



# Women's Federation for World Peace

Oceania Newsletter 4/2017

## From the Regional Office

We are moving into that time of year when we, in Oceania, prepare for the holiday season by enjoying days with lots of sunshine and warm nights, the end of our school year and for many of us the prospect of our long summer holidays. It is also the time, when many of us come together as families to celebrate religious and cultural traditions. As a multi-cultural community, we remember and celebrate many spiritually significant observances in December. Christians celebrate the birth of Christ with Christmas. Jewish people celebrate the Festival of Lights with Hanukkah. Muslims commemorate Ashur with fasting for the creation of the world, Noah's departure from the ark, Moses' flight from Egypt and the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson. Buddhists commemorate Buddha's enlightenment with Bodhi Day and Zoroastrians celebrate Shab-e-Yalda as a triumph of good over evil at the solstice.



Universal in all these celebrations, is caring for each other and coming together harmoniously as families and communities. We are after all 'one family under God'. As Mother Teresa once shared, "It is Christmas, every time you let God love others through you... yes, it is Christmas, every time you smile at your brother and offer him your hand."

May your holiday season be filled with hope, warmth and caring for each other. Thank you for being a part of the WFWP community, and sharing our stories.

Love, Anne Bellavance

## Reflections from the field

### Reflections on the UN International Day of Peace Conference

The UN International Day of Peace Conference for me was a day that resonated with a deep sense of love and care. The ceremony of the Bridge of Peace was, as it always is, a beautiful and moving ceremony where hearts were gladdened and spirits were uplifted as participants embraced each other with warmth and smiles.

Hana Assafiri was inspirational and her presentation ignited my interest in finding out more about her endeavours. Once I was home, I watched the Compass program on I-view featuring Hana and was overwhelmed by her enthusiasm, drive and commitment to providing support to disenfranchised women.

Breaks for lunch and 'a cuppa' provided lovely opportunities to share informally with different participants and enabled wonderful and unexpected exchanges which are the underlying aims of the day.

The afternoon sessions encouraged participants to broaden their perspectives on such topics as 'Measuring Peace and its Economic Benefits'- a topic I had not ever considered before. Another presentation which provided some food for thought covered the perennial topic still evident in our culture regarding the disparity of women and men and its impact on life in general.

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# The Hope for Humanity Comes from Mothers



“History is calling for reconciliation, compassion, love, service and sacrifice. Today’s problems cannot be solved by the logic of power. ... Our present problems can only be solved by the logic of love.”

Dr. Hak Jan Han Moon  
Founder, WFP International

## Overview of WFP activities in Oceania

**Women are Empowered**  
**Families are Strengthened**  
**Communities are Connected**

**WFP is founded on the belief** that a peaceful world begins in the heart of each person and in each family. The family is the cornerstone of peace and mature couples are the foundation for strong and loving families. Our organisation encourages every woman to become a ‘woman of peace’ through cultivating her heart, the mother’s heart, to care not just for her own children, but for the children of others, the children of other nations, the children of the world, by developing and expressing the qualities of empathy, forgiveness, and unconditional love.

### **WFP is committed to**

Serving communities – service projects within Australia & the Pacific Islands

Strengthening the family – workshops, forums, seminars and conferences

Reconciling differences and healing wounds of the past – Bridge of Peace

Global Women’s Peace Network (GWPN) – a global network of women leaders who are peace builders within their community

### **Philosophy**

Shine & stand up

Action; starting in the family

Transformation through teaching

Impact with love

Nurture self and others

**WFP Australia** supports projects within Australia and the Island Nations of the Oceania region. Projects include: Global Women’s Peace Network; Dignity Project; Annual Walk-a-thon to support our Pacific Neighbours; Workshops, Seminars, Conferences and Forums on Peace Building; Books for the Islands; Solomon Islands New Hope Kindergarten; Pacific Islands Scholarship Fund; Women’s Sewing Centres; Island Lights Project; Marriage, Family and Wellness education; Character education; and, reconciliation through the Bridge of Peace ceremonies.

**WFP is a dynamic organisation** committed to providing women with the opportunity to create lasting peace in the world by fostering dialogue, developing projects that nurture reconciliation and conflict resolution, and supporting projects that serve the community and overcome racial boundaries; all centering on the inherent feminine characteristics of care, empathy, support, nurturing and cooperation.

# Victoria

## Faith Stories

### Conversations and Story Telling

12<sup>th</sup> August 2017

#### OVERVIEW

As an international NGO, WFPW supports the realisation of the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These Global Goals encompass six essential elements:

- Dignity: to end poverty and fight inequality
- People: to ensure healthy lives, knowledge and the inclusion of women and children
- Prosperity: to grow a strong, inclusive and transformative economy
- Planet: to protect our ecosystems for all societies and our children
- Justice: to promote safe and peaceful societies and strong institutions
- Partnership: to catalyse global solidarity for sustainable development

March 21<sup>st</sup> is Harmony Day, a celebration of our cultural diversity – a day of cultural respect for everyone who calls Australia home. The Day coincides with the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It is about inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone



The Women's Federation for World Peace (WFPW) hold an annual Faith Stories Symposium in Melbourne to support and foster peacebuilding between faiths within our diverse multicultural city. This year, the symposium focused on the Abrahamic faiths. Presenters shared Faith Stories from the feminine perspective covering: Aboriginal people's stories, Muslim stories, Jewish stories and Christian stories.

Through the Global Women's Peace Network (GWPN), WFPW partners with other like-minded organisations. Each year, one organisation is presented with an award to honour their contribution to achieving the goals of the Network. This year's recipient of the GWPN partnership award went to the United Muslim Sisters of Latrobe Valley (UMSLV), who were the organising partners for the 2017 Faith Stories.

## GOALS

1. Support the realisation of the SDGs through implementing:

- Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals.

2. Foster understanding and a sense of community between people of different cultures, faiths and nationalities through hearing the stories of women from different Faiths.

## Introduction

We had two beautiful young women MC for the day: Kosina Hanson and Yumna Ahmed, representatives from the partnering organisations, WFP and UMSLV.

Councillor Mike Clark shared the day with us and welcomed everyone to his ward in the Shire of Yarra Ranges.



Afterwards, Anne Bellavance (National President of WFP) gave a presentation about the goals and mission of WFP International and encouraged participants to get involved with our service projects within the Pacific island nations. Khatija Halabi shared how the UMSLV was founded and their work with the communities of Latrobe Valley to help dispel misconceptions about the Muslim faith and culture.



## Aboriginal Story

We were blessed to have Aunty Janet Turpie-Johnstone, a Mullum Mullum Elder and WFP member, present her Welcome to Country for us. Janet also presented the Aboriginal people's story, outlining the history of Aboriginal communities in early Melbourne.



Janet is a lecturer in Aboriginal Art and Culture at the Faculty of Education at ACU, and is currently also a HDR student at ANU, where she is completing her PhD titled *Bunjil Patterns: The Mess of the Past and Future in the Present*.

Janet presented her research based on human relationship with land and waters and briefly analysed the colonial impact on the colony of Port Phillip Bay (now Melbourne). During her presentation, Janet emphasised how we can learn from our ancient Aboriginal ways of life, which are highly philosophical and religious and are based on a relationship to land and all that is on the land. Janet strongly

feels that people need to become more sensitive and humble in the way they relate to the land and all the natural resources.

## Muslim Story

Khatija Halabi is the founder and Vice-president of UMSLV and a WFWP member. Khatija was both humble and proud that interfaith dialogue was not a new concept in her family. Her great grandfather and Mahatma



Gandhi had an interfaith conversation in Durban, a city they both lived in, in South Africa.

Khatija spoke about how growing up in South Africa during the transitional period between apartheid and a new democracy shaped her identity. She grew up in a community that allowed her to develop a strong Muslim identity. The community leaders supported families through the difficult times of lack of opportunity due to their beliefs and philosophies based on Islamic teachings. Those community members who felt strongly about social injustice helped the country get over the ills of apartheid by joining the struggle for liberation. With Khatija's exposure to people of different races and different religions, her identity grew stronger as she developed the ability to treat everyone that she came into contact with as members of the human race (not an ethnic one)! She is grateful that her children, and the born free generation of South Africa, are now a part of a global community.

Sarah Price then shared her faith journey with us. A Jet Ski accident motivated Sarah to contemplate some big questions about life. She realised that she wanted to travel and live life to the full. Raised in a country town meant the opportunity to interact with people of multicultural backgrounds was limited and her own views on Muslims and Islam were tainted by what was portrayed in the media. During Sarah's stay in Malaysia as a journalism student, she began to observe the lifestyle of Muslim women. She gained valuable insight into their lives during her interviews of top profile women. After a lot of research and reflection, she was drawn to Islam and on returning to Australia, she converted to Islam. Sarah is admired and loved by the community of Gippsland for her courage, determination and sincerity.

## Jewish Story

Frances Prince is a member of the JCCV (Jewish Community Council of Victoria) Executive, holding the Multicultural and Interfaith Portfolio. She is a Board member of the JCMA (Jewish Christian Muslim Association of Australia) and of the FCCV (Faith Communities Council of Victoria.) Due to our Faith Stories being held on



a Saturday, Frances provided her presentation via video. She explained what it meant to be a Jewish person in relation to religion and ethnicity. According to Jewish traditions, if you are born of a Jewish mother you are Jewish. Thus religious and ethnic identities overlap, because a person can become a Jew through conversion or can be considered a Jew even if they do not adhere to Jewish beliefs, but are cultural adherents. Frances openly shared her experiences as a woman in her faith and described the traditional role of women as standing in parallel position to men. Most of Jewish life and Jewish traditions take place in the home which is under the domain of women. However, the public eye sees the men in the synagogue. The laws were set up to protect women in the home life, so that women did not need to attend the synagogue, because traditionally women did stay at home rather than working outside the home. Today, women work and so the traditional roles have changed. Modern Jewish women in the orthodox world now push boundaries. Today in progressive communities, women have more choices to engage and participate in the synagogue.

We were very fortunate to have Sivan Barak answer questions from the audience and briefly share her story of being raised in a Kibbutz in Israel. Sivan is a cultural Jewish woman and was not raised in Jewish religious traditions.

### Christian Story

Rev. Ruth Harrison was ordained an Anglican deacon in 1990 and a priest in 1992. She was among the first women in Melbourne to be ordained to the priesthood. Ruth shared the story of how she was drawn to contemplative prayer at an early age, and then was called by God to the ordained ministry in the Anglican Church, before the Church was prepared to ordain women. Ruth emphasised that this journey towards ordination should be viewed as a struggle for the right to obey the call of God, rather than fighting for women's rights, per se.

In her conclusion Ruth reflected that what emerged most clearly from her experience of sharing her story was that she was able to observe how those of other faiths - and in particular, the Muslim faith, could understand the reality of her faith story, just as she could connect with the reality of others who shared their faith story. She was able to experience a meeting of the spirit in each other, something she will always treasure.



### Reflections from Participants

“A fantastic event providing much needed information on various faiths and how they impact and have input on the lives of people in communities. The event is particularly useful for dispelling myths and providing insight into culture versus religion.”



“It is wonderful to hear other people's journeys. A wonderful opportunity to learn new facts about different faiths.”



“If you are interested to hear about the perspective of the faith women from different religious, I recommend this program.”

“This was a wonderful event of bringing women (and men) together to share faith stories and understands, and to realize our many points of connection.”

### PARTNERS and SUPPORTERS

United Muslim Sisters of Latrobe Valley, Simon Babb Photography, and Candace Films.

# Partnerships for Peace - Dignity for All

UN International Day of Peace  
16<sup>th</sup> September 2017

## OVERVIEW

The International Day of Peace (“Peace Day”) is observed around the world each year on 21st September. The day was established in 1981 by a unanimous resolution by the United Nations, after which the General Assembly declared this as a day devoted to “commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples.” The 2016 theme was: ‘Building Blocks for Peace.’

The Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP) and the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) hold an annual 1 day conference in Melbourne to support and foster peacebuilding within our diverse multicultural city. This year the conference was held at the Ibis Hotel in Glen Waverley (City of Monash). Titled Peace Building in a Global Village, the event attracted 68 participants, many of whom are Ambassadors for Peace and members of WFWP. The organising committee comprised members of the Victorian Peace Council: UPF, WFWP, And I declare Peace and the World Peace Prayer Society.

## GOALS

1. Support the realisation of the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals through implementing Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals.
2. Foster healing and reconciliation to end hatred and prejudice between people through the Bridge of Peace Ceremony.

## PROGRAM



After registration, participants had the opportunity to join in the flag ceremony. They were each offered hand-painted world flags to place in holders on their way in to the conference room. At the opening of the day, Jenny Funston from the World Peace Prayer Society explained the significance of the world flags displayed around the venue and led everyone through the World Peace Prayer - ‘May peace prevail on earth’.

On the public officials’ panel, the Mayor of the City of Monash Cr. Rebecca Paterson joined with John Bellavance to share their experiences of peace building within local communities.



## Bridge of Peace



Anne Bellavance, WFWP International Vice-President (Oceania) and Charlotte Mukamuberwa, WFWP Vic. Vice-president conducted the signature Bridge of Peace Ceremony together. The Bridge of Peace seeks to build real and lasting friendships between people from different cultural, religious and national backgrounds. The motto of the ceremony, coined by the founder of WFWP International Dr Hak Ja Han Moon is: "If the women of the world can be sisters, the men of the world won't go war."

The purpose of the Bridge of Peace is to enable healing and reconciliation between people who may have been enemy nations in the past. Hatred is generational, passed on by the attitudes and conversations that children learn from their parents. The Bridge of Peace seeks to break this cycle of mistrust and prejudice. By becoming sisters (and brothers) who share each other's stories and develop true friendship, then our world view changes. This brings about a change in how we think, communicate and act; resulting in healing and reconciliation from the grass-roots level.

The leading ladies for the ceremony were: Mrs Jenny Funston, Australian/Oceanic Coordinator for Byakko Shinko Kai (White Light Association) and official Peace Representative of the World Peace Prayer Society and Hana Assafiri the owner of the Moroccan Soup Bar and Moroccan Deli-cacy in Brunswick (right and left in picture). Both women provided a personal perspective on the powerful role played by women in peacebuilding.



During break periods, participants had the opportunity to wander through the exhibition display titled, "Peace-Loving Global Citizen". Each two metre high banner revealed a different aspect of the life and works of Rev. Sun Myung Moon.

After a delicious and healthy lunch, participants enjoyed a repertoire of Chinese music played by the New Eastern Arts College Orchestra. Wearing period costumes and using traditional instruments, teachers and students gave a live performance showcasing beautiful traditional music.



**The keynote address** titled Measuring Peace and its Economic Benefits was presented by Jose Luen-go-Cabrera who flew in all the way from Sydney for the address. Jose is a research fellow from the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). He spoke about the research undertaken to quantify peace, its drivers and its economic benefits. The 2017 IEP report indicates that in 2016, Syria was ranked the least peaceful nation and Iceland the most peaceful. While Ethiopia and Burundi registered the largest deteriorations in peace, the Central African Republic and Sri Lanka showed the largest improvement. Since 2008, research indicates that the world has become less peaceful. One reason for this is the increase of non-state actors in conflict. Alarmingly, the global economic impact of violence in 2016 was \$14 trillion.



Three workshops were also held during the day.



of peace activities conducted by one person. Rick also emphasised Reverend Moon’s belief in the divine significance of marriage that underpins the most famous events of the Unification movement - the World Peace blessing and wedding ceremonies under the banner of “One World Under God” and which have drawn together thousands of participants from all over the world.

**Workshop 1:** Rick McInerheney, Former National Director of UPF and FFWPU provided a brief overview of the remarkable founder of UPF and WFWP - the Reverend Sun Myung Moon. After screening the video, “A Peace-Loving Global Citizen”, Rick touched on Reverend Moon’s life, his teachings and vision for the world. He mentioned that when Reverend Moon died just 5 years ago, he was leading together with Mrs Moon, the fastest growing religious movement in the world during the lifetime of a founder. Reverend Moon’s international and interfaith peace activities are also considered in history the maximum number



peace negotiations. Anne concluded her presentation by stressing the need for a cultural change, where women and men advocate for each other as partners so that parity between men and women is achieved; the end result being stable and ongoing peace. Afterwards, the audience were invited to share their concerns, ideas and experiences and many participants joined in with their views.

**Workshop 2:** Anne Bellavance began the ‘Conversation about Parity’ workshop by first defining equity, equality and parity and shared her insights from the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW61) held in New York this year. At the current rate, research indicates it will take 170 years for women to gain parity with men in the workplace. Anne explained that the WFWP has advocated the partnership between men and women as the model for peacebuilding since its founding 25 years ago. It is only in the last few years that governments and organisations are recognising the value of engaging with women in security and

For more information visit the Why Women Report at [www.inclusivesecurity.org](http://www.inclusivesecurity.org)



**Workshop 3:** John Bellavance, Vice-president of UPF Australia presented a workshop on Unification Thought and Mindfulness. John described the key principles for peacebuilding based on Dr Moon’s teaching. These are: 1- Break down barriers and build bridges that separate people, such as race, religion and culture. 2- Faiths must work together to promote peace, we are one family under God. 3- A partnership between men and women is needed to build peace. 4- In our global village and the multicultural society which is Australia, for peace to be achieved, we need shared universal values. 5- Left and right in politics must

work together for the sake of the common good. Neither side, on its own, can solve our shared problems. 6- Living for the sake of others. 7- Peacebuilding requires unity between mind and body. 8- The family is the cornerstone of peace.



### Reflections from Participants

“The conference encouraged me to think about peace and bridge between friends and colleagues.”



“To pass the message of Peace across the world; peace starts within a family and friends.”

“Living for the Sake of Others; to build peace is about loving your enemy and engagement.”

“Bridge of Peace and Living for the Sake of Others is my goal and aim in my life.”

“This event is sending its message heart to heart. There is no push/pretence on the subject. Your peaceful approach made the day easy.”

“A wonderful opportunity to engage in global sharing – sharing of ideas, sharing of smiles and sharing of energy. I loved every minute of the day. Thanks for the opportunity to participate in an interesting and inspiring day.”

## 'I Declare Peace' event in the CBD of Melbourne



The 'Hands for Peace' event was held in the Melbourne CBD at 4pm on Sat. 23rd September. To form the letter P for peace, a human chain joined hands to encircle Princes Bridge (just south of Flinders Street Station), the footpaths along both sides of Yarra River and the South Bank Pedestrian Bridge.



This final event was organised by Negin Mansoury and her friends. Negin is a peace activist and Ambassador for Peace.

Around 100 people gathered to fill 20 stations to make a P for peace around the bridges. Different nationalities and organisations operated these stations providing music and cultural events. To conclude the event,

at 4pm, doves were released from a boat in the Yarra River while trumpets for peace sounded out over the gathering.



### **PARTNERS and SUPPORTERS**

World Peace Prayer Society, New Eastern Arts College, I declare Peace, Simon Babb Photography, Art-Mill Productions.

### **Mission and Vision**

WFWP Chapters adhere to the principle that women, working together, taking initiative and empowering one another across traditional lines of race, culture and religion to create healthy families, are resolving the complex problems of our societies and world.

Ultimately "solutions" come as true partnerships between men and women and are established in all levels of society. The beginning point is within society's most elemental level - the family.

**Vision:** Women working together to realise one global family rooted in a culture of sustainable peace.

**Mission:** Empowering women as peace buildres and leaders in the family to transform the community, nation and world. Through education, advocacy, partnership, reconciliation and humanitarian service, WFWPI aims to create and environment of peace and wellbeing for future generations and people of all races, cultures and religious creeds.



# Peacebuilding Leadership Seminar

Peace Building Principles for sustainable peace  
7<sup>th</sup> October 2017



On October 17th, thirty UPF Ambassadors for Peace, leaders and members of the Woman's Federation for World Peace gathered for the final peacebuilding leadership seminar for 2017. The series of seminars had the theme: "Peace Building Principles for Sustainable Peace", and sought to open a conversation on universally shared values and principles that can underpin peacebuilding in Australia. The explorations of core moral, spiritual and methodological principles that foster peacebuilding are based on the teachings of Rev. Sun Myung Moon. These seminars also sought to find solutions to the moral and social problems facing Australian society.

John Bellavance, UPF Australian Vice-President, spoke about the principle of reciprocity as the basis for all relationships and happiness. The main points of discussion were: a person does not experience love and joy on their own, they are experienced in relation to another; second, the family is the building block for world peace; third, possible causes of war such as conflict within the individual are expanded to the tribe, nation and world. In conclusion, it was suggested that a revolution of character was needed before a revolution of politics could be carried out.

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Anne Bellavance, President of Women's Federation for World Peace, Australia spoke about the Principles that underpin reconciliation and restoration of peace. Anne gave a synopsis of history through the biblical lens and explained how biblical history was repeated over and over again through the actions of the central figures outlined in these stories. These stories show the methodology of peacebuilding, of how to win the heart of the elder brother. Anne emphasised that this methodology of serving and "loving your enemy" outlined by the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, have application for us today.



Four worthy individuals were presented with the Ambassador for Peace Award at the closing of the seminar. Each person exemplified “living for the sake of others”.



The award was presented to Maryam Shahryar and Fereshteh Zamini, two Iranian women who stood up for human rights and service to others;



Gamini Fonseka, a community broadcaster and leader who was a past recipient of many Australian community awards for excellence in multiculturalism; and



Joseph Jock Luak a South Sudanese leader.



Victor Jessop and Negin Mansouri presented the closing remarks. Mr. Jessop suggested that if we have the mindset that we are one family under God, this would change how we viewed each other and hasten the peacebuilding process.



Miss Mansouri emphasised the importance of addressing all the facets of peace, starting with the individual.

### Global Women’s Peace Network

**Mission:** A network of women leaders and organisations dedicated to solving pressing social issues and securing an environment for human development. It seeks to ensure mutual prosperity and lasting peace through feminine peace leadership rooted in a culture of caring, responsibility and education in family values.

People in our 21st century are demanding a new style of leadership. Leaders in our ‘flattening world’ need a different set of skills; requiring aptitude in emotional intelligence, reconciliation, mediation and forgiveness.

In 2012 during the GWPN inaugural assembly, the founders of WFWPI, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and her husband Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon called for a new era of women’s leadership in peace building. The assembly highlighted the need for a body of NGO leaders, whose collective wisdom and judgment can complement the deliberations of the United Nations; which as a body of government representatives and is overwhelmingly male. The GWPN is a project of WFWP international.



Find out more at [wfwpaustralia.org/global-womens-peace-network](http://wfwpaustralia.org/global-womens-peace-network)

# New Zealand

## Global Women's Peace Network Event

21st October 2017,

Parnell Peace Embassy Auckland

WFWP NZ President Mrs. Felicity Cairns welcomed about thirty participants to this forum on religious and cultural diversity in New Zealand. The purpose of the forum was to understand the effects of diversity on people's lives and their understanding of each other. After providing a brief introduction of WFWP, Mrs. Cairns explained the founding purpose of the organization which was to create opportunities for dialogue among diverse groups to enable the breaking down of barriers and thus creating harmony, peace and unity. She went on to describe the "Bridge of Peace" ceremony a signature project of WFWP which facilitates the building of connections between people of different nationalities, religions, cultures and ethnicities.



Introduction by Mrs. Felicity Cairns

The five speakers representing different religious groups were then introduced before they were invited to join the main panel. While Dr Rafah Smith was going to present an Islamic perspective, the Venerable Anila Tenzin Rakshita would present the Buddhist perspective, Rev Jenny Chalmers the Christian perspective, Mrs Ruth Cleaver a Jewish and Unificationist perspective and Baskey Reddy would present a Hindu perspective.



(Left to right) Dr. Rafah Smith, Venerable Anila Rakshita, Rev. Jenny Chalmers. Mrs. Ruth Cleaver, Mr. Baskey Reddy.

Dr Rafah Smith a General Practitioner and holistic healing practitioner has been an ambassador for peace with UPF since 2005. She applauded New Zealand's efforts for creating a peaceful and culturally diverse country one of the few such countries in the world.

While Islam is often portrayed in the media as a negative force, she explained that Islam promotes peace and peaceful relationships. Her childhood in the Middle East as part of an Islamic community was encircled with serenity and harmony. These principles, she added, continue to guide her in every aspect of her life and she prompted the audience to remember that in practicing one's faith, one needs to be considerate and relate to others with compassion and care.

She suggested that another important aspect of understanding diversity was to respect the differences in the foods people eat. To illustrate this point, she explained that Muslims do not eat pork and only eat halal food. She commended New Zealand for showing an understanding of this distinction, and as a result of this understanding, she described the economic benefits that New Zealand was able to achieve as they export 1.4 billion dollars of halal food a year.

The next speaker a Buddhist nun, the Venerable Tenzin Rakshita works with the blind as a vision rehabilitation specialist. Like Dr Rafah Smith, her address highlighted the key components of all religions being tolerance, compassion and care. Nevertheless, she recognized the difficulties many people had with following these principles.

The word Buddha means 'awakened mind' and thus Buddhism, she explained, was a 'practice of the mind'. In order to achieve an awakened mind, she advised the audience to work on the mind. "Working on the mind," she continued, "means not forming attachments to the clothes people wear or the way they look, instead it means looking at ways of improving behaviours that restrict us."

In her case, she explained she struggled with being patient. To overcome this situation, she set up a daily schedule where she practiced patience for a particular time each day, increasing the length of the period to enable this behavior to become part of her nature. She advised the audience to practice what they felt were behaviours that would enrich their lives.

Becoming peaceful people, she believed, relied on the development of the qualities of tolerance, compassion and care.

Reverend Jenny Chalmers, a minister from St An-

drew's Anglican Church in Taupa, was next to speak. A Peace Ambassador since 2002, she convened the Auckland Interfaith Council in 2002 and is active on the Wellington Abrahamic Council as well as an executive member of the Australian Council of Christians and Jews. She spoke about her religious beliefs and some of the ways she felt constricted by these beliefs. During a visit to the Treblinka concentration camp when studying the Jewish roots of Christianity she explained was a critical time for her as she questioned the atrocities committed in the guise of religion. Although religion had been the cause of many tragedies through history, she believed that in many tragedies, Christianity like other religions has offered hope to many and this hope could continue to contribute to a peaceful world.

Born and raised in the Jewish faith and later becoming a Unificationist, another member of the Auckland Interfaith Council and its current President since 2010, Mrs Ruth Cleaver encouraged the audience to widen their experiences by accompanying the Auckland Interfaith Council on a tour of sacred places in the city. She expressed her delight at the changes she has been able to observe as Auckland embraces the possibilities that cultural diversity offers. She spoke about her arrival in Auckland in 1989 when sausage rolls and Happy Meals from McDonalds were standard fare. A radical change she observed has since occurred with the arrival of people from other cultures and ethnicities making Auckland one of the most culturally diverse cities. This diversity she explained could be effective in supporting people to search for the good in others and to find meaning in their lives.

Mr Baskey Reddy a devotee of Hinduism outlined the basic tenets of his religion which corresponded with those of the earlier speakers. He explained that Hinduism promoted peace, harmony, love and the dignity of all human beings. He encouraged the audience to be conscious of God and to speak the truth as these would be the means to propagate peace.

To promote the beauty in cultural diversity, the audience was treated to the performance of a Phillipino dance by Josefina Suafa followed by a Tongan dance with Atu Afa and three children.

The forum concluded with all attendees joining in a Circle dance to the music of The Lord of the Dance.



Mrs. Josephina Suafa



(Left to right) Moana Pogoni, Rachel Afu, Anna Pogoni, Ata Afu



Socializing



Some of the participants

Sharing refreshments at the end of the day continued to be uplifting as many of the attendees filled with the spirit engendered during the speeches shared their thoughts with others. It was most heartening to observe the purpose of the day being achieved.

Report by: Lia Goijarts & Felicity Cairns

## Reflections from the Field ...

◀ page 1

Besides providing presentations on a range of topics, we were treated to a delightful performance by the New Eastern Arts Chinese Orchestra. They were awesome!

Thank you for including me in this wonderful day of sharing for International Day of Peace.

With joyful heart

Jenny Funston

# Solomon Islands

## iPad program at the New Hope Academy

9<sup>th</sup> September 2017

Recently, our students at the New Hope Academy (NHA) received a number of iPads from Beaconhills College in Victoria. The teachers of NHA were delighted to receive these gifts as they felt the iPads would enrich the students' education and assist them to keep up to date with the world around them. Beaconhills College is to be commended for their generosity in reformatting the iPads and uploading appropriate apps for the students of NHA. The efforts of Giulia from WFP in Victoria in organising the delivery of the iPads are much appreciated too.



NHA Students using the ipads during the practice session.

Before introducing the iPads to the students, parents were informed about the gift and the school's aspirations about the educational outcomes these iPads would generate. The parents were excited about the opportunities that this new technology offered their children. They were pleased that their children would now be able to access new information which would help to broaden their knowledge and thus enhance their education.

While classrooms were rearranged to accommodate a new computer lab for the use of the iPads, teachers worked overtime to ensure the lab was suitable and safe. They worked collaboratively and with a sense of unity which was heart-warming. The lab was also carpeted to ensure the children have a safe surface to use their iPads. While parents wait patiently outside for their children after school, the students are reluctant to leave school each day for such is their enthusiasm for this new educational tool.

### **Schools reflection:**

NHA is the first kindergarten in the Solomon Islands to access the educational possibilities of technology. It is also the first time that the teachers have been able to teach basic numeracy and literacy skills via the use of computers. On behalf of the students and staff at NHA, I wish to thank the donors for their generosity and their commitment to furthering the education of our children in the Solomon Islands.

Written by Selina Galo - Principle NHA, Solomon Islands

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## Support our Island Nations Projects in Oceania



New Hope Academy Kindergarten  
Pacific Islands Scholarship Fund  
Women's Sewing Centres  
Island Lights Project  
Books for the Islands

## United Nations Affiliation

WFWP International became a "NGO in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations" in 1997. This status has continued to be renewed based on the preparation of the Quadrennial Report.

Consultative status is granted by ECOSOC upon recommendation of the ECOSOC Committee on NGOs, which is comprised of 19 Member States.

There are only 139 NGOs worldwide that hold the general consultative status. The requirements of this level of affiliation include:

- ❖ Applying organisation's activities must be relevant to the work of ECOSOC
- ❖ The NGO must have been in existence (officially registered) for at least two years in order to apply
- ❖ The NGO must have a democratic decision making mechanism
- ❖ The major portion of the organisation's funds should be derived from contributions from national affiliates, individual members, or other non-governmental components
- ❖ NGOs granted General Consultative Status must submit to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, every fourth year, a brief report of their activities, in particular regarding their contribution to the work of the United Nations (Quadrennial Report) general consultative status is reserved for large international NGOs whose area of work covers most of the issues on the agenda of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. These tend to be fairly large, established international NGOs with a broad geographical reach.

### The benefits of receiving this status include:

- ❖ The NGO may propose new items for consideration by the ECOSOC
- ❖ Organisations granted status are also invited to attend international conferences called by the UN General Assembly special sessions, and other intergovernmental bodies.

WFWP International maintains a UN office in New York City. WFWP International has twenty UN representatives in seven countries: Austria, Chile, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Switzerland, Thailand, and the US.