

Punchbowl Musallah Hosts Interfaith Youth Visit

(Sydney, Saturday, 22 April 2006) - The Religious Youth Service (RYS), www.religiousyouthservice.org, in conjunction with the Universal Peace Federation (www.iifwp.org), organised for a group of 35 young people (high school and university) from a variety of faiths to participate in a 2 day interfaith event on resolving conflict and promoting peace. The event started on Friday 21st April and concluded on Saturday 22nd April 2006.

The Friday consisted of presentations and discussion while the Saturday involved visiting the place of worship of 3 different faiths - Buddhist, Christian and Islamic.

The objectives of the visits were to:

- Feel the joy of Multi-faith Service,
- Explore the possibilities for harmony among the world's diverse cultures,
- Feel the power of practising the basic spiritual principle of living for others through serving a church, a temple and a mosque in one day.

The Australian Islamic Mission (AIM) hosted the group's visit to an Islamic place of worship at the Punchbowl Musallah (Prayer Hall) in Matthews Street on the Saturday from 11:30am to 2:00pm. The group had just visited the Melkite Catholic Church in Greenacre.

The Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth (FAMSY) were invited to bring along 15 local youth to join the visit to the Musallah.



Sh Mutasim Jarrah, Rev Rick McInerheney,
Father Melhem Haikal, Clr Khodr Saleh



Group with the bags of rubbish collected

The visit to the Musallah consisted of two main aspects. One was to participate in practical community service and the group decided to pick up rubbish in the centre yard as well as on the footpaths of five streets surrounding the Prayer Hall. The other aspect involved listening to a short presentation on the teachings and traditions of Islam by Br. Siddiq Buckley, a spokesperson for AIM.

The youth were also given an opportunity to observe the performance of the prescribed midday Muslim prayer and were later treated to a delicious lunch which they all enjoyed.

In attendance were several guests including Father Melhem Haikal from the Melkite Catholic Church in Greenacre, Sheikh Mutasim Jarrah, Imam of the Punchbowl Musallah, Jynene Helland from the Women's Federation for World Peace and Canterbury Councillor Khodr Saleh.

Closing remarks were given by Fazida Razak (RYS Asia and Australia) and Rev Rick McInerheney (UPF). The AIM president, Dr Zachariah Matthews, thanked everyone for participating in the event and gave a special note of thanks to all the volunteers and supporters.

The group then departed for their next stop, the Laotian Buddhist Temple in Bonnyrigg.