



Initiatives of Change

Peace is the way

170 women have now registered for the Creators of Peace (CoP) conference Creating a Culture of Peace - what will it take? (Sydney, 30 September - 4 October). 35 more have indicated their intention to be present. Others will come by day.

“The conference will be a catalyst for deepening the connectedness of women from around the world,” says conference convenor Trish McDonald-Harrison. “It will enable peace builders, from seasoned to aspiring, to listen to each other and their own hearts and to find a deeper understanding of their own potential.”

“The planning team are grateful to those who have generously given their funds, time, prayers and goodwill. Because the conference is in this region, it gives a chance for women from the Pacific nations and Indonesia especially

to take part. A number are working hard at raising their funding. Any further contributions to assist them would be warmly welcomed.”

Sydney women who have heard about the conference have been helping in different ways:

* On Sydney’s North Shore two sisters organised a fund raising evening in a home. Twenty five came and \$630 was collected.

* A Mosman Councillor and former Mayor sent out conference information in the ALGWA (Australian Local Government Women’s Association) Newsletter.

* In June, the Indonesian Australian Women’s Association of Sydney invited conference committee member Barbara Lawler to speak.

* Soroptimists International Sydney have invited Ann Njeri (Kenya), Joanita (Uganda) and Zhanna (Russia) who have joined the conference organising team, to speak at a dinner on the UN International Day of Peace, 21 September in North Sydney.

Jean Brown, author of the Creators of Peace Circles, writes:

“The reality is that few of us really know what Peace is, what it looks like, how it sounds. Rather like unconditional love, we have an intuitive sense of its existence without actually having fully experienced it. Or perhaps we have experienced it in some fleeting memory, enough of a glimpse to leave us hungry for more. In his enigmatic way Mahatma Gandhi said of Peace, ‘There is no way to Peace. Peace is the way’. And the same could be said of unconditional love.

“For the women gathering in Sydney at the end of September, even to envisage what a culture of peace would consist of will be a challenge, let alone ask ourselves what it will take to create it. We will discern threads from a variety of speakers and experiences, from those coming from cultures of violence and cultures of apathy, cultures of material prosperity and cultures of spiritual starvation. Ancient cultures and contemporary ones.

“And we will weave these threads into a new understanding that the way to create a culture of peace is just that: each one of us committing to its creation, in home and business, in community and government.”

More information at:
<http://www.iofc.org/creators-of-peace-conference>

My hopes for the Creators of Peace conference

- by Trish McDonald-Harrison, conference convenor.

1. Inspiration that will knock our socks off;
2. Deep respect for people of other cultures and beliefs;
3. Deeper understanding of our own personal life's "mission";
4. A shift from a tendency to blame to focusing on "what can I do personally" to improve a situation;
5. Understanding that a Quiet Time each day can be a gold mine for finding a way forward, and for developing character and spirituality;
6. Understanding our limitless capacity as peace builders - while knowing what it takes;
7. Heart-warming connections with women from around the world which will stay in our hearts and minds for life;
8. A linking network that makes it easy to remain in touch and work collaboratively after the conference
9. Some practical "how to" skills in peace-building including facilitations of Creators of Peace Circles;
10. Refreshment and a new lease of life.

In Aotearoa - the hidden iceberg

In June workshops took place in Lower Hutt and Auckland for women to experience a "Creators of Peace Circle" and learn how to use this format in their own communities.

Glenys Wood who invited facilitators Christina DeAngelis and Zhanna Petrukovich to New Zealand has a vision that CoP Circles can bring women together from different groups, such as Maori and Pakeha, working towards reconciliation on a deeper "soul to soul" level.

At government level a lot is being done to address the injustices of the past, but this is the tip of the iceberg. CoP workshops can help to deal with the hidden iceberg beneath, to melt the fear and mistrust that has the potential for conflict.

The women in the workshops were diverse in nationality, age and

background. Most were strangers to each other, but after the first exercise one would think they were old friends. Role plays about how greed or fear destroys peace, and how sharing and compassion builds it, were fun and expanded awareness of the possibilities of transforming situations in everyday life.

Participants expressed that they felt at peace and respected when really listened to. One shared how she often does not listen, but rather tries to give advice. The exercise on active listening helped her find a new way of supporting people.

Ten women from New Zealand will attend the International Creators of Peace conference in Sydney.

- Zhanna Petrukovich

Asia's inspiring changemakers

Rob and Cheryl Wood recently spent several weeks in South-East Asia with Action for Life 4. Rob writes:

A feature of Action for Life (AfL) has been the opportunity to meet some of Asia's inspiring changemakers. In Thailand we had an exchange with Sulak Sivalaksa. He recounted that many years ago when he was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, a fellow student said to him, "Stop your intellectualising and when you get back to Thailand, do whatever you can to close the gaps in Thai society."

Over the last 40 years he has been a conscience for his country. He has spoken out for his beliefs on different issues. As a result he has had several periods in detention. Sulak Sivalaksa has championed the cause of democracy. He has established the International Network of Engaged Buddhists which has played an important role in developing a moral and spiritual leadership among the young people of his country. He will be coming to Melbourne as a speaker at the Parliament of the World's Religions. A

Completely Brightened

Ouk Vichet from Cambodia was a 2009 participant in the Life Matters course. Recently he wrote a detailed description of this experience and of the IofC philosophy for the ELSU (English Language Support Unit, Royal University of Phnom Penh) newsletter which goes to all the universities in Cambodia and to some sponsoring universities in the USA. Vichet wrote:

The course far exceeded my expectations... I was inspired to figure out my relationship to myself, my family, my community and my country. To find ways to heal those relationships, I was told that change starts with me because 'If not me, who? If not now, when?' As a result I have found that the way I involve myself in my family and work has completely brightened. I have planned plenty of things to do in Cambodia. I will take more care of my parents. I will try to inspire better relationships in the workplace and with my students who are the bamboo shoots of my country".

member of our AfL team – San San from Malaysia – said it was meeting him and others like him in Thailand that made her decide to take her Buddhist religion seriously, as part of her everyday life.

Our outreach program took us to Laos. During the Vietnam war vast numbers of bombs were dropped on Laos and many are still lying unexploded in different parts of the countryside. Against this background it was moving to meet up with a youth group that has a focus on practical peacemaking called Mittapub. They work at a village level and encourage people to deal with their disputes through dialogue.

Mittapub invited us to present a weekend workshop for their group and there was lively participation. It became clear that while they promote peace wherever they can, quite a number had family conflicts which they didn't know how to resolve. The message of "change starts with me" seemed to make sense to many of them. One young woman spoke about the hatred she had for her mother's controlling attitude and her feeling of helplessness about it. However, she decided to apologise for her part in their bitter relationship. On the phone a week

later, she said this had transformed their feelings towards each other.

It had been the first IofC event in Laos since 1974.

We returned to Cambodia for the final month of AfL: a time for intensive evaluation and preparation for return to home situations. It was particularly encouraging to see the difference seven months with AfL had made in the lives of participants we had known before.

Cheryl writes:

In Cambodia I met Kannikun Ouk who had taken a course at Armagh in 1987. Through her Rob and I had got to know the Melbourne Cambodian community.

In 2008 Rachel Peters from Warrnambool who also made friends with Kannikun at that time took her daughter to Cambodia to meet her. On her return, Rachel decided to raise money to help with Kannikun's health expenses. Rachel set about painting and selling her works. She was able to send \$380 to Kannikun who had to spend some days in hospital soon after receiving the money. Her bill came to \$370!

Breaking down prejudice

Deborah Sullivan, an artist from Melbourne, describes her experience with Action for Life 4:

Action for Life has been the experience of a lifetime. Our group of thirty came from eighteen countries and represented different age groups, religious beliefs and backgrounds. We travelled through India and from there to Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand.

As we travelled, giving presentations and workshops to all sorts of organisations, we learnt about the issues and history of these countries. We met people who were making a difference to those in poverty, who had been abused, were destitute or had been victims of human trafficking.

I went on AfL wanting to work towards the restoration of dignity and respect for people who had suffered from assault and abuse, with the hope there could be greater respect between

the sexes and towards children. Listening to the men's honest, courageous and open sharing on Action for Life, I found that my own hardness and prejudice towards men started breaking down. (I had not realised I was like this.) I started to feel great compassion and care for these men. When I began to experience this transformation within myself I started to feel there was hope for the future. I heard how they too were seeing and wanting to be more respectful towards women. Daily Quiet Time, the weekly Quiet Days and sharing with others were the vital tools for these changes to begin. I believe these IofC practices can bring collective healing in these areas, as they have in my own life. So healing and change is possible in the battle of the sexes.

Basketball and life skills camp

The fourth Basketball and Life Skills weekend camp run by lofC and the Major Street Basketball Foundation took place in July in Anglesea.

These camps help young people gain life skills through the message carrier of basketball. They create a friendly environment for them to know and understand each other in spite of different cultural, racial and religious backgrounds.

Forty seven took part including seven who had been at previous camps and wanted to make the experience available to others. Their leadership was a feature of the weekend.

As well as advanced level basketball training, there was on and off court training in:

- how to manage time effectively
- how to build deep friendships that

will provide support at challenging times

- the importance of personal reflection and inner awareness
- how to set and achieve goals in our lives

Always a highlight is the story sharing around the campfire. One participant said that he had always blamed others for what went wrong. He realised that he needed to start taking responsibility for what was happening to him. This led to his apology to his mother for the way he had behaved at home.

Some comments at the end were:

"I've learnt that nothing is impossible...life can change".



Participants at the basketball camp

"Not to be afraid to speak up"

"I am not the only person experiencing hardships and there are lots of people I can talk to".

"Basketball brings people together through teamwork and life is all about balance, priorities and getting going".

Basketballs and Golden Buddhas

It is easy to judge people. It is even easier to justify why something is not worth spending time on.

This is made easier still when you are trying to help people who don't seem to want it, or appreciate the efforts. Yet real leadership demands that we get past these comfortable notions and extend our hand.

For me this lesson has come twice recently, in my adventures with Action for Life (a seven month training program in India and Asia) and more recently on the Basketball and Life Skills camp.

While I was struggling with noisy late nights and participants dragging their feet, I was reminded of the story of the Golden Buddha, of an ancient monastery where a clay statue of Buddha was kept.

One day, an invading army threatened the temple, so the monks had to flee. They took their revered statue with them. Outside it was raining and as they were carefully moving down the stone stairs, a young monk slipped. The statue tumbled to the ground, breaking on impact! With heavy hearts they moved in to clean up the remains. Suddenly the monks noticed, inside the now broken clay Buddha had been hidden a Buddha statue of gold.

We are each like that, and giving leadership is being able to see the amazing value of each person, no matter

what at first is presented. So when I could get past seeing the clay of the participants, this is when the real gold came for me - a golden experience and real revitalisation.

One young Sudanese participant (who had real difficulty getting into the swing of things) extended his care and friendship to one of the youngest, skinniest and whitest of participants. I became flooded with a sense of hope: each person really can be the change we hope to see in the world.

- Alex Birnberg

Armagh outreach – two

July events



Joanne Nabanja from Uganda and Ann Njeri from Kenya

Seventy five people came to Armagh for a second Action For Life 4 presentation night (the first was in June). The audience, including many Melbournians of African background,

heard Joanne Nabanja from Uganda and Ann Njeri from Kenya tell about deep changes they had experienced. Joanne spoke of finding the will to apologise to relatives for their mistreatment of her immediate family, and Ann about initiating meetings with representatives of a rival tribe in her own home.

As an outcome a meeting was arranged for Ann and Joanne to dialogue with members of the Ethiopian Youth Committee about conflicts within their community. Following their conversation it was decided to organise a 'Discover The Other' workshop next month in Melbourne's western suburbs to bring together people from all sides of the conflict situations, to get people talking to each other rather than about each other.

Abdulkarim Galea, Principal of the Australian International Academy, initiated a leadership training day at Armagh for student leaders from four of the largest Islamic schools in Victoria. On the theme, 'What kind of leader?', the program included a panel of six speakers, group discussion, question and answer sessions and team games. Staff members who attended were delighted with the occasion.



Student leaders from four Islamic schools at an Armagh training day

Beazley memoirs reprinted

Father of the House, the memoirs of Kim Beazley Senior, is to be reprinted after the first printing was sold out.

The book has been widely circulated in the main book shops and libraries.

The new printing will be ready for sale in September, just in time for Christmas gifts. Grosvenor Books has ordered a further 170 copies.

Reviews have appeared in many papers, including the following comments:

"This memoir is fascinating...Riveting and immensely readable."

Australian Literary Review

"A remarkable story of foresight, persistence and adherence to principle.... It restores faith in politics."

The Australian

"A refreshing candour and honesty throughout. A modesty which defies all expectations of a politician's memoirs."

Supreme Court Library Review of Books

"Well-written story of a humble man who devoted his political life to doing good... deserves a large audience."

Sydney Morning Herald.

"It is not easy to live up to Christian principles and survive in the rough and tumble of the Australian Parliament.

Beazley showed it can be done."

The Catholic Record

"A remarkable story. It reveals Beazley's convictions, his conscience and his courage."

Senator John Faulkner, Cabinet Secretary, at the Parliament House launch

John Farquharson, former Deputy Editor of the *Canberra Times*, has written a review suitable for Christian magazines and newspapers. In Perth the Rev Lindsay Cartwright has taken advantage of this and the review has appeared in the *Catholic Record* and the July edition of the *Anglican Messenger*.

- Joyce Fraser

Father of the House: the memoirs of Kim E. Beazley. Published by Fremantle Press. \$25, or \$30 inc p&p
Available from: Grosvenor Books, 226 Kooyong Road, Toorak VIC 3142
Tel: 61 3 9822 1218 **Fax:** 61 3 9822 6871
Email: grosvenor.books@au.iofc.org

Do practical things together

An Interfaith Conference took place in Perth in June, co-sponsored by the Abrahamic Alliance and Initiatives of Change, under the theme. "How can the faiths of the world help move us away from violence and towards peace"?

The Chairperson, Rev. Hollis Wilson, read excerpts from the Cairo speech of US President Barack Obama, after which several speakers gave responses.

Professor Samina Yasmeen, Director of the Centre for Muslim States and Societies at the University of Western Australia, said, "Obama is giving hope not just to America but to the international community". She had been sceptical about interfaith activity. However she now realized that when people of different backgrounds do practical things together they create a human family.

The afternoon concluded with workshops involving participants from different religious backgrounds.

The heart of the question

"We need to go to the heart of the question of how to revive and extend multilateral solidarity in a globalizing world..."

The message of love reminds us that we cannot just defend that which is relative to us, or only seek short-term compromises through international conferences. It reminds us that we should realise that we are truly, all in the same boat! And that all together, really together, we should map out our course through the storm and through the heavy clouds that herald tempestuous times."

Mohamed Sahnoun, Founder-President of the Caux Forum for Human Security, speaking at the opening of the 2009 Forum on 17 July.

Read the whole speech at:
www.caux.ch/sites/all/files/Sahnoun_cfhs_opening.pdf

Truly Motivating

Some twenty Australians are taking part in the 2009 international lofC conferences in Caux, Switzerland. Some have helped to plan and run the conference sessions. Others have been in the 'engine room' making the conference organisation, that depends on volunteers, run smoothly. One Australian taking part for the first time is Kristina Shaw from Canberra. Kristina writes:

On a mountain that overlooks Lake Geneva stands the Caux Palace. It is now summer and as the blue waters of the lake sparkle at the foot of the mountains, people from all around the world gather to share ideas and dreams.

As a junior intern, I am able to experience all that the Initiatives of Change has to offer. We work in most aspects of the house and are given opportunities to meet people who have spent half their lives working on programs that benefit people from all walks of life. We are surrounded by people who are important in their country, whose names are internationally known. The fact that we are working side by side with them, listening to their speeches and learning from their workshops is truly amazing and motivating.

I am able to build friendships with young people from Armenia, Australia, Canada, Egypt, India, Lebanon, Malaysia, Moldova, U.S.A, Zimbabwe - to mention a few of the nationalities that the interns represent. We are here to change ourselves, and hopefully in the future, work together to change the world.

Caux Palace brings us all together in an environment that is peaceful and alive, challenging and inspirational, moving and joyful but most of all it is here to teach us all how to lead change in our countries when we return home.



Kristina Shaw with Caux interns

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