



# **BENDIGO INTERFAITH COUNCIL**

## **NEWSLETTER. APRIL 2022**

Dear friends of the Bendigo Interfaith Council

Thank you to the many people who attended our recent Annual Dinner. It was a wonderful evening and I'm sure all present enjoyed the leadership of MC Sonia Di Mezza, the Karen dancers, the delicious food, the great company and most of all, the inspirational address by the Venerable Thich Phuoc Tan on the topic "A Glimpse of Hope: the service of kindness".

It takes considerable organisation to make the dinner happen each year. Special thanks must go to Heather Marten, who arranged bookings, liaised with the venue host regarding numbers, meals and special dietary requirements and, with the help of Rhonda Jewell, faced the daunting challenge of seating arrangements for the dinner.

Mons. Frank Marriott travelled to Melbourne to meet with and the Venerable Thich Phuoc Tan and to finalise arrangements for him to come as our guest speaker. Mons. Frank is a great networker and ambassador for the dinner and many individuals and groups respond enthusiastically to his invitation to attend.

This year we enlisted the help of many children in the community to decorate small rocks with the word "HOPE" in a variety of languages. We appreciate very much the enthusiastic support of the teachers at St Francis in the Fields, Girton Grammar and Catherine Macauley College and the leaders and teachers of the children of the Muslim and Sri Lankan Buddhist communities in taking up our invitation. Guests at the dinner were delighted to receive the rocks as a "take home gift" with a positive message.

A sad note was struck when we farewelled Mons Frank as Chair of the Bendigo Interfaith Council after almost 8 years at the helm. Mons. Frank, in partnership with Heri Febriyanto, was instrumental in the establishment of the BIC in 2014, when Bendigo was shaken by the hostility generated by the proposal to build a mosque. He has worked tirelessly to build positive, harmonious relationships between people of different faiths in our community, particularly among young people. Mons. Frank is a great networker and encourager and much of the success of the Bendigo Interfaith Council can be attributed to his efforts. Although no longer Chair or a committee member of the BIC, he will continue to provide his support and wise counsel for our work. We are most grateful for all that he has done to promote interfaith harmony in the City of Greater Bendigo.

The dinner also marked the handover to new office bearers. Judy Causon has moved from the position of Secretary to Chair of the Bendigo Interfaith Council. Heri Febriyanto continues as Deputy Chair, while Shivali Chatley is our new Secretary. Heather Marten will continue to serve as Treasurer,

with Fiona Gardner as Assistant Treasurer. We are very appreciative for the support of Rhonda Jewell, who volunteers as Minute Secretary - and does much more besides.

The membership of the BIC decision-making committee is flexible, as the representation from our participating groups sometimes changes. Those represented are Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Islamic and Jewish faiths, as well as the Victoria Police, Remembrance Parks Central Victoria and the City of Greater Bendigo.

We appreciate the hospitality of Bendigo Community Health, who provide us with a venue for our monthly meetings.

As very little correspondence comes via "snail mail" these days, we have decided to discontinue the rental of a Post Office Box. Future correspondence of this nature can be sent to:

**The Secretary, Bendigo Interfaith Council, c/- Post Office Junourton 3551**

We have also discontinued our phone contact, so communications should be directed either to:

**Chair, Judy Causon, 0417 435 909** or email [judithacauson@gmail.com](mailto:judithacauson@gmail.com) or

**Secretary, Shivali Chatley 0416 423 424**, email [shivalichatley@gmail.com](mailto:shivalichatley@gmail.com) or

**Minute Secretary, Rhonda Jewell, [BendigoInterfaithCouncil@yahoo.com](mailto:BendigoInterfaithCouncil@yahoo.com). New email address**

After two years of very limited activity, we are hoping to provide more interfaith opportunities in 2022. In previous years, we conducted a number of successful bus trips to places of worship in other communities and these experiences were enjoyed by many people. This year, subject to the success of our grant application, we are planning a "Local Faith Trail", taking in places of historical and current significance in and around Bendigo. Further information will be circulated when arrangements are confirmed.

Our first interaction with students will be with Year 10 students at Girton in May. We hope to have similar contacts with students at Marist and Catherine McAuley Colleges during the year. We consider this connection with young people to be particularly important and are keen to support the schools in whatever way we can to help build informed awareness, acceptance and positive relationships within our community.

Thank you for your interest in and support for the work of the Bendigo Interfaith Council.

Best wishes

Judy Causon, Chair.