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Chairperson's Editorial

Difference

It was with much satisfaction that your Executive welcomed Rabbi Sheryl Nosan-Blank of Temple David Congregation to Perth, and invited her to be one of our Honorary Presidents. As some of you will know, Temple David has been without a permanent rabbi for some years now, so the arrival of Rabbi Nosan-Blank means that an important Jewish community now has, once again, their own religious leader.

However, this lack of a rabbi has not prevented Temple David being one of the strongest and most consistent supporters of the work of the Council, so that the arrival of a new rabbi among us was also greeted by your Executive with hope. Hope that her evident commitment to Jewish-Christian dialogue will prompt more of our Jewish members and friends to take a more active role in our work. For some years now it has been a standing joke among members of the Executive that we have been a Council of Christians *and a Jew*; recognising the unhappy situation that Ken Arkwright has been the only Jewish member of the Executive. We all acknowledge that, no matter how hard Ken and the rest of us Christians try, we cannot be sure of properly upholding the point of view of our Orthodox Jewish friends.

Both our religious traditions have a past and a present that is full of diversity, and even of internal contradictions, with some of our denominations having been formed in direct conflict with others, as in the case of Christian Protestants against Catholics. While this diversity has largely been viewed in our religious histories as undesirable, and a contradiction to religious claims to a single solitary truth, it could also be seen as a testament to the vitality and vibrancy of our religions, as they keep reinventing themselves in the light of old and new situations.

In that respect I believe we should welcome the arrival of Rabbi Nosan-Blank as an indicator of hope for the work of the Council. It means that the viewpoint of our supporters at Temple David can be

engaged with in greater depth as set forth by their own religious leader. It is also an encouragement to our Orthodox members and friends to revive their different engagement with the Council, so that the breadth of the traditions of Judaism as well as Christianity can continue to be a real aspect of the Council's work.

We had a strong affirmation that people do respond to religious traditions presented in their diversity and difference in our evening last year when Rabbi Freilich and Archbishop Herft spoke on the different understandings of God in their own faiths, to one of our largest audiences ever. Honestly addressing our differences, as well as celebrating our agreements, as Christians and Jews, is a vital part of the work of the Council, and a necessary contribution to the harmony of modern Australian society. With the arrival of a new religious leader among us, I hope that 2010 is one in which we will continue an engagement with the Council's events among all our diverse Jewish supporters, as well as our even more diverse Christian members.

Reverend Associate Professor Rowan Strong, Chairperson

The Holocaust Institute of WA

Tucked away in the quieter rooms of the Jewish Community Centre, The Holocaust Institute of WA is little known, but serves a very important purpose. The Institute is an educational facility set up for the purpose of teaching the truth about what happens when hatred overcomes a nation.

Groups of students visit from schools around Western Australia and are brought to an understanding of the consequence of hate and intolerance. They are shown how the Holocaust began with words of hatred which led to the murder of six million Jewish citizens of Europe.

The students are spoken to by a survivor of this terrible period. They hear first-hand an individual story, one of many. They are also encouraged to ask questions and to express their thoughts. The hope is that those who are educated will not perpetrate another Holocaust or sit idly by while one is perpetrated by others.

School groups are encouraged to attend and no fee is charged; the Institute survives on the generosity of donors and volunteers.

For more information on visits to the Institute or any other queries, please call 9376 8730 9:00am — 1:00pm, Monday to Thursday, or leave a message. We are also contactable by email on szcwa@inet.net.au.

Navit Shchigel, State Zionist Council and Holocaust Institute of Western Australia

Rabbi Sheryl Nosan-Blank, Temple David Congregation

After several years without a tenured spiritual leader, members of Temple David Congregation were delighted to welcome Rabbi Sheryl Nosan-Blank when, together with her family, she arrived in August to commence a four-year term.

She grew up, along with her three brothers, in Mount Pleasant, Michigan, in the Conservative tradition, within a small congregation of only 20 Jewish families. Having initially acquired a Degree in Psychology (University of California), she then studied for a further three years to gain Degrees of Master in Hebrew Letters and Jewish Education (Hebrew Union Colleges in Los Angeles and Jerusalem). Following an additional two years of study, Sheryl Nosan-Blank was ordained as a Rabbi in 1993 by the New York campus of the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. Prior to her appointment in Perth, she spent five years as Rabbi of Temple Or Rishon, in Orangevale, Sacramento County in California. Earlier, in 2002, she had served for a year as an associate rabbi in Sydney, thus gaining an appreciation of the Australian lifestyle. The position in Perth was attractive because it would allow her more time for involvement with her young family, as well as with the life of her congregation.

As the only female rabbi in our state, Sheryl Nosan-Blank is enthusiastic about the distinctive dimension a woman is able to bring to the role, especially in aspects of ministry to other women and to children. She has a keen sense of humour; is not afraid of standing out, regularly wearing a yarmulke — a rare practice for a woman; and she sets a high standard, asserting the importance of observing the laws of *kashrut*, though acknowledging that not all Reform Jews do this. Her attitude in this matter is clear from her comments on “A Jewish Diet”, published online on 5 February 2004: “Judaism recommends a diet high in holiness, rich in consciousness and connection, and low in selfishness. These four factors guide not only a Jewish diet, but also a Jewish life.” [JewishJournal.com]. Another noteworthy publication is her contribution about the female messenger of good tidings (*m’vaseret*) of Isaiah 40:1–26, in Rabbi Elyse Goldstein (ed.), *The Women’s Haftarah Commentary: New Insights from Women Rabbis on the 54 Weekly Haftarah Portions, the 5 Megillot and Special Shabbatot* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2004), 216–220.

Rabbi Nosan-Blank has already indicated that she is a keen proponent of interfaith dialogue, and has specifically demonstrated her commitment to the Council and its work. We are fortunate indeed to have her support, and very grateful that she chose to take up the appointment at Temple David.

Mary J. Marshall, Hon. Secretary CCJWA

Review of Events in 2009

AGM, Wednesday 29 January, Mary Lockett Hall, Christ Church, Claremont



Our Guest Speaker, CCJWA Treasurer, Ann Smith, offered a very moving presentation titled “Spiritual Experiences in Europe”, showing inspiring photographic images of sacred places she had visited, as she spoke of the profound impact they made on her. Commencing with the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Seville (left), Ann described her journey, which included places of religious and/or historical significance — synagogues, cathedrals, churches, ghettos, and memorials — in Spain, Sweden, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Hungary.

Her concluding subject, the Great Synagogue in Budapest (right), intentionally designed to blend harmoniously with the existing Christian places of worship, she found reminiscent of cathedrals in Spain. Hence, in contrast with the several places which had been painful reminders of the horrors of the Shoah, the Dohány Street Synagogue engendered hope for the future.



Cemetery Walk, Sunday 17 May, Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth

Our Vice-Chairperson, Mr Ken Arkwright OAM (on left), and our Chairperson, Reverend Associate Professor Rowan Strong (on right), conducted a very interesting and informative guided tour through Jewish and Christian sections of Karrakatta Cemetery, providing commentaries on the graves, funerary rites and customs of their respective faith traditions.



Seminar: “God Talk”, Thursday 3 September, Anglican Parish of Applecross



Rabbi Dovid Freilich (centre) and Anglican Archbishop Roger Herft (left), both Honorary Presidents of CCJWA, were Guest Speakers at a seminar titled “Exploring God in Judaism and Christianity”. The focus was on the differences in the perspective of each of their faiths, rather than the similarities, but much commonality was revealed, and Reverend Associate Professor Rowan Strong, as Chair (right), concluded the seminar by observing that: “Our God is one and expects us to celebrate life with each other, despite our differences.”

Kristallnacht Commemoration, 8 November, Sylvia and Harry Hoffman Hall



“The best Kristallnacht Service I have attended”; “What a moving experience”; “I am so glad I was able to be here today”. These were some of the comments heard after the Commemoration held at the Sylvia and Harry Hoffman Hall, Carmel School, and attended by over 100 people. After the introduction by the Reverend Associate Professor Rowan Strong, the audience were drawn in and captivated by a haunting presentation by Carmel School choristers (left), of the song “Acheinu”, arranged by Lev Tahor. We were then given a glimpse into the horrors of the Holocaust with a very moving excerpt from the personal testimony of Holocaust survivor, Fryda Grynberg (d. 2002). Georgia Denny from Presbyterian

Ladies’ College (PLC) gave an excellent rendition of “I Saw a Mountain”, adapted from the poem by Moses Schulstein.

We were very privileged to have Rabbi Sheryl Nosan-Blank (right) of Temple David Congregation Inc. give the address. She spoke from the heart and by drawing on the student performances and the excerpt from Fryda Grynberg’s testimony, gave us an insight into how many people are still affected by extreme racism today. The Rabbi then challenged us all to take action and not stand by as many did during the Holocaust.



Year 11 drama students from PLC (left), under the direction of Fiona Tholet, presented a piece of drama written by Fiona and based on words from: “A Letter by a Firefighter”, “A Personal Memoir” by Michael Bruce, “Reminiscences” by Yitzhak S. Herz, and “Speech delivered in Cologne Synagogue 9 November 1978” by Helmut Schmidt. Fiona had used these sources to create a piece of drama that

began and ended with the quote from Anne Frank: “I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are really good at heart.” The audience were mesmerised with this both excellent and sensitive dramatic production by a group of 16 year-old girls.

We were uplifted by the inclusion of prayers, the reading of Judy Chicago’s “Merger Poem”, and a candle-lighting ritual symbolising our hope “that light will overcome the darkness of war and hatred”. Carmel School students then sang “Yehi Shalom — Let There Be Peace”, arranged by Yitzchok Rosenthal. The service was concluded with those assembled turning to each other and passing the peace.

Ann Smith, Hon. Treasurer CCJWA

The Twelve Points of Berlin

The following is a summary of the document, "A Time for Recommitment: The Twelve Points of Berlin", which was endorsed by 22 member organisations (including the Australian CCJ) at the annual conference of the ICCJ, held 5–8 July 2009. For the entire document, go to http://www.iccj.org/en/pdf/BThesen_engl_kompl.pdf.

A Call To Christians and Christian Communities

We commit ourselves to the following goals and invite all Christians and Christian communities to join us in the continuing effort to remove all vestiges of contempt towards Jews and enhance bonds with the Jewish communities worldwide.

1. To combat religious, racial and all other forms of anti-Semitism;
2. To promote interreligious dialogue with Jews;
3. To develop theological understandings of Judaism that affirm its distinctive integrity;
4. To pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

A Call To Jews and Jewish Communities

We commit ourselves to the following goals and invite all Jews and Jewish communities to join us in the continuing effort to remove all vestiges of animosity and caricature toward Christians and to enhance bonds with Christian churches of the world.

5. To acknowledge the efforts of many Christian communities in the late 20th century to reform their attitudes toward Jews;
6. To re-examine Jewish texts and liturgy in the light of these Christian reforms;
7. To differentiate between fair-minded criticism of Israel and anti-Semitism;
8. To offer encouragement to the State of Israel as it works to fulfil the ideals stated in its founding documents, a task Israel shares with many nations of the world.

A Call To Both Christian and Jewish Communities and Others

We commit ourselves to the following goals and invite Jews, Christians and Muslims, together with all people of faith and goodwill, always to respect the other and to accept each other's differences and dignity.

9. To enhance interreligious and intercultural education;
10. To promote interreligious friendship and cooperation as well as social justice in the global society;
11. To enhance dialogue with political and economic bodies;
12. To network with all those whose work responds to the demands of environmental stewardship.

Israel Education Seminar, 3–13 June 2010

A 10 day tour of Israel is being organised by the Australian CCJ for adults wishing to delve into the central challenges of contemporary Israeli society. The itinerary includes Jerusalem (6 nights), Tel Aviv, Jaffa (4 nights), Nazareth and Galilee, and aims to create a better understanding of and between Christianity, Judaism and Islam, with lectures from some of Israel's most outstanding educators. The group will include Jews and Christians from Perth, Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne.

Should you wish to participate, the deadline for opting in is 14 February. For more information visit <http://www.ccjaustralia.org/en/?area=Australia> or write to the Hon. Secretary, CCJWA, PO Box 1469, Booragoon, WA, 6954.

(May 2007) onwards, including No. 79 (December 2009), logon to <http://ccjaustralia.org/en/?item=478>. Hard copies of the current issue will be available at the CCJWA Annual General Meeting to be held Tuesday 16 February 2010.

The International Council of Christians and Jews also publishes an E-Bulletin located at: <http://www.iccj.org/en/index.php?area=Bulletin>.

The CCJWA newsletter is produced by the Executive Committee and is available online. It 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.

ACCJ and ICCJ Online Publications

The newsletter *Christian and Jewish Scene*, published by the Australian Council of Christians and Jews, is now available online. For issues No. 69

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