

Biography: Reverend Pratima Dharm

She was born and raised in Northern India in the 1970s. Her maternal grandfather is a recognized freedom fighter who walked alongside Mahatma Gandhi to struggle peacefully against British rule in Colonial India. Her father gave up his rights to his ancestral land to free hundreds of bonded laborers and indentured servants in the 1940s. The formative examples of justice for the oppressed set by her maternal grandfather and her father became the framework for her own spiritual journey. She started a school for poor children at age nine, under the guidance of her school teacher, a Catholic nun. She also organized several humanitarian aid missions for the displaced tribals and Latur earthquake victims in India in the 1990s. She migrated to the United States in 2000 and felt called into ministry in 2003. She graduated from Ashland Theological Seminary in 2005 with a Master's in Theology. After her ordination as a Pentecostal Minister she was commissioned as an Army Chaplain in 2006. She organized 10 Humanitarian Aid Missions for the poor Iraqi women and children including the persecuted Yezidi population, while deployed to Iraq from 2007 to 2008. Upon her return from Iraq in 2008 she embraced an all-inclusive theology of God's Universal Love and returned to her Hindu roots, becoming the first Hindu Chaplain in the history of the Department of Defense and the entire armed forces in 2011. While grieving her mother's sudden death in 2013, she discovered and found her spiritual home in Unitarian Universalism. She retired from the US Army in March 2015 and completed a Masters of Divinity Degree from Ashland Theological Seminary in December 2016. After a yearlong internship at the Accotink Unitarian Universalist Church in Virginia, she successfully cleared the Ministerial Fellowship Committee in September 2016 and was ordained as a Unitarian Universalist Minister at Cedar Lane UU Church in March 2017. Before, accepting the call to become a Minister at Monte Vista UU Congregation, she served as an On-Call Chaplain at Johns Hopkins Bayview Hospital in Baltimore, MD from May 2016 to December 2017. She also served the Goodloe Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Bowie, MD as their Minister from August 2016 to July 2017. A Bronze Star Medal recipient, she introduced President Obama at the White House Diwali in 2011 and received the Special Achievement India Abroad Award in New York City the same year. She was honored by the Government of Trinidad as the first Hindu Chaplain at the annual Diwali Nagar Celebrations as their Chief Guest in Trinidad in 2013. Her Army uniform is on display at the Women's Memorial Museum in Arlington VA. since 2014. The joys of her life are being a mother to her two girls, serving the poor, the underprivileged, reading, travelling, cooking and nature.