

Newsletter April 2025

Greetings from the Religious Diversity Centre team.

The year has begun with a bang for our **'Weaving Empathy' Project** with a continuation of Dinner Conversations and Craft events from last year. There has also been 2 x Courageous Conversations Workshops which explored non-violent communication skills.



Perhaps you would like to host a dinner for 18 or so people from a range of backgrounds. Tables of 6 work well for some great relationship building from the conversation starters. Contact Jill and Steph at weavingempathy@gmail.com for their advice and facilitation (as this is an RDC Project funded externally – your costs will be reimbursed !) So what are you waiting for ?

Most of you will know that our Founding Trustee and Executive Director, **Jocelyn Armstrong**, stepped down at the end of June last year. We had a great celebration afternoon tea with Jocelyn and George in August. Unfortunately for their health we needed to limit numbers attending.



You may not also know that Jocelyn was honoured in the New Years Honours as a Companion of the Kings Service Order (KSO) for her inter-religious / interfaith work over many years. This Honour will be formally conferred sometime in the next few months.

If you would like to communicate directly with Jocelyn please feel free to contact her at gandj.armstrong@xtra.co.nz

To assist the ongoing processes of the RDC the Trust Board appointed **Tayyaba Khan** as 'Interim Change Manager' and she has taken us through a review of our documentation, facilitated the development of a new Strategic Plan, and tried hard to find some funding sources to keep us

going. Some of these documents will be available the RDC Web site in the coming months : www.rdc.org.nz

The Board has appointed **Ricky Waters** as Executive Director (from mid February) to help lead us into the next phase. Ricky is a founding Trustee of the RDC and has been the Treasurer for the past 7 years. He has committed to 10 hours per week in this role – which sits alongside his Co-ordinating Chaplain roles at Manukau and Unitec Institutes of Technology.

Anthony Green has become the co-Chair of the Trust Board to serve alongside Jenny Te Paa Daniel (who has held this role with Jocelyn) <https://rdc.org.nz/patrons-trustees/>

Mary Nissen continues in her part-time role as Administrator to the Executive Director – this is her third year in the role. You can contact Mary with any query at admin@rdc.org.nz

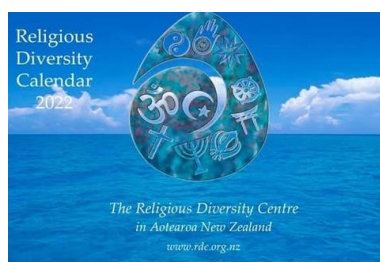
The **Religious Literacy and Competency Survey** had a soft launch last year and is in full swing. This overseen by Dr Paul Morris (also an RDC Trustee) with a team of researchers from Victoria university of Wellington. They are looking to establish a benchmark of what the people of New Zealand do actually know about other religions (and their own). We hope to use the benchmark of the Survey to encourage the further teaching of religious studies in high school, and have a group working on developing curriculum content for the NCEA credits.

Those who attended our **Religious Leaders Forum** in November (leaders from some 16 religious communities from across the country) were more than a little surprised at their knowledge gaps. <https://rdc.org.nz/religious-leaders-forum/>



Any feedback you may want to offer on the Survey can be sent to research@rdc.org.nz

Some of you may be missing the **MultiFaith Calendar** which the RDC produced over the past few years. Since we decided not to produce one for 2025 (having sold less than half those we printed for 2024) we have fielded a number of enquiries about whether we might host an on-line version on our web site. We are keen to see if we can make this happen but we need the engagement of a competent person who can set this and help us to easily maintain it robustly. If you have any suggestion of such a person please send their details to admin@rdc.org.nz



The **Climate Change Action Group** began the year 2024 with sadness. The retirement of charismatic Jocelyn Armstrong, who initiated the Climate Action Group was a blow; the untimely passing of Rod Oram, distinguished journalist, passionate environmentalist and committed man of faith, who contributed so much to this group, devastated us. And yet, the group remained faithful to our vision of education, advocacy and action to support faith communities to take collective action in the face of the existential threat of climate change:

- Presenting the paper, “From faith to awareness to action: Aotearoa’s Religious Diversity Centre in support of climate justice for Oceania” for a major conference in Apia in May 2024.
- Participating in Greenfaith’s “*No Faith in Fossil Fuels*” climate action week in early May 2024. [Greenfaith](#) is a global, grassroots, multi-faith climate and environmental movement, focused on supporting local communities to drive transformational change and build resilience to withstand the worst effects of climate change.
- Writing two submissions on relevant NZ legislation issues: a submission on the The Submission Reductions Plan and the Crown Minerals Amendment Bill.
- Presenting a workshop at the Religious Leaders Forum in November from which came a request from religious leaders about information on how to do faith-based climate action. Two resources are being produced and further information on how to access these will be in our next Newsletter.

Teachings of
the Major
Faiths about
humanity's
relationship
with Planet
Earth



Belieforama / Engaging with Religious Diversity Workshops have been in little demand post covid and with a shrinking economy meaning organisations and companies provided for less staff Professional Development. We have 12 Facilitators trained and ready to provide these Workshops (from 2 hours to 2 days) and are keen to hear from anyone who thinks a Workshop tailored for their group / organisation / workplace / worship centre would be a great idea - especially after having completed the Religious Literacy Survey. There are a range of costs (and some funds to subsidise Community Workshops) See <https://rdc.org.nz/professional-development-in-religious-diversity/> and <https://rdc.org.nz/community-diversity-workshops/> for further information. To begin the conversation and get us planning this, contact us at admin@rdc.org.nz and let us know what you are wanting.

Yr 12 Leadership Diversity Days have continued in Auckland post covid. We invite up to 10 secondary schools to select 10 x Year 12 students who will be school leaders in following year (year 13) and to bring them (with a teacher) to the Marae at either Unitec or Manukau Institutes of Technology. This full day has them mostly in small groups looking at Diversity, Leadership, Religious perspectives. They are very interactive days with lots of energy and provide some insight of (and for) the next generation of leaders.



Perhaps you know a Yr 12 teacher who might be interested in this event ?

Check out more information at

<https://rdc.org.nz/leadership-diversity-days/>

And have them contact admin@rdc.org.nz

If you are Auckland based and have a few hours to spare on August 19th & 20th come and join us on the ground, on the day. We are in need of up to 5 volunteer helpers for each of the days. If this sounds like you, please let us know at admin@rdc.org.nz

Over the past two years our **income** has dropped considerably and we have constantly had less monthly income than our monthly expenses. We have become very lean and conscious of all costs. We have decided to try and make all events cost-neutral but some, like the Religious Leaders Forum, do not have any income to off-set the costs (yet are essential to provide).

If you know any Trusts or individuals who might support our endeavours with donations and / or ongoing contributions please pass on the details to fundraiser@rdc.org.nz

If you are able to make a one-off or a monthly contribution to enable us to not just continue what we are currently doing but to be even more engaged in the communities in Aotearoa New Zealand check out the details around giving at <https://rdc.org.nz/donations/>

If you would like to discuss your giving / donating options please contact treasurer@rdc.org.nz to begin a conversation.

If you would like to make a donation please deposit this into our Kiwi Bank account : The Religious Diversity Centre in Aotearoa New Zealand Trust (or RDC) **38-9017-0433364-00**

Please include your name and initials on the deposit, and let us know your residential and email address (treasurer@rdc.org.nz) As the religious Diversity Centre is a registered Trust within New Zealand, on all donations from \$5 upwards you can claim a tax rebate.

End of tax year receipts will be issued during the month of April.

You may also like to consider listing the RDC as a preferred Charity when you claim your tax rebates on Charitable Donations. There is a space on the IRD Form to write details of charities you would like your rebate to go directly to (instead of your own Bank account) :

The Religious Diversity Centre in Aotearoa New Zealand Trust CC 52791
Kiwibank 38-9017-0433364-00

Please feel free to forward this Newsletter to others who you think might be interested.

If you have received this newsletter from a friend or colleague please complete the form on the web page at <https://rdc.org.nz/donations/> so we can add you to our data base.

“Na, tenei te mau nei te whakapono, te tumanako, me te aroha, enei e toru; ko te mea nui rawa hoki o enei ko te aroha” 1 Koriniti 13:13

“And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love”