

WFWP Colorado's Interreligious Sharing Series at the Calvary Apostolic Church

Gale Alves
October 13, 2018



The God-centered family is the place in which all religions are fulfilled. This deep insight from Rev. Sun Myung Moon was manifested clearly throughout the third session of our Interreligious Sharing Series on October 13th, 2018 at the Calvary Apostolic Church in Denver, Colorado.

The first and second events in this series – a combined project of the Colorado chapter of Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) and Family Federation for World Peace (FFWP) – had taken place earlier in the year at the Lady Fatima Mosque. Thirty people, five religions and one service ministry came together to share their reflections on "The Meaning and Value of Marriage and Family."

Gale Alves, co-chairwoman of the WFWP Colorado Chapter, welcomed everyone and expressed, "My husband Antonio and I were inspired to initiate this Interreligious Sharing Series because of Rev. Moon's teaching that true world peace cannot come about without harmony and respect among the world's religions. It makes sense that people who deeply love God, Allah, Jesus and Buddha's teachings would naturally have an open heart and mind for people of other faiths."

This gathering of like-minded individuals who value healthy and happy families was a joyous occasion filled with merriment. We all spontaneously cheered when a large extended family photo appeared on the screen: four sons, their wives and 16 grandchildren. This family photo was proudly displayed by the lay minister couple of The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints. An imam leaned over to his wife and whispered, "We beat them by two children, but they beat us by two grandchildren." There were smiles all around.

Each participant at this seminar had 20 minutes to convey their perspectives on marriage and family. Lay ministers and overseas missionaries Ed and Jayne Swapp told us about the weekly Family Night that has been a tradition of The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints for 50 years. Families turn off the televisions, computers and all electronics. They talk together, play board games, sing, play sports, take walks, create art or do crafts together. It has definitely helped strengthen the family bond, they said.

Pastor Don Haymon II, of the hosting Calvary Apostolic Church, gave us a list of seven traits that can help married couples stay happily married:

1. Be adaptable and flexible.
2. Have empathy and sympathy in your emotional arsenal.

3. Give and receive love.
4. Work on your emotional stability.
5. Develop good communication skills.
6. Explore and discover similar interests and aspects of your backgrounds.
7. Learn how to work through problems.

We were then guided through a relaxing meditation by lay minister Billy Lee Elrick of the Kadampa Meditation Center. She gently led us to connect with the core of our beings: our hearts. The Kadampa Buddhist teachings say, "When I have love in my heart, I don't allow others to hurt my feelings," and that we should in turn "cherish all living beings' feelings."

An interactive piece by Dr. David and Trisha Ferlic of SmileHi Laughter helped us to let go of any remaining stress we held. "Laughter can help us heal physically, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically," stated Dr. Ferlic. Even fake laughter does the trick. "Ha, ha, ha!" we forced out of ourselves, looking at pretend mirrors in our hands. And pretty soon we were laughing for real. We could all feel the positive effects of giggling, tittering, smiling and chuckling together. The Ferlics emphasized that daily laughter is good for chasing the blues away, and laughing together is a positive tonic for our marriages.

The Lady Fatima Mosque's spiritual leader and prayer imam, Massoud Farazandeh, got up and boldly stated, "As a Muslim, I agree with 90% of what has been shared today. It makes me feel good that we all have so much in common regarding marriage. And if you want to know what you truly believe in, look at your children." He went on to say, "This is the best way to learn from one another: people getting up and sincerely sharing about their faith." Imam Massoud concluded by encouraging us to not be afraid to explore with one another the 10% where we differ theologically and spiritually.

Up next was Michael Hentrich, pastor of the Colorado Family Church, along with his wife, Pastor Adonia. He candidly told us that the only thing he and his wife initially had in common was their love of God. He and his wife were matched and married by Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. Their love took root and developed over time. As the youngest speaker, he wisely noted, "People cannot relate to God today because they have not experienced love in the home."

To conclude our time of reflecting and sharing on marriage and family, representatives of FFWP, supported by members of WFWP, led all of the married couples in a brief rededication ceremony. "With all that is going on in society today," Pastor Hentrich explained, "we felt it was important to make a stand together for marriage between a man and a woman." Couples from all of the faiths present joyfully re-pledged their love and commitment to God, Allah, Jesus or to a Higher Consciousness, as well as to each other. They agreed to strive to live for the sake of others and to work to build God's Kingdom on this earth.

A group photo and a delicious potluck meal rounded out the event. Pastor Haymon gave a tour of his church's beautiful sanctuary. Various people from other faiths commented that they had driven by the Calvary Apostolic Church many times and were curious about who and what this church was all about. They were grateful for this interreligious gathering because it gave them a reason and a chance to see and experience this lovely Christian church.

Additional comments from participants:

Imam Massoud, "You are doing what Satan hates – bringing religions together. Keep it going!"

Minister David Martinez, Calvary Apostolic Church: "This was a lot better than I expected. Very good."

Lay Ministers Carlos and JoLynne Pierce of The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints: "You hit a homerun with this event!"

Billy Lee Elrick: "It was a wonderful event. Thank you for inviting me. I will share with the Kadamapa Buddhist Center leadership."

Ed and Jayne Swapp: "Thank you so much for the opportunity to share our thoughts and beliefs. We enjoyed the day. Stay in touch."