

# Peace Week

2022

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

*May the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon everyone*

It's now three years since 51 men, women and children were killed and 40 injured when a gunman opened fire at the Al-Noor and Linwood mosques in Christchurch. The terrorist was jailed for life. However, the reality is that pain and trauma is now part of the lives of the survivors. And as their struggle continues, the Muslim community is still under threat; just recently, a Muslim high school girl was attacked by three other girls from the same school in Otago.

Peace Week has been established as a means of remembering the victims of the Christchurch Mosques shootings. As marking anniversaries is not typically done in Islam, instead, Peace Week focuses on looking forward with acts of love, service, and charity – honouring the victims by doing good. It is also an opportunity to learn and understand different cultures, ethnicities, and faiths by sharing conversations and good works.

The theme this year is 'Empathy'. Empathy is the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes and understand their emotions. It is thinking about others in their perspective to identify and feel their distress. A crucial first step to compassion, empathy is a powerful psychological tool that can bring about tranquillity and goodwill to this world that is often filled with so much hatred and animosity. Sympathy and empathy, although often mistaken as similar emotions, have widely different meanings. Sympathy is being concerned about others. It is the temperament of feeling sorry for others. Empathy, on the other hand, is stronger than sympathy – it goes a step further to actually feel others' feelings about something.

Empathy is extremely important in Islam. Consider this Qur'anic verse about the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him):

“There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you and to the believers is kind and merciful.” [Qur'an: Chapter 9, Verse 128]

The Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) himself also encouraged us to feel empathy for each other, he was reported to have said:

“The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy are just like one body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever.”

I would urge us all to take a step towards being more empathetic. 'Are you ready to join the Empathy Revolution?', Roman Krzanich's [TED Talk](#), shows how we can boost our empathy and use it to improve our relationships, enhance our creativity, rethink our priorities in life, and tackle social problems from everyday prejudice to violent conflicts. Empathy, Krznanic argues, has the power to transform relationships, from the personal to the political, and create fundamental social change.

It's important for us all to stop and think – “what can I do to help make a positive change for a better future”? Each one of us has something to offer in our own individual capacity to take that step towards improving social cohesion – whether that be time, effort, skills, money, a good word, prayers, or supporting others to do good – so let's make the intention, be proactive, talk to people, find out what is happening and then let's take that first step.

While we can never forget what happened in Christchurch, and we continue to pray for the shuhada (martyrs), the survivors, their families and our nation, let's also unite on the road to greater empathy to each other.

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ السَّلَامُ وَمِنْكَ السَّلَامُ تَبَارَكْتَ يَا دَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

O God, You are Peace, and from You comes Peace. Blessed are You, O Possessor of Majesty and Honour