



Reflections on the Strategic Retreat on Community Capacity Building for Peace and Harmony and International Interfaith Peace Conference 2019



*Group Photo at the International Interfaith Peace Conference 2019:
Compassion as the Common Ground of Religious Faith & Practice*

Together we come from different parts of the world with rich experience." This was a beautiful line from the multifaith prayer offered by the Toowoomba Interfaith Working Group which helped to put up this conference and the pre-conference retreat that I had the privilege to attend.

The retreat was really a 3-day intensive immersion into a small makeshift community of practitioners from the field of either interfaith dialogue or community building. The methodology provided by the retreat director, Prof. Michael Cuthill, and Pure Land's Multifaith Multicultural Centre turned us into a microcosm of human society: people arrived from all around the world, we came with various professions, different cultural backgrounds, age groups, and most of all an accumulated wealth of community work in very different contexts. We shared our personal stories, and motivations, case studies, and projects we were currently working on. The privilege of having a group sharing from such disparate fields offered me insights, parallels, and best practices that I could bring back to my own interfaith practice in Singapore.



Personally, I do interfaith work concerned with tweaking the processes of dialogue, especially the dialogue around diversity - because sometimes the minor changes are the ones that have the deepest impact. I shared a new project I'm working on, developing a simple tool to foster deep conversations around all sorts of diversity - interfaith, intercultural, disabilities, and neurodiversity - that people who are not diversity experts, not trained dialogue facilitators, not professors nor professional mediators, can still fruitfully and especially safely have on their own.

My tiny project now contains improvements - effective tweaks from my fellow retreatants in this small makeshift microcosm of society - community-building tweaks from interfaith challenges in Wales, training mindsets in Scotland, partnership brokering in East Timor, community engagement in Toowoomba, and science shop applications from Germany.

I return home after seven days of retreat and conference, with not merely having made a few new friends nor merely expanding my 'network', but I go home more informed about the possibilities - the potential - that interfaith work doesn't have to be just interfaith.

Interfaith work could be engaging with the police force like what I experienced here in Toowoomba, it could be welcoming refugees like what this city has decided to do, and it could be providing a Saturday friendship dinner every single week for the privileged and not-so-privileged members of the community to come together. Interfaith work can involve all sorts of community-building. I carry home with me the lesson that in the work I already do, I could add all sorts of value to the various communities in my home country.

Don Basil Kannangara,
Workshop and Conference participant from Singapore
Interfaith Facilitator, Founder of IF THEN HOW



Keynote Address by Marilyn Turkovich, Executive Director, Charter for Compassion



Plenary I: The Central Role of Compassion in Your Faith



Plenary II: Knowledge and Understanding must be Accompanied by Compassion



In Conversation with The Toowoomba Interfaith Working Group



Plenary III: Sharing Experiences



Plenary IV: Compassion in the School Grounds – The Youth Perspective



Keynote Address by Derek Tuffield, Chief Executive Officer, Lifeline Darling Downs



Dialogue Circles: Does One's Motivation for Showing Compassion Matter in Today's Society?



Open Space Technology: Where To From Here?



The Venerable Master Chin Kung, the Venerables, all staff and volunteers from Pure Land Learning College Association wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Check out more photos on [f mmc.Toowoomba](https://www.facebook.com/mmc.Toowoomba) - For upcoming activities and programs, please visit www.interfaith-harmony.org - call us at +617 4659 8054, or email us mfmcc.pllc@gmail.com