



# Comparative Religion Panel at L&C to Spotlight Faiths, Promote Understanding

September 20 2012 3:16 PM

GODFREY - The Diversity Council of Lewis and Clark Community College will present a comparative religion panel, entitled "Appreciating Our Neighbors," from 7:30-9:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 2, in the Ann Whitney Olin Theater inside the Hatheway Cultural Center on the college's Godfrey campus.

"We encourage everyone to come together peacefully and to listen respectfully to the speakers," Diversity Council President Ann Davidson said. "Their purpose is to inform us about their religions. This is not a debate. Learning about other faiths helps to increase acceptance and understanding of the spiritual paths of our neighbors."

Three guest speakers will discuss their belief systems as members of the Sikh, Mormon and Christian Science religions, followed by a question-and-answer session facilitated by Peter Hussey, L&C associate professor of music and Diversity Council member.

Representing the Mormon faith will be Reid Mortensen, a local member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mortensen was born and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah. He has served in several positions in church leadership, including teacher and Bishop of the local congregation in Godfrey. He also completed a two-year mission in the central United States.

Professionally, Reid is the chief compliance officer for Genesis Wealth Management Group, a Registered Investment Advisor firm. He serves as the president elect of the

Rotary Club of the Riverbend and as an ambassador for the Riverbend Growth Association.

"I am very excited to participate on this religion panel," Mortensen said. "The Mormon faith firmly believes in the God-given right that men and women have the privilege to worship Him as they choose without infringing on the rights of others. When approached with an open mind, with intent on learning more about the worldview of the faiths being presented, it will not only deepen our understanding of our commonalities and differences, but also a greater appreciation for dedicated and fervent believers of all faiths. We hope our presentation and dialogue will accommodate such an environment."

Maryl Walters will be speaking on the prayer-based system of healing called Christian Science. Walters, who is from St. Louis, Mo., is a professional practitioner and teacher of Christian Science who helps people find solutions to personal and world problems through the practical Christianity found in the Bible and Mary Baker Eddy's book, "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures."

As a member of the Christian Science Board of Lectureship, Walters presents talks and workshops throughout North America. She is chair of the cabinet of the St. Louis Interfaith Partnership and is active in other interfaith and dialogue groups. She is representing the Christian Science church as a member of the Interfaith Relations Commission of the National Council of Churches.

"Interfaith activities like this panel discussion are so essential in removing ignorance and fear in an age of greater diversity than ever before," Walters said. "We get to know each other as individuals, we get to know each other's beliefs, and, then in trust, we serve together in ways that help and heal our communities. I love the motto of St. Louis Interfaith Partnership: 'As communities of faith, we agree to differ, we promise to love, and we unite to serve.'"

Guest speaker Harjot Singh Padda, one of the first Sikhs ever born in St. Louis, will be speaking about the Sikh religion. Padda was raised in the Sikh religion and culture by his parents who were two of the founding members of the local Sikh temple, now known as the Sikh Study Circle of St. Louis.

Padda has been a practicing attorney for 12 years and has traveled to India on numerous occasions for family visits and pilgrimages to various religiously significant Sikh temples and sites. He plans on bringing a unique perspective to the panel, since he was raised in a Western culture while still subscribing to his Sikh culture and beliefs.

"I am looking forward to the opportunity to educate those unfamiliar with my religion and to promote a sense of cooperation, community and most importantly, understanding," Padda said.

For more information on this panel discussion, contact the college's public relations department at (618) 468-3220.

This Lewis and Clark event is presented by the Mannie Jackson Endowment and Center for the Humanities and is a Lewis and Clark Arts and Humanities Project, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information visit [www.lc.edu](http://www.lc.edu) and search the keyword diversity.