



New Zealand Buddhist Council

How are you? Perhaps a complex question at this time. We welcome your news and word of special activities you are undertaking. Since the last bulletin we have been pleased to receive words of wisdom and poetry from members, and welcome that continuing. We will steadily put what we receive on [the website](#) and [Facebook](#). We also appreciate the advice from Buddhists and Interfaith colleagues that led to our [Covid-19 resources page](#).

While I write from the tranquillity of my home in Otautahi Christchurch, I have family living in a Covid-19 hotspot in the USA, and friends in NZ and in the UK who have contracted the infection. So like many of you, my local conditions are peaceful, and yet people I know are experiencing a difficult test. Most of us also know people affected by unemployment and other uncertainties arising from the situation.

While it may be a time of resurgence for other creatures, for humans around the world there is a needle point of intensity to the suffering. So it is an important time to draw on the inner and outer resources our faith offers us. I have posted an offering called "[practice considerations during widespread contagion](#)" that combines suggestions from several members with whom Exec members touched base. I encourage us all to keep in touch online.

NZ Buddhist Council wants to keep membership informed and connected in the ways that we can during this unfolding situation. It is becoming ever more apparent that the resilience of a society in the face of shocks and perils, earthquakes, fires, eruptions, terror

attacks, or pandemics, lies not in the state of the stock market but in the depth of social cohesion within that society. For society to hold together now depends on the degree of trust and full inclusion that can be called upon in this crisis. NZBC seeks harmonious inclusive society through its work, and is one instrument for us to use for cohesion within our own religion.

With that in mind, I would like to extend a warm appreciative welcome to the new organisation members of NZ Buddhist Council. Last year and early this year we approved membership applications from some wonderful temples, together representing a wide diversity of culture and wisdom traditions. Greetings to the venerables and all supporters of Chua Giác Nhiên, Vietnamese temple in Otahuhu (South Auckland), of the Cambodian Association in Papatoetoe (South Auckland), of Trashi Ganden Choepel Ling, Tibetan Buddhist centre in Glenfield (North Shore Auckland), of International Buddhist Meditation Temple of NZ, Korean Buddhist Temple in Parau (West Auckland), and the Korean Buddhist Society of Myosim-sa in Edendale (west from Christchurch).

Online, I have been receiving "how are you and your community?" inquiries from people of many faiths around us in Aotearoa who care about our well-being. This is a clear sign that many people of faith in this society care about cohesion and inclusion.

Below is an update on the work we continue doing to foster good relations for Buddhism and Buddhists within New Zealand society.

Buddhist Chaplaincy training:

- A new milestone - a first level two training in Buddhist Chaplaincy was successfully offered at Amitabha Hospice in Auckland in February – [read about it here](#)
- **Development of strong Interfaith relations:**
 - The annual Religious Leaders Forum was held in Auckland 3 December 2019 and it resolved to call for religious studies in schools. We co-signed a letter to the Prime Minister and Ministers of Education, for Ethnic Communities, and for Social Development. Read more [here](#) on what we are seeking from this
 - Assisting and networking for the youth Interfaith Tour 2019 from France. Four French youth, each from a different faith background, visited this country as part of an international tour of discovery and sharing around inter-faith and inter-culture relations. With our friends, we were able to introduce them to some leading figures from varied faith and from tangata whenua. A video summary (with English subtitles) of their journey in Aotearoa NZ, can be viewed [here](#).
 - The Office of Ethnic Communities organised a series of multi-faith meetings for attendees to discuss issues of inclusion for religious communities and ways to build a more peaceful society. Representatives of NZBC attended these events, held in Dunedin, Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington, during February and March. Read more about these [Hui/meetings](#) and our experience of interaction there and what we expect next. We thank the NZBC folk who gave time to attend these regional events.
- **Cultivating NZ Government's understanding of our community:**
 - In June 2019 Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern called a meeting of organisations representing religious communities in NZ. Ven. Amala Wrightson and Robert Hunt attended. There was open-ended discussion in which the delegates all suggested to Government that it was important to listen to the call for children to be educated in "religious awareness" - not "religious instruction" but leading them to develop an appreciation for diversity and understanding of the principles that inform different religious cultures in this country.
 - NZBC participated in the Reference Group which met twice in 2019, to offer advice to the Office of Ethnic Communities as they organised the multifaith meetings held in February and March 2020.
- **The Christchurch Invitation:**
 - We have responded to the tragic circumstances in other communities and countering hate - in particular we answered [the Christchurch Invitation](#) with [a letter from NZBC](#) affirming our understanding of what



happened, what can happen and the changes that are possible.

- It is important to stop racism and xenophobia from taking hold. We are identifying and sharing positive information for this such as [this - Voices of Youth website](#).

While face-to-face gatherings are not possible at this time, the relationships we have built through this work now makes it possible to continue liaison online.