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# Global Faith In Action

*A World of Faith Living Together, Beyond Our Differences.*

## Newsletter

## > SPIRITUAL WELLNESS WEEK AT WSU!

When I think about interfaith work I think about a tree that is constantly growing new branches, new leaves and getting stronger each day. In order to expand religious tolerance around the world, interfaith needs new ideas that will speak to the current generation.



Recently, we started a registered student organization at Wichita State University, Global Faith in Action—COLLEGE, that incorporated different religious leaders at the university. At our scheduled monthly meetings we planned our first event, Spiritual Wellness Week in conjunction with the Office of Multicultural Affairs at WSU.

Our goal for this week was to engage with students in a tangible way and make them aware of the mission of our organization. We wanted to plant a seed knowing it would take a lot of water and patience to sprout.

All week we set up an art project in the Rhatigan Student Center, the student union on campus. Students were invited to add a piece of stained glass to what would become a large mosaic of a tree on their way to lunch or class. Many students stopped by the table and glued a piece or two while more enthusiastic students completed whole branches before returning to their daily routine. I think many students enjoyed taking a break from school and expressing their creative side.



Wichita State students take turns working on a mosaic in the Rhatigan Student Center during Spiritual Wellness Week, November 18 - 22.

Students naturally asked questions about interfaith and we were able to have casual discussions about interfaith work in and around Wichita while they were deciding where to glue their next glass piece.

We are already starting to think about next year's activity with the Office of Multicultural Affairs and I look forward to the advancements we can make to the program. This year, I believe our goal was achieved because interfaith at its finest is just like a tree mosaic—people coming together with their crooked and jagged edges, delighted when they become a part of something colorful, exquisite and bigger than themselves. - Chandler Williams



## > 4<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL AMAZING FAITHS DINNER DIALOGUES

This marks the 4<sup>th</sup> straight year Global Faith In Action hosted the Amazing Faiths Dinner Dialogues in Wichita, KS.

Once again this unique event brought dozens of people of various faith traditions together to learn about one another's beliefs through exploration and discussion.

Hosts throughout the area welcomed groups of 8-10 participants into their homes and provided vegetarian meals for the event. Moderators attended each dinner and helped the discussions stay on track, while everyone participating learned and grew in understanding and friendship.

The feedback received from this year's dinners has been enormously positive from all angles.

David Carter returned for his 3rd Dinner Dialogue this year and had some insightful thoughts about the evening. "It is a transformative and inspiring experience, a chance to bond with others and expand my own horizons." David has both moderated and participated in the event in the past and understands the benefit of the format of AFDD. "The structure creates a safe and sacred space in which empathetic listening occurs and each person is unafraid to hold forth spontaneously," said Carter.

**Student Involvement** - One of GFIA's goals for this year's dinner dialogues was to increase the number of young participants. By involving groups from Wichita State University, Friends, Kansas Newman, and Butler County Community College, this became a reality. Deloris Eades, one of the participants, appreciated the presence of younger people at this year's dinners. When asked what her favorite part of the night was, Eades said, "Learning with thoughtful inspiring young people."



One of many Amazing Faiths dinners on Thursday, November 21, 2013.

*"It is a transformative and inspiring experience, a chance to bond with others and expand my own horizons."*

- David Carter

*"I believe in the format, 'the circle of sharing' as a way of achieving peace in this world one circle at a time"*

- Marguerite Regan

This year's Dinner Dialogues were also included as part of "Spiritual Wellness Week," a new event at Wichita State University. Chandler Williams, Chair of Spiritual Wellness Week and GFIA employee, believes increased student involvement provided an important element to this year's dinners. "I have found that when old and young generations interact with each other, they both bring valuable, diverse perspectives that strengthens the dialogue. The problem lies in creating an environment for this interaction to happen which is one of the reasons I love the Amazing Faith Dinner dialogues." - Chandler Williams

The students that attended had great things to say about their experiences as well. Benjamin Snook, a student of Butler County Community College said, "The people were great! Fantastic insights and wonderful food!"

Ariel McCollough, another student at Butler said, "I really loved how considerate everyone was and how willing and open they were to share."

**Increased Participation** - Our registration totals doubled from that of last year and with your help spreading the word, we believe we can reach a similar increase in registration and participation next year. If you attended one of this year's dinners, we truly appreciate your participation. This event would not have been the same without you. If you didn't get the chance to attend, we look forward to the possibility of your involvement in next year's Amazing Faiths Dinner Dialogues and invite you to attend GFIA's other events leading up to it. Thank you for your continued support of Global Faith In Action throughout 2014.



## > UNIVERSAL HARMONY CONCERT 2014

The 2014 Universal Harmony Concert will be a joyful dialogue of three religious traditions: Christian, Muslim and Vaishnava (Krishna devotion). Through the centuries, these traditions (and many others) have flourished in the territories of East India. While maintaining sacred uniqueness, these traditions have also had the freedom to collaborate with each other musically.

It is our hope that this concert will reflect the peaceful nurturing in this area of the world and also be an artistic example of the way the world can live together in harmony.



Artists featured at the 2013 Universal Harmony Concert.

**Background** - For millennia, India (including present day Pakistan) has welcomed many religions and ethno-religious groups to coexist in peace. Even though religious tensions fanned by fanatics flare up from time to time, there has been an ancient wisdom tradition in India that has granted the co-existence of so many groups, including: Ancient Hindu, Vedic, Vaishnava and Yoga traditions, Sufi schools, Buddhist, Sikh and Jewish temples, Muslim mosques and Christian churches.

Music, poetry and sacred sound traditions are a perfect example of this amazing relationship of the religions of India. Throughout history, famous musicians and poets—also considered wisdom-devotion teachers—have welcomed students from diverse religious backgrounds.

Jews, Zoroastrians, and other ethnic and religious groups have practiced their traditions within India, honoring this welcoming land with their own sacred sound, while at the same time mixing in dialogue with the native traditional modes. For example, St. Thomas Christians have used sacred Indian Karnatic modes in their worship for millennia.

**Mark your calendar!**

**2014 Universal Harmony Concert  
St. Vincent de Paul Catholic  
Church, Andover, KS on Sunday  
May 4, 2014 at 6:30 p.m.**



Guest musician Karnamrita Dasi.

### 2014 Universal Harmony Guest Musicians

***We are excited to once again have a masterful and eclectic line-up:***

**Karnamrita Dasi**, a rising-star singer, trained in both classical and folk Indian tradition. Dasi grew up in Ashram community in United States, and has sung Bhajans and Kirtans since childhood.

**Ustad Ghulam Farid Nizami**, 18<sup>th</sup> generation Sufi, a master vocalist and sitar player, his son Farad Nizami, master tabla player. Ustad's ancestor, Farid Nizami, designed the Sitar—the most revered musical instrument in North and South Indian classical training.

They will be hosted in dialogue by **Wichita Symphony Principal Cellist Jakub Jerzy Omsky**, a master of Western Classical Music and Christian Sacred Sound.

We believe this event will continue to be a Kansas tradition that meets through the beauty of music, poetry and joyful expression. We hope you will be inspired by this truly special evening of unity in diversity.

## > A FIVE YEAR VISION FOR HAITI

For 20 years we have been assisting the needs of an impoverished rural area of North Haiti called Lambert. Today, our schools have quality teachers, the Lambert Clinic has a doctor, nurse and lab technician and the church has many young adults in leadership positions. For the most part, the leaders that are now assuming responsibilities are products of the Lambert school we have helped build.

The people living in the Lambert area are farmers. Families live in small homes with mud floors and no running water, electricity or plumbing. When there is a draught they become very malnourished, hungry, and sometimes die of starvation. Even when life is good, they have a difficult time eating a balanced diet. Their agricultural methods remain what they have been for centuries and the population has increased significantly causing more and more people to live off the small plots of land.

Over the past few years the founder of the school, the late Rev. Dantus Louis has planted an idea within the community. Before his death he said, "Let's develop a demonstration farm that teaches low cost agricultural methods and increases the financial sustainability of Haitian households."

Once carried out, this farm will teach students how to care for the soil, eliminate erosion, irrigate the land while conserving water, raise livestock, develop cooperatives, and create business plans that increase household income. We will be spending the next year researching the idea with the hope of fulfilling the dream within five years.

Of course, while looking to the future, we will maintain our focus on the many projects we are presently accomplishing through the help of many contributors and volunteers. Supporting four schools totaling 700 students, plus the Lambert Medical Clinic is an awesome task in itself.



**Thank you for your continued support of this mission to the people of Haiti!**

### ASAP Haiti Sponsorship Program

ASAP HAITI is excited to announce that 29 more students can go to school because of contributions from 17 new sponsors. One reason for the growing numbers is participants from the Volunteer in Mission Trip in May fell in love with our students and many, in turn, became sponsors when they returned.

After traveling to Haiti my perception of poverty turned upside down. Poverty no longer means only having two meals a day instead of three—it's the fear of not knowing how long until the next meal. This is why when I receive a check from a new sponsor, my heart fills with joy. One \$15 check means one more child is guaranteed a competitive education and five meals every week, one more child no longer has to worry about the knots tightening in their stomach, but instead can worry about their next geography, math or science test. - Chandler Williams

### Spring Break Trip to Haiti

ASAP Haiti and Global Faith in Action—COLLEGE are taking more than a dozen religiously diverse college students to Haiti this spring break to expose them to one of the world's poorest countries. While there, we hope to work on landscaping the school with some of the older Haitian students. Our students interested in medicine will help Dr. Tony at the Lambert Clinic for our first free clinic day and the education majors will have a chance to assist our teachers in the classrooms.



**College students break from painting to play with kids during last May's trip to Lambert.**

At GFIA we realize our VIM trips to Haiti are vital for the future of the sponsorship program. Once participants travel to Haiti we have realized their heart forever remains there and with our organization. What the Haitians lack in resources they make up for in unwavering love and appreciation; a priceless and inspirational duo that leaves a lasting impression.