

Friday, May 6th 2011, A conference was held at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary on "Building the Beloved Community: An Interfaith Dialogue".

The conference started after the welcome speech of Dr. Greg Mast, President of the New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

Panel 1

Dr. Joseph Stoutzenberger, Holy Family University

Justice and the Beloved Community

Talked about, the two-volume study of Sufism Fethullah Gulen states that an important activity for Sufis is: "Trying to eradicate injustice and support justice." In the presentation he discussed the importance of working for justice as a characteristic of a beloved community such as Gulen advocates, which requires examining the impact of social structures on those who are hurting or lack basic necessities in our world.

Dr. Antoinette Ellis- Williams New Jersey City University

"The Black Church: Examples of Social Justice & Development"

Talked about the use of liberation theology from enslavement, Reconstruction, the Civil Rights movement and to the post modern urban community development era.

Rabbi Steven Sirbu, Temple Emeth, Teaneck NJ

"Inter-Faith Outreach and the Jewish Community"

Discussed how many American Jews support the concept of inter-faith dialogue as a means to bridge-building. There are many challenges in establishing such dialogues, but once they get going they can elevate the level of discourse and spawn new partnerships. Rabbi Sirbu, a congregational rabbi in Teaneck, reflected on how interfaith cooperation has helped strengthen his community in ways both expected and unexpected.

Panel 2

Dr. Levent Koc (filled in for Mehmet Kalyoncu)

Civilian Response of Hizmet Movement to Ethno-Religious Conflict: Countering the PKK and Hezbollah Terrorism in Southeastern Turkey

Talked about a paper that was based on field research in Mardin, Turkey, on the activities of the faith-based Hizmet Movement. The movement has succeeded in forging policies and programs that bring different ethno-religious communities together as a necessary first step towards civil society where the social landscape is characterized by communal conflicts stemming from deeply entrenched ethno religious differences: common problems facing the different ethno-religious communities are identified, then solid services to address those problems are provided, requiring collaborative effort by the different ethno-religious communities. In this way the social potential of those communities is mobilized and channeled to achieve shared goals, which enrich the society as a whole.

Dr. Michael J. Christensen, Drew University

Gave a speech on: Stepping Up from Social Services to Asset-Based Community Development This presentation introduces the six threads of an approach to faith-based community development using SHALOM as an acrostic and relating the concept to Salaam, peace and even the inner peace concept in Buddhism.

Dr. Jon Pahl, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

"Beyond Sacrifice: Rethinking Religion and Violence in America, or How a *Pax Americana*

Might Figure in a Coming Religious Peace."

In his famous Riverside Church Speech of April 1967, "Beyond Vietnam," the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr (who is identified especially with the phrase "beloved community") identified America as the "greatest purveyor of violence in the world today." How has this changed, or not, since 1967? And how has "religion" factored into the problems of episodic and systemic violence in America? Drawing on his book *Empire of Sacrifice: The Religious Origins of American Violence* (NYU, 2010), Professor Jon Pahl suggests some necessary rethinking of the categories of "religion" and "violence" in American history, with an aim to move the nation in its domestic and foreign policies beyond "sacrifice." Such a move may in fact already be underway, toward what Pahl calls, in the working title of his next book, *A Coming Religious Peace*, which builds on trajectories evident in the Hizmet movement associated with Fethullah Gulen.

Panel 3

Dr. Willard Ashley, New Brunswick Theological Seminary

"Learning To Lead"

Talked about the lessons are necessary for people of faith to learn to be effective in our quest to be the 'Beloved Community?'

Rev. Gabriel Salguero, Princeton Theological Seminary

"A Spirituality for Christian Leadership in an Interfaith World"- Gabriel Salguero, National Latino Evangelical Coalition

A Talk that outlines some of the spiritual disciplines and fundamental underpinnings for interfaith work from a Christian perspective. Rev. Salguero spoke about his work with both strengths and weaknesses as an Evangelical leader. The talk focused on mining disciplines that help nourish

the Christian leader in this type of work.

Pat Brannigan, Executive Director of the Catholic Conference of New Jersey

“Working Together In Peace and Dignity”

Shared how many faiths, especially the Abrahamic faiths, share fundamental values concerning the dignity of individuals and the importance of everyone contributing to the common good. These shared values can form a foundation for establishing harmonious relationships that lead to dialog. Authentic dialog can lead to understanding and recognition of the importance and beauty of collaborative work to address the needs of the most vulnerable among us. he Interfaith Dialog Center provides many opportunities throughout the year for people of diverse backgrounds and faiths to come together in peace to exchange ideas and journey on the road from tolerance, to caring concern, to compassion and friendship. The more we work together, the more opportunity we have to enjoy our diversity while also seeing the unity within the human family.

Pics from the Event:



Dr. Joseph Stutzman



Dr. Antoinette Ellis



Rabbi Steven Sirbu



Dr. Levent Koc



Dr. Michael L. Christensen



Dr. Jon Pahl



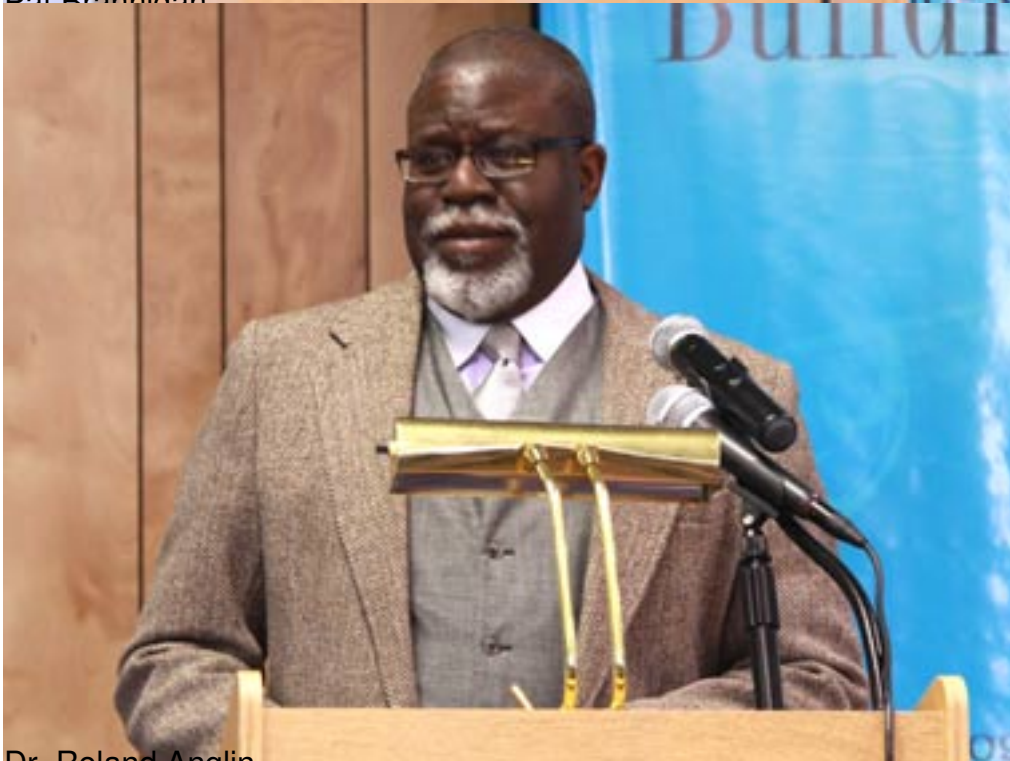
Dr. Willard Ashley



Rev. Gabriel Salguero



Pat Brennan



Dr. Roland Anglin



Building the Beloved Community: An Interfaith Dialogue Initiative for Regional and Community