

# Saints and sinners: Finding God on the golf course

In John Tidyman's popular book, "Cleveland Golfer's Bible" (Gray & Company, 2002), the author has a chapter titled, "Why I Love Playing Golf with Women."

One of the reasons he gives is that women "rarely swear." With men golfers, it's different. Over the course of 18 holes, they may invoke the name of the deity more than a minister does in church on a Sunday morning.

The men, however, will insist they mean no disrespect. They will go even further. They will claim they feel closer to God on the golf course on Sunday morning, while enjoying the wonderful world of nature.

I have always been skeptical of such claims. Of course, it is possible — as Shakespeare said — to find "tongues in trees, books in running brooks and sermons in stones."

But stones by themselves do not a sermon

make, nor a hole-in-one on Sunday a Christian make.

Still, wanting to put the golfer's creed to the test, I decided one lovely spring morning to skip church and spend the time outdoors. I wanted to see whether it was possible to feel closer to God while communing with nature, rather than crowded in a pew.

The Bible, I reminded myself, speaks more of woods and trees and woodland creatures than of synagogues and churches.

In the Bible, we read of lying down in green pastures, of still waters, of the fields exulting and the woods singing for joy. The glory of nations is compared to an overflowing stream and peace to a river.

So, I stepped out of a world of stone and asphalt and automobile emissions into a world of trees and wildflowers and babbling brooks.



george plagenz

• saints & sinners

The contrast gets one to realize that we spend most of our lives not in the world of God's making, but in one of our own making that has all the ambience of a trash-burning plant.

In his book "The End of Nature" (Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), Bill McKibbin states that we may soon be looking for answers in the great god, Dacron, as opposed to finding faith in the God that has been our spiritual leader for thousands of years.

In a world of AstroTurf, he writes, there may still be work for God to do, but He will be unable to speak to us through nature.

I passed only three people and an Irish setter on my walk. They all looked as happy as I to be out on such a beautiful morning. We said hello (one barked) and went on our way.

With church bells pealing in the distance I sat down on a rock and cooled my bare feet in a running stream and read "The Golfer's Prayer for Forgiveness," which appears on page 211 in "The Golfer's Bible":

"Forgive me, O Lord, if Sunday morning finds me on the golf course and not in church. Forgive me if I find You, not in prayers and hymns, but in Your great and glorious outdoors, more magnificent than any cathedral.

"My prayers to You on Sunday morning may be unspoken and my hymns to You unsung, but

my heart will be always praising You for the beauty of the Earth, for spacious skies, for the joys of comradeship and for this funny little game we play.

"Bless my driving and my putting. Direct the ball into the bunker only for my opponent's shots. (If to ask this is unworthy of me, forgive me this, too.) Amen."

It may be unrealistic to expect your ordinary duffer to be thinking thoughts about nature and the universe as he steps up to the first tee on a Sunday morning.

But if he takes a minute to pray "The Golfer's Prayer for Forgiveness" before he leaves the clubhouse, he may indeed find his 18-hole journey chasing an elusive little white ball across one tiny corner of God's glorious creation to be a religious experience such as he would not find in church. Or anywhere else.

# Newly dedicated temple in Pennsylvania attracts Hindus from across nation

By Jennifer Kay

*Associated Press Writer*  
SCHUYLKILL HAVEN, Pa. — Under billboards pointing tourists toward Amish souvenirs, an ornate, sandstone Hindu temple carves a corner of India into the middle of Pennsylvania's rolling farmland.

Haveli at Vraj opened this spring — the first temple in the Western Hemisphere consecrated as a principal shrine of the Pushti Marg sect. It is an official pilgrimage destination for Hindus in North America.

The temple, about 70 miles northwest of Philadelphia, will eventually be surrounded by other religious and cultural structures on a 300-acre campus.

The site was chosen because of its relative proximity to large Hindu communities in Boston, Pittsburgh and

Richmond, Va., said Pramod Amin, Vraj's chief adviser and trustee. Already, it has draw large crowds: Approximately 15,000 people from across the country attended the first day of a monthlong Haveli inauguration celebration in May.

Dr. Pratima Shah, a physician from Cleveland, recently visited the shrine with members of her extended family.

"This is the holy temple. For our parents, our grandparents and our ancestors, we are following the same tradition," she said. "We just wanted to be part of the celebration."

"For meditation, for peace, it is the best place so far that I have visited, in India or in the U.S.," said Mahendra Shah, of Elmira, N.Y., no relation to Pratima Shah.

Six viewings of the swaroop, or icon,

of the god Shri Nathjee are performed each day in the temple's main sanctum, which is decorated with silver and marble imported from the same region of India — Vraj — where the deity is believed to have lived while in human form.

In the Pushti Marg sect, the swaroop is believed to be the living presence of the god Shri Nathjee, the child image of Krishna. Krishna, in turn, is believed to be an incarnation of Vishnu — one of Hinduism's principal deities — who is worshipped as the protector and preserver of the world.

Barefoot worshippers in a mix of ethnic and Western dress kneel in front of the icon as attendants present offerings of flowers and food, and temple musicians beat on traditional Indian drums.

Construction workers finishing the

temple's balcony, though, may keep their shoes "because they are part of the creation," Amin said.

There are an estimated 837 million Hindus worldwide, including almost 1 million in the United States, according to the World Christian Encyclopedia.

Although the temple itself upholds Pushti Marg beliefs — the only other such shrine to Shri Nathjee is in Nathdwara, India — the rest of the Vraj campus will focus on the traditions held by all Hindus.

More small temples, along with a reflecting pool, a library and a museum about India and Indian culture are planned for the site. Weeklong camps for children from various Hindu sects will be held on the campus this summer.

For those unable to travel to India for a traditional 145-mile, 84-stop pilgrim-

age based on the life of Krishna, the Schuylkill County property has a smaller version that will circle the property.

Atul Parikh, the shrine's architect, said Vraj is a traditional Hindu temple haveli, which means "palace" or "mansion."

According to the Pushti Marg belief that Shri Nathjee practiced his faith at his father's house, the temple fulfills the god's needs with a place to sleep, eat and dress.

"I am translating the religious requirements into architectural form using the technology and building requirements here," Parikh said.

Funding for the haveli, which is expected to cost \$6 million to \$8 million, comes solely from private donations, from \$5 up to several thousand dollars,

Amin said. Sheela nyas — "stones given in trust" — used in construction can also be purchased for \$25.

Since groundbreaking a decade ago, when the temple was just a blueprint, Vraj has attracted about 50,000 visitors annually, Amin said. He expects that number to double with the haveli's completion.

The founders of the Vraj intended to make the property a home-away-from-home for Hindus, Amin said.

"If we made a video of this temple and the campus when it is completed and sent it to India for people to see, no one would make out that it's in the middle of Pennsylvania," he said.

*On the Net:* Haveli at Vraj: <http://www.vraj.org>

Internet tonight! 899-2338

## Bible Baptist Church

**Pastor:** Don Crutcher

Fifth & Broadway

899-7368

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9 am

Worship Service: 10 am

Evening Service: 6:30 pm

**Wednesday:** Evening Bible Study: 7 pm

## Calvary Gospel Church

**Pastor:** Rev. Steve Rains

Fourth & College • 899-3605

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:15 am

Morning Service: 10:30 am

Evening Service: 6:00 pm

**Wednesday:** Adult Prayer and Worship: 7:00 p.m.

Youth @ the Rock House: 7:00 p.m.

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## Church of Christ

401 Caldwell

899-6185

**Sunday:** Bible Study: 9:45 am

Worship Service: 10:45 am

**Wednesday:** Bible Study: 7 pm

## Church of the Nazarene

**Pastor:** Matthew Delp

Third & Caldwell

899-2080 or 899-3797

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:45 am

Worship Service: 10:50 am

Evening Service: 6 pm

**Wednesday:** Evening Service: 7 pm

## First Baptist Church

**Pastor:** Bud Chester

Fifth & Center • 899-3450

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:15 am

Morning Worship: 10:30 am

Evening Worship: 6:30 pm

**Tuesday:** Mens' Prayer Group: 6:00 am

**Thursday:** Night Bible Study: 7:00 pm

## Seventh Day Adventist Church

1160 Cattletrail

**Pastor:** Arlin Cochran • 785-332-2888

**Saturday:** Sabbath School: 9:30 am

Worship Service: 11 am



# First Christian Church

## First Christian Church

(Disciples of Christ)

**Pastor:** Loren Strait

Eighth & Arcade • 899-5233

**Sunday:** Worship Service: 10:30 am

**Sunday School:** 9:15 a.m.

**Activities:** Junior High & High School Youth Groups, Adult Bible Study, Choir, Men's and Women's Groups, Devotions Study, Monthly Fellowship

**Special Notice:** Handicap Accessible, Hearing Assistance Equipment and Infant and Toddler Nurseries Available

## First United Methodist Church

1116 Sherman

899-3631

**Pastor:** Rev. Carol Moore-Ramey

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:15 am

Worship Service: 10:30 am

## Sonrise Christian Church

Ninth & Caldwell • 899-5398

**Minister:** Tony Kafka

**Youth Minister:** Doug Bean

**Sunday:** Worship Service: 9:30 am

Sunday School: 10:45 am

**Wednesday:**

Junior/Senior High Meeting: 7 pm

Adult & Children's Classes: 7 pm

## Emmanuel Lutheran Church

13th & Sherman • 899-6161

**Pastor:** Scott Grimshaw

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 8:45 am

Worship Service: 10 am

**Wednesday:** Confirmation: 6 pm

## Kanorado

## United Methodist Church

**Pastor:** Leonard Cox

399-2468

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9 am

Worship Service: 10:15 am

## Goodland Bible Church

109 Willow Road • 899-6400

**Pastor:**

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 9:45 am

Morning Worship: 11 am

Evening Worship: 6 pm

**Wednesday:** Call for location

## Grace Fellowship Church

104 E. Hwy 24 • 899-6423

**Pastor:** Bob Snyder • Residence: 899-0134

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 10 am

Worship Service: 11 am

Youth Group at Gattshall's at 5:30 pm

Adult Bible Study 6 pm

## St. Paul's Episcopal Church

13th & Center

899-2115 or Rectory 899-2114

**Priest:** Father Charles Schneider

**Deacon:** Gretchen Talitha

**Adult Forum:** Sunday : 8:30 am

Morning Prayer: 9:30 am 1st & 5th Sundays

**Holy Eucharist:** 2nd, 3rd, & 4th Sundays: 9:30

Sr. Warden for emergencies during the week 899-2067

## Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

1200 15th Street • Burlington, CO • (970) 664-2470

**Sacrament Meeting:** 9:30 am

**Sunday School:** 10:45 am

**Priesthood/Relief Society:** 11:30 am

## Word of Life Foursquare Church

223 E. 10th

899-5250

**Pastor:** John Coumerilh

**Sunday:** Worship Celebration &

Kids' Church: 10:30 am

## United Methodist Church

**Brewster:**

**Pastor:**

Worship Service: 10:45 am CST

Sunday School: 9:45 am CST

**Winona:**

**Minister:** Rev. Bob Winters

Worship Service: 9 am CST

Sunday School: 10:15 am CST

## Iglesia Del Dios Vivo

La Luz Del Mundo

Spanish Speaking Church

**Minister:** Esteban Ortiz B.

1601 Texas • 899-5275

**Daily Prayer:** Sunday thru

Saturday: 5 am & 6 pm

**Sunday:** Sunday School: 10 am

## Our Lady of Perpetual Help

**Pastor:** Father Daryl Olmstead

307 W. 13th • 899-7205

**Sacrament of Reconciliation:**

4:30-5 pm Saturday or by appointment

**Mass Schedule:**

**Saturday:** 6 pm

**Sunday:** 8 am and 9:30 am

**Spanish Mass:**

1st & 3rd Sunday: 2 pm

## Pleasant Home Church

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Rt. 1, Box 180 • 694-2807 • 3190 Road 70

**Pastor:** Jim Cress

899-5784

**Sunday:** Worship Service: 9 am

Sunday School: 10 am

Evening Service: 6 pm

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