



India: A Spiritual Journey

"What a strange fellowship this is: the God-seekers of every clime, lifting their voices in the most ways unimaginable to the God of all people. How does it sound to God? Like bedlam? Or, in some mysterious way, does it blend into harmony? Does one faith carry the melody, the lead, or do the parts share in counterpoint and antiphony when not in solid chorus? We cannot know. All we can do is try to listen carefully and with full attention, to each voice in turn as it is raised to the divine." (Huston Smith)

Interfaith/Intercultural/Interchurch, Bay of Quinte Conference, sponsored a pilgrimage taken by a group of eight United Church of Canada members in October 2016. We sought a deeper understanding of the UCC's National document titled "Honouring the Divine in Each Other". The document will be presented for final approval at next year's General Council meeting in Oshawa. "This report proposes acceptance, respect and openness to mutual transformation as the orientation that the UCC brings to

our relationship with Hinduism". Traveling with our Church's understanding of "dialogical reverence", we encountered the plurality of religious options Christians in India are living with. "Many in the Church see the differences between faiths as a given part of God's creation. For them it is simply a reality that the world is made up of different faiths, and differences between traditions become as revealing or more revealing of the nature of God than similarities between faiths".

For a long period of Indian history, world religions have lived side by side with the developing religiosity of the Hindu tradition. Our group was introduced to this lived reality in a variety of ways - one of which was a visit to the Vivekananda Centre in Chennai, where this highly influential teacher's speech to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 was heard. Another, was a visit to the "City of Joy" (Calcutta). Here we deeply encountered the Gospel truth that "compassion shatters boundaries". While visiting Mother Theresa's home, and the Sisters of Charity Mission Quarters, we understood that "compassionate love is counter-cultural. It creates upheavals in the ways we understand ourselves, others, and the world. Compassion does not just alleviate suffering, but rather transforms it. Compassion helps us to experience what justice feels like". (Maureen O'Connell). Sharing the service of Vespers with the Sisters of Charity, and walking through rooms where God's generous love is shared with the sick and the dying, we were surrounded by a sense of The Holy. The Center's mission in a society and world divided by caste and class, shines as "Something Beautiful for God" and Humanity.



Jane Alleslev, Jeannette Avery, Bill Avery, Sue Genge, Glenn Genge, Corrine Gallupe, Gita Vadhera and hosts. Missing: Aruna and David Alexander

Traveling through multifaith and intercultural India, listening to the sounds of ancient hymns from (1000 BCE,) sung in Hindu temples from the Rg Veda, visiting the Church of St. Thomas, built in 1504 and said to house the remains of St. Thomas the Apostle, visiting an ancient Jain temple, amazed at the thousands fed at no cost to them, by the Sikhs at their Golden Temple in Amritsar, viewing a play from the great epic, the Mahabharata (approximately 3rd century BCE) - all confirmed the fact that "deeper relationships with Hindus (and other world religions) will truly reveal something new and helpful to us about the nature of God". These experiences helped us understand the purpose of United Church of Canada's work in Interfaith and Intercultural areas. For deep within the call to live a fulfilled and fulfilling human life, is the call to dialogue: "the dialogue of life and the dialogue of relationships and the dialogue of ideas and the dialogue of commitment. For the Christian, the life of God is, in and of itself, a life of engaged being;" our best spiritual interpretations of Gospel tells us this time after time. Therefore, each UCC member traveling on this pilgrimage, engaging with local families and their culture, drew from the strength of the One God who is Creator of all; demonstrating the fruits of the Spirit in our diverse encounters.

The depth and breadth of learning, the perception

expanding experience, the reflections we shared, all too many to encapsulate through words and language. Rev. Sue Genge and I look forward to sharing a visual presentation with you at Conference Annual Meeting this year. On a personal note, a very meaningful interfaith and intercultural experience was the day we visited Shantiniketan (meaning peaceful abode), founded by Rabindranath Tagore in 1901. Tagore was the winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. This Hindu Nobel Laureate, poet, playwright, novelist, and painter influenced and strengthened the aesthetic expression of Canada's Group of Seven artists. As visionary painters, they were drawn to Tagore's understanding of Hindu mysticism, which was cosmic in its reach, unifying in its understandings, and deeply spiritual in its encounter with nature. Acknowledging Tagore's creative brilliance, members of the Group of Seven extended to him an invitation to The Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Arts. Tagore arrived as Nobel Laureate lecturer in June 1929 to share his quest for harmony and balance in art and spirituality, insights from the Upanishads supporting his view of the interrelatedness of all human beings, and the concept of "divinity in the individual". We pray you will take time to read our Church's document Honouring the Divine in Each Other, and join us on our next spiritual journey to India.

Team Leader, Aruna Alexander

MEET CAROLINE GIESBRECHT

I have been working half-time at the Bay of Quinte Conference office since October, 2016 (after retiring from over 18 years of congregational ministry). I enjoy working with the other staff, meeting with people I already know (albeit in a new context) and getting to know new people.

I'm learning how much time and energy so many people are putting into the various facets of mission in the Conference. I'm here to provide pastoral care for ministry personnel and retirees, and support for various Conference committees and programs – such as the prayer shawl ministry, the Living in Right Relationship group, refugee sponsorship groups, and

Partners in Mission. My job description keeps changing, so I'm open to new challenges. I'm here to listen to your concerns, to provide support and encouragement where I can. My goal is to enable, together with all of you, God's mission in this Conference to grow and flourish.

When I'm not at work I enjoy reading, knitting, gardening, travelling, and spending time with my grandchildren. The future structure of our Church may be uncertain, but I am certain that we will continue to be guided and strengthened by the Spirit. Please feel free to contact me at the Conference office (or at home).



Caroline Giesbrecht

Cycling To The Arctic

My name is Jonathon Reed. I grew up in The United church in Beaverton and Lindsay and for years have been a steady leader of Bay of Quinte Conference youth programs. The United Church is my home, so much so that I once stopped in an unfamiliar-to-me rural pastoral charge to use the bathroom (which led to a slightly embarrassing but ultimately heartwarming conversation with the church secretary).

From May to October, my creative partner and I are embarking on a unique cross-Canada expedition. We are cycling 15,000km from the Atlantic to the Arctic and Pacific to document our nation's past and envision our collective future. The project, named "As the Raven Flies" will develop and document specific themes that have shaped and continue to shape Canada. By providing Canadians with a better understanding of the different histories and ecosystems

embedded in our shared landscapes, we seek to contribute to and foster a better understanding of this place we are fortunate to call home.

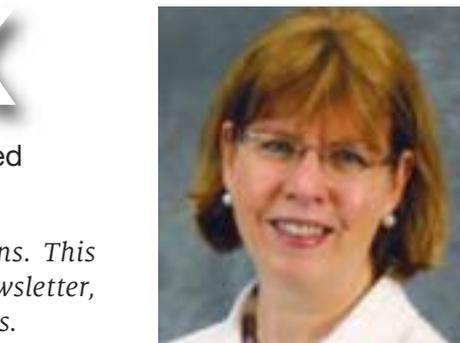
As a Christian and Muslim respectively, we are seeking to embody our faith in collecting narratives rooted in social justice, peace and inclusion, we believe that projects of this sort are critical given the cultural shifts happening both in Canada and abroad.

As a grassroots team, we need every bit of support we can get; from financial donations, to open doors along our route, to connections to individuals and communities across Canada. You can mail us at Jonathon Reed, 34 Markland St., Kingston ON K7K 1S1 or send an email to jcr@chairsandtables.org if you'd like to help, find out more, or send words of encouragement!



TECH TALK

Catherine Rodd is the Multimedia Producer at the United Church's General Council Office.



Circuit Rider's technology column is meant to aid congregations. This column was originally posted in Toronto Conference's "Insight" newsletter, and we thank them for allowing us to now share it with our readers.

Q: Our church started Facebook and Twitter accounts but we only have a few followers on Twitter, even though we post once a week. Our Facebook is a little better but the volunteers are finding it a lot of work.

invite the volunteers to a potluck or coffee night. Have a list of all the activities for the year and then sit together and assign people to post on particular events. You'll have a bank of material ready. Also use the bulletin to direct people to Facebook for more information on things. That should help increase your traffic.

A: I suggest you close your Twitter account and concentrate on Facebook. In the Twittersphere, once a week just isn't enough. To feed Facebook

An Outing to the Museum

The Social Integration Team of the United Syrian Refugee Sponsorship group in Belleville organized an intercultural journey to the Aga Khan Museum in Toronto, on Saturday February 18th. Canadian sponsors and Syrian families spent the day together viewing the exhibition SYRIA: A LIVING HISTORY which "celebrates the land and its people, highlights their heritage, and emphasizes the cultural continuity and diversity that has shaped their long history, and endowed them with an intricate, multi-layered, yet not easily bracketed notion of self".

In addition to its focus on how cultures connect with one another, the exhibition shares the idea of "the changing relationships between people and the divine as beliefs transitioned from a crowded pantheon to one God".

*Aruna Alexander,
Social Integration Team Leader*



Marialice Fielding and a member of one of Belleville's refugee families.

PARHAM UNITED HERITAGE QUILT SUNDAY

submitted by Rev. Jean Brown

Members of Parham United Church hold up a historic quilt made by the Parham United Church Explorers in 1977. Leaders of the group at that time were Mrs. Doris Campsall and Mrs. Clive Wilson, whose spouse the Rev. Clive Wilson served the church. The quilt was displayed on Heritage Quilt Sunday Feb. 19 along with many others, as folks brought in quilts to share along with their memories. The worship team helped by offering readings and insights into our God as a Master Quilter and the theme song was "Dear Weaver of Our Lives' Design" (Voices United). Directed by minister of music Stanley Stinchcombe, the congregation had spent a few weeks learning the hymn and sang it in hearty style for Heritage Quilt Sunday.



Sharbot Lake United, the sister church in the pastoral charge, also featured a similar theme and although both services were varied, the same bulletin was shared along with some of the readings - showing how two very strong churches can continue to share and yet maintain their individual presence and churches. The key is in the Worship Team, which is

a pastoral charge team, who can work together and adapt the material for each church making it a fun time and a tribute to God. The two churches both contribute significantly to their respective areas and have enough strong committees at each church to continue in this parallel pattern for a good many years, God-willing.

THE 'OWL' PASSES

Many people in Bay of Quinte Conference will remember Len Norlock who died of cancer in November 2016.

It was his wife, Lila, who first introduced Len to Camp Lau-Ren in 1976 and the next summer he served as a counsellor and nature study leader at the Junior Boy's Camp. Starting in 1977 he served the camp in many different capacities including Camp Coordinator but accepted no salary and insisted that the salary amount be deposited in the Capital Improvement Fund.

Len was very interested in improving the camp facilities and saw that there

was constant improvement including steel roofs on the cabins, washroom renovations, etc. Dedicated to the core, Len led camp renovations with



others and on his own. Even after retiring as coordinator, he could be found renovating Forrest Motel. His last project was the installation of commemorative plaques in the buildings.

Once you got to know Len, his serious outward appearance melted to reveal a good sense of humour. Yes, he could smile and laugh. No camper deed escaped Len's attention and he became known as 'Owl' – the all-knowing one.

Len and Lila made their mark on many young souls. Camp Lau-Ren has been privileged to have Norlock Chapel named to remember their contribution. Len definitely left this world a better place and the Camp Lau-Ren community mourns his loss.

by Renton Patterson

NORTH HOUSE SHELTER



North House is a long time Mission Support Grant recipient located in Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge Townships in the Northern part of Durham Region. The area is semi-rural with small towns and agricultural lands. Parts of this area are depressed with residents receiving a lower than Ontario average general income. There is a growing demand for affordable housing, better access to nutrition and supportive resources for the bottom third of the population. The vast majority of housing in the area is single family dwellings for sale. There are few apartments or houses for rent. Newer rental units that have come on the market are not affordable. The lack of affordable apartments for rent in all three townships continues to be one of the biggest barriers North House faces. North House provides housing with WrapAround support for the homeless and those in danger of homelessness in Brock, Scugog and Uxbridge Townships.

People become homeless when they can't pay their rent due to all kinds of different reasons- work place injury, abandonment, job loss, mental or physical illness. No one chooses to be homeless. And anyone can become homeless very quickly. The people North House serves are our friends and family members, our neighbours and their children. They remain hidden from public view because no one likes to admit they are too poor to care for themselves and their families.

North House provides support so that people can identify their goals and reach them. Through our Financial Literacy Program, people can have their incomes taxes calculated and submitted which will allow them access to other support programs. We can help them get and maintain their housing so that they have an address and can apply for a job, get a bank account, access the food bank regularly. Without an address no one can function in our society. Most importantly, having stable housing improves health and educational outcomes for children and youth and



ensures that our elders are safe and cared for.

It has also been noted that there is significant growth in the number of people who are employed that are being priced out of the housing market with some of them spending up to 70% of their earnings on housing when provincial guidelines suggest spending no more than 40% on housing. North House owns rental units in Beaverton and

Uxbridge and hopes to be able to procure additional units in Port Perry. All are offered at affordable rates which helps families to maintain an address.

North House works with clients with a program called WrapAround. WrapAround is a process that focuses on building a team of support. This may include family, friends, professionals who work together to empower those with complex needs to find solutions. The end result is an improved quality of life. It is concerned with building on capacity at both the individual

and community levels.

The WrapAround process operates on the traditional belief that a community can engage and offer support in the empowerment of its members.

Your contribution to the Mission and Service fund continue to make it possible North House to allow for members of our communities move from surviving to thriving and participating in community life.

CONNECTING CLERGY to CURLING

It is difficult to name a sport for men and women, other than curling, where you can play all your life, and at any age. Not only that, but in Canada, few, if any of our major sports are so connected to clergy as curling. That isn't surprising since in the 1900's, the curling rink was the social hub of the town or village. If, as a new pastor, you wanted to be part of the community (and you did, of course) you learned to curl!

Although not widely known, for many years, ecumenical Church services were held prior to major Canadian curling briers. Some believe this practice stopped in 1982, when the coordinator of the Scott 'Tournament of Hearts' chose a particular minister to handle the church service. As one curling historian put it, "how was she to know he would preach a sermon on circumcision!"

In 1978 a clergy curler named Don Amos travelled from Ontario to Winnipeg to talk to his colleagues in ministry about what might be done to bring this country more together. For Canada was then reeling from the double blow of separatism and increasing western alienation. The result: The formation of the annual Friars' Briar (The different spelling of 'brier' was due to a copyright issue). Although the original intent of the Friars' Briar was nation building, it now has as its purpose 'to promote fine fellowship and good curling on a

national basis among clergy persons and their associates'. The Friars' Briar usually takes place in the same locality and during the same week as the Canadian Championship Tim Hortons Brier. For over 30 years, clergy in the Bay of Quinte Conference, have often formed teams to compete at the Friars' Briar.

Around 1990, some of the keenest clergy curlers organized the Kingston Clergy Curling Group. Originally, membership was limited to clergy. However, now it is open to men and women, clergy or lay. During the curling season it meets on Fridays from 8am -10am at the Catarqui Golf and Country Club. A banquet at the end of the season is included in the membership fee of a little over

\$200. This past year curlers have come from the Anglican, Baptist, Pentecostal, and United Churches. Readers of this article may recognize the names of United Church clergy who have been curling with this group during the past season. They include, among others, Brian Yealland, Don Misener, Wayne Hilliker, and Jim Potter.

Next winter, the group hopes to recruit more members, including those from other faith traditions. Even if you have never curled before, curling lessons are given at the beginning of each curling season. If you are interested in joining please email Harold Vandertol at avanderth@queensu.ca





**Stewardship
Festival**

May 6, 2017

9a.m. - 3:30p.m.

Edith Rankin Memorial United Church

4080 Bath Rd., Kingston

\$25.00 (lunch included)

Look for a Registration form arriving in your church's mailbox in late March. Or call Jackie Harper at 888-759-2444 or 613-967-0150 or programs@bayofquinteconference.ca for more information and a registration form.

Deadlines for 2017

**Submit CR news and
photos for**

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– or send as soon as possible to
circuitrider@bayofquinteconference.ca

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