

World Pilgrims Visit Washington, D.C.

Reverend John A. V. Strickland, Senior Minister of Unity Atlanta Church in Peachtree Corners, Georgia, and past Chair of Unity Worldwide Ministries, joined Atlanta's renowned interfaith leadership program, World Pilgrims on a pilgrimage to Washington, D.C. May 31 – June 2, 2016. This pilgrimage was a rare opportunity for Atlanta's pilgrims to share what they have learned through their travels and dialogues with national interfaith leadership.

The World Pilgrims gather people of different faiths to travel together, learn other faith traditions and deepen friendships. Each day a pilgrim is paired with someone from another faith. They share their faith journeys and personal stories for the entire day. Every time they change hotels each pilgrim has a new roommate from another faith. This simple approach has made an outstanding difference in the lives of the pilgrims and in their communities.

Reverend Strickland has participated in interfaith activities wherever he has served. He helped to found The Open Table interfaith group in Honolulu. He now serves on the Board of Atlanta's Interfaith Community Initiatives, the parent organization of World Pilgrims. He has also participated in three Parliaments of the World's Religions (Cape Town, South Africa in 1999; Barcelona, Spain in 2004 and Melbourne, Australia in 2009). In one of those Parliaments he heard a spiritual leader from a Canadian First Nation Tribe say, "What we do not understand, we fear. And what we fear we tend to destroy." Reverend Strickland believes that dialogue and heart-focused listening are essential to removing fear and bringing about understanding and peace.

Strickland was amazed to find out that leaders in Washington, D.C. were as interested in the work of the World Pilgrims in Atlanta as we were about what is going on in our nation's capital. He has found that the work of World Pilgrims has affected him and his ministry profoundly. We believe in going

beyond tolerance all the way to the honoring of different views in different faiths. We do not try to proselytize or “convert” anyone. All people have sacred worth. All are included in the kingdom of God.

Reverend Strickland says, “I am honored to represent Unity, both locally and internationally, in such a powerful, diverse and loving program as World Pilgrims. Unity has been welcomed with open arms into the community of faith communities, and I love telling the Unity story. I believe, in some small way, I am helping bring about the peace we all desire among all people and all faiths.”