

STORIES ABOUT THE INTERFAITH CENTER AT THE PRESIDIO WEBCASTING AT THE MELBOURNE PARLIAMENT

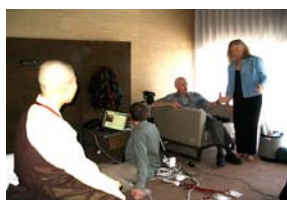
Webcasting from the Melbourne Parliament

Being with 5,000 people who share your passion is hugely confirming. On the other hand, deciding which 30 workshops to attend (if you can handle that many in six days), from the 660 offered at the Parliament of the World's Religions last month in Melbourne, is worse than a high-school pop quiz. Plus six plenaries, 40 off-site events... So - follow your personal compass and let the feast at hand serve you!

More than a hundred Bay Area registrants in Australia faced that assignment. Their stories tumble out afterwards. Islam and the West, climate change, the divine feminine, the indigenous role in interfaith culture, conflict resolution, and interreligious education were among the hot-button issues raised up in dozens of contexts by 1500 presenters from 80 countries. And bumping into new friends and old in the halls between sessions can trump the workshops.

In 2004, the Interfaith Center's *Interfaith Design Competition* was featured in Barcelona. Last month the *Lost and Endangered Religions Project* was given a featured workshop. And the Center's new webcasting capacity was highlighted in one workshop with a live feed from the web on a screen behind the panel - an interview with young adult leaders in the hotel next door to the convention center. That took doing.

Twenty of us connected with the Center worked on creating two dozen hours of live broadcasting from the Parliament. On a Tuesday afternoon, 16 of us gathered at David Rickey's hotel room. The next afternoon, hours before the opening, the team swelled to 18 in the Chaffee's room (see photo). Two-thirds of the team was charged with finding interesting guests for live interviews.



Mastering the computers, cameras, modems, and broadband issues involved in this new, inexpensive technology turns out to be huge for novices. No one had done this before. We didn't find a good broadcast site until the third try. **Gard Jamieson**, a longtime interfaith leader from Las Vegas, offered his bedroom on the 15th floor of the Hilton Hotel, next to the convention center. Light was good, the broadband adequate, and guests could be escorted from the Parliament floor to the "studio" in 15 minutes. (PHOTO: From the right, Bettina Gray works with David Rickey and Daniel Gray as their guest waits to be interviewed.)

Half a dozen team members made the webcasting their personal Parliament. **Bettina Gray** was indefatigable as the host for most of the interviews, which will be archived with her

other “Spiritual Resources” interviews recorded at the Interfaith Chapel. In addition to asking the questions, she produced/supervised the segments as they were recorded. Board member **David Rickey** did most of the camera work, backed up by **Rachael Watcher**, who also took her own camera outside to get footage and interviews on the Parliament floor. David said he was happy to miss the workshops since he was able to be with and hear the personal stories of 40 extraordinary religious leaders from around the world, all committed to bridge-building. **Vanessa Brake** was equally faithful in monitoring the chat room and technical support during the broadcasts themselves.

Daniel Gray, our technical director and wizard, is the team member on whom we all depended, minute by minute. Daniel, who happens to be Bettina’s son, stayed in touch with **Junaid Islam**, who created the technology, back in San Jose. Daniel fought like a quiet tiger in our search for a reliable, affordable source of internet broadband, and finally found it in the Hilton’s room service.

Marla Kolman was host for young adult interviews, and **Paul Chaffee** spelled Bettina in a session on grassroots leadership and an interview with Marcus and Mary Braybrooke, pillars of the global interfaith community for 50 years. **Andrew Kille** produced a segment, and **David Ponedel** served as the team still-photographer.

Now comes the editing, archiving, and website preparation for making these interviews available online at www.interfaith-presidio.org. The task is considerable, but we are working hard to make this come true quickly.

Beside David Ponedel and David Rickey, current and former Interfaith Center trustees on the Melbourne team included **Don Frew**, **Iftekhhar Hai**, **Heng Sure**, **Kathleen Hurty**, **Jack Lundin**, and **Meji Singh**, a real tribute to the Center’s leadership.

What We Came Home With

The Interfaith Center at the Presidio produced two dozen hours of live webcasting last month, bringing home interviews with three dozen leaders attending the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Melbourne, Australia, December 3-9.

Unless otherwise indicated, **Bettina Gray** hosted the interviews listed below, in addition to producing and supervising the segments through six days of broadcasting. Tapes from the interviews are currently being edited and will be broadcast in coming months and available from the web.

Circumstances kept us from inviting interview guests ahead of time. Instead, we had a dozen people prowling the workshops to identify particularly interesting speakers and invite them, sometimes at the last minute, to be interviewed live on the web. So guest selection was scatter-shot rather than representative. We missed some interviews we really

wanted for lack of time or conflicting schedules. Nevertheless, the list clearly reflects the Parliament's amazing diversity.

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Dr. Marcus Braybrooke and Mary Braybrooke – Hosted by Paul Chaffee

Since the early sixties the Braybrookes, Anglicans from Oxford, have attended global interfaith gatherings, with Marcus becoming the movement's 'scribe' and historian. They talk about what drew them to interfaith dialogue 50 years ago as well as their hopes for the future.

Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bukhari

Sheikh Bukhari talks about peacebuilding in Jerusalem. He leads the Naqshabandian Religious Method (Sufi) and the Uzbek community in Jerusalem, where he is a leading Muslim voice for peace and reconciliation.

Sr. Joan Chittister

Sister Joan, author of 22 books, is a noted international lecturer focused on women in church and society, human rights, peace and justice, and contemporary religious life and spirituality. She talks about spirituality, justice, and balanced gender roles.

Alvin Dixon & Rev. James Scott

Alvin Dixon, a Canadian Indigenous leader, and Jim Scott, a United Church of Canada social activist focused on conflict resolution, tell the story of "the residential school settlement process" in Canada, a remarkable reconciliation process that remains active.

Grove Harris

Grove Harris from the Parliament's staff was responsible for selecting this year's Parliament workshops, 660 from three times that many proposals. She talks about how the process unfolded. [Unfortunately, audio problems may make this tape unusable.]

Amma Sri Karunamayi

A Hindu spiritual teacher from the Penusila Ashram in India, Amma is known for her devotional meditation and is founder of a number of free humanitarian programs, including schools and hospital service for the poor.

Dr. Paul Knitter

Professor Knitter is Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions, and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in New York and author of *No Other Name?* (1985) which helped open up interreligious dialogue for Christians. Here he talks about religious "dual belonging."

Kay Lindahl

Kay is best known for her interfaith-friendly books on the power of listening. As an

interfaith leader, she has been or still is a trustee for the North American Interfaith Network, Immortal Chaplains Foundation, and United Religions Initiative. She talks about listening in an interfaith context.

Janet Penn

Janet is the Founder and Director of Interfaith Action (IFA), in Sharon, Massachusetts, and its innovative youth leadership program. She also created the Sharon Pluralism Network, a collaboration among town departments to foster a town-wide culture of pluralism. She talks about young adult interfaith action.

Imam Feisal Rauf

Imam Rauf is chairman of the Cordoba Initiative, a multinational, multireligious project working to improve relations between the Muslim and the West, and founder of the American Society for Muslim Advancement. He talks about peacemaking in the midst of the purported "clash of civilizations."

Ralph Singh

Long-time interfaith activist and North American Interfaith Network trustee, Ralph has completed a new children's book featuring stories focused on character development and faith, the result of many years of interest in interfaith education.

Alison Stokes & Rev. Guo Cheen

Alison is Executive Director of the Temple of Understanding, one of the oldest international interfaith organizations in the world. She and her colleague Rev. Cheen talk about the activities of women in the interfaith movement since the original World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893.

Mary Evelyn Tucker & John Grim

Professor Tucker teaches religion and environmental studies at Yale and is co-founder and co-director of the Forum on Religion and Ecology. Her Yale colleague Professor Grim is widely known for his work in the same area and is series editor of Harvard's World Religions and Ecology books. They talk about spirituality and the environment in a time of climate change.

Dr. Sakeena Yacoobi

Dr. Yacoobi is an educator in Kabul, Afghanistan, where she daily puts her life on the line to promote women's rights and education for girls. She talks about what it takes and why she does it.

PANELS

- *Memories of Parliaments Past – Hopes for Melbourne*

Three Interfaith Center at the Presidio trustees, past and present, talk about their memories of earlier Parliaments and their hope for the one that was just beginning in

Melbourne. **Rt. Rev. David Ponedel** has been to all the modern Parliaments, **Dr. Meji Singh** is a regular at international meetings of the Parliament and United Religions Initiative, and **Iftekhhar Hai** brought his wife Attila to this Parliament. They are joined by **Bettina Gray** and **Paul Chaffee**.

- *Children of the Earth - Youth Projects* -- Hosted by Marla Kolman

Jimmy Lama is a Buddhist young adult leader in Nepal who works with 700 children in 10 community-run schools promoting peace and values-based education.

Karolyn Buys, a Columbian living in Munich, is a translator and teacher. She serves on the World Spirit Youth Council and works on issues of forgiveness and healing.

Dr Nina Meyerhof is Founder and President of Children of the Earth.

- *Women in Interfaith Leadership*

Kathleen Hurty served as ecumenical and interfaith officer of the National Council of Churches, USA. Retired in Oakland, she is on the Interfaith Center at the Presidio Board of Directors.

Bettina Gray, hosting this panel, also spoke as current Chair of the North American Interfaith Network and author of *Parliament of Souls* (1993), which focused on 1993 Parliament interviews.

Rev Dr Antje Jackelen is the Bishop of Lund, the first woman to be popularly elected bishop in the Church of Sweden. A theologian and widely published author, she is also president of the European Society for the Study of Science and Theology.

Jacqueline Ogega is Director of the Women's Program of the World Conference of Religions for Peace. Formerly she established the African Women of Faith Network and is known for her work in gender issues, peacebuilding, and development programming.

- *The Varieties of Grassroots Interfaith Activism* – Hosted by Paul Chaffee

Girish Shah, a Jain from San Jose, California, helped his community build a temple and then reach out to the rest of the South Bay religious community. He tells the story of an American immigrant building faith and interfaith connections.

Rev. Bud Heckman is Director for External Relations at Religions for Peace, the world's largest interfaith coalition, and his book *InterActive Faith* (2008) has become a handbook for activists.

Dr. Barbara McGraw teaches ethics, world religion, and law at St. Mary's (Moraga), where she is Director of the Center for Engaged Religious Pluralism. She is known for her textbook on world religions and her special interest in religious pluralism in the public square.

The list is incomplete and will be updated.