

In this issue:

1. Chairperson's Editorial
2. Interfaith Studies
3. Review of Events 2010
4. Kristallnacht Commemoration 2010
5. 2010 ICCJ Conference Istanbul

Chairperson's Editorial

Old and New

In an old nineteenth-century English folk song the idiom 'off with the old and on with the new' appears. It is a fitting phrase for me to let you all know that I am resigning as your Chairperson after sixteen years. If I counted the three years it took to get the Council of Christians and Jews, Western Australia Inc. going, then I have been involved in the leadership of this organisation for nearly twenty years. That is long enough.

I want to say more about these years, and the future of the Council as I see it, at my last address at the Annual General Meeting next month. We have done much in that time, not least of which is surviving and thriving. There is also much more to be done in the next period of the Council's life. This will, I trust, occur under the leadership of Father Charles Waddell, whom I have nominated to succeed me — if he accepts and you elect him.

But now I want to say to you all, our members, a big 'Thank you' for your support over this decade and a half. When I began to consider the possibility of a Council of Christians and Jews in Western Australia in 1993, I wanted to establish something that had grass-roots support from both Jews and Christians. I knew that voluntary organisations were beginning to struggle in our culture, as the tradition of unpaid service to community organisations begins to dwindle among the coming generations. Also, religious communities are themselves growing smaller and more inward-looking. I knew also that the Jewish community was not large in Perth; but neither was it in Edinburgh where I had come from and where the Council thrived with strong support from local Jews. So beginning the Council was a gamble; but it has paid off.

Over the years since 1995 you have kept the Council going, many of you no longer quite so young (like your Chairperson).

Where you could not come to events you have kept up your subscriptions to provide the financial base for our on-going work.

You have also been encouraging rather than carping, of your Executive Committee, and so we have got to 2011 still in existence.

I do hope you will come to the AGM, to meet your new Chairperson and the members of the new Executive Committee; and to hear the last words from me about where we have gone and where we might still need to go. In a world where religion is too often associated with militancy and fanaticism and destruction, Councils like ours offer an indication that religious faith is about life not death; hope not despair; and dialogue not diatribes.

I wish you all well and the Lord be with each one of you.

*Reverend Associate Professor Rowan Strong,
Chairperson*

Interfaith Studies

The Woolf Institute, Cambridge, is one of the world's leading institutes in the study and teaching of all aspects of the encounter between Christians and Jews, and Muslims and Jews, throughout the ages. Comprising two centres, the Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations (CJCR) and the Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish relations (CMJR), the institute offers a wide range of courses which includes a Cambridge University Masters Degree, and e-learning courses, as well as individually tailored programmes for faith groups and public sector workers.

The e-learning approach gives participants the freedom to study whenever they want from anywhere in the world, but with the knowledge that Woolf Institute tutors will be there to support them throughout their studies.

The courses will appeal to those interested in history as well as in how faith is impacting on society today, particularly people working in, and with, faith communities.

For more information, please log on to www.woolf.cam.ac.uk.

Review of Events 2010

AGM, Tuesday 16 February

The meeting was held in the Applecross Anglican Parish Centre, in Ardross. The Reverend Associate Professor Rowan Strong, as Chairperson, delivered a profoundly moving annual report, which comprised a reflection on his involvement with CCJWA over the past twenty years, focusing, in particular, on the Council's purpose and achievements. In his concluding remarks, he urged Jews and Christians alike to support the Council's interfaith activities, saying: "We cannot afford for this work to falter here in Western Australia. Complacency is always the friend of evil, and the good God we serve demands more of us." (The report is published in full on the CCJWA website.)

The guest speaker for the occasion, CCJWA Secretary Dr Mary Marshall, gave an illustrated address on "Highlights from the Annual Conference of the ICCJ, Berlin, July 2009", providing details of the plenary sessions and workshops, and of the outings, which included a boat cruise on the River Spree, and visits to the Holocaust Memorial and Jewish Museum. She observed that a recurring theme of the conference was that ideally, Jews and Christians must work together as allies, towards justice and peace, and also stressed the importance of employing sound scholarship in the interpretation of Scripture. In closing, she echoed Rowan Strong's call for commitment to the Council's work, encouraging the audience to "Think globally, and act locally".



View of Bundestag (Parliament) from the Holocaust Memorial, Berlin



"Garden of Exile" at the Jewish Museum

Seminar: "Authority of Scripture", Thursday 27 May



Rabbi Marcus Solomon

Following the popularity of the "God Talk" seminar held in September 2009, the Executive decided to follow up with a panel discussion on "The Authority of Scripture". This event, held in the Temple David Social Hall, attracted some 80 members and visitors. Members of the panel were Rabbi Marcus Solomon (Honorary Senior Rabbi of the Beit Midrash of WA Inc.), Kenneth Arkwright OAM (Progressive Judaism, Temple David Congregation Inc.), The Right Reverend Dr Anthony Nichols (Honorary Lecturer, Trinity Theological College, Perth, and two Indonesian Colleges), and The Reverend Professor William Loader FAHA (Australian Research Council Professorial Fellow at Murdoch University and Minister in the Uniting Church in Australia).



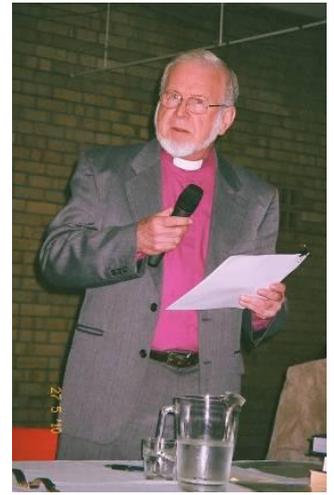
Mr Kenneth Arkwright OAM



Professor William Loader

These represented, respectively, four different faith positions, known as 'orthodox' and 'progressive' Judaism, on the one hand, and 'evangelical' and 'academic' Christianity, on the other.

Each speaker was given 15 minutes initially to expound his position regarding the authority of Scripture. Following a break for refreshments, panel members responded with erudition and goodwill, to the many questions from the audience. It was noteworthy that despite the different faith perspectives of the presenters, harmony and respect were maintained throughout the evening. The success of this event was such that another seminar with a theological focus is planned for this year.



Right Revd Dr Tony Nichols

(A full report on the occasion is published on the CCJWA website, together with copies of the papers presented by Bishop Nichols and Professor Loader.)

Lecture by Simon Blond, Tuesday 17 August

The guest speaker for the third event of the year, held at St Peter's and Emmaus Church in Joondanna, was Simon Blond, Lecturer in Art History and Theory at Curtin University. After an introduction by Executive member Reverend Dr Charles Waddell, Mr Blond led CCJWA members and guests through a detailed exposition of the relevant works of Marc Chagall (1887–1985) and Anselm Kiefer (1945–), focusing on the artists' use of spiritual icons extrinsic to their own faith traditions. Chagall, though Jewish, used the image of the crucifixion throughout his career, while Kiefer, originally from a Christian background, has utilised iconography deriving from Jewish Kabbalah. Following the presentation, the many questions from the audience were an indication of the thought-provoking nature of the subject, and the depth of feelings which had been evoked. The evening concluded with refreshments, and an opportunity for attendees to converse further with Mr Blond on this most interesting topic.



(A detailed report of the occasion is available on the CCJWA website.)

Commemoration of Kristallnacht, 2010



The remembrance of Kristallnacht, or 'Night of Broken Glass' — the beginning of escalating pogroms and persecution that would become the *Shoah* — was held on Tuesday, 9 November at 4.00 pm in the Perth Hebrew Congregation synagogue. The annual commemoration is an important occasion for bringing to the forefront of our minds the devastation wrought by intolerance of faith differences. Working by means of education and dialogue to prevent a similar recurrence, is the fundamental task of CCJWA.

Over a hundred persons, Jews and Christians from various Perth communities, gathered to prayerfully remember the destruction of life in all of its proportions, in its depth, magnitude, and reverberations. The MC for

the occasion was The Right Reverend Kay Goldsworthy (representing The Most Reverend Roger Herft, the Anglican Archbishop of Perth).

Following her introductory remarks, Rabbi Dovid Freilich OAM, Rabbi of Perth Hebrew Congregation, welcomed everyone to the synagogue. In recalling the horror of the *Shoah*, he spoke of the feelings which re-emerged in 2004 when Perth Synagogue was defaced by slogans expressing intolerance. This resulted, in 2006, in the addition of a rather forbidding fence surrounding the synagogue, representing a sad reminder of the past.

Rabbi Freilich continued with the story from the Holocaust, of a Polish Jewish family who asked a gentile Catholic family, whom they trusted, to take care of their son. In the event that the parents did not return from Auschwitz, the Catholic family were provided with letters, and instructions to send the boy to Canada or USA where he could meet up with Jewish relatives.

The family raised the child, but after the war took him to a Catholic priest to be baptised. When the priest enquired why they had left this so late, they explained the situation. The priest refused baptism and instructed the family to honour the boy's parents' wishes. The young man was then taken to America where he became an observant Jew. The priest in this story was to become Pope John Paul II.



Choristers from Trinity College, conducted by Robert Braham and accompanied by Athena Litis, then offered a moving rendition of an excerpt from *The Lamentation* (arranged by Milner-White; music by Edward Bairstow), in which Jeremiah laments his people's humiliation, and his own isolation, persecution and affliction.

The guest speaker for the commemoration was Fr Stephen Astill SJ, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Medicine at Notre Dame University, and Parish Priest of the Immaculate Conception Church in East Fremantle. Acknowledging that he was moved by Rabbi Freilich's story, Reverend

Astill began with a contrast. In this story, an eagle chick raised among chickens, upon seeing an eagle soaring overhead expressed to the other chickens that he, too, could fly like this bird overhead. The chickens put him straight, saying, 'we are chickens and chickens do not soar'. The eagle chick, nevertheless, felt himself to be an intrinsically soaring creature, and did not give up his felt affinity with the soaring eagle. The young man being allowed to follow his tradition illustrates liberation; the eagle suffering others' misapprehension as to its true character — analogous to the human spirit denied its authentic expression — illustrates oppression.

Continuing, Fr Astill reflected that the *circumstance* of suffering moves us to turn to a particular aspect of God. When suffering is principally on a physical plane such as injury or illness, seeking a practical solution, we appeal to God who is the source of scientific knowledge. But when suffering occupies the psychic, spiritual, and affective dimensions of our person, we call to see God's 'face' as Job (and Jesus) did from an experience of abandonment. In this realm where no relief is to be found, we, as one human family, are obliged to listen to the voice of the sufferer and accompany them as God accompanies us.

Following the address, Mr and Mrs Kenneth Arkwright, representing the Jewish community, lit six candles while the names of some death camps and ghettos were spoken. Two further candles were lit by the Reverend Ken Williams, Moderator of the Uniting Church in Western Australia, in honour of righteous Gentiles who helped their Jewish brothers and sisters in their hour of darkness, and those many others, of so many nations, who died for being different in a time of madness and of terror.



Meanwhile, the Reverend Marie Wilson read the poem "For the Rescuers" by Gwyneth Lewis.

Two minutes of prayerful silence were observed, and brought to a close by the sound of breaking glass. Then all present recalled in unison the events which characterised that night. This was followed by a prayer led by The Reverend Dr Charles Waddell, incorporating these words, asking God to shatter any hardness in our hearts, through meditating on the events that occurred. Those gathered replied by reciting: "I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining; I believe in love, even when feeling it not; I believe in God, even when God is silent."

A candle was brought forward and lit, symbolising hope in future harmony and liberation, light to overcome the darkness of war and hatred, and the goal of preventing another Shoah. All responded with the affirmation "Let the light of peace shine in our world," and offered a reconciliatory greeting of 'Shalom' to those close by. After this, Dr Mary Marshall read the inspiring "Merger Poem," by Judy Chicago, powerful in its rhythmic use of "And then ..." beginning each line in a progression of hoping toward compassion, freedom, and Eden.

Reverend Charles concluded the formal proceedings with an expression of thanks, and Rabbi Dovid Freilich invited all to stay for kosher refreshments, provided by Perth Hebrew Congregation, and further offered a guided tour of the synagogue. The lyrics of the final item, the hymn "Let There Be Peace on Earth" (Sy Miller) appropriately mirrored the sense of harmony and commitment among those gathered. It was sung beautifully by the Trinity College choristers, with the congregation invited to join in a reprise. Many stayed on afterwards to participate in the refreshments and the tour, reflecting an interest and sharing in the unique faith expression of our neighbour.

Judith Schneider
Committee Member, CCJWA

ICCJ Annual Conference, 20–23 June 2010

The 2010 conference of the International Council of Christians and Jews was held in Istanbul, that uniquely situated city which bridges two continents, and links East with West. The focus was very deliberately extended to include relationships between all three monotheistic faiths, and while this had been done previously, it was the first time that the conference had been held in a predominantly Muslim country. The theme, deriving from the Quran, was "So that you may know one another" (Sura 49:13). Constantly overshadowing the meeting was the fallout from the "flotilla" incident that had occurred three weeks before, souring relationships between Turkey and Israel.

The tensions were such that organisers had considered cancelling the conference, but fortunately decided it should go ahead. The venue was the luxurious Kalyon Hotel, overlooking the Sea of Marmara, and within easy walking distance of the historic section of the city, and its major tourist attractions.

The program commenced with a dinner, then the opening session, which featured addresses by eminent clergy and ICCJ President Dr Deborah Weissman, and was followed by a reception. Each of the next three mornings started with Jewish and Christian prayers (in separate rooms), followed by breakfast, and then a plenary session which began with a Meditative Moment, led in turn by a Christian, a Jew and a Muslim. Keynote lectures on the three days were given by speakers from each of the three faiths, with representatives of the other two then providing a response, before a time for discussion. The keynote speakers were Professor Susannah Heschel, His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, and Imam Dr Abdul Malik Mujahid. These lectures, together with Dr Weissman's opening address, are available online at <http://www.iccj.org/en/index.php?item=550> and are recommended reading.

The workshop I selected on the Monday morning was on "Women's Issues", with a focus on "Contemporary women confronting patriarchal traditions". This was a very animated session, overwhelmingly attended by women, but with two courageous gentlemen present. One important "take home message" for me was a statement by Muslim presenter Dr Mona Siddiqui: "Never underestimate the impact of what you say." I was very impressed by Mona, who was the first female, non-Christian, non-white staff member at the University of Glasgow.

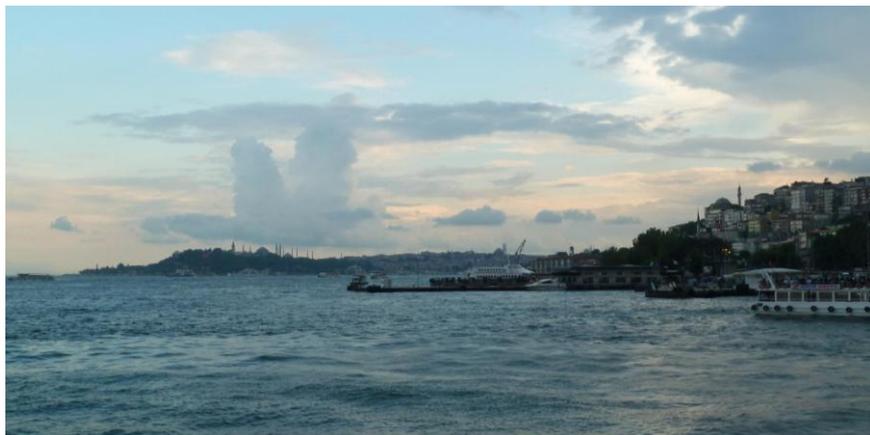
In the afternoon, we walked to the tourist precinct for a guided tour of the Topkapi Museum. This was an amazing experience, with our guide providing a very thorough overview of the historic background to the huge complex, as well as commenting on matters pertaining to the Muslim faith. For photographers, a highlight of the tour was the panoramic view of the Golden Horn. That evening there was an opportunity to view the poignant documentary *Desperate Hours*, which reveals Turkey's little known role in rescuing Jews during the Holocaust.

My choice of workshop on Tuesday was "Scriptural Reasoning: Holy Scriptures as a way to find the Other". This was led by four women who are part of an SR group in London. The session commenced with a brief explanation from the group Moderator about the method used for such study, before the examination of three texts, one from each faith, following introductory commentaries from the presenters. In view of the conference theme, the Muslim text selected was Sura 49:8–13, while the Christian text was Matt 5:38–48, and the Old Testament portion was Gen 1:27–28.

Each of the texts proved surprisingly controversial, and discussion was, at times, tense. This prompted one of the presenters to speak of the genesis of their female SR group, with the observation that male clerics tend to impose a view of the text, whereas conversation among women can go in a different direction. A useful resource on SR is www.scripturalreasoning.org.

In the afternoon we travelled by bus to the Roman Catholic Saint Esprit Cathedral for a presentation by Bishop Palâtre on the history and actual situation of Christian communities in Istanbul and Turkey, followed by a brilliant recital by the organist and an alto soloist. From there we were bussed to the very interesting Jewish Museum, and finally to Ortaköy Synagogue where we were invited to attend the evening service, and a lively performance by a male choir. After this we were given a sumptuous meal in the synagogue complex, which is a huge and amazing place with (necessarily) extremely tight security.

On Wednesday morning, instead of workshops, there was a choice of panel discussions, the first on "Turkey and Europe", the other on "Religion and State: The Turkish experiment, freedom or failure?" I chose the latter, which turned out to be an extraordinary experience. Organisers had faced great difficulty in obtaining the two Turkish presenters required for the panel, and then had been informed that morning that one of these had suddenly become ill the evening before. As a result, the format was changed, and the session consisted primarily of a very disturbing presentation by the other Turkish panelist. It became evident that the government exercises considerable control over religious communities, and this was confirmed during the discussion which followed. The session



Commencement of the boat cruise on the Bosphorus at the conclusion of the ICCJ conference

ended with a solemn warning by the Moderator about worldwide threats to religious freedom.

The conference concluded that evening with a marvellous boat cruise and dinner on the Bosphorus — a memorable finish to a great meeting. This year's conference will take place in Krakow, Poland, 3–6 July.

Mary J. Marshall
Honorary Secretary, CCJWA

The CCJWA newsletter is published annually by the Executive Committee and is available online. While it is distributed primarily to members, it is hoped that it will attract a wider readership and stimulate interest in the Council's objectives and activities. Applications for membership are welcomed, and the membership form may be downloaded from the website, or obtained by contacting the Honorary Secretary by post or email.

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