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CITIZENS FOR PEACE
Minutes
May 8, 2012

Our meeting opened at 7:10 pm with a welcome by President, Colleen Mills. She introduced Inner Peace Director, Sally Peck, who led us in a peace meditation.

Special Presentation:

Our Guest Speaker this evening is writer, author, activist and speaker and friend, Robert Weir, who was here to share his observations from his recent trip to India, especially on the religious diversity there. He was dressed, very comfortably, in a kurta, which is quite common for the men in India. He was in India between Aug 2011 and Jan 2012. He spent a large part of the time with the Co-founder of Empower the Children, in Kolkata, India. For the balance of the time, instead of staying primarily in hotels, Robert stayed primarily in people's homes, so he could be immersed in the culture. His presentation was accompanied by a slideshow of his travels.

First, he shared some statistics about India such as the fact that India has the second largest population in the world, with China leading and the United States, third. He also mentioned the religious make-up of the country to be: 80%-Hindu; 13%-Muslim; 5%-Sikh, Buddhist & Jain; and 2%-Christian.

Robert had the distinct pleasure of visiting the Dalai Lama's temple. He said his Holiness is over 70 years old, and if you ever get the chance to see him, please do! He readily imparts his message of compassion for all living things. The Buddhist Monks at the temple serve rice and dal (lentil soup) to thousands of people, of all faiths. Also, along his travels, Robert stopped for food on a holy day – the Lord of Saturday, and those celebrating the day were serving food to people of all faiths.

He also attended a Hindu festival in which the streets were decorated with thousands of altars within temporary temples (Pandals) – each with a theme. He said Pandal hopping was the thing to do! The best Pandal had a metaphysical theme. And the temporary nature of the festival underscored the impermanence in our lives.

He also observed an Islam festival, lasting three days, which included the slaughtering of animals as neatly as possible and with great reverence, with a third of the meat going to the family, a third going to neighbors and a third going to the poor. He observed a Sikh celebration (Sikh men do not cut their hair and wear turbans) which included honoring warriors with martial arts and distributing food equally to the rich and poor.

Robert noted that wherever he traveled, everybody got along, regardless of religion. He had the pleasure of teaching English to four Tibetan Monks during his last week there. They were filled with questions and he helped them understand the difference between formal English and everyday English. They were so thankful for his teachings that they presented him with a Blessing Shawl as a thank you. Robert displayed the shawl and said he will treasure it, always.

Colleen thanked Robert for his fascinating presentation, and he was thanked by all in attendance. A Q&A session followed. Also, Colleen thanked Kevin Szawala for taping this presentation.

Business Meeting:

- The Treasurer's report was given and approved as presented.
- Please sign-up for the Arlington Michigan display, if you're in town Memorial Day.
- New members were introduced and given folders filled with CFP info.
- We are participating in the Kroger Plus card program, with proceeds going to the Education Fund.
- Mary Hanna, Director of the Michigan Peace Team will be speaking at our June meeting.

Colleen thanked all in attendance for joining us, and looked forward to seeing our members during the many summer activities. With no further business to conduct, the meeting closed at 9:10 pm.