



Many Paths

the quarterly journal of

CRES — multi-faith community resource for exploring spirituality

Beyond superstition, narcissism, self-righteousness, and violence, we uplift the world's faiths to heal the three great crises of our desacralized culture —

- in the environment ● in personhood ● in society.
- We bring experience and study together.

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Our Page 1 essays introduce readers to aspects of specific faiths, compare and contrast how various faiths consider particular subjects, or present material those of any spiritual path may find helpful.

Wish List

This expands Vern's last *KC Star* column for 2008.



Many Paths readers know that one's spiritual life is deepened by knowing about the faiths of others, and that our community is strengthened by mutual respect. The fate of our planet depends on a vision of our common humanity embedded in our differences, as we share a home planet now in peril.

In various ways over twenty organizations in the metro area are now putting these sentiments into action. Much has happened since CRES was formed in 1982 to create the climate for sharing a vision of interfaith embrace. Good. And to move forward, here are suggestions for 2009 for

Forty years ago at Christmas time, humans first circled the moon. Apollo 8 astronauts Frank Borman, James Lovell, and William Anders safely slipped into lunar orbit. At the end of a three-day journey to the moon, the astronauts must have been greatly relieved when their rockets fired, their module slowed (else it would have continued on into deep space), and the Earth appeared to rise over the moon for the first time. The photo above, *Earthrise*, is one of those enduring and iconic moments of human history. —Text adapted from NASA history.

us in the Heartland.

Form a Council of Congregations. In 1989, CRES founded the Interfaith Council with members of more than a dozen faiths, from A to Z, American Indian to Zoroastrian, one member per faith. (CRES hosted the Council through 2004 when we encouraged the Council to become independent. Its new name is The Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council.) Strictly speaking, Council members do not represent their faith communities in a legal sense because most are not selected for Council membership by formal action of their communities. A key qualification for membership has been interest in contributing to interfaith understanding. This may be the ideal arrangement for long-term education about the traditions present in the Heartland.

But we also need a metro-wide organization through which all religious groups are able to exchange timely information, respond to urgent or long-term social needs, co-ordinate resources, and cooperate on issues of mutual interest.

The creation of such a group was the chief recommendation of the 30-some religious leaders of the Religion / Spirituality Cluster of then-Mayor Emanuel Cleaver's 1996 Task Force on Race Relations, chaired by Maggie Finefrock, now CRES Chief Learning Officer.

In their opinion, reflecting on the experience of MICA — Metropolitan Interfaith Church Agency, which was torn apart by disagreements in the early 70s — a body organized through denominational offices would be ineffective. Each congregation, of whatever faith, needs to be represented. As the Obama campaign suggests, participation at the grass-roots level is essential for real change.

Create an interfaith chapel at KCI. It is a scandal that our purportedly "international" airport, unlike those at other great cities, has no place to offer travelers for prayer, meditation and reflection. Many people travel because of personal transitions —



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- 9-12 SUPPLEMENT . . . *The Interfaith Martin Luther King Jr*

Question Box

What happened to the Holiday Calendar on Page 1 and the Community Calendar on page 7?

From the beginnings of *Many Paths* 24 years ago through our November issue, we provided holiday listings and calendars of interfaith interest for all area organizations.

We are proud to have encouraged so many worthwhile events sponsored by other organizations and glad to have provided these services for so many people for so many years.

We now eagerly offer other organizations the privilege of providing the holiday and calendar services to the community.

We've achieved our first goal of legitimizing interfaith work, helping to make it a mainstream activity. This has encouraged the formation of other groups, which as children of an aging parent, can assume some of the functions CRES has offered the community. So we now refocus on our second goal: Beyond superstition, narcissism, self-righteousness, and violence, we uplift the world's faiths to heal the three great crises of our desacralized culture —

- in the environment ● in personhood ● in society.

We are exploring new ways to do this, including the commissioning of a song by composer-performer Barclay Martin who, with his Ensemble, will premiere the song April 18. Please mark your new calendar now!

We are also cooperating with other organizations to move toward completion of the work we can offer to the community and to the nation.



Details from a sign at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport Meditation Center

weddings, illnesses, funerals, job changes, and so forth — and a chapel open to all faiths supports the traveler's spiritual life. A place set aside from the confusion and anxiety of the regular terminal activity is also important for those whose devotional life includes regular prayer.

An existing or new non-profit organization should lease space at the airport for this purpose. It should not be paid for or in any way subsidized by tax dollars, and it should insure that all faiths are recognized.

A chapel would support our city's reputation for interfaith activity.

It is probably unrealistic to expect a chapel to be operating by June when members of the North American Interfaith Network come here for their convention, but it is not too early to begin planning an interfaith chapel.

Welcome Freethinkers into the interfaith conversation. In the US, atheists, agnostics, secular humanists, Deists and others, often called "Freethinkers," number more than any religion except Christianity. Each year at the CRES Interfaith Thanksgiving Sunday Family Ritual Meal, to conclude words of gratitude from members of the traditional religions, we add words from a Freethinker.

This past year the statement was, "Freethinkers are grateful for the heritage of religious liberty enshrined in the vision of our nation's founders. They separated church and state in our Constitution. Our system of government protects those who choose any religion and those who choose none. With the insights of science and the arts, we give thanks for the freedom to think afresh and work with others to make this world a better place."

These folks care deeply about humane values. They work as much as those of any faith to make a better world. They have much to contribute to, and learn from, interfaith dialogue.

Access art to grow spiritually. Several groups are appropriating the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art as part of their interfaith explorations. There, and at other facilities as well, they are discovering that even works with seemingly secular subjects often elevate the spirit.

Kansas City offers ballet, opera, chamber, symphony and club music, as well as theater, film and other arts that help us understand the world afresh, and awaken and deepen the basic spiritual capacity to wonder, to sense the sacred where we might not have expected it.

The high quality of our arts organizations supports the spirit of Kansas City and the human spirit as it reaches for experiences that teach us who we are and what we can be as incarnations of the spirit of the universe.

Use the term "interfaith" with care. Strictly speaking, the involvement of any two faith groups with each other can be called *interfaith*. But in Kansas City *interfaith*, as with the Greater Kansas City *Interfaith* Council, has come to mean *multi-faith*.

For this reason, using specific language for bilateral or trilateral conversations, such as modeled by the "Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies" — or in the 90s in Kansas City, the "Christian Jewish Muslim Dialogue Group" — is clearer than "interfaith dialogue."

The late Pope John Paul II, who conducted historic bilateral conversations with both Jews and Muslims (Catholic-Jewish and Catholic-Muslim), deserves much credit for sparking renewed interest in *interfaith* in the sense of *multi-faith*.

In 1986 the Pope's interfaith gathering in Assisi, the town of St Francis, included leading figures of 12 world religions. This meeting was a critical link in the chain of events that led to the creation of what is now the Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council.

The Pope's example helped to inspire a conference called "A North American Assisi" in 1988 at which the North American Interfaith Network was launched. (As noted above, the Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council is hosting NAIN's meeting here in June.) CRES



heavily promoted the 1988 meeting (and arranged registration discounts) at which there were more Kansas City folks in attendance than any other city save the host city. The North American Assisi was described in the New York Times as the "first of such nature and scope on the continent" since the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 in Chicago.

From this, and previous work, CRES was able to form the Interfaith Council the following year, in the Assisi sense of *interfaith*, including all world traditions.

A term sometimes confused with *interfaith* is *ecumenical*. Strictly speaking ecumenical contacts are within the household of Christianity, *intra-faith*, rather than interfaith.

Other terms include *syncretism*, the merging aspects of two or more faiths into a new manifestation; *diversity*, the fact of a variety of faiths; and *pluralism*, which Diana Eck describes as "the energetic engagement with diversity" and "not *relativism*, but the encounter of commitments."

A good note to sound as we pray for the success of a new administration. -VB

On the Path



This is the first issue of *Many Paths* with a greater focus on our own work. Other groups, such as the Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council, which we founded, are now strong enough to provide the community with information about their own work directly.

In order to provide time and resources for our larger projects, *Many Paths* will be issued quarterly this year. The Interfaith Council has established its own newsletter, and we wish to support it.

When CRES began in 1982 to foster genuine interfaith activity in Kansas City, such efforts were rare. Now they are mainstream, with over two dozen groups involved. This is a major achievement for CRES, and we are happy to give other organizations the opportunities to grow the interfaith network we established.

But our second aim is yet to be realized, bringing the wisdom of the world's faiths to heal the three great crises in our desacralized society — in the environment, in personhood, and in society. We are therefore focusing our resources, including *Many Paths*, toward that end. We continue to treasure your friendship, partnership, and financial support.

Vern Barnett

See also our website, www.cres.org

Our Work in the Community

Upcoming Programs:
See Page 7

CRES Participates in the Festival of Faiths, Part 2

[continued from our last issue](#)

Not only was CRES a “collaborating partner in the Festival of Faiths ending with the “signature event” January 26, but we also participated in various ways in most of the individual activities.

For example, the first event, November 7, a “First Friday” near the arts Crossroads District at the Rime Buddhist Center, asked the CRES Guiding Question (see page 8, bottom, first column), “What is sacred?” Our offering in answer was the bowl, Silver Sea, created by internationally-known glass



artisan Dierk Van Keppel of Rock Cottage Glassworks, containing “holy water” used in many Kansas City interfaith ceremonies, water from dozens of rivers and other bodies of water around the world and fountains of metro Kansas City. (You can read about the collection of water at www.cres.org, click PUBLICATIONS, click HOLY WATERS.)

The second event, introduced by KC Public Library director R. Crosby Kemper III and emceed by John Mark Eberhart, book editor of *The Kansas City Star*, was “Voicing the Spiritual Self: The Interfaith Language of Doubt and Belief,” with the evening of original readings beginning with a sonnet by Vern who distributed the text and notes framed by a photo of a window of the venue, The Writers Place. The sonnet included the phrase, “the window of this page.” To read it in PDF, visit www.cres.org, click **PUBLICATIONS**, and under POEM, click **FENESTRATION**.)



CRES board member Mahnaz Shabbir also read a moving account of her experience following 9/11,

The next day, November 12, CRES associate minister David Nelson conducted a Vital Conversations discussion (see page 8) that opened the door to greater understanding of Islam for



Nelson with Kenneth L. Mosley Sr at the November 13 Table of Faiths luncheon

folks meeting at the Mid Continent Public Library Antioch Branch.

November 13 Vern, founder of the

Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council, was a guest at the Council’s fourth annual Table of Faiths luncheon



CRES community chaplain Josef Walker with Greater KC Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Peter Levi at the luncheon.

where 500 people viewed exhibits, heard prayers from fifteen faiths, and enjoyed conversation with many new and old

friends at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.



Donna Ziegenhorn, a member of the CRES board of advisors, created *The Hindu and the Cowboy and Other Kansas City Stories* after the CRES-created “Gifts of Pluralism” conference in 2001 from interviews with Kansas Citians of diverse faith traditions. It has been performed many times since, and November 17 a capacity crowd enjoyed it at the Metropolitan Ensemble Theatre. [See page 4.](#)

A Note to Our Readers: For most of its 25-year history, *Many Paths* has sought to be Kansas City’s publication of record of the area’s interfaith news, not just about CRES events. Because the seeds we have sown now make it possible for other organizations to assume this responsibility to varying extents, *Many Paths* is now focusing more on CRES events. And because of our new publication schedule, our web site is better equipped to keep you up-to-date on what has just happened and what is about to happen, beyond what we can print. Still, we aim maintain the record as fully as space allows. We appreciate your continuing support.

In Memoriam



Sheldon Stahl, 1933-2009. Sheldon sometimes stopped by Costco and brilliantly responded to questions.

Sheldon played an important role in advancing the work of CRES with advice and contacts. For example, when he was dean of the Rockhurst University School of Management, he assisted in Fr Thom Savage becoming a member of the then-flourishing Christian-Jewish-Muslim Dialogue Group shortly after Savage became president of the school.

Vern was working with Sheldon on a column when he died, and Sheldon’s words appear in that *Kansas City Star* space. You can find the text on the CRES website by clicking on **KC STAR COLUMN** and scrolling down to column #756 for March 11.

Please share this journal with your friends — or give them a gift subscription!

Our Work in the Community

Upcoming Programs:
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CRES Participates in the Festival of Faiths, Part 2

Continued from page 3.

The Festival closed 2008 with the 24th annual CRES Interfaith Thanksgiving Sunday Family Ritual Meal, this year hosted by St Paul's Episcopal Church. Since one of our honorees was using his phone headset for his fiancée in Egypt to hear, we think this was our first dinner internationally "broadcast" live.

We honored —

- ▶ **Walt and Jean Hiersteiner** whose extended civic faithfulness to public health, education, and interfaith comity have blessed us beyond measure.
- ▶ **Ahmed El-Sherif** whose local and global humanitarian and interfaith work and leadership within his own faith bring the world closer to peace.

••• *And from the arts, leaders of two groups with 50 years of service to Kansas City enriching the spirit of our community—*

- ▶ **Evan Luskin and Ward Holmquist** whose leadership of The Lyric Opera of Kansas City with the magic of musical drama portrays the human condition and enriches the soul.
- ▶ **William Whitener** whose artistic leadership of the Kansas City Ballet reveals and uplifts the human spirit through dance.

Details about the dinner — the liturgy, the participants, and the honorees — were printed in the 2008 November and December issues of *Many Paths*, available on line.



Diners stand for a part of the liturgical full Thanksgiving Sunday meal. The 2009 dinner, our 25th year, will be the last hosted by CRES. We hope another group will adopt it.

The final event of the Festival of Faiths, the "signature event," was a lecture entitled, "Faith and Politics:

From George Washington to Barack Obama" by Jon Meacham, best-selling author and editor of *Newsweek*, January 26 at the Carlson Center's Yardley Hall at Johnson County Community College.



Barclay Martin and internationally known "green" architect Bob Berkebile, who was an advisor for the "Gifts of Pluralism" conference, chat after the Meacham lecture.

Vern and world music musician Barclay Martin, who returns to the Philippines just before the world premiere of a song commissioned by CRES April 18 (see page 7), were guests at a dinner with Meacham before the lecture.

Former CRES board chair Larry Guillot attended most of the small group discussions through February 5 to follow up on the lecture.

Congratulations to the Festival of Faiths team for their thoughtful and effective gifts to the community!

Interfaith Roundtable



Top left to right: Mary McCoy, Cultural Crossroads; Larry Guillot, Community Advisor of GKIC; Jon Willis with Second Presbyterian Church; Paula Isgir, Youth Director of Second Presbyterian Church; Diane Hersberger, the House of Menuha; Bottom left to right: the Rev Dr David Nelson, the Human Agenda; Shannon Clark, Executive Director of GKIC; Donna Ziegenhorn, Festival of Faiths and GKIC. Not shown: Vern with CRES. The meeting was hosted most graciously by Diane and the House of Menuha for a second time.

The Interfaith Roundtable, representatives of various area groups involved one way or another in interfaith work, met January 11 and found ways to be mutually supportive. The group meets again April 8 Wednesday 9-11a, hosted by the Raindrop Turkish House, 9903 Pflumm Road, Lenexa.

The quarterly meetings were initiated by CRES, the Human Agenda, and the Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council. (Thanks to Shannon for scribal services!) Coordinating schedules, avoiding duplications, and enhancing service to the community are some of the aims. Many groups are listed at www.cres.org/kc.

CRES phone change

Beginning April 1, we no longer will accept messages left on (913) 649 5114. Callers are asked to send an email to us, staff@cres.org.

Donor Information

CRES is a 501(c)(3) charity as determined by the IRS in its 1985 July 17 letter. It is a Kansas not-for-profit also registered in Missouri. It is operated by a Board of Directors and led by the Rev Vern Barnet, DMin and a volunteer staff.

CRES, with its scholarly capacities and practical networking, has been central to the development of interfaith work in Kansas City and has been nationally recognized by CBS-TV, Harvard University's Pluralism Project, and in other ways.

Because of our professional volunteer staff, your gift to CRES provides an enormous "bang for the buck."

Please draw your check to
CRES
Box 45414
Kansas City, MO 64171.

For a personal call, phone or write
Vern Barnet,
913.649.5114
vern@cres.org

If you are not already on our mailing list, you will received *Many Paths* regularly with our thanks.

Our Web Site

Use your browser refresh button whenever you visit cres.org to see updated news and features.



Second Annual Shabbir “Peace, Understanding in a Pluralistic World” Scholarship Essay

The second Syed Farrukh Shabbir MD Memorial \$500 Scholarship winner of the 500-word essay contest was Leah Cullen from St Thomas Aquinas. She was applauded last fall at the Crescent Peace Society dinner. (We will eventually catch up on our backlog of news!)

The judges found her essay, reprinted below, the most compelling of the entries about the importance of peace and understanding in a pluralistic world. Leah is attending the University of Kansas this fall.

The second place winner of the \$250 scholarship was Nicholas Ian Holle of Olathe South High School who planned to attend the University of Nebraska in Lincoln.

About 95 letters were sent to public and private high school counselors in the greater Kansas City areas in January last year. The deadline for the essay contest was that March 31.

The scholarship contest, sponsored by the Crescent Peace Society, was open to any college-bound graduating senior from a high school located in the greater Kansas City area. The blind essay contest was judged by Ali and Adil, Dr Shabbir’s two older sons; the Reverend Vern Barnet, minister emeritus of CRES; Bill Tammus, then columnist for *The Kansas City Star*; and Mary Cohen, then United States Department of Education, Secretary’s Regional Representative.

Syed Farrukh Shabbir MD was a physician who practiced in the greater Kansas City area for over 27 years. During his lifetime, he was active in the community serving the health care needs at various hospitals, universities, and in his own private practice as a psychiatrist.

In addition, he was involved in working with people of many faiths — not just in the health care area, but also in community activi-

ties. Unfortunately, his life was cut short 2006 January 22 at the age of 57 after fighting a debilitating autoimmune disease called Wegener’s granulomatosis.

“Our desire is for the next generation of college students to think about the importance of peace and pluralism and that they take an active role in making this a better world,” said Mahnaz Shabbir, Dr Shabbir’s widow. She is on the advisory board of the Crescent Peace Society and a member of the CRES board. Her many commitments make her one of the community’s most valued leaders.



Leah with two of the Shabbir Scholarship contest judges, Vern and Bill Tammus, at the October 12 Crescent Peace Society dinner.

The Importance of Peace and Understanding in a Pluralistic World

Leah Cullen, First Place Winner

What does a pluralistic world look like? America is a country that has shown the possibility of manifesting this magnificent idea. America was founded by people seeking religious freedom, and over the years, America has welcomed people of religions that differed from the majority of the founders. However, when talking about America, or any other country, peace is of extreme importance to everybody, no matter what their religion. Think of how many wars would never have taken place or how many people would never have been killed in the name of God or religion, if peaceful, pluralistic societies had been in existence around the world from the beginning.

The idea that groups of people with more than one set of beliefs may make up a peaceful society seems like a difficult concept to grasp. But, whether you agree or disagree with specific religions, understanding them is of key importance to living in a community with individuals who practice religions different from one’s own. It is only through understanding the religions of others that we can overcome the ignorance and resulting fear that stereotypes promote. Ignorance of other’s religious tenets and beliefs is the enemy of understanding and acceptance. We must listen to what people of other religions are saying about the importance of their beliefs.

Understanding, however, goes beyond just religious tolerance and mere acceptance of others. It requires a commitment to take an active role in learning about, and understanding, the religious beliefs and practices of others, though they may be different from our own. To do this we must seek knowledge and engage in dialogue with people of the various faiths.

We must listen with an open mind, putting aside any thoughts of establishing the “rightness” of our own religious beliefs, or converting others to our religion. By seeking to convert others we are, in essence, saying that the other person’s religious beliefs, are wrong. We must instead seek understanding and acceptance of other people’s beliefs and listen with an ear for seeking out commonalities. These commonalities then form the basis for understanding, and the creation of peaceful, pluralistic communities.

Most people have the same common needs; adequate food and shelter, the ability to raise their children in a safe environment, and the opportunity to worship a higher power in the way they see fit. This is what unites all of humanity, and understanding this and maintaining a focus on our shared needs, is important to living peacefully in a pluralistic world. Our religious and cultural differences should not be a reason to divide us as a nation or a world. It is by understanding and accepting our differences, while seeking common ground, that we can support the inclusion of all religions in order to achieve peace and understanding in a pluralistic world.

See also our website,
www.cres.org

CRES Miscellany

Upcoming Programs:
See Page 7

Quotations

On one side of the faith line are the religious totalitarians. Their conviction is that only one interpretation of one religion is a legitimate way of being, believing, and belonging on earth. Everyone else needs to be cowed, or converted, or condemned, or killed. On the other side of the faith line are the religious pluralists, who hold that people believing in different creeds and belonging to different communities need to learn to live together. Religious pluralism is neither mere coexistence nor forced consensus. It is a form of proactive cooperation that affirms the identity of the constituent communities, while emphasizing that the well-being of each and all depends on the health of the whole. It is the belief that the common good is best served when each community has a chance to make its unique contribution. —*Eboo Patel*

Some emergent types [want] to recast Jesus as a limp-wrist hippie in a dress with a lot of product in His hair, who drank decaf and made pithy Zen statements about life while shopping for the perfect pair of shoes. In Revelation, Jesus is a prize fighter with a tattoo down His leg, a sword in His hand and the commitment to make someone bleed. That is a guy I can worship. I cannot worship the hippie, diaper, halo Christ because I cannot worship a guy I can beat up.

—*Pastor Mark Driscoll.*

I never felt that anxious any other time during my presidency, curiously enough.—*George Bush speaking about the pitch he threw out at the World Series in 2001 when asked by People magazine what moments from the last eight years he revisited most often.*

Humor

A minister was completing a temperance sermon. With great emphasis he said, “If I had all the beer in the world, I’d take it and pour it into the river.”

With even greater emphasis he said, “And if I had all the wine in the world, I’d take it and pour it into the river.”

And then finally, shaking his fist in the air, he said with great drama, “And if I had all the whiskey in the world, I’d take it and pour it in to the river!”

It was a powerful sermon, now ended.

Perhaps the minister had failed to coordinate his sermon topic with the music director who then announced, “For our closing song, let us sing Hymn #365, “Shall We

CRES 2009

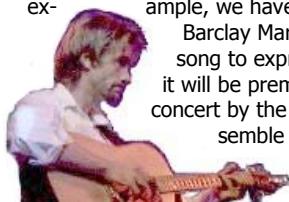
As announced in the December *Many Paths*, CRES is encouraging new organizations now engaged in interfaith work (see our list at www.cres.org/kc to offer basic services to the community initiated by CRES so that our limited resources can be directed to those efforts we are especially able to provide.

Here are some examples. We hope to greatly reduce the networking services we have provided. This usually means referral to the Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council as we receive requests for speakers from various faiths and other requests. We no longer list all community events of interfaith interest on page 7 of this journal and on our website, and lists we previously provided of holidays of all faiths are now also elsewhere available. With the regular publication of the newsletter of the Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council, *Many Paths* is take its publication quarterly but by the summer will be mailed first class.

Having achieved the first goal of raising Kansas City’s awareness of its religious diversity and making the celebration of pluralism a mainstream activity, CRES now turns to the second part of its mission (see page 8): *Beyond superstition, narcissism, self-righteousness, and violence, we uplift the world’s faiths to heal the three great crises of our desacralized culture —*

- in the environment
- in personhood
- in society.

Our new initiatives underline this intent. For example, we have commissioned Barclay Martin to compose a song to express this vision, and it will be premiered in a special concert by the Barclay Martin Ensemble April 18 which we hope will attract



an enlarged audience including younger people and those still unaware of CRES. This initiative also expands our emphasis on art as a vehicle for spiritual life.

Still CRES, uniting study with experience, theory with practice, will continue to offer educational, consulting, and ceremonial services, as listed on our website. We hope this notice will clarify the sphere in which we now intend to contribute to the community.

The Poetry Path

Poems with spiritual significance

Sonnet CXVI

William Shakespeare 1564 – 1616

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never
shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth’s unknown, although his
height be taken.
Love’s not Time’s fool, though rosy lips and
cheeks
Within his bending sickle’s compass come:
Love alters not with his brief hours and
weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

A comment on California’s Proposition 8.

25th Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Sunday Family Ritual Meal

2009 Nov 22 Sun 6-8p
The last for CRES to host.
Mark your calendar now!



KC Star Column

Vern’s Wednesday FYI “Faiths and Beliefs” columns included these recent topics:

- 1203 Waiting and arrival of Advent
 - 1210 Faith is bigger than beliefs
 - 1217 One plan would change Christmas
 - 1224 Let us proclaim the child
 - 1231 Wish list for faiths for 2009
- For 2009 topics, visit our web site.
- Add your comment under the column on [The Star’s web site](http://The Star's web site).

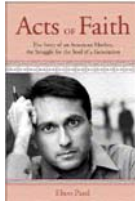
For the full text, please visit www.cres.org (sometimes the printed version gives way to ad space) or send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to CRES, Box 45414, Kansas City, MO 64171.

Our website, www.cres.org, is changing. Please visit.

CRES Programs

25th Annual Thanksgiving Sunday Convocation: 2009 Nov 22

2009 January 20 Tuesday 7-8:30p Interfaith Youth Service and Dialogue in Kansas City



Discussion of Eboo Patel's book, *Acts of Faith*, and interfaith youth organizing — people from all faiths are welcome.

2009 February 8 Sunday Service project for 9th-12th grade youth

2009 February 28 Saturday Interfaith Youth Training Workshop

For Youth Leaders

- 12:30-1p
— Introductions and Overview of IFYC
- 1-3p
— Storytelling Training
- 3-3:15p
— Break (Drinks and snacks provided)
- 3:15-5:15p
— Dialogue Facilitation Training

For All

- 5:30-6:30p
— Dinner (provided) and Keynote

For 9th-12th Grade Youth

- 7-9p
— Training Program for Youth: Religious Pluralism + Faith Heroes (Drinks and snacks provided)

All events at Second Presbyterian Church, 318 E 55, co-sponsored by CRES. Please RSVP Jon Willis, 816-822-8756, jonwillis@madisonreds.com.

Human Family Reunion 2009 May 1 and 2

Andy Pratt, vice president for religious activities at William Jewell College, and CRES Amity Shaman Ed Chasteen plan a special Human Family Reunion for May 1 and 2 for all students who were HateBusters while on the William Jewell campus and all who attended Human Family Reunions in the past. If you can't come, send a message about how the Reunions affected your life. Ed will compile all accounts into a book and make it available on line and at the Reunion.



Vital Conversations 2nd Wed of the month, 1p

Led by CRES associate minister the Rev David Nelson, DMin, (humanagenda@juno.com) at the Mid-Continent Library, 6060 N Chestnut, Gladstone. Vital – that which creates life and hope. Conversations – intentional moments of listening and talking. A collaboration with the Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council, cosponsored by CRES. “The purpose of a vital conversation is not to win an argument, but to win a friend and advance civilization.” —Vern Barnet

January 14— *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation*, by Jon Meacham. Editor of *Newsweek*, Meacham's book is an historical portrait of the spiritual foundation of America. With Sally Quinn, he moderates “On Faith,” an internet conversation on religion. Jonathan Sarna, historian of American Judaism writes, “At a time when faith and freedom seem increasingly polarized, *American Gospel* recovers our vital center, the middle ground where, historically, religion and public life strike a delicate balance. Meacham speaks here January 26 at the “Festival of Faith” keynote event. Visit www.festivaloffaithskc.org.

February 11— *The Post-American World* by Fareed Zakaria, editor of *Newsweek International*. “This is not a book about the decline of America, but rather about the rise of everyone else.” So begins this important new work on the era we now enter. Following the success of his best-selling *The Future of Freedom*, Zakaria describes with equal prescience a world in which the United States will no longer dominate the global economy, orchestrate geopolitics, or overwhelm cultures. He sees the “rise of the rest” — like China, India, Brazil, Russia, and many others — as the great story of our time, and one that will reshape the world. Zakaria will be at the Folly Theater March 31. Vital Conversations participants will be given free tickets.

March 11— *Our Search for Happiness* by Elder M Russell Ballard. Local members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) will share their history and faith. In the coming years a new Temple will be build here in Clay County. Packets of materials will be provided at the February meeting. Elder Brent McAllister, who is assigned to the Historic Liberty Jail, will share in our conversation along with other members of the Mormon community in our area.

April 8 — *Change of Die: Could you change when change matters most?* by Alan Deutschman. **SEE www.cres.org.**

April 8 *Change or Die: Could you change when change matters most?* By Alan Deutschman

May 13 *Cleaning Closets: A Mother's Story* by Beverly Cole

June 10 *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man Who Would Cure the World* by Tracy Kidder

July 8 *The Mystic Heart: Discovering A Universal Spirituality in the World's Religions* by Wayne Teasdale



Bassist Rick Willoughby, drummer Giuliano Mingucci, Interfaith Council Sikh member Karta Purkh Singh Khalsa, composer-singer-guitarist Barclay Martin, and pianist Mark Lowrey with the Greater Kansas City Interfaith Council banner at an Eid at the Shawnee Civic Center Dec 6 where the Ensemble performed.

CRES Benefit Concert with the Barclay Martin Ensemble co-sponsored with the Interfaith Council

Premiering a new composition
commissioned by CRES
and discussing it, other songs, and creativity

Save the date

April 18 Saturday 8 pm
All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church
4501 Walnut

Details on line, www.cres.org

The Three Dimensions of the Sacred in World Religions Jan 25 Sun 9:30a

Vern speaks for Mark Stowell's adult Faith Journey class at Village Presbyterian, 6641 Mission.

OTHER SELECTED ENGAGEMENTS

- February 20 Sophia Center, Atchison
- March 21 Diplomatic Ball invocation
- March 25 Interfaith Workshop for Clergy, Laity
- April 3 Holy Union
- April 8 Interfaith Roundtable
- April 24 Tour of Nelson-Atkins for ADL



CRES Greater Kansas City's multi-faith resource

Promoting understanding among all faiths through civic involvement, teaching, consultation, and writing

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CRES Benefit Concert
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Mark your calendar now!

April 18 Saturday 8 pm
 All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, 4501 Walnut

Many Paths

Vol 25 #1; Josef Walker, proofreading assistance

World Faiths Center for Religious Experience and Study

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 TO SUPPORT INTERFAITH WORK TO**

**CRES
 BOX 45414
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VISION

CRES envisions metro Kansas City as a model community honoring interfaith relationships

- ▶ as a way of deepening one's own tradition and spirituality, and
- ▶ where the wisdom of the many faiths meaningfully addresses our
 - environmental, ● personal, and
 - social crises, and thus promotes healing, justice, and peace.

MISSION

To honor the sacred wherever it appears, to support its appearance everywhere — especially by promoting interfaith understanding in metro Kansas City and beyond

OUR GUIDING QUESTION

What is sacred?— what is so important that my life depends upon it, that I would die for it — and what may I do to understand, honor, and share it?

THE CRES MOTTO

- *Primal Faiths*: restored with nature
- *Asian Faiths*: the self made whole
- *Monotheistic Faiths*: community in covenant
- *Liberation Movements*: finding the sacred afresh

OUR VALUES

Mutuality. For CRES, mutuality means fully embracing both differences and similarities, both distinct traditions and universal kinship. We understand ourselves better by understanding others.

Exploration. For CRES, exploring one another's faiths leads neither to conversion nor syncretism, but rather to mutual purification and the deepening of our own traditions.

Service. CRES offers multi-faith resources and processes to the community for interfaith encounter and service to the secular world. We need each other's insights and aid to respond to the crises of secularism.

CRES WORKS TO

- promote interfaith dialog and cooperation
- provide insight into the problems and possibilities of global community
- support and enhance the efforts of existing KC area religious and educational organizations
- interpret religious dimensions of American and international culture
- enrich and refresh the life of the individual
- deepen awareness of our participation in the natural environment

FOUR REASONS FOR INTERFAITH WORK

- ▶ We are kin.
- ▶ We understand ourselves better by understanding others.
- ▶ Genuine interfaith encounter leads to mutual purification and the deepening of our own traditions.
- ▶ We need each other's insights to respond to the
 - environmental, ● personal, and ● social crises of our age.

OUR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

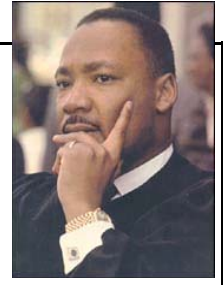
- The Kansas City Interfaith Council, 1989-2004 (CRES founded and hosted it as a program and arranged its independence in 2005).
- The first interfaith conference in the region's history with 250 people from 14 faiths, A to Z — American Indian to Zoroastrian.
- Our monthly 12-page color journal, *Many Paths*.
- Our extensive web site, www.cres.org.
- Our annual Thanksgiving Sunday Interfaith Family Ritual Meal.
- Our Passport congregational visitation program.
- Sparking efforts like *The Hindu and the Cowboy and Other Kansas City Stories* and interfaith book clubs.
- Other programs, consultations, teaching, writing, networking, and resources requested by international and community groups, including the nation's first Interfaith Academies (with Harvard's Pluralism Project, etc) and the metro Festival of Faiths.
- The services of a professional staff that includes Dr Vern Barnet, who writes *The Kansas City Star* "Faiths and Beliefs" column each Wednesday.

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*Peace is not the absence of tension.
It is the presence of justice. — Martin Luther King Jr*

Satyāgraha in America

King’s voice is one of the few to speak to all conditions and situations. Perhaps this arises in part from his rootedness in a particular American experience with a vision of universal order.

Who in 20th Century America exemplifies commitment to one’s own faith with reverence for others better than Martin Luther King Jr?

As the photo from King’s home suggests, King’s ideas about non-violent civil disobedience derived in part from the Hindu Mohandas K Gandhi. King first studied Gandhi at Crozer Seminary, where he took a BD in 1951. After completing his doctorate at Boston University with a dissertation on the thought of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman (one of my teachers and Huston Smith’s father-in-law), in 1959 he went to India and talked with Gandhi’s followers, including Prime Minister Nehru, “not as a tourist, but as a pilgrim.”

King, whose civil rights movement leadership began in 1955 and

ended with his murder in 1968, wrote “While the Montgomery boycott was going on, India’s Gandhi was the guiding light of our technique of non-violent social change.”

When King was 6 years old, Gandhi said, “It may be through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world.”



In tracing this history, we discover the irony that Gandhi himself claimed his *Hinduism* only after being stirred by the writings of a *Christian*, Leo Tolstoy. As Wilfred Cantwell Smith has shown, Tolstoy himself was converted to non-violence and social service by the Christian story of Barlaam and Josaphat, a retelling of an earlier

story from a *Muslim* source, which in turn received it from the *Manichees*, who had recast the story of the *Buddha*, successively called Bodisaf, Yudasaf, and Josaphat. And earlier versions suggest *Jain* or other beginnings. Thus our celebration of King’s wisdom has ancient and universal origins.

Just as Gandhi matured in Hinduism by discovering Christianity, King was strengthened in Christian love by respectful study of the Hindu. King remained Christian. Gandhi remained Hindu. Conversion was unnecessary because they stretched and enlarged their own faiths. Our encounters with those of other religions may lead us to deeper powers of our own heritage, which is really an intertwined, universal story, as King’s example shows us.

Here is the gist of Gandhi’s *satyagraha*, “truth-force”—

- Make no distinction between process and goal. Tactics used must exhibit in the present the spiritual nature of the future goal.
- Lack of involvement betrays community.
- See the truth in one’s opponent and the demonic potentials in one’s own position.
- We must be as pure as we ask others to be.
- The process, the community, is not complete until wholeness is restored among all “adversaries.”

For a look at a look at a more recent movement inspired in part by Dr King’s efforts, we recommend the current movie *Milk*, about the San Francisco supervisor who was assassinated in 1978.

The goal is to be at peace both with others and with ourselves.



The encounters we have with those of other religions may lead us to hidden

and strong nuclear forces, so a spiritual “theory of everything” honoring the sacred in



- nature,
- selfhood, and
- society, is the search CRES hopes to provoke and excite.

Building community — with

- the environment, with
- the many “selves” in each of us, and with
- one another in community —

is a profound response to the gift of life we enjoy. The wisdom of responding to duty as an act of friendly playfulness may be a secret of unending bliss. —VB

In his famous “Letter from the Birmingham City Jail,” King outlines four steps of a non-violent campaign:

- collecting facts to determine whether injustices exist,
- negotiation,
- self-purification, and
- direct action.

The “means we use must be as pure as the ends we seek.” This is why those engaged in direct action were repeatedly asked, “Are you able to accept blows without retaliating? Are you able to endure the ordeals of jail?” and so forth.

Many injustices around us damage and degrade community — in Kansas City metro, in the nation, in the world. The “Beloved Community” King



envisioned is still to be realized. The Beloved Community is made

not by protecting ourselves at all costs from injustices around us or by blaming others for them, or by keeping silent when we are witnesses to outrage, but by helping to make them visible in such ways as to affirm our relatedness even to those who do injustice, and to pull them with ourselves into a more just world. This sometimes results in crisis, which King saw as potentially creative.

powers of our own heritage, which is really an intertwined, universal story. As King’s example shows us, an encounter with another faith can stimulate and

A SPIRITUAL PATH

Christian M L King Jr
from Hindu Gandhi
from Christian Tolstoy
from Barlaam-Jesaphat
from Muslim source
from Manichees
from Buddhism
from Jain elements

and deepen our own. If the only religion you know is your own, you really don’t know it at all. The Christian

may become a better Christian, the Jew a better Jew, the Buddhist a better Buddhist, by recognizing and embracing the differences expressed within our common humanity, sharing the planet’s fate.

King, Gandhi, and Pandurang Athavale (see *Many Paths* 2004 February) joined ●Asian and ●Monotheistic themes. *CRES works to integrate their vision with insights of ●Primal faiths.* As the physicists move toward a single comprehensive explanation that unites gravity, the electromagnetic force, and the weak



One of the most interesting applications of the Gandhi-King understanding of community is found in the work of a former writer for Jerry Falwell, Mel White, who since has acknowledged his male partner. (See <http://www.soulforce.org>.) White lists five “soul-force” vows:

- ▶ to seek the truth, to live by the truth, and to confront untruth wherever I find it,
- ▶ to reject violence,
- ▶ to take on myself without complaint any suffering that might result from my confrontation with untruth and to do all in my power to help my adversary avoid all suffering, especially that suffering that may result from our confrontation,
- ▶ to control my appetite for food, sex, intoxicants, entertainment, position, and power that my best self might be free in doing justice, and
- ▶ to limit my possessions to those things I need to survive, using them to help make things fair for all.

The Audacity to Dream

Martin Luther King Jr Celebration 2008 January 21, Lee's Summit, MO

Substance of Keynote Address by Vern Barnett

Topic assigned by the Human Relations Commission

SOURCES

INTRODUCTION

We have dreams. Sometimes that can be audacious. Those who founded Lee's Summit, incorporated in the 1850s as the Town of Strother, had a dream. Those who, 11 years ago, began this annual Martin Luther King Jr observance had a dream. Each person here tonight came to share in King's dream and be inspired by the good spirit in this town, and to strengthen it, evidenced in your honoree and in the performances we are witnessing tonight.

Forty years ago I was a theological student in Chicago. I had finished early in the week working on my first Easter sermon. Then, on April 4, King was assassinated. Devastated by his death and the unfolding events, I asked *how could I preach an uplifting Easter sermon April 7?* Last week I went through my files and found that sermon. [Show manuscript.] As I reread it, I realized in a sense I've been re-writing this sermon ever since. And over the years writing my column in *The Star*, the person I refer to the most often by far is King [53 times].

In the face of that horror and in the grim context of that time, it was audacious to dream that something good could follow such a wicked act as King's murder. And indeed, in Chicago and many other places, including Kansas City, disturbances and riots and dreadful violence broke out. King was killed, and it seemed for a time that the dream of America, the dream he had, the dream embedded in the founding of this nation, had become smoldering ashes. In Kansas City, the school board required students to be in school on the day of King's funeral. The police killed six African-Americans.

Of course what happened in Christian America was not the first murder of someone dreaming of the justice that makes peace and community possible. Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin was

killed by a fellow Jew, Gandhi was murdered by a fellow Hindu, Egyptian president Anwar Sadat was killed by a fellow Muslim.

But the promise of faith, the power of hope, the pull of a dream finally moved us forward.

I happen to know your honoree of last year, Allan Gray, who is with us tonight with his wife on her birthday. When King was killed, Allan was in high school, and he had the audacity to reach out creatively to develop relationships beyond barriers, a bridge-building pattern that became part of his life-long character, and even at that early time *The Star* wrote about his efforts, and he became friends with many in the King family.

In many places, the burnt ground of those days has become green again. [And today prejudice is often seen for what it is.] Legal segregation is gone, but de facto segregation persists. As I heard high school students today discussing their situations, fear is too common and friendships still too few. So while in some respects our situation has improved, we face new threats against the environment, against personhood, and against our social fabric. Many Americans are excited about moving beyond racial and gender constraints in selecting public servants, even the presidency. But it still takes audacity to dream the dream that will propel us forward.

In celebrating King, we celebrate the best of America, the dream that all people are created equal, the dream — that in its fullness — was what Dr King called "the beloved community."

Please repeat after me: **I have / the audacity / to dream.**

Let's now recall three things: the sources of the dream's power, how to put the dream into action, and the content of the dream itself.

The sources of the dream's power are ancient. Let me compress twenty-five hundred years into a moment, and then I'll tell you what I think it means.

In the distant past, somehow the notion of *ahimsa*, non-violence, developed, perhaps with the Jains in India. The idea became part of the Buddha's teaching. As stories about the Buddha grew, he was called Bodisaf, Yudasaf and Josaphat. The Manichees retold the story, and the Muslims transmitted it to the Christians in the tale of Barlaam and Josaphat. Tolstoy was converted to non-violence and social service by this now-Christian tale. By reading Tolstoy, Gandhi was stirred to explore his own Hindu tradition.

And King studied Gandhi, first in divinity school, later in India. Gandhi called his tool satyagraha, "truth-force," a tool of such spiritual energy it helped to liberate India from the British. King called it non-violent direct action, which has liberated us from the shackles of racism.

King regarded Gandhi as "probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale."

One other source I mention because it comes from Rich Hill, MO, just down the road on Hiway 71, where Henry Nelson Wieman was born in 1884. King wrote about Wieman in his doctoral dissertation. Wieman, known for his phrase "creative interchange," understood God as the power that transforms us as we cannot transform ourselves.

Into the cauldron of interposition and nullification, of separate drinking fountains and deprivation of the right to vote, of economic slavery, fear of lynchings, and other racial evils, King brought these sources of healing and dreamed a dream big enough for all of us.

Now here's what this means:
Martin Luther King Jr. was a black Christian. Others who also marched and died were white Christians. The civil

rights movement included Jewish leaders. Many Muslims regard King as a great teacher. His work has inspired American Indian, Hispanic, gay, women and other groups. King's legacy is for all peoples and speaks to all faiths.

Thus our celebration of King's wisdom has ancient and universal origins. [Just as Gandhi matured in his Hinduism by discovering Christianity, King was strengthened in Christian love by respectful study of the Hindu. King remained a Christian. Gandhi remained a Hindu. Conversion was unnecessary because they stretched and enlarged their own faiths.] The dream involves and embraces everyone. Can we dream today?

I have / the audacity / to dream.

METHODS

How do we put the dream into action? — King's use of the "creative crisis" was primarily spiritual. The Birmingham volunteers were required to "pledge myself—my person and my body—to the nonviolent movement." The pledge included daily meditation on the teachings and life of Jesus; remembering the goals are justice and reconciliation, not victory; refraining from violence of fist, tongue and heart; and sacrificing personal wishes so that all people may be free.

Let me break this out.

1. Cowardice is the worst possible position. Some situations demand that we suffer as individuals to achieve freedom for all.

2. We must start at home, with ourselves. We can authentically urge change upon others only to the extent that our own spirits are orderly.

3. We must find the humanity in our adversaries and beware of demonic potential within ourselves. While confrontation may be necessary, cherishing the personhood of all involved in the conflict may lead to a creativity larger than we can presently see.

4. The methods we use to bring about social change must manifest the goals themselves. Worthy ends cannot justify immoral means. It is more important to establish a nonviolent relationship with

one's adversary than to achieve a victory through violence.

5. Achieving justice is an unending process. We make mistakes and are disappointed along the way. But in forgiving ourselves and deepening compassion for others, we become more human.

6. Winning is not defeating one's opponent but transforming the opponent into a companion on the path of righteousness. The dream is puny if it is just about winning. We cannot create the beloved community when we are hating others. But how glorious, how audacious is our dream if our dream is of love.

I have / the audacity / to dream.

THE DREAM

We've looked at the sources of the dream. [Those sources are ancient and world-wide and, we might say, eternal.] And the methods to put the dream in action. Now the third question: What is the content of that dream?

You've already answered it if you say it is love. If you say it is equality. If you say it is service to one another.

This became clear to me when I heard King in Washington DC the summer before he was shot. He spoke out against the Vietnam War. He said "wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means." King understood that all oppressions are linked, that war arises from injustice. What would it be like if our national bellicose leaders asked if we ourselves as a nation might be guilty of injustice, which comes back against us from those whose voices we refuse to hear?

King said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly." King said this before the internet, before economic integration, before the media made plain how we are involved in things that happen on the other side of the planet.

What is the content of that dream? The dream begins with a complaint. The

world is not the way God wants it to be. And it is up to us to do the work of righteousness.

What is the content of that dream? I'm not going to tell you because you have the answer already if you refuse to accept poverty, disease, and militarism while others gorge themselves on greed, force upon us an addiction to violence, and pollute our environment. A dream is a renewable resource!

What is the content of that dream? I'm not going to tell you because you already have the answer if you interrupt jokes that put down people on the basis of their race, religion, gender, sexual preference, or age.

You know the dream if you work with a friend who is different, in skin color, in religion, in sexual preference, who is looking for a new place to live, and you audaciously encourage your friend to locate in your neighborhood.

You already have the answer, you already know the dream if you find and choose leaders in business, in education, in government, in medicine, in religion, in the arts, who have the experience and insight to work with everyone in your community.

To love your enemies as Dr King taught is not easy. It is easier to bully, or arm yourself, or send your military to kill them, rather than to convert them into friends by doing justice, loving mercy, and walking honestly with one's God.

IN CONCLUSION

Dear citizens of Lee's Summit. Your town is so named because in places it rises to an elevation of over a thousand feet. It is a noted geographical and topographical fact. You are higher than some of the areas that surround you.

Let this town and all its people also rise to a moral elevation. May your audacity to dream, which you in this assembly tonight embrace, raise you to elevations of friendship and service such as you never before imagined, but with the audacity of the dream, you become what King dreamed about, the beloved community.

One last time, together:

I have / the audacity / to dream!