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|  | Speak Up” – “KōrerotiaFrom Parihaka to Persia: Peace commemoration in Christchurch4 November 2022 |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana, E ngā reo, E ngā hau e whāTēnā koutou katoaNau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.Ko “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” tēnei, ko Sally Carlton ahau. Today we are talking about events that are happening on the 5th November 2022 in Ōtautahi Christchurch, there is both the Parihaka commemoration and a Freedom for Iran movement. I’ve come up with this great title for this show which is “From Parihaka to Persia: Peace Commemoration in Christchurch”.I’m really excited that we’ve got three different guests with us today, we’ve got Kate Dewes from the Peace and Disarmament Centre who has been involved in peace work in the city for many, many decades and Kate, it’s the second time you’ve been on this show so it’s great to have you back. We’ve got Razi from the Interfaith Society which does a lot of work around peace events and we’ve got Mir from the Iranian community who is going to be telling us about what’s happening in Iran and the commemoration and the protests that are happening in order to try and get a bit of public information, a bit of public awareness, about what’s going on.It would be fantastic to hear a bit more from each of you about who you are, the work that you do, what you bring to this show. Provide us with a bit of context.  |
| Kate | Thanks Sally, kia ora everyone. Yes I’ve been doing peace work probably since 1976, starting to go out and oppose visits by nuclear warships coming into New Zealand but have run a Centre for Peace Foundation but also the Disarmament and Security Centre for 45-ish years. But I also taught Peace Studies at Canterbury University and helped get a Peace City in Christchurch. So very involved locally but I’ve also been very involved internationally, also strong links with the Māori community here and my first memory of Parihaka goes back to 1980 when Te Merenga Hohaia came to the peace movement and said why the hell don’t you know about this. So he often has stayed at our whare when he was organising the peace festival here and other elders from Parihaka have also joined in. So this whare is called Te Whare Maukaroko, the peace centre, peace house. Briefly hand over to the others but am happy to share. |
| Sally | Thanks Kate and it’s so great that you bring such a wealth of experience with you. Razi, how about you?  |
| Razi | Kia ora everyone, I’m Razi Syed and I’m the current chair for Canterbury Interfaith Society. I’ve been part of this Interfaith Society for the last five to six years maybe. Just joined this by chance when we were just feeding the homeless people and Matthew Gardiner the co-chair of the Canterbury Interfaith Society was also feeding the homeless in Latimer Square and we just sort of bumped into each other and he and my wife were serving the people there and we got to know them because his wife comes from India and that’s how he introduced us to the Interfaith Society and we started taking part in meetings and gatherings. Since then we’ve done a few other things, mainly after the 15th March event, the tragedy that took place with 51 people from the Muslim community were killed. The society then was heavily involved in trying to reach out to the victims and trying to create more peace events and understanding about each other’s religious beliefs and showing respect to each other and basically coming together. So that you know, when we are in need, we would be able to help each other out. Whether it was earthquakes or floods.One of the things that we did after the tragedy was to make packages of food. What was happening was a lot of the food was given to the families who had lost their main earners but because it wasn’t ethnically appropriate for them, they were just returning them back to the Sallies and things like that. So we organised this with the churches, the Church of Latter Day Saint, the other one – a Presbyterian church, I think – and we packaged culturally appropriate spices because it was Ramadan during that time… I mean it was about to come through.So you know that’s the gist of it, that you know if you do have that connection and respect the if something happens then you know you’re there to help each other out. |
| Sally | What a lovely kaupapa. You touched on something that is interesting there which is that I think a lot of people think of ‘interfaith’ and they think of Islam and Christianity and Buddhism but they don’t necessarily think about the branches, you touched on different branches of churches for example, different branches of Christianity. So I think that’s one of the nice things that I always think about the Interfaith Society is it’s not just Buddhism and Islam and Hinduism, but it’s all the different branches within those different religions that come together as well. |
| Razi | That’s right, yeah, that’s right yeah. One of the annual events we do is a peace prayer and it was actually organised by the Christians first and then slowly as immigrants started coming in, they opened that up to all the other religions and faith groups. So for the last two years we haven’t been able to do it face-to-face but we were able to do it this year face-to-face last month.  |
| Sally | I’m sure we’ll hear more about that as we go on. And Mir Hosseini, we’ve got you as our final guest. |
| Mir | Yes so I’m Mir and I came to New Zealand over five years ago to do my PhD in education. Right now I’m a bilingual support staff at Riccarton High School. Since I was a kid when I was the UK, I’ve been following news but for the last ten to fifteen years, I’ve been following the news especially around Iran every single day and for a period of time when I was in Iran, apart from you know being a teacher, I was with a photo journalist. So I know the journalist society and the journalists in Iran, at least the ones that were in my city. What is going on in Iran is a very complex thing that I think Iranians mostly understand because they’ve known the whole history and they’ve seen what has been happening over the past at least 43 years after the revolution. We know the history of the ground and we do not have the perspective that is usually shown on TV in the news or in movies. So for us it’s a totally different matter.  |
| Sally | Thank you Mir, we’re going to have our first song now.  |
| Mir | This song is called ‘Baraye’ by Shervin Hajipour. They sang this song based on people’s Tweets. So people started Tweeting at the start of this – they would call it a revolution, around 45 days ago – Tweets that people wrote about why they want this to happen and you will realise that it’s for the simplest things that the Iranian people cannot get and they want and it’s not just for them, it’s for the environment, for the animals, for migrants. So it’s for a lot of beautiful stuff and he was detained after that and his post was taken down.  |
| Sally | So we’re going to play the Iranian version now and then later in the show we’ll play the English version.  |
|  | **MUSIC BY SHERVIN HAJIPOUR – BARAYE** |
| Sally  | This is Plains FM with Speak Up – Kōrerotia. We’d like to think now about the various events happening on the 5th November 2022 in Ōtautahi Christchurch. One of which is the commemoration of Parihaka and Kate, you’re probably the best person to talk to us just a wee bit about what is the story of Parihaka and why is it so critical that it’s commemorated?  |
| Kate | Well just to acknowledge those from Parihaka because even though my whakapapa isn’t necessarily back there, we have to be very careful to allow the stories to come from the people of Parihaka. And it’s basically that on the 5th November 1881, about 1600 troops marched on the village, the Pākehā troops, and they were greeted by people sitting down, by children singing with poi, offering bread, not moving, a completely non-violent direct action to save their land from confiscation and the people before that, the farmers in that area who were in this very successful place of Parihaka led by two prophets, Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi, they’d been established there as a special place from 1860 and were very successful with trading and everything but the land was being confiscated so they sent their farmers out to change the fence lines as well and of course kept getting arrested.Many of the men were taken and arrested and put into prison either here at Ripapa Island or they were taken to Dunedin and imprisoned there and the women were raped. But it was a very powerful story of opposition to colonialism before Gandhi and in fact we know that Gandhi was inspired by Te Whiti and the protests there. And also some of the prisoners were kept at Addington jail which was really important that those two leaders were imprisoned there. So Christchurch has quite a link with Parihaka. But the peace group that started here, came out… Te Merenga Hohaia came and stayed here at this whare and he invited us to come up to the Parihaka peace festival in 2006 and 2007 and we started a little group after that that wanted to highlight what was happening in our own city and educate people about what happened at Parihaka because so few people knew about it. We had hui here that promoted a petition for Guy Fawkes Day to be renamed Parihaka Day. We also connected with the Addington and Lyttelton prison – so there were prisoners in both those places and Ripapa Island – and we got people to wear white feather badges because many of the Parihaka people had three feathers to symbolise where they came from. And since that time, many of the commemorations have happened throughout Ōtautahi but have gone nationwide as well, with consultation with Parihaka people, so that there are commemorations right throughout the country at the moment. The petition was actually given to parliament, it’s still being considered as formally naming November 5th as Parihaka Day, it hasn’t gone through yet, the team up at New Plymouth supporting Parihaka are meeting with Marama Davies very soon to finalise that. But one of the things we wanted to support an apology and the government going to Parihaka. That has happened. We also, right on the earthquake time, September 2010… A few weeks after, on Parihaka day, Sir Paul Reeves, former Governor General, came and spoke in the Cathedral and there were young children who were greeting people coming in mimicking what had happened with the children at Parihaka. So offering bread and with their poi and singing to welcome people in. So this is continuing and on Saturday, there will be a commemorative service with karakia and light refreshments at Rāpaki Marae and at 2pm at the Memorial Rose Garden in Lyttelton near where the prison is, there will be another gathering. So that has been a focus for a lot of us for a long time and Rāpaki people, there’s a special commemorative stone out there which acknowledges those who have died and who were in prison at the time.  |
| Sally | It’s certainly an amazing history, isn’t it, and what I also find amazing is that it’s really not all that known about. Razi and Mir, did you know about the history of Parihaka?  |
| Razi | I knew a little bit about it but didn’t dwell that much deep in it. But it certainly has a resonance to Jallianwala bagh massacre in India where you know, our freedom fighters were also protesting against the so-called occupation we had in the colonist era. That’s when the leaders of a certain movement were arrested and put in jail after being invited to one of the brigadiers’ residents and when people were gathered to actually celebrate an event, a festival, they gathered in this particular bar which is basically a garden. But the authorities at the time thought this to be a union of people who were trying to again revolt and make plans. Well the brigadier basically went there and ordered without any warning, for shots to be fired and people had nowhere to hide because it was sort of in an enclosed area and there was just one well and people were just running around. There were kids, young people, older men and women and the massacre only stopped when the ammunition ended. So definitely there’s a relation to and I can certainly understand what had happened in Parihaka. |
| Kate | Can I just also add the importance of the film that was made featuring the children of Parihaka called Tātarakihi and that has been shown right around the country with Parihaka speakers as well to give the context. And in fact last week it was shown at quite a few of the local churches and usually each year it’s been part of either a film festival or certainly churches are showing it and it’s a great educational tool because it’s actually Maata Wharehoka leading, taking the children, the descendants of some of those people who were in the prisons, their male ancestors to these places to tell them the stories right around the country and to let them grieve and acknowledge what happened. So that was before this sort of process of educating right around the city, the country, it was before the apology came from the government at Parihaka a few years ago which again was absolutely profound, very powerful. It’s the first time ever in this country there’s been a public acknowledgement and asking for forgiveness about the rapes that occurred as well, very significant.  |
| Sally | And I think something that’s interesting from what you mentioned there, Kate, relating to Razi’s work, is that you said lots of the churches are showing the video. And I guess there’s a theme there, isn’t there, around the role of religious institutions in promoting peace work. Mir, it would be great to hear from you a little bit about the situation in Iran, what’s going on, why it’s happening and also if you could tell us about what’s happening on Saturday in Christchurch in order to try and raise public awareness.  |
| Mir | To know what is happening in Iran you have to go back over 100 years to 1905 when the fight for democracy kind of started. Iran is, by some definitions, considered as the oldest country in the world so it’s been around for a long time. So dates back to 1905 when there was a constitution revolution, it was the first country in the Middle East to have that although it failed due to internal and external divisions. It was bombarded by the Russians in 1908 and there was again another democracy that we had where we elected… the Iranians elected the prime minister who did something that some countries considered a sin, he nationalised oil. So when that happened, the Brits didn’t like it so they went to the Americans with the CIA to establish a coup, they overthrew Mossadegh and then he was under house arrest until he died and replaced him with Jamshid Amouzegar who was a bit weaker when he started but he started getting a lot stronger and when he started using the oil, within the country and all the wealth and everything, Iran’s growth rate really expanded.So Iran was going forward but what happened slowly was although the Shah was a nationalist, loved Iran and did everything for Iran development and progress and everything and he had great plans but I think he got separated from society a bit. So he started moving… him and the people started moving apart in terms of understanding each other and also there was the fact that he was getting really strong. So there were some powers who didn’t like that and also the mullahs, the leader actually tricked them, tricked the people in saying that he had a democracy, everybody will have freedom and people really supported him but once he got into power everything changed. So the revolution… peace started growing different groups out. For example nobody had talked about the Islamic regime in that sense or mandatory hijab and that suddenly became a rule. Slowly they imposed it and it became a law in 1983, three years after the Iranian war. The opposite of what had happened in 1963 when there was a mandatory unveiling of women after Reza Shah went to Turkey and saw that in Turkey and then wanted to implement that in Iran. At that time there was also opposition from the women, they marched against it. So the women didn’t accept that. So since that, although this has been imposed on them, they’ve never really accepted the mandatory hijab and there’s always been a struggle between the government and the people because they do not resemble each other at all. |
| Sally | Great could you just maybe bring us up to what’s happening right now, the events of the last month or so. |
| Mir | They have been always a sort of police, morality police, that has imposed these mandatory hijab laws. So this police has been there to impose the hijab on people. So you could be walking to work or going out with your friends and suddenly they catch you and they will take you away and they use brutality. I’ve seen these images, really hurts people, but they have the power. So 45 days agoc, this girl who is an Iranian Kurdish girl, had gone to Tehran with her brother on a visit and when they came out of the underground, they caught her and although she told them that she was a visitor and her brother struggled to get her back, fought to get her back and apparently was beaten and sprayed, they took her away to Vozara where they gather all the girls. They usually take their names and details and everything and they have mandatory classes for them to teach them about stuff and psychological stuff and tell them off and they make them sign sheets that they won’t do it again. But then she passed away and what happened was that the news came out, two journalists got that out, but the government claimed that she had a heart attack and she had health issues before and that was a result of that, although her dad said that this was not the case, she had no health issues. From the people who were with her in the van, they said she was beaten in the head and she had internal bleeding, passed out and then went into a coma and passed away and then the people came out in anger over what had happened.It was an amazing thing for us because I have been always struggling to tell people that we Iranians are not how you see them and how we are shown in the news and movies, the people who oppress women. Inside… I’m not saying every one of them, there are percentages but most of us are not. People came out with anger and have been protesting since.  |
| Sally | So this seems to be almost like a spark of resentment that’s been around many, many decades from the sounds of it. |
| Mir | Yes it’s the anger within the society and also all these different things like the huge inflation that you don’t have, mismanagement that have resulted in droughts and the environment being destroyed because of all these… the brain drain is high, a lot of people are leaving Iran. The poverty line is now 18 million Tomans so according to that, out of 85 million people in Iran, 66 million are under the poverty line from a country that is ranked first in terms of natural resources, 27.3 trillion dollars of natural resources. The second in terms of gas reserves and I think fourth or fifth in terms of oil reserves, it shouldn’t be like that at all. So rich country, poor people, result of mismanagement and the lies and corruption and all these other stuff. So the society in every aspect that you may think and you may not think, is going down.  |
| Sally | If you could tell us, Mir, what’s happening on Saturday in terms of events in Christchurch? |
| Mir | So there have been annual and weekly events protests in Christchurch and the central city, Bridge of Remembrance – human chains of protest trying to inform people about what is going on in Iran, get their support which is important. And one of the reasons that it’s important is that lack of understanding. We have had support from Kiwis but there are some communities that we kind of expected support and we didn’t get and I think that’s again because of misunderstandings.What is happening on Saturday on 5th November at 12.30 at Christ’s College on Rolleston Avenue, there is going to be a human chain in support of what is going on in Iran and all the protestors and all those who have been killed. |
| Sally | So as far as I understand it, Mir, a human chain is something that’s happening right around the world in terms of trying to change awareness. |
| Mir | Yes it is a global event, so it’s happening around the world. There have been a few other ones as well. The first one that happened over 150 cities around the world, there are 50,000 people out in Toronto, around 30,000 in LA and then the second one, there were 80,000 people out in Berlin protesting. So it’s been going on to raise awareness for the global community. |
| Sally | That’s great and I’d be really keen to hear from Razi and Kate about your reflections as people who aren’t part of the Iranian community but watching what’s happening, both the news but also through the events happening right here in the city.  |
| Razi | You know when certain types of laws are imposed against the will of the people, that’s when you know people sort of revolt and go against the authorities. But you have to also look at Iran has been under sanctions for, like, decades and so you know, they have a lot of economic failures, they don’t have a lot of jobs, they can’t trade freely like other countries, like the other oil producing countries and so you know, it’s basically a combination of a lot of other anger as well that has come out from these protests. I don’t know this particularly but maybe you can correct but I think the morality policy probably got more powers when Mohammad Javad got appointed as the president and he imposed and gave them a lot of delegated authority. In saying all this, you know, any countries issues are really complex and when you look at the media, you know the media can pick up one issue and highlight that more compared to other issues because there are so many other Muslim countries where media and Muslim countries are okay with… for example like in Saudia Arabia, driving for women has just been okayed whereas in Iran, they’ve been free to drive, free to educate, go outside the country and come back. So their issues compared to, like, issues where in certain western countries now, the hijab or the veil has been banned which is also a human rights issue but that doesn’t get highlighted too much. It’s like their issue and they have resolved to do that by voting and that’s resulted. And when it comes to Iran then there’s the question of well are the elections, when people get appointed to the parliament, are they fair or not. So it’s a very complex situation that we are living in in these days. For me to comment on those issues as an outsider, yeah I’m not sure where to begin and where to stop.Understanding these geopolitics and international issues, there’s always different sides that you will encounter but certainly the people have to decide there what they want their country to be like and they’ve taken like a whole 180 degrees turn now, as Mir was explaining, from when they had a democratically elected government which got toppled by western powers and then Reza Shah was appointed and then you know, he was taken over by the people of the time and now again the people are against the now current government.  |
| Mir | Yes you are right, after Ahmadinejad it got worse but before… ten years after the revolution there were people went around and if the women weren’t wearing their hijab properly, they would paint their foreheads. Yes I agree you have to give people the choice to wear whatever they want. If it’s not like doing anything offensive which is wrong, people should have the right to wear what they want but France is not using brutality against the people. France is not beating them down, France is not taking them to prison, France is not killing, that is a whole different story and that’s what needs to be understood. Sanctions have been there yes, historically western powers haven’t really liked the powerful Iran but at the same time you have to look at what the regime has been doing. A lot of the sanctions that have been imposed are the results of the actions that the regime has been taking. When the regime treats its people in the way that I’ve seen it, killing them in streets, what would it do if it had a nuclear power, nuclear weapon? And a lot of the sanctions that have been in place have been because of that. There have been a lot of wrong decisions and the government, the regime believes that if it backs off from any of these, it will fail. So it will not back off. So it has left the people with no solution. The people don’t like a revolution, a revolution is not an easy thing, right. People are getting killed, people have been trying to have reform in Iran for a long time but have failed. It has elections – yes, it has elections but you have to know the system, it’s fraught. In 2009, votes were stolen and there are filters that allow only certain people who are approved by the higher power can become candidates and again people try to express their angers and opposition by electing reformists which now they’ve given up on them, to implement that change but unfortunately they come to power, again they are restricted by the higher power and they can’t do anything. So no change that the people have wanted has taken place.  |
| Sally | Okay Kate, any comments on all this as an observer?  |
| Kate | Well as a woman observing I have felt terrible pain for the first woman killed that we know of but also all those who have been killed at the protests which is outrageous. I’m heartened by the international support, which is people coming out on the streets and I know that the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom that I’m a member of, there are people supporting women as much as they can and hopefully our members will get to some more of the protests here on Saturday. It depends which protests they’re going to or which commemoration on Saturday, it’s a busy day. |
| Sally | It is a busy day. OK, we’re going to have the English version of Baraye’s song.  |
|  | **MUSIC BY RANA MANSOUR – FOR WOMEN, LIFE, LIBERTY (BARAYE)** |
| Sally  | This is Speak Up – Kōrerotia and we’re talking about peace commemoration in Christchurch, from Parihaka through to Persia. We’ve got Mir Hosseini, Razi Syed and Kate Dewes and I’d like to think now about how the peace commemorations taking place on the 5th November – we’ve got both Parihaka and Freedom for Iran taking place – how these two events fit into a kind of longitudinal context of peace commemorations in our city because there’s been a lot that’s been going on. Kate, we’ll start with you maybe to get some context and then I think we might pass over to Razi to talk to us a bit about the work that the Interfaith Society has been doing. |
| Kate | Thank you, Sally, for the opportunity. A few years ago we started a Voices against War website at the university and tried to collate the stories of the Canterbury people who spoke out against the First World War and as we gathered those stories, we realised of course there was a lot more history that came before, not least our Māori history here with Waitaha being a completely non-violent tribe and stood up for absolutely no people being killed. So that peace tradition is here.But we also uncovered a huge history of the peace movement that Elsie Locke has written up as well but also Margie Lovell-Smith is writing up about as early as the 1890s right through the First World War, there were women active in the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the National Council of Women and others who worked with a progressive network of labour, political, religious and social reform groups throughout Christchurch and they were strong. An Irish background as well as the Methodists and others who had been involved in getting the vote for women, were also very involved in trying to stop war but also to call for an International Court of Justice, for example, to try and mediate and get a police force there instead of a war force if you like, before the UN was even set up. So there was some strong voices coming out but also, even in the pre-war peace movement here, the National Peace Council and the Anti-Militarists League was strong with Quakers and passive resisters union. The first woman elected to the city council on the peace vote was Ada Wells who was actually part of the Canterbury Women’s Institute and there is a book coming out on this next year which I’m hoping Sally will interview Margie Lovell-Smith about. |
| Sally | We’ve already set that one up for August. |
| Kate | Great because I think it’s part of the story that’s never told. So when you have the commemoration of, say, World War One and a lot of money from the government going in, it wasn’t going in to finding stories of the people who stood for peace, who were imprisoned for standing up for peace, who were conscientious objectors, who were imprisoned for sedition. There was one woman from Christchurch, the only woman in the country, imprisoned for sedition because she spoke out against war. So there’s a long history of people being prepared to do that, not just from the churches but from the labour union and others. So it’s a very important part of our history. Also we were the first nuclear-free city in Christchurch in March 1982, the same night as Lyttelton actually and Rangiora was not long after, that led the sort of nuclear-free movement to declare homes and schools and councils nuclear free. 20 years later on the anniversary of that, we were the first Peace City and our city at every level internationally and nationally... Mayors for Peace, Gary Moore I think was the vice president of Mayors for Peace have spoken out internationally.We’ve got peace relationships with a lot of countries and a lot of cities, especially Hiroshima and Nagasaki. You would have seen the World Peace Bell that was in the Botanic Gardens where a lot of ceremonies are taking place. Well that bell was gifted to Christchurch because of our Peace City status and long history and ‘herstory’ of people speaking out.You will see more recently there’s been interpretative panels in Victoria Square and other places to acknowledge, for example, the lantern ceremony that’s been going on for 40 years to remember the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. So there is a lot happening and just recently of course, the Peace Train which was launched, in fact, on the anniversary of the September quakes and of course to acknowledge what happens with the mosque attacks. So for our city there’s been a lot of peace heritage that’s gone on for a very long time and this is the city where we started what was called the World Court Project, where we took a case to the International Court of Justice to get nuclear weapons declared illegal and we did start that from a tiny little group of us here. It did succeed at the UN in the General Assembly and at the World Court and generally ruled that nuclear weapons were illegal and called for negotiations on a treaty and three or four years ago we actually got in the UN, a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We haven’t got everyone signed up yet but it’s an amazing legacy that our city holds and I think those of us who are peace activists today, walk beside or have our ancestors behind us and those who were prepared to be imprisoned and take the risks including Te Whiti and Tohu Kākahi in our own city, they inspire us to continue to do non-violent direct action to actually achieve change. And I think we’ve got a wonderful heritage here and it’s up on the Peace City website for our city, a lot of that history is written up so people can know about it and know what activities are going on.  |
| Sally | It’s actually pretty amazing when you list it like that, just how much has happened here. And I think, Kate, we’ve got to take our hats off to you for all the work that you’ve done in that space. And you mentioned the Peace Bell which is the perfect segue into bringing Razi into this because the Peace Bell in the Botanic Gardens is where the Interfaith Society does so many peace events and I’d love to hear from you, Razi, about how and why the Interfaith Society started to do these kinds of events and I guess the importance of bringing together multiple religions and faiths in the name of peace.  |
| Razi | Yes I think these prayers started, if I’m not wrong, from 2006, these annual prayers and this was basically the Week of Prayers for World Peace which happens usually around 11 to 18th of October. This year we did our prayers on the 23rd October at the Peace Bell and the Peace Bell was brought out and if you go to our Facebook page, Canterbury Interfaith Society, you can see the prayers and the video that John Selwood from Telling Lives has created for us. This goes back to, if I’m not wrong, the date was 1978 when the Christians decided to come together and do this event and slowly as immigrants started arriving to New Zealand, they started including other faiths into this. So this was like a national type of an event and different councils around New Zealand do it differently, they do a whole lot of things here in Christchurch because it’s been Covid and so many other things, we haven’t been able to manage to do a week-long event where you know, you go to different religious faith premises and you get an understanding and an invitation from these places to visit and see.But this year we have just been able to do the prayer where all different faith backgrounds come together and from their scriptures or from their faith, recite a prayer for world peace and last couple of years we have also done a sacred sound event which is also again an interfaith event where we invite different faith groups to come together and either sing or hymn or recitations from Quran or Bhagavad Gita from the Sikh faith. They have some chants and so we do that event.Since now we have come out of Covid, we are hoping to do a bit more of these events in different shapes and forms but you know, because these are all voluntary organisations you know, it is hard to find time as well to do it but a lot of people are quite enthusiastic about doing these types of events so I’m hoping that we can do some more of these and keep them as always, open to general public to come and see and yes, as part of this we had also done an interfaith podcast called Open Table where we have invited guests from different faiths and picked up a topic that we could all talk about. And it was amazing to see how there was so many similarities in different faith groups who talk a lot about, you know, having peace within, first, and once you have that, you can improve the society around you and you can have these respectful conversations and respect for each other and an understanding about each other. |
| Sally | And I think one thing that is also great about Christchurch and commemoration is that the Canterbury Interfaith Society has been invited to all the earthquake commemorations as well, to give the different prayers, and I think that says something about the city’s openness to these sorts of things, that we have our earthquake commemoration and as part of that, there are all these different prayers from different faiths and in different languages, of course, as well. |
| Razi | The last couple of years we’ve also invited people who are of no faith to come in and do their own presentation and John Sellwood who doesn’t want to be associated with any faith, he recited something on behalf of the Charter for Compassion this year and last year.  |
| Kate | I’ll just do a follow up on the World Peace Bell. For those of you who haven’t necessarily looked down when you’re doing the ceremony, we put about 50 or 60 words of peace in different languages right on the ground on the slate. So look for that when you’ve got your gathering there because that’s a very nice way of including lots of different religions and nationalities.  |
| Sally | Have any of you rung the Peace Bell? |
| Razi | I have.  |
| Sally | How does that make you feel?  |
| Razi | Feels good, if you want to listen to it the video is there from our peace prayer as well. It starts with the Bell.  |
| Kate | With that as well, when we first put it down we were gifted a piece of pounamu by Ngāi Tahu and when it rings, when the bell rings, it sounds a vibration to Nagasaki where we’ve placed the other part of the pounamu and that is at the bottom of Japan and linked with the last time a nuclear weapon was used in war and it resonates right throughout the world. We’ve also put the pounamu in different parts of the world on behalf of one of our Māori elders here, so it’s just an acknowledgement that that vibration goes global, not just local.  |
| Sally | Anything you would like to say in terms of wrapping up?  |
| Mir | Supporting this movement is very important, it’s very disappointing that there’s been a lot of condolences and everything when it comes to Ukraine but when it comes to the people of Iran, people have ignoredwit. And I have read a lot of comments that they said oh it’s not our problem.First of all you have to consider that Iran or Persians were the first people that came up with human rights. The Cyrus Cylinder is in the British Museum, you can go and look at it so we talked about human rights, we were the first people who did that and now nobody cares about our human rights which is very disappointing. But the other thing is, if we really care about global peace, we care about Ukraine, you care about drones and rockets, we care about price of oil and the fuel that you put in your car and many other stuff, you have to care about Iran and what’s happening in Iran and you have to understand that this movement is not against religion, it’s not against the hijab, it’s not against… it’s against compulsory hijab. So it’s about that freedom that the people of Iran want and that you respect and human rights. |
| Sally | Great, that was a great summation.  |
| Razi | In terms of wrapping up, I can say that as Canterbury Interfaith Society, we basically pray for world peace in every part of the world obviously. So I just hope that things improve in Iran and in other places like in Ukraine and Russia crises as well, we just hope that this senseless killing, trying to take another country’s territory stops and hopefully there is some kind of resolution that comes out of this. Hopefully after all these protests, you know, there’s some kind of sense that comes back to people, to the government who listens and basically improves themselves. It looks like there’s a lot of issues that need to be addressed and which is why people are on the streets asking those things to be fixed. |
| Kate | I’d just like to thank you, Sally, for bringing us together and giving us this opportunity for the voices to get out a bit wider and educate people about Parihaka, about what’s happening in Iran, about the Interfaith Society and about strong peace heritage and legacy within this city. And I just hope it inspires our younger people to get out on the streets, to do the original sort of protests, the kids at Riccarton High. I take my grandchildren now on the peace protests anywhere just to teach them that we still have a democracy and we can still effect change. So all the best, thank you.  |
| Sally | I’d like to say thank you to all three of you, tēnei koutou, and also to mention that there are lots of other movements of peace that we haven’t touched on but we’ve seen over the years in Christchurch, vigils for Afghanistan for example when there were bombings, we’ve seen lots of events and movements since the 15 March 2019 including Temel’s Walk for Peace when he walked from Dunedin right up to Christchurch. There’s lots and lots of different events we could have pointed to today and we’ve just chosen the three that come with your expertise but yeah, I guess just to kind of think about the fact that we’ve got three of you here but it’s just a drop in the ocean in the kind of bigger pool of what is happening. And Mir, reflecting on what the other two have said, all we can do is hope that things do improve and have our say by attending some of these events and standing in the human chain.  |
| Mir | Thank you. |
|  | **MUSIC BY CAT STEVENS – PEACE TRAIN** |