

## Interfaith Prayer Service Unites Traditions

(see below for photo ID)

5.24.2018—Burlingame, CA: In an intense atmosphere of world conflict, local faith leaders from the Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Yogic and Christian communities came together May 20 to pray at the Yaseen Burlingame Center. They came in varied dress--hijabs, robes, and embroidered stoles--but they shared a unity of purpose: praying for peace. The program for the 35 who attended represented six faith traditions and contained prayers from the Upanishads, three different Christian prayers including one from St. Francis, Buddhist chant, the Quran and songs of Peace from the Net of Light and Muslim traditions.

“As I sat there taking in the devotion and dedication of each participant from the various faith traditions, I had a glimpse of what the world could be like if we all committed ourselves to the path of peace,” said **Penny Nixon**, senior minister of the Congregational Church of San Mateo.

The seamless simplicity of the service did not come easily. The event was one of a series of year-long efforts planned by the Sisters of Mercy Outreach and Solidarity Committee to reach out to other faiths. As discrimination against Muslims became front page news, a year ago six Mercy Sisters and Associates, members of the Yaseen Foundation, Penni Thorpe and Donna Baranski Walker, founder and executive director of Rebuilding Alliance, met to take action. They mapped out a plan to counter the lack of understanding between Muslim and Christian communities.

“We planned a free, year-long program that will highlight the sacredness of each member of the human family in the global village,” said Sister Marguerite Buchanan, committee organizer. She worked closely with Penni Thorpe, her niece, a member of the Net of Light, who has an equal passion for interfaith dialogue.

“We wanted to pray together, educate ourselves about other faiths and get to know one another,” said Sister Marguerite.

Their first session in November 2017 was a talk by Imam Hafiz M.K. Siddiqi, Ph.D. on the basics of Islam. The scope of events has widened to include members of local Hindu and Buddhist communities. Living Room Conversations designed to build relationships between people are part of the schedule at Mercy Center.

The leaders were unanimous in their agreement on the urgency of coming closer to those we see as different. "We are always uncomfortable with things we do not understand," said Salah Elbakri, a Muslim Elder of the Yaseen Foundation. "There is nothing more gratifying than having dialogue with fellow citizens. We look forward to working together on education and mutual understanding."

The Sisters who had begun the movement a year ago felt rewarded by the coming together. "To take time out to gather during Ramadan with our Yaseen Foundation friends and other Interfaith partners to embrace our world in a mantle of peace was indeed very powerful," said **Sister Joan Marie O'Donnell**.

For more information on the Interfaith dialogues, contact Sister Marguerite Buchanan, [mbuchanan@mercywmw.org](mailto:mbuchanan@mercywmw.org)

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L-R: Faith leader at the Interfaith Prayer Service May 20 at Yaseen Burlingame Center.

Gaurav Rastogi, Shiva-Vishnu Temple, Hindu Community and Cultural Center, Livermore; Rev. Noritaka Imada , Buddhist Churches of America, Hongwanji International Ministerial Exchange Program; Rev. Henry Toryo Adams, Resident Minister, San Mateo Buddhist Temple; Penni Thorpe, Beacon, Net of Light, San

Mateo; Rev. Etsuko Mikame, Buddhist Churches of America, Hongwanji International Ministerial Exchange Program; Rev. Penny Nixon, Pastor Congregational Church of San Mateo, United Church of Christ; Karen Moen; Br. Ali Shehadeh, Yaseen Foundation, The Muslim Association of the Peninsula, Burlingame; Br. Salah Elbakri, Yaseen Foundation, Burlingame; Imam Shiek Abdulla Azab, Yaseen Foundation, Burlingame; Butch Shafsky, Mercy Associate, Burlingame; Br. Ishaq Asfour , Board President, Yaseen Foundation, Burlingame; Sr. Asfour, Yaseen Foundation, Burlingame; Sr Naela Bakour, Yaseen Foundation, Burlingame; Lynn Shafsky, Mercy Associate, Burlingame