NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Wild Goose Day 3: mingling of faith traditions

Patrick O'Neill | Jun. 26, 2011

Shane Claiborne (photo by Veronica O'Neill)

SILK HOPE, N.C. -- After their interfaith panel discussion Saturday afternoon, Rabbi Or Rose and Muslim chaplain Abdullah Antepli walked side-by-side talking quietly. It was quite a site in the South -- long known as the ?Bible Belt.? The pair, Rose wearing a yarmulke, had just spent an hour together in a tent with former Catholic priest and scholar Paul Knitter discussing interreligious dialogue, and what it is they admire -- even love -- about each other?s faith traditions.

So it went on Day 3 of The Wild Goose Festival at Shakori Hills Farm, a rural section of Chatham County, not far from the bigger places -- Chapel Hill, Durham and Raleigh. While Wild Goose is predominantly Christian, ecumenism and interfaith dialogue have been major themes of the four-day festival that may be the first of its kind in the U.S.

Wild Goose founder Gareth Higgins wants the festival to bring together people of faith to celebrate their diversity and their love of God in a non-judgmental setting. What?s clear about ?the vibe? of Wild Goose (vibe is a term Higgins uses) is that there appears to be a sincere search by festival-goers not so much for truth, but for pluralism based on the basic foundational principle of all the world?s major religions -- love.

Despite the 90-plus degree heat, Wild Goosers do a lot of smiling and a lot of sharing. Groups of young seekers can be overheard engaged in deep conversations about heavy religious topics -- liturgy, fundamentalism, gay marriage and prayer to name a few. With as many as five speakers on tap at different sites in any given hour (beginning at 9 a.m. and going past midnight), the fodder for listening and good conversation is omnipresent.

On Saturday, mothers with new babies gathered all day around two small baby bathtubs and playpens provided by festival organizers for respite. Children have filled the site with the high energy only kids can provide. Wild Goose Number One may have a few kinks, but its clear people are having an adventure, and they?re glad to be here. Festival staff want to do this again next year, and they are asking for feedback.

Even author Ed Dobson?s discussion of death was for the most part light and humorous. Dobson, a former

fundamentalist Baptist and graduate of Bob Jones University who now with his wife worships with an African American community, was diagnosed with ALS 10 years ago. Gaunt, but still very much on his feet, Dobson has defied the odds and lived twice as long as the best diagnosis he received when he first asked a neurologist about the odd, involuntary twitching his body kept doing.

The biggest thing about the rail-thin Dobson is his thick graying beard. On the stage, he stayed in motion for the entire hour of his talk. Like a long, thin-legged flamingo, Dobson moved across the stage, suddenly paused, bent his knees and leaned his torso forward as if in a dance before quickly moving again.

Dobson said his ?heart sank? when he got his diagnosis. ?I descended into the tomb. ? I was so overwhelmed with the darkness around me.?

However, Dobson soon recommuned with the foundational roots of his faith journey. He recalled the reassuring words of Jesus: ?Choose life that you may live. ? Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you. So we say with confidence, ?The Lord is my helper. I will not be afraid.??

In his black church experience, Dobson said he likes what his pastor says to open each service: ?Thank you God for waking me up this morning,? a prayer habit he has also adopted. So, like everyone, Dobson waits for death, but thoughtfully. ?I?m not afraid of being dead,? he said. ?It?s the getting dead that bothers me.?

While the speakers and musicians are interesting and colorful, so are the festival attendees. After the killing of Osama bin Laden, Aaron Condon, a member of The Simple Way community in Philadelphia, said he was upset with the public jubilation that followed, so he drew a design for a T-shirt that included an image of bin Laden and the words, ?Love Your Enemies.?

?I did it because I saw right after we murdered bin Laden, a lot of Christians were posting on facebook things like, ?Alright, we finally got him. He?s burning in Hell,? and celebrating it, and it upset me,? said Condon, who said he expects to sell out the 30 to 40 shirts he brought to Wild Goose. ?People seem to really be connecting with it,? he said.

Saturday's speech by evangelical headliner Shane Claiborne, The Simple Way founding partner, appeared to draw the largest crowd of the festival with about 500 overflowing a tent. Claiborne's presentation outdrew Saturday evening's "bluegrass liturgy," which drew about 300 worshippers. The liturgy, in the Lutheran tradition, was officiated by Denver-based "house for all sinners and saints" tattooed pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber. Perhaps only at Wild Goose can one receive communion from a man with a bleached blonde Mohawk haircut wearing a Wonder Woman T-shirt. Yes, Wild Goose is different.

As they strode away, side-by-side, from the tent, a rabbi (Or Rose of the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College in Massachusetts) and a Muslim cleric (Abdullah Antepli, Muslim chaplain at Duke University), they commented on this unusual juxtaposition.

Said Rose: ?When I walk with Abdullah I feel as if I?m walking with a fellow seeker who is trying to search out the right and the good, and that is very complicated process for each and every one of us, and I feel blessed to have a fellow traveler.?

Said Antepli: ?We should inject and inspire hope and not only talk about despair; about the conflict, about the problem, X.Y and Z.?

In unison, not by design, the pair said: ?We are absolutely committed to working together.?

Score one for Wild Goose.

[Patrick O'Neill is a freelance religion journalist living in Garner, N.C.]

Editor's Note: Patrick O'Neill is reporting on the Wild Goose festival from Shakori Hills, N.C. Check back for updates. See his previous stories:

- **At 'Wild Goose,' echoes of Martin Luther King, Jr[1]**
- **With a smearing of mud, 'Wild Goose' takes flight[2]**
- **Part revival, part music fest: 'Wild Goose'[3]**

The Next Step FORWARD [4]

DONATE NOW [4]

Enjoy this article?
Help support more like it by **donating today!** [4]

Source URL (retrieved on *09/02/2015 - 17:53*): http://ncronline.org/news/peace-justice/wild-goose-day-3-mingling-faith-traditions

Links:
[1] http://ncronline.org/node/25357/
[2] http://ncronline.org/node/25341/
[3] http://ncronline.org/node/25296/
[4] http://ncrnews.org/webathon/donate/article-end