



Church Women United in Madison, Wisconsin

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C.W.U. Newsletter February, 2015 No. 6

March Celebration

Friday, March 6, 2015

World Day of Prayer

Written by the Women of the Bahamas
Jesus Said, "Do You Understand What I
Have Done For You?"

9:00 am Gathering and Coffee

9:30 am Welcome and announcements

10:00 am Celebration

Glenwood Moravian Community Church
725 Gilmore Street, Madison (53711)

March Celebration

The World Day of Prayer 2015 is our March Celebration. Written by the women of the Bahamas, we will join with thousands of people around the world as we worship and explore the theme, Jesus Said, "Do You Understand What I Have Done for You?" We will meet at Glenwood Moravian Community Church, 725 Gilmore Street (across from Dudgeon School on Monroe St.) at 9 am for coffee and fellowship, with celebration to follow at 10 am. The church parking lot is on the north side of the building, and there is street parking on one side of Gilmore. (Glenwood is also the location of our CWU/MEC office.) Invite your friends, women and men, to join us for this celebration.

February Forum

Thirty some people gathered at First Baptist Church for the February forum on Christian-Muslim Dialogue from an Islamic Perspective. We were greeted by the American Baptist Women with a nice variety of treats which we shared around tables of conversation. We had special attendees. A professor from the School of Social Work brought young ladies in her class. They are looking at how churches engage in social concerns of their communities. And we had gentlemen present

as well. Always invite men to CWU programs with topics that would interest them.

Our welcome included a thumbnail sketch of First Baptist's history, from its founding in 1847, with its first baptism by immersion in Lake Monona in November, to years on Carroll Street in two locations before moving to the west side in 1951. Throughout, women have taken leadership in missions and support for the church, as well as active ecumenical participation.

Our devotional reading was a blessing written as the closing for Sharon Buttry's class on Conflict Transformation at Arab Baptist Theological Seminary in Lebanon. The blessing follows the outline of the training design they used with their students. [Sharon Buttry is an American Baptist Global Consultant for Community Transformation.] Blessing for Conflict Transformation Leaders

"But let justice roll down like rivers and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.." Amos 5:24

Wherever you find yourself, may you have compassion for the clueless and also for those who think they have no voice.

May you have the wisdom of the apostles in Acts chapter 6 in all the conflicts you will have in the church.

When you need power, may you receive the power of the Holy Spirit and may God guard you against any presence or use of ungodly power.

May those who oppose you find you to be a listener and willing to learn from the margins.

May you be a person who is known for the love of your enemies.

May God reveal your self-limiting beliefs and may you sing songs of hope and transformation.

May your wounds and grieving make you an effec-

tive healer of the wounds of others.

May you have compassion for the traumatized and make safe places for their stories.

May you be blessed with the power to do the unexpected, to refuse to be a victim, to love beyond borders.

May you teach what you know.

May you be a bridge-builder.

May rivers of justice flow down through you and me. Amen.

This led us to our speaker and the Islamic perspective. Seljuk Altuntas, Executive Director of Niagara Foundation, Madison, gave us a brief introduction to the Niagara Foundation, founded by a group of Turkish businessmen and educators in Chicago which now has groups in other midwestern states. In Madison, activities include holding a statehouse reception and hosting an Abrahamic dinner. Mr. Altuntas gave us an in-depth look at inter-religious dialogue. Its principles include

- Learning more about the other from the other
- Seeing the other with the eyes of the other
- Emphasizing similarities
- Irreconcilable differences
- We must agree to disagree in a dialogue meeting
- It is not a debate.

The history of Christian/Muslim relations begins with the coming of Islam. Islam is seen as a Christian heresy and John of Damascus is a part of that. The Crusades, the militant Christianity, the belief that outside the Catholic church there is no salvation were all major points of the relationship. The second Vatican Council changed to a view that there was salvation in other faiths.

How do Muslims, and the Qur'an see Christianity and Christ? Muslim faith, Judaism, Christianity, Sabaeans, whoever truly believes in God and the Last Day and does good righteous deeds, surely their reward is with the Lord, and they will have no fear nor will they grieve. Qur'an 5:82 speaks to this. Those closest to Muslims are Christians. Muslims particularly appreciated hermits and monks who devoted themselves to worship.

3:199 speaks of people of the Book (Jews and Christians) who believe in God and in what was sent

down to you and sent down to them. Humbling is an important part.

57:27 Thereafter we sent following in their footsteps others of our messengers, sent Jesus son of Mary and granted him the gospel. Mary (Miriam) is a revered figure in the Qur'an, 3:55 God, to Jesus, I will take you back, will raise you up and purify you and then to me you will all return and I will judge between you concerning all that on which you were used to differ. The miracles of Jesus are in the Qur'an.3:40 Clay turned into the shape of a bird that breathes and becomes a living thing. 19:30, 31, 32 Those named include Jesus: I am a servant of good will. Muhammad, a prophet, met the Monk Bahia on the way to Syria. Waraqa bin Nawfal. the migration to Christian Abyssinia (Axum) in 615. A Christian delegation from Najran in 622. Christians praying a mosque. Letters to neighboring countries.

Said Nursi (1873-1960), Turkish Muslim thought that believers should unite, Christian-Muslims should find their common ground, and World War II victims were a tragedy. Believers should be united. Believers should now unite with believers. Pious Christians. Disregarding questions of dispute and not arguing over them, because absolute disbelievers are on the attack, Muslims and Christians must unite to kill the anti-Christ of rampant atheism.

WWII Victims were innocent people. Even unbelievers, because of tribulations they suffered, will receive a reward from the treasury of time.

Qur'an does not require abandoning your religion completely. It is a modifier and corrector of basic principles. Fethullah Gulen (1938-) lives in Pennsylvania in exile. A proponent of the Culenor Hizmet movement, believes in Abrahamic dialogue. He had a meeting with the Pope and other denominations in Turkey. His philosophy: "Be so tolerant that your bosom becomes wide like the ocean. Become inspired with faith and love of human beings. Let there be no troubled souls to whom you do not offer a hand and about whom you remain unconnected." (Fethullah Gulen, Criteria or Lights of the Way. London: Truostar)

There are 4 major schools of law. The more liberal one is in Turkey, India is in the middle, most conservative in Saudi Arabia. As you can see from the notes, we received a completely different view of

Islam from what greets us in almost daily reports of violence and hatred. Our speaker took questions and engaged in discussions well after the conclusion of our program. Those who could linger appreciated the extra time he gave to us. Thank you, Seljuk Altuntas, for an informative and inspirational morning.

Ecumenical Action

At our meeting, Gloria Carter reminded us of CWU's Circle of Protection, a statement to candidates to protect the poor, the needy, the hungry. Budgets are moral documents. She has also forwarded emails from National CWU, including CWU Affirms that Black Lives Matter.

As we commemorate Black History Month, we are mindful that church women have not always lived up to the call of recognizing and honoring black history. We are mindful that church women have dismissed the struggle of black people, calling it "history" only, when this struggle is still relevant in our diverse communities today. The events of 2014 in Ferguson, MO, Staten Island, NY, and countless other casualties indicate the devaluation of black lives and compel us to speak out.

As Church Women United, we affirm that black lives matter. All lives matter. This message was the core of Jesus' ministry from Zacchaeus to the Samaritan woman. But in our American context, we also recognize that the particular history of the United States requires us to lift up black lives especially. We oppose and call out systemic racism, which we find knit into the fabric of American society despite our best intentions. We pledge to be mindful of the intricacies in our individual identities. We are proud of our differences, but not of the disparities in our privilege.

Remembering Paul's words, "let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action" (1 John 3:18), we commit to living out the truth that black lives matter. We commit to resisting racism as it is manifest in our communities, our institutions, and our attitudes. We are Church Women United—a racially, culturally, and theologically diverse group UNITED against racism. Faithfully, Church Women United

Ecumenical Choir

Our practice schedule has been confirmed. We will practice on the following dates: February 27, March 13, March 27, April 10, April 24. We will practice from 12:00 Noon to 1:30 P.M. at Bethany United Methodist Church, 3910 Mineral Point Road, Madison, WI 53705, in the third floor choir room on these dates. We will definitely sing for the May Program and Shirley has provided the music. Perhaps we can sing for either the March or April program. We will discuss this on February 27th. Look forward to seeing you then. Jenny Armstrong

Other Opportunities

FLUTES ON FIRE On March 22, 2015, at 2:30, First Baptist Church, 518 North Franklin Avenue, Madison will present the 9TH Annual Chinese Orphans Benefit Concert. Acclaimed Native American flutist, James Pellerite performs solos, duets and trios with strings. The Madison Flute Choir opens the concert with a surround-sound piece edited by Mr. Pellerite. Patricia George, editor of Flute Talk magazine, plays a lovely CPE Bach sonata, then joins local flutists for Cimarosa Suite, a charming trio composed by her husband. Linda Mintener and Roberta Brokaw will play a duet concerto by Cimarosa with flute choir accompaniment. Elizabeth Marshall—of MSO & WCO—and Roberta play a duet of lovely Chinese tunes.

Admission is free with a free-will offering taken for the Chinese Orphans Project, which provides educational opportunities to 85 orphans ranging from kindergarten to college students in China's rural Henan Province. Many of the children were orphaned when their parents died of HIV/AIDS contracted from donating blood for small amounts of much-needed cash. Most live with elderly, infirm grandparents who struggle to provide for themselves, let alone their young grandchildren. The grandparents cannot pay for school fees, schoolbooks, pencils, notebooks, transportation costs, and exam fees. Our support provides those things, as well as adequate clothing and a healthy diet. \$250 sponsors a child for a year. Come to the concert, enjoy an afternoon of lovely music and donate to this great cause. Contact Linda Mintener, Project Coordinator, 3976 Plymouth Circle, Madison, WI 53705 or at 608/231-1680 for more Orphan Project information.