Meet Our Missionaries: The Rev. Paul-Gordon Chandler and CARAVAN

What is CARAVAN and how is it a part of the Way of Love?

CARAVAN is an international peacebuilding non-profit affiliated with The Episcopal Church with the objective of building sustainable peace through the arts. CARAVAN’s peacebuilding work is based on the belief that the arts can serve as one of the most effective mediums to demonstrate God’s universal love and embrace for all humanity - by enhancing understanding of the “other,” nurturing respect, enabling sharing and facilitating friendship between diverse peoples, cultures and faiths.

CARAVAN creates artistic “encounter points” that bring together those of divergent backgrounds and worldviews to stimulate discussion, dialogue, education and friendship, with a vision toward healing our world and creatively fostering peace and harmony in all its forms. While CARAVAN’s peacebuilding work is global in focus, our primary emphasis to date has been on building bridges between the creeds and cultures of the Middle East and West – with a special focus on the Abrahamic faiths; between Christians, Muslims and Jews. CARAVAN’s artistic initiatives are often held in heavily trafficked “sacred spaces,” such as Anglican and Episcopal cathedrals, and have resulted in unprecedented gatherings of renowned and emerging artists from all over the world coming together to use art for peacebuilding purposes.

Why did you choose to serve as an Appointed Mission Partner?

I grew up in Senegal, West Africa, which is a majority Muslim country. And over the years I have had the privilege of serving throughout the Islamic world, from Morocco to Indonesia, in Anglican publishing, faith-based relief and development and with The Episcopal Church. After 9/11, I could see the quickly growing chasm of discord and misunderstanding that was developing between the Middle East and West, and especially between Christians and Muslims, and I felt led to serve in the Middle East with The Episcopal Church as an Appointed Mission Partner, toward stewarding my background and experience to help build the much-needed bridges. I served for ten years (2003-2013) in Cairo, Egypt as the rector of the international Episcopal church there – a congregation known for its creative interreligious peacebuilding programs. CARAVAN’s ministry originated in Cairo out of the artistic bridge-building initiatives that we had, which focused on bridging the divide between the peoples, cultures and faiths of the Middle East and the West.

How can we pray for you and the people you work with?

Today’s climate of increasing prejudice and stereotyping all too often leads to a dehumanizing of the “other,” whether in worldviews, words or actions. It is vital that this escalation of misunderstanding and misrepresentation not become the new norm. The tide of suspicion and mistrust, which has resulted in a rise of what some are calling a new “tribalism,” needs to be counteracted by initiatives that are based on our similarities and what we all hold in common. Now, more than ever, it is essential that “creative demonstrations of dialogue” be developed.

Please pray that as our peacebuilding art exhibitions travel throughout the Middle East, Europe and North America, that their fundamental message of harmony speaks loudly and clearly, and serves as a common starting point on which to build a society that inherently respects and honors cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, living and working together to jointly enhance their communities.

Please also pray for the financial support needed for our artistic peacebuilding initiatives. Resources are critical in this regard.

You can continue to follow and find out about CARAVAN at oncaravan.org.