

Auckland Inter-Faith Council – Report of Activities – 2010

Our theme for the 2010 year's series of evening seminars was "Journeys of Faith", and we had three separate evening programmes featuring one major speaker. This was a new format for us, allowing one person to give an in-depth talk (45 minutes to 1 hour) about his or her spiritual journey, and answer questions from the floor. The programmes concluded with supper and a chance to 'mix and mingle'.

Our speakers covered an interesting range of faiths and backgrounds. The first programme featured Mr Shadrack David, a Christian of Indian ancestry from South Africa. He shared deeply and poignantly about the challenges he had faced in his faith life – experiencing racism in South Africa, and losing his wife to cancer while raising two young children.

At our AGM, following the business portion, our guest speaker was Mrs Joy Meikle, a nurse who eventually became a Christian Science Practitioner. She gave a moving talk about the power of prayer and her experiences with spiritual healing.

We were extremely fortunate to have Dr Maureen Sier (who many people know from the 2009 National Interfaith Forum in Auckland) as the keynote speaker for our third and final "Journey of Faith" evening. She was in transit after doing an interfaith educational programme for NGO workers in Samoa, and had a 10 hour layover in Auckland. Her testimony, starting as a punk rocker in a small Scottish mining town and ending up a Baha'i who now travels the world promoting interfaith work, was really fascinating. She also showed a short video of the interfaith training work she had just completed in Samoa, the first of its kind. We generally have around 50 people attend these evenings.

Our end of the year event was an afternoon celebration of sacred words and music. Seven faith groups had a chance to share on the theme of Gratitude. The venue was a Baha'i centre in South Auckland, which happened to border onto a Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Both of these communities brought sizable choirs to perform. Other faith groups had small groups of singers or musicians perform, including children. Each group had the stage for 8 minutes, and the programme flowed very well. We were delighted that over 200 people of all ages attended, including many who were new to the interfaith experience. Special mention should be made of Baha'i centre volunteers who hosted the event so graciously.

For 2011, our theme is "Keeping and Practicing Faith in New Zealand Today". The format we have chosen is to have 3 speakers per evening (15 minutes each) plus Q & A. We will keep the same topic over 3 separate evenings spread throughout the year. Our first programme will be on 30 March at the Jubilee Building in Parnell, speakers still TBA. At the end of the year we will have an event that includes music, similar to last year's.

The Council is run by an Executive Committee of 10 people which is comprised of a mixture of long standing members and some very welcome new additions. Our office holders are currently Ruth Cleaver, President, Gul Zaman, Vice President, and Terry Ball, Treasurer. Rev. Rob McKay is serving as Recording Secretary and Ruth is doing the email correspondence until a permanent Secretary can be found. Other Executive members are: Marcus Cohen, Louise Campbell, Dr Kanwal Jit Singh, Sridhara Myesore, Navin Patel, and Nimi Bedi.

Our funding is from subscriptions (\$20 pp per year) and a grant from the Auckland City Council Community Funding scheme.

Submitted by Ruth Cleaver