

TURQUOISE HARMONY INSTITUTE INTERFAITH AND INTERCULTURAL COMMEMORATION

DATE: 5 February 2023

The Turquoise Harmony Institute (THI) an interfaith organization established in 2006 and based in South Africa with the main aim of strengthening dialogue and tolerance among people who come from different backgrounds

THI partnered with a number of stakeholders in Chatsworth, Durban, South Africa to commemorate World Interfaith Harmony Week from the 1st – 7th February 2023. Preliminary meetings and discussions were held over a period of two months which culminated in a multifaceted programme of activities on the 5th of February 2023.

The programme had three parts as follows:

Part 1 (10h00 to 12h00) – Interfaith and Intercultural feeding programme.

THI partnered with a number of stakeholders to distribute free meals to the disadvantaged sector of the community of Westcliff, Chatsworth where there is a large percentage of unemployed people. As a result of the poverty and unemployment there are lots of associated social problems.

A symbolic location was chosen for the meals distribution. In Westcliff, Chatsworth, the New Bethesda Church, The Siva Sathi Alayam (Temple) and the Masjid (Mosque) lay side by side which was a great opportunity for the meal distribution in a multi faith religious setting.

This feeding program was coordinated by the Food For Life, Durban which was headed by Mr Paul Pillay. Over 300 people of different faiths were

beneficiaries of this feeding program and had heart warming smiles on their faces.

Part 2 (12h00 to 13h00) – Interfaith Lunch

An Interfaith lunch programme was hosted at the Tudor Conference Centre, Woodhurst, Chatsworth where over 250 guests from different faiths were provided with a lunch complimented by cultural performances representative of the different cultures. There was a South Indian Hindu Dance item performed by a young non-Hindu Zulu girl which showcased social cohesion in action. Additional cultural items were an Islamic Naath recital and a Christian Gospel Singer. The interfaith lunch provided an opportunity for people from different faiths to interact in a non-formal setting and share information on the different religious practices.

Part 3 (14h00 to 15h30) – Interfaith Dialogue

The day concluded with a very successful, moderated dialogue that featured religious experts from five different groups; Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Nazarite (African faith) and Sikhism.

The topic that was discussed was, **Unity in Diversity: The Importance of Interreligious Initiatives in promoting Peace, Love & Reconciliation.**

The discussions were very robust and informative, which provided a very good opportunity for the audience to understand the different religious practices and associated principles of each religion which all lead to the same conclusion, “One Religion, One God”.

The Interfaith dialogue was hybrid, live streamed

<https://www.facebook.com/TurquoiseHI/videos/1064453858280056>

There was an opportunity for the attendees to ask questions for the purpose of clarification. There were many positive outcomes from the dialogue. The general consensus was that people need to stop being hostile towards each other and start thinking of ways to understand each other, and break the cycle of violence that some people and structures imposed and provoked for the sake of religion and the quest for power. This was also an ideal opportunity to get to know each other in an informal setting mainly because the audience were so interactive and stated that there should be more of these discussions held, as South Africa is rich in cultural, religious and linguistic diversity and this program provided an ideal opportunity for people to come together to partake in this discussion.

All three initiatives hosted by the Turquoise Harmony Institute was a huge success due to the many role players/organizations that were involved viz.

- Food for life
- Sunset Sai Centre
- Chatsworth Magazine Barracks Shree Vishnu Temple
- Islamic Interfaith Research Institute
- People's Church of God
- Gurdwara of Durban
- Nazarite Church of God.
- Social Cohesion Advocates Programme – South Africa
- Africa Kingdom Diaspora Alliance (AKDA)
- Advocacy Unified Network (AUN)