



WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK

Toronto Celebrates It



Love of God & Love of The Neighbour
Or Love of The Good & Love of The Neighbour

2016 REPORT-Part 1 of 2

WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK TORONTO STEERING COMMITTEE

Our Theme

Open Hearts, Open Minds

World Interfaith Harmony Week is a year round focus for our Steering Committee, and we met several times in 2015 to plan how to make the week bigger and better in the Greater Toronto Area.

INTERNATIONAL PRIZE 2015 SHARED WITH EVENT HOSTS

Following the acceptance of our 2015 3rd place award from HM King Abdullah II, we in turn hosted an evening in May 2015 and presented copies of the award certificate to all who hosted an event, sharing our success with those who helped make it happen. In this way we hoped to engage more citizens of the Greater Toronto Area and lay the groundwork for a more successful 2016. We believe, given our results, that this strategy worked.



John Voorpostel, Chair of the Toronto Steering Committee, presenting copies of our award to some of the event hosts.

DISPOSITION OF OUR 2015 \$5,000 AWARD

We thank HM King Abdullah II and The Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought for the US \$5000 awarded to us in 2015, and are pleased to report all of it is being re-invested in promoting World Interfaith Harmony Week in Canada and we provided grants to 2016 event organizers in the Greater Toronto Area to help fund events for the week.

STATUS OF OFFICIAL CANADIAN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

We also followed up with the Canadian government members of Parliament during the year in order to shepherd along the Private Member's Bill we had engineered that would have Canadian Parliament officially adopt the United Nation's Declaration sponsored by HM King Abdullah II that established World Interfaith Harmony Week.

Unfortunately, Parliament dissolved for an election before it could be enacted, however, we were undeterred in our efforts. We decided to sponsor a petition to be presented to Canadian Parliament in order to maintain more control over the process. We are pleased to report that our petition was presented to The Clerk of The House of Commons and certified during World Interfaith Harmony Week 2016, and was officially presented on February 16 2016.

In addition, Yasmin Ratansi, a Member of Parliament and a founding member of our steering committee, stood up in Parliament on February 3 2016 to officially recognize World Interfaith Harmony Week in Canada, and our Toronto Steering Committee's work in bringing it to Canadians and growing it into an important annual interfaith event.

SEE ATTACHED HANSARD EXTRACTS

VIEW VIDEO ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE ([link below](#))

2016 EVENTS

Once again Toronto, via a proclamation by Mayor John Tory, officially recognized World Interfaith Harmony Week. This marks the 4th year our Steering Committee was responsible for obtaining local government recognition and support.

Our operating philosophy for 2016 was to use our 2015 win constructively, pair steering committee members and organizers to share their strengths and prior experiences, and set the stage for individual partners to pair with new organizers for 2017. This strategy proved to be a successful formula as the quality of 2016 events, and attendance at each event, was markedly improved over previous years. It has also created significant momentum for 2017 because of the awesome results experienced by the 14 events on our 2016 Calendar. There was also a "pre event" in January 2016 that served to bring together an interfaith audience and serve as a "marketing platform" which widened our reach.

Our Toronto Steering Committee also reached out to Halifax organizers and participated in their Declaration Wall.

For the first time this year, we were approached by independent local organizers of World Interfaith Harmony Week events to make them part of our official calendar and marketing efforts. There were three such events in 2016. We see this as a major development and success this year as it has been part of our mission and vision from the beginning.

Week Long Opportunity

Film director Kyoko Yokoma, via a link from our events calendar, offered free on line viewing of her award-winning film "Between Allah & Me (and Everyone Else)" exclusively during World Interfaith Harmony Week. This candid film explores the experience of four Muslim women in Toronto deciding their dress codes, unveiling a variety of meaning of the hair-covering practice for different people in our multicultural society.

Sunday January 31 2016

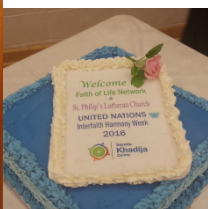
The Sayeda Khadija Centre and St Philips's Lutheran Church

The Power of Interfaith Work

A panel of speakers discussed the power of interfaith work, and an estimated 100 guests were encouraged to not only discuss this topic, but make a concerted effort to get to know one another over a dinner. Desert was a cake emblazoned with World Interfaith Harmony Week details.



Steering Committee Chair John Voorpostel and Pastor and Toronto Steering Committee member Tuula van Gaasbeek present a framed Golden Rule poster to Dr Hamid Slimi of the Sayeda Khadijah Centre to commemorate 2016 World Interfaith Harmony Week and its theme, Open Hearts and Open Minds.



A cake was especially baked for the occasion and shared as dessert. Cutting the cake, from left to right, Mr Harry Malawi, Jordanian Canadian Society, Pandit Maharaj Doobey, Pastor Tuula van Gaasbeek, Imam Dr. Hamid Slimi and Toronto Steering Committee Chair John Voorpostel.



PRPDiversity

@PRPDiversity

2016 World Interfaith Harmony Week. Enjoying the morning at Fo Guang Shan Temple @PeelPoliceMedia <http://pbs.twimg.com/media/CalWJfHUKAAU9Wc.jpg>



Retweeted By PeelPoliceMedia

7:55 AM - 01 Feb 2016

Monday February 1 2016

Fo Guang Shan Temple of Toronto and Interfaith Council of Peel

Interfaith Harmony Prayers and Breakfast

This independently organized event brought about 70 people from different faiths together to hear prayer and presentations. Organizers and Toronto Steering Committee members met after the event to discuss formalizing a relationship that would allow us to collaborate more closely for 2017.

Twitter feed by Peel Regional Police who sent representatives to the Fo Guang temple to enjoy the breakfast and network with an estimated 70 attendees.

Spiritual Dialogue Circle

Open Hearts, Open Minds

This event has become an annual fixture during World Interfaith Harmony Week in the Toronto. Don Heights Unitarian Congregation hosted another intimate gathering of participants from diverse faith and no-faith communities who shared their own experience of this year's theme, "Open Hearts, Open Minds". Many participants commented that being in this Circle was the only opportunity they had to share personal stories and truly make a heart connection with others.

Muslim-Catholic Student Dialogue

Catholics and Muslims Together in Prayer for Peace

In this independently organized event, Catholic and Muslim students attending Ryerson University came together to pray with and for those who are suffering from recent terrorist attacks and violence in Toronto and around the world and those who are persecuted because of their faiths.





Wednesday February 3 2016

Pandit Suraj Persad and Patanjali Yog Peeth (Canada)

Yoga- Postures, Pranayamas and Puja

Participants were led by a team of Yoga teachers from Pantanjali Yogpeeth Canada in a discussion and instruction session of Yoga in its purest form.

Steering Committee member Pandit Suraj Persad performs a Hindu Fire Ritual (Havan) for participants. Participants are instructed in some of the finer points of Yoga.

University of Toronto Multi Faith Centre, Hart House and Vanessa Snyder-Penner

Religion, Comedy and Free Speech

An estimated 250 participants engaged in a lively and informative, independently organized evening of dialogue about comedy, its role in society, its potential impact on religion and people of faith, and what responsibilities, if any, comedians have to their audience. Panelists included Zarqa Nawaz, creator of Little Mosque on the Prairie, Prof. Ken Derry, author of A Buddhist, a Christian, and an Atheist Walk into a Classroom: Pedagogical Reflections on Religion and Humor, Prof. Mohammad Fadel, U of T Faculty of Law and Mr. Bernie Farber, Executive Director of the Mosaic Institute.



Participants listening to speakers. Afterwards, there was a table discussion of the evening's topic, and speakers fielded questions from the audience.

York University Student Associations



NOT IN GOD'S NAME: Religions AGAINST Religious Violence

In this independently organized event, various York University student groups came together to discuss and speak out against the numerous acts of violence done in the name of religion – or in the name of God. Speakers from three monotheistic faiths – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – spoke from their own faith traditions why such religious violence is not condoned.