

Victoria Multifaith Society  
AGM 2025

Sharing Light

Keynote Speaker **Harold Rosen** presents  
*Why Learn About Other People's Religions?*

Sunday, 19 October  
2:30—4:30  
All welcome!

Christ Church Cathedral, Chapter Room  
Burdett Ave. Entrance (off parking lot)

## VMS Annual Report 2025



**2025**

**One Spirit**  
Share your faith in prayer, song, chant, hymn, drum, and dance!  
4:30 PM Sunday 21 September 2025  
Christ Church Cathedral, Burdett Entrance, 832 Burdett

**Listening Circles**  
Abrahamic Faiths Gather In Conversation  
Christ Church Cathedral, Burdett entrance, 832 Burdett  
May & June, 2025  
Organized by a committee of the Victoria Multifaith Society  
By invitation, host of 80 participants.

**Spiritual Perspectives:**  
Community Conversations on Hot Topics  
February Hot Topic: **How Will You Measure Your Life?**  
Sunday February 23rd 2-4pm  
Celebrating our diversity  
Working together for global well-being  
Hosted by THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

**Healing in a Polarized World**  
1-877-767-1965  
www.WorldReligionsConference.ca

**Honouring Peace**  
80th Anniversary of Hiroshima & Nagasaki  
6 PM, Wednesday 6 Aug. 2025  
At the Gorge Park Pavilion  
Tokyo Atom Bomb, Nagasaki Atomic Bombing, Greater Higher Chakra, Krishna's teachings in Bharat, Akasha & Prana's Lullaby & 6pm program starts 7:30 pm.

**The VMS Mission**

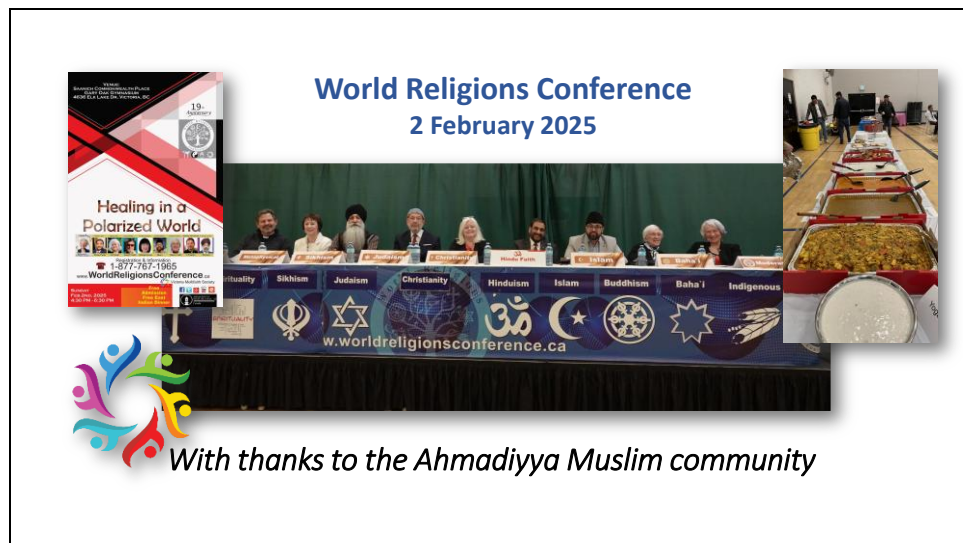
- to Learn from each other,
- to Celebrate our unity in diversity,
- and to Work together for the well-being for the community and the world.

## VMS Annual Report 2025

VMS had a range of activities this year, some that are held annually, others like the Listening Circles that are part of a series, some initiated by VMS and other that were initiated by other groups with our collaboration, such as the World Religions Conference and the Hiroshima-Nagasaki commemoration.

The Victoria Multifaith Society board has met monthly over the past year, overseeing events and ongoing projects inspired by our mission statement:  
to Learn from each other, to Celebrate our unity in diversity, and to Work together for the well-being for the community and the world.





## World Interfaith Harmony Week

World Religions Conference, 2 Feb. 2025



In honour of World Interfaith Harmony Week, VMS continues to support the World Religions Conference organized by the Ahmadiyya community, which is held annually at the Saanich Commonwealth Centre. On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 225 people attended in spite of less-than-optimal weather conditions!

Speakers from 8 faiths presented their spiritual teachings on the theme of *Healing in a Polarized World* followed by an enormous East Indian meal provided by the Ahmadiyya community.

The Conference for 2026 will take place at the same venue on Sunday Feb. 1 on the theme of Building Bridges between our communities. Guiding Question for Discussion: *How does your religion contribute to uniting humanity for the common good?* We hope that this theme will spark meaningful dialogue, inspire collective action, and highlight the shared values that can bridge divides across diverse communities.



## Faith Forum / Spiritually Speaking

**Times-Colonist column**

Over 2 dozen writers

In print & online



## Spiritually Speaking/Faith Forum



**We continue to be enormously proud of this ongoing project of VMS, the Faith Forum column and Spiritually Speaking blog appearing in the print and online editions of the Victoria Times-Colonist newspaper.**

**The idea of this column and blog is for writers of faith to share a spiritual perspective on world issues, or to share elements of their faith that may be misunderstood or unknown. Writers also enjoy sharing an event, celebration or religious observance.**

**We're very grateful to Anna Bowness-Park who initiated both the column and blog in 2009 and has continued to moderate it and guide its progress.**

**The project began back with eight rotating writers and has grown over the years. There are currently around 25 writers from a large range of faith traditions contributing once or twice a week. An article for the Times Colonist print edition is published every Saturday on the Religion page and then published on the blog the same day. It can be found by googling Spiritually Speaking Times Colonist.**



## Hiroshima-Nagasaki 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary

August 6, 2025, Gorge Park Pavilion

4 local organizations



## Honouring Peace: Hiroshima-Nagasaki Day



For the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, VMS has supported the annual event honouring Hiroshima-Nagasaki Day, held on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at the beautiful Japanese-style Gorge Park Pavilion. This year was the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary, commemorating those who died in the nuclear blasts on August 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

The entire ground floor of the pavilion was dedicated to displays and lantern-making from 6pm to 7pm, followed by an outdoor program of entertainment interspersed with short speeches. At sunset there was a ceremonial “launching of the lanterns” in the pavilion reflective pools.

The event was a cooperative effort between the Greater Victoria Peace School, The Raging Grannies, the Bahá'í community of Esquimalt, the Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society, and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War Canada.



## Spiritual Perspectives on Hot Topics



The VMS project *Spiritual Perspectives on Hot Topics* was created as an opportunity for people of various backgrounds and faiths to come together to discuss complex and/or challenging issues from a faith perspective. Various faith communities host and propose a topic of concern that would be of interest to the public.

The project began in 2024, with the first meeting held at the Victoria Truth Centre on the theme of Social Media and its impact on children and youth. Earlier this year a meeting was held at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints on the subject “How will you measure your life?” about priorities in work and life and the critical importance of family and relationships.

Every faith community has its own gifts and teachings that apply to the problems that currently plague the world, and this is one way to share them in an atmosphere of openness, tolerance and curiosity.



In response to Gaza:  
**Listening Circles**

**Four sessions**  
**May & June, 2025**  
Christ Church Cathedral  
**To listen, to learn**





## Listening Circles



**On four Tuesday evenings of May and June of this year, a group of 25 to 35 people gathered at Christ Church Cathedral for a series of bi-weekly Listening Circles. This project began in 2024, bringing together people from the Abrahamic faiths – Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Baha’i – who have direct ties to Israel/Palestine.**

**Presenters this year were from the Jewish and Muslim communities: Hanan Abousaleh, Dahlia Beck, Mustafa Abousaleh and Rabbi Harry Brechner. Each was given an evening to present their perspectives, followed by Q&A and mixed discussion groups of 6 to 8. Questions and conversations were sometimes difficult, but participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to the dialogue and to form personal bonds with one another.**

**VMS is grateful to Christ Church Cathedral for providing this incredible venue to bring our communities together; to Yasser Yousef of Fig Deli for his support by more than once catering dinners for the entire group; and to Jennie Keeran of the Christian community for providing refreshments.**



## One Spirit

21 September 2025

Victoria Hindu Parishad and Cultural Centre  
Multifaith Arts-based Devotional



## One Spirit: Celebrating Our Faiths Together



On September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025, VMS again collaborated with the Victoria Hindu Parishad and Cultural Centre to host the annual event *One Spirit: Celebrating Our Faiths Together*.

*One Spirit: Celebrating our Faiths Together* is an annual multifaith arts devotional co-sponsored by the Hindu Temple and the Victoria Multifaith Society, held this year on 21 September. An estimated 90 people attended this community event, with uplifting, presentations in multiple forms: chanting, singing, guitar, dance, and drumming.

The program started with a First Nations blessing by Patrick Leon, ending with a Sufi Dance of Universal Peace, and in between presentations from many communities: Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist and Baha'i. A vegetarian Indian meal was offered by the Urban Rebar restaurant and served by volunteers.



## VMS Youth Council



Naeem Tohidi (Bahá'í)  
Zaynab Majzoub (Muslim)  
Annie Konstantinova (Jewish)  
Tanisha Carter (Indigenous)  
Gurkeerat Kaur Makker (Sikh)

## Multifaith Youth Council



**Beginning in the Fall of 2024, the Multifaith Youth Council formed and developed a mandate and mission statement. It's now in the process of developing a program to implement them.**

**This wonderful group meets monthly at the Cook Street Activity Centre. It is currently composed of Naeem Tohidi of the Baha'i Faith, Zaynab (Jenny) Majzoub who is Sunni Muslim, Annie Konstantinova of the Jewish community, Tanisha Carter representing Indigenous Spirituality and, most recently, Gurkeerat Kaur Makker of the Sikh community.**

**We're very fortunate to have this enthusiastic group. We're looking forward to seeing them build bridges of understanding and openness between faith groups, between youth of faith and no faith, and increasing participation of youth in interfaith activities.**





## **The Interfaith Liaisons Network – ILN**

Monthly meetings at the Quaker Meeting House, Fern St.



Sessions for sharing knowledge & perspectives



## **ILN: Interfaith Liaisons Network**

**The meetings of the Interfaith Liaison Network (a project of the Victoria Multifaith Society) have covered topics such as Temples & Holy Places, the Role of Forgiveness, Prophecy, Faiths Changing in Response to the World, and the Role of Women in our various faiths, followed by discussion. The sharing circle format allows us to get to know each other as well as learn about different religions.**

**ILN meets at the Friends Meeting House on Fern Street on the third Wednesday of the month from 2:30 to 3:30, usually with a group of 6 to 10 people from traditions such as Jewish, Quaker, United Church, Catholic, Sunni Muslim, Latter Day Saints, Hindu and Baha'i. Newcomers from other denominations and traditions are welcome to join. The Quaker friends, and in particular Derek Hawksley, are warmly thanked for faithfully providing the venue and hospitality for each meeting.**



## The Giving Machine

Tillicum Mall Nov. 15 to Dec. 3



Our local charities are:

- Cool Aid Society
- New Horizons
- Saanich Neighbourhood Place
- Shelbourne Community Kitchen
- Soap for Hope

Our global charities are:

- CARE Canada
- UNICEF Canada



## The Giving Machine: Nov. 15 – Dec. 3



In addition to these projects, VMS is happy to support the Giving Machine project initiated by the Church of Christ of Latter-Day Saints by providing publicity through our networks. This new charitable project will be set up in Tillicum Mall from Nov 15 to Dec 3, 2025.

The Giving Machine is a vending machine-like dispenser that instead of selling candy or beverages dispenses items such as goats, chickens, warm clothing, meals, and hygiene items. Donors purchase items or services for people in need through local and global charities.

Donations are made via credit/debit cards or mobile payments like Apple Pay or Google Pay. 100% of donations go directly to the designated charities, with operational costs covered by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

VMS has welcomed this project as a form of collaboration that helps to fulfil our mandate to “work together for the benefit of the community and the world”.





**VMS**  
**Membership**

AGM registration table  
Or go to VMS website "Donate or Join"  
Tax receipts for donations \$20+

**Membership is free with any donation.**



**Donate**


[www.victoriamultifaith.com](http://www.victoriamultifaith.com)




## Charitable Donations

**VMS has recently acquired a Square, a small portable device that allows people to donate using their credit card or phone. For those wishing a receipt, donations can be easily made by e-transfer directly on our website, by clicking on the Donate / Join button. Printable receipts are given automatically through Canada Helps for every donation of \$20.00 or more. Membership continues to be free with any donation.**

**A milestone this year has been a change in our official CRA status from a "project" of the defunct World Inter-Faith Education Association to our own entity, the Victoria Multifaith Society, with its own charitable status. We'd like to thank all who have donated and renewed membership over this past year for your encouragement and support.**



## VMS Board of Directors



**Thank you**  
to our outgoing board member:


**Bhavin-singh Nihang**  
Sikh seat

With our thanks...




**According to VMS bylaws, Board terms are normally 4 years to allow fresh perspectives and new people to serve but can be shorter depending on circumstances.**

**This year we are losing one board member, Bhavin-singh Nihang. Bhavin joined the board in 2023 in the Sikh seat as our youngest board member. We're very grateful to him for having proposed the idea of forming a Multifaith Youth Council, which came into fruition during his tenure as board member.**



**Welcome!**

**Claire Grant**  
(Buddhist seat)



Welcome!



**When possible, Board members are asked to recommend members from their faith community to replace them when they leave, and at other times, the Board is made aware of candidates through other networks. This normally leads to an interview, after which a board decision can allow the person to serve immediately, followed by affirmation at the following AGM.**

**This year 1 new member has recently joined the board:**

**Claire Grant** joined the VMS board in July in the Buddhist seat, a seat that had been unoccupied for the past several years. Claire started practicing mindfulness meditation in the tradition of Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh in 2010 while living in France and has been practicing and facilitating as Bell Master with the Victoria Mindfulness Community since 2012.

## Current VMS Board



- **Fletcher Bennett** – Treasurer, Bahá'í seat
- **Rabbi Harry Brechner** – Jewish seat
- **John Carter** – Indigenous Spirituality
- **Jeannine Friesen** – Secretary, Christian seat
- **Claire Grant** – Buddhist seat
- **Rev. Lesia Kohut** – New Thought seat
- **Shrikant Shenwai** – Hindu seat
- **May Shihadeh** – Chair, Muslim seat
- **Sheila Flood** – Executive Director

## The Victoria Multifaith Society Board



**The Board of Directors for 2025 would like to warmly thank all who have given their time and energy to VMS this past year, and also to all our members who continue to support our efforts for interfaith understanding and cooperation.**

**We feel that this work is more important than ever and are delighted to continually receive wholehearted support, community encouragement and grassroots participation within the Greater Victoria area.**

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Other People's Religions?  
Harold Rosen



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## Sharing Light: a Multifaith Manual

Moving forward, we would like to encourage all VMS members and members of the public to investigate the new publication, **["Sharing Light: a Multifaith Resource Manual for BC Educators"](#)**. The guest speaker at this year's AGM, Harold Rosen, coordinated and edited this new online publication for the Multi-Faith Summit Council of BC, based in Vancouver.



Thank you to all