

Interreligious Dialogue programs in Labasa.

Awareness session for primary and secondary school student at Holy Family parish. Date – 13th and 15th October 2026.

As part of the Columban Interreligious Dialogue Ministry's ongoing efforts to promote peace, mutual understanding and respect among people of different faiths, I, Pescila Magdalin with help of Sainiana facilitated an Interreligious Dialogue awareness session for primary year 6 and year 9 - 11 to secondary school students. The session aimed to help young people appreciate religious diversity and recognise the importance of building positive relationships with people of different religious backgrounds.

During the session, I introduced the meaning and importance of interreligious dialogue, emphasising that dialogue is not about debating religious differences or proving one religion superior to another. Rather, it is about personal encounter, listening, learning from one another and building friendships based on mutual respect.



*The presentation highlighted the four forms of dialogue: **dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of theological exchange and dialogue of religious experience.** Students were encouraged to recognise how these forms of dialogue can be practised in their daily lives, particularly in schools, families and communities.*

I also shared the importance of the Golden Rule “treating others as we would like to be treated” as a common value that encourages kindness, compassion and respect across religious traditions. The session emphasised that Fiji is a multicultural and multireligious society, where peaceful coexistence depends on our willingness to accept, respect and care for one another. Through this awareness session, we hoped to encourage students to:

- Appreciate and respect people of different religious traditions.
- Overcome religious prejudice and misunderstandings.
- Develop openness, friendship and a spirit of listening.
- Become young peacebuilders in their schools and communities.

The awareness session provided an opportunity to promote the values of peace, respect, friendship and unity among young people. It reinforced the message that interreligious dialogue begins with simple acts of encounter, listening, kindness and respect for one another. This initiative forms part of the Columban commitment to building bridges across religious differences and encouraging young people to contribute towards a more peaceful and harmonious Fiji.



Primary school students enjoying ice breaker session led by Sainiana Tamatawale.



The Golden rule poster that has same values in 13 sacred holy books were introduced. (treat others as you want to be treated)..



Students were well explained on the different religious symbols & places of worships;

Women's Interfaith Group meets at the TISI Sangam temple hall in Labasa.

On the 14th of October, I facilitated the first gathering of women from different faith communities was held at the TISI Sangam temple hall at Labasa. The gathering brought together women from different religious traditions for a meaningful Talanoa session on the theme “Sharing Our Faith.”

The purpose of the gathering was to provide a welcoming and respectful space where women from the Shri Sanatan, Bahai Faith, Islam and Christian community openly shared their faith experiences, heard one another, and deepened their understanding and appreciation of different religious beliefs and practices. Among the participants, was Sainiana Tamatawale a lay missionary who joined the gathering in a spirit of fellowship and support. Many common values of love, compassion, kindness, service that unites us were also recognized by the women from different faiths groups which can promote peace, friendship, harmony and solidarity within families and communities. The gathering also emphasised that interreligious dialogue is not about debating or changing another person's beliefs.

It also reminded the group despite our different religious traditions; we share a common humanity. Through simple encounters, faith-sharing and respectful listening, women can become powerful bridge builders of friendship, unity and peace in our society.

This first gathering was a meaningful step towards strengthening interfaith friendships and encouraging women to become bridge builders of understanding, unity and peace in their communities.



A group of women from faith communities gathered together and shared on the “Golden Rule Poster”..



Group sharing by women from all faith's recognizes common values of love, compassion, kindness, service and peace that unites us..



Through simple encounters, faith-sharing and respectful listening, women can become powerful bridge builders of friendship, unity and peace in our society.

Interfaith Gathering of Religious Leaders, representatives and faith communities.

On the 15th of October 2026, an interfaith gathering of religious leaders and representatives took place at the Sikh Gurudwara under the theme “My Faith, My Story – Building Harmony, Understanding and Peace.” The purpose of this gathering was to provide a welcoming and respectful space for people of different faith traditions to share their personal faith journeys, cultural experiences and religious values while strengthening mutual understanding and relationships.

The gathering began with a warm welcome and an opening prayer, followed by introductions from the participants from the Sikh Gurudwara, Shree Sanatan Dharm, Islam Faith and the Catechists from the Catholic church. Supported by Columban Lay Missionary Sainiana Tamatawale, I facilitated the programme, encouraging everyone to participate in a spirit of openness, respect and attentive listening.

The main activity focused on personal sharing, where religious leaders and representatives were invited to speak about what their faith means to them, the values that guide their daily lives, and the religious and cultural traditions that shape their communities. The dialogue also encouraged participants to reflect on the values shared across different faith traditions, including love, compassion, respect, forgiveness, service, justice and peace.

The gathering emphasised that interreligious dialogue is not about debating religious differences but about listening, learning, to strengthen relationships and encourage friendship among people of different religious backgrounds and appreciate one another. It highlighted how personal encounters and respectful dialogue can help overcome misunderstandings and build bridges of trust and cooperation. The programme also offered an opportunity to reflect on how different faith communities can work together to promote peace, harmony and the common good in our society.

The interfaith gathering was a meaningful initiative in promoting the Columban mission of interreligious dialogue. It reinforced the importance of creating spaces where people of different faiths can meet, share their experiences and grow in mutual respect and understanding.

Through this initiative, we continue to build bridges of friendship, understanding and peace, recognising that although our faith traditions may differ, our shared humanity brings us together.



Faith sharing and encourage friendship among people of different religious backgrounds can work together to promote peace.



The Golden Rule poster was also shared with the religious leaders and representatives, highlighting a common teaching across different faith traditions: »Treat others as you would like to be treated«.



Follow up IRD awareness Talk → Reflection → Encounter → Friendship with Holy Family Parish – Youth and Community Members.

Theme: Building Bridges of Peace through Dialogue, Encounter, and Friendship

On the 16th October, I facilitated a follow-up awareness session on Interreligious Dialogue for Catholic youths and community members at Holy Family Parish, following the evening Mass. The session focused on understanding the meaning and importance of interreligious dialogue and the Catholic Church's call to love, respect and build relationships with people of different faiths. I introduced the four forms of dialogue: Dialogue of Life, Dialogue of Action, Dialogue of Religious Experience and Dialogue of Theological Exchange.

Special emphasis was placed on the role of young people as bridge-builders of peace, encouraging them to overcome religious prejudices, respect differences, build friendships and promote unity within their communities. Through reflection questions and sharing, participants were encouraged to recognise the importance of listening, mutual respect and peaceful encounters with people of other religions. They were also invited to identify practical ways of living interreligious dialogue in their everyday lives. The session provided a valuable opportunity to raise awareness of interreligious dialogue within the Catholic community and encourage young people to become active promoters of peace, friendship and understanding.

The key message was that interreligious dialogue begins with simple acts of kindness, respectful encounters and genuine friendships that help build bridges across religious differences...



Interfaith Prayer Gathering for Peace and the Care of Creation.

Theme: “United in Prayer for Peace and the Care of Our Common Home”.

On 17 October 2026, I facilitated an Interfaith Prayer Gathering in Labasa at the Jame Masjid Mosque bringing together representatives from different faith communities, including Shri Sanatan, TISI Sangam, Islam, Sikh, Catholic and Anglican traditions.

Religious symbols representing different faith traditions were placed at the centre of the gathering, symbolising unity in diversity, mutual respect and our shared commitment to peace. People of different faiths gathered around these sacred symbols, offering special prayers for peace, for people affected by war, violence, natural disasters (care for creation) and humanitarian crises, as well as for reconciliation and harmony in their own religious traditions. This prayer gathering also highlighted our shared responsibility to respect religious diversity, promote peaceful coexistence and protect our common home. Participants expressed friendship and solidarity through a respectful exchange of peace.

The prayerful session was a meaningful expression of interfaith unity, reminding participants that despite our different religious beliefs, we share a common responsibility to work together as peacemakers and caretakers of creation.

The spiritual prayer session concluded with a time of fellowship over refreshments, providing participants with an opportunity to meet and greet and build meaningful connections with one another.



Religious leaders and members reflect /pray for peace in our hearts, and homes, neighboring countries experiencing war and conflict and for unity among all people.



Prayers.by.faith.communities.for.harmony?caring.for.our.shared.earth-environment;



United in Respect and Peace: This shared moment reflects the beauty of Interreligious dialogue honouring one another's faith traditions.



The spiritual prayer session by faith groups concluded with a time of fellowship over refreshments..



Participants with an opportunity to meet and greet build meaningful connection with one another.

***Pescila Magdalin with support of Sainiana Tamatawale.
Columban Interreligious Dialogue Ministry.***