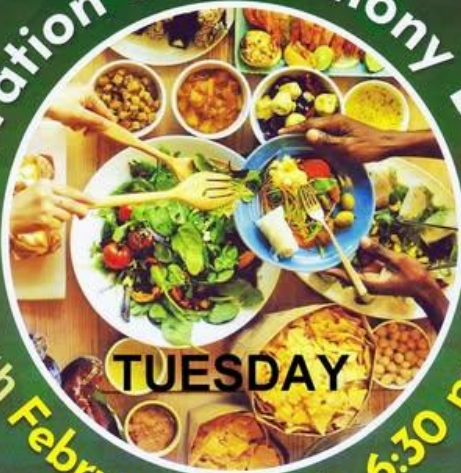


**REPORT FOR WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK 2025
FROM THE DUNEDIN (NZ) INTERFAITH COUNCIL and UN OTAGO**



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

Celebration of Harmony Dinner

TUESDAY

4th February 2025 - 6:30 pm

VEGETARIAN POTLUCK: Bring a vegetarian meal or dessert to share
WHANAU-FRIENDLY: Face-painting and other activities will be provided
FEATURING: Musical items, guest speakers readings, and more.

Everyone is Welcome!
Organised by the Dunedin Interfaith Council.

Venue : St Peters Anglican Church Hall, Hillside Rd, Caversham. Info : dunedininterfaith@gmail.com

**Organised by the Dunedin Interfaith Council and the
United Nations Otago branch of the UN Association of NZ**

The Master of Cermonies for our event this year was Mrs Ruth Groffman, Chair of United Nations Association of New Zealand, Otago Branch. Ruth is also an active member of the Dunedin Interfaith Council. We had our UN Otago banner proudly located behind our lecturn.

A set-up team was on the job from 3pm, setting up tables and preparing a large number of potatoes for baking. People started to arrive from 6.30pm.

At 6.40pm, Ruth welcomed everyone and shared briefly about the UN Sustainability goals, challenging us all to become more familiar with them and to implement them

At 6.45pm we were welcomed by Rev Natalie Milliken who (after sharing Health and Safety information) prayed a blessing over our food, and on our time together.

From 6.45-7.15pm we enjoyed our first course of food , with some background Jazzy piano items provided by Peter Kesha . There was plenty of lovely food for everyone. Everyone who attended provided a small contribution, and there was more than enough for 110 people, including 20 children.

From 7pm until 9pm the children enjoyed having their faces painted (outside on the Church lawn) by Hannah, a professional artist, who we employed for two hours. It was a lovely warm summer evening, outdoors. Some youth also enjoyed having their faces painted by Hannah. (see photos) This activity created a very happy vibe ! The young people moved freely between the hall and the outdoor area , so they were able to participate in our indoor programme as well as having their faces painted.

From 7.15pm till 7.25pm we enjoyed listening to our speaker, Dunedin City Councillor Christine Garey. Christine is a long-term supporter of our Dunedin Interfaith Council. She shared a very encouraging message, affirming our work in the wider community and challenging us all to support those in our midst who are suffering in our world as a result of war, poverty and aggression. Some people at our gathering have moved to Dunedin from war-torn countries, so this message was very relevant.

From 7.25pm - 7.45pm we were blessed to listen to beautiful harmonious musical items, sung by our Dunedin Methodist Tongan Youth choir who sang two amazingly harmonious and uplifting songs for us.

Video link of Tongan Choir : https://youtu.be/26xCxAoVa_A

The first song was a prayer : "'E 'Eiki tataki au kite koe .." (Translation : Lord lead me to you) The second song was about Jerusalem drawn from the story in the New Testament book of Luke 19:41 where Jesus wept over Jerusalem. "Selusalema, tau mai aa, na'a ke 'ilo, 'a e me'a 'oku kau ki ho'o lelei .." (Translation : "As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it.")

From 7.45pm onwards we enjoyed dessert, tea and coffee.

During this time we were treated to a song composed and sung by one of our Dunedin Interfaith Council members, Namakau Nalumango who comes from Africa, accompanied by Peter Keshu on keyboards.

Namakau's song is written from a heart and mind full of forgiveness and love. Before she sang, Namakau shared with us the deep personal significance of her song . Also, before Namakau sang her song, we heard a translation of the chorus of her song, in te Reo Maori, the native language of Aotearoa-NZ :

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa

E tūtira mai nei

I ngā wā koa, pōuri rānei,

Ahakoā he aha.

Here are the words of Namakau's song , entitled "I want you to know, that I love you"

I want you to know, that I love you

No matter what

I want you to know, that I love you

And I will love you

No matter what

I want you to know, that I love you

No matter what

Sing chorus twice :

THANK YOU, ALL OF YOU

WHO STAND TOGETHER

IN HAPPY TIMES OR TRIBULATIONS

NO MATTER WHAT (repeat)

After Namakau's song, Peter Kesha continued to entertain us on his keyboard with a wonderful range of well-known songs, concluding with "One love, one heart, lets get together and feel alright"

Video link : <https://youtu.be/nl4HPHO1Hv0>

At 8.20pm Jane Watson shared a closing prayer with us .

"Lord, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Let peace fill our hearts, our world, and our universe. Let us dream together, pray together and work together, to build one world of peace and justice for all. Amen."

After this, people were reluctant to leave. Rev Natalie Milliken encouraged us all to go and introduce ourselves to someone we had not yet met, and most people did this. Many new friendships were made and many new learnings experienced. Together we experienced a real and genuine taste of interfaith harmony. We all went home feeling uplifted, encouraged and hopeful. After people had drifted away, around 9pm, we had plenty of willing volunteers to help tidy up the hall and kitchen. These tasks were completed quickly and we all went home, very satisfied with our event.

FEEDBACK FROM TWO PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED OUR EVENT

From Diane Bellamy :

Our Dunedin Interfaith Council joined with the UN regional branch to once again hold this free community event. We advertise this as a joint event and focus on the theme of harmony.

Over 100 people from various faiths, ages and walks of life filled a Church Hall. It was a delight to see groups included Muslim refugees, a Catholic Bishop and Christians from various strands, Buddhists and Hindu faiths-talk laugh and eat kai/food together. We were hosted by UN Otago Branch President Ruth Groffman be our MC in front of a banner of UN.

We enjoyed the passion and literal harmony of a Tongan Choir perform in their language. It was truly a Pacific celebration down here so south in the globe.

I am so proud of our small group with very few resources presenting this inclusive community event. It was respectful and thoughtful including offering vegetarian and halal food.

We could feel the warm connections formed through conversations with strangers. People were reluctant to leave! I personally talked with others I did not know and felt genuine love for humanity via the speeches and music and gathering itself. It is nourishing for our souls!

From Claire Carey :

I arrived early to the dinner because I was asked if I might pick up some cooked dishes, plus the UN flag from probably the main organiser of the event. What a beautiful sight when I arrived that hour earlier.

The hall was perfectly set out for us all , three long trestle tables covered with pink tablecloths; each table already with bread rolls and two generous bowls of coleslaw. The most significant thing that struck me though was that it was a new venue at a different Christian denominational church, therefore new territory perhaps.

For years the dinner has been very generously hosted by the Church of the Latter Day Saints at their very suitable premises. This year, however because of earthquake strengthening work it was not available for us. A

smaller venue close by was hired instead. Everything was totally in hand, and the most amazing thing of all struck me as I walked into this new space. There in the kitchen was the chief Latter Day Saints' leader immersed in getting those memorable baked potatoes that they had always provided, ready for the meal that was to come, along with everyone else's contributions. The person from their church who had always overseen this had suffered an accident and was still not quite "up to speed." What an act of love! His wife too, had generously made up the coleslaw, just in case there were gaps in the food offerings.

Importantly also, the new church hosts did a fabulous job of individually welcoming everyone as they came in, learning their names, introducing themselves and making them feel totally at home.

The scene was set for a perfect event!

PRE-EVENT PUBLICITY IN LOCAL WEEKLY DUNEDIN NEWSPAPER

The Star ★

www.thestar.co.nz

Thursday, 30 January 2025

Pot-luck to celebrate harmony

<https://www.odt.co.nz/the-star/pot-luck-celebrate-harmony>

The UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, the Celebration of Harmony Dinner will be held next Tuesday, February 4, from 6.30pm at St Peter's Anglican Church in Hillside Rd.

Dunedin Interfaith Council member and harmony dinner co-ordinator Ruth Groffman said the event was part of an important international movement for peace.

"The overall aim of the event is to bring people of all faiths and none together in harmony.

"We want to bring the community together to enjoy a vegetarian meal and a fun evening together — and everyone is invited," she said.

Ms Groffman said the Celebration of Harmony Dinner would include guest speakers, musical items, reading, face painting and children's activities.

The event had previously been hosted by Dunedin's Church of the Latter Day Saints, but had changed venue due to necessary building work.

"We are very grateful to all of the people and organisations who have supported the event in the past, and are looking forward to welcoming the community to St Peter's on Tuesday," she said.

brenda.harwood@thestar.co.nz

OUR EVENT WAS ALSO EXTENSIVELY PUBLICISED VIA OUR DUNEDIN INTERFAITH COUNCIL AND UN OTAGO E-MAIL NETWORKS AND FACEBOOK PAGES.

PHOTOS



















