

CREATING PEACE THROUGH SACRED CONNECTIONS

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We can move from scared to sacred by flipping the C in scared.
When we can C [see] differently we can create Peace.

I believe Peace is Possible. I believe that our great religions of Islam, Christianity and Judaism can be a powerful force for good... a force so powerful it can heal our wounds. I believe in the Power of God's love. With God as our partner we can create the scared connections that will help us heal and create peace.

Tonight I would like to share with you three ways to create sacred connections:

1. Connect to God, the eternal source of peace.
2. Connect inward to ourselves,
3. Connect outward to other people

The three sacred connections are related in a way I call bridging the gap. Although the three aspects are distinct, they are related, with each one bridging the gap between the other two. So first we must connect to God, when we connect to God it makes it easier to connect inward to ourselves and outward to other people. Our connection with God helps us bridge the gap between other people and ourselves. While our relationship with ourselves bridges the gap between how we relate to other people and how we relate to God.

The first step, connecting up to God is accomplished through study of sacred text; the Torah, New Testament, and the Koran, and by learning and observing laws, rituals, prayers and stillness.

We can connect to God either individually, in our separate houses of worship or together. I believe we can create a more powerful sacred connection by working together as groups of Christians, Muslims and Jews.

We can study together. We can learn each others histories and rituals. We can create new rituals together.

On September 11th as part of the NC.C.J Day of Remembrance, Imam Elahi, Rabbi Norman Roman, Rev. Keely and I collaborated on a Unity ritual. Trish Potter created and donated a beautiful bowl inscribed with Allah's/Gods name inscribed in Arabic, Hebrew, and Greek. The ritual began with lighting candles for unity and peace. Prayers for seeing Allah's/ Gods light were spoken in Arabic by Imam Elahi, Hebrew by Rabbi Roman and Greek by Rev. Keely. Lay leaders from each community translated the prayers to English. We then planted Seeds of Unity and Peace in the bowl with soil from the Herlong Cathedral School in Detroit, The Hillel Day School in Farmington Hills, and The Young Muslim Academy in Dearborn, sites that we had visited that morning. We then poured water into the bowl as we recited prayers to open our hearts to the wonders of Allah's/ God's creation. I then had the honor of leading a responsive reading of a prayer for peace.

We can pray for peace together and we can create sacred space together through stillness.

Stillness is a way of creating sacred space with God, within ourselves and between each other. Stillness allows us to connect with God, ourselves and each other through our hearts and souls, not just our minds and intellects. Stillness is a universal corrective, bringing all conditions of disharmony into immediate alignment with God's, Peace.

Connecting inward is the second step. We have been singing the song "Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me" for a very long time. We need to do more than say the words of the song, we need to heal ourselves. "The source of war lies within us, as does the source of peace". As we heal our hearts of hate, anger, rage and violence, we can foster peace.

Salaam, Shalom is more than a greeting. The words mean Peace and wholeness...Holiness. We need to love ourselves, respect ourselves, honor ourselves, and appreciate ourselves. We must recognize our beauty, our wisdom, our special talents and gifts. When we have compassion for ourselves, when we can forgive ourselves and hold no harsh judgments, we can love ourselves as God loves us, and we can love each other as God loves all his children.

My friend Marianne Williamson says “An angry generation can not create peace in the world. That we be at peace with ourselves must be our personal effort as well as our global goal”.

The third step is to connect outward toward each other at a deeper level. We need to avail ourselves of the best tools for effective discussions; non violent communication and compassionate listening.” In the presence of compassionate, non judgmental listening and sharing, miracles can happen.” We need to hear each other, listen to each other stories, to each others pain. Without the tools of non violent communication and compassionate listening we end up in heated defensive debates that are destructive to creating peaceful coexistence.

I have been blessed to see first hand how effective non violent communication is. Nabil Satar, an American Muslim friend who co chairs with Lisa Lis and I, our local Seeds of Peace teen chapter, Christen, Muslim and Jewish teens who come together to learn about each others cultures and acquire coexistence skills.

[Tell Blood Libel story in Saudi papers and A.J.C. criticism of Pat Robertson’s sweeping condemnation of Islam.]

With the tools of nonviolent communication and compassionate listening we can create sacred space together. We can pray together, sit in silence together, and engage in heartfelt conversation with each other. We can create visions of the world as we wish to see it .We can create plans of social action, political action, and economic action to make our dreams a reality. We may not agree on everything, but we can work together to build a community of respect and peaceful co existence.

There were ages when people sat on great power, yet did not know how to harness the power for practical purposes. People enjoyed the beauty of Niagara Falls long before its hydroelectric power lit whole cities. Today we know there is God’s love in our hearts, readily available to us. We need to use that power to restore, repair, and heal our world.

I feel so blessed to have experienced first hand the miracles that can happen when we create sacred connections with God, ourselves and with each other. Each one of us can be a powerful force for good. We are the ones with the power, the answers, the ability to change the world.

WE ARE THE MIRACLE THE WORLD NEEDS.

As Cardinal Maida said on September 11th, “to turn the tide of evil into rivers of peace we must always be partners in faith, hope and love”.

Please join with Imam Elahi and me in building partnerships for Peace.