

Peace Week

2025

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, the University of Auckland's annual Peace Week is a coordinated approach with acts of service and charity to honour the 51 shahada (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 work.

Peace Week is an invitation to the university community, regardless of ethnicity, nationality, religion or background – to set aside time and energy to see each other and recognise our shared humanity. It is an opportunity to grow social capital, social cohesion, and cultural and 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.
- **Justice and Courage:** understanding that real peace can only be achieved with justice and that standing for justice often takes considerable courage and resilience.

The theme for this year is “Unmasking Prejudice: The power of knowledge and empathy”.

Ibn Sina, the great 10th-century polymath, wrote, “The pursuit of knowledge is the noblest of all human endeavours, for it is through understanding that we come to know the world and ourselves.”

“The good news is that human beings can regain the sense of connection to themselves. Just as we can regain the sense of connection to our nature. Empathy, which is a genuine human quality, is in us. We are actually wired for empathy...” — Gabor Mate

The launch of Peace Week, on Monday 17 March, will include a discussion from esteemed speakers about the importance of knowledge and empathy as key aspects of unmasking prejudice:

- **Dr. Fatima Junaid** specialises in the area of Organisational behaviour & HR. Her work focuses on well-being and stress, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), mental health, psychosocial risks at work, and women. She publishes in academic and non-academic media.
- **Dr. Aamina Ali** is a registered clinical psychologist with diverse experience in the application of psychology across different sectors, including clinical practice, management and advocacy. Her clinical experience encompasses work with children, adolescents, and adults across individual, systemic, and group therapy settings.

Mrs. Shahela Qureshi
Muslim Chaplain
University of Auckland