

2023 IAW/ThanksGVIN Fruita Proclamation acceptance (11/7/23)

crafted by Carlene Goldthwaite

On behalf of the Grand Valley Interfaith Network, we are honored to accept the City of Fruita's Proclamation supporting Interfaith Awareness Week here in the Grand Valley. I'm Carlene Goldthwaite, past Vice President, joined by webmaster and past President Reverend Dr. Carla Ryan. We'd like to first take a moment and acknowledge our collective privilege of being able to live, work, and play in this beautiful place -- the ancestral lands of the Weeminuche Ute people who were forcibly removed from their home. Acknowledging this challenging history is a critical step to addressing past harms and moving forward in community.

In much the same spirit, Interfaith Awareness Week reminds us that religious history, while full of benevolence and goodness, is also fraught with conflict and conquest. With this Proclamation, the City of Fruita affirms its commitment to honoring freedom of religion or belief -- and to welcoming people of all -- and no -- faith practices.

We have all heard stories, seen images, or perhaps been personally impacted by religious-based intimidation or violence. As a practitioner of Christianity -- and here I'm speaking for myself personally, not for GVIN -- I cannot pretend away the dehumanizing aspects of my religion's history. What I can do is understand that people like me have a special responsibility to ensure other faiths have equitable access in the public square. It's so easy to forget how entrenched some aspects of my religion are. For example -- in our culture, we typically think of a week as being Sunday -- Saturday. The concept of Sunday as the first day of the week is rooted in early Christian practice; not all religions or cultures define a week the same way. In GVIN's ongoing work to be inclusive of many traditions, we elected to observe Interfaith Awareness Week from Wednesday, November 15 -- through Tuesday, November 21.

Although religious conflict is what makes the news, organizations like GVIN remind us that many religions share similar values or beliefs. This year, we elected to focus on a couple of those shared values -- loving and learning. One of our original Interfaith Awareness Week traditions springs out of love; we encourage people to donate blood during Interfaith Awareness Week and

throughout the year. How amazing is it that one small act like that can save the life of a person you'll never know?

We'll wrap up IAW with a focus on the learning – through the annual interfaith gathering we call ThanksGVIN. It will be hosted by the Episcopal Church of the Nativity on the Redlands and livestreamed on their You Tube channel on Tuesday, November 21. More information will be available on GVIN's website.

I'd like to close with something I recently came across that was attributed to Arthur C. Clarke, best known by most of us as the author of the novel *2001 A Space Odyssey*

In my life, I have found two things of priceless worth – learning and loving. Nothing else – not fame, not power, not achievement for its own sake – can possibly have the same lasting value. For when your life is over, if you can say 'I have learned' and 'I have loved,' you will also be able to say "I have been happy."

Thank you for continuing to support Interfaith Awareness Week and for your stated commitment to renewing your support every year.