

Testimonial written for WIHW following a worship service “Love of the Good & Love of the Neighbor” held at Interfaith Community Sanctuary Sunday February 2, 2020.

I enjoyed the Interfaith Harmony service and celebration so much. It gave me hope for a world that seemed to be getting more divided, selfish and myopic as each day passed. It provided context and actionable things that I could do to help heal and repair my heart and extend that out to my family, community and work community. Which I did the very next day. The discussion and emphasis on forgiveness gave me a way to contextualize the stuck place my work team was at the moment. When I said the words out loud the next morning, I could feel the energy shift to something more positive and the letting go of old wounds was palpable. What helped me get to this centered feeling and clarity? The service and the intentions that each spiritual leader and practitioner brought to the sanctuary on interfaith harmony Sunday.

“Why sanctuary? We believe and we feel enriched by a welcoming spirit. We welcome all and today gives us a chance to practice it with intention.” J

Homelessness. Sacred is to be found in the stranger. There is oneness in every person. It is what unites us. We must give “hospitalities to angels.” To do this is not a “nice to have.” Conflict and dialog between the religions and within societies is a matter of survival. We are too connected not to do this work at this time. The question for ourselves is “can I create the environment creatively where we can know each other on a human level?” Not judge but listen. When meeting someone who is adversarial, take the right action. Do not keep this person’s nature out of your heart. Connect. The universe is not made out of atoms but rather stories. Human stories. Find your common stories.

Seek to truly know another’s religion. Don’t give up, don’t turn away. When we know almost nothing about the religions of others, in hard times our bias’s take over and do damage. Every single culture has its truths and untruths. Even when our understandings and beliefs are far from one another, it is important to connect and understand what it means for the person. We then can shine a light and come up with an interpretation that serves the most good between us, building from there. We must have frequent contact and deep, meaningful conversations about solutions. When we have infrequent gatherings the behavior is absurdly nice. When you truly connect and have understanding and appreciation for another’s perspective, when stress happens you give them the benefit of the doubt. You look upon them with soft eyes, soft ears and soft heart. They are not “other.” We are kin.

Realize all religions are a path to the Universal. It leads us to completion....a more developed human being. Spiritual practices deepen us into compassion, expand our awareness and help us understand our anger. We learn how to Forgive.

Planetary degradation is a big problem but it’s fueled by the even larger problems of Selfishness, Greed and Apathy. “Taking care of the river is not about taking care of the river, it’s about taking care of the heart.”

To connect to heart each faith must be approached as it sees itself. Each person, each organization, each culture must be approached how it sees itself. Be open. Listen. Learn. First. Be authentic. Connect with

the real human being. Seek to be related to others as you would like to be related to. What appears nonsensical to a person sitting outside a culture or a community or a family, might be essential to that religion, culture, community or family. It doesn't make it right or wrong; we must start by understanding. Can we still love in difference? Also, learn what is flourishing in that community. Maybe we can better our own communities with the wisdom of learning from one we did not know before.

We have to Forgive how we have treated each other in the past. Old wounds heal very slowly unless we forgive. To move forward we must forgive.

No matter what people's differing viewpoints are, the more compassion that we have, the more comfortable we are in our own skin, allows us to connect with others in meaningful and healing ways.

"For the love of good and for the love of neighbor" find your community, where people are open like you and then do something. True relationships form by coming together in a meaningful way. It's how we evolve. In natural disasters we function as one human family. When we see our goodness in our deeds we get glimpses of who we are and who we can be. When we foster, grow and offer loving kindness we help others and ourselves heal, repair and flourish.

Amen.

In warm gratitude,

Betty

Training Solutions Manager
WA state department of children, youth, and families
505 Union Ave SE, Suite 300
Olympia, WA 98504-0991
360-280-7438