**World Interfaith Harmony Week Report**
Event Date: February 2nd, 2020
Event Title: “Building Sacred Connections: Understanding How Implicit Biases Can Get in The Way of Building Meaningful Relationships”

**The Interfaith Center at Miami University**
16 S. Campus Avenue, Oxford OH 45056
Contact: Geneva Blackmer, Program Director
(o) 513-523-4848 / (c) 702-884-0004
oxfordinterfaithprograms@gmail.com

The Interfaith Center at Miami University invited keynote speaker, Priya D. Klocek, to present “Building Sacred Connections: Understanding How Implicit Biases Can Get in the Way of Building Meaningful Relations” on February 2nd, 2020 from 2:00pm to 3:30pm. This sixty-minute interactive session focused on: the impact of culture on how one sees the world; how to identify and manage unconscious bias and blind spots; and tools and techniques for how to mitigate unconscious bias.

This event was purposefully scheduled during the United Nations’ annual observance of World Interfaith Harmony Week and took a multi-faceted approach to implicit bias, which reflects the complexities of human social identity. During World Interfaith Harmony Week, it was important for the Interfaith Center, Miami University, and the greater Oxford community to address religious biases which perpetuate misconceptions and create unsafe environments within our community. We hope that as a result of this program, and similar initiatives by TIC, Miami University and Butler County will become a more welcoming place for people of all diverse religious, spiritual and secular traditions. The Interfaith Center believes that in order to create a harmonious world, to promote acceptance of all the world’s religions, and to truly embody the essence of the Golden Rule, it is necessary to understand how implicit biases create unconscious barriers to all of these goals.

The event was co-sponsored by several Miami University affiliates, including the META Collective, Hillel, the Center for American and World Cultures, and the Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion. Community sponsors included the Hamilton Trinity Episcopal Church and the Hamilton Central YMCA. Faith communities in attendance included Presbyterian, Lutheran, Unitarian Universalist, Catholic, Episcopal, Taoist, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Baha’i, Spiritual but not religious, and Atheist. Due to limited funds at the Interfaith Center for programing development, this event was made possible entirely by grant support from the Interfaith Youth Core, a Chicago-based organization led by Eboo Patel, and a grant from the unrestricted funds of the Hamilton Community Foundation, made possible by generous donors since 1951. Due to this grant funding from HCF, participants were able attend this event at two locations in Butler County. The event was held at the Interfaith Center at Miami University, 16 S. Campus Avenue, Oxford, Ohio 45056 and the Hamilton Lane Library Meeting Room, 300 N 3rd St., Hamilton, OH 45011. The Hamilton location featured an interactive, live stream event. The live stream was also offered to participants globally, made available through the United Religions Initiative network. All events were free of charge.

Data collected from post-event surveys demonstrate that **80% of participants reported that the program altered their perspective on implicit bias** and **90% reported the program encouraged them to challenge their own unconscious bias**. Participants reported repeatedly that the presentation prompted them to not only reflect upon their own implicit biases, but also to have conversations with friends, family and community members surrounding the nature of unconscious biases.

This event also presented a unique opportunity for the Interfaith Center to engage attendees who would not normally participate in interfaith dialogue. Many admitted they entered the event skeptical of how we would approach implicit bias yet discovered the Interfaith Center to be a safe space for dialogue and mutual understanding. Notably, there were several attendees from a conservative, evangelical Presbyterian church, who expressed they always felt excluded from interfaith due to its liberal ethos. Despite our vast differences, they agreed with our presentation, felt safe in our space, and expressed a desire for future collaboration. Ultimately, the Interfaith Center, despite our limited resources, hopes to continue to pursue these difficult conversations as a path forward towards healing our community and the world.