

Finding Common Ground

Religious Leaders Work to Find Unity Between Their Different Faiths



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Monday night, at UFV, people of diverse faiths met for a discussion about harmony, peace and humanity. Speakers were present from many of the world's major faiths, including Sikhism, Baha'i, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Without any kind of debate over whose God was

the right God, all came together to bring up important issues facing the well being of humanity and the environment. The focus of the evening was plurality, and how the current global crises can only be solved if we all work together. Scripture was read, prophets and activists were quoted, and ideas were shared. The atmosphere was one of unity and of passion for the care of the world

Raheel Raza, the representative from Islam, who traveled from Toronto

name. She forced the crowd to ponder over the sameness of the different faiths, and the oneness of humanity. Kusum Somi, the representative from the Hindu faith, read in Sanskrit, and translated into English the teachings of peace. She reminded the crowd of the similarities between the teachings of all of the faiths, and spoke of the oddity of referring to oneself as a "Hindu" or a "Sikh", when we are all humans first.

for the dialogue, began the evening by emphasizing unity. She spoke of Christians and Muslims worshipping the same god together, merely calling Him by another

Oscar Khalideen, who also spoke on behalf of the Hindu faith reiterated some of the earlier themes, and also brought up the issues concerning the environment, an aspect of world care that is very important to Hinduism.

Gurmit Singh Tiwana, from the Sikh faith, preached a similar message, going back to the revolutionary roots of the religions, illustrating how each faith has played an integral part in serving humanity. By quoting Gandhi and Steven Weinberg, Gurmit raised some excellent points about humanity and how religion factors into it.

Harold Rosen, the representative from the Baha'i faith, revisited the theme of unity, one that is very important within the faith. He spoke of the independent nature of spirituality and how each person has the responsibility to understand his or her own beliefs. He also expressed the Baha'i belief that all world religions come from the same source of truth, and each interprets that truth to their own time, and cultural setting.

David Geisbrecht represented the Christian perspective, and continued

the idea that there is common ground to be had. He outlined some ways that the Christian church is working to help the community, and to break down racial, religious and personal barriers. He commended the other speakers on doing the same, and encouraged all present to continue to work together for the betterment of all.

Questions and Comments from the crowd followed the speaking segments, and were, for the most part, very constructive and positive. The evening was also a learning experience for many for whom the education of world religion had been left to popular media. As each speaker taught a little about his or her religion, eyes were opened, and a new appreciation for diversity was found for many in attendance. More events are being organized by those involved in order to continue the communication between the major faiths in the community and in the world. These events will be open to anyone who wishes to participate.