

THE DIFFERENCE ONE DAY CAN MAKE

Just one day, just one joint worship experience with people whose religion is somewhat different from our own, but what a *difference* a day such as that can make!

Following our June 12th joint worship gathering with *Masjid as-Salaam*, which included a message by their resident religious mentor, Imam Omar Shaheed, and an opportunity for dialog afterward, I received a letter, excerpts of which I should like to share with you. That communication, written the next day after our time together, was penned by Quadyrah Muhammed. This was his message:

Thank you for inviting my *Masjid* family and me to your moving worship at CCM. We had a wonderful time with you and your members. I particularly loved how you carefully designed the program to welcome our *Masjid*. Your doing so made it a delight for us to fellowship with one another. Allah (God) blessed us to be able to worship together like that. Our Qur'an tells us to "hold firmly to the rope of Allah—all of us together—and not to become divided: "Remember the favor of Allah upon you: When you were enemies, Allah brought your hearts together, and you become, by his favor, brothers. You were on the edge of the pit of five, and Allah saved you from it." (Chapter 3, *The Holy Qur'an*)

Mr. Muhammed continues:

I just wanted to share that verse with you, because you made it *possible* for us to hold on to that rope with each other. I pray that we shall continue to hold on to that rope and never again divide ourselves. To some, what you did to bring us together may seem like only a small act of kindness; but, for us, it was *life-changing*.

Just one day, just a simple opportunity for togetherness with some people who often are lumped together and labeled as enemies, but that act of inclusion in our worship gathering was experienced by them as "life-changing."

Who knew? Who even *suspected* that our “small act of kindness,” as they expressed it, would be received as a gesture that “brought our hearts together” and transformed us from enemies into brothers? For me, that letter from Mohammed was a humbling experience of validation that what we do here at CCM—our spirit of openness and caring for *all* people—makes a significant difference, even if we are not always aware of it.

So, dear people, I have printed the letter from Muhammed to let you know how much you matter, how much of a difference our small progressive Christian fellowship has the potential to *continue* to make!

Let us persevere enthusiastically as God’s progressive people in Columbia, just as Jesus was for individuals in *his* lifetime. What we are and do together here—*matters!* That’s true over the long haul, of course; but, as we have been reminded, it appears that what we do can make a positive difference even in a *single day!*

On a single Sunday, our time together with others was experienced as *life-changing?* Wow!

With abiding love,

Your pastor and friend,
John

IT'S HAPPENING AT CCM!

Note to Visitors: Our fellowship ordinarily gathers on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month. Exceptions are always announced in our newsletter, on our website, as well as in regular worship and educational gatherings.

Sunday, July 10 (2nd Sunday of the Month)

10:00 a.m. WORSHIP

Every year, the month of July gives us an opportunity to celebrate a major patriotic event: Independence Day. Many churches regularly observe that day in honor of our nation's declaration of its independence in 1776. We, at CCM, do not. Is there a reason why? Absolutely, and we'll take an in-depth look at it in worship today. Our pastor's message will be on "Christianity and Politics: What We Need to Know Now"—the second in a series of thoughtful, "need to know messages"—to raise our awareness on issues of crucial importance to our welfare—and, perhaps, even our survival. John's emphasis will be on a vital biblical principle that has the potential positively to transform our nation collectively and our lives individually. As usual, our worship will be followed by an opportunity to engage in an informal discussion on this important topic. (Out by about 12 noon)

Sunday, July 24 (4th Sunday of the Month)

10:00 a.m. EDUCATION

In our last session on "WHAT IS PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY?", we dealt with a significant issue: how to tell the difference between an *authentic* church and an *inauthentic* church. The truth is that, unfortunately, most people *don't* know the difference! Today, we'll have an opportunity to *continue* our exploration of progressive Christianity (the way taught by Jesus) as opposed to "conventional" Christianity (often, the unconscious *distortion* of the Way of Jesus). We'll adjourn between 11:30 a.m. and 12 noon.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

JUNE: A MONTH FOR REMEMBERING

Several years ago, when our then associate minister, the Rev. Nancy Zuckerman, moved back to Florida to care for her mother through a final illness, the Rev. Dale Sessions, a valued member of CCM, called our pastor and offered to be of help in any way that he could. At that time, we were having 4 to 5 worship services per month, and Dale graciously volunteered to deliver the sermon at two of them. He did so with love and caring, sharing his lifetime of skill and experience as a pastor and chaplain until facing the prospect of an Alzheimer's diagnosis necessitated his deciding to terminate that responsibility.

You may be interested to know that June 5th marked the 50th anniversary of Dale's ordination as a minister. A while back, we had a special celebration in Dale's honor at which time we publically reread the plaque of appreciation we gave to him at the time of his pastoral retirement at CCM. We had hoped that we could do something like that again for Dale's 50th anniversary; but since Dale and Norma have not been able to be present with us for an extended period, we realized that getting Dale dressed and ready to come to CCM has now become difficult for both him and Norma. That reality was confirmed when Norma indicated in a recent email that, on occasions, she has had to leave Dale at home and go by herself to Chapel across the street.

Although we have remembered Dale and Norma in our prayers, our pastor asked if there were something else we could do to be of help. Norma responded that she had prepared a notebook of memories for Dale and invited a number of people to contribute to it. Dale, she said, had read it several times, tearfully. He no longer remembers anything about his ordination or his previous ministry, so he is amazed at the marvelously positive influence his ministry had. Norma indicated that if John wanted to write a letter for Dale, she would be glad to add it to the ones she already has in the notebook. John, of course, told her that he would be honored to do so. However, *before* he writes anything, he would like for each of *you* to have an opportunity to give him any memories you have of Dale's ministry with us that you would like for John to include. So, as soon as you can, please share any remembrances

or comments that you feel would be meaningful for Dale and Norma. Although Dale has some difficulty formulating sentences now, he can still read, write, and understand what is going on around him; so our small contribution probably could mean more to him than we'll ever know.

Just as Dale has ministered to us, we now have an opportunity to minister to him. Your words and thoughts can constitute a gift of ministry to both him *and* Norma. So let us share them while they *can* still be received—and valued!

June is now over, but it *still* is “a month for remembering!”