



PO Box 2815, Bendigo D.C. 3554

NEWSLETTER 2019

Learning about each other

A contribution that we make towards building awareness, understanding and acceptance of other faiths is our tour to places of worship in other centres. This year's first tour took place in June, when 37 people travelled to Werribee and Hopper's Crossing in the Wyndham local government area. With wonderful support from the Wyndham Interfaith Network and some of their members who joined us for the tour, we had three excellent experiences - and were very warmly hosted and generously fed at each venue.

At the Crossroads Uniting Church we enjoyed a welcoming morning tea, then learned about the history of the bluestone church building, established as a Presbyterian church in 1884. We were interested to hear from representatives of the LI Su (Burmese) and Sudanese congregations who use the property, most of them having come to Australia as refugees.



Our second venue was the Sahib Gurudwara, where we joined the Sikh community for an explanation of Sikhism and a time of prayer, followed by a delicious vegetarian meal. We removed shoes and socks and covered our hair, in accordance with Sikh practice.

At the Virgin Mary Mosque, we were interested to learn that there is a chapter of the Koran about Mary, who is greatly revered in Islam. Like the planned mosque in Bendigo, this is a multi-cultural mosque, with attendees from more than 40 different nationalities. Regular features of the mosque were explained and questions answered. We were treated to a lovely afternoon tea before our return to Bendigo.

.... and supporting each other

Attacks on people of faith in Christchurch and Sri Lanka reminded us of the importance of building positive relationship between people of different faiths and cultures. Local vigils following each of these attacks were well supported by the wider community and gave hope and reassurance to those present.

Sadly, there were some extremely vicious responses to the live streaming of the Muslim vigil in March, leading to concerns about safety when the building of the Bendigo Islamic Centre was to begin. The Interfaith Council expressed its support through the CoGB Community Harmony project and the Combined Media Strategy Group and Chairperson Frank Marriott participated in the ceremonial turning of the first sod on July 20.

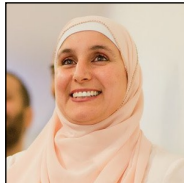


Newstead Live Interfaith Service

We responded to the request from the Castlemaine District Parish of the Uniting Church to assist with the Annual Interfaith Service as part of the Newstead Live festival on Sunday, January 27. About 80 people attended and the service was very well received.

Annual Dinner

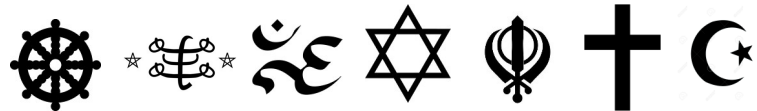
The dinner was held on Harmony Day, March 21st. The Guest Speaker Sherene Hassan, OAM, Education Director of the Islamic Museum of Australia, addressed the theme "Leading Harmony: Respect, Inclusion, Dialogue".



Exploring diverse faiths and rituals through music

The Council has been honoured to support our member Astrid Notarangelo in her project, a research collaboration with the University of Melbourne for her Ph.D.

Eleven research collaborators from 6 faith traditions came together: Bahai, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Uniting Church. The material gathered has contributed to Astrid's presentations at the Spiritual Care Australia (SCA) Conference in June and the European Music Therapy Conference in Aalborg, Denmark.



Working with Young People

We happily respond to requests for speakers and presenters at schools. In December 2018, representatives from the Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim and Baha'i faiths visited the Chewton Primary School and shared stories and responded to questions from children in all grades from Prep to Year 6.

In March a number of faith representatives participated in the Year 10 Interfaith Studies program learning day at Girton Grammar. Representatives also provided input for nine Year 10 Religious Studies classes at Catherine Macauley College over several weeks in March.



We are very appreciative of the contributions made by our members and supporters to the learning opportunities for young people.

Gender Equity and Bystander Training

Progress on this project has been slow, but we are grateful for the input from Loddon Mallee Women's Health and the CoGB Resilient Communities Co-ordinator in working to develop suitable material for an interfaith setting. A pilot "Gender and Respect" session was attended by 10 people from a variety of cultural and faith backgrounds, most of them members of the Youth Council. Staffing changes at LMWH have delayed further development of the material at this time.

Celebrating Tu B'Shvat

Every year, the Kehillat S'dot Zahav – Goldfields Congregation holds an outdoor service to celebrate Tu B'Shvat - the "New Year of the Trees". Fittingly, the service takes place under a large cedar tree in the Malmsbury gardens and is planned as an Interfaith service. A number of people from a variety of faith groups participated in the service on February 9 this year.

Our Wish List

There have been a few projects we've been hoping to develop for some time.

FILM NIGHT

Original ideas about a film festival have been modified due to the challenges of identifying suitable films and venues. We hope to have a film night in November when "The Sultan and the Saint" will be screened. Details will be circulated soon.

YOUTH FORUM

There have been conversations with interested people from schools the CoGB Inclusive Communities Officer. A Youth Forum or Conference may be held in February 2020, in conjunction with the **UNITED NATIONS WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY DAY**.