



INTERFAITH COMMUNITIES FOR DIALOGUE (ICD)

FAITH PERSPECTIVES

Creation Stories and Their Present-Day Implications

The Interfaith Communities for Dialogue (ICD) has conducted a variety of programs under the theme of Faith Perspectives, exploring the commonalities and differences among faiths with reference to some basic concepts that religions address. A virtual dialogue was held on October 24, 2021, on [Creation Stories and Their Present-Day Implications](#). Members of six local faith communities offered their personal insights on this topic. Some highlights are given below.

Cynthia McDaniel described the **Bahá'í's** view of creation as one of continuous, ongoing activity. The participants in the process of creation are God, the initiating Agent; the Manifestations of God, the Activating Agent; and humanity, the recipient of Activation and Respondent. Humanity's role is to advance the world toward a more peaceful and unified civilization. Bahá'í's believe that the purpose of religion is to educate humanity about God in accordance with the evolving capacity of humankind to understand God and God's plan. In that view, humankind is presently seen as post-adolescent, embarking on maturity. The struggle today is to recognize the oneness of humanity, fostering unity and social transformation through good deeds and prayer.

Eric Rothberg articulated five concepts that are key to the **Jewish** perspective. For purposes of this discussion, he focused mainly on two of these: that we are made in God's image and that we are partners with God in ongoing creation and repair of the world (tikkun olam). In the six days of God's work, man was created last. Scripture indicates that God's work was finished at this point but it was left to humanity to continue the work. Having been created in the image of God means having the potential to imitate God's ethical qualities and repairing the world is about how we interact with others. This belief provides the basis for civil discourse.

Rev. Sarah Scherschligt discussed the **Christian** scripture which includes both the Old Testament (the Jewish bible) and the New Testament which tells the story of Jesus. She noted that there are actually two creation stories in the book of Genesis. In the first, as previously described, man is created last. In the second, humanity is created first and is then placed in the Garden of Eden with responsibility for tending the garden and the animals. Some Christians would say scripture implies that the earth will pass away and is therefore unimportant. The Pastor, however, suggested that scripture shows that the creation is really important to God when it states "on earth as it is in heaven".

Chandra Mohan began with the greeting, Namaste, meaning "I bow to the divinity in you". He described the core beliefs of **Hindus** as: there is one omnipresent consciousness which may be worshipped in many ways; time is circular, not linear; and all lives are born divine and devoid of

sin. Hindus believe in reincarnation and karma. Creation is unknowable and does not have one unified origin as the world is repeatedly destroyed and renewed.

Imam Farhan Siddiqi explained that **Islam** shares the basic creation story with Judaism and Christianity. From the Muslim perspective, there are two stories – the creation of the universe and all that is around us, and the creation of Adam and Eve. God calls Adam his successor which causes jealousy among the angels but Adam is superior to them because of his greater knowledge. The story provides insight on how to deal with jealousy, recognizing and appreciating the abilities of ourselves and others while striving against pride.

Randhir Singh Chhatwal explained that **Sikhism** is just over 550 years old and its focus is on how to live a good life. To talk about creation, he said, one must talk about the Creator of whom there is only one regardless of what name we call Him. The entire universe is His creation and only God can know how many universes he created and why. A real disciple of God is one who takes responsibility for protecting the environment. To live in a happy and peaceful world requires that we find peace within ourselves by subduing desire and greed.