

Over 40 religious and community leaders, coming from Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths, came together on the evening of February 7th in SU's Casey Commons to commemorate Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry's Interfaith Harmony Week event.

To mark Interfaith Harmony Week here in Seattle, Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry hosted a special dinner for members of the Interreligious Council, other interreligious representatives, faculty and community leaders.

At the dinner, a panel comprising a rabbi, a sheik and a minister discussed "What are the barriers to the harmony we seek?" The speakers were: Rabbi Bruce Kadden, Temple Beth El, Tacoma; Rev. Linda Smith, Church of Mary Magdalene, Seattle; Mohamed Sheik Hassan, Somali community, Seattle.

Rabbi Kadden identified internal disagreements among different parts of the Jewish community towards interfaith dialogue and the ongoing Israeli-Arab conflict as the two main barriers, internal and external, respectively. For her part, Rev. Smith focused on racism and poverty as the being the primary factors that inhibit interfaith dialogue. Echoing some of Rev. Smith's concerns, Sheik Hassan spoke compellingly about poverty and being refugees or new immigrants as being huge barriers to interfaith dialogue. One can't worry about interfaith relations when one is concerned about finding a suitable place to live, or getting a job, or putting food on the table.

Following the presentations, there was ample time for questions and answers with the panelists. The true highlight of the evening, however, was the lively discussions that took place at each of the five tables. So intense was the conversation on the topic that it was hard to draw the evening to a close.

This program marks the first time Seattle University School of Theology and Ministry has marked Interfaith Harmony Week and plans are already underway to make next year's event even better!