

## Did You Know...?

Though it makes up less than 1% of the population of the United States, Hinduism is this country's fourth-largest religious community.

The name Hindu originated outside India. East of the river Sindhu (Indus), the ancient Persians called the land Hindustan. Somehow the **sa** in the Persian language got changed to **ha** and the people of the land were called **Hindus**.

Hinduism has its roots in the **Vedas**, the ancient scriptures. Hindus traditionally call their religion, Sanaatan Dharma. Sanaatan means *very ancient* and Dharma means *that which upholds the universe*.

Hinduism has no single founder and it did not originate at a particular period of history. It is based on the superconscious experience and spiritual realizations of a galaxy of ancient saints and sages. The knowledge known as the Veda is given by God and through the lineage of sages it has been experienced and shared unto the present time.

**Many people ask: Do Hindus worship many Gods?**

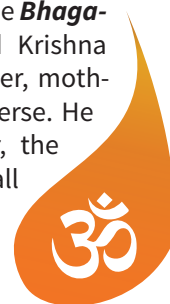
**Answer: Hindus worship one God in many forms and by many names.**

Hinduism teaches that God is infinite, and

## Hindu Faith

therefore, we cannot put any limits on the name of God. The names of the limitless God are limitless. We cannot attempt to control and restrict God's divine freedom. In the **Rig Veda** (1.64.46), Hinduism's most ancient scripture, it says "Truth is one; the wise call it by many names." (*Ekam Sat vip-raha bahudaa vadanti*). In the **Bhagavad Gita** (10: 17-18), Lord Krishna explains that He is the father, mother and ancestor of the universe. He is the Lord, the supporter, the beginning and the end of all things.

Hinduism teaches that this *continued below*



# MeckMin

## Fall 2016 Newsletter

Celebrating 41 Years of Charlotte's Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

promoting interfaith collaboration  
fostering understanding, compassion and justice



# MeckMin

PO Box 11243, Charlotte, NC 28220

We envision a community that lives by the highest values & core virtues of its rich faith traditions & respects the dignity of every person.

704-565-5455  
www.meckmin.org

## Recent & Upcoming Events

Community Leader Breakfast  
June 6, 2016

Vigil for Orlando  
June 14, 2016

Listening Sessions  
October 2016 - June 2017

41<sup>st</sup> Interfaith Thanksgiving Service  
Nov 22, 2016

January Food for Thought  
Jan 19, 2017

In Our Own Backyard  
Jan 21, 2017

*continued from above* one God can be called by various names and we can think of God in different forms. God is one, but there are no limits to God's names and forms, so often Hindus are able to easily accept all religious faiths.

Babita Thaker, babitact@gmail.com

*continued from p. 1* I asked myself, have we in the faith community done enough to address racial disparity in Charlotte? Have we done what we could

to ensure that communities are not ignored and left behind by the prosperity enjoyed in the wealthy wedge? Have we treated Black/Brown Charlotte as a different city with different access to power and privilege and opportunity? Have we addressed issues of racial disparity within our congregations and considered why they are more segregated than our kids' re-segregated schools? Have our congregations addressed the morally problematic nature of living in a racialized society?

Though the encounter was just a momen-

tary blip amid an evening of organized chaos, her comments stuck with me. Have we done our job? Could it be that we have not done all that we can to make Charlotte a more united and equitable city? Could it be that we have not used the full power of our interfaith network to espouse the sanctity of every human life and common commitments to fostering justice? As people of faith what can we do to ensure that what happened on September 20th never has to happen again?

Have we done our jobs?

We cannot say it enough: now, more than ever, our community needs a vibrant interfaith network working to foster understanding, compassion and justice! For ten months, committed leaders have been hard at work reimagining MeckMin to cultivate just such an organization.

We have gone back to basics, asking such questions as:

- What is MeckMin's core identity and mission?
- What are the central issues of the interfaith community that require MeckMin's focus?
- What is the most faithful, effective and adaptive model for an interfaith organization such as MeckMin?

Through community interviews, study

of interfaith organizations, listening sessions with members and constituents, honest analysis of funding and a host of others processes, we have been reshaping MeckMin in ways that will benefit Charlotte-Mecklenburg. There is plenty of hard work ahead! Inside this newsletter you will find some of our key learnings as well as some of our current and future plans. *continued on p. 2*

## Doing Our Job



Rev. Dr. Rodney Sadler  
Board President

September 20th started as an uneventful night, until I heard that another African American man had been killed by CMPD. Looking at the Facebook live-stream, I saw that a large crowd had gathered at the scene. There was anger, frustration, grief and sorrow melded together in their eyes. I could see there was more going on than mourning for one man.

Along with a few other concerned faith leaders, I headed for the scene, believing there should be a clergy presence. When we arrived the tensions were high. There was a preponderance of black and brown peoples, mostly young, but joined by others - white, Latino/a and Asian, all standing together demanding justice for a largely unknown man.

The protestors were incensed, enraged because of yet another police killing of a black man. They had surrounded a po-

lice car and were standing on it, shaking it. They had claimed their souvenir, the object upon which to vent their anger. I appealed to the officers to leave it to them and was assured that that would be their course of action. Instead, another order was given and a phalanx of officers in riot gear assembled in a line spanning across Old Concord Road. In body armor with helmets and batons, they were a frightening sight to the assembled crowd.

But fear was not the dominant emotion of the crowd when confronted by the phalanx. It was frustration tied with sorrow, seasoned with rage. It was not just grief caused by the loss of one man, but by a host of concerns that plague their community. It was the lack of jobs and a living wage and adequate housing and healthcare. It was living in a world that circumscribed people deemed racially "Other" to an inferior status. The killing released a virtual explosion of their pent up pain.

Along with 5 or 6 clergy colleagues, I

waded into the crowd. We hoped to form a buffer that would ensure that the protestors' voices were heard, while also averting a violent conflict. A young woman approach the phalanx, screaming at the top her lungs. She was enraged, but not wrong; each of her accusations were on point, but laced with profanity and accusation. I stepped in between her and the officer, trying to create some distance. When I did, she lifted her finger, pointed it in my face and said, "Don't try to silence me! It's your fault we are here! If you had done your job [Mr. Scott] wouldn't be dead and we wouldn't be here!"

### "If you had done your job!"

Those words hit me like a Mack truck. After puzzling over what I had done personally to cause this situation, I came to understand. She was not speaking to me, but to me as wearer of a clerical collar, as a representative of the church. I then felt the sting of her accusation for myself and my clergy kin.

*continued on p. 4*



# What We've Learned...

## What is MeckMin?

MeckMin began as an ecumenical coalition that evolved into an interfaith organization. However, it still needs to mature into its interfaith identity. The future of MeckMin lies in creating a strong interfaith organizational culture.

MeckMin's central restructuring task is to cultivate a network of many different faiths and philosophies which work together in a web of interactions, efforts and programs initiated by member faith communities and/or by MeckMin leadership. The core of these efforts and programs will always be about promoting understanding, compassion and justice between and across faith traditions.

### Network

*a group of people or organizations that are closely connected and that work with each other*



## What is Interfaith?

### Interfaith is more than Multifaith

Interfaith describes an interaction between people of different religions or faith traditions. It is not simply people of different faiths getting together - that is multifaith. Rather, interfaith implies action by or between people of different faiths.

### Interfaith implies differences

Interfaith collaboration by definition brings together people who are different from one another. These differences include not only religious beliefs or practices, but also race, ethnicity, economics, and cultural background. A large part of interfaith work is discovering shared core values while learning to understand and navigate differences through methods that are just, compassionate and mutually affirming.

## What is Next?

### Volunteers are essential

The word network implies multiple interactions between many members. Therefore, utilizing a strong base of diverse volunteers from MeckMin's many members and constituents is essential to a vibrant interfaith network.

MeckMin is moving towards a staffing model that focuses on networking through a strong volunteer coordination system to more fully engage our diverse interfaith network and enhance financial sustainability. Engaging volunteers improves communication, accountability and collaboration within the network.

We are currently developing a volunteer training and orientation system. Please contact us if you are interested in getting involved in your interfaith network.

### There is more to do

There is more to hear, more to learn, and more to change in the months ahead. The MeckMin Board of Directors has defined our 2016-2017 fiscal year as the year of restructuring. We will continue to host listening sessions. We will focus on foundational programs such as the Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, the Community Leader Breakfast, Food for Thought, IOOBY Interfaith Youth Leadership Institute, regular communication through the Interfaith Network, and crisis response. And we will reimagine and restructure as we work to become a mature and sustainable interfaith network that is identity-driven, mission-focused, and accountable to our diverse faith traditions.

## Stay Involved...

Weekly eNewsletter

Interfaith Blog

Social Media

Volunteer Opportunities

Attending Events Within the Interfaith Network

### DONATE!

Your financial support is crucial. Please visit

[www.meckmin.org/donate](http://www.meckmin.org/donate)

or use the enclosed envelope to invest in your interfaith network today!

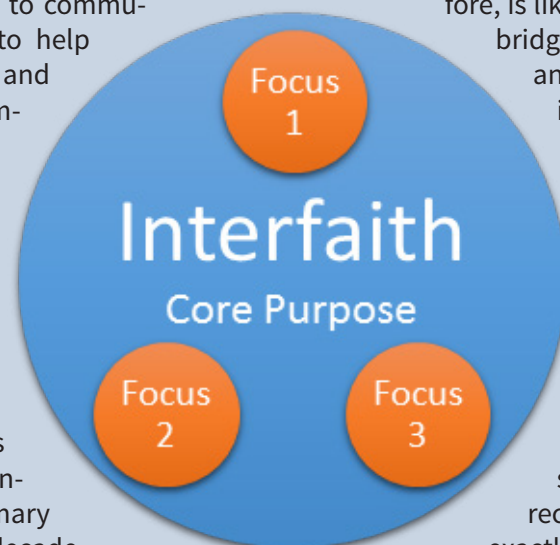
MeckMin is your interfaith network, fostering understanding, compassion and justice to create a Charlotte-Mecklenburg that we are all proud to call home!

## How Should MeckMin Focus?

### Interfaith work must be focused

Historically, MeckMin has responded to community needs and requests intended to help bridge differences. Listening sessions and interviews have revealed a strong community desire for MeckMin to continue filling that role. These sessions also revealed that MeckMin needs to focus its efforts through an interfaith lens.

In the future, MeckMin will increasingly apply a mission-based rubric to focus its efforts around key areas of difference, always grounding its work in interfaith sharing and learning. For example, race has been a primary focus of MeckMin for more than a decade. Race is also of a key area of difference, and there-



fore, is likely to remain a focus. Programs aimed at bridging this divide, however, must always be anchored in our core identity -- promoting interfaith understanding, compassion and justice.

MeckMin must live into its core interfaith identity and concentrate efforts to promote the discovery of shared values and the navigation of differences in our community. Identifying primary focus areas (shared core values and key areas of difference) is essential to MeckMin's effectiveness and sustainability. Currently, our Board of Directors is conducting listening sessions to do exactly that, with the hope of discerning 3 areas of focus for the future.

## In Our Own Backyard

At MeckMin, we believe that there is more to unite us than to divide us. Participants of *In Our Own Backyard* Interfaith Youth Leadership Institute put that belief into practice. Traditionally a Summer Camp, the 2016 IOOBY Program is occurring on select weekends throughout the 2016-17 school year.

IOOBY kicked off in October with a group of multi-racial teens from five different faith traditions. Over two weekends, participants have visited the Levine Museum of the New South and the Baha'i Community of Charlotte, attended Jumah Prayer at Masjid Ash-Shaheed, attended Shabbat Service at Temple Beth El, sorted clothes at Crisis Assistance Ministry, taken a dive into social issues through an interactive Poverty Simulation, and much, much more.



*Through IOOBY, I realized that people will always be who you think they are . . . until you get to know them.*

- Elana Burack, IOOBY '12