

In Solidarity – visit to a Mosque

On Sunday 17 March, we went to a Mosque south of Brisbane where a gathering was held to remember the people who lost their lives in Christchurch, as well as to pray for those who remain in hospital, and their families and friends. We also found it a welcome opportunity to express solidarity with the Muslim community of Brisbane. It was hard to estimate how many people were there, as the enormous auditorium was filled to overflowing and people were banked up in every space, including the main aisle and entrance hall. We estimated at least 2,000 people. We were lucky that our age gave us priority for seats. The leaders said more than once that they had underestimated the numbers of people who came.

The service went for 80 minutes and felt shorter. Sam Watson, well known Brisbane Indigenous elder, gave a warm Welcome to Country. Islamic leaders including the President of the Islamic Council of Queensland, Habib Jamal and Imam Uzair Akbar spoke, expressing their hope in the goodness of societies such as New Zealand and Australia. One speaker said something like: Hate does not conquer hate, violence does not conquer violence. Love and compassion are the only way. State Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, the Lord Mayor of Brisbane Graham Quirk and the Queensland Police Commissioner Ian Stewart all spoke strongly in support of the Muslim community and of the people of Christchurch. In different ways they expressed determination to work together and not allow a negative spirit to grow for any reason. There was much clapping through all the speeches. Other religious leaders present were invited to the stage for a period of prayer and silence. These included Catholic Archbishop Mark Coleridge, other Christian leaders and leaders of the Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist faiths.

Then a screen opened to reveal a group of about 50 Maori (NZ) men and women who led a dramatic Haka, followed by a rendition of *Amazing Grace*, sung slowly and in parts in Maori. Everyone loved this. It provided a very fitting and beautiful conclusion.

Similar events were held throughout Australia during the period following the tragic events in Christchurch.

Sisters Joan Murphy and Pamela Molony

