



# Embracing Diversity

## *The Greater Huntington Beach Interfaith Council*

It's the beginning of the fall season — time for back to school. This time of year reminds me of my childhood and the brand new box of crayons that always seemed to be part of my early school experience. I still remember opening the box to see the beautiful colors neatly lined up in the box, every point sharpened. It was a box full of potential — an opportunity to take a color, and run it across the toothy paper I so loved — a whole year of undiscovered drawings would appear in my mind as I looked at the rainbow of wax crayons. As an adult, I see the crayons as a metaphor for the diversity of humankind. Each of us brings something bright and rich to the world - we are from many races, cultures, background and belief systems, yet we are all part of one human family — a world filled with the brilliant colors of life itself. I think it would be a dull world if

we were all exactly alike - what if you opened a box of crayons and found that it only contained one color? Sixty-four blue crayons would not lend themselves to creativity - but rather to monotony. For me, I love the diversity of humanity - life seems so much more interesting when we learn about one another.

In 1996, a group of clergy were invited to a meeting which had been organized by members of the City Council of Huntington Beach. Our city had experienced some hate crimes that year — there were some people who believed that only certain people of a certain race were acceptable in their eyes. They did not understand the beauty and the gift of diversity. We were asked to form an organization now known as the Greater Huntington Beach Interfaith Council.

We are an organization dedicated to building bridges of understanding between people of all faith traditions. Our organization includes Christians of many denominations, Jews, Muslims, Bahai's, Religious Scientists, Christian Scientists, and even Zoroastrians. We hold monthly meetings at City Hall on the last Tuesday of every month at 8:00 in the morning. We join together to promote religious harmony.

As we have grown together through the years, we have broken through the barriers of fear, of distrust and found instead the many ways in which we are similar. We also celebrate the ways in which we are different. We plan and present several major events together through the year, and in the process learn about our values and our diverse spiritual practices.

On September 9, we presented our 8th Annual Procession of Light. It is an observance of coming together in words prayers, and music to remember September 11, and to bring our diverse faith communities and houses of worship together in one place to foster a deeper sense of harmony and understanding between our various religions. This year our theme is "On Common Ground." It began on Sunday afternoon with musical guests and speakers and concluded with a bagpiper leading us to the end of the Pier and back - symbolizing our willingness to walk together in peace and harmony.

In the richness of our common belief in One Power, One Supreme Being called by many names, we have come to appreciate the multi-colored world in which we live. **HB**

*Rev. Peggy Price is a founding member and past President of the Greater Huntington Beach Interfaith Council. She currently serves as Senior Minister of the Seal Beach Center for Spiritual Living (formerly Seal Beach Church of Religious Science). She and her husband, Don are long-time residents of Huntington Beach.*

