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Quarterly Conversations:

World Holidays

Cultures, Traditions, and Acceptance

Our Panelists:

Reverend Kevin L. Tindal He/Him The Reverend Kevin Tisdol is a retired senior executive from MTA New York City Transit and is an ordained minister who serves as the Minister of Education for Fort Lauderdale Florida's Sunshine Cathedral, a progressive global Fellowship that serves the LGBTQ+ community and its allies.

Amy Exum MS, LMHC, CMIP She/Her is a licensed mental health counselor and certified mindfulness-informed professional at Baptist Health. She is also an American Diabetes Association mental health provider. Ms. Exum has worked in both inpatient and outpatient facilities, and has treated children, adults, families and couples. Ms. Exum appears on South Florida's PBS Health Channel and hosts educational programs on social media platforms.

Dimitris Xygalatas He/His is an anthropologist and cognitive scientist at the University of Connecticut. He studies some of the things that make us human, focusing on religion and ritual, sports, cooperation, and the interaction between cognition and culture. At UConn, he is the director of the Experimental Anthropology Lab

Per-Olof Lööf He/Him has served as Honorary Consul of Sweden for Florida, since he received his exequatur from the US State Department on January 18th, 2006. Mr. Lööf is the Chairman and CEO of Loof Holdings LP, an investment and consulting business as well as The Per-Olof Lööf Family Foundation, a charitable organization focusing on children, education, and the arts.

Rabbi Jonathan Fisch He/Him was drawn to Temple Judea's warm and welcoming atmosphere since first stepping foot inside the synagogue February 2014 when interviewing. Since then he is constantly inspired and driven by the innovative programming and community involvement. Rabbi Fisch has helped create new programs within and outside the synagogue walls

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Tips for introducing and teaching children about world holidays, traditions and acceptance in schools, programming, and at home.

HELP CHILDREN ASK QUESTIONS

When children point or stare instead, we can encourage them to have a conversation with the person. We can guide them in learning more about the ritual or culture by talking with the people of that culture and/or who practice that ritual. The following books were cited by our panelists in reference to the advice of encouraging curiosity in a kind way.

Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You– Justice Sonia Sotomayor

What Happened to You? - James Catchpole

CREATE, PERFORM, AND LEARN ABOUT RITUALS

Children love rituals. They often mimic the rituals of the adults in their lives. Have them participate in rituals, and create new ones within your family, class, or organization. It brings people together despite differences- even age.

Rituals are vast, but they satisfy the same human need. Sharing meals has shown to have positive developmental impacts on children. Performing rituals creates community. To get closer to a community, take part in their rituals when invited or after asking for guidance. Often starting with a conversation is the best first step. Don't start with the action, start with the person.

We can participate in rituals that celebrate more generic things like seasonal change. We can also acknowledge the similarities instead of the differences of the rituals that are practiced during the winter season.

Ex. Candle Rolling activity- many winter holidays and rituals have roots in the winter solstice and use candles in their rituals as a symbolic and literal way of bringing light to darkness.

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HAVE THE OPTION, GIVE A CHOICE

Just by giving children the option to learn about new and different holidays we are empowering them. If only one choice is given, then there is no opportunity for learning about or celebrating diversity. We're also saying something about the importance of other traditions and rituals when we only offer one choice. The less visible traditions are not less important. Children feel empowered when given a choice and when they make choices, we need to make sure we're listening to them.

DIVERSIFYING THE BOOKSHELVES

We try to empower children by saying "Be you!" "Be proud of who you are!" but many times we don't give them the tools for how to do that. One tool we can use is picture books. Introducing children to diverse peoples, customs, and rituals can be done through picture books. Here is a resource from the Anti-Defamation League on how to choose and assess children's books with an anti-biased lens:

https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/assessing-childrens-literature

We now know how important representation is for children. Seeing themselves represented in picture books helps affirm and increase their self-esteem, and learning about diverse people and practices helps expand their worldview.

EXAMINE YOUR OWN BIAS AND PRECONCEPTIONS

Adults need to be open to new ideas, open to leaving their comfort zones and acknowledging that other celebrations are as important as theirs. Are we skewing our programming or lessons with our own bias?

Most adults can remember moments of feeling left out, or moments of "otherness" from their childhood. Children have those feelings as well and can connect with them. We need to build programs and lessons with the intention of reducing those feelings for children.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Reach out to the community who practices the ritual or tradition you are wanting to share or celebrate. Give them the time and the platform to share their culture. Many are willing to especially if it involves teaching children. Make sure it's age appropriate and that it makes sense with your programming or lesson. Make sure they can answer tough questions. Have a conversation with them in order to vet them and/or have them present to you before the program or lesson.

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