

Thoughts along the path . . .

Connecting through Dialogue

I have just finished my daily reading of newsletters and watching news on several cable stations. I purposely read/watch from several sources in more than one country to gain a broader view of world events. Frankly, I don't feel uplifted most mornings after doing this.

Sadly, one of the recurring themes is intolerance, whether based on racial, religious, cultural, or other ultimately artificial ways that we humans have devised to separate rather than unite ourselves.

Before anyone thinks that we are immune to this in our sweet village of Ayr or neighbouring communities, I had a dose of reality by encountering hate speech here in town. Not long ago, my husband John and I were shocked to overhear a racist conversation in a local business. We spoke out in defense of the group being verbally attacked, but we were dismissed as irrelevant to their conversation.

Like most readers of this paper, I want to contribute to solutions. I am convinced that the vast majority of us do not agree with or indulge in such destructive behaviour. To the contrary, we are well-meaning people. And we have much to gain through "dialogue," by which I mean seeking congenial ways to share our thoughts, our beliefs, and our values — motivated by sincere curiosity and open-mindedness.

Last November I was fortunate to attend a week-long event in Toronto called "The Parliament of the World's Religions." Generally considered the world's first "interfaith event" convening in Chicago in 1893, this most recent gathering brought together over 8000 people from over 200 self-identified faith (or no-faith) groups. Together we attended presentations, visited exhibits, shared arts and culture, and at times just sat down and talked. No one judged anyone. In fact, we found over and over again that we had much in common. We have similar visions for the future, our beautiful planet, and all of its creatures. And we have a desire to work together to make this happen.

With so much on my mind about what I learned that week, I am pleased to announce that the Baha'is of North Dumfries are hosting yet another Unity Café, this time with the theme "Connecting through Dialogue." I will share highlights, offer some stories, and encourage everyone attending to engage in the themes of the Parliament (Indigenous Peoples; Women's Dignity; Climate Action; Justice; Countering War, Hate & Violence; and Next Generations).

Please consider joining us at the Ayr Firehall on Friday 21 June at 7:30 pm. In addition to refreshments, there will be plenty of time to get acquainted in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. For more information you can go to <http://northdumfries-bahais.org> or email unitycafe.ayr@gmail.com .

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Submitted to Ayr News by Jaellayna Palmer, June 2019

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