

Along The Way Nov. 1

Ecumenical and Interfaith Connections

“God is not a Christian, God is not a Jew, or a Muslim, or a Hindu, or a Buddhist. All of those are human systems, which human beings have created to try to help us walk into the mystery of God. I honor my tradition, I walk through my tradition, but I don’t think my tradition defines God, I think it only points me to God.” –*John Shelby Spong*

Back in the seventies, I sang in a folk band called Cornerstone. We mainly performed original religious folk music, mostly at churches and youth events. I was raised Mennonite and when the local catholic priest invited us to play for the Guitar Mass, I was surprised. All the members of the band were Protestant and I thought it would be a problem for them. It wasn’t—and it was the first time I ever attended mass. I learned a great deal about what it meant to be ecumenical, to interact with other Christian traditions different from the one in which I was raised. We had fun.

This Saturday, we have a great opportunity to experience an interfaith dialogue with the Three Amigos. Interfaith describes an interaction between people of different religions or faith traditions. But it is more than that. It is about understanding our significant differences, but also recognizing our similarities, and working together on all kinds of issues, including peace, justice and healing in our world.

Interfaith cooperation is not about renouncing religions or combining all religions into one. In fact, many people find that their friendships with people in other traditions strengthen their understanding and respect for their own tradition. Interfaith friendships reach out across the stereotypes and misunderstandings that lead to religiously motivated violence. They reinforce the idea that, regardless of religion or belief tradition, every human deserves respect.

I hope you will attend this special event!

Paula Northwood
Acting Senior Minister