Healing the World: Appreciating Diversity, Creating Community

The Victoria Multifaith Society and UVic Multifaith Services celebrated UN World Interfaith Harmony Week with *Healing the World: Appreciating Diversity, Creating Community,* held Sunday, 5 February 2017 at the University of Victoria B.C. Displays, refreshments, storytelling and music accompanied a panel of 8 speakers of various traditions who spoke of the many ways all can contribute to healing the world.

180 attended the event, in the rain, on Superbowl Sunday. Many keenly felt the need to unite following the tragic killings in a mosque in Quebec City just days before. The event opened with introductions and the reading of a letter from the Imam of a local mosque, expressing gratitude for the many expressions of love and support in the days following the incident. It was a poignant moment.

Storyteller Shoshana Litman uplifted and cheered the audience with a story inspired by Jewish scripture. MC Dr. Elaine McCreary introduced the question for the panel: *What tools and teachings from your faith tradition are most needed for humanity to heal and flourish?*

Panelists were Alex Nelson (Aboriginal Spirituality); Gita Badiyan (Bahá’í Faith); Rev. Soshin McMurchy (Buddhism); Rev. Shana Lynngood (Unitarian); Sharon Kobrinsky (Judaism); Sridevi Ganti (Hinduism); Rev. Michelle Slater (Christianity); and Dr. Farouk Mitha (Islam). A theme that occurred repeatedly was recognition of our oneness: Alex spoke of the four races that are in reality one, Gita of our underlying unity, Shana of the dignity and worth of all people.

Sharon told us of the concept of Tikkun Olam, acts of kindness performed to repair the world. Sri shared the Hindu belief, “Truth is one, the wise call it by many names.” Michelle spoke of the courage of openness and vulnerability, and Soshin of the need to work to change and transform the self. Farouk reminded us of the need for self-examination, self-knowledge and compassion for all things and all people.

The response was lively and enthusiastic. Several sincere questions from the audience were answered in a thoughtful and articulate manner, to much applause. Added to this was the enchantment of Gettin’ Higher Choir led by Siobhan Robinsong, whose songs echoed the sentiments precisely and lifted spirits even higher.

The spirit of the event, a sense of community, was a tribute to the beauty and wisdom of all our spiritual traditions. Together they were able to stir hearts and unite souls at a time when it was most definitely needed.

[Video link, Healing the World, WIHW, 5 Feb. 2017](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7yLjB3PXJQD7pX5zS2FC5r3fkJ_vaQ9n)

[Link to photos, Healing the World, 5 Feb. 2017](https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=oa.674267266078879&type=1)