



Message from the VMS Board

Dear Members & Friends,

Our Annual General Meeting for 2020 was postponed to 24 February 2021, within the BC Societies special allowance for 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

It's been an usual year and a difficult one in many ways, but has also resulted in some beneficial changes. Like many others, we've gained some expertise in online meetings and presentations, which has helped to open our activities to new audiences, saved on time and travel, and refocused our attention on the pressing challenges of our times.

We've recommitted to our mission "to learn from one another, to celebrate our unity in diversity, and to work together for the well-being of the community and the world". In that spirit, we present this review of 2020 and wish all of you the best in 2021.

The Victoria Multifaith Society



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On February 6, 2020, we held an in-person conference on *Spirituality & the Climate Crisis*, in honour of our annual celebration of World Interfaith Harmony Week. It was held in the Multifaith Centre at the University of Victoria.

It was very well received, thanks to many participants, including our Keynote Speaker Hannah Askew and MC Flossie Baker, both of the Sierra Club, and youth panelists Isha Cheema, Christopher Sanford-Beck, Ben Ingham, Asiyah Robinson and Brendan Noyes, students of the University of Victoria.

Slide 4



March 11, 2020
The Covid-19
pandemic was
declared.

And everything
changed...

On March 11, 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic was declared.

All events for the rest of the year would be adapted to the new circumstances.



The ***Healing the Planet*** Open Letter from VMS, released on the 75th anniversary of the UN Charter during the summer of 2020, was released in the form of a short inspirational video at the end of the year.

It provides a glimpse of 2020 from a spiritual perspective, pointing to where we, as a multifaith society, believe we need to go in order to restore health to our planet.

Collaborative Projects

August
Bells for Peace,
initiated by World Beyond War Victoria

September
The BC Thanksgiving Food Drive,
organized by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

October – December
The virtual World Partnership Walk,
organized by the Ismaili community

Bells for Peace
75th anniversary of Nagasaki & Hiroshima
8:15 a.m., August 6th
& 11:50 a.m., August 9th
Noon, Thursday, Aug. 6th
Live Zoom presentation
on the current nuclear weapons threat
Register Here
to receive link
Details of Campaign

Go
Go night!
RAISE FUNDS FOR
WALK, A MUSIC
PORTED BY THE
OCIETY - IS BEING
CEEDS WILL GO
GLOBAL POVERTY.
TH, 3:30-5PM (PST)
R IN ADVANCE AT:
/www.victoria
ED IN SUPPORTING A
ING SOME FUN!
In support of:
World
Partnership
Walk

BC THANKSGIVING FOOD DRIVE
PLEASE DONATE!
Did you know? Funds go further than food donations!
"Every \$1 donated - up to \$3 worth of food."
Donors today will receive a food bank receipt for their donation.

Several collaborative projects took place in the Summer and Fall of 2020.

Bells of Peace

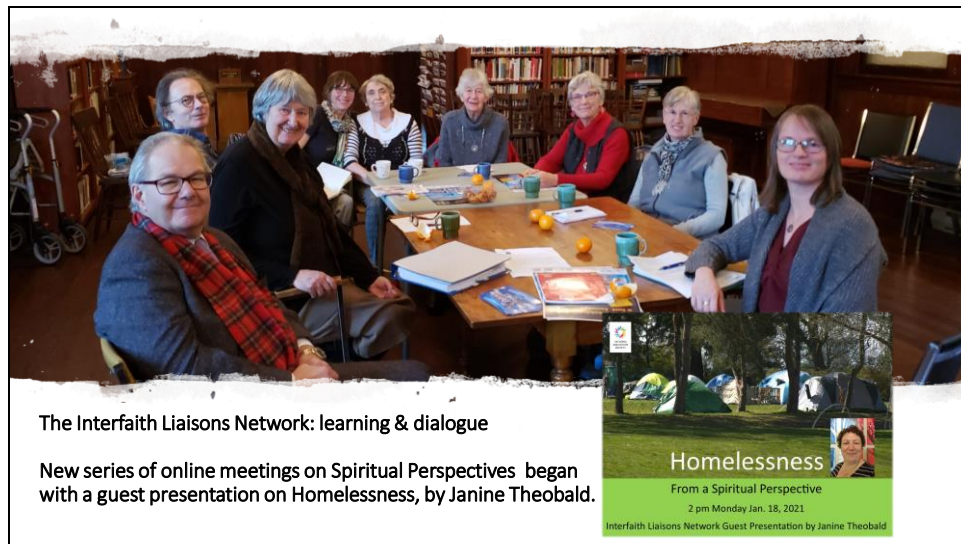
In August, church bells, hand bells and the Friendship Bell near Laurel Point were rung to commemorate the 75th anniversaries of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and say “Never Again”. A live Zoom presentation was also held on the current nuclear weapons threat.

BC Thanksgiving Food (Fund) Drive

In late September, the BC Thanksgiving Food (Fund) Drive, initiated by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, was changed to online donations of funds to help local food banks meet the increased demand in these difficult times. Almost 28,000 door hangers were delivered by 222 volunteers of all backgrounds, raising the equivalent of over \$13,000.

World Partnership Walk

The Virtual World Partnership walk, organized by the Aga Khan Foundation, went over a period of 6 weeks in the Fall, raising about \$50,000 in Victoria. Each week a video checkpoint from a different country was featured, with online donations going to some of the poorest communities in the world.



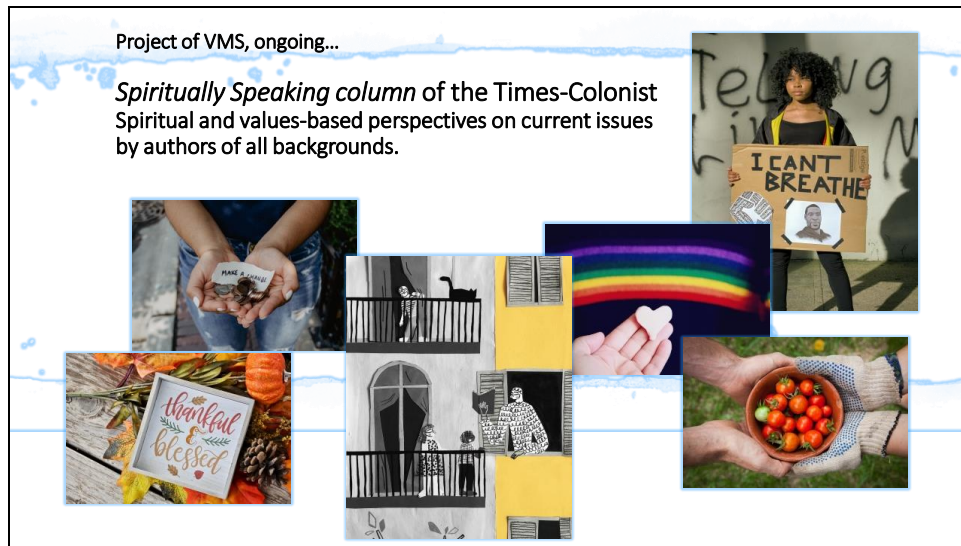
Interfaith Liaisons Network

Seven meetings of the *Interfaith Liaisons Network* were held in 2020. ILN is a project of VMS open to members of congregations and spiritual groups, who engage in interfaith dialogue and act as informal liaisons between the group and their communities.

The dialogue format gave way to a more zoom-friendly format of guest speakers on topics of general interest. A record number of 46 signed up for the recent meeting on Homelessness from a Spiritual Perspective with Janine Theobald.

VMS will continue its collaboration with ILN over the next months in organizing and publicizing the rest of its series of online meetings with guest speakers, on Spiritual Perspectives on Economics in March, the Environment in April and Racism in May.

We're grateful to Co-ordinator Beth Gibson and Terri Woolgar for their work with ILN since it's inception several years ago.



Spiritually Speaking Column / Faith Forum

Another project of VMS that we're quite proud to support is the Spiritually Speaking column of the Times-Colonist newspaper, which features a roster of about 25 multifaith writers expressing a spiritual and values-based perspective on current issues & events.

The column appears twice weekly online and in the print edition of the Saturday paper. It also has a Twitter account, @SpiritualityBC, with over 4,250 followers including CBC Tapestry.

The column is moderated by Anna Bowness-Park of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, who has recruited and warmly encouraged every one of the writers, beginning when Spiritually Speaking first replaced the Church Page of our local paper 13 years ago.



Our Annual General Meeting 2020, 24 Feb. 2021

Guest speaker Dr. Mary-Wynne Ashford spoke on the promising efforts underway to reshape international institutions to reflect our common spiritual values.

Dr. Ashford is Past President of International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War which won the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize. She has been a leader in the international peace and disarmament movement for over thirty years.

VMS Board of Directors

Continuing in 2021:

- **John Borrows**, – Chair, Indigenous Spirituality
- **Yavhel Velazquez**, – Vice-Chair, Unity Church, Non-affiliated seat
- **Sheila Flood**, – Secretary, Bahá'í seat
- **Henri Lock**, – Recording Secretary, Christian seat
- **Moussa Magassa**, – Muslim seat
- **Sridevi Ganti**, – Hindu seat
- **Parminder Virk**, – Sikh seat

Stepping down:

- **Janine Theobald**, – Treasurer, Buddhist seat
- **Sharon Kobrinsky**, – Jewish seat



L-R: Janine Theobald, John Borrows, Sri Ganti, Parminder Virk, Sheila Flood, Front row: Yavhel Velazquez, Henri Lock. Missing: Sharon Kobrinsky, Moussa Magassa (2019)

The Board of the Victoria Multifaith Society will have two changes in 2021, as well as some exciting plans for the year ahead. Board members continuing are:

- **John Borrows**, – Chair, Indigenous Spirituality
- **Yavhel Velazquez**, – Vice-Chair, Unity Church, Non-affiliated seat
- **Sheila Flood**, – Secretary, Bahá'í seat
- **Henri Lock**, – Recording Secretary, Christian seat
- **Moussa Magassa**, – Muslim seat
- **Sridevi Ganti**, – Hindu seat
- **Parminder Virk**, – Sikh seat

Stepping down in the coming months will be:

- **Janine Theobald**, – Treasurer, Buddhist seat
- **Sharon Kobrinsky**, – Jewish seat

We're very thankful to Janine for her services not just as our Buddhist member but as our conscientious and dedicated Treasurer, and to Sharon for her time as our Jewish board member, her stories and her enthusiasm.

VMS Board of Directors

Beginning in 2021:

Peter Kedge – Buddhist seat

Ora Stefanic – Jewish seat





The graphic on the right features the Victoria Multifaith Society logo at the top, which consists of a colorful circular emblem with various religious symbols. Below the logo, the text reads: "VICTORIA MULTIFAITH SOCIETY". A quote in the center states: "To learn from one another, to celebrate our unity in diversity, to work together for the well-being of the community and the world." At the bottom, there is a silhouette of a group of people standing on a hill with their arms raised. Contact information at the bottom includes the website www.victoriamultifaith.com and the email victoriamultifaith@gmail.com.

We're happy to announce that Peter Kedge has agreed to join the board in the Buddhist seat this Spring. Peter was raised in England and lived in Asia for 30 years, studying and practicing Tibetan Buddhism, running a business in Hong Kong, initiating and leading several Buddhist related projects. He continues his studies and involvement with Buddhist publishing from his home in Victoria.

Ora Stefanic will also be joining the board in the Jewish seat, as of March. Ora was born in Israel and immigrated to Canada in 1993, training as a teacher at the University of Western Ontario. She has been involved in community work in Ontario, Montreal and Nova Scotia. She is currently the Director of Hillel BC in Victoria, and has a special interest in inter-cultural understanding, diversity and inclusion.

Both of the new board memberships were recently confirmed by the board and are due to be approved at our AGM for 2021 in the Fall of this year.

Treasurer's Report 2019-2020	
Victoria Multifaith Society*	
Financial Statement July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020	
OPENING BALANCE July 1, 2019	\$ 2,095.03
INCOME	
DONATIONS - INDIVIDUAL	\$ 145.00
DESIGNATED DONATION - STARFIELDS	\$ 500.00
DONATION - STARFIELDS	\$ 364.00
SPONSORSHIP - ICA WIHW 2020	\$ 100.00
MEMBERSHIP - Faith Groups	\$ 100.00
MEMBERSHIP - Individuals	\$ 220.00
INTEREST	\$ 0.19
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 1,429.19
EXPENSES	
REMEMBRANCE DAY WREATH - POPPY FUND	\$ 80.00
EVENT - AGM SUPPLIES	\$ 15.00
EVENT - World Interfaith Harmony Week 2020	\$ 300.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 395.00
INCOME OVER EXPENSES	\$ 1,034.19
CLOSING BALANCE June 30, 2020	\$ 3,129.22

*project of World Interfaith Education Association, BC

Treasurer's Report for fiscal year 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

Treasurer's Report – July 1, 2020 – Jan. 31, 2021

Victoria Multifaith Society*	
Financial Statement July 1, 2020 – January 31, 2021	
OPENING BALANCE July 1, 2020	\$ 3,129.22
INCOME	
DONATIONS - INDIVIDUAL	\$ 106.88
MEMBERSHIP - Individuals	\$ 10.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 116.88
EXPENSES	
ADMINISTRATIVE - BC Societies Filing Fees 2018 & 2019	\$ 80.00
Internet Web Hosting Fees	\$ 108.89
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 188.89
INCOME OVER EXPENSES-	\$ 72.01
CLOSING BALANCE January 31, 2021	\$ 3,057.21

*project of World Interfaith Education Association, BC

The follow up report to 31 January 2021 showed a closing balance of \$3057.21 as of 31 January 2021.

Our finances were not greatly affected by the new circumstances of the pandemic, since VMS has traditionally operated largely through volunteer work and in kind donations of venues and other expenses.



"Discussing Racism: Leading Change from Multifaith Spaces"

We're also happy to announce that VMS has recently been approved for a grant in partnership with the national non-profit Centre for Civic Religious Literacy (CCRL) for the project "Discussing Racism: Leading Change from Multifaith Spaces".

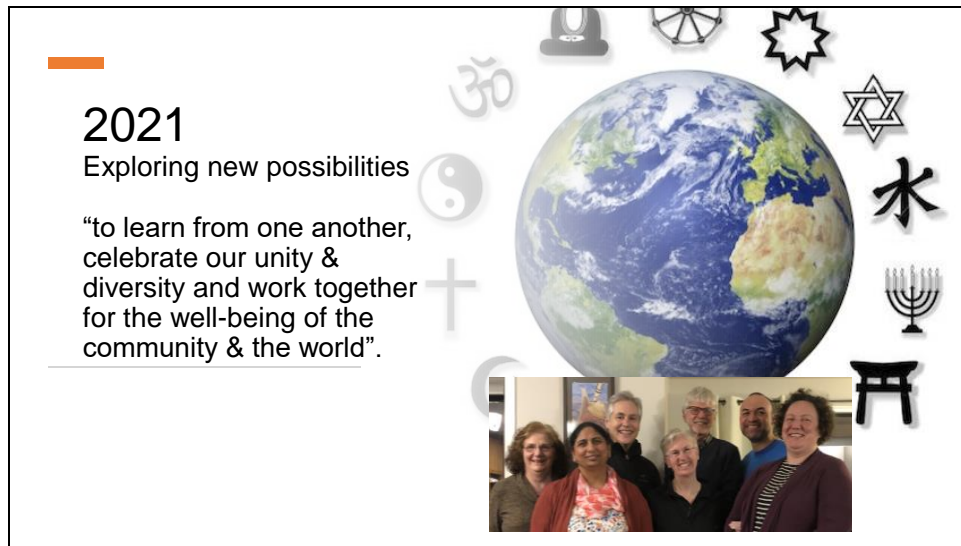
A diverse 11-member group of religious and secular community leaders have been tasked to develop, over the course of the year, an anti-racism tool appropriate for multicultural Canadian groups.

VMS is grateful to the Vancouver Foundation for its support with this project.



Thank you to those who have contributed to VMS over the year, such as Starfields Festival of Hope, the Unitarian community, Open Door Sanctuary, and the Community Partnership Network.

We're deeply grateful for your support.



Other activities this year will go ahead or be adapted depending on pandemic restrictions, but we're exploring new possibilities and avenues to pursue our mission *"to learn from one another, celebrate our unity & diversity and work together for the well-being of the community & the world"*.

VMS thanks all those who contributed their time and expertise over the course of the year -- our presenters, participants, supporters, and collaborators, particularly UVic Multifaith Centre and ICA's Community Partnership Network. We are enormously grateful to you!

Victoria Multifaith Society

<https://victoriamultifaith.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/VictoriaMultifaithSociety>

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