



#### In this issue:

1. Chairman's Editorial
2. Book Report: "The Dignity of Difference" by J Sacks
3. Kristallnacht Memorial Service and Postscript
4. News – Home and Abroad
5. 2007 Program

### Chairman's Editorial

The newsletter you are now reading is an indication of the renewal of energy and purpose in your Council. Thanks to new members on the Executive and increased numbers of you, the members, attending our events, our message of interfaith dialogue and understanding is reaching more people than ever. So we have had a year in which a variety of events has brought a sense of renewal to the Council. Possibly our most important initiative was to ask the Orthodox community in Noranda to host our evening on the topic of Israel. This they did willingly and hospitably, and we are very grateful for their very positive response. Not only did it enable us to tackle one of the most important and difficult issues in Jewish-Christian dialogue, the nature and purpose of the State of Israel, it also saw a return of significant Jewish numbers to our work.

This involvement of Jews in the events and work of the Council is, of course, absolutely fundamental to our purposes. The Council exists to serve both Jewish and Christian communities, by bringing them together in the work of mutual understanding and appreciation of one another. We do seem to be achieving some more success in this over the past year. It has also been reflected in the greater numbers of Jews attending our Kristallnacht memorial services, both last year and this one.

However, it is still a worrying and significant omission that we have just one Jew on our Executive Council, and have had no one from the Orthodox community since the retirement of Norm Hoffman some years ago. So I would ask you, our members, particularly our Jewish members, to give this omission serious consideration in the hope that we may rectify this imbalance in our Council at the next Annual General Meeting early in the new (Christian) year.

It would not be a helpful outcome if the Executive Council of the Council of Christians and Jews were, on its Executive, to be the Council of Christians only!

Nevertheless, this has been an encouraging year and not least because of the ongoing commitment of you, our members, to maintain the reality of a genuine conversation and appreciative encounter between Christians and Jews here in Western Australia in a world where suspicion, if not hatred, is more often found between people of different faiths.

Shalom/peace to you all this Hanukkah and Christmas.

*Rowan Strong, Chairperson*

### Book Report: "The Dignity of Difference – How to avoid the clash of civilizations" by Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

This book provided the material for a study held over three Tuesdays in August 2006 at the Como Uniting Church. Twelve members of the CCJWA attended one or more of the studies. The studies were led by the Revd. Dr. Rowan Strong. Dr Strong chose three chapters of the book for particular attention.

The theme was particularly apt, with current world events increasing tension between many adherents of the three monotheistic faiths whose roots spring from the patriarch, Abraham. The first two studies were based on material in earlier chapters, with the final study concentrating on the last Chapter "A Covenant of Hope". This was a beginning step in promoting deeper dialogue of the differences between the faiths and those world issues which are currently affecting our lives.

The book was written as a response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. During a visit to Ground Zero by a diverse group of world religious leaders during the January 2002 World Economic Forum, Sacks looked around at his fellow participants and found himself "wondering at the contrast between the religious fervour of the hijackers and the no less intense longing for peace among the religious leaders who were there."

In his book review, Rabbi Charles L. Arian of the Institute of Christian and Jewish Studies, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, reports that:

“While virtually all religions hold peace as a value, Sacks notes that religion is just as often a source of conflict as it is of peace. This is because, Sacks says, most religious leaders speak more or less in these terms: ‘Our faith speaks of peace; our holy texts praise peace; therefore, if only the world shared our faith and our texts there would be peace.’ But that path does not necessarily lead to peace; ‘peace means living with those who have a different faith and other texts.’ ”

Sacks is of the opinion that to believe in one truth about the essentials of the human condition and that it holds true for all people at all times causes us to take a superior position: “If I am right, you are wrong. If what I believe is the truth, then your belief, which differs from mine, must be an error from which you must be converted, cured and saved. From this flowed some of the greatest crimes of history.”

Rabbi Arian comments, “Sacks goes further than many other Orthodox rabbis in affirming the validity of other faiths: ‘God has spoken to mankind in many languages, through Judaism to the Jews, through Christianity to Christians, Islam to Muslims...no one creed has a monopoly on spiritual truth.’ ” He observes Sacks’s call for more than just toleration, i.e. acknowledging others’ right to hold beliefs different from our own, even though we might consider them wrong. Rather, he would encourage us to celebrate our diversity, the ‘dignity of difference’. In reference to Sack’s reasoning that diversity within nature indicates divine sanction of religious diversity, Rabbi Arian quotes his statement: “God no more wants all faiths and cultures to be the same than a loving parent wants his or her children to be the same...we serve God, author of diversity, by respecting diversity.”

However, Rabbi Arian counters Sacks’s argument by saying that “the mere fact something exists (in this case, diversity) is not therefore proof that God desires its existence unless one wishes to argue that a whole host of social evils also represent the will of God.”

He notes that, “Sacks has come under intense criticism for his book, particularly from more traditionalist elements within Anglo-Jewry...What raised their ire, according to reports in both secular and Jewish newspapers in Britain, were Sacks’s statements that all religions (even Judaism) contain only partial truth and that non-Jewish religions are ways in which God speaks to those who are not Jews. Subsequent to these incidents, Sacks issued a statement conceding that ‘one or two sentences might be misunderstood’ and had the book withdrawn from circulation until it could be revised. He added that the book was written for Gentile audiences and was not intended for Jews.”

Whichever side you fall, it is the reality that we live in pluralistic societies, among people of differing faiths and some with no faith at all. Even if we do not “celebrate” another’s faith, we should “celebrate” the other person, simply because each of us has intrinsic worth and value, made in the image of the Creator and beloved of God, The Lord has given unto all free will and we should respect the right and freedom of every person to choose that which they believe to be truth.

In the final paragraph of his book, Sacks alludes to the classic statement of John Donne, “No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a part of the whole; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind.”

*Contribution by Alan and Betty Matthews and edited by Shelley Rush, with additional material sourced from a review by Rabbi Charles L. Arian of the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies, Baltimore, Maryland, USA at: <http://www.icjs.org/info/dignity.html>*

## **Kristallnacht**

As the flames of the candles flickered in the yellow glow of the stained-glass windows, we remembered those whose lives were extinguished amid the shattering glass and flames of Kristallnacht, as well as those who subsequently lost their lives in the resulting tragedy of the Shoah or Holocaust.

Kristallnacht or “night of broken glass,” is commemorated on 9 November each year and is the signal event of the beginning of the Shoah. Kristallnacht began on the evening of 9 November 1938 when the German Government unleashed a pogrom against the Jews, burning down synagogues and smashing the glass fronts of Jewish shops in Berlin and all large cities in Germany and Austria. The pogrom was allegedly in retaliation for the assassination of a German diplomat at the German Embassy in Paris, by a 17-year old Jewish youth, Herschel Grynszpan.

The moving ceremony held at Temple David, Mt Lawley on the afternoon of Sunday, 12 November was an initiative of the Council of Christians and Jews WA Inc. (CCJWA). The ceremony was well attended with some members of the Jewish community vividly remembering their own experiences and those of their parents during this horrific time. As one elderly Jewish lady said, “It is my duty to be here today.”

The address was given by the Hon. David K. Malcolm QC AC, Professor of Law at Notre Dame University and Lt-Governor of Western Australia, with readings by Council members of CCJWA.

The beautiful and reflective musical interludes were sung by Ken and Judith Arkwright, accompanied by organist, Elizabeth Pascoe.

In his address, Professor Malcolm provided the background to Kristallnacht, the importance of which, in the history of the Shoah, is often misunderstood. He outlined the political climate of the time, the events that triggered Kristallnacht, the atrocities perpetrated during the three days and nights it continued (it officially came to an end on 11 November 1938, although attacks still continued) and how anti-Semitism morphed from economic, political and social persecution into outright genocide.



Candles were lit representing the six million Jewish people who lost their lives in the Shoah, one million of them being children, and countless others; those righteous Gentiles who stood against the events that were taking place and those who were “just different”.

During the service, the Christians present prayed for forgiveness on behalf of all Christians for those actions which contributed to the persecution of the Jewish people. Prayers of hope were offered for reconciliation and also for the renewal of the Jewish people’s trust in the love of their Christian brethren and for Christians everywhere to be faithful to that love.



In closing his address, Professor Malcolm reaffirmed his view that freedom of religion is one of the fundamental freedoms which entitles Australians to call our society a free society and that statutes are not intended to affect this freedom. He commented that, “...the law, after uncertain beginnings, now provides a reasonable basis for the achievement of religious tolerance. Religious freedom is regarded as an inherent right of the individual which includes, not only the ‘right to believe’, but also, subject to the general law, the ‘right to act’. However, though the law can educate and enforce, true religious tolerance resides in the hearts and minds of individuals.”

*Shelley Rush*

*A copy of Professor Malcolm’s full address can be accessed on the CCJWA website: [www.ccjwa.org](http://www.ccjwa.org)*

## **Kristallnacht Postscript**

During Professor Malcolm’s address, he referred to the waves of terrorism perpetrated by the various German security units, including the SS, on the night of 10 November 1938. This recalled to my mind an experience I had during my early teenage years.

I was raised by my grandmother in Mandurah where we had quite a large residential property with a very unruly garden. During our time there, a German family came to live next door consisting of father, mother and one daughter. I became the only friend of the daughter as she, herself, was mercilessly persecuted at school and often called, “The Nazi.” Her father, a quiet and seemingly gentle man, used to assist my grandmother with her gardening free of charge. As time went on, to our shock and dismay, we found out that our kindly neighbour had actually been a member of the SS.

One afternoon, after having finished in my grandmother’s garden, our German neighbour was sharing a cup of tea with my grandmother and me. All of a sudden, my grandmother asked, “Why did you do what you did to all those people?” Her question was so unexpected that I almost choked on my tea. However, quite composed, he answered, “If we had not cooperated with the authorities, we would have also been killed.”

I was quite familiar with the events of the Holocaust, even then. Although our family was not at all spiritual, my grandmother often talked about subjects which were taboo, including the subject of death. We even had a book about death, macabre though it sounds, one of the chapters being wholly devoted to the Holocaust. My grandmother, a very pragmatic woman, believed that death was not to be feared, but viewed as an integral part of life.

After mulling over our neighbour’s response, I remember going to my grandmother and discussing my thoughts with her. Even at that tender age, although I believed what our neighbour had said to be true, I had arrived at the conclusion that ultimately everyone is responsible for his / her own actions. One should do right, because it is right, regardless of the consequences.

Now, many years later and having become a practising Christian, I still hold to this position. Needless to say, I have had many opportunities to test my convictions; opportunities where I have had to do the right thing even when the right thing did not happen to me –



of course, not unto death. I have since read many accounts of Christians, like Corrie ten Boom and her family, who at great cost to themselves saved approximately 800 Jewish souls. In fact, Corrie and many of her family were incarcerated and consequently deported to the death camps in which several of her family members died.

The remarks of Corrie's father remain indelibly imprinted in my mind. When someone refused to harbour a Jewish child for fear of losing their life, he took the child in his arms and said, "You say we could lose our lives for this child. I would consider that the greatest honour that could come to my family." And when caught for stealing food coupons to feed the Jewish people hidden in his home, he exclaimed to a Gestapo officer "If I go home today, tomorrow I will open my door again to any man in need who knocks."

This is the sort of Christian I aspire to be and say "Amen" to that which we all committed ourselves during the Kristallnacht service... "We pray that we too burn with commitment to ensure that this may never happen again and that we too are pillaged of false pride and nameless fear, so that we might stand up for our neighbour."

It takes more than just mere tolerance, it also requires us to take a stand when we see the rights of others, even those of our own, infringed upon. It requires that we make a choice, perhaps far in advance of ever having to act on that choice.

*Shelley Rush*

## **News – Home and Abroad**

*News articles by courtesy of Bridges for Peace, Jerusalem*  
[www.bridgesforpeace.com](http://www.bridgesforpeace.com)

### **Anti-Semitic hate wave across Britain and Australia**

The month of July was one of the worst, in terms of anti-Semitism, in both England and Australia – in Canada as well – and Jewish leaders are concerned.

TheAge.com in Australia reports that anti-Semitism is on the rise across university campuses in the country. Grahame Leonard, the president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, says July had the most anti-Semitic incidents – no fewer than 141 – since records began in 1945. Never before had there been more than 90. The July attacks included phone calls, hate e-mails and graffiti, as well as violent incidents – with the big jump being on campuses in Victoria.

Recent incidents include:

- An enraged Monash University lecturer gushed expletives upon a representative of the Australasian Union of Jewish Students for his pro-Israel stance.

- Jewish students were pushed to the ground and spat upon in Sydney.

- A Young Liberal member in Monash, staffing an Israel stall, was grabbed by the throat and threatened, and the table was kicked over.

- Israel's Ambassador to Australia recently visited Melbourne University, but Socialist Alternative members disrupted the meeting and were asked to leave by, of all people, the Lebanese Students' Society.

- Also at Melbourne University, security staff intervened to keep apart left-wing students and another group of students waving Israeli flags.

"There's a real feeling of threat," Deon Kamien, Victorian president of the Union of Jewish Students, was quoted as saying. "It's not something I can put in words. A lot of students who would feel very comfortable wearing a kippah or T-shirt with Hebrew words on it now feel they are being targeted as Jews – not supporters of Israel, but Jews."

In Britain, as well, The Times of London reports that attacks on Jews have soared, and that even the national government has taken notice. On Thursday [7 September], an all-party parliamentary inquiry will state that anti-Semitic violence has become endemic in Britain, both on the streets and university campuses. The report will call for urgent action from the government, the police, and educational establishments.

The Times attributes the hate wave to the war in Lebanon. "Synagogues have been daubed with graffiti," the paper writes, "Jewish leaders have had hate-mail, and ordinary people have been subjected to insults and vandalism."

Mark Gardner, of the Community Security Trust, said, "In July, when the conflict in Lebanon began, we received reports of 92 incidents, which was the third-worst month since records began in 1984." In 2000, the monthly average was between 10 and 30 incidents. He said the July incidents were "more dispersed than usual" and "were very widespread across the country."

There have been several attacks in various Jewish neighborhoods in London of late. Last month, a Jewish restaurant in Golders Green was targeted by two young men who threw chairs, punched workers, and threatened to kill the owner, Ruth Cohen, with a knife. In Hampstead Garden, swastikas and the words "Allah" and "Kill all Jews" were daubed on the house and car of a local Jewish doctor.

*Arutz Sheva, 6 September 2006*

## **Archbishop and Rabbis sign historic agreement**

Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams and the Chief Rabbis of Israel, Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar and Chief Rabbi Yonah Metzger [on 5 September 2006] signed a joint declaration in London, which sets out a framework for continuing dialogue between them.

According to the Anglican Communion News Service [ACNS], Dr Williams described the agreement as historic, quoting him as saying, “This is a most significant step in developing better mutual understanding and trust between the Anglican Communion and the Chief Rabbinate and worldwide Judaism.”

The Archbishop was supported in the meeting by the Coadjutor Bishop in Jerusalem, The Rt Revd Suheil Dawani, and by Bishops Michael Jackson and John Stroyan.

The Chief Rabbis were supported by Rabbi David Rosen and by the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations, Sir Jonathan Sacks. The Archbishop paid tribute to Sir Jonathan and to Bishop Suheil for their constructive roles in the discussions leading to this meeting.

The ACNS story went on to say, “The agreement adds to the growing network of bilateral and multilateral dialogues between religious leaders in the Middle East and in the wider world. This network of dialogue is a major contribution to a world in which religious faith is an increasingly important dimension of people’s lives and of national policies.

At a reception to witness the signing of the joint declaration, attended by 70 leaders of the Jewish and Christian communities of England, the guests heard a presentation by the Chief Executive of the Council of Christians and Jews and by the Director of the Center for the Study of Jewish Christian Relations. The presentations illustrated the range of new initiatives taken by these two complementary organizations to take forward relationships between Christian and Jewish communities in England.”

Dr Williams said that the agreement would help to advance interfaith relations:

“This is a potentially fruitful development for relations between Christians and Jews in general and for the peoples of the Holy Land in particular.

What we’ve agreed today will provide a framework within which both practical and sometimes challenging issues can be discussed on the basis of mutual trust and respect.”

The Archbishop and the Chief Rabbis also agreed on the need for a renewed sense of urgency in the search for long-term peace, justice, and security in the Middle East in general, and in Israel and the Palestinian territories in particular. The Archbishop and Chief Rabbis called for the greatest possible response to the need now for reconstruction and rebuilding both of the physical infrastructure and of the emotional and psychological relations of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim believers in the region. Dr Williams said that the dialogue would make trust and cooperation easier to establish:

“We have acknowledged the tensions that shadow the present situation, particularly the ongoing tragic conflicts in the Holy Land. But our hope has rested very firmly on this – that without friendship and mutual confidence, without the ability to speak to one another candidly and lovingly, we shall never be in a position where our relationship can change things and challenge things and move the situation forward.”

The Chief Rabbis emphasized the responsibility of religious leaders to do their utmost to ensure that religion is not abused for violent ends.

*Dan Wooding, ASSIST Ministries, 5 September 2006*

## **US Holocaust museum exhibit to open in Germany**

An exhibit on the Nazi policies of racial purity that led to the Holocaust seems eerily at home in the long, high-ceilinged rooms of the 1930s-era German Hygiene Museum.

After all, many of the swastika-stamped posters trumpeting Nazi theories – collected by curator Susan Bachrach and displayed in the exhibit “Deadly Medicine” – were produced at the Dresden museum after it fell under Nazi control in 1933.

This direct link to the museum's role in promoting mass sterilizations and bans on what were considered interracial marriages helped museum director, Klaus Vogel, convince the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum to let the show – which attracted 700,000 visitors during its run in the Washington-based US museum – open Thursday [12 October 2006] and run until June 2007.

“This close relationship to the topic made it almost a requirement to bring the exhibit here,” Vogel told reporters last week. “It is a very unique opportunity.”

It is the first time in the 13-year history of the US Holocaust Museum that an exhibit has traveled abroad. “This is the perfect place,” curator Bachrach said last week.

Vogel sees more than history as pertinent in bringing the exhibit here. The present political situation gives it relevance in the eastern German state of Saxony, where a far-right party holds seats in the regional legislature. The National Democratic Party, known by its German initials NPD, also won seats last month in another East German region, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

“Such an opportunity to explain to young people the meaning of racial hatred – then and today – must not be missed,” Vogel said.

Upon entering, visitors are greeted by “The Glass Man,” a figure whose bones, veins and organs are visible through the clear plastic of his outstretched limbs, arms, and face raised to the sky. Developed by the Hygienics Museum in the 1920s, the Nazis later used him as a symbol for their racial policies.

In the first of three sections, the exhibit shows how eugenics, which purported to improve the human species by controlling heredity, became a global movement in the scientific world, starting in 1919. The second part picks up in 1933, when the Nazis began using eugenic theories to justify forced sterilization to establish a “master race”. In it, a poster made by the Hygiene Museum for a 1934 traveling exhibit shows a man with distinctly African features and reads, “If this man had been sterilized, there would not have been born...12 hereditarily diseased,” in the poster’s clumsy English.

“The Hygiene Museum was not a criminal institute in the sense that people were killed here,” Vogel said. “But through the traveling exhibits and educational material that it mass produced in the Nazi era, it helped to shape the idea of which lives were worthy and which were worthless.”

After World War II, the museum documented health issues under the now-defunct East German regime. Since German reunification, it has redefined itself as an institute that documents different aspects of social existence.

While the “Deadly Medicine” exhibit generally mirrors the one in the US, there are a few subtle differences. One is the display of artwork by people killed under the Nazi programs aimed at eliminating the mentally handicapped. The Germans created a separate, small gallery for the pictures. “We wanted to present them like artists and give them the dignity they deserve,” said Antje Uhlig, who headed the project for the Dresden Museum.

The third section explores how the Nazis ultimately used science as a weapon not only to murder some

six million Jews in the Holocaust, but hundreds of thousands of others who died under euthanasia programs and other pseudoscientific efforts aimed at eliminating the supposedly unfit.

Bachrach said the idea behind the show was not only to understand how the Holocaust happened, but to emphasize the importance of discussions today, particularly regarding bioethics and genetics.

“Science doesn’t function in a moral vacuum,” Bachrach said. “It requires critical participation of freethinking peoples. You can’t just leave it to the experts.”

*German Hygiene Museum: <http://www.dhmd.de>*

*US Holocaust Museum: <http://www.ushmm.org>*

*Associated Press and The Jerusalem Post, 11 October 2006*

## **Program 2007**

The following is the proposed program for 2007. Further details will be provided when available. We look forward to your support and participation.

### **Annual General Meeting**

Speaker: The Most Rev. BJ Hickey,  
Catholic Archbishop  
Date: Sunday, 4 February  
Time: 3.00 pm  
Venue: The Parish Centre,  
Applecross Anglican Church,  
54 Simpson Street, Ardross  
(parking at rear)

### **International Speakers: TBA**

Date: TBA

### **Seminar: The Three Faces of Judaism – Orthodox, Conservative and Progressive**

Date: TBA

### **Book Study: TBA**

Date: August

### **Kristallnacht Memorial Service**

Date: November

The CCJWA newsletter is produced by the Executive Committee and is principally distributed to CCJWA members. Copies are also made available to congregations of the five faith communities who directly support our work. We welcome submissions, feedback and subscription requests. Contact details are provided below.

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