

# Kristallnacht commemoration signifies Jewish-Christian solidarity

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By Amanda Murthy (Published by The Record)



*The “candle of hope” signifying reconciliation and peace was brought forward by Carmel Primary School pupil Dylan Rockman and Prendiville Catholic College pupil Amon Ross who symbolically carry and then light it simultaneously at the Kristallnacht proceedings on 8 November 2020. Photo: Amanda Murthy.*

The “candle of hope” signifying reconciliation and peace shone bright as some 200 guests – both Jewish and Christian – gathered on Sunday 8 November for the annual Council of Christians and Jews WA (CCJWA) commemoration of the 82nd anniversary of Kristallnacht, the “Night of Broken Glass”.

Held at Carmel Primary School in Yokine, the solemn proceedings began with a “prayer for our country”, then musical offerings including the song *Rachem*, an earnest plea to God for mercy, sung by the school’s choir, accompanied by Michele Galanti.

On the night of 9 November 1938, 91 Jews were murdered, hundreds of synagogues were burned, 7000 Jewish businesses destroyed and 30,000 Jewish men arrested – foreshadowing the mass extermination that would occur during the Holocaust (Shoah).

Excerpts from oral testimonies of two Shoah survivors, and a poem written by another while incarcerated at Terezin, were read, giving insights into the horrors the three had experienced as youngsters.

Guest speaker Professor Max Kamien MD AM, CitWA then delivered an address on the topic “Burning, Banning, Boycotting, Editing and Expurgating Books: The ever-present struggle for Freedom of Speech”.

“This talk is about banning and burning books and boycotting their authors. It is about destroying knowledge and suppressing the free communication of ideas,” he said.

“This has been a blot on nations and individuals for over 3000 years, reaching a crescendo in 19th and 20th century Germany.

“This form of censorship continues to this day, even here in Perth, for the last 120 years a paradise for its Jewish population.”

The silence of the world about Kristallnacht was followed by the death of 52 million people during World War II, of which 6 million were Jewish.

After providing a brief history of the burning of books in Australia, Prof Kamien went on to recount history that German students had travelled from all over Germany to Wartburg in the early 1800s, burned Jewish books and called for the expulsion of Jews (and Frenchmen) from all German universities.



*The exhortation given by the Anglican Diocese of Perth’s Chaplain Rev Jacob Legarda at the 82nd anniversary of Kristallnacht on 8 November 2020 at Carmel Primary School. Photo: Amanda Murthy.*

“Censorship and suppression of ideas is common in our society even in universities and professional institutions that claim to encourage the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom and the airing of all points of view with the exception of hate speech,” Prof Kamien stated.

“Censorship begins with boycotting talks by people that the executive of the student guild has declared to have objectionable opinions, even high-profile thinkers.

“Censorship progresses when CEOs and media departments vet and, without the writer’s agreement, sanitise their contributions, and refuse to publish anything that they deem controversial or less than flattering to their institution,” he added.

Prof Kamien concluded by encouraging the community to stand up and speak out, should censorship occur in their society in today’s world.

“We owe it to those who only 82 years ago tomorrow, were subjected to terror and had their property wantonly destroyed in a prelude of much worse to come.”

Following a brief account of the millions of Holocaust victims, the lighting of two memorial candles and a two-minute silence took place.

The first memorial candle was lit by CCJWA Honorary President Rabbi Adi Cohen of Temple David, and the next by Redemptoris Mater Seminarian Gionata Pagani – representing the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth on behalf of Seminary Rector Father Michael Moore SM, a CCJWA committee member, who was unable to attend.



*Redemptorist Mater Seminarian Gionata Pagani lights one of two memorial candles, at the at the 82nd anniversary of Kristallnacht on 8 November 2020 at Carmel Primary School. Photo: Amanda Murthy.*

At the conclusion of the formal proceedings, a recording of *Shemá Israel* by Kiko Argüello. *The Suffering of the Innocents* was played as the congregation dispersed reverently.