**Prayers for the City 2022**

**Cape Town Interfaith Initiative** with Muslim Judicial Council, Safcei, Cape Town Unitarians, Cape Flats Interfaith Group and the Cape SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Every year on the first Sunday in February, Capetonians gather to share Prayers for the City.

It was a tradition started in 2000 by former Mayor Gordon Oliver, who asked Cape Town residents of all traditions to pray together at the start of every year. After 2011, when World Interfaith Harmony Week was first established by the United Nations as an annual event from 1 – 7 Feb , the event was moved to the first Sunday in February in solidarity with this global movement with its universal message of peace.

On Sunday 6 February 2022, more than 100 faith leaders, community leaders, residents and local children gathered on open ground adjacent to a disused railway line in Kalksteenfontein to pray for our City and to share their vision, asking God to bless us as we move forward in service, compassion and love for all – including all of life, and this one planet which we all share.

The event is held annually under the umbrella of Cape Town Interfaith Initiative which was grateful this year for the supportive collaboration of the Cape Flats Interfaith Declaration, SAFCEI, the Cape SA Jewish Board of Deputies and the Muslim Judicial Council.

Rev Berry Behr represented SAFCEI as well as CTII, and spoke in her capacity as Faith Leader Liaison as well as CTII Chairperson. Rev Berry said we had to unite to fight common enemies such as climate change. Where past wounds of separation and the legacy of colonialism were responsible for mistrust between diverse sectors of society, healing needed to take place to enable all Capetonians to link arms with common purpose and to move forward with trust in each other.

Moulana Abdul-Khaliq Allie of the Muslim Judicial Council called about thirty children who had gathered to witness the Prayers. He said these were the ones that we needed to focus on, and that we needed to serve. He asked the children if they were hungry, and when they all said they were hungry, Moulana Allie and Imam Salieg Isaacs of the Kalksteenfontein Mosque took the children to a kitchen across the road where food had been prepared for them.

The message of Imam Salieg Isaacs and Moulana Allie was that not only words of compassion should be spoken, but also compassion and kindness towards people needs to be demonstrated through acts of loving service.

Prayers were offered by community and faith representatives including the traditions of Buddhism, Islam, Unitarianism, Interfaith, Indigene, Judaism, Baha’i, Brahma Kumaris and Christianity. The Ward Councillor for Kalksteenfontein, Theresa Thompson, commended the faith leaders and spoke of the need for collaboration, unity and common purpose. The musical contributions from Ann and Nic Paton as well as Nur Felix were excellent and highlighted the spirit of unity and common purpose that embraced the event.

In another gesture of generosity at the end of the event, Imam Salieg Isaacs invited the faith leaders to hand out a number of gift parcels containing food, to the group of senior citizens from the community who had come to pray.

Our actions towards people of all faiths, and towards our earth, are the physical service we offer to God.