

**“God’s Law and Its Honest Reclamation”**  
**Sermon by Rev. Tom Warren**  
**Peace United Church of Christ**  
**February 16, 2014**

About four or five, perhaps six, weeks ago, all of you who are members of this church received a packet of information announcing the beginning of the “Mel and Pat Palmer Lecture Series”. The announcement was about the initiation of this lecture series, and I’m going to talk about the thinking behind the initiation of that lecture series, and the packet of information was an announcement of the first lecture and who would be coming for that lecture series.

The video, which we are going to watch in a second is a 10-minute video, is to introduce you to those gentlemen who will be here in our sanctuary, what their ministry is, and just to get a sense of who these guys are and what they are all about.

I want to begin by saying that there are three main reasons for the initiation of the “Mel and Pat Palmer Lecture Series”. The first main reason is specifically to celebrate the ministry of over 33 years of Mel and Pat Palmer which was such a critical component of the recent history of this church, to celebrate that and to think about how do we celebrate their 33 years of ministry in such a way that it helps catapult the church into the future. We certainly have a wonderful memorial room and the memorial stone out here in the driveway and so forth, which are wonderful gifts and very important remembrances of Mel, but how can we use the legacy in a way that strengthens our ministry going forward?

The idea of a lecture series (because Mel and Pat were so important to this church and, in fact, continue to be, and Mel was a highly-educated individual and was always learning throughout his life) might do honor to their legacy and move our church’s ministry into the future, so that is number one.

Number two reason is that the lecture series is part of our Christian religious and education ministry, so our lectures as they go forward into the future (and we don’t know what they all are, as we only have one scheduled so far) will be a part of our public ministry of religious education. We do religious education, Christian education within our congregation all the time like we did this morning, but this lecture series will be part of a public-focused religious education program, so it will not only benefit us as we participate in these lecture series, but also benefit the public in their religious understanding and in their faith journeys.

The third reason is that the lecture series is also part of our public evangelism program. In other words, it is part of our invitation to the community to come to Peace Church and remain with us, see our church, learn about us, and hopefully get excited to be a part of us. So those are three of the primary thinking points about a lecture series and what that can be, hopefully, in the future.

Lecture series are not inexpensive. If we get high-quality lectures throughout the coming years, that always costs money, but I want to tell you that the response so far has been overwhelming. The generosity of this congregation has been fantastic. We hope others will continue to give, but so far the response has been so good, and I want to thank everyone for that reality. It’s very encouraging.

What we’re going to be watching here is directly from the Interfaith Amigos website. It is a 10-minute YouTube video and is just a tiny chunk of their presentation of what they do throughout the world and throughout the country. This clip is from the University of Denver a couple of years ago.

The Three Amigos are: Reverend “Mack” MacKenzie, Don MacKenzie, who is a UCC Pastor, and I know Dr. MacKenzie because his mother was a member of the church that we served in Tennessee, so I got to know

him intimately. His mother is still alive. She's 102 years old. Dr. MacKenzie just retired from a 17-year ministry in Seattle and the University Congregational Church in Seattle.

The second piece of the Interfaith Amigos is Rabbi Ted Falcon, who is a Jewish (obviously) Rabbi, very, very involved in Interfaith dialogue, interfaith education, also Jewish prayer and all kinds of interesting things, but Ted will be with us.

The third part of the Interfaith Amigos is Imam Jamal Rahman, who is basically an Imam, a teacher, Rabbi and pastor of the Islamic tradition.

These three guys, who all live in Seattle, at the point where they come together, are a positive, positive response in the wake of "9/11". When "9/11" happened, they got together, not knowing each other very well (and they mention that in the video), and they said that the world is crying out for interfaith understanding, and the horror of "9/11" was perpetrated by people who have gravely misunderstood and violated the essence of Islam. That type of violation, as these three guys say, happens in all faith traditions, has happened throughout history, and now, as we become a global culture and really become a global world now, interfaith dialogue, interfaith understanding is critical to the future, so that is what this ministry is about, Interfaith Amigos. That's their whole passion. They have published two books. We will have those books for sale at our lecture series. They are funny. They are filled with wisdom, and here is the video to introduce you to them, and we trust this technology will work.

(Video presentation begins from "The Three Interfaith Amigos" video on You Tube)

So, that's was an introduction to The Three Interfaith Amigos and, as you know, when they are here, they will be giving three lectures on Saturday March 8, one in the morning and one in the evening, and they will be giving a 3-part sermon that following Sunday. They are just like that. They are funny. They are filled with wisdom. They are challenging, and part of their presentation always leaves lots of time for questions and dialogue, so it is very stimulating. That will be one lecture series.

In the future, we will have very different lecture series with very different topics, but one of the important pieces of The Interfaith Amigos is, like I said before, we are really trying to do our faith, as Christians, in an entirely new world. We live in a world that is completely different from even 20 years ago. In fact, in the United States today, as many of you know, we now live in the most religiously diverse country in the entire world. We need, as an act of faith, to engage with that reality, and it is a very challenging reality because it calls for us to not only understand more deeply other faith traditions, but to understand our own faith tradition more deeply also because we're going to be in dialogue with all kinds of faith versions as the future goes forward. Think of our children and the world they will inherit and the faith diversity with which they will have to engage. It will be quite something as it goes forward.

So, the lecture series I see as very important as one piece of our church ministry as we go forward into the future, and it is, hopefully, going to be a very important part of our witness in the community, of our educational industry, of our invitational industry, to invite people into our wonderful church for learning and dialogue back and forth.

So, I will simply add that I am encouraging all of you to not miss this opportunity because these Interfaith Amigos have really done some intense work and have published two books, and in March they will be featured on the History Channel, right at the same time we are doing our program, so the timing couldn't be better. This will be, through our advertising, through getting the word out into the community, a wonderful way to say to Greensboro "Peace Church is here and you are all invited". We will look forward to that and be prepared for that in just a couple of weeks. Amen.