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A Newsletter of the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable

THE ROUNDTABLE



*"Only trees that
bear fruit have
stones thrown at
them."*

When we talk about Interfaith we mean faith cooperation, not a blending of faiths, but a strengthening of faiths. The problem in the world today is not the faiths in the world. The problem in the world is that people do not follow their own faiths.

There is a belief in the word "infinity" which is universal. For instance, I can not count to the highest number. There is no limit to the amount of wisdom, knowledge or understanding one can obtain. Each faith here today that you have seen through a variety of performances has a share of this infinity. What is a part of infinity? All you mathematicians out there, you know what the answer is. Any part of infinity is infinite itself. Therefore we are

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Interfaith Month Celebrations of diversity

Interfaith Month in Utah commenced with a Prayer Breakfast hosted by the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable (SLIR) on Thursday, February 3rd, 2011, at the Downtown Marriot Hotel. This event joined with the United Nations' "World Interfaith Harmony Week" which was being celebrated worldwide.

Alan Bachman, SLIR Chairman, welcomed everyone. He noted that interreligious dialogue contributes to a culture of peace, and spreads the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill throughout the world's churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, and other places of worship. Three recent installations were acknowledged: Rev. Curtis Price of the First Baptist church, Rabbi Ilana Schwartzman of Congregation Kol Ami, and Pastor David Nichols of the Mount Tabor Lutheran Church.

The invocation was given by Wendy Stovall, Coordinator of the Utah Chapter of the Universal Peace Federation and Co-Pastor of the Unification Church. A proclamation from Salt Lake City's Mayor Ralph Becker was read by Yolanda Francisco Nez from his office. Mayor Peter Corroon was in attendance and spoke of the importance of the work being done by the

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Heidi Hart performs at the Musical Tribute

Closing Remarks at the Musical Tribute

— Alan Bachman, SLIR Chair

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all here as equals. In my own faith – Judaism for instance, it is repeated over thirty times: the importance of caring for strangers, the widows, orphans, those that are less fortunate than ourselves. Why is this repeated over thirty times? Because this is the hard one, my friends. It is so easy to fear other people rather than to love them. Every major faith addresses the issue of caring and the need for charity. All faiths teach us to do things that are sometimes not easy to do, and sometimes the holiest things are the most difficult. And when we go to help a stranger sometimes we are singled out ourselves and it is at our own risk.

As a great Turkish Muslim in Salt Lake City taught me: “Only trees that bear fruit have stones thrown at them.” The goal of the Roundtable is to allow our people to be holy and to be a tree with fruit, and not have stones thrown at them. We must work hard to fight the forces of xenophobia. The forces that would cause us to fear strangers. We must choose to overcome our fear.

Those on the early Mormon pioneer trail knew what it was like to be treated like strangers. They knew of an angry mob that killed Joseph Smith at the age of 38. The Sikh’s who you saw here lost Prophets as well, as they clung to their faith. As far as my Jewish faith, we lost millions not long ago. Native Americans in this very country faced perhaps the largest acts of genocide on the planet. The Americans of Japanese ancestry were forced to move into camps be-



cause of fear during World War II.

All faiths and belief systems know what it is to suffer. All faiths know the dangers of mob rule or when a group of people act out of fear rather than knowledge and understanding. Here in Salt Lake City the Mormon pioneers settled in this valley because of the protection of the Wasatch Mountains. Today those mountains are a source of recreation and beauty. But back then those mountains meant life or death.

The Roundtable today, our Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable, is the substitute for those mountains. Our getting together as faiths is a stronger protection and builder of real peace than any wall or mountain. And to our Native American friends and Piute Chief Gary Tom: “We love you.” For your ancestors knew what it was like to be strangers in their own land. Rather than to just say “We are sorry,” we must build bridges together. Bridges of respect, love, harmony and real peace between our people.

To all parents of children, and all children here: if there is someone in your class who appears to be different and is treated like a stranger, talk to your parents, and your teachers, and find a way to reach out to this person. Why? Because all our holy ancestors were once treated like strangers, either here or in another land. And since we know how bad that feels we must go out of our way to make sure that no one in the State of Utah ever feels that way again. We need this concept of infinity, this concept of infinite wisdom in our lives to get there. As it is said in the Psalms and as I heard the Sikhs say it in their own faith, “for the Holy One is the source of all life and it is in the light of the Holy One that we can see light.”

One last thing: “For her ways are ways of pleasantness (and this is the most important line to me) and all her paths are paths of Peace”. Please let this be the beginning of our day together as various faiths. ✨

March Religious Holidays



1st St. David of Wales—Christian

A patron saint of missionaries



2nd-20th —Baha'i

A 19 day fast preceeding the New Year



3rd Maha Shivarati—Hindu

Celebration of Lord Shiva's marriage to Parvati



6th Transfiguration of Jesus — Christian & Orthodox



7th Great Lent — Orthodox Christian

A cycle of reflection and fasting



8th Shrove Tuesday —Christian

A time of Mardi Gras, leading up to Lent



9th Ash Wednesday — Christian

Start of Lent



17th St. Patrick's Day — Christian

Celebration of Irish/Celtic saint of Ireland



19th Magha Puja Day —Buddhist

Giving of the teachings of Lord Buddah



20th Vernal Equinox — Pagan

In the north, Oestra, in the south, Mabon



20th Purim— Jewish

The Persian Jewish queen Esther saving her people from annihilation



20th Holi— Hindu

Spring celebration of the Lord of Pleasure



20th Hola Mohalla— Sikh

Display of martial arts and skills



21st Naw-Ruz, New Year of the Baha'i faith



Norouz, New Year of the Zoroastrian New Year celebrating a new beginning



28th Khordad Sal—Zoroastrian

The birth of the prophet Zarathustra

Interfaith Month 2011

>>> Celebrations of diversity

Feb 3rd

"Awaken to the Heart of Oneness"



Led by Janet Eakin, this evening introduced Interfaith visitors to the Oneness Deeksha blessing experience of meditation, blessings and sharing. Not associated with any one religion, Deeksha is a transfer of love, enhancing, deepening and expanding personal beliefs. It diminishes the belief of separateness and awakens us to the truth that we are all One.

Feb 5th

"True God's Day"

The Unification Church celebrated the 44th True God's Day established by Rev. Sun Myung Moon in 1968 and commemorated on the Lunar New Year. This day recognizes the existence of a loving Heavenly Parent, and reaffirms humankind's connection to the Creator and each other as brothers and sisters, one family of God. Pastor Mike Stovall led those gathered in reciting the Family Pledge, prayer, and a concluding song, followed by a gift exchange and pot luck brunch.

www.familyfed.org



Feb 7th

"Visit to a Utah Hindu Temple: Understanding the Culture and Religion of Utah Hindus"

Sri Ganesha Hindu Temple of Utah



Feb 10th

"Doing Ministry in a Multi Faith Setting"

Rev. Michael Chittum of the First Congregational Church gave a powerpoint presentation explaining the religious and cultural issues that professionals and volunteers in chaplaincy face working in a multi-faith or multicultural environment.

www.firstcongregationalslc.org



Feb 12th

"Bridging Religious Divide / An Interactive Workshop"



Mary Barth and Carla Kelley of the Human Rights Education Center of Utah presented a workshop to help define what creates the religious divides in our communities and how could we personally help to bridge them. The goal of HREC is to advance equality in Utah through education, advocacy and civil dialogue.

www.hrecutah.org

Feb 13th

"Religious Readings and Hymns"

An exceedingly warm welcome greeted visitors to the Sikh Temple for the Sunday worship service of scripture readings, hymns and prayers. Refreshments

were an integral part of this experience, and allowed for much family involvement, interaction and community outreach in the sharing of their meals.



Feb 13th

"Musicians of St. Mark's in Concert"

This event hosted in the beautiful 19th Century Episcopal Cathedral of St. Mark in downtown Salt Lake City was in honor of both Interfaith Month and Black History Month. It celebrated with solo instrument performances including piano, bassoon, guitar, and organ. The magnificent voices of outstanding soloists and the Cathedral choir thoroughly engaged the large audience with many familiar songs, hymns, and choruses.

www.stmarkscathedral-ut.org



Feb 16th

"Jewish Sabbath Foods"



At the Congregation Kol Ami synagogue Debra Winkler and Leslie Dorius-Jones demonstrated how to assemble a Cholent stew and Challah bread, two very basic and accessible foods used within Jewish communities for Sabbath dinners. The Challah bread is rich braided egg bread presented on Friday nights to commence the Sabbath. The Cholent stew is slow cooked in a brick oven and served after services on Saturdays.

www.conkolami.org



Feb 15th

"Family Promise"

A national organization founded by Karen Olsen, which helps over forty homeless families a year to get back on their feet, "Family Promise" held a reception and gave a tour of their day center located at 814 West 800 South, Salt Lake City. They work with local hosting churches to provide places to sleep at night as well as meals and transport.

www.fpnl.org

Feb 17th

"The Humanitarian Center Tour"

Operated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The Humanitarian Center has an objective to care for the poor, help them to become self-reliant, and give service to others. It offers employment to many people of differing faiths and cultures who also have the opportunity to learn new trades, new languages, and become an integral part of society. Additionally, it provides aid and service to countries around the world in times of disaster and need.

www.providentliving.org

Feb 18th
 “Islam and the Media”



Imam Mohammed Mehtar of the Khadeeja Mosque in West Valley City gave a talk about the influence media has on the way Muslims and other faiths are portrayed. Over one hundred in attendance enjoyed Pakistani snacks, mingled with people of different faiths, and had the opportunity to interact with Muslim men, women and youth.



Feb 19th
 “Mosaics of Cultures: Turkey”

The Pacifica Institute Utah Branch presented a seminar on exploring Turkish history, culture, geography, and diversity. The keynote address was given by Ozgur Yildiz, President of West America Turkic Council.

www.pacificainstitute.org



Feb 23rd
 “Exploring African American Songs and Spirituals and Their Relationship to U.S. History”

Held at Westminster College’s Eccles Concert Hall this program was brought together by Westminster College’s African American Intellectuals Union, the G3 Spiritual Life Club and the Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable. The program showed how songs with a seemingly Christian tone were songs whose words were coded with a purpose to bring freedom to the slaves.

www.westminstercollege.edu



Feb 25th
 “Taizé Service”

Originating from the Taizé community in France by Protestant and Catholic brothers providing spiritual refuge during World War II, this beautiful Taizé service with prayers, readings, meditation, and music introduced us to the Salt Lake Center for Spiritual Living. Today, churches of many different denominations hold Taizé prayer services.

www.spirituallyfree.org

Feb 20th

“Interfaith Musical Tribute”



- a) Piute Blessing
- b) Sikh Invocation
- c) Harp & Ladies Choir with Anne-Marie Hildebrandt
- d) Greek Orthodox Choir
- e) Hindu dancers





(f)



(g)



(h)



(i)



(j)



(k)

- f) Intefaith Children's Choir
- g) Intefaith Children's Choir
- h) Buddhist Dancers
- i) Taiko Drummers
- j) Baptist Church Choir
- k) SLIR Members

Interfaith Month

Prayer Breakfast

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social and interfaith groups in Salt Lake County. Josie Stone, Chair of the Interfaith Month Committee, detailed the month's planned events, and Alan described the upcoming Musical Tribute. Ivan Cendese, SLIR Executive Director, presented awards to Dee Rowland and Michelle Francis for their work with the Roundtable.

John Hughes, the keynote speaker, was introduced by Colleen Scott, special assistant to Elizabeth Beall of the Christian Science Committee on Publication. Dr. Hughes is currently a Professor of Communications at BYU. As an expert in international broadcasting and journalism, and former editor of the Deseret News, he intertwined interfaith themes with his life experience. He discussed the many humanitarian involvements that he had with the United Nations, the Voice of America, and his long service as a reporter with the Christian Science Monitor.



Alan concluded the event by thanking Dr. Hughes for his excellent talk, and thanked the Universal Peace Federation for their co-sponsorship as well as others who made anonymous donations. The closing benediction was given by Indra Neemegglaham, a Hindu and a SLIR Board Member.



*Top: Prayer Breakfast participants
Left: Dr. John Hughes, Keynote Speaker
Above: Salt Lake County Mayor Peter Corroon and Yolanda Francisco
Nez from Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker's office*



The Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable Meet the Board Members ~ Indra Neelameggham

Indra Neelameggham immigrated to the United States in the early 1980's. Known as Indramami or Indra Aunty to most young people of Indian heritage living in Utah, she and her husband Neale have been very involved in the Sri Ganesha Hindu Temple and India Cultural Center of Utah located in South Jordan.

A much sought after speaker and panelist on the subjects of Indian culture and Hinduism, Indra has a skillful way of translating deep philosophical concepts into ideas of day to day experience. Her stories from eastern mythology for children are very popular.

Indra teaches computer technology but is also very active in matters of concern in the state. She worked very closely with the research and advocacy group Utah Issues: Center for Poverty Research and Action. She is active with the 3R's Board of the Salt Lake County School system and instrumental in teacher training and pupil awareness on religious diversity and fundamental rights.



**Increasing Harmony and Understanding
in our Communities**

Find us at www.interfaithroundtable.org