

Morning deadlines. Mobile banking. Making bubbles.
(It's the **Mobile Banking** part that we can help with.)

BrooklineBank
MEMBER FDIC

Burlington, Bedford Interfaith panel meets over dinner for discourse on intolerance



BUY PHOTO

HIDE CAPTION

The Islamic Center of Burlington Wicked Local Photo/Kim Burnett

Monday

Posted Jan 9, 2017 at 1:11 PM

Updated Jan 9, 2017 at 6:07 PM

By Judy Wasserman**burlington@wickedlocal.com**

A rabbi, a Muslim imam, an Episcopal rector, and a Mormon bishop have dinner

together.

No, this is not the beginning of a stand-up comic's joke.

It really happened, on Jan. 8, at the Islamic Center of Burlington.

The four clergy participated in a panel discussion on intolerance and how to combat it, and dined together with members of their congregations.

Sponsored by the Burlington and Bedford Interfaith Clergy associations, "Responding to Racism---An Interfaith Dialogue," drew a crowd of approximately 125 people on a cold winter night.

They listened, learned, talked, and agreed more interfaith efforts will be planned.

The clergy included Rabbi Susan Abramson of Temple Shalom Emeth, Burlington; Imam Shakeel Rahman Miah of the Islamic Center of Burlington; Rev. Rector Christopher Wendel of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Bedford; and Bishop Jared Koyle of the Church of the Latter Day Saints (the Mormon Church), Billerica.

State Rep. Ken Gordon of Bedford moderated the panel discussion, and Burlington Chief of Police Michael Kent also attended the event.

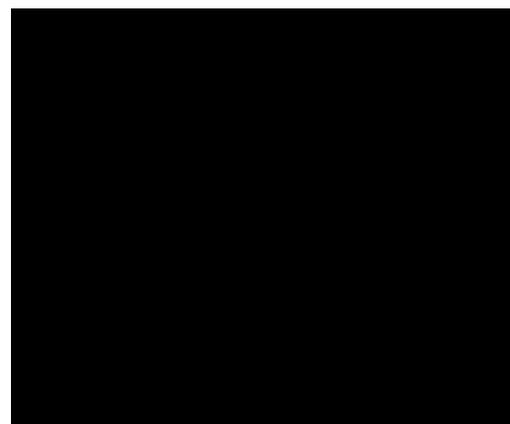
Abramson said "The learning is just beginning," and Koyle said, "This is a good start. The next question to ask is, 'Where do we go from here?'"

Kashif Ahmed of Burlington, representing the Islamic community, who has been instrumental in planning other local interfaith events, said he hopes the panel discussion "sparks interest in tonight's attendees, who will then tell other people" and the interfaith dialogue will grow.

In fact, another interfaith event is planned for Jan. 13, when Temple Shalom Emeth hosts the annual MLK Interfaith Shabbat Service; guest speaker will be Dima Basha of Newton, who came to America from Aleppo, Syria.

Gordon praised the interfaith clergy group for sponsoring the event, and said that with a gathering like this, "We can talk about what separates us but also what unites us, what we have in common."

Share



MORE VIDEO:

Power of Flowers moves from Billerica to Tewksbury. Video by Mary Leach.



He added that "This is what we do in Massachusetts;" we get together; we learn about each other's experiences; and we discuss and work to solve intolerance.

Referring to the interfaith gathering, the imam said, "This is exactly what we need to do. We need to be open with each other; we need to talk. It's not impossible."

Abramson took an informal poll of how many in the audience had ever been to an Islamic center, and most had not. "Just being here is meaningful; it helps dispel misconceptions."

How does your religion respond to intolerance?

Rector Wendell said his religion strives "to loose the bonds of injustice," and that "we are on the side of victims; we stand in solidarity with them." He added, "It isn't easy though."

Imam Miah said, "We respond to intolerance with tolerance," and we must "be patient." He said that Muslims are taught if you "treat someone good, good will result." And, with a smile, he added, "Spread peace and good food."

Abramson said "the spike in anti-Semitism has been disconcerting," and seeing

swastikas "echoes deeply in our hearts," but that the Jewish people are taught to love one another and make the world a better place. Stand up to your oppressors as a community, she said, and if you save one life, it's as if you saved the whole world.

Bishop Koyle said Mormons believe that "We live with differences, while we find ways to live together." Forgiveness is important, and "never regret being a little too kind [to others]."

During the panel discussion, the participants described their individual religions, and addressed misconceptions about their religions. They answered questions on how religious intolerance affected their community, and the role of women in each religion.

The four clergy agreed that their religions condemn racism in any form, and that their religions have all experienced intolerance and oppression, some going back thousands of years.

At the conclusion of the event, Koyle said, "I hope all leave here more enlightened."

JUMP TO COMMENTS

MORE STORIES

YOU MAY LIKE

BEHIND THE PLATE: Moozy's in Belmont satisfies more than sweet tooth

[Around Billerica](#)

[Power of Flowers Project leaves Billerica](#)

[Billerica-Chelmsford girls hockey beats St. Mary's, but falls in tourney final](#)

[FREEZE FRAME:](#) Share your snowstorm and winter fun photos

[Fundraiser nets \\$20k for Billerica assault victim](#)

SPONSORED CONTENT

[How Cats Show Affection to Their Humans](#) Hill's Pet

[Enter Your Name, Wait 14 Seconds, Brace Yourself](#) TruthFinder

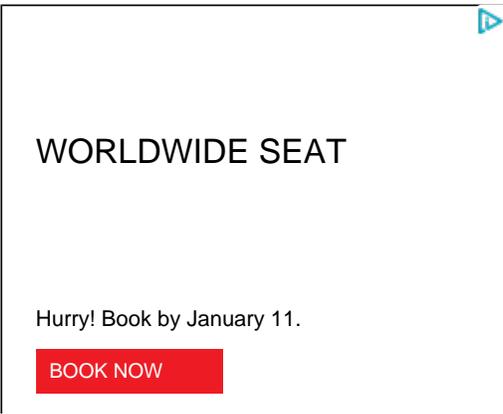
[Learn How this Before Bed Diet Routine can help you Lose Weight](#) DNC Nutrition

[This Is The Most Addicting Game Of The Year](#) Stormfall

[How To Fix Your Fatigue \(Do This Every Day\)](#) Gundry MD

[Workers are rejecting the uninspiring sea of sameness that has come to be known as "the office"](#) Steelcase

Recommended by  Outbrain



WORLDWIDE SEAT

Hurry! Book by January 11.

[BOOK NOW](#)