



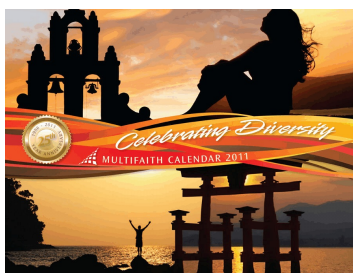
ANNUAL INTERFAITH CENTRE OPEN HOUSE

**Please join us on Wednesday December 1st at 7:30
Ashbourne Assembly Hall , 11148 84th Ave, Edmonton Alberta**

“Welcoming the Stranger”
An obligation in many religious traditions.

This year our program features:
Local poets and musicians,
A dance performance,
Refreshments and Rob’s famous cranberry punch

We will have a short presentation on the proposed new Shared Interfaith Statement on homelessness that is part of the city’s Housing First initiative.



Calendars, Peace Posters & Books

The 2011 Multifaith Calendar is in stock, still \$16.00 (no

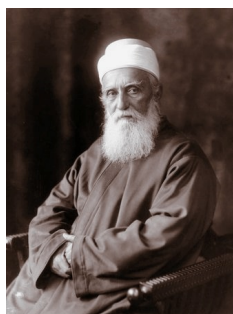
GST), still beautiful and a wealth of information. In March we announced our own posters and booklet on the theme of peace from many different religions. They are proving to be very popular, in fact we have to reprint the book. Please keep them in mind as gifts, for your classroom or office, etc.

Celebrating Our Faiths

We have had a succession of wonderful displays at City Hall. On September 29th the Muslim



community featured the *Hajj* (Pilgrimage to Mecca) in their program. Professor Ibrahim Abu Rabi gave a fascinating overview of the historic importance of this annual journey. He examined the religious, social and economic affects on the millions of Muslims who take part. Then Shayda Nanji spoke about women in Islam.



On November 9 the Baha'i community celebrated the birth of their founder Baha'u'llah with music and a play written about his early years.

That display will be replaced on December 1st with one featuring Eckankar. There will be a launch at noon to which all are welcome.



Our monthly Lunch & Learn program has continued to be a very popular and well-attended program.

In October we heard from Kelly Sloane, Executive Directory of the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, about the work of that organization. In November Rev. Patrick Cameron talked about his ministry at the Centre for Spiritual Living. Upcoming:

Our upcoming Lunch and Learn programs (second Monday of every month) will be:

December 13th: Rev. Audrey Brooks' topic will be "Santa Claus, the Wild Man".

January 10th: Dr. M. Mirza, Ahmaddiya Muslims.

February 14th: Pat Power on Elder Abuse.

March 14th : Rabbi David Kunin, "The Philosophy of Dialogue".

All sessions at noon #113, 11148-84 Avenue, entrance through the back door in the alley across from Tim Horton's, bring your lunch if you like, drinks provided, \$2.00 donation gratefully accepted.

United Nations International Day of Peace September 21st.

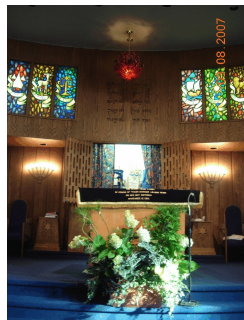
Once again, in partnership with a number of local peace groups, we commemorated the 21st on the City Hall Plaza. The program included keynote speeches from Professors Andy Knight and Tom

Keating, raising the peace flag, a proclamation from the mayor, music and peace poems from young students.

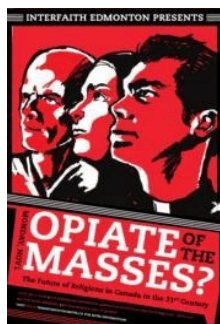


Journeys of Our Faiths

Our program of visits to different houses of worship, in partnership with the John Humphrey and the City Office of Diversity & Inclusion, has taken us to the Truc Lam Monastery, the al Rashid Mosque, the Hindu Cultural Centre, the Baha'i Centre and Siri Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara.



The next tour will be to Beth Shalom Synagogue (11916 Jasper Avenue) at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday December 11th. Please call our office (780-413-6159) for more information or to register.



Opiate of the Masses? Interfaith Dialogue at the Ashbourne

On November 1st speakers from diverse faiths (Prof. Ibrahim Abu-Rabi, Helen Chan-Park, Dr. Marie Gervais, David Goa, Gary Goldsand, Rabbi David

Kunin, Shya Young) were invited to discuss the role that religion should and will play in the 21st Century. They examined the question “Is religion the opiate of the masses as Marx suggested? If not, how does religion help and serve those who remain committed and attached?”

The program was attended by more than sixty people. They engaged our speakers in a lively Q & A period. The papers will be published by the Centre in the future.

Our thanks to Dr Simon Lasair and his committee for putting together this successful program. Another dialogue, examining the role of women in religion is planned for the spring.



Our Partners in Saskatchewan

On October 30 Multi-Faith Saskatchewan, in partnership with the Craik Sustainable Living Project, dedicated a sacred site near the Craik Eco-Centre. Plaques with the “Golden Rule” from many faiths are set around a circular path. There are also tall pillars which feature messages that encourage good stewardship of the planet. Our board member Rob Hankinson was in attendance.

Women in Islam

Shayda Nanji

Before we can talk meaningfully about women in the context of Islam or Islamic tradition we need to clarify what is meant by Islamic tradition.

Islamic tradition like most other religious traditions does not consist of or derive from one single source. "Islamic tradition" therefore needs to be understood in the right context and the sources from which it is derived. Significantly the Holy Qur'an, Sunnah or the practical tradition of the Prophet (pbuh), the Hadith – sayings attributed to the prophet, Fiqh (Jurisprudence), Madahib (various Schools of Law and the Shariah- code of life that regulates the various aspects of Muslim life. While these sources have contributed to what is cumulatively referred to as the Islamic tradition, they are not the same and do not carry the same weight. It would therefore be entirely inappropriate to speak of "the Islamic tradition" as if it were unitary or monolithic.

We cannot also overlook the fact that nascent Muslim community of the Arabian Peninsula was also influenced by the Jewish, Christian, Hellenistic and pre-Islamic Bedouin cultures. Since then other cultures and traditions have played an equally significant role as Islam spread across to the North and East and West.

The other key point to remember is that until very recent times, the sources mentioned above have been pre-dominantly interpreted by men, be it Muslim men or Western Orientalists, and therefore "the Islamic tradition" has remained mainly patriarchal in nature, influencing all studies of Islam and Islamic traditions. Under this back drop it is hardly surprising that women and their role has been little understood and continues to be a subject of much debate and discussion and interest.

The essence of the holy Quran is concerned with the salvation of the soul, but at the same time also with the ethical imperatives which sustain an equitable social order. It is a vision of a just society, a compassionate society, an intellectual society where pursuit of knowledge to understand Allah and His creation is given primacy, a pluralistic society and a society in which the dignity of human beings is given the highest importance. In such a society women have been endowed their rightful place. How then can women actualize their full potential if there are artificial barriers which debar them from all human endeavour. Throughout human history and in all societies, women have always faced these challenges. They are the most vulnerable and therefore must be well protected and the Qur'an had therefore enshrined these rights and protection. There are many verses of the Qur'an which talk about a woman's right to property, to inheritance, to divorce but more importantly to the equality of men and women in the eyes of God. To elaborate this I would like to quote a few verses of the Qur'an on:
Equality of Men and Women

O people! Be careful (of your duty) to your lord Who created you from a single soul and created its mate of the same (kind) and spread from these two, countless men and women (4:1)

Lo! Men and women who submit to Allah, men who believe and women who believe, men who obey and women who obey,.....men who remember Allah and women who remember

Allah...men who give alms and women who give alms....Allah has (in store) for them forgiveness and mighty reward (33.35)

And of His signs is this: He has created for you spouses from among yourselves, so that you may live in tranquility with them and He has planted love and mercy between you. In that are the signs for people who reflect (30.21)

So as we celebrate the upcoming event of Hajj, it is important we remember, that before God we are all equal. Hajj is the quintessential ritual which epitomizes this equality. There are no distinctions between gender, the rich and the poor, no CEOs and employees, no kings and slaves. As we bow down in total submission before God, we are one humanity, connected by the Spirit of Allah which is in all of us. The true spirit of the Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Mohamed (peace be upon him) encouraged the evolution of all legitimate freedom and legitimate equality between men and women. The responsibility before God for prayers, for action and for moral decisions is the same for men and women, according to the Prophets' Holy message

So when we talk about in women is Islam it is essential that we understand what we mean. Are we talking about Islam as a faith and what its teachings are about women or are we talking about how women in Muslim societies, how they have evolved over time, and how they are perceived today? The context is very critical, and the questions we need to ask are: through what lenses are we viewing this discussion, whose interpretation are we listening to, what culture are we looking at, and so on?

We must remember that historically Islam has developed in a multiplicity of language, culture, geography, economy and thus to render it and its people as being monolithic is rather naive at best. Muslim women therefore, like all other women of any other faith, are not a monolithic group, either in their practices or their interpretation of

their faith, their level of education, their entrepreneurial skills, etc. and to reduce them to being oppressed, or being veiled, or not having the opportunities of education or being exotic is a great injustice of modern times.

I would like to end with a quote of Aga Khan III. This is from the 1950s

Sir Sultan Mohamed Shah, grandfather of present Aga Khan was a strong advocate of

Women's rights and at every opportunity he got he urged that the status of women should be raised in every sphere of life. He encouraged women's education so that marriage would no longer be seen as a lunch ticket.

"The active influence of women in society, under free and equal conditions, is calculated not only to bring about the practical improvement in the domestic realism but also to introduce a higher and nobler idealism into the life of the state"

This Year at Centre

Wednesday, December 1st @ 7:30 PM

Monday, December 13th @ Noon

Monday, January 10th @ Noon

Wednesday, February 2nd @ 7:30

Sunday, February 13th @ 2 PM

Monday, February 14th @ Noon

Monday, March 14th @ Noon

**Centre Open House at the Ashbourne
Lunch and Learn, Rev. Audrey Brooks**

Lunch and Learn, Dr. M. Mirza

General Meeting at Ed. Talmud Torah

Building Bridges Interfaith Concert

Lunch and Learn, Pat Power

Lunch and Learn, Rabbi David Kunin

Edmonton
Interfaith Centre
for Education & Action

News from the Centre is the newsletter of the
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