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Purpose

Purpose of Perspectives

Perspectives is a newsletter published periodically from the Office of the Head of School. The purpose is to provide an exchange of intellectual topics, educational trends and research. The mission of Perspectives is to explore philosophical approaches to education and the results of research that advance the understanding of teaching and learning processes.

Mission

Mission of St. Anne's School of Annapolis

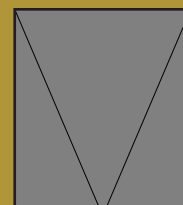
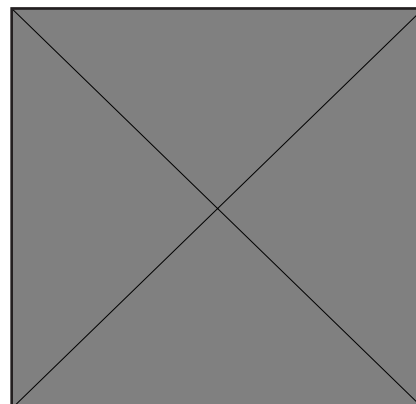
St. Anne's School of Annapolis invests in the intellectual and spiritual promise of each student in a community that celebrates diversity and values the dignity of every human being. We challenge students to think critically and creatively, to know themselves as learners, and to govern their lives with confidence, compassion and integrity. St. Anne's School draws from its Episcopal tradition as an independent, co-educational school, to best serve students in Preschool through Eighth Grade.

Interfaith Relations: A Path to Understanding

St. Anne's School of Annapolis hosts Conversations in the Round to encourage thoughtful dialogue on issues central to our school mission. The 2009 series focused on "Interfaith Relations: A Path to Understanding." The evening was funded in part through a grant from the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland to advance the school's efforts to promote social justice and equity. St. Anne's School assembled leaders from several different faiths. We have compiled some of their stories here as we strive to further this conversation.



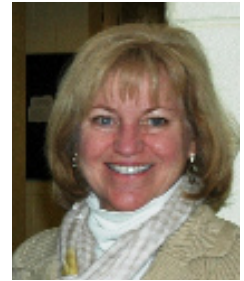
Imam Mohammed Majid, Sen. William Brock, Rabbi Philip Pohl, Dr. Clark Lobenstine, Doug Holladay



Today's world offers both the challenge and the delight to live and work closely with others who may have cultures very different from our own. At St. Anne's School, we strive to arm our students for a world view, to not only navigate but to thrive in a world of differences. We want our children to have confidence to lean into the world with curiosity and openness. In many ways, however, our society seems to have lost the will, the courage, and the ability to encourage us to speak and listen to one another with civility and humility, a tradition that has been long-honored in our country. Dr. Oz Guinness, author and one of the founders of the Trinity Forum, which hosts leadership seminars worldwide, urges us to acknowledge that it is time for Americans to re-forge a civil public square. And Prime Minister Tony Blair, talking about interfaith dialogues, says that "God's name must be identified with peace."

The mission of St. Anne's School is to invest in the intellectual and spiritual promise of every student in a community that celebrates diversity and values the dignity of every human being. And our school-wide theme this year is listening. Listening within the context of valuing the dignity of every human being requires, of course, that we set aside our own thoughts with genuine respect

and we open our hearts and minds and souls as well as our ears. Deep listening is born within a rich inner life, where one can be silent to make space for the other with hospitality and welcome. It begins with humility, reflecting an attitude of servant-hood, being able to reach out and to share with another our deepest feelings, suspending judgment and finding common ground for our humanity. In his newly published book, "With God On All Sides, Leadership in a Devout and Diverse America," Douglas Hicks employs the Spanish word *convivencia*: describing the peaceful and productive coexistence of those of different relations. When we manage well, we show respect to our neighbors where our paths cross and we seek to build connectors between our paths. Mr. Hicks urges us all, our leaders as well as all of us, to become religiously literate and to engage with one another where our paths cross and find ways to connect those paths. Tonight we have the privilege to hear from wonderful speakers who have dedicated their lives to looking for places where the paths cross and building new connections.



Frances C. Lukens
Head of School

Recommended Reading

With God on All Sides: Leadership in a Devout and Diverse America
by Douglas A. Hicks

Acts of Faith by Eboo Patel

Interactive Faith, Edited by Reverend Bud Heckman with Rori Neiss

Beyond Tolerance, by Gustav Niebuhr

Contributors

Conversations in the Round 2009 was coordinated by
Hutchey Doley, Director of Development, and Susan Judge,
Director of Community Programs and Events.

Perspectives 2009 was edited by

Effie Dawson, Director of Communications.

Upcoming Events

Empty Bowls Dinner: Thursday, January 28, 2010.

Conversations in the Round: Will be announced in early 2010

Annapolis Music Festival: May 1, 2010

What is faith
if it is not translated
into action?

—Mohandas Gandh:

My career has been in public service. Recently I was a member of a panel on CSPAN with Leon Panetta, Bill Clinton's budget officer, and Norman Ornstein, an expert on constitutional issues. We were talking about the breakdown of the political process in this country. Despite the fact that we represented different political parties – even different philosophies in many ways – it became clear that we were all saying how worried we were about the breakdown in communication, the breakdown in civility – just basic civility in this country – in the political process, and the danger that breakdown poses for us.

For the three of us, it appeared that far too often no one in Congress is listening to anyone of a different persuasion. Yet the core predicate of our civil society is based on representative government, one that gives our citizens their voice. We were each expressing in our own words a deeply rooted concern that over the last decade or so there has been erosion in real communications in Washington, D.C. I'm sure that problem is not limited to the nation's capital, but it does seem to be focused there.

I'll share some of my own life experiences. When I was first elected, I was a fire-breathing, 31-year-old, relatively conservative congressman, coming in to change the world. I rode on my white horse out of my hometown of Chattanooga into Washington, D.C. with my armor all burnished and my sword in my hand, fully ready to take on all the Huns and the Hessians who clearly were then running our nation's capital.

My late wife and I had not finished moving into the little house that we bought in D.C., when the phone rang. It was Estes Kefauver, the senior senator from Tennessee. Here I was, a very green new congressman, different party of course, and yet he said, "Bill, Nancy and I would like to welcome you to Washington, and if you and Muffet don't mind, we would like to have a little dinner party for you and introduce you to some of the folks up here that count." He was such a prominent leader of the Democratic Party and here he was making a very special effort to welcome this brash

newcomer to Washington. How do you hate somebody like that? He gave me an opportunity to talk and to listen and to learn, and he gave me an example of what really works, what makes this fractious, contentious, exciting nation work. His grace and civility set a pattern for much of what would characterize what happened to me over the next 20 or 30 years in the political arena.



William Brock

You don't see enough of that today, in part because we are not listening enough. It doesn't have to be that way. Listening is simply a matter of showing that you respect somebody. That is how you build trust, by considering honestly the views and values of someone with a different background and different life experiences. We can only learn from their different life experiences by being able and willing to listen – really hear what they are saying. You can't hear when you are shouting. You can't hear when you have closed your mind to any other point of view.

Listening, really listening, is clear evidence that you believe that the most important things in life come from the human relationships that we have – families, of course, but friends, acquaintances and others we chance to meet as well. If we value our children, our families, our loved ones, we have to find ways to reignite that mutual respect between all people, and we have to begin with ourselves by being really good listeners. The good news is, that is really wonderfully interesting and fun. It lets us truly value others for what and who they really are, learn from their lives and experiences and in the process, grow ourselves.

We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race.

—Kofi Annan

William Brock is a former U.S. Senator, Secretary of Labor and is a leader in national education reform.

I am new to Annapolis, but I have been a Rabbi in Maryland now for over thirty years. And I have found that encounters with people of other faiths have been among the most enriching, the most educational and the most valuable to me in my Ministry. There are certain areas that all the various movements of Judaism – we do not use the term denominations, we use movements – can share and we can really have a fruitful discussion on certain areas that are important to us. I have found the same to be true in my work with other clergy and with people from other religions. One area that crosses over any denominational line is the area of healing, specifically helping people when they are ill.

I will tell you just one story that has come to mind again. I should never forget this story, I should probably remember it every single day. It goes back many years. When I was in Olney, Maryland, one of the things I did

was serve as a Jewish Chaplain to the local hospital. I would visit the Jewish patients regularly, but I worked with the other clergy providing on-call coverage whenever there was an emergency, and specifically when there was a death in the hospital. I was on-call several times over the course of the year and therefore I would have to be responsive to anybody, any family, any tradition that might need service for that evening, after hours, sometimes over night and sometimes on weekends. We would have a pager and we would be called and we would come to the hospital. It was a wonderful service that the hospital performed. I also volunteered specifically for Christmas, figuring that my colleagues were busier than I am on Christmas.

One year it was Christmas Eve after midnight, it was 2 or 3 in the morning, the pager beeps and I get to the phone and I am told by the staff in the hospital that there is a family from Korea. The father is some sort of diplomat and they lived in this area. They had an infant that was brought to the hospital not long ago, that was born in the community and this is a few weeks later, the infant became ill and the infant had died. This is a Christian, Korean family and they called, and here is the Rabbi coming in to be with them. Other than the father, who knew some English being a diplomat, the wife, the mother, didn't know any, and there were two other small children, maybe a three-year-old and a five-year-old. They didn't know any English at all. They wanted a clergy and they were told it was

going to be a Rabbi. So they knew it wouldn't be a Christian clergy and he certainly wasn't going to be someone who could speak with them. But I told the father that I was there and that I could say some prayers and I could read some Psalms. We went into a very small room, I remember, with the baby in the arms of the mother, and we prayed. And I just offered what I know God's spirit was

telling me to provide at that moment, to a family that I had never met before and I had never met them afterward. And beautifully, it was many years before it was more conventional wisdom to do this, the mother had the child, the baby, passed into the arms of the two other children, to hold this baby and to say goodbye and to kiss the baby goodbye. I learned as much from them as they received from me that particular evening. And it was only because we were able to be together at that moment and share a faith -- not the same faith, but a faith -- and a sense that there was something bigger going on than any of us could really understand and we could help one another, or I could be there to help them. But as I said, they taught me as well. I had that experience over and over again, I have done a lot of work in my own study of ministry and Jewish healing and specifically the healing service at synagogue, but I also received that at Wesley Theological Seminary and I have worked at lots of hospitals. That has been the setting for me where I have had the most interfaith kinds of experiences and pathways to learning.



Rabbi Phillip Pohl

My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together."

—Desmond Tutu

Rabbi Phillip Pohl is the leader of Congregation Kol Shalom in Annapolis and a co-founder of the Washington Jewish Healing Network.

tell a story from the ancient history of Arabia: There is a man that was in the desert and he lost his camel. Today, to convert the story to contemporary time and to tell young people, I say that his Hummer or Land Cruiser breaks in the middle of the desert. He can't get any help and his cell phone dies. Everything goes wrong. He waits for his destiny, until God does his will. And while he is waiting and in a very dangerous situation, he sees something moving on the horizon, a creature. He says, "Wow, there is something there and it is coming. It might be a good thing." Now a negative thought comes to his mind: "No, no, no. It could be a beast. I don't know. It could be a human being or an animal. I don't know what is going to happen to me." And so when the creature comes closer he says, "Oh, it is a human being. Wow. That's great." The negative thought comes back to his mind and he says, "You know what, I don't know what kind of human being that is. I can't see him well from the far distant. "When the person come closer, he says, "Oh, my God, he is my friend. I will be safe." The moral of the story is the more distance you have, the more stereotyping and misconception and fear you have. The closer you are to one another, the more you get to know people. As one African American comedian said, "Don't judge me because of my color, get to know me and you will have enough reason not to like me."

We have to develop a better understanding. Through my work in interfaith, through having a Rabbi come to my mosque to teach about Judaism and a pastor give a course in Christianity, we develop a better understanding of each other. I do believe that when we can have time for interaction we find a common ground. And finding common ground doesn't mean that we should not acknowledge our differences. We should recognize that we may have different ways of worship, different theology, but that differences should not be a point of friction, but rather of mutual respect. I am one of those people who don't believe in the color blind theory. You should really be a color recognizer and respect them for who they are. You say color blind – that means you don't see their color. You have to see my color. The same thing I have to see him as Jewish, I have to see him as Christian because of how he defines himself. With that recognition and acknowledgment, we then can begin a dialogue. Many people think that interfaith

means to dilute their own religion or give up your own principals. No, it is interfaith dialogue. Inter-religious dialogue, meaning that there is a reason that they are Christian, a reason that they are Jewish, a reason that they are Muslims. But there is a common ground, trust me. There are so many things that Muslims, Christians and Jews can do together to make a better world. I think that there are so many people that are hungry around the world and we could feed them. There are so many people that really don't have health insurance in this country. And there are so many people that are homeless. Mohamed calls upon us to be people of service. As one



of my Christian pastors says, you find yourself worshiping God when you do a ministry of service, when you feed a person who is in need, when you shelter someone who is homeless. And I do believe that today interfaith dialogue has to be taken at the next level. Then we learn what we can do with this trust that we have built, with the understanding that we have shaped.

I have daughters. Five daughters. I would like them to not only identify themselves as Muslims, but I would like them to identify themselves with friends who are Jewish, friends who are Christians. As a matter of fact, my in-laws are Catholic. When they come in town they ask me to take them to the church – the Catholic Church. And when I go to the church, the Father knows me pretty well, many people in the church know me because we all do work together and they say to me many times, are you an undercover Catholic?

Imam Mohammed Majid is Vice President of the Islamic Society of North America and a member of the National Interfaith Planning Committee for Domestic Violence, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Muslim, Sikh and Arab Advisory Board.

Don't walk ahead of me, I may not follow. Don't walk behind me, I may not lead. Walk beside me, and just be my friend"

—Albert Camus

Imagine that many of you are here because you have children or grandchildren at this school and I think that if all the schools in this world had that focus on listening to each other and preparing kids for a life that will be with very diverse people, how wonderful that would be. The opportunities that we have to share and to learn are amazing. They may take place in the context of a water cooler conversation in the office, or a checkout line conversation at the supermarket, or working together on a committee with the PTA, or being neighbors with somebody or in more formal settings like a Buxton Initiative luncheon or dinner or an interfaith conference. Critical to that process is what scholars have described as four levels of relating to each other. We talk about you, usually behind your back. We talk to you, because I've got the goods and you need them: salvation, answers to a problem, whatever. We talk with you, which is where dialogue begins and sometimes in that process, we talk with one another about ourselves. We realize our common humanity, such as the experience that Rabbi Phillip Pohl has shared.

Trusting relationships are the critical element of that.

If I walk up to a person of another faith or any of you, and ask a very personal question, there is probably some offense to take at that. Where did we meet before? You are asking me something rather personal. So however we begin those relationships, we are developing relationships. Taking the risks, opening ourselves, being vulnerable: It is a part of that process. Wherever it might be – the neighborhood, the water cooler – wherever it might be – it's all so critical that we extend ourselves by asking about the other. If we start by sharing ourselves, we will probably get polite listening on the other's part. That is very different than, for example, what we just read in the paper about Ramadan. So a colleague at work – or a colleague wherever – is a Muslim and I have the chance to ask, "What does Ramadan mean to you? Why do you practice it? Why are there more Muslims in Washington who will fast for 30 days than will go to weekly services?" Building the trust is essential. Someone has talked about interfaith dialogue as being like dancing in the dark. You are going to step on your partner's toes. But all the difference is made if your partner knows that you didn't intend to do that and that you were not out to hurt the person. The "ouch" that

is said is said very differently. So the opportunity that we have – I believe it's the privilege that we have – of living in a multicultural community, society, nation, world, is one of building those relationships of trust, of reaching out to someone who is different in whatever way, and getting to know them, sharing their stories, learning from their story and taking initiatives in that process.

As a Christian, living in a predominantly Christian nation, I would say that I have a primary responsibility to be listening first and hearing and talking, second. Someone has pointed out that we are born with two ears and one mouth so that we have an opportunity to be listeners and develop the habit of listening and of wanting to learn more by asking those questions.



Clark Lobenstine

My religion is very simple. My religion is kindness.

—The Dalai Lama

Someone has said that in interfaith dialogues, there are no "bad questions," but there are questions that may be uncomfortable. The questions that are possible after getting to know someone are different after the second and third meeting. Don't expect to ask the toughest question right at the beginning of the conversation. It is in the process of developing relationships that all things are possible.

Clark Lobenstine is Executive Director of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington and a parish associate at the Silver Spring Presbyterian Church.

A former Senator from Vermont named George Aikin said something that really stuck in my mind. I was a junior in high school and I never forgot. He said that if we were to wake up one morning and find that we were all the same nationality, race and religion, we would find another reason to hate each other by noon. At first I laughed about it, but then I started thinking: What is it about the human condition that causes us to look for differences. I spent a lot of time in Africa and I am amazed, even in a place like Africa, dark-skin people don't like light-skin people. Where did that come from? I mean there are all kinds of ways we draw lines. And I think it is fundamentally out of our insecurity. You know we really are threatened by people who are different from us. Now, here is what concerns me: We all say our times are tougher or whatever. I think there are things that are contributing to a problem, at least in this country, in terms of people drawing lines and being isolated from one another. Divisions and polarizations. It used to be when Bill Brock was in the Senate and he and I were in government together there was some civility because you had a lot of friends that had kind of grown up in the political culture. So what is different now? I would say that one of things that is different is a 24/7 news situation. What I mean by that is that there is such a voracious appetite to feed things. We have no sense of proportionality. There was a time when you had to become comfortable with a range of ideas.

My three boys do not read the newspaper anymore. They get their information pretty much on the Internet. It used to be you would be reading the newspaper and you would read articles that maybe were not in your comfort zone but you could read them and it would force you to think a little bit broader. I think this is part of what we are faced with now where we have increasingly these little pods of people and little islands where people think alike and they only want to relate to a certain kind of person. So you meet an average person and you say did you ever meet a Muslim? Have you ever talked to a Jew? And thank God I think our younger kids are really starting to be comfortable with that. But we are getting information distilled for us and these lines are drawn and instead of us having first hand knowledge of people that are different than us, it is being distilled by

I never will, by any word or act,
bow to the shrine of intolerance
or admit a right of inquiry into
the religious opinions of others.

—Thomas Jeffersoni

people in the middle.

Right after 9/11, I met Akbar Ahmed, an anthropologist and a former Ambassador from Pakistan. I had a lot of questions for Akbar, I'm a person on the road with Jesus trying to understand my faith but I really don't understand a lot about what would cause us to feel like we are in a new world where 2.2 billion people don't like us. What in the world is going on? So we started to talk as friends and the more the friendship developed the more sensitive the questions. I



Doug Holladay

was so amazed by what he was saying that I pulled together a lunch with a number of people, the head of the CIA, the FBI, all these interesting people and I said, "You might not like what Akbar is going to tell you but I have asked to just give you his perspective on what is going on in the world here." It was a very interesting time. So many people were vilianizing Muslims and others that we somehow needed to figure out a way to connect with them. So we started this thing called the Buxton Initiative. We have dinners at Embassies, where we pull together Generals, Senators, CEOs and others and we try to talk about issues related to how can we really understand one another more and how do we tell our story and do that.

Our idea is differences make a difference. So what would I say to people like us? I'd say get out of your comfort zone. Find a couple people that have a different religious perspective or culture and sit down with them and start to understand their journey. Everybody has a story, don't they? And when you have the patience to hear the story, boy do you learn a lot about somebody. It can really transform you.

Doug Holladay is an equity investor, theologian, and advisor to the White House, CEOs and world leaders.