

One Light, Many Candles

Introduction

'One Light, Many Candles'

A multi-faith program in word and song reflecting the diversity and integrity of individual faith seeking a global spiritual community.

"The embrace of 'God' is vast, able to exceed all our definitions and expectations. Can we unlock our certainties and open a way within for acceptance of differences?"

Betty Stookey

As chaplain at Northfield Mount Hermon preparatory school, Elizabeth ("Betty") Stookey became aware of the need for greater spiritual inclusivity among the large and culturally diverse student body. The current program, "One Light, Many candles" had its germination in the interfaith services Betty held monthly, with students of various faiths reading from their holy books accompanied by Noel's music and music indigenous to other cultures.

The word 'interfaith' was eventually replaced by the word 'multifaith' since it more accurately suggested standing strong in ones own faith while reaching out a hand of tolerance, understanding and respect to those of other beliefs.

Recognizing Love as the common calling to many different faiths, Betty and Noel's presentation continues to evolve by referencing expressions of the Divine from a myriad of spiritual leaders and literature of many cultures. The program shifts dynamically from the spoken word to the sung word and back again, with Betty reading and Noel singing.

Since 2005, following a three month residency at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., where they were invited to be 'minister and artist in residence', Betty and Noel have subsequently shared their inclusive vision at such diverse settings as Earlham College (as keynoters for their Religious Emphasis Week), and The Reversing Falls Church in Brooksville, Maine. In 2011 they brought the program to public forum- an essentially secular audience – both in Montgomery County, Maryland and Key West Florida. They have presented their program in Vermont, California, N. H., Massachusetts, Maine and other states.

The program is flexible and continues to grow, incorporating new readings and new music; Josh White Jr. lent his talent to two of the programs and the 15 voice black gospel choir contributed a powerful performance of gospel songs to another program. Thus far, a typical program runs about an hour to an hour and a half, depending on the participants.

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