

Renovating Our World With Good Thoughts, Good Words And Good Deeds.

The **Zoroastrian Association Of California** was proud to host an Interfaith celebration of “**Renovating our World with Good Thoughts, Good words and Good Deeds**”, jointly with the **World Interfaith Network** and the **Unity-and-Diversity World Council**, at the ZAC Center on 19th February, 2017.

The purpose of this special gathering was to promote the spirit of unity within diversity in humanity...and this was amply portrayed by the large number of speakers, who spontaneously volunteered to be a part of this celebration.

Meher Amalsad was the MC for the event and he very ably conducted the proceedings with wit and humor. The celebration was organized by **Zarrir Bhandara** who initiated the whole event with the chanting of a Zoroastrian prayer. **Perinne Medhora**, committee member presented a warm welcome to the attendees, followed by a hymn, sung by the ZAC priest, Zarrir Bhandara.

The list of speakers was impressive, starting with **Reverend Leland Stewart**, Founder & Central Co-coordinator of the unity & Diversity World Council, and author of books on world religions. He was happy to note that he saw many more in the audience, than in the past.

He was followed by **Bishop Obispo Juan Carlos Mendes** of Centro Cristiano Bet-El in South Gate. He is a leader of social justice and has retired as Superintendent of Public Schools in LA. He has been a pastor for the last 32 years.

The CZC also had their presence noted with **Dr. Ardeshir Anoshiravani**, who talked about good destroying evil and how in Persian, Angre (The angry thoughts) is destroyed by “Spenta” (the good thoughts)

The Bahai faith, founded in the 19th century, followed with a speech by **Mr. Farhad Shahriary** who discussed how honored he was to be a part of this forum. He talked about the love of humanity and read paragraphs written by Bahá'u'lláh the founder of the Bahai faith and the founder's quote which made a huge impact on the crowd, “The world is but One Country and Mankind its Citizens”

The Brahma Kumari's world Spiritual Organization, was represented by **Liza Haddad** who also spoke of how “we, God's children, all belong to one global family”. She believes that by directing our thoughts in positive ways, we all have the potential to guide the world towards becoming a more loving place.

The next speaker, was the very erudite, **Mr. Homi Gandhi** who is the current President of the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA). Mr. Gandhi has been awarded the “Temple of Understanding's Interfaith Visionary Award (2010) and was also honored to ring the New York Stock Exchange opening Bell (2004) in recognition of his service to the community. He is a vocal climate control and environmental advocate and has presented papers at numerous conferences globally. He is the honorary president of “Religions for Peace International World Council” and was treasurer for “Religions for Peace USA Council”. He

talked of the tenements of the Zoroastrian religion, “Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds”.

The Hindu faith was represented by **Dr. Rini Ghosh**, who is the president of the South Coast Interfaith Council, the oldest and largest Interfaith Council in Southern California. She is also a devotee of the Vedanta Society of Southern California which is part of the Ramakrishna Mission of India and president of Vedanta International Cultural Center, in Redondo Beach which devotes its time to feeding the homeless and underprivileged. Dr. Gosh, talked of the Vedanta’s Advaita philosophy which talks of “Chidananda Rupa Shivoham Shivoham” which means, “I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am pure consciousness, I am eternal Bliss”.

Islam was represented by **Duaa Alwan**, who was very thankful and gracious for being invited to speak at this interfaith meeting. Alwan is the co-founder of the Muslim Speakers Network and a board member of the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California. She talked about a very prominent quote by Prophet Muhammad which says, ‘Love for others what you love for yourself’.

Erica Wilson, from unity and Diversity World Council and a retired professor of comparative Religions, followed by stating that she believed that science and religion are totally connected. As a student of Quantum Physics she was always interested in similarities of all religions of the world.

Susanna Foo Rios, worked for the Church of Scientology for 18 years. She started studying scientology in Sweden and now works as community relations and interfaith work in the Church of Scientology in Los Angeles. She talked of how Scientology is reaching out and helping others in their time of need.

She was followed by **Wilma Striebeck** who has studied all different religions right since childhood. She talked of reaching the same goals through different methods by different faiths. If you search in your heart and soul and you see beauty everywhere your life will change and you will feel better.

Last but not least, priest **Zarrir Bhandara**, took the floor and talked about Good thoughts, Good words and Good Deeds and how if everyone followed these three principles, the world would be living in peace and harmony. He quoted the Zoroastrian scriptures, saying how energy flows where the attention goes. He talked of how Prophet Zarathrustra, said that you are the maker of your own destiny. He said we all have the super power of our “good and positive” thoughts and if we used our supernatural powers within us, we could make the world a more positive and better place. He asked us to be more receptive in receiving God’s blessings to renew and renovate ourselves with these three simple principles in life.

Each of the representatives, lit a candle from one main candle, thereby summarizing the thread that a candle loses nothing by lighting another candle and yet helps to light another one! Therefore each faith can help another and do good, and not lose sight of its own uniqueness.

To very aptly sum up we are all one big global family of faiths and serve one God and if we all worked together in peace and harmony the world would be a wonderful place with happiness and thankfulness all around.

By Dilnavaz Shroff