

LIPC NEWSLETTER

London Interfaith Peace Camp Initiatives



From the Beginning...

It's hard to believe that London Interfaith Peace Camp is anticipating its ten-year anniversary this summer! But, the calendar and the height of my children do not lie. Ten years ago my children were one and three, and now my eldest is six feet tall and they are both eating me out of house and home. Maija Willson asked me to reflect on how the Peace Camp began in London.



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FROM THE BEGINNING...

LIPC - A PLACE OF HOPE: TESTIMONIES OF PEACE

SUMMER CAMP 2022

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It began as a dream. Dave Janzen, a member at Valleyview Mennonite Church, my congregation at the time, was inspired by the original Interfaith Peace Camp formed out of the Peacebuilding Institute at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisburg VA. He planted the seed. My husband met Rabbi Debra from Temple Israel at a clergy event and she caught the spark. Rabbi Debra knew Sister Shahin Pardhan from the Interfaith Tree planting event. We each had gifts and networks: Rabbi Debra had experience from Jewish summer camps and a lot of connections, Shahin has a very organized spirit and a passion for interfaith work, and I, perhaps, had a lot of ideas and a willingness to see them come to fruition. We were all mothers who wanted a better world for all our children, and we formed the original core planning team.

The dream of London Interfaith Peace Camp at its core is simple, based on friendship. The premise is that people who are friends with each other do not want to hurt each other. And who does friendship better than children? The first year was exhilarating - friendships were happening, families were engaged and the dream was coming alive.

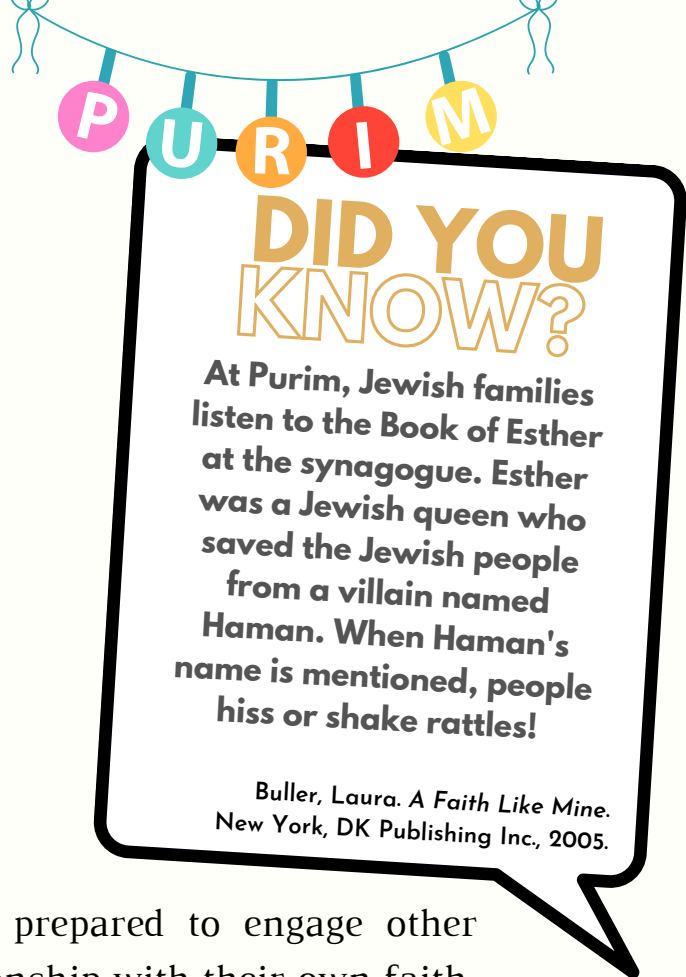


That fall of 2012 Christian writer Brian McLaren published a book - Why did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha and Mohammed Cross The Road? Far from being a joke, the premise is the idea that if the leaders of our world's religions met each other in person, they would greet each other not with violence but with deep joy and curiosity, akin to the friendship of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama. I experienced the joy of interfaith friendship through the Peace Camp.

Answering a concern that children weren't prepared to engage other faiths when they were still developing a relationship with their own faith, our experience at Peace Camp was that children and leaders alike experienced instead, a deepening of their own faith as they encountered other faith groups. The experience allowed our Muslim, Christian, and Jewish members to be ambassadors for their own community and draw deeper on their own faith.

Peace Camp has been a highlight of my adult life, and I am beyond grateful to acknowledge and celebrate this significant ten-year milestone. Peace, Salaam, Shalom!

- Pastor Charleen Jongejan Harder



Six-Word Memoirs

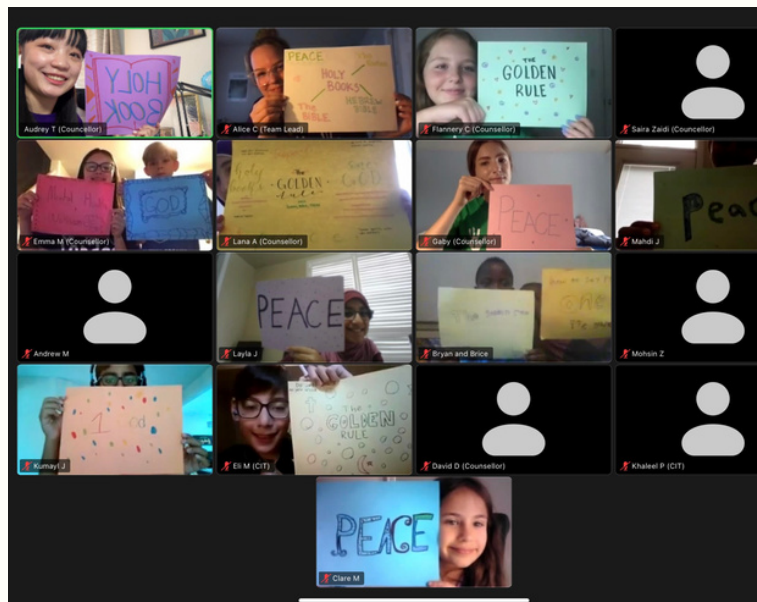


"Six-Word Memoirs is a project founded by the U.S.-based online storytelling magazine Smith Magazine.

Like that publication, Six-Word Memoirs seek to provide a platform for storytelling in all its forms." During virtual camp 2021, we each offered 6 words of Peace for our LIPC morning Prayer. Throughout this newsletter, you will read some examples from both our campers and counsellors. Please email us if you would like to contribute and add your six words of peace.

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Community, back together at last, reunion - Nevia



As a proud 1993 King's University College alumni and a professional speaker and leadership trainer since my graduation, I was disappointed that it took me till 2017 to get involved in the camp! That first summer my youngest daughter, age 9, participated as a camper while my eldest, age 12, was a junior counsellor. Bringing my 30 years of experience as a school assembly speaker, I was the high-energy welcome keynote to the camp on the Monday morning. In my message, I challenge the campers and counsellors to bring kindness, interest, empathy, and friendship to this special week. I mix in comedy and hilarious spirit activities to get the participants laughing and meeting each other. This is a tradition I continue into 2022, with the last two years being a virtual welcome!

LIPC - A Place of Hope: Testimonies of Peace

It was February of 2017...

My church, Chalmers Presbyterian here in London, was creating large Valentines Cards for delivery to the Mosques and Jewish temples in our city. We were responding to a calling by our leadership that our sisters and brothers in these faiths needed to know that we loved and appreciated them. I was commissioned by our church to hand deliver these large cards. At one of the mosques and one of the temples the worship leaders suggested I reach out to King's University College and participate in that summer's Peace Camp with my children. Thus began my six-summer blessing of being a part of the Interfaith Peace Camp!



DID YOU KNOW?

Eid al-Fitr is a holiday celebrated in Islam. The Festival of Eid marks the end of the month-long dawn-to-sunset fasting period. Since a new moon is the start of a new month, Muslims wait for a new moon to signal that Ramadan has ended, and that is when the Eid celebration begins!

Buller, Laura. *A Faith Like Mine*.
New York, DK Publishing Inc., 2005



On the Friday, I ask all participants to bring their favourite joke and/or camp song and/or energizer activity to share at an “indoor campfire”. For centuries, our cultures and religions have shared the stories of our faith around campfires. Now, we conclude the Peace Camp with the campers and counsellors being given the opportunity to share “around the fire” and lead an activity. It’s a perfect way to conclude our week together: the participants know that their voices, their faith, their character is valued and needs to be shared!

Peace Camp 2022 – 10 years of Faith, Fun, and meeting new Friends! I am blessed to be a part of this interfaith family!

- Andy Thibodeau. *IMPACT Presentations*. www.andypresentations.com



Peace no doubt everyone is happy.- Ali Juma

I was just 7 years old when London Interfaith Peace Camp began. At the time, I didn’t fully understand its significance. As a seven year old, I simply saw it as a chance to meet new people and play with Perler beads. It was only as I grew older and became more aware of current events that I came to recognize the deeper importance of LIPC. Since then, I have learned that the world is more complicated than it seemed to seven-year old me, and getting along with others isn’t always easy.

Nevertheless, London Interfaith Peace Camp has taught me to think critically and look at things from different points of view. The same skills I practiced at camp help me to act respectfully and conscientiously in the real world. At LIPC, I learned that what we have in common is greater than what sets us apart. This applies not only to religion, but to everything that seems to divide us.

-Yuki MacDougall



"From being a camper to a camp counselor, it is a blessing to be a part of our ten-year journey with London Interfaith Peace Camp (LIPC). Around a decade ago, I recall how excited I was to put on a yellow LIPC shirt. I enjoyed learning about different Abrahamic faiths through friendly conversations, oral presentations by faith representatives and visiting various places of worship including a synagogue and a mosque for the first time. It was eye-opening to reflect on the religious beliefs and values of my Jewish and Muslim friends. During the visits to the holy places of worship, I especially enjoyed eating the tasty Samosas from the mosque and the delicious Latkes from the synagogue. I was also happy that Valleyview Mennonite church, where Pastor Charleen Jongejan Harder and I attended, hosted LIPC campers during a religious site visit. One key takeaway from LIPC included learning to build friendships with people from different backgrounds in my school and the local community."

- Natalie Jonnalagadda.



"Transitioning from an LIPC camper to a counsellor was a big change, as we now participated in the behind-the-scenes aspects of delivering the fun, educational, and peace-building activities of LIPC.

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**All in God's love and protection -
Marie**

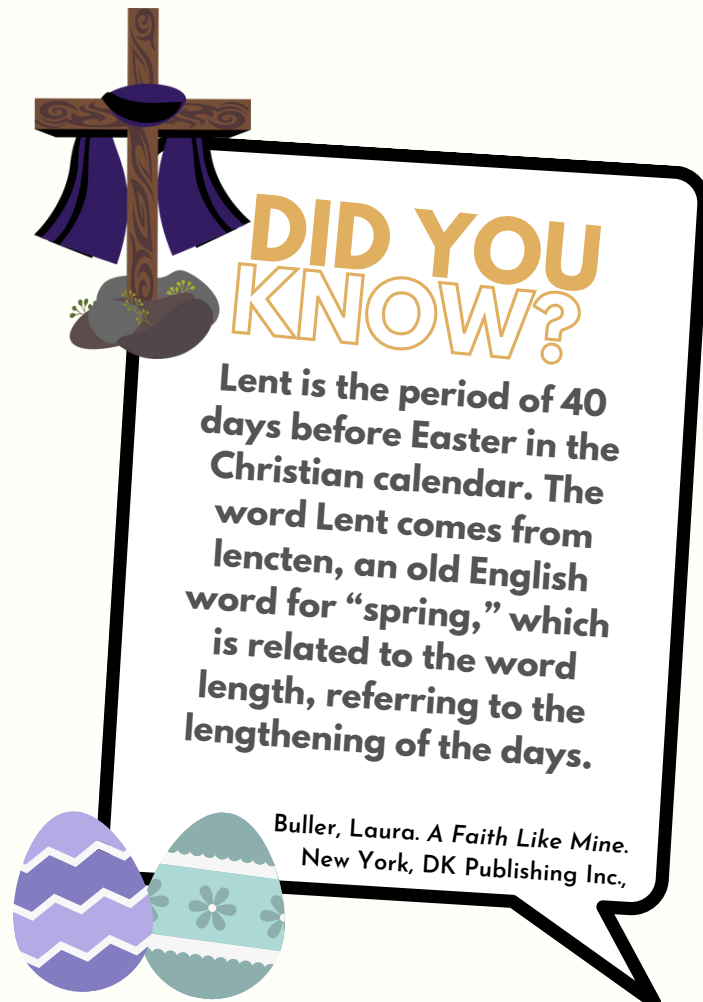


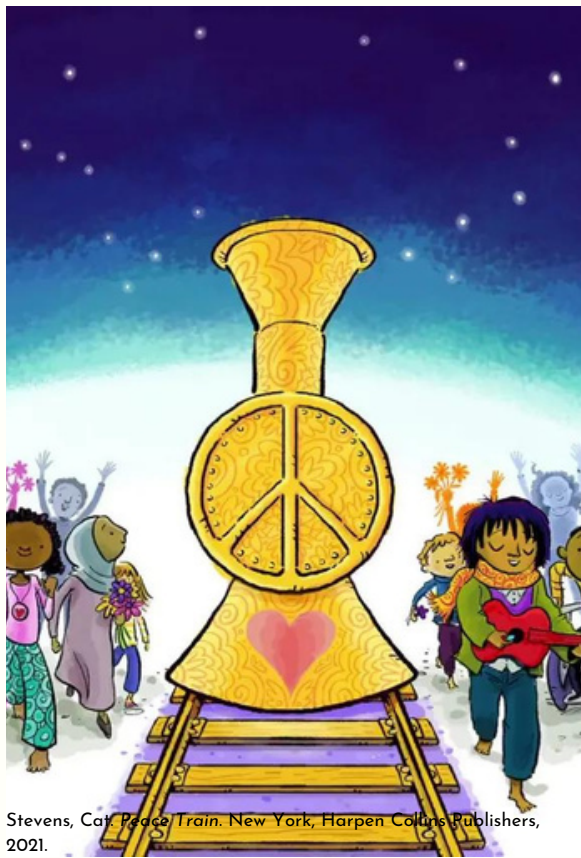
Peace is freedom to be ourselves - Kauser

LIPC's mission reminds us of the Bible verse Micah 6:8: "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." This verse resonates with LIPC; LIPC encourages us to "treat others as they wish to be treated" and seek justice for all. Learning about other faiths and building bridges of peace motivates us to be more compassionate and advocate against religious or racial discrimination. We recognize that differences and misunderstandings may arise in a pluralistic society, however, LIPC reminds us to coexist peacefully, promote inclusivity, and engage in mutually respectful dialogue."

- Natalie and Melanie Jonnalagadda.

... In 2021, we had the privilege of serving as LIPC counsellors. Although the camp was virtual that year, we still cherished the memories. We fondly recall organising events that would help campers learn ways to take care of their well-being. It was great collaborating with fellow counsellors and CITs to host a game of "Well-Being Bingo", produce a video on the Abrahamic faith's perspective on mental health, and organise a game of Jeopardy to help campers remember everything they learned during camp. Being a camp counsellor helped us develop collaboration, leadership, and communication skills. We feel confident that we can create welcoming and friendly environments for diverse members of our society, no matter where we end up in life.





Stevens, Cat. *Peace Train*. New York, Harper Collins Publishers, 2021.

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Equality, acceptance, forgiveness, love, charity, and compassion.

- Flannery

"London Interfaith Peace Camp is the biggest event I look forward to every summer. I was once a young, excited camper. Soon, I was trained by my own counsellors to help inform the next generation of children about the importance of religion, and how to establish a healthy relationship between the three Abrahamic faiths.

Along the way, I had an incredibly supportive team that was eager to offer me assistance in camp, answer any questions, or simply contribute to a friendly conversation. Finally, LIPC gave me a remarkable learning opportunity that allowed me to gain more than my required volunteering hours in high school. Thank you Maija for working your hardest to give everyone the best experience possible at camp!"

- Ali Mohammad Ali.

Summer Camp 2022

glide on the peace Train.
Come on the PEACE TRAIN!

Hop on the Peace Train this summer and come celebrate TEN YEARS of LIPC. Take a look at our poster below for more details! We look forward to seeing you there!



Stevens, Cat. *Peace Train*. New York, Harper Collins Publishers, 2021.

Special Thanks To...

University students Mary Cooke and Mohammad Alakrad for making each of our newsletters come alive. Many blessings as you graduate this year! We would also like to thank our current editor, university student volunteer, Camille Gilbert!

LONDON INTERFAITH PEACE CAMP

Celebrating 10 years

BACK IN PERSON THIS SUMMER
AUGUST 15-19 2022



Adventures of LIPC continue...

- Register online using the link below
- Available for Grades 1-8
- Campers will enjoy outdoor activities, crafts and more!
- Visits to a Mosque, Synagogue and Church

- NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS for Camp Counsellor volunteers
- Leadership Training for Camp Counsellors : Monday, July 25 to Friday, July 29, 2022.



A collaborative community project that encourages understanding and cooperation among Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faith groups.

