

CREATION OF CACHE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

September 11, 2011

I'm here to talk about the creation of Cache Community Connections and how it relates to this evening of commemoration.

I suspect your experience was similar to mine. Ten years ago this morning, I first heard it on the radio. I was shaving. They reported that a small plane had crashed into the World Trade Center. I couldn't believe it was an accident so I turned on our TV to see if the collision had been caught on camera. I was horrified when the live cameras caught the second plane slamming into the Twin Towers. In that moment, all Americans changed. Our fear, sorrow and terror have softened but will never completely go away.

A concern came to mind. With the number of wonderful Muslims living in Logan, we had to ensure that none of them was harmed, mistreated or embarrassed by someone's misguided wish for retribution. Soon leading citizens made statements to the press, most notably USU's President, the late Kermit Hall, that we all had a responsibility to protect our Muslim brothers and sisters and show them an outpouring of love.

Many people of goodwill also saw the need for an interfaith service to physically and spiritually bring the valley together to worship, grieve and find hope. 9/11 was on a Tuesday. By Friday night representatives of most of the faith based groups in Cache County had met several times to plan and bring to pass in the Eccles Theater an evening where prayers and songs and earnest messages of love and unity were given by Christians, Buddhists, Jews, the B'Hai, and others. The leader of the Logan Islamic Center, Said

Ghabayen, showed us that our Muslim friends were as horrified as we were. With tears in his eyes, he softly pronounced, "This is not my Islam."

That evening in Logan's Eccles Theater, the spirit of love, caring and unity was palpable, and, as the events of 9/11, never to be forgotten.

The following week, the organizers met to review the service. Everyone felt so good about working together that they deeply wanted the group to prolong that feeling of love, mutual trust and unity.

Thus, Cache Community Connections was born. A name was chosen, a charter written, non-profit status obtained, and today the group is renowned in the valley for its service and sought after as a catalyst for good in the community. The annual interfaith Thanksgiving service, the summer and Christmas music series, the monthly concert and lecture series and countless service projects are measures of Cache Community Connection's continuing influence for good. Less visible are the great relationships among the church and community leaders that Connections has fostered. Gone are the tensions and misunderstandings that may have existed, replaced by genuine love and cooperation.

In its creation and over its ten years of service, scores of exceptional people have served on Connections' board and as active volunteers. I began to list the names so we could honor them tonight but I dare not in case I forget one of those exceptional people. Suffice it to say, they have done a great work.

Now, today as public and political discourse becomes increasingly harsh, mean spirited and coarse, there is a voice in Cache Valley that speaks peace and love, gratitude and unity, cooperation and caring. That voice is Cache Community Connections. Out of the ashes of the twin towers has grown an organization that blesses us all. For that I am deeply grateful. Thank you.