

Peace Week

2024

What is Peace Week about at the University?

The horrific Christchurch Mosques attack on 15 March 2019 was followed by an amazing outpouring of aroha (love) and compassion that offered hope and healing at a time of potential despair and division. Since the first anniversary, many people sought ways to reconnect to that solidarity but were unsure what could be done and what would be appropriate.

Established in 2021, University of Auckland's annual Peace Week is a coordinated approach with acts of service, and charity to honour the 51 shuhada (martyrs) and the other victims. It is also an opportunity to learn and understand our different cultures, ethnicities, and faiths by sharing, having conversations, and doing good works.

Peace Week is an invitation to the University community, no matter one's ethnicity, nationality, religion or background – to set aside some time and energy to really see each other and recognise our shared humanity. It is an opportunity to grow social capital, social cohesion, and cultural, religious diversity literacy by facilitating connections and extending these to new networks and people we don't usually interact with.

Peace Week themes and key messages from previous years include:

- **Charity:** Turn our good intentions into intentional acts for good — recognising this is something that we can all invest a bit of our time and effort into.
- **Empathy** is stronger than sympathy and has the power to transform relationships and create fundamental social change.
- **Unity in Diversity:** Building (sometimes difficult) bridges, and respecting each other by accepting our similarities, as well as our differences

The theme for this year is “Justice and Courage”.

Real peace cannot be achieved without justice, and standing for justice often takes considerable courage.

Rosa Parks demonstrated an iconic status of courage when she refused to vacate a seat on a bus in favour of a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama, USA. In 1955, Parks rejected a bus driver's order to leave a row of four seats in the “coloured” section once the white section had filled up and move to the back of the bus.

Her defiance sparked a successful boycott of buses in Montgomery a few days later. Residents refused to board the city's buses. Instead, they carpooled, rode in Black-owned cabs, or walked, some as far as 20 miles. The boycott was led by a newcomer to Montgomery named Martin Luther King, Jr.

In Rosa Parks' own words, “*Differences of race, nationality or religion should not be used to deny any human being citizenship rights or privileges.*”

The launch of Peace Week, on Monday 11 March, will include a discussion from esteemed academic speakers about the importance of justice and courage as key aspects of establishing peace:

- **Dr. Usman Afzaly**, principal investigator of the Muslim Diversity Study, currently working as a postdoctoral research fellow and lecturer at the University of Canterbury. His research interests encompass human flourishing, diversity in religious groups, cognitive psychology, and contemplative neuroscience.
- **Dr. Bilal Naser**, who completed his training in Clinical Psychology at the University of Auckland and currently practices out of a South Auckland clinic for children and adolescents. In his doctoral thesis, Bilal explored how Muslim youth experienced and responded to the March 15th terrorist attacks.

Please go to [Eventbrite](#) to register for the launch event.

Justice is the seed, peace is the flower.

Mrs Shahela Qureshi
Maclaurin Associate Chaplain (Muslim)
The University of Auckland