

WIHW Prize Application 2016

Events Report

Respectfully submitted by the

Dunedin Interfaith Council

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2016 World Interfaith Harmony Week

Events hosted by the Dunedin Interfaith Council, New Zealand

Introduction

The members of the Dunedin Interfaith Council extend their warmest gratitude to H. M. King Abdullah II of Jordan for proposing a World Interfaith Harmony Week be adopted by the United Nations and thereby causing the goal of interfaith harmony to become not just a glimmer of a distant possibility but a world wide and growing reality through the promotion of this special week by so many people of faith and goodwill towards those of different faiths.

Though we ourselves are located at great distance from countries featuring significantly on the world stage our small interfaith group has been able through His Majesty's insightful initiative to become a catalyst in our city creating awareness of the common goals and spiritual realities amongst people of different Faiths and this year at our two World Interfaith Week of Harmony events it was noticeable these first tentative steps of awareness of others and the commonalities shared at our first event last year have blossomed into genuine friendships and exhibitions of warmth and pleasure at being once again in each other's company.

World wide interfaith harmony through the initiative of H. M. King Abdullah of Jordan has, we believe, grown and enhanced interreligious activities exponentially to the point the increase in interfaith activities radiating across the globe during this dedicated interfaith week has helped the worthiest of causes, world peace. We the members of the Dunedin Interfaith Council from the midmost heart of the South Pacific Ocean applaud your Majesty's foresight and we are greatly encouraged by the visible difference appearing in our city through our own small efforts during this year's WIHW.

We trust through this WIHW Prize Application many more small grassroots organizations like ours, despite few members and lack of material resources, will be encouraged to take their own steps towards creating a culture of interfaith harmony and goodwill in their home towns and cities.

2016 WIHW Events

Two main events were held this year to celebrate World Interfaith Harmony Week. Both events were organized to be sociable though purposeful non threatening events for members of different religions in the Dunedin area as our Council is aware there are people in different religious communities who still do not care to associate with those of different religions or discriminate for a variety of reasons.

1. WIHW Interfaith Service Project on 1st February 2016

Members of the Dunedin Interfaith Council invited their Faith communities to join together in helping to beautify the surroundings of Al Huda Mosque after the Otago Muslim Association accepted their nomination to be the inaugural recipient of this World Interfaith Harmony Week service project.

Slowly after their work day had ended people of different Faiths and cultural backgrounds appeared in gardening clothes with garden implements and smiling faces ready to get their hands dirty weeding and beautifying the grounds and driveway areas of the Mosque property.



Above: Some of the participants in the Interfaith Service Project at Al Huda Mosque organized by the Dunedin Interfaith Council for World Interfaith Harmony Week 2016

Altogether 52 people from different faiths (Muslim, Christian, Baha'i) enjoyed working together with much laughter and goodwill towards each other and the ages of those present ranged from 92 years to children of 6 years. Our 92 year friend, a retired Christian Presbyterian Minister, is an avid supporter of interfaith activities and fascinated the younger people present with his willingness to participate and interact with everyone. He was an example of the importance of interfaith interactions to all present and many young people sought him out for conversation.

By 8pm weeds were cleared and gifted plants were in position in the grounds of Al Huda Mosque and given drinks of water by the children present. The last action was to choose a suitable place to plant the interfaith tree. This tree, an Olive, was gifted by the Dunedin Interfaith Council to the Mosque as a visible reminder for Faith communities to keep interfaith harmony in their hearts.



Photo above: Digging of the turf to plant the interfaith Olive tree gift was carried out by (left) David Stiles, a member of the Dunedin Baha'i Community and now Chairman of the Dunedin Interfaith Council, and (right) Steve Johnston, Chairman of the Otago Islamic Association.

There was an abundance of obvious interfaith goodwill amongst those who participated in this WIHW service project as can be seen in the accompanying photos. Working alongside each other proved to be a wonderful opportunity to get to know people of different Faiths and it was such a friendly success this service project has been adopted as an annual event for World Interfaith Harmony Week by our interfaith Council.

2. WIHE celebration of harmony “Have Faith in the Future” dinner on 4th February 2016 for the Dunedin community

This dinner evening proved to be a surprising success last year when organized for as our Council’s first event celebrating UN World Interfaith Harmony Week. And, once again despite our lack of resources and fewness of number we managed to hold a very successful event again due to the generous hospitality of our Latter Day Saint friends offering their recreation hall as the venue and holding the dinner as a ‘pot luck’ event. People from different Faith communities started to arrive before the start time of 6.30pm each bearing a dish of fragrant food. Each person was greeted at the door when they arrived and many were recognizable from the previous year and from attending the WIHW service project just a few days earlier. Smiles and greetings were exchanged with ease showing a pleasing familiarity has developed between people attending these WIHW interfaith activities.



Photos above left to right: A happy group of interfaith friends at the 2016 WIHW Dinner, children attending the event having their faces decorated, and interfaith friends Colin (Catholic Christian), and Karuna Sindhu Das (Hare Krishna).

The Chairman of the Dunedin Interfaith Council welcomed everyone, invited the President of our host Faith community, The Latter Day Saints, to say an opening prayer, and then asked everyone present to choose someone they had ever met before to say hello to and start a conversation. As a result animated conversations began happening all around the big hall amongst former strangers and then everyone present enjoyed the wonderful array of different vegetarian food dishes and desserts spread impressively along the tables in the large hall.



Photo above: A group of interfaith friends gathered at the 2016 WIHW celebration dinner.

Later several speakers each gave short presentations about the importance of encouraging interfaith goodwill and interreligious dialogue as it promotes a culture of goodwill amongst the citizens of our global homeland and enhances the prospect of world peace. Speakers included Ms Bokyong Mun, the United Nations Youth Otago Regional President, and Ms Jinty MacTavish a Dunedin City Councillor. Ms MacTavish passed on greetings from the Mayor of Dunedin City, the Deputy Mayor and the Chief Executive who were each unable to attend due other commitments the same evening and they all expressed their desire to be invited to future WIHW events. These city dignitaries also passed on their good wishes to those present and stated their support for the interfaith event and the work of the Dunedin Interfaith Council in their promotion of platforms for interfaith dialogue and cooperation amongst the citizens of Dunedin City.

After the speakers the ‘Sunny Side Up Choir’ gave a magnificent performance of harmonious singing which the assembled interfaith audience thoroughly enjoyed.




Photo above: The Dunedin City ‘Sunny Side Up Choir’ perform for an attentive audience at the 2016 Celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week dinner.

Altogether a total of 150 people representing a diversity of different religions and Faiths enjoyed the dinner and entertainment celebrating World Interfaith Harmony Week 2016. The attendance was a 50% increase on our first WIHW dinner event held in February 2015.




Photo above: 2016 WIHW Dinner participants linger and chat with each as they bid each other goodbye after an enjoyable evening of food and entertainment together.




WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK
 The Official UN Week 1st Week of February

INTERFAITH SERVICE PROJECT


Date: Monday 1st February 2016
Time: 6pm – 8pm
Location: Al Huda Mosque, 21 Clyde Street, Dunedin
Project: Weeding and general gardening/tidying in the front garden and driveway
Tools: Wear appropriate old clothing and bring gardening gloves/tools



Service project to be followed by the planting of an "Interfaith Tree" at Al Huda Mosque




*"A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in".
 (Greek proverb)*



WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK
 The Official UN Week 1st Week of February

"Have faith in the future" Dinner 2016

Thursday 4th February 2016 6.30pm - 8.30pm
 Venue : Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Fenton Crescent, St Clair, Dunedin



Vegetarian potluck: Bring a vegetarian meal or dessert to share
Whānau friendly - face-painting and other activities will be provided

Featuring: Guest Speakers : Bokyoung Mun, United Nations Youth Otago Regional President, Jinty McAvish (DCC Councillor), other speakers, poetry readings, music and more !
Transport to venue available: contact David Kitchingman on 476 7767 or dmkman@es.co.nz

EVERYONE IS WELCOME !
 Organised by the Dunedin Interfaith Council

Above: The two posters advertising the 2016 WIHW events organized by the Dunedin Interfaith Council.

UN WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK
2016 Celebration Dinner and Entertainment
 Organised by the Dunedin Interfaith Council
 6.30 p.m.-8.30 p.m., Thursday, February 4, 2016
 Venue: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Fenton Crescent, St Clair, Dunedin.
 Please bring a vegetarian meal or dessert to share.
EVERYONE IS WELCOME !

Left: An advertisement placed in the *Otago Daily Times* newspaper on Wednesday 3rd February 2016 to attract people to attend the 2016 WIHW dinner organized by the Dunedin Interfaith Council.

Below: The event notice placed in *The Star* community newspaper



WHAT'S ON 31
 The Star, January 28, 2016

February 4: Dunedin Interfaith Council potluck dinner and entertainment to celebrate 2016 UN World Interfaith Harmony week, 6.30pm at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Fenton Street, St Clair. All welcome.

Some background about the Dunedin Interfaith Council and its adoption of events for World Interfaith Harmony Week

The Dunedin Interfaith Council was formed in February 2013 by a handful of like-minded souls to act as an umbrella organization to encourage harmony and goodwill amongst the diverse religions and people of faith in the city of Dunedin.

Dunedin, located in the southern part of the South Island of New Zealand, had no existing organization inclusive of all religions and Faiths like other large cities in the country and since its inaugural meeting despite fewness of members, and resources - except its members and their various skills and talents - has managed to organize and host a number of large harmonious interfaith events attracting good attendances from the various faith community's represented in the city as well as the unaffiliated.

In December 2014 the Dunedin Interfaith Council adopted a proposal to hold an event to celebrate the United Nations World Interfaith Harmony Week for the first time and decided to hold a 'Celebration of Harmony' Dinner and invite the different religious communities in Dunedin to enjoy dinner and entertainment together.

Due to the kindness and hospitality of a local Christian community offering the free use of their large recreation hall and the decision to host the dinner as a vegetarian pot luck (i.e. each person attending brought a food item to contribute to the dinner) the proposal quickly became reality. This first 'Celebrating Harmony Dinner' held during the 2015 World Interfaith Harmony Week on 3rd February 2015 attracted 100 people from a diversity of religions and Faiths who mingled together in goodwill and harmony making new friends and sharing information about spirituality and their faiths with each other.

Note: On the next page is a copy of our double-sided Dunedin Interfaith Council brochure with information about the purpose, objectives and activities of our interfaith Council, including our annual promotion of events for World Interfaith Harmony Week.



Above: A group of Dunedin Interfaith members practise a song together.



Above: Members of different faiths celebrate the United Nations World Interfaith harmony week, Feb 2015.

I wish to become a member of the Dunedin Interfaith Council and receive information about the next meeting:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

The Dunedin Interfaith Council welcomes new members...

- The Council has three administration officers: A Chairperson, Secretary and Vice-Chairperson.
- Council meetings are held on the first Sunday of each month from 2.30 pm to 4 pm.
- Council meetings are rotated around different Faith community facilities of members.
- Each Council meeting begins with a spiritual sharing of brief readings or comments about a chosen topic and closes with a sociable afternoon tea.
- Council meetings are open consultative forums where everyone present is free to discuss agenda items and join in the decision-making process.
- The Council hosts multi-Faith gatherings each year for the *Week of Prayer for World Peace* in October and the *United Nations World Interfaith World Harmony Week* in February.

CONTACT:

Dunedin Interfaith Council
 email: dunedininterfaith@gmail.com
 or for more information about interfaith and different religions in New Zealand visit the website
www.interfaith.or.nz



Dunedin Interfaith Council



'An essential element of peace is harmony amongst religions'

What is the Dunedin Interfaith Council?

The Dunedin Interfaith Council is a voluntary association of people who collectively represent a diversity of religions and faiths.

The Council exists to foster mutual appreciation and good relations, to coordinate activities and to act in an advisory and consultative capacity to the community at large.

Anyone interested in supporting and promoting multi-Faith harmony are welcome to become members of the Dunedin Interfaith Council.

Council members are people who are sympathetic to the religious faith traditions of others.



Photo kindly supplied by:

Above: People from a diversity of religions and Faiths throughout New Zealand attended the 2014 National Interfaith Forum hosted by the Dunedin Interfaith Council in Dunedin.



Above: Young people from a variety of religions spoke about their faith at the National Interfaith Forum (Christian, Bahai, Buddhism, Hare Kishna and Islam).

Dunedin Interfaith Council Objectives:

- To enjoy cordial respectful relationships with members of other Faiths and religious traditions;
- To provide a forum for its members to consult and discuss Interfaith matters;
- To promote harmony and cooperation among members of the Council and by doing so be an example to those in the wide community,
- To promote the elimination of religious discrimination, and
- To promote the universal themes, values, ethics and norms common to all Faiths.