

WFWP Denver, CO's Interreligious Sharing Series What Does It Mean to Be a ...

Gale Alves
April 25, 2019



Interreligious sharing series

Editor's Note: Gale Alves is the co-creator, alongside her husband Antonio, of the Denver Interreligious Sharing Series. With their passion for interreligious dialogue, they organized the first gathering in Denver, Colorado in April 2018 (you can read about it [here](#)) and it has been continuing ever since.

"What Does It Mean to Be a Christian, a Sikh, a Mormon, a Muslim, a Unificationist, etc.?" This was the topic of the 5th gathering of our Interreligious Sharing Series at a mosque on April 25th, 2019, and the month of April marked our first anniversary of bringing adherents of different faiths to one place of worship and promote mutual respect and understanding. It all began one year ago in the Denver Lady Fatima Center.

Our inspiration to start this interreligious work was the founder of the Family Federation for World Peace spiritual movement, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, who dedicated his life to working for peace. He understood that harmony among the world's religions was the solid foundation needed for true peace to take root and flourish. Rev. Moon passed in 2012, but his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, is continuing their God-given mission for peace.

"It is easy to talk about peace," he once said, "but to bring about peace is not easy. Before we talk about peace among individuals, or nations, we must talk about peace between ourselves and God. There are close to 200 countries in the world. For all of these countries in the world to enjoy peace, the power of religion is absolutely necessary. The power of religion is in the love that overflows from it. There is no difference between Islam and Christianity or any other faith, in their commitment to bringing about a world of peace."

In a moving statement of love and peace between religions, five religions were represented at our interreligious gathering: Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, Sikhism, Christianity, Islam and Unificationism. All of the leaders were delighted to meet each other over a wonderful halal dinner provided by the center, and everyone expressed how warm and hospitable our Muslim hosts were. The religious leaders each had 10 minutes to share and each did a fine job conveying the highlights of their faith.



Jennie Preece, interfaith leader of Jesus Christ of the Latter day Saints

Jennie Preece, interfaith leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, emphasized practice. "A Mormon practices their faith in the form of caring for others and being a disciple of Jesus Christ. It takes work and thoughtful preparation to make time to practice one's faith on a daily basis."

She described how they honor the Sabbath Day by attending meetings, singing and worshipping, and shared about other expressions of faith such as serving others, and spending time as a family. "We keep Sunday holy by choosing the sacred. This is a big focus for us. We pray and seek to connect with God. It is a sacred privilege to commune with God. We are spirit children. God hears and answers our prayers. We have lay clergy only in our church. They are not paid. This helps to cultivate a willingness to serve and sacrifice. Each Sunday we partake of the Sacrament and renew our baptismal covenants. Our temples are our most sacred buildings."



Sikh speaker, Davinder Singh Sandhu

Davinder Singh Sandhu, a member of the Sikh religion, spoke next. He told the audience that Sikh means "learner." A true Sikh strives to learn every moment, every day. They believe in equality for all. They do not believe in the caste system. A Sikh earns his living honestly and tries to serve selflessly. Their faith teaches about oneness with God and respect for humanity. They want clean air, clean water and a clean earth for everyone.

Sikhism was founded in India. Their holy temple, called the Golden Temple, is in the city of Amritsar in northwestern India. It is the Sikh's holiest site. One enters the temple from 4 different sides; this expresses openness and acceptance. Thirty-five percent of the pilgrims visiting the temple are from other faiths. During special religious events, up to 200,000 people

are served food, all of which comes from donations from the faithful.



Chaplain James Choi

Our Christian speaker was Chaplain James Choi from the Evangelical Covenant Church. He grew up in Korea and was raised a Presbyterian. His parents were very devout, attending daily 4:30 a.m. prayer meetings. Chaplain Choi was inspired to be a practicing Christian because of the beautiful example of his parents. He attended Bible college and the seminary, but as a child he was sickly. A faithful elderly neighbor lady laid hands on him and prayed, and miraculously he was healed. Chaplain Choi then knew the power of God through actual experience.

Evangelical Christians believe in Speaking in Tongues. The Holy Spirit helps them to do so. For them, the power of God is expressed by speaking in different languages temporarily. The people who do so are refreshed spiritually as they speak and pray in tongues.

A Christian follows Jesus and lives by his example, Chaplain Choi explained. They are to be forgiving and live by the Golden Rule - "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." They are taught to

love God and to love their neighbors. The chaplain also described the Christian theological view of Jesus as the way to connect to God and the significance of God's grace.



Hossein Hasheminasari Lady Fatima Mosque

"Being a Muslim does not mean adhering to a faith tradition because your fathers and mothers did. It is not a cultural endeavor." Thus began Hossein Hasheminasari, a young leader of the Lady Fatima Center. He continued by saying that the Prophet Mohammad brought a revolution of all kinds 1400 years ago. He taught that there is but one God and we are to worship Him alone. Muslims acknowledge the Old and New Testaments and recognize Jesus as "the Prophet Jesus." Mohammad was the final prophet who gave them everything they need.

Islam means "peace within oneself." It is the religion of the inner soul. Muslims believe it is important to take time to get to know God and to get to know oneself. We can find answers within ourselves. We know right from wrong. If we look inward, we will know the truth and how to avoid evil.



Pastor Mike Hentrich

The final speaker of the night was Pastor Mike Hentrich of the Colorado Family Church. He co-pastors alongside his wife, Adonia. Pastor Mike shared that Unificationists believe that God has been working through all religions to return our world to His original ideal. He had an original plan for this world, a beautiful world that would be composed of God-centered families. It was to have been a world that wouldn't need things like religion, holy scripture or even a messiah because mankind was not meant to have separated from God.

Pastor Mike continued by expressing that God loves all of His children and plans to save them all, not just those of a particular religion or belief. And because we don't always remember or see God as the Parent of all of us, we don't see each other as brothers and sisters. Therefore, we can easily mistreat or ignore one another.



The religious leaders all felt happy to have had a chance to share aspects of their beliefs with each other and with a spiritually mixed audience. Some leaders, as well as their members, had never been in a mosque before and were grateful for the experience. Dr. Michael Hentrich, former pastor of Colorado Family Church and its director of education, took the photographs and supported all aspects of this edifying program, and Antonio Alves was the emcee.

First-time Sikh participants were so inspired by this interfaith gathering, they want to host the next one this summer!

Author's note: A special thanks to our friend JoLynne Pierce from the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints for taking extensive notes, making this detailed article possible.

