



CINCINNATI FESTIVAL OF FAITHS

THE "BELOVED COMMUNITY"

Interfaith Devotional Observance
Cincinnati, Ohio September 8, 2019



THIS BOOKLET WAS LOVINGLY PREPARED BY
**THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES**

3101 CLIFTON AVE., CINCINNATI, OH 45220
AMERICANJEWISHARCHIVES.ORG

**"The end is reconciliation;
the end is redemption;
the end is the creation of the
beloved community."**

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., December 3, 1956



Program



INTRODUCTORY WORDS

Rabbi Gary P. Zola, Ph.D.

OPENING SONG

Rabbi Meredith Kahan

PRAYERS

Hindu	Koti Shreekrishna
Quaker	Rev. Jim Newby
Unitarian Universalist	Rev. Connie Simon
Roman Catholic	Sr. Christine Pratt
Pagan	Rev. Brian Morgan
Buddhist	Carlos Nazario
Sikh	Jaipal Singh

MUSICAL INTERLUDE AND REFLECTION

The Celtic musicians of the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer

PRAYERS

Jewish	Rabbi George Barnard
Episcopal/Anglican	Rt. Rev. Thomas E. Breidenthal
Latter-day Saints	President Wesley J. Foister
Baha'i	Renaldo Raeheim
Muslim	Inayat K. Malik, M.D.
Zoroastrian	Becca and Fred Desai
Protestant	Rt. Rev. Marvin F. Thomas Sr., Rt. Rev. Susanne Darcy Dillahunt and Rev. Dr. Todd Anderson

COMMON PRAYER

James P. Buchanan, Ph.D.

CLOSING SONG

“Turning of the World”, Rabbi Meredith Kahan





Common Prayer For All¹

Led by Dr. James Buchanan

O Infinite, through which we move and live and have our being, we have gathered to ask that our steps be rightly guided as we strive to build our community and bring about a world filled with love and respect for all existence and a spirit of solidarity with one another.

Let us see our differences as welcoming invitations that beckon us to actualize a fuller peace for ourselves and for all existence.

Let us see a true world of peace, which may be beyond our grasp
and understanding at present,
but which can one day come to be through the power of love.
To these prayerful aspirations, we all say: Amen - so may it be.

¹ This prayer has been adapted from the "Common Prayer" used by the Catholic-Muslim Dialogue of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Closing Song

“Turning of the World”

by Ruth Pelham¹

Music: Rabbi Meredith Kahan

Let us sing this song for the turning of the world
That we may turn as one
With every voice, with every song,
we will move this world along

And our lives will feel the echo of our turning
With every voice, with every song,
we will move this world along (2x)
And our lives will feel the echo of our turning

Let us sing this song for the loving of the world
That we may love as one
With every voice, with every song,
we will move this world along

And our lives will feel the echo of our loving
With every voice, with every song,
we will move this world along (2x)
And our lives will feel the echo of our loving

¹ Ruth Pelham (b. 1949) is a singer, songwriter and educator who strives, through music, to bring about a vision of world peace and social change. This song was composed in 1982.



Let us sing this song for the healing of the world
That we may heal as one
With every voice, with every song,
we will move this world along

And our lives will feel the echo of our healing
With every voice, with every song,
we will move this world along (2x)
And our lives will feel the echo of our healing

Let us sing this song for the dreaming of the world
That we may dream as one
With every voice, with every song,
we will move this world along

And our lives will feel the echo of our dreaming
With every voice, with every song,
we will move this world along (2x)
And our lives will feel the echo of our dreaming...
And our lives will feel the echo of our healing...
And our lives will feel the echo of our loving...
And our lives will feel the echo of our turning.

Essays

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. began publicly advocating the concept of the “Beloved Community” in 1956. Speaking to the First Annual Institute on Non-Violence and Social Change in Montgomery, Alabama, the young social activist explained how the idea of a “Beloved Community” was inextricably linked to a non-violent approach to societal change. The theme of that Institute on Non-Violence and Social Change was “Freedom and Justice through Love,” which reflected Dr. King’s deeply felt belief that universal love constituted the blueprint for establishing a “Beloved Community.”

As you read and reflect on the essays that appear on the following pages of this booklet, you will discover that they all validate Dr. King’s inspiring conviction that universal love can actualize our vision of a world that is truly free and just. All of the religious and spiritual traditions participating in our Festival of Faiths are, indeed, striving mightily to actualize a “Beloved Community” through the power of universal love.



African Methodist Episcopal (AME)

The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) envision all people as our beloved community; a beloved community that's not contained within defined geographical borders. The AMEC, whose founders affirmed their humanity in the face of slavery and racism, stands in defense of disadvantaged and oppressed peoples. Our mission is to minister to the social, spiritual and physical development of all people. The mission expanded to others within the African Diasporas in the Americas, Africa, the Caribbean and Europe. Whether in schools, seminaries, hospitals, or social-service centers, the AME Church has lived the gospel outside its sanctuaries.

THE "BELOVED COMMUNITY"

African American Episcopal Zion (AME Zion)

The mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is to increase our love for God and to help meet the needs of humankind by loving God with all our soul, with all our mind, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. Implicit in this statement is the belief that the church should have a positive relationship to the “beloved community” horizontally. Along with the church's emphasis on ministry and social change here in the United States, the denomination has focused much of its attention and energies on outreach abroad.



Bahá'í

God is One, mankind is one and religion is one -- these are core Bahá'í beliefs. Bahá'u'lláh ("The Glory of God"), Revealer of the Bahá'í message, proclaimed that we're all united in spirit. He established an order -- God-centered in justice, love and unity in diversity -- through which His teachings flow. Bahá'u'lláh compared the human world to the human body whose millions of diverse cells cooperate to support a healthy system in a continuous process of giving and receiving. Baha'u'lláh created a social system that requires eliminating all prejudice and lets all voices be heard as we build community together.

THE "BELOVED COMMUNITY"

Baptist (National Baptist Convention)

Dr. King in his lifetime was all about love and inclusiveness for all of us. We should strive as a people and society to seek the lost, strengthen the believers, and serve the community. It should be a calling and sincere outreach to touch our world with love. It has been said what the world needs now is love sweet love. We need to continue the cause of social justice and fairness for all people. God is Love and we are all his children. We all should look for a better community and world to bring about the dream Dr. King so eloquently spoke about.



Buddhist

Beloved community, as a reflection of Buddhist teachings and practice, is rooted in compassion and wisdom, and where we aspire to attentive listening and opening the heart to the perceived “other”. Such a community would live within this aspiration and prayer: May all beings, without exception, be free from suffering and live with deep ease of well-being, held in boundless loving kindness.

THE "BELOVED COMMUNITY"

Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME)

From its founding in 1870, the CME Church has embraced Beloved Community as part of its heritage. As recipients of the teachings of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, we believe, as stated in our Social Creed, that “the world is our parish.” We strive through our efforts and together with other faiths to love as Jesus loved. We seek to minister to the needs of others without regard to race, creed, color, gender, or sexuality, and to eliminate hatred and abuse of power in all its forms so that in the words of Jesus, all may live the abundant life.



Disciples of Christ

All are welcome at the table. In the Disciples of Christ tradition, we center our worship and our identity as followers of Jesus around the communion table. Beloved community is a table where all come just as they are to share a meal. There is plenty of space for everyone regardless of any human division we may have arbitrarily constructed. The table that is set is not ours, but God's. And God's invitation is for all people. When we eat together, laugh together, and share a meal together, we become transformed into the beloved community.

THE "BELOVED COMMUNITY"

Eastern Orthodox

The Eastern Orthodox faith embraces all communities as one inclusive family, working together to bring about Peace. We are called to be the embodiment of peace and to see Christ in our neighbor and to treat everyone as a neighbor. Peace has no religious frontiers. Religious communities, through interfaith dialogue and collaboration, must strive to overcome misunderstandings, stereotypes other prejudices, inherited or acquired. Their voices in favor of peace must be heard in the public realm and together must take initiative that promotes justice and peace in the world. The universal message of peace, that each religious faith community espouses, should enable their followers and other people to see one another, not as enemies, but as brothers and sisters across religious, national, racial and cultural frontiers.



Episcopal (Anglican)

This gathering. These people. Our love for one another.
This time. These efforts. The connectedness we encounter
here. The justice and peace that we seek. The integrity and
respect shown today. This is Beloved Community.

As the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement, we foster
loving, liberating and life-giving relationships where all
people may experience dignity and abundant life and see
all people as beloved children of God. Beloved Community
is possible here and now.

THE "BELOVED COMMUNITY"

Hindu

Hinduism has one billion adherents; it is the oldest of living religions. Its basic tenets are: 1. May Noble inspirations come to us from everywhere; 2. God is ONE, names are many; it has both respect and tolerance of different paths; 3. God incarnates as needed to set things right on Earth; 4. All creation is part of God. World is one sacred unit like a bird's nest or one family! Relish life with humility, reverence and righteousness; ultimate goal is of union with GOD (many opportunities and ways for that; surrender to God being the easiest). May all be happy, healthy and prosperous. May Peace prevail in all realms.



Jewish

The prophet Micah had a social vision which anticipated Dr. King's Beloved Community. Micah said, "They shall sit under their vines and under their fig trees, and none shall make them afraid." The vine and the fig tree represent the basic necessities of life – food, clothing, shelter, and medical care, and also a meaningful cultural life. A just society must provide a way for all of its members to have access to these basic goods "None shall make them afraid." All people must be free from threats, intimidation, hatred, and discrimination based on their gender, race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, or other characteristics.

THE "BELOVED COMMUNITY"

Lutheran (ELCA)

An understanding of how the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America envisions the reality of the world and works to create the Beloved Community is clearly described in our Social Statement, *The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective*. The introductory paragraph of that statement professes the following, "The ELCA is called to be a part of the ecumenical Church of Jesus Christ in the context in which God has placed it - a diverse, divided, and threatened global society on a beautiful, fragile planet. In faithfulness to its calling, this church is committed to defend human dignity, to stand with poor and powerless people, to advocate justice, to work for peace, and to care for the earth in the processes and structures of contemporary society."



Muslim

Islam witnessed a beloved community in its early days during the historic Hijrah (emigration) when the Muhajirun (Emigrants) fled persecution in Mecca and migrated to Medina, where they were embraced by the warm welcome of the Ansar (Helpers-local residents).

The Ansar epitomized hospitality with their genuine love for the Muhajirun, having their differences enrich instead of divide them. “Those who were firmly established ...in faith, show love for those who migrated to them for refuge...” (Holy Quran 59:9).

When people come together in a mutually respectful, beneficial manner to uphold justice for all- young, old, rich, poor, weak, strong -under the banner of humanity, a beloved, prosperous community ensues.

THE "BELOVED COMMUNITY"

Native American/Indigenous Peoples

The Greater Cincinnati Native American Coalition represents many Indigenous peoples of many faiths. The common thread that most Indigenous cultures share, is "Walking in Balance." Balance within ourselves, balance within our communities, Balance with those around us, and Balance between ourselves and those communities around us. To serve those in need, and to walk in humility with all our relations, including our water and the land which we inherited from our ancestors. This is Wo-Lakota, this is the Beauty Way.



Pagan

Paganism is founded on its Beloved Community. From the very beginning, when the pagan cultures thrived, the clans, tribes, and villages worked together to honor the gods. Our whole identity was built around community. Our holidays like Lughnasadh, Mabon and Samhain were a celebration of the harvest that the community had grown, and we came together to celebrate the blessings of the gods. Today, in modern times we try to keep that very same tradition alive. By coming together, we grow, we thrive and we flourish. A religion isn't just one single individual, it is the community and its shared philosophies.

THE "BELOVED COMMUNITY"

Presbyterian (PCUSA)

We seek always to embody and actively work as the Beloved Community of God on behalf of the Beloved Community of the world, in all places at all times, for all are made in His image. We are called to champion reconciliation and justice, enlivening our faith, awakened to vibrant new possibilities, and, boldly compassionate, serve the hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor. We respond to Christ's urgent call to be a church of action, where God's love, justice and mercy shine forth with a contagious Spirit, bringing His holy purpose to the world, serving with love, energy, and imagination.



Quaker

As one of our six testimonies, Community has always been important to Quakers. How is a beloved community formed within the Quaker tradition?

Community is formed when we gather together and feel the power of a Spirit beyond our finitude. . . Community is formed when we help one another process each other's pain, experience another's suffering. . . Community is formed when we encourage one another and build one another up...Community is formed when we live in a spirit of expectant hope together... and Community is formed when we live in a spirit of acceptance and forgiveness of one another.

THE "BELOVED COMMUNITY"

Roman Catholic

The Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction.

True faith in the Incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness. – Pope Francis in *Joy of the Gospel*



Sikh

The Inspiration of the Divine is quite literally found in the company of one another who share the path of Oneness and cultivate the virtues of God. It is realized through the recognition of one human race, one family within creation, one ultimate soul comprised of countless drops swimming in that vast ocean, where we find the deepest and most profound meaning of Community, and the ever-vivid experience of the Divine Beloved. Enraptured by this vibration, and in constant meditation, a true Saint-Soldier embraces all as brother or sister, father or mother, son or daughter, while quietly serving with no thought of reward, always grateful, always smiling. This, we have learned from the True Guru.

THE "BELOVED COMMUNITY"

Swedenborgian

Emanuel Swedenborg wrote that in a beloved community, “everyone conveys his or her own blessings and happiness to others....there is a communication and keen perception of all feelings and thoughts, so that in the sharing of joy each communicates to all and all to each, which essentially makes every individual the center of all the rest....As a result, the more people there are to make up the Lord's kingdom, the greater the happiness is; it increases as the numbers increase....Such a sharing of all with one and one with all exists whenever we love another person more than ourselves.”



The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

We seek to follow the example of Jesus Christ by serving those in our community. Christ taught that the second great commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. A member of our Quorum of Twelve Apostles recently said we demonstrate that love “through acts of kindness and service – the way that the Savior would love and serve all of us if He were among us today.” The Book of Mormon records that an ancient prophet in the Americas taught, “when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.” (Mosiah 2:17)

THE "BELOVED COMMUNITY"

The United Church of Christ

I read a derogatory description of the UCC by a well-known writer. He called us, "a mini-denomination operating on the extreme fringe of Christianity." This writer was attempting to dismiss our relevance due to small size and inclusive theology. Reflecting on his description, I have concluded this writer is correct. We are small, and we practice our faith on the fringes of American-Christianity. Far from feeling dismissed, I believe the writer was describing The Beloved Community. We are a small gathering of believers. We live out the gospel truth. God's love is for everyone regardless of race, creed, gender-identification, ethnic-identity, economic-status, sexual-orientation or any other human-made category. A home for those left behind by religion.



Unitarian Universalist

Unitarian Universalist principles promote the inherent worth and dignity of every being and an interdependent web of existence to which all belong. That's the Beloved Community we strive to create – a place where we truly honor, respect and value EVERYone and we shed the systems of oppression that shackled society for far too long. In Beloved Community we work together for justice because we know we're all connected and that NONE of us is free until ALL of us are free. We know this work isn't always easy or comfortable. And we do it anyway.

THE "BELOVED COMMUNITY"

Zoroastrian

The Zoroastrian view of a beloved community is one in which all people live with Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds with one another; and which is led by inspiring, wise and righteous leaders. It is a community which strives TOGETHER to root out everything negative which comes in the way of progress towards a just, peaceful, prosperous, and united world. Last, but not the least, a beloved community believes that we are STRONGEST when we are UNITED, and that nothing is impossible to achieve when ALL the PEOPLE JOIN HANDS AND WORK FOR PROGRESS TOGETHER!



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