devotions via Zoom, but expanded to include all members of the interfaith planning committee. Our intention was to offer prayers of healing, justice and hope from our faith traditions, after which we lit candles for all victims of racism, in the USA, in New Zealand and throughout the world. Hosted by Presbyterian New Church, Roslyn, this was our first post-lockdown event which featured eloquent and touching contributions of all participants:

Leigh Scott offered an Opening Meditation and Chant, "*Om Mani Pame Hum*". Gerry Lew led us in the song, "*We Shall Overcome*". Hadassah bat Avrohom uVatsheva read the article "*Black Jews are Tired*" by African American journalist, Chris Harrison, of the Reformed Jewish Community in the USA, and also presented a modern psalm. Brother Riaz made an impassioned statement in Arabic and English condemning racism from the Muslim perspective, and Dr. Aamer offered a prayer from the Muslim tradition. Wibha Desai presented a soulful Hindu chant and made a beautiful statement on unity. Julie Randall sang "*Amazing Grace*" and shared the history of the song. Jaspreet Singh offered a prayer from the Sikh tradition and shared with us something of the richness of his faith. Mervyn Dykes from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints read from the New Testament and offered a spontaneous prayer. Stephen Close from the Anglican Church read a Prayer about Creation from Anglican Archbishop David Moxon. Margaret Sinclair-Jones sang "*Bless This House*", from the Celtic tradition. Mary prayed for the indigenous people in the United States who have suffered greatly from racism. Beth and Leslie Moana presented lovely prayers from the Bahá'í tradition, and Beth Greenwood, also from the Bahá'í community, led us in singing "*Let there be peace on earth*" to close the circle of prayer. After supper, Bob led us in a discussion of where recent events, particularly the death of George Floyd which inspired this vigil, might lead us in our own work in the community. Bob referred us to an account of George Floyd's own actions in opening up his own community to 'outsiders' seeking to bring a message of peace.⁹⁹

* A very meaningful workshop on New Zealand hymns was held at the Diocesan Centre in early July to honour Shirley Erena Murray and Colin Gibson. This workshop was organised by John Thornley, assisted by Myra Smith at the piano and Margaret Sinclair-Jones, who prepared Power Point slides, and the programme. Bob designed pro-motional materials.

The Dialogue of Theological Exchange

* American presidential scholar, Dr. Ron White, explained the cardinal importance of ethical and compassionate political leadership when he spoke in Palmerston North on 5th March as part of his four-centre lecture tour of New Zealand. Dr. White illustrated the characteristics of good presidential leadership using the words of Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address.¹⁰⁰ Lincoln's deep religious conviction moulded his character and his determination to bring reconciliation to a fractured nation. The poor presidential leadership and racial unrest we see in the United States today presents a stark contrast. Only two months after Dr White's talk, the world would be reminded, with the brutal killing of George Floyd in Minnesota, that violence lay

⁹⁹ Cf. Broadcast on Democracy Now: https://www.democracynow.org/2020/6/3/houston_memorial_george_floyd

¹⁰⁰ Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address is included in Appendix 7. The book: *Lincoln's Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural Address* (2006 Simon & Schuster Lincoln Library) was written by our guest speaker, Dr. Ronald C. White Jr.

just below the surface in American society and could erupt at any time. Time to take Lincoln's words to heart again.

Our gratitude to Bob Skipp for liaising with our American visitors (Ron and Cynthia White; Jim and Patty Symons), to the planning committee for providing the delicious supper, to Events Central for providing the venue and to Mervyn Dykes for the wonderful article in *Manawatu Standard/Stuff*.¹⁰¹

* *'Connecting Faith and Interfaith Communities'* was a Wellington regional *hui* organised by the Office of Ethnic Communities¹⁰² held at Westpac Stadium on 1 March 2020. Several members of PNIG attended, enabling them to meet with Wellington-based religious leaders, staff from the Office of Ethnic Communities and then Minister Jenny Salesa herself. Participants shared what they were doing to help counter racism and discrimination and to promote social inclusion and religious acceptance. The context of this *hui* was to examine how the 15 March terror attack had raised challenging questions about what it means to be a New Zealander and what we can do to build more inclusive communities. Interfaith groups from New Plymouth, Hawkes Bay, Whanganui and Wellington met with members of our PNIG contingent: John Thornley, Julie Randall, Wibha Desai, Joanne Wilson, Beth and Gerry Lew, Lina Jaffar and Shabbir Shah Hashmi, Leigh Scott and Mary plus Mukesh Mishrah (Hindu community), Samah Andy (Muslim community), Stuart and Phyllis Schwartz (Jewish community). Here we saw PNIG contributing to a regional and national conversation about fostering religious diversity and acceptance, as well as countering religious discrimination. Our insights have been published.¹⁰³

* The annual PNIG public lecture was given by Dame Robin White, New Zealand painter and printmaker from the Bahá'í community, recognised as a key figure in the re-regionalist movement of 20th century New Zealand art. Joanne Wilson provided a comprehensive biography of Dame Robin as an Introduction, and Bob Skipp read some appropriate and powerful words from last year's booklet for the 'Week of Prayer for World Peace' attributed to the 12th century Spanish Sunni Muslim teacher and Sufi mystic, Ibn El-Arabi.

Dame Robin's talk was entitled "*One Common Faith: how faith relates to creativity and interfaith relationships*". The audience was clearly enthralled by the inspirational and enlightening presentation which seemed to combine a history of art and creativity from Palaeolithic times with a concise and insightful autobiography – all leading to an understanding of a common spiritual basis for human creativity. Our appreciation of the talk was conveyed most eloquently by Helen Chong in her vote of thanks.¹⁰⁴

Gerry Lew from the Bahá'í Community is Appointed Deputy Chair

Dame Robin's talk was followed by the AGM of PNIG, in which Gerry Lew was elected the Group's Deputy Chair. Gerry joined the planning committee in 2018 and has endeared himself to our interfaith family because of his deep faith and knowledge of the Bahá'í

¹⁰¹ CF <https://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/120087723/wise-words-of-the-past-st>

¹⁰² Since 11 October, Mary was part of a reference group to work alongside the Office of Ethnic Communities to help shape the content and approach for this series of regional *hui*. These *hui* took place in Christchurch, Dunedin, Wellington, Auckland.

¹⁰³ Our insights have been published in *Connecting with Faith Communities and Interfaith Groups: Growing a socially inclusive Aotearoa New Zealand to counter racism, discrimination and religious intolerance*, released in November 2020.

¹⁰⁴ A special vote of thanks to Julie Randall for making a video of Dame Robin's presentation, which will be an important resource for the community.



tradition, his wonderful interpersonal gifts, and his unique personal contribution to interfaith events since 2018. This appointment also recognised the great contribution the Bahá'í community has made to interfaith dialogue in Palmerston North since 2013.¹⁰⁵

Youth Interfaith Forum: "Generation 20/20: Agents for Change"

Ever since Hannah Higgison and Kaia Constanza from Youth Action Group Manawatu graced us with their energy and passion during our earlier focus on climate change in 2015 and 2016, PNIG has been keen to re-engage with the perspective of young leaders in Palmerston North. It is important for us to take on board those issues which define the challenges of the world they are inheriting, climate change and racism being especially urgent.

On two consecutive Tuesdays in August at Café Royale, Square Edge, two panels of articulate young people held an audience of about 50 people spellbound. Their focus was constructive action at the local level to bring about change. This action was grounded in the principles and values of their faith traditions, which placed *Hope* at the centre of the conversation. This event, therefore, was an expression of the 'dialogue of theological exchange' as well as the 'dialogue of action'. We were not content to let their words float off into the night air, never to be given a second thought. Hence the impetus to create this publication as a permanent record of their thoughts and aspirations. The Proceedings of this inaugural event accompany these historical chapters in this publication. The Volume will be dedicated to the late Kevin Tate, key note speaker at our 2015 interfaith forum, Sharing Care of the Earth: Science, Faith, Action.

Addressing the topic of Climate Change on 4 August were youth leaders:

- Grace Fakahau¹⁰⁶ from Tonga, who was an organiser of the Student Strike for Climate Change in 2019.
- Jaspreet Singh, who was born into a Sikh family in India and was founding member of the interfaith group. Jaspreet currently works as a researcher at the Crown Research Institute, AgResearch. He is a member of Green S Force, and is an active environmentalist who is also interested in the history of places and migration.
- Klem McJarow-Keller from St. Peters College and the Catholic community.
- Agha Wajeeh from Palmerston North Boys High and the Muslim community.

Moderating the panel on Climate Change was Teanau Tuiono,¹⁰⁷ climate change activist and member of the Green Party.

On 11 August, 2020, the Young Adults Forum on Racism¹⁰⁸ was moderated by Jaspreet Singh. Panelists included:

- Elza Gibu Joseph, "service freelancer", trained Indian Classical Dancer, student at St. Peter's College and member of St. Mary's Catholic Church.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Recall Sam Te Tau's contribution to the interfaith forum "Making Peace with Abraham, our Father in Faith," after which the Bahá'í have contributed to every major public event in interfaith dialogue.

¹⁰⁶ Grace is a student at Amanaki Stem Academy and Girls High School, Palmerston North, and is Youth Council Chairperson.

¹⁰⁷ Teanau Tuiono is The Green Party's first Pasifika Member of Parliament.

¹⁰⁸ The 16 April: Race Unity Speech Awards were absolutely crucial in planning our interfaith youth forum. Because of COVID-19 lockdown, the regional and national finals were held via Zoom. Organiser Joanne Wilson reported that the messages were very timely and of a high quality. Our region's young people acquitted themselves extremely well — we hoped we could tap in to some of their passion and oratory in our own events. We did. Both Grace and Elza participated in the Speech Awards event and shared their passion and knowledge with us in *Generation 20/20: Agents for Change*.

¹⁰⁹ Elza gave free lessons for events (last year taught 35 students and coordinated 2 programmes); she is the media coordinator for a number of events: leader/organiser of 'Focus Youth Group'; teaches Bible Studies for the kids at St. Mary's Catholic Church.

- Tessa Ma'auga, an art student from the Bahá'í community involved in the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme.
- Jasmine Pai, a graphic designer from the Bahá'í community, who stands with her people of Tainui and Te Arawa.
- Agha Wajeeh, who not only spoke at this forum on Racism, but the forum on Climate Change as well.¹¹⁰

At the debrief meeting held afterwards, those youth leaders present signalled their desire to hold another youth forum in 2021 and work closely with the planning committee to envision and organise it.

Members of the planning committee worked harmoniously both before and after lockdown to secure the venue and funding, organise the panelists, design promotional materials, and prepare the venue for the actual event. Thanks to our deputy chair, Gerry Lew, for so ably taking the role of Master of Ceremonies.¹¹¹ Thanks also to Julie Randall for making a video of this event to be used as a resource.

The Dialogue of Action

- * The Muslim community observed the holy month of Ramadan from their homes this year, unable to gather in the Mosque because of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Nevertheless, their outreach to the community was not curtailed. During Ramadan, Manawatu Muslim Association initiated their 'Helping Hands' project, in which 5000 serves of food (pre-packed hot dinners) were prepared and delivered on Sundays and Tuesdays for the wider (non-Muslim) community and organisations already helping the most needy and under-privileged. What a marvellous illustration of the dialogue of action.¹¹²
- * 'Growing Gardens and Communities' project: This project was initiated by Beth Lew after showing members of the Interfaith Group the movie: "Tomorrow - Take Concrete Steps to a Sustainable Future." The group's response was to help local people learn how to grow gardens to produce food. Beth liaised with Dave Mollard from Awapuni Community Gardens who provided four plots for us to plant vegetables and run demonstration workshops, the first of which was held on Sunday 7 June. There 12 people were introduced to 'microbiomes', organic gardening and suitable plants for winter. The group planted lots of kale, cabbages, cauliflower, silverbeet, onions, garlic, broad beans and more. Many of the plants were donated by Beth and also her col-leagues, Tim and Rick, who also have a bed at the community garden. Weeding, planting or harvesting needed to maintain the garden is carried out as a group activity from 1.30pm every second Sunday. Vegetables produced in the garden are being donated to the Methodist food bank or Just Zilch, with a pataka kai in Highbury being a possible future recipient.
- * Contribution to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Attack on Christchurch Mosques: Like all interfaith groups in New Zealand, PNIG was invited to make a

¹¹⁰ Grace Fakahau was also scheduled to give a talk on racism, but was unable to do so because of an unexpected illness. Grace organised the Black Lives Matter Rally in the Square after the killing of George Floyd. Her talk will be published in the Proceedings Volume of this event.

¹¹¹ Mary was called home to the USA because of a family emergency.

¹¹² We also acknowledge the contribution of Margaret who knitted knee rugs for elderly Muslim women to keep them warm during winter.



submission to the 'Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019'. Without hesitation, Helen Chong from the Progressive Jewish community and Shabbir Shah Hashmi from the Muslim community, took on this responsibility.¹¹³ On 17 January 2020, Shabbir was sent a letter from the Royal Commission requesting permission that two statements from their formal submission be incorporated into the final report. These statements are noted below along with our gratitude to Helen and Shabbir for their superb contribution:

“One of the biggest problems we face is the “silos” where young people are encouraged to remain in their own community and not to mix with others” (community organisation).

“Channels of communication between different cultures should be encouraged and supported, possibly by funding gatherings where people can meet over a cup of tea” (community organisation).¹¹⁴

The Dialogue of Life

Celebrating what it means to be to an interfaith family

Since its formation in 2011, PNIG has embodied and nurtured two crucial elements which have made it a unique faith family. Firstly, our Group affirms those core values that sustain life in all faith communities, like compassion, respect, love, hope and peace and, secondly, we earnestly and sincerely attempt to understand what is most precious to our partners in dialogue. Every dimension of interfaith dialogue holds together these dual concerns. As we conclude chapter two of our story, let's look at how the dialogue of life uniquely reflects this dynamic.

- * Before lockdown, the Bahá'í community held the Ayyam-i-Ha Celebration at Ashhurst Domain organised by Gerry and Beth Lew. It attracted 30+ people of all ages enjoying craftwork, rock painting and other pleasant activities (including eating good food).
- * The Support Group for Muslim Women could meet only a few times in 2020 because of COVID-19 meeting restrictions, and yet every gathering was a celebration of what it means to be an interfaith family. As mentioned earlier, this wonderful group has enriched the lives of our Muslim sisters, their children and grandchildren and the interfaith women who have offered their love and support. As a result close friendships have been formed. In 2020, the crafts dimension of the group has been expanded to include sewing lessons and cooking classes will begin later this year.
- * The Intergenerational Family Lunch, initiated and organised by Beth and Shabbir, was held on 26 September at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. It was the most beautiful expression of the dialogue of life, a marvellous celebration of unity within diversity, bringing together members of the planning committee and their children and grandchildren — families from the Bahá'í, Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities. Children from different faith and cultural traditions played together. People from all over the world embraced each other as friends. The sumptuous lunch featured a wide variety of vegetarian dishes (curries, fried rice, egg rolls and other savouries, gluten free and vegan options, salads, fresh fruit plates, Indian sweets) honouring our commitment to our Hindu and Sikh family that while they cannot eat

¹¹³ Their statement can be read in the Appendix 8 of this Proceedings Volume.

¹¹⁴ I would also like to acknowledge that John Thornley made his own personal submission.

meat on religious grounds, all would be able to enjoy the same variety of foods. It also expressed our awareness that a plant based diet is better for the Earth our Mother.

We were delighted that Palmerston North City Council Deputy Chair, Tangi Utikere, and Councillors Zulfiqar Haider-Butt, Lorna Johnson and Brent Barrett were able to join us. Each expressed the sentiment that events like this reflect both the multicultural and interfaith texture of our city helping to bind its community together.

Although this was not intended to be a major public event for 2020, it certainly turned out to be so. Considering the time and effort involved in securing funding, managing the personal invitations, organising lunch for some 100 people, games for children and ice breaking exercises, and preparing and cleaning up the hall, this event took as much effort as other major public events held in the past, but with much tighter time constraints due to COVID-19 restrictions.¹¹⁵

Given all the uncertainty involved in planning and realising this event, we are incredibly grateful to the perseverance of Beth and Shabbir. We are very grateful to Mervyn Dykes for making it possible for us to hold the event at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and to Sr. Barbara Roberts for working closely with Beth to deal with the nuts and bolts of setting tables, etc. Also to the lovely young Missionary Sisters from the Latter Day Saints who served the food and who sang so beautifully at the end of the day.

Our grateful thanks as well to Sr. Lina Jaffar and the Manawatu Muslim Association for the contribution of fried rice, and to the Bahá'í community for their contribution of fresh fruit and salad. Finally to all member of the planning committee who helped in whatever capacity to make this event so special.

LOOKING FORWARD WITH HOPE

The second chapter of the history of the Interfaith Group is not yet finished, as two very significant events in 2020 have not yet occurred. One is the Week of Prayer for World Peace which is celebrated this year from 11 October until 18 October. This international event is an opportunity for people of all faiths to pray in their own gatherings or with people of other faiths for world peace. This year, the Interfaith Group will gather for prayer at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, the Amitabha Buddhist Centre, the Islamic Centre, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Presbyterian New Church, Roslyn.

The second is our final meeting of the year which will take place in November at Pit Park, combining a working bee with an end of year picnic. We look forward to this gathering of our faith family to care for the Earth and to celebrate what we have meant to one another this year.

“Touch Its Centre, Make It New”

A living spiritual tradition develops through the lived commitment of people who hear the voice of God, with all its challenges, at a precise moment in history. The Interfaith movement is a unique response to the voice of God in the 21st century. Its centre is the call

¹¹⁵ A second outbreak of COVID-19 in Auckland in mid August obliged the Prime Minister to place Auckland in alert level 3 for several weeks and the rest of the country in alert level 2 from mid August until September 22. Meetings at alert level 2 were restricted to 100 people.



to people of good will to put aside differences and embrace one another as brothers and sisters in faith, and yet remain deeply rooted in our own spiritual traditions.

Each year, the Palmerston North Interfaith Group touches the centre of these life giving principles and makes them new - letting them speak through events and experiences that uniquely respond to challenges facing humanity at the particular moment. Responding to the degradation of the Earth, seas and oceans through global warming is a challenge to which we have always responded. Likewise, to catastrophes that have befallen our brothers and sisters, like the heinous crime against our Muslim family in 2019, or the brutal killing of George Floyd in 2020.

We believe that responding to critical challenges like these as an interfaith family is the best way that people of faith can be harbingers of hope for a new day of peace, justice and harmony in the world.

Mary Eastham, 25 September 2020

The International Day to Suppress the Slave Trade and Slavery was signed at Geneva on 25 September 1926 and amended by the Protocol, New York, 7 December 1953



Appendices



Climate Change Forum Panelists: Klem McJarrow-Keller, Jaspreet Singh, Agha Wajeeh and Grace Fakahau with Moderator Teanau Tuiono, Climate Change Activist and Member of Parliament in the House of Representatives as a Representative of the Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand.





Racism Forum Panelists: Agha Wajeeh, Jasmine Pai, Elza Gibu Joseph and Tessa Ma'auga; not pictured is Moderator Jaspreet Singh.



Amreen Kaur Sidhu, Youngest Member of the Interfaith Group; Amreen is Jaspreet Singh's Daughter.

Appendix 1

'Sharing Care of the Earth: Science - Faith - Action' North Island Regional Interfaith Forum

Saturday 29th August 2015

Te Waiora Chaplaincy Centre, Massey University, Palmerston North

1. PROGRAMME

Welcome	Mary Eastham, Sita Venkateswar, Peter MacGillivray, John Maats
Opening Prayer	Rev Paul Stock (Massey Chaplain)
Opening remarks	Grant Smith (Palmerston North Mayor)

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Global change — failure to care for the Earth Dr Kevin Tate

INTERFAITH PANEL

Environmental Stewardship from a Muslim Faith Perspective	Dr Anwar Ghani
Tikkun Olam – Healing the World	Dr Paul Blaschke and David Zwartz
Laudato Si — Care for our common home	Martin de Jong
Baha'i Perspective	Sam Te Tau
Hindu Perspective	Sreejith Sreekumar
Change my Mind, Change my World	Gen Kelsang Demo

ACTION GUIDE

War on Climate Change	Shah Shatnam Ji Green 'S' Welfare Force
Climate change:Energy, Adaptation and Resilience – what can citizens do?	Prof. Ralph Sims
Adaptation (Sustaining Soil)	Dr Alec Mackay
Environmental Justice in Oceania	Martin de Jong
An update to Economics (and Business) so that people and nature matter	Prof. Marjan van den Belt



Māori view of Caring for the Earth Hone Morris

ACTION PLANS

Initiatives for ‘Sharing Care of the Earth’ Jill White - chair

CONCLUSION

National Interfaith Forum Ruth Cleaver

Closing Prayers Multiple contributors

2. BACKGROUND TO FORUM CONTRIBUTORS

Dr Kevin Tate: ‘Global change — failure to care for the Earth’

Kevin is currently a Research Associate at Landcare Research, having retired in 2005 following a number of years leading major research programmes on greenhouse gas exchange with the terrestrial biosphere. He began his scientific career teaching chemistry at Victoria University in Wellington before becoming a soil scientist at the New Zealand Soil Bureau, DSIR in 1968. During this early period he took his family to the UK, firstly for a year in Aberdeen to work at the Macaulay Institute (now The James Hutton Institute), and later to Rothamsted Research in England where he was privileged to work with the late Professor David Jenkinson FRS. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand in 1995, and in 2005 won the New Zealand Marsden Medal for his contribution to climate change research. In 2013 he was awarded the inaugural L Grange Medal for his outstanding contribution to New Zealand soil science. In retirement he has led research to develop mitigation technologies for reducing methane emissions from agriculture, and when asked gives talks to community groups on global change. In 2014 he joined Rod Oram and the head of Tear Fund to successfully persuade the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand to divest from fossil fuels.

Dr Anwar Ghani: ‘Environmental Stewardship from a Muslim Faith Perspective’

Anwar Ghani is a soil biochemist who has specialised particularly in research on ‘mitigation of nitrogen losses’ and ‘sustainable land use’. He has expertise in microbiology, soil biochemistry and organic waste management. He was the first Chairman of the Halal Standards Advisory Council, advising government on standards to maintain market access to specific markets. Anwar was the previous president of the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ). His work leading FIANZ has been considerable; building bridges with the government as well as with the broader New Zealand population and leaders of other faiths.

Dr Paul Blaschke and David Zwartz: ‘Tikkun Olam — Healing the World’

Dr Paul Blaschke works as an environmental consultant in Wellington, a part-time lecturer in environmental studies and environmental health and an advisor and volunteer in environmental restoration projects. He is the current chair of the Board of Temple Sinai, the Wellington Progressive Jewish Congregation. David Zwartz is a retired publisher and editor, current chair of the Wellington Regional Jewish Council, and involved in interfaith activities.

Martin de Jong: 'Laudato Si' — Care for our common home'

Martin de Jong is the Advocacy and Research Advisor for Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand with a particular focus on environmental justice. He is a writer and journalist of 30 years standing, with a passion for exploring the ongoing human relationship with the world around us.

Sam Te Tau: Baha'i Perspective

Sam is an active member of the Baha'i and interfaith communities locally, and is a notable artist. <http://www.samtetau.com/#!gallery/cff9>

Sreejith Sreekumar: Hindu Perspective

Sreejith Sreekumar has spent a decade with Chinmaya Mission, India pursuing spiritual knowledge from the divine lineage of seers who had learned and served under Swami Chinmayananda ji. He has conducted seminars, workshops & games on Personality Development, Self-Management Strategies and National Awareness for Chinmaya Yuva Kendra (Youth wing) in India. Sreejith Sreekumar takes Bhagawat Gita study group and teaches Sanskrit in Palmerston North. He also takes Bhagawat Gita and Vedantic class in Wanganui.

Gen Kelsang Demo: Change my Mind, Change my World

Demo is Resident Teacher at Amitabha Buddhist Centre, Albert St, Palmerston North.

Shah Shatnam Ji Green 'S' Welfare Force: 'War against global warming'

Jaspreet works as a scientist at AgResearch Limited and Lee is the Secretary of the South Auckland branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand. Dera Sacha Sauda is a socio-spiritual organisation that preaches and practices humanitarianism and selfless services to others. The main centre of the ashram is located in Sirsa (northern India). More than fifty million people around the world are faithful followers of the organisation. By the inspiration of Revered Saint Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh Ji (Insan) the organisation has been recorded in The Guinness Book of World Records with 6,873,451 saplings planted in a single day on 15th Aug. 2009. Recently on 15 August 2012 another World Record was set by planting 2,039,747 saplings in 1 hour. This is a non-profit organisation dedicated to guiding all to find peace, serenity and compassion in their life through the universal teachings of meditation, vegetarianism and selfless love. Currently this organisation is involved in 112 community welfare activities which include tree plantation, blood donation and helping needy. The volunteer army "Shah Satnam Ji Green S Welfare Force" works tirelessly around the clock throughout the world. Jaspreet and Lee are both members of "Shah Satnam Ji Green S Welfare Force".

Prof. Ralph Sims: 'Climate change:Energy, Adaptation and Resilience — what can citizens do?'

Climate change is well understood and the impacts are beginning to show. The Pope has made some strong statements in his recent encyclical and the forthcoming international negotiation meeting in Paris is looking promising to deliver a step in the right direction. New Zealand's position however remains very weak. So what is our fair share? And what can businesses, cities and individuals do to help reduce the risks of climate change? Ralph Sims is the Professor of Sustainable Energy at Massey University, New Zealand, and Director of the Centre for Energy Research. In 2013 he was appointed to the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for a 4 year term and has been a lead author for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) covering renewable energy and agriculture, "Energy Supply"



“Integration of Renewable Energy” and “Transport” chapter of the IPCC 5th Assessment Report- Mitigation (2014). Ralph is a Companion of the Royal Society of New Zealand and has acted as a consultant to many organisations over the past decades, including UN FAO and OECD.

Dr Alec Mackay: ‘Adaptation (Sustaining Soil)’

Alec is a Principal Scientist, Land and Environment Group at AgResearch, Palmerston North.

Martin de Jong: Environmental Justice in Oceania’

Drawing from Caritas research over the last two years, an overview of key environmental issues affecting people in Oceania and some responses (or lack thereof) at local, regional and international levels. Martin de Jong is the Advocacy and Research Advisor for Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand with a particular focus on environmental justice. He is a writer and journalist of 30 years standing, with a passion for exploring the ongoing human relationship with the world around us.

Prof. Marjan van den Belt: ‘An update to Economics (and Business) so that people and nature matter.’

This workshop will first look into ‘Why Economics (and Businesses) as we know it don’t and can’t deliver the benefits most of us would like’. Proposals for ‘getting Economics right’ are not new and some hopeful signs and activities will be highlighted. However, many trends are clearly not pointing in a desirable direction. What can we improve to give ‘Economics as we know it’ an overdue update, so that, we end up with benefits that are bigger than the costs? We will discuss the ‘social-ecological economics’ of sustainable resource use and the pitfalls and power of certain words as they often relate to fundamentally different mental models that people hold about ‘Economics’.

Marjan van den Belt is Director of the Ecological Economics Research New Zealand, at Massey University, Palmerston North. She arrived in New Zealand in 2009. She holds a PhD in Marine Estuarine Environmental Science from the University of Maryland, USA and a Masters in Business Economics from Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands. She has used an ecosystem services approach for 20 years, predominantly in stakeholder participatory processes guided by model building and scenario development. She is a co-author on the seminal article in Nature on the ‘Value of the world’s ecosystem services and natural capital’ (Costanza et al. 1997), lead editor of ‘Ecological Economics of Estuaries and Coasts’ (2011) featuring an ecosystems services approach. Relevant appointments include 1) Pool of Experts for the United Nations World Oceans Assessment; lead-author on ‘Scientific Understanding of Ecosystem Services’ and 2) Expert Member of Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) on ‘Methodology development for ecosystem service assessments on values and valuation’ as well as ‘Policy support tools for scenario analysis and modelling of biodiversity and ecosystem services’ and 3) Editorial Board of the Journal ‘Ecosystem Services’. As Science Leader of MBIE-funded programmes, her trans-disciplinary research interests spans land (e.g. urban, agricultural and conservation) and water (e.g. rivers, coast and marine) as they relate to human well-being.

Hone Morris: ‘Maori view of caring for the Earth’

Hone is a lecturer in Massey University College of Humanities and Social Sciences, specialising in Te Reo Maori, Languages and Linguistics, Historical Linguistics and Corpus Linguistics.

Jill White: Facilitator of Open Forum

Jill was formerly Mayor of Palmerston North, Labour MP and chair of NZ Environmental Risk Management Authority

3. FORUM STATEMENT

On 29th August 2015, The Palmerston North Interfaith Group hosted North Island members of New Zealand's interfaith community in a forum held at Massey University where experts in the science of Global Change and people of Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faiths explored together ways in which our World's faiths shared view – that human beings have a sacred responsibility to care for the Earth, its people and all living things – could help develop a common will to solve problems threatening the future of our planet.

The following statement is based on a proposal shared at the forum by Keynote Speaker, Dr Kevin Tate. It is largely based on a covenant developed at a climate change meeting held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2009 which Kevin attended, along with Christians from Kiribati, Tuvalu, sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and East Asia where climate change effects were then already causing loss of land, drought, and flooding. The organising team and contributors of the forum have endorsed this as our Forum Statement.

We,

- Acknowledge that, if we hope to ensure the future survival of life on Earth, we must urgently change from the path we are on
- Reject the theological understanding of a disposable earth and the incessant drive for limitless growth motivated by a relentless focus on profit
- Affirm that the economy should benefit humanity within the bounds of a sustainable earth
- Acknowledge the interconnectedness of all life on earth
- Welcome people displaced by climate change
- Urge our faith communities to explore ways to minimise fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions
- Commit ourselves to share resources and material that will help educate and inform our local and faith communities on climate change issues so they can become agents of transformation
- Commit ourselves to engage with governments, business sectors and the wider civil society in shaping and implementing policies in the areas of energy and climate change

Participants at the Forum made over eighty suggestions about ways that they could act, personally, or through encouraging action locally, regionally, nationally or internationally, to urgently reduce the impact of global change.



Appendix 2

'Making Waves' Video Entry for Reel Earth Environmental Film Festival



Saturday 20 May 2017 10:00am – 2:30pm

Te Manawa Museum, 326 Main St, Palmerston North

Lunch provided – Koha welcome

Reserve your seat for this free event at Eventfinda:

<https://www.eventfinda.co.nz/2017/making-waves-stories-of-courage-and-hope/palmerston-north> — or email bob_skipp@xtra.co.nz

- Produced locally, specifically for Reel Earth 2017, *Making Waves: Stories of Courage and Hope* features the graphic testimony of 6 Massey University Pasifika students about the effects of climate change on their lives and loved ones.
- The associated Forum takes up the film's call to action, asking, "What do Pasifika people need and want from us as they struggle to live with climate-induced devastation?" *Speaker: Teanau Tuiono: champion of climate action — indigenous knowledge — Māori and Pasifika education.*



Palmerston North
Interfaith Group

Papaiōea Pasifika
Community Trust



Palmerston North City
Environmental Trust

Appendix 3

A Celebration of the Diversity of Faiths in our Community

Friday 30 November 2018 @ 7.00 pm,
Queen Elizabeth College Hall, Rangitikei Street

PROGRAMME

Karakia	Wiremu Te Awe Awe
Welcome	Mary Eastham
Introductory Remarks	The Honourable Iain Lees-Galloway

1. Amitabha Buddhist Community

Liberating prayer — All Kadampa Buddhist practices begin with the Liberating Prayer, a prayer to Buddha Shakyamuni.

Prayers for the Long Life — In this prayer we pray for the long life of Venerable Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, the founder and spiritual guide of the New Kadampa Tradition.

Migtsema prayer — All Kadampa Buddhist practices end with this beautiful prayer.

2. New Zealand Sikh Society Palmerston North

First sabad (Hymn)

Mul Mantar

Ik: *One-God is one and only one. Omkar:* *Omnipresent God is everywhere.*

Satnam:

Truth-name Karta Purakh: Doer-person Nirbhau, Nirvair: Not afraid, No enemies

Akaal Murat: Timeless, endless entity Ajooni: Formless Saibhang: Self-created

Gur Parsad: Obtained by the Grace of the Teacher

Second sabad (Hymn)

Kabeer meraa mujh meh kichh nahee jo kichh hai so teraa

Kabeer, nothing is mine within myself. Whatever there is, is Yours, O Lord.

3. Cambodian Buddhist Trust - Theravada Buddhism

1. Greetings to Buddha - bow three times.

2. Salutation prayer to Buddha.

3. Meditation for 3 minutes.

4. Blessing prayer to everyone.

4. Manawatu Muslim Association

The first item is instrumental based on a folk romantic story from Punjab called “Heer Ranjha”. The instrumental is a fusion between Sufi rock and Blues rock guitar with improvisation based on Sitar and the tabla adds the flavour of Punjabi folk music.

The second item is presented by the Syrian brothers and is called “Nasheed” which describes the love of a person towards the Prophet, and his holy city. It will be presented without any music.



Comments from our City Councillors

Tangi Utikere Deputy Mayor
Lew Findlay City Councillor with responsibility for multicultural affairs

5. Bahá'í

Three Prayers

1. **Blessed is the Spot** (by Baha'u'llah, founder of the Baha'i Faith)

Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God hath been made, and His praise glorified.

2. **Say God Sufficeth** (by the Bab, precursor to Baha'u'llah)

Say: God sufficeth all things above all things, and nothing in the heavens or in the earth but God sufficeth. Verily, He is in Himself the Knower, the Sustainer, the Omnipotent.

3. **E Te Atua** (by Abdu'l-Baha, son of Baha'u'llah)

E Te Atua, Ārahina i ahau, tiakina ahau whakamāramatia te rama o tōku manawa. Kia meinga ahau hei whetu tiahoaho. Ko koe te kaha rawa me te mana.

(Translation: O God, guide me, protect me, illumine the lamp of my heart and make me a brilliant star. Thou art the Mighty and the Powerful.)

6. Hindu Community: Prayers and chants from the Rada Krishna tradition

7. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

We are pleased to have our Palmerston North Youth choir to sing two hymns. *'Peace in Christ'* and *'I am a child of God'*. We believe that everyone is a child of our loving Heavenly Father, and that we can all return to Him by following Jesus Christ.

8. a. Jesus the Way Maker Oneness Apostolic Church

b. Seventh Day Adventist Zimbabwe Group

9. Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Spirit

We are very honoured to be able to share in this wonderful occasion of celebrating the faith communities of Palmerston North. The task of selecting some music from our Catholic heritage has not been easy, so we have compiled a medley of hymns that reflect values we hold in common.

We begin with an invocation, *'Veni Creator Spiritus'* (Come Holy Spirit), a 9th century Gregorian chant. This is followed by a lively counterpoint, *Act Justly'*, based on Micah 6 by Bernadette Farrell. *'Christ in me arise'* by Trevor Thomson is based on St Patrick's prayer (5th century) and *'Wairua Tapu'* (Holy Spirit) is a modern Maori himene by Wiremu Reddy. One of our favourites is *'For Everyone Born'* (lyrics by New Zealander Shirley Erena Murray, music by Brian Mann), reflecting the values of acceptance and inclusivity. We finish with a reflective round, *'Be Still and Know I am God'* (Barbara Bridges) - essential advice for today's noisy and busy world. May God's blessing and peace be with each one of you.

10. Wesley Broadway Methodist Church

Two Carols from Aotearoa New Zealand

'A Child was born in Bethlehem, Alleluia!' Words and music by Cecily Sheehy,
Carol our Christmas No 1

'All over creation' Words by Shirley Erena Murray, music by Jillian Bray,
Carol our Christmas No. 3

11. **Presbyterian New Church** (Margaret Sinclair-Jones / Roy Tankersley)

Eternal Light	Norman Warren	
Come and find the quiet centre	Lewis Folk Melody	CH4 716
We cannot measure how you heal	Ye Banks and Braes	CH4 718
I heard the voice of Jesus say	O Rowan Tree	CH4 540

Acknowledgement of the Contributors Mary Eastham

Concluding remarks and Final Prayer Karl Gill

The organisers gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the 'Welcoming Communities' initiative of Palmerston North City Council and The Catholic Charities Allocations Committee of the Diocese of Palmerston North. This has enabled us to meet all the expenses for the Celebration so that all Koha will be given to the Red Cross and Manawatu Multicultural Centre for their work in supporting refugees and migrants settling in Palmerston North.

This event arose from an initiative of New Zealand Sikh Society (Palmerston North) and has been facilitated by the Palmerston North Interfaith Group through a Planning Committee drawn from the Sikh, Buddhist, Bahá'í, Muslim, Hindu and Christian (Pacific Island, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Methodist, Presbyterian and Catholic) faith communities in Palmerston North.

Special thanks to the Sikh Community for providing the vegetarian Supper.



Appendix 4

Decalogue for World Peace

Proclamation of the Decalogue of Assisi for World Peace

On October 26, 1986, Pope John Paul II convened the first Assisi multi-faith prayer service for world peace. The inspired reflections of representatives of different faith traditions, their sincere desire to work for peace, and their common quest for the true progress of the whole human family, found a concrete expression in the “Decalogue” for World Peace. It is addressed to all people of good will:

1. We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism.
2. We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem, in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.
3. We commit ourselves to fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among peoples, for these are the premise of authentic peace.
4. We commit ourselves to defending the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with their own cultural identity, and to form freely a family of his own.
5. We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider our differences as insurmountable barriers, but recognizing instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.
6. We commit ourselves to forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices, and to support one another in a common effort both to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, and to learn from the past that peace without justice is no true peace.
7. We commit ourselves to taking the side of the poor and helpless, to speaking out for those who have no voice and to working effectively to change these situations, out of the conviction that no one can be happy alone.
8. We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we desire to make every effort possible to offer the men, women and children of our day real hope for justice and peace.
9. We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, for we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes the world to a growing risk of destruction and death.

10. We commit ourselves to urging leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, on the national and international levels, a world of solidarity and peace based on justice.



Appendix 5

Programme for 'FAITH FAMILY FEAST'

FAITH FAMILY FEAST



Saturday 16 November 2019
Ross Intermediate School

*When Palmerston North's diverse communities of faith come together
— to share food, sacred words and music, and affirm core values like
compassion, respect, love, hope and peace — they become a Family.*

PROGRAMME

Welcome and Introduction — Mary

Sacred Expressions

1. Amithaba Buddhist Community: Meditation – Gen Kelsang Demo
2. Jewish Community: Statement of Jewish Views on the Environment – Hadassah
3. Catholic Community: Song and dance – Cathedral of the Holy Spirit: Adults and Children
4. Sikh Community: Prayer – Gurveer Kaur
5. Methodist Community: Song, "Let Justice roll down like a river" – Wesley Broadway Singers
6. Muslim Community: Prayer and poem – Lina
7. Hindu Community: Prayers and chants – Hindu participants from the Rada Krishna Tradition
8. Baha'i Community: Chant and song – Parivash and John
9. Community of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints: Prayer – Mervyn Dykes
10. Hindu Community – Audio Visual presentation – Wibha Desai
11. Presbyterian Community – Celtic song – Margaret Sinclair-Jones

Laudato Si': Video representation of Pope Francis's Environmental Message to the World

Community Service: Introduction to the work of organisations sharing our Koha: —

- Red Cross
- Manawatu Multicultural Centre
- Papaioea Community Trust

Environmental Service: Introduction to a 'hands on' event at Edwards Pit Park on Saturday 23 November, 9.00 -11.00

Feast: Sharing food and conversation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: *With sincere thanks for the generous support of: Ross Intermediate School, the Catholic Charities Allocation Committee of the Diocese of Palmerston North, Mary Eastham and the Planning Committee of Palmerston North Interfaith Group — and all members of our 'Family' who participated, provided food and/or who came along to share in this celebration.*

1. Amitabha Buddhist Community: Meditation

"The heart of Dharma practise is meditation. The purpose of meditation is to make our mind calm and peaceful. If our mind is peaceful, we shall be free from worries and mental discomfort and so we shall experience true happiness; but if our mind is not peaceful, we shall find it really difficult to be happy, even if we are living in the very best conditions. If we train our mind in meditation, our mind will gradually become more and more peaceful and we shall experience a purer form of happiness. Eventually, we shall be able to stay happy all the time, even in the most difficult circumstances."

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso

Gen Kelsang Demo is going to lead us in creating a peaceful and positive mind which is the cornerstone to all endeavours including our care for the environment we live in. It will include verses about a pure land by Shantideva, a Buddhist monk from the 8th century, which can have a profoundly liberating effect on us, evoking special, positive states of mind.

2. Jewish Community: Statement of Jewish Views on the Environment

Jewish tradition teaches us to care for our planet in order to preserve that which God has created. Psalm 24 notes, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," a dramatic assertion of God's ownership of the land. It follows, then, that any act that damages our earth is an offense against the property of God. The Jewish concept of *bal tashchit*, "do not destroy," forbids needless destruction.

Judaism emphasizes our need to preserve our natural resources and generate new ones for future generations. The Talmud tells the story of the sage Choni, who was walking along a road when he saw a man planting a carob tree. Choni asked, "How long will it take for this tree to bear fruit?" "Seventy years," the man replied. Choni then asked, "Are you so healthy that you expect to live that length of time and eat its fruit?" The man answered, "I found a fruitful world because my ancestors planted it for me. Likewise, I am planting for my children." In fact, tradition values this concept so much that the rabbis teach that if a man is planting a tree and the messiah appears, he should finish planting the tree before going to greet him (*Avot d'Rebbe Natan 31b*).

We are encouraged *l'vadah ul'shamrah*, "to till and to tend," to become the Earth's stewards. In Isaiah 41:17-18, God promises, "I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places and fountains in the midst of valleys; I will make the wilderness



a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.” In other words, we were given our planet as a loan from God, and we should work to preserve it.

Climate Change

Among the many issues facing our planet, climate change poses a huge challenge to resource development and even daily habits. Addressing climate change requires us to learn how to live within the ecological limits of the earth so that we will not compromise the ecological or economic security of those who come after us.

The Torah commands, “Justice, justice shall you pursue” (Deuteronomy 16:20), and thus, our energy policy must also be equitable and just - and the countries most responsible for climate change should be those most responsible for finding a solution to the problem. Judaism also underscores the moral imperative of protecting the poor and vulnerable: “When one loves righteousness and justice, the earth is full of the loving-kindness of the Eternal” (Psalms 33:5). Indeed, poor nations are likely to bear the brunt of the negative impacts associated with climate change.

Because our sacred texts teach that humankind has an obligation to improve the world for future generations, Jewish tradition encourages families and communities to reduce their waste and make smart consumer choices, investing in companies that do not pollute and supporting behaviours and policies that encourage conservation.

Clean Water

As one of the most important natural resources to humanity’s survival, water has a special place in Jewish tradition, playing a role in nearly every major story in the bible. Isaac’s wife was chosen for him at a well; the baby Moses was saved after floating down a river; the Israelites were freed when the red sea parted; Miriam will forever be remembered by her gift of water to the Jewish people in the desert. Our clean, fresh water supplies and mineral resources are being exhausted by industrial and population growth, and it is vital that we lead in conservation while developing natural resources. Jewish tradition has long advocated that local and national governments take appropriate measures to remove or ameliorate the growing threats of environmental pollution and to afford protection to the environment.

Environmental Health

The principle of *pikuach nefesh*, saving human lives above all else, is our greatest moral obligation. We are taught, “You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor” (Leviticus 19:16), and to “choose life, that you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30:20). It follows, then, that Jewish values command us to preserve the earth and its varied life for our sake and for generations to come. It is our obligation to preserve human life by educating ourselves about the dangers of environmental health risks and working to prevent them for the sake of all humanity.

As heirs to a tradition of stewardship that goes back to Genesis and teaches us to be partners in the ongoing work of creation, we cannot accept the escalating destruction of our environment and its effect on human health and livelihood. It is our sacred duty to alleviate environmental degradation and the human suffering it causes instead of despoiling our air, land, and water.

Source: Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Modim Anachnu Lach — We Thank You

We thank you, for you are our God and the God of our ancestors, forever. Rock of our lives, Shield of our salvation, you are the One, from generation to generation. We thank you and tell of your praises, regarding our lives, which are in your hands; regarding our souls, which are entrusted to you; regarding your miracles which are with us every day; and regarding your wonders and favors, which are with us every moment, evening, morning, and noon. You are good, for your compassion is never-ending. You are compassionate, for your kindnesses never cease. Our hope has always been in you.

For all these things, we bless and exalt your name, our Sovereign, constantly and forever. All living things will acknowledge and thank you, and they will praise your name in truth, God, who saves and helps us. Selah. Blessed are you, Adonai. Your essence is goodness, and it is a pleasure to give thanks to You.

3. Catholic Community: Song and dance — A Season of Creation (September)

Following the example of Christian communities around the world, it has become our custom at the Cathedral to set the month of September aside as a Season of Creation beginning with the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation on 1st September and ending on 4th October – Feast of St Francis of Assisi. During this Season of Creation our prayers and music help us to reflect on care for our common home and what is required of us to be good stewards of the earth. On the 1st September Pope Francis sent a message regarding the care of creation. He specifically mentions the youth of the world –

“This too is a season for undertaking prophetic actions. Many young people all over the world are making their voices heard and calling for courageous decisions. They feel let down by too many unfulfilled promises, by commitments made and then ignored for selfish interests or out of expediency. The young remind us that the earth is not a possession to be squandered, but an inheritance to be handed down. They remind us that hope for tomorrow is not a noble sentiment, but a task calling for concrete actions here and now. We owe them real answers, not empty words, actions not illusions.”

Pope Francis concludes – “...every member of the human family, can act as a thin yet unique and indispensable thread in weaving a network of life that embraces everyone. May we feel challenged to assume, with prayer and commitment, our responsibility for the care of creation. May God, “the lover of life” (Wisdom 11:26), grant us the courage to do good without waiting for someone else to begin, or until it is too late.”

TOUCH THE EARTH LIGHTLY

Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently,
nourish the life of the world in our care.
Gift of great wonder, ours to surrender,
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.

We who endanger, who create hunger,
agents of death for all creatures that live.
We who would foster clouds of disaster
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!



Let there be greening, birth from the burning,
water that blesses, and air that is sweet.
Health in God's garden, hope in God's children,
regeneration that peace will complete.

God of all living, God of all loving,
God of the seedling, the snow, and the sun.
Teach us, deflect us, Christ reconnect us,
using us gently, and making us one.

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- Slok -

ਸਲੋਕੁ ॥

Salok

ਪਵਣੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਿਤਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ ॥

Pavan guroo paaneee pita maataa dharat mahatt.

Air is the guru; Water, the father; and Earth the great mother.

ਦਿਵਸੁ ਰਾਤਿ ਦੁਇ ਦਾਈ ਦਾਇਆ ਖੇਲੈ ਸਗਲ ਜਗਤੁ ॥

Divas raat do-e daa-ee daa-e-aa khaylai sagal jagat.

Day and night are two male and female nurses in whose lap the entire world plays.

ਚੰਗਿਆਈਆ ਬੁਰਿਆਈਆ ਵਾਚੈ ਧਰਮੁ ਹਦੂਰਿ ॥

Change-aa-eeaa bure-aa-ee-aa vaachai dharam hadoor.

Good and bad actions will be narrated before the God of Justice.

ਕਰਮੀ ਆਪੋ ਆਪਣੀ ਕੇ ਨੇੜੈ ਕੇ ਦੂਰਿ ॥

Karmee aapo aapnee kay nayrai kay door.

Some will be called in, and others will be pushed away by God in accordance with their actions.

ਜਿਨੀ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਇਆ ਗਏ ਮਸਕਤਿ ਘਾਲਿ ॥

Jinee naam dhi-aa-e-aa ga-ay masakkat ghaal.

Those who have meditated on God's Name, will leave this world after putting toil in the right direction.

ਨਾਨਕ ਤੇ ਮੁਖ ਉਜਲੇ ਕੇਤੀ ਛੁਟੀ ਨਾਲਿ ॥ ੧ ॥

Naanak tay mukh ujlay kaytee chhutee naal.

They will go with brilliant faces; and many more will be emancipated along with them.



4. Sikh Community: Prayer

5. Methodist Community: Song

LET JUSTICE ROLL DOWN LIKE A RIVER

Let justice roll down like a river
Let justice roll down like a sea
Let justice roll down like the river
Let justice begin with me.
(All join in the chorus)

Justice for all who go hungry,
crying to God to be fed,
left in a world of abundance
to beg for a morsel of bread.

Justice for those who are homeless,
victims of warfare or need,
trapped on the borders of nowhere,
lost in the canyons of greed.

Justice for all who are powerless,
yearning for freedom in vain,
plundered and robbed of their birthright,
silently bearing their pain.

Words and music © Colin Gibson
(b. 1933, New Zealand)

6. Muslim Community: Prayer and poem

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَارًا وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا رِجَالًا لَّيْكُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ لِلَّهِ الْكَلِمَاتُ لَعَلَّ لِقَوْمٍ يُتَفَكَّرُونَ

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ قِطْعٌ مُتْتَجِرٌ وَرَبْوَاتٌ مِّنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَرِزْقٌ وَنَخِيلٌ صِنْوَانٌ وَعَيْرٌ صِنْوَانٌ يُسْقَىٰ بِمَاءٍ وَاحِدٍ وَنُفُضِلُ بَعْضُهَا عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ فِي الْأَكْلِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

And it is He who spread the earth and placed therein firmly set mountains and rivers; and from all of the fruits He made therein two mates; He causes the night to cover the day. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.

And within the land are neighboring plots and gardens of grapevines and crops and palm trees, [growing] several from a root or otherwise, watered with one water; but We make some of them exceed others in [quality of] fruit. Indeed in that are signs for a people who reason.



Sur-ah 13 Ar-Ra'd 3-4
Lina Jaffar

DEEN ASSALAM SABYAN COVER

HemmMmmm

HemmmmMmmmm

Killa ha ail ard maa tag fi masahah launa`isyibila sama hah,
The whole world ain't big enough for us, if we live without tolerance.

Wint`ayasyna ba hub lau tadlii qil armlinaskin kalli qolb,
But if we live with love` although the world is small, we will live a happy life.

Killa ha ail ard maa tag fi masahah launa`isyibila sama hah,
The whole world ain't big enough for us, if we live without tolerance.

Wint`ayasyna ba hub lau tadlii qil armlinaskin kalli qolb,
But if we live with love` although the world is small, we will live a happy life.

**Ab takhiyyah...wab salaam...an syaruu wah lal kalam zainu...din yakh tiroom ab
makhabbah...wabitsam...an syaruu bainil anam ha da hu deen assalam,**

*With respect and peace spread the most beautiful manners beautify the world with respect with
love and smiles spread this among mankind, this is Islam the religion of peace.*
Zarkarbe/Lina Jaffar

7. Hindu Community: Prayers and chants from the Rada Krishna Tradition

SRI NARASIMHA PRANAMA

namas te narasimhaya
prahladhada-dayine
hiranyakasipor vakshahsila-
tanka-nakhalaye

*I offer my obeisances to Lord Narasimha who gives joy to Prahlada Maharaja and whose nails are
like chisels on the stonelike chest of the demon Hiranyakasipu.*

ito nrisimhah parato nrisimho
yato yato yami tato nrisimhah
bahir nrisimho hridaye nrisimho
nrisimham adim saranam prapadye

*Lord Nrisimha is here and also there. Wherever I go Lord Nrisimha is there. He is in the heart and
is outside as well. I surrender to Lord Nrisimha, the origin of all things and the supreme refuge.*

Prayer to Lord Nrisimha
by Jayadeva Gosvami

tava kara-kamala-vare nakham adbhuta-sringam
dalita-hiranyakasipu-tanu-bhringam
kesava dhrita-narahari-rupa jaya jagadisa hare

O Kesava! O Lord of the universe! O Lord Hari, who have assumed the form of half-man, half-lion! All glories to You! Just as one can easily crush a wasp between one's fingernails, so in the same way the body of the wasp like demon Hiranyakasipu has been ripped apart by the wonderful pointed nails of Your beautiful lotus hands.

HARE KRISHNA MAHA MANTRA

HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA
KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE
HARE RAMA HARE RAMA
RAMA RAMA HARE HARE
RADHE RADHE RADHE RADHE
RADHE RADHE RADHE RADHE

8. Baha'i Community: Chant and song

PERSIAN CHANT (Translation)

Create in me a pure heart, O my God, and renew a tranquil conscience within me, O my Hope! Through the spirit of power confirm Thou me in Thy Cause, O my Best-Beloved, and by the light of Thy glory reveal unto me Thy path, O Thou the Goal of my desire! Through the power of Thy transcendent might lift me up unto the heaven of Thy holiness, O Source of my being, and by the breezes of Thine eternity gladden me, O Thou Who art my God! Let Thine everlasting melodies breathe tranquillity on me, O my Companion, and let the riches of Thine ancient countenance deliver me from all except Thee, O my Master, and let the tidings of the revelation of Thine incorruptible Essence bring me joy, O Thou Who art the most manifest of the manifest and the most hidden of the hidden!
Bahá'u'lláh

BLESSED IS THE SPOT

**Blessed is the spot, and the house,
and the place, and the city,
and the heart, and the mountain,
and the refuge, and the cave,
and the valley, and the land,
and the sea, and the island,
and the meadow where mention
of God hath been made,
and His praise glorified.
—Bahá'u'lláh**



9. Community of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints: Speaking with God Through Prayer

PRAYER WITHIN THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS

There are very few set prayers in the Church. These are usually reserved for the most sacred of occasions such as the blessing of the Sacrament at Sunday services.

Instead we are encouraged to pray often, both as families and individuals. Our personal prayers can be in public, such as when we offer thanks for our daily bread – the food we eat -- but are often in private as we speak to our Father in Heaven about things of importance to us.

In all of our personal prayers we try to follow the pattern set by the Saviour when He introduced what Christians now refer to as The Lord's Prayer. We call upon God and reverence His name. We give thanks for the blessings we have received and then ask for additional blessings for others and lastly ourselves. We then close our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, in His role as Mediator between God and Man.

However, there are other written prayers which we use often, in the sense that the hymns we sing are orisons, or prayers set to music rather like the Psalms of David.

I would like to read one now and you are welcome to read along with me. It is entitled Sweet Hour of Prayer. The text is attributed to William W Walford who lived from 1772-1850 and the music is by William B Bradbury, 1816-1868.

It goes like this :

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer, that calls me from a world of care.

And bids me at my Father's throne make all my wants and wishes known.

In seasons of distress and grief,

My soul has often found relief.

And oft escaped the tempter's snare by thy return, sweet hour of prayer.

Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer, thy wings shall my petition bear

To Him whose truth and faithfulness engage the waiting soul to bless.

And since He bids me seek His face

Believe His word and trust His grace.

I'll cast on Him my every care and wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer.

10. Hindu Community — audio visual presentation

ॐ

ॐ द्यौः शान्तिरन्तरिक्षं शान्तिः

पृथिवी शान्तिरापः शान्तिरोषधयः शान्तिः ।

वनस्पतयः शान्तिर्विश्वेदेवाः शान्तिर्ब्रह्म शान्तिः

सर्वं शान्तिः शान्तिरेव शान्तिः सा मा शान्तिरेधि ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Meaning:

May there be peace in the whole sky and in the whole external, vast space.

May there be peace on earth, in water and all living beings.

May there be peace in trees, creepers, greenery, flowers and all herbs.

May Peace flow over the whole universe and the Supreme being, Brahma.

May there be peace among all and everywhere – may all live in peace.

Om Peace Peace Peace:

- Adhidaivika Shanti - Peace from things we have no control over example any natural disasters.
- Adhibhautika Shanti- Peace from obstacles that comes from the surroundings (worldly)
- Adyathmika Shanti- Peace within us

This shanti mantra is a universal peace prayer from our Vedic Scriptures.

Sanatana Dharma teaches us that we are one with nature, that we are linked spiritually, psychologically and physically with the elements around us. Divinity is present everywhere, in and through all matter.

Earth is our Universal Mother, she has nurtured us and it is our prime responsibility to look after her. Centuries of human exploitation of the Earth is making an impact on eco system and therefore drastic changes are required in our relationship with nature. Survival of the eco-system depends on protecting our Mother Earth.

“We protect nature and Nature will protect us.”

We must look at how our ancestors lived in principles, which were very eco-friendly with simple contented living in happiness and peace.

Lets join hands to change our lifestyle, to simplify our needs, restrain our desires and do all that is humanly possible, to protect the Earth and her resources together for the entire species.

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

11. Presbyterian Community — Celtic song

Margaret writes: “This is a song written about the village I lived in, the environment. The words were written in 2007 by a 95 year old family friend. He needed someone to write the music score for this. This my brothers Niall and Peter Sinclair gladly did - and it is one of my favourite songs from home”.

Shepherds of the Etive

Chorus

*Through the sunshine of my dreams I hear you calling
from that far off heather land that beckons me
I will meet you when the twilight's gently falling
Where the Shepherds of the Etive meet the sea.*

1. I am longing to renew my scenes of childhood
The isles of Mull, Coll, Iona and Tiree
I will journey on and gaze with awe and wonder
When the sun sets on our glorious Hebrides.
2. I will tread these myrtle paths beside the water
And the message in these wavelets seem to say
Come and view the Movern Hills gleam in the summer
And watch the seabirds sing their songs oe'r Oban Bay.



3. On that foam-kissed rocky strand I'll sit and rapture
N'er again will I ever say goodbye
As I watch the flowing tide engulf the tangle
And the weaving shadows dim our western skies.

Appendix 6

A Multi-Faith Vigil in memory of the victims of the Christchurch terrorist attack



Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Palmerston North

Karanga Korty Wilson, PN Catholic Diocese

Procession of Celebrants led by Mary Eastham

Mihi Kaumātua Wiremu Te Awe Awe, Rangitāne

Welcome: Rev. Joseph Grayland,
Parish Priest, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit

Introducing the Celebrants: Mary Eastham

Br Hazem Arafah & Br Riaz Rehman on behalf of the Muslim community – a prayer and statement.

Waiata
Te Aroha Te Whakapono me Te Rangimarie tātou tātou e

Stuart Schwartz, Jewish Community – a prayer in Hebrew and English.



Waiata

Hebrew Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you:
The Lord make his face shine upon you
And be gracious unto you;
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you
And give you peace.

Rev. Joseph Grayland, Catholic community – a prayer**Waiata**

Prayer of St Francis

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love.
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord
And where there's doubt true faith in you.

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope,
Where there is darkness, only light,
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Wibha Desai, Hindu community – chant and prayer in Sanskrit and English.**Gerry Lew, Bahai'i community** – a prayer from the Baha'i tradition.**Margaret Sinclair-Jones, Presbyterian New Church** – chanting a prayer from the Presbyterian tradition.**Harminder and Karl Gill, New Zealand Sikh Society** – a prayer from the Sikh tradition**Birgit Saunders and Leigh Scott, Amitabha Buddhist Centre** – a meditation from the Buddhist tradition.**Lighting of the Vigil Lights** led by Sr Lina Jafar**Mantra of Peace** (Prophet Muhammad)

O God, you are peace
From you comes peace
To you returns peace
Revive us with a greeting of peace
And lead us into your peace

Three Minutes Silence**Mayor Grant Smith** – A Statement of Condolence and ongoing promise of community support to our Muslim brothers and sisters.

Proclamation of the Decalogue of Assisi for World Peace

On 26 October 1986, Pope John Paul II convened the first Assisi multi-faith prayer service for world peace. The inspired reflections of representatives from different faith traditions, their sincere desire to work for peace, and their common quest for the true progress of the whole human family, found a concrete expression in the “Decalogue” for World Peace. It is addressed to all people of good will. Please stand and proclaim these principles for peace together.

1. We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism.
2. We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem, in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.
3. We commit ourselves to fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among peoples, for these are the premise of authentic peace.
4. We commit ourselves to defending the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with their own cultural identity, and to form freely a family of his own.
5. We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider our differences as insurmountable barriers, but recognizing instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.
6. We commit ourselves to forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices, and to support one another in a common effort both to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, and to learn from the past that peace without justice is no true peace.
7. We commit ourselves to taking the side of the poor and helpless, to speaking out for those who have no voice and to working effectively to change these situations, out of the conviction that no one can be happy alone.
8. We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we desire to make every effort possible to offer the men, women and children of our day real hope for justice and peace.
9. We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, for we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes the world to a growing risk of destruction and death.
10. We commit ourselves to urging leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, on the national and international levels, a world of solidarity and peace based on justice.



Closing Prayer: Rev. Andy Hickman – All Saints Anglican Church

Closing Karakia – Kaumātua Wiremu Te Awe Awe

Concluding Hymn – God of Nations

E Ihowā Atua, o ngā iwi mātou rā
āta whakarangona; me aroha noa
Kia hua ko te pai; kia tau tō atawhai;
manaakitia mai Aotearoa

God of Nations, at thy feet,
in the bonds of love we meet,
hear our voices we entreat,
God defend our free land.
Guard Pacific's triple star
from the shafts of strife and war,
make her praises heard afar,
God defend New Zealand.

We of every creed and race,
gather here before Thy face,
asking Thee to bless this place,
God defend our free land.
From dissension, envy, hate,
and corruption guard our state,
make our country good and great,
God defend New Zealand.

May our mountains ever be
freedom's ramparts on the sea;
make us faithful unto thee;
God defend our free land.
Guide her in the nations' van,
preaching love and truth to all
working out thy glorious plan;
God defend New Zealand.



THIS IS YOUR HOME
AND YOU SHOULD HAVE
BEEN SAFE HERE

Appendix 7

Abraham Lincoln Second Inaugural Address March 4, 1865

At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention, and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it – all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war - seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern half part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war, while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each side looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces [Gen 3:19]; but let us judge not that we be not judged [Mat 7:1]. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences, for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences, which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope - fervently do we pray - that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether" [Psalm 19:9]



With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan — to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.



Appendix 8

Submission to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019 from the Palmerston North Interfaith Group

After considerable discussion the group offers the following suggestions to the Royal Commission.

- The local community as well as the government should take considerable steps in order to establish a healthy relationship between the locals and the new comers, i.e. immigrants. This includes the skilled migrants, immigrants as well as the refugees. In this regards, channels of communication between different cultures should be encouraged and supported possibly by funding gatherings where people can meet over a cup of tea. This could be done through city councils, ethnic centres, other community centres and organisations such as ours which already work to foster communication and friendship between different groups.
- Government agencies should be capable enough to monitor social media pertaining to “hate speech” and activities that motivate racism among the society. Social media had been well monitored post-Christchurch attack in order to avoid the spreading of the incident video. The similar monitoring should be in place so that nobody can plan such dreadful acts in future.
- A programme promoting good relationships between people of different cultures and faiths similar to the antibullying programme could be developed by the Ministry of Education for use in schools. The counter argument of the overcrowded curriculum must be countered by providing activities promoting friendship and understanding which can be used in the different curriculum areas.
- Young people should be growing up with tolerance – encouraging sports teams of mixed backgrounds and other activities where youth can meet would be helpful. One of the biggest problems we face is the “silos” where young people are encouraged to remain in their own community and not to mix with others.
- Parents as well as teachers should be encouraged to teach the children on behavioural aspects. Children should have an atmosphere where they don’t de-isolate themselves within their own community. They should be encouraged to increase communications with the children of other communities regardless of race, religion and culture.



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