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Common Interests Bring Different Faiths Together

Submitted by Terry Clark

On Saturday May 21, area residents from Christian, Muslim, and Jewish congregations gathered together at the Lafayette Reservoir to enjoy relaxed fun, fellowship, each other's foods and rich conversation under the theme "Harmony in Diversity."

The occasion was the second annual Interfaith Picnic sponsored by Neighbor to Neighbor, an East Bay partnership among different faiths established six years ago to promote understanding, respect, appreciation for others' religions and deep inter-relationships among people of all cultures and faiths.

As the 100 or so picnickers arrived, each placed a flag pin in a very large World Map at the country of origin for their ancestry. Virtually all pins landed in Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, South America and elsewhere around the world. As N2N Coordinator Terry Clark explained later in the program, "The results underscore that (unless we are Native Americans) all of our families originated with immigrants from outside the United States. From these diverse origins, we come together to create the strengths of our country."

An early highlight was the outdoor Christian worship service, conducted by Pastor Lauren Gully of the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church. Her message deepened the theme of harmony in the diversity among people of different faiths and emphasized the importance of "our many Interfaith activities in the East Bay community connecting neighbor to neighbor."

Members from the San Ramon Valley Islamic Center and Temple Isaiah also spoke from their scriptures on this theme of the day. In addition, Pastor Gully carefully explained each element of the Christian worship for the benefit of the other faiths; and everyone joined in singing hymns together on common spiritual beliefs and the scriptural imperative to "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Before the group began their meal, all formed N2N's signature "Ring of Solidarity" in prayer and reflection on their motto of "People of All Faiths Standing Together" along with blessings from Jewish, Muslim and Christian representatives.

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