

Interfaith Service in Support of Nepalese Earthquake Victims Held in Syracuse, NY

[InterFaith Works of Central New York](#) and members of the [Bhutanese Community in Syracuse](#) held an Interfaith Service on Tuesday, May 12, 2015, for victims of the recent earthquakes in Nepal. Over 100 Central New York faith leaders, ethnically Nepalese, Bhutanese, and community supporters walked in unison from InterFaith Works, 1010 James St., Syracuse, NY, to the top of nearby Lincoln Park for the service, which included interfaith meditation, prayers, mantras, and the lighting of candles. A letter of support from Syracuse's mayor in support of the Nepalese people and local citizens whose loved ones have been affected was read. Following the vigil, attendees attended a reception at nearby St. Vincent DePaul Church on Vine Street.

As we hiked to the top of the hill through the neighborhoods, many families came out of their houses and offered well-wishes to the marchers, some joining up with us. Upon arrival at the hilltop, we gathered in a large circle on the open grass and reflected on the second earthquake that had happened that morning. Especially moving was the creation of a map of Nepal, made from a simple bag of flour. Bhutanese teens and young adults scooped handfuls of flour to dust the grass with the outline of the country, while faith leaders chanted a Buddhist prayer of mourning. Then candles were placed around the map, and lit by those present to represent our hopes and prayers for the people of Nepal. The Hindu faith leader invited all to "open and step out of their shoes" for prayers, a practice some had never encountered before. Faith leaders spoke of the interconnectedness of all human life, no matter our belief systems. Then the teenagers sang the Nepalese national anthem to close the service.

InterFaith Works has settled many Bhutanese refugees in Syracuse. Due to persecution in their native Bhutan, many refugees fled to Nepal and lived in refugee camps before being resettled in the United States. Many Syracuse Bhutanese still have family and friends in Nepal.

InterFaith Works and the Bhutanese Community also are partnering to gather donations to benefit the victims. Over \$4,000 has already been collected. Those wishing to donate may send a check (with "Nepal earthquake donation" in the memo line) to InterFaith Works, 1010 James St., Syracuse, NY 13203.

News coverage of the Syracuse interfaith service is available at the following links:

http://www.syracuse.com/news/index.ssf/2015/05/interfaith_service_for_nepal_earthquake_victims.html

<http://www.localsyr.com/story/d/story/nepalese-families-in-cny-find-support-from-neighbor/50680/qG74Dc3ICUW5f9sQtKeWfA>

About InterFaith Works

Located in Syracuse, NY, [InterFaith Works of Central New York](#), through education, service and dialogue, affirms the dignity of each person and every faith community and works to create relationships and understanding. Founded in 1976, InterFaith Works addresses deeply embedded social divisions leading to community action and policy change. InterFaith Works' social service programs address the needs of and empower people who are vulnerable, low income and targets of oppression, including refugees, the elderly and the institutionalized, through direct service and educational programs. InterFaith Works is committed to the belief that all people are deserving of dignity and respect regardless of ethnicity, faith tradition, social circumstances or age. Key programs

include the following: [Ahmad and Elizabeth El-Hindi Center for Dialogue](#), [Center for New Americans](#), [Senior Services](#) and [Spiritual Care](#).

**Additional message provided by Madalyn Smith,
member of the InterFaith Works Round Table of Faith Leaders**

"The nature of all things is interdependent, and all beings are intimately connected. Directly or indirectly, all beings support us on our journey through life. Everyone deserves our kindness, and everyone is in absolute need of our care. As a mother cares for her child, we can care for everyone. This is the boundless quality of love."

H.E. Shyalpa Tenzin Rinpoche