

## RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY

# Clarence community encourages conversation on diversity



Rabbi Zalman Kastel, AM who is the national director of the Together for Humanity program, paid Christ Church Cathedral in Grafton a visit on Monday as he looks to help the region achieve one goal.



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THE Clarence Valley has often been touted as a ‘monochrome’ community in the face of diversity, but with the help of the Together for Humanity program the region is looking to challenge that title.

National director of the [Together for Humanity program](#), Rabbi Zalman Kastel, stopped by Grafton’s Christ Church Cathedral for a meeting on Monday involving prominent members of the Clarence community.



Greg Jenks and Rabbi Zalman Kastel AM, national director of the Together for Humanity program joined a group of community members at Christ Church Cathedral in Grafton on Monday, September 21, 2020.

Coinciding with International Peace Day, the goal of the meeting was to explore ways to promote and learn more about Together for Humanity which can provide programs for students in local government and independent schools.

While it was Rabbi Kastel's first visit to Grafton, he expressed a keen interest in developing a further understanding of the region and its diversity issues.

"Today I heard lots of different perspectives of the region from people in the group. There's diversity here, but that's not as visible to some people," Rabbi Kastel said.

"Inclusion is always an ongoing task but what it looks like here will be determined by its people.

"Together for Humanity is an inclusive not-for-profit organisation that provides belonging, acceptance and wellbeing and we would like to work with the people of Grafton on those things."



Greg Jenks and Rabbi Zalman Kastel AM, national director of the Together for Humanity program joined a group of community members at Christ Church Cathedral in Grafton on Monday, September 21, 2020.

Dean of Christ Church Cathedral Greg Jenks said it was a novelty having a Rabbi in the church, but when he got the call it was too good an opportunity to pass up.

“He’s one of the leaders in the social tolerance community development sector. He was doing some community work up in Byron Bay and he rang to see if we could get together,” Dr Jenks said.

“We’re both part of the religious communities forum, that was our connection. When we found out he was coming to Grafton we wanted to bring some other folk in. We had folk from council, the police and other members of the community.”

Dr Jenks said it was important to equip our younger generation with the ability to understand and adapt through diversity.

“It’s about giving people the cultural skills to deal with these differences. When the community is seemingly so monochrome, we don’t give our kids the skills to deal with the cultural differences we experience,” he said.

“I would love it if kids coming out of school, their first reaction to seeing somebody different was ‘wow this is good, I’d like to explore that’ rather than ‘they’re different, they’re weird’.

“We’re not saying that the other person is better or smarter, but there’s a whole world of differences to explore and we don’t often know how to react to these situations.”

Rabbi Kastel said school is a crucial part of one’s life and the skills can be introduced with great effect.

“I think what happens at school is very formative. If young people can learn ways of thinking about themselves, that will increase their happiness and their wellbeing,” Rabbi Kastel said.

“Part of that is thinking about fitting in and dealing with differences.”

Together for Humanity will look to introduce its programs to the region as soon as they get the nod of approval, with community members expressing a keen interest at the meeting.

“We’ve got a team that are already working with schools in various places. We’ll be ready to start as soon as the community and COVID allow, but even with COVID there’s ways we can work around that.”

[grifton christ church cathedral](#)

[greg jens](#)

[rabbi zalman kastel](#)

[together for humanity](#)

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