

February 3, 2016

Dear friends in Christ,

On Monday night, a group of faith leaders from Islam, Judaism, and three branches of Christianity (Roman Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical) met for dialogue at UWMC. About 125 people gathered with them, listening, and asking questions. It was an amazing evening! The leaders were asked questions about science and faith, responses to people and groups who misuse or hijack their sacred texts, the role of women, how the sacred texts came to be, as well as others.

I had the privilege of being part of helping plan the evening and worked in the background during the dialogue. At the conclusion, as each panel member reflected on what they had learned, Mother Jane Johnson, from Intercession in Stevens Point, offered that she believed God was present in the dialogue. Afterwards, and into Tuesday, I heard many comments that reflected almost surprise at the graceful and respectful way people spoke to each other and answered the questions.

I have to say I was not surprised. I would have been surprised if it had been anything else. We created a place and space where we expected thoughtful and respectful dialogue. We assumed we were capable of being together and discussing difficult subjects while honoring each other, both the person and the tradition.

There is one more Monday evening for this dialogue, February 8 from 5-7. We will ask how our sacred texts help shape our relationships with people of different faith traditions. You are invited to come and be surprised, even as you are invited to wrestle with everyone else some difficult questions.

Most of all, I would ask you to consider what your expectations and assumptions are when people of different beliefs, traditions, or practices come together? We may not be able to expect people will change, but can we not expect people to be able to share their lives, can we not assume we can live together in commonality?

Peace,
Fr David