

Mornington Peninsula

INTERFAITH NETWORK

Newsletter: Winter Edition 2009



Welcome to our Inaugural Newsletter

Dear all,

It is my sincere pleasure to welcome you to the inaugural newsletter of the **Mornington Peninsula Interfaith Network** (MPIN). As some of you know, the Network was launched late last year at the Mornington Peninsula Interfaith Festival. The festival ran over two days (November 22 & 23rd) on the beautiful foreshore of Rye attracting over 2,500 people. Those who attended gave resounding support for an Interfaith Network to be permanently based on the Mornington Peninsula. And with financial support from the Victorian Multicultural Commission this wish has become reality.



And what a first year it has been! The Network has organized numerous events throughout the Peninsula, including a **Tour to Places of Worship** for Toorak College students and four **Spirituality Talks**: 'Craig Hassed on Mindfulness' in Rye, 'Robina Courtin on Fear & Depression' in Sorrento, 'Women & Spirituality' in Mt Eliza, and 'Shaykh Hisham Kabbani on Sufism' in Mt Eliza. All of these events have been a resounding success with many more planned in future.

To those who attended our events thank you for your support. It is great to see the Mornington Peninsula buzzing with interest on Spiritual matters. To those of you thinking of attending future events, I sincerely hope we cross paths.

Sandy Kouroupidis
President of the Mornington Peninsula Interfaith Network

Featured Quote:

In this age of religious tension it is very important that people of faith learn to communicate across religious boundaries. When you strip every religion of its ritual and dogma you find a common core. That core has to do with an immediate and direct relationship with God, however conceived. Each religion has its Great Beings, great realisers who have attained the ultimate mystical oneness with the Divine. The Great Beings of all the paths can communicate with each other with love and respect

- Swami Shankarananda
Spiritual Director of Shiva Yoga (Mt Eliza)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Event: **Synagogue Visit: Bar Mitzvah**
Date: Saturday, June 20th
Time: 10am-1pm (Arrival 9:45am)
Venue: Temple Beth Israel
Address: 76-82 Alma Road St. Kilda
Cost: By Donation

Event: **Multifaith Community Festival**
Date: Sunday, June 21st
Venue: Peninsula Community Theatre
Address: Cnr Nepean Highway & Wilson Rd, Mornington
Cost: Free Entry

Event: **Spirituality Talk: Treating Depression : A Psychologist's Perspective with Nick Allen**
Date: Sunday August 16th
Venue: Continental Hotel, Sorrento
Cost: By Donation

Event: **Spirituality Talk: The Mystic Heart of Christianity with Rev Hans Christiansen**
Date: Saturday October 17th
Venue: Shiva Yoga
Address: 27 Tower Road Mt Eliza
Cost: By Donation

Event: **Spirituality Talk: Earth & Spirituality with Rabbi Black (GreenFaith)**
Date: Sunday October 18th
Venue: TBC
Cost: By Donation

Event: **Mornington Peninsula Interfaith Festival**
Date: Sunday, November 22nd
Venue: Peninsula Community Theatre
Address: Cnr Nepean Highway & Wilson Rd, Mornington
Cost: By Donation

NB: These events are subject to change. For up-to-date information please join our newsletter at mail@mpin.org.au

Spirituality Talks

Freeing the Mind from Depression & Fear with Venerable Robina Courtin (Tibetan Buddhist Nun)

Continental Hotel, Sorrento - 3rd May 2009 6.00pm-8.30pm.

The Spirituality Talk with **Venerable Robina Courtin** was held in partnership with the Anglican Parish of Sorrento and Rye who hosted Robina's weekend visit from Sydney. The topic of Robina's talk was **Freeing the Mind from Depression & Fear**. The evening was a tremendous success. We hoped to get 60 to 80 people but ended up with 145, the majority being from the local area and the wider Peninsula. Given the extraordinary numbers on a Sunday night in Sorrento the space was tight, but the feeling in the Hardy Bar with so many people together was great.

We met at 6pm and had dinner together. At 7pm Robina began her spellbinding teaching. She started and ended with beautiful Buddhist chants. The audience listened intently as Robina expounded in a contemporary and engaging way on Buddha's teaching on the mind, the nature of fear and depression and how to practically deal with them, and the need for simple and short meditation practises to disengage the mind from fearful patterns. After the talk, half an hour of question time followed. People had many questions. As response to some of the questions Robina movingly told some of her life-story as well as reflected on the Tibetan Buddhist understanding of karma, re-incarnation, meditation, and interfaith dialogue.

The evening was a great success with many people expressing their deep appreciation for what the Interfaith Network is doing. Robina has graciously expressed her willingness to come back to the Peninsula and perhaps do a more intensive, retreat-style day of teachings and meditations. We all look forward to inviting her back.

- Rev'd Hans Christiansen

Mindfulness: The Body as the Shadow of the Soul with Dr Craig Hassed (MBBS, FRACGP)

St Andrew's Anglican Church Garden, Rye - 11th Jan 2009 10am -1pm.

The Spirituality Talk with **Dr Craig Hassed** was held in partnership with the Anglican Parish of Sorrento and Rye. It was our first event in 2009 and it was a great success. 175 people came to hear Dr Hassed speak on the topic of **Mindfulness: The Body as the Shadow of the Soul**.

After people had enjoyed freshly brewed coffee, quiches and live guitar music, Craig gave an inspiring and humorous talk on Mindfulness. Being an author, doctor and teacher in the faculty of medicine at Monash University, Craig gave convincing evidence based on his personal experience and scientific research of the health benefits of daily mindfulness meditation practise. Following the talk we had half an hour of question time. People asked many questions including about depression, cancer, and how to live in the moment which Craig gave some very wise and illuminating answers to.

After the talk, 75 people went into the Church where Craig offered a more inter-active style workshop including a time of shared mindfulness meditation practise followed by questions. The whole morning was a great success with people expressing their deep appreciation of Craig's excellent presentation. Thank you to Dr Craig Hassed for coming down to to the Peninsula. We look forward to welcoming him and his wife back for more teachings.



Multifaith @ Toorak College

Tour to Places of Worship:



On Tuesday March 20th, Year 6 students from Toorak College along with teachers and chaplain visited four places of worship within the local area and beyond. The first visit was to the **Shiva Yoga Ashram** in Mt Eliza, where the welcome was joyous and open. The students met with Swami Shankarananda and devotees of the ashram and given a tour of their 6 acre property. It was then onto the **Emir Sultan Turkish Mosque** in Dandenong and a meeting with Sharene Hussein, a Muslim woman who shared a talk about Muslim practises and prayers. Question time was stimulating with much laughter and goodwill. Lunch was shared on the way to **Dhammasarana**, a Sri Lankan Buddhist temple in Keysborough where students met the Venerable Vijita Thero the temple's head monk. The temple was beautiful and discussion enlightening. Last visit was back in Baxter at the **Brahma Kumaris Retreat Centre**, where Jacqueline Russell and fellow sisters made everyone feel welcome. We shared in a short meditation and given individual positive affirmations. Watermelon and fruit was graciously offered for afternoon tea. Accompanying the tour was Sandhi from the Mornington Peninsula Interfaith Network who handed out an interfaith calendar to each student. It was a great experience for students to visit these places of worship. What a wonderful day of sharing.

Women & Spirituality: Talks & Workshops

On Tuesday the 19th of May, Year 6 students from Toorak College and the Mornington Peninsula Interfaith Network hosted an evening where stories of Women and Spirituality were shared. Over 80 people attended the event. Five women were invited to share their stories of faith, representing Buddhism (Girija), Hinduism (Devi Ma), Islam (Inaz Janif), Brahma Kumaris (Jacqueline Russell) and Christianity (Jenni Georgiadis). It was a real joy to be together and to hear each other's journeys. The evening format involved a forum of speakers, followed by individual workshops and concluding with refreshments. It was a beautiful night, gathering young and old with rich and harmonious sharing.

- Jenni Georgiadis, Toorak College Chaplain



Featured Items

Featured Dish: Vegetable Biryani

Ingredients:

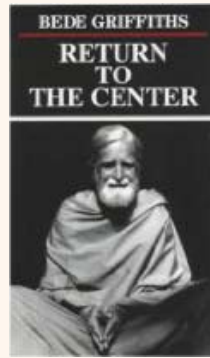
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds
- ½ teaspoon whole cloves
- 2 tablespoons garam masala
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon chilli powder (or to taste)
- 1 medium sized onion chopped thinly
- ½ teaspoon garlic
- 1 ¼ tablespoons oil
- 175g mixed vegetables
- 750ml water
- 1 teaspoon butter (or ghee)

Method:

1. Rinse and soak rice for 30 minutes and drain thoroughly.
2. Heat oil in saucepan over medium heat. Add cumin seeds and cloves to the pan and sauté lightly for one minute. Add the onion to the saucepan and fry until lightly brown.
3. Stir in rice and fry until oil coats the rice and add salt, garam masala, chilli powder, garlic, vegetables and water. Bring the rice mixture to a boil and then cover, reduce heat and simmer for 20 minutes or until all water is absorbed.
4. Add butter and stir rice before serving.

Featured Book:

Return to the Centre by Bede Griffiths



Return to the Centre, written in 1976, is one of the late Benedictine Monk, Bede Griffiths' classics and a must-read for anyone who is interested in East-West dialogue and inter-religious spirituality.

Bede Griffiths lived in a Christian Ashram in India for over 40 years where he sought to incorporate Indian spirituality and way of life into his Christian monastic life. His ashram Shantivanam (forest of peace) in Tamil Nadu in South India still attracts thousands of seekers today.

In his book, *Return to the Centre*, Bede Griffiths offers 19 short, easy-to-read chapters on Christian spirituality, the spiritual nature of humanity, Eastern Wisdom, and reflections on the relationship between Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

Bede Griffiths' main argument in the book is that within all major world religions is a non-dual centre, an experience of union with the divine, and it is to this centre that humanity must return if it is to find peace and union with God and with each other. Anyone who reads this book will find inspiration and hopefully be compelled to seek the centre within and work for inter-religious dialogue and peace.

Featured Faith: What is Buddhism?

An ordinary man called Siddhartha Gautama was born as a prince over 2,500 years ago. His compassion was acutely awakened after encountering old age, disease and death. He recognised human suffering and he set out to end suffering for all beings.

The Buddha taught the way to end suffering was to first understand the **Four Noble Truths** and then to practice the **Noble 8-Fold Path**.

First Noble Truth: Life contains suffering. Suffering can take the form of pain, old age, sickness and inevitably death. We become weakened from emotional, physical and psychological suffering such as loneliness, fear, jealousy and anger.

Second Noble Truth: Suffering has a cause. An individual's aversion and perception frequently

leads to suffering. One's attachment to pleasure can lead to suffering, craving can lead to addiction and unmet expectations can lead to suffering.

Third Noble Truth: Once the cause of suffering is understood, it can be managed and the potential of happiness increases. Unrealistic self focus is recognised and compassion for others heightened.

Fourth Noble Truth: The 8-fold Path leads to the end of suffering.

The Noble 8-Fold Path: By following the Noble Eightfold Path one brings awareness to every aspect of existence. 1. Right View 2. Right Intention 3. Right Speech 4. Right Conduct 5. Right Livelihood 6. Right Effort 7. Right Mindfulness & 8. Right Concentration.



The three main schools of Buddhism are Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana. For more information on the 'What is Buddhism?' go to: www.buddhanet.net

Featured Spiritual Symbol: Brahma Kumaris



The Brahma Kumaris' Spirituality Symbol represents God, the Supreme Soul, an eternal Self-luminous and Incorporeal, Point like entity. This radiant form of God, is referred to as a PurePoint of eternal energy, the incorporeal Supreme Soul, Shiva, [Jyoti Bindu] the spiritual Mother and Father, the source of constant joy, bliss and happiness. The 16 rays coming out from the Point represent all of God's pure benevolent qualities.