



M inistering Together

“News, comments and events of
concern to the religious community”

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

Autumn Edition 2012

Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County announces the appointment of Interim Executive Director, Rev. Will McGarvey



Dear ICCCC community,

I'm honored to have been asked to serve you as the Interim Executive Director of the Council for the remainder of this calendar year. I served on the Executive Committee of the Council for six years (2004-2010), and fully support the great work we have been able to do over the years.

As an Interim ED, I will be helping the Executive Committee through a process of a Mission Study and redefining the role of the Executive Committee. Since my youth, I have always felt a call to Interfaith work. I even helped organize the first committee for interfaith chaplains to the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City (before leaving for seminary in 2000). Locally, we have said that these programs are important as we have supported them; the Winter Nights Shelter, Rev. Charles Tinsley's ministry as Chaplain at the Juvenile Detention Facility, the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration each year, and our ongoing programming around Interfaith understanding. **What else are we called to do together?** We need every persons and congregation's input to answer this question. In the near future, you will find invitations to help us answer that question and more.

In many ways, I have been doing such work already. When I was at the Ramadan Iftar with our brothers and sisters at the Islamic Center of the East Bay in Antioch in August, we recognized that it has been five years since the arson that destroyed their building. Today, there is hardly enough room for all of the people and children. The Contra Costa Times wrote an article on the anniversary and the overwhelming response of peaceful people of faith and good will numbered over 500 persons, including at least 12 Rabbis the day after their busiest Holy Day. We know what it is like when crisis comes to any of our community. Fortunately, there is now another Masjid (house of Muslim prayer) in Brentwood where other families are finding a safe place to pray.

Given the increase of religiously motivated hate crimes across our country, and especially the recent shootings and arsons at houses of worship, I think we need to start to make a difference in each of our communities. At my community of faith, we will be hosting our own Peace Concert (with the musicians from our two congregations, Ministerio Cristiano, the Filipino Crossroads Christian Center, St. Ignatius of Antioch Catholic Church, and others) on Friday, September 21st at 7:00 p.m. as we dedicate the Peace Pole donated by the Interfaith Peace Project in our courtyard. Together we will sing the songs of peace, love, and justice from each of our traditions.

But perhaps we need to do more. Dr. Mohammed Chaudry, President of the Islamic Center of the East Bay has invited the whole East County Community to ICEB for an Open House in November. Our East County Shared Ministry Interfaith Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner has been planned for 4:00 pm on November 18th and all are invited (please rsvp with me). What will you do in your corner of Contra Costa County? We want to share the news of your event! Check out the updated event page at: <http://interfaithccc.org/>

Eventually, the question remains for each of us “Who is your neighbor?” Perhaps we need to travel a bit to know our neighbors, and understand their lives in their own context. Perhaps listening to the stories of our siblings can help us live out our mandate to fully follow the ways of our own path.

What if we can pull off a “Monthly Road Show” that invites the congregants of our communities to visit the many faith sites across our county? If this is possible, I hope you will preserve the time to participate in each of them. Find a carpool, join a circle, ask a friend to pick you up, but you are invited to be more than a participant in the re-creating of the

religious landscape of the ICCCC, and the world. I would also ask that you begin to talk about when you would host such an event. For every Mosque that has burned in Antioch, California or Joplin, Missouri, it may just take many of us to show up at an interfaith event to make a difference.

"We belong to each other"

Shalom, Peace, Salaam, Om Shanti, Solh, Amani, Paz, 幸福, Ping On...

Will

The Executive Committee of the ICCCC is in a peaceful time of transition, and on Thursday received the resignation of Rev. Alexis Easton (Brentwood UMC) as President and Marilyn Wright (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints). Alexis will be furthering her studies at the Center of Islamic Studies at the GTU, and Marilyn accepted a call as the President of her Stake's Relief Society. We are sorry to see them go, but hear God's calling in their going to learn and serve. We will celebrate their time on the Executive Committee at our Annual Meeting on Sunday, November 18th (potluck at 6:00 pm and event at 7:00 pm) at Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church, 55 Eckley Way, in Walnut Creek, CA. Thanks for your service to ICCCC!

In their place, the Executive Committee unanimously voted in as Chair, the Rev. Leslie Takahashi-Morris, co-pastor at Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church in Walnut Creek; as Vice-Chair, the Rev. Margaretmary Staller, Episcopal Diocese of California; and as Secretary, Ms. Loel Bartlett Miller from Sufism Reoriented in Walnut Creek. Let us welcome our new EC Officers!

"We Belong to Each Other"

September

- 1 Installation of Guru Granth Sahib (First Parkash) (Sikh)
- 1 Orthodox Church New Year (Eastern Christian)
- 8 Nativity of Mary (Western Christian)
- 9 Auditors' Day (Scientologist)
- 12 Ghambar Paitishahem (through Sep 16) (Zoroastrian)
- 14 Exaltation of the Life Giving Cross (Eastern Christian)
- 14 Holy Cross Day (Western Christian)
- 17 Rosh Hashana (through 18) (Jewish)
- 19 Ganesha Chaturthi (Hindu)
- 20 Paryushana Parva begins (to Sept 29) (Jain)
- 21 International Day of Peace (United Nations)
- 22 Death of Guru Nanak Dev Ji (Sikh)
- 22 Fall Ohigon (Buddhist)
- 22 Mabon, Alban Elued, Haustblot / Harvest

October

- 1-7 (1-2 Primary Obligation Days)
- Sukkot * - Judaism
- 4 Saint Francis Day - Catholic Christian
- 8 Shemini Atzeret * - Judaism
- Thanksgiving - Canada - Interfaith
- 9 Simhat Torah * - Judaism
- 16-23 Navaratri ** - Hindu
- 18 Saint Luke - Apostle and Evangelist - Christian
- 20 Birth of the Báb * - Baha'i
- Installation of Scriptures as Gukru Granth - Sikh
- 24 Dasera ** - Hindu
- 25 Waqf al Arafa - Hajj Day * - Islam
- 26-29 Eid al Adha * *** - Islam
- 28 Milvian Bridge Day - Christian
- Reformation Day ** - Protestant Christian
- 31 All Hallows Eve - Christian

Chaplain's Corner

**Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley
Juvenile Detention Chaplain**



During the months of May and June of this year, it was my honor and privilege to attend five graduations!

One of the young people, who began his college career at Butte College in Oroville, went on to complete his Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology at Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio. I attended his graduation on May 5th. He was the second of “my kids” to graduate from Central State. The night before the graduation he presented me with a very large shirt with the school seal and the words, “CSU DAD” stenciled across the front. I wear it with great pride... While he was in school, he was initiated into the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, the oldest Black intercollegiate fraternity in the United States. Notable members of the past include the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.

The first young person to graduate from Central State University also began post-secondary studies at Butte College. He earned the same degree, Bachelor of Science in Sociology in May, 2011. This young man spent the summer between his junior and senior years at Central State as a student at the University of Ghana in West Africa. Then, immediately following his graduation he spent several months in the southeastern African country of Malawi. My office is graced with souvenirs from his travels to both regions of the African continent. Upon his graduation, I was given a polo shirt with the Central State name and logo stitched on its front. And he gave me a “CSU DAD” coffee mug.

These two, woe to anyone who would say they are not brothers, shared an apartment (food, car, books...) in nearby Xenia, Ohio while attending the university. Both young people are working in the area of social services and are preparing to pursue graduate studies. Proud of them, am I? A tremendous understatement!!

Still another young man who began his studies with the above-described individuals at Butte College went on this year to graduate from Chico State University in mid-May. He earned the Bachelor of Arts degree, with highest honors, in Liberal Studies. He is heavily involved in youth activities at his church in Chico. His service there includes volunteer work in the Butte County juvenile hall. As a graduation present, I took him to Ohio with me to attend his long-time friend’s graduation at Central State. I have been talking to him about seminary. Proud of this one, also? Absolutely! All three of these young people come from Richmond! Not bad for kids from

“around the bay...” huh?

Over the past year I have served as temporary pastor for the Imani Fellowship Presbyterian Church in Vallejo. Just following my arrival at Imani, an exceptionally gifted and talented seminarian completed her year-long internship at the church. She was invited to stay on for another year to conduct Bible studies and to serve as “assistant to the pastor.” She received her Masters of Divinity degree from San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo, also in mid-May. As a matter of fact, I was only able to attend a part of the SFTS commencement exercises because, I had to leave early to drive to Chico for the Chico State ceremony. She has recently been accepted into a clinical pastoral education (CPE) program in San Francisco, this as she continues her studies in spiritual direction.

Finally, reporting last only because this activity occurred in June, I traveled to Riverside to watch my eldest grandson graduate from the University of California, Riverside. He did this in four years! I suppose the University of California runs in the family. His father is a graduate of the University of California, Davis. His mother graduated from the University of California, Berkeley; the same school where I earned my first graduate degree, 32 years ago! This young man took the degree Bachelor of Arts in Sociology (my undergraduate degree). He is also applying for graduate studies in the social services area! He also spent much of his early life in Richmond, where his father has worked for the City of Richmond (primarily in youth services), for the Coronado YMCA in South Richmond and now as the dean of students for the Making Waves Educational Program.

Additionally, I am a life member of both, the California State University, East Bay and University of California, Berkeley alumni associations. So, this year I participated as an alumnus in the Black Graduation Ceremony at “Cal-State East Bay” (for us purists of the past: “Cal State, Hayward”)

A busy couple of months? Yes, and all the while working with a whole “new crew” of aspiring Butte, Skyline, Laney, Los Medanos, Diablo Valley, Solano and Contra Costa colleges and Central State University students waiting in the wings; some beginning their studies as soon as this fall semester. Some are even now, still in custody, looking forward to the time in the very near future, out of custody and off probation, when they too, will have their chance...

And, there is another young person who also began his work at Butte College, who will very soon graduate from St. Mary’s College in Moraga. He called today to ask me to write a letter of recommendation—for law school!! Gladly, gladly...

■ Dr. Amer Araim

President of the Islamic Community Outreach of California, Walnut Creek Islamic Center

The Linkage between (San Francisco Municipal Transportation) (MUNI) Buses' Ads and Islamophobia

The recent ads on MUNI buses in San Francisco describing the Palestinian -Israeli conflict as a struggle between "the civilized" and "the savage" is not only wrong but has roots in the persistent depiction of Islam and Muslims as a threat to the Western civilization, which is rightly described as Islamophobia. I wish to acknowledge with thanks the opposition to this advertisement expressed by many organizations and groups including members of the Jewish community. All students of the history of world civilizations know the contributions of Islamic civilization to Western civilization, and that the former benefited from previous civilizations. At a recent Ramadan Iftar (breaking the fast) in Contra Costa County, to which non-Muslims were invited, a scholar from another faith reminded us that Muslims, Christians and Jews worked together during the Islamic era in Spain. It is a fact recognized by Jewish scholars, that the era of Islamic rule in Spain was considered as the golden era of Jewish history in Europe. The American Muslim communities repeatedly condemn violence and terrorism, and work with the interfaith organizations and cooperate with the governmental authorities against these threats. In the meantime, we reject the attempts to prevent us, as well as many people of conscious from expressing our support for the rights of the Palestinian people to establish their own independent state with Arab East Jerusalem as its capital, on their own territories occupied by Israel in 1967. As a matter of fact it is in the interest of the Israeli people and the national interest of the United States, to end the Israeli occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people.

However, we are now in the middle of the Presidential campaign, and unfortunately candidates will exaggerate their support for Israel and against the Palestinian people in order to win more votes. The Republican presidential candidate, Mr. Mitt Romney, in his recent trip to Israel described the inability of the Palestinians

to compete economically with the Israelis as related to different cultures, "and the hand of providence." He ignored that the Israeli occupation is stifling the lives of the Palestinian people. All these negative projections of the Arabs and Muslims, brought to my mind a comment by a former Attorney General, who stated once that the Muslims worshiped some thing called "Allah," while the other monotheist religions worshiped God. In reality Arab Christians called "God" "Allah", and the Jews called God "Elohim." Furthermore, the campaign claiming that President Barack Obama is a Muslim disguising his true religion, while in reality he attends church, was married in a church, and his children were blessed by a Christian Pastor, demonstrate the attempts by many and particularly politicians, and others to utilize Islamophobia and fear as means to enhance political support. These tactics are contrary to the basic principles of democracy including freedom, fairness and transparency, which are major elements to ensure the success of democracy. Democracy and all its presuppositions, including pluralism and prevention of discrimination, represent the bedrock of the political system in the United States. In the meantime, the United States government has set the promotion of true democracy in the world as a major tool of its foreign policy, and therefore, Islamophobia, which is directed against one-fifth of the population of the world violates the basic principles of mutual understanding and respect, and contrary to United States national interests.

■ Rev. Leslie Takahashi Morris

**Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church
Walnut Creek**

What does it mean to be part of a community? In this disconnected world in which we live, many of us would not recognize our closest neighbors if we were to cross paths in a grocery store. And yet, at our heart, as living creatures, we yearn to connect with others and to be part of creating community together.

I have been reflecting on this a great deal this summer as I mark a transition—moving away from the national Unitarian Universalist Association stage where I have devoted much of my time and leadership and focusing closer to home—to the organizations and causes right here in this new state and region I now call home.

I am excited to gain insights on how to be a better ally as I begin my terms of service on the board of the Rainbow Center in Concord and the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of California. I continue to value the work of our neighbors in religion as part of the board of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County. And I continue to look for ways to personally extend my witness for our immigrant neighbors (many of whom have lived in this state MUCH longer than I) as we bring the work of the Justice General Assembly home to Contra Costa County. All of these opportunities will enrich my sense of connection as a Californian, as a resident of the East Bay area and as, well, a human being. For we can only love better that which we serve, and only serve better that which we love.

For that is what I believe community asks of us—to give of ourselves to create the richness, the fullness and the interconnections that enrich and enhance life. We do that every day through this amazing congregation we call the Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church. I return from my July break with an enhanced sense of gratitude that the work of building and nurturing community is the work we share. For this is the work I love.

■ **Rev. David Takahashi Morris
Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church
Walnut Creek**

There's an experience from Justice General Assembly I want to share with you. Imagine: It's Saturday night, and the Assembly is gathering in front of Sheriff Arpaio's "Tent City" jail. About fifteen of us in purple Witness Team shirts are lined up close to the jail gate. Yellow-shirted UU's pour in from one side; Phoenix police in riot gear line up on the

other. Counter demonstrators shout from behind them; sheriff's officers cluster at the gate. Behind us, as if we are a protective wall, are families from our Arizona partner groups—and the Shouting Lady. She's at every demonstration, we've heard. She has a bullhorn, and she shouts at Sheriff Joe in Spanish. She never stops; some of our folks are stressed by the relentless angry noise. A Spanish-speaking Witness Team member talks with her, then translates for her through the bullhorn as she speaks directly to us. "I have lost two sons. One of them was shot in the head. Another one is in there. I shout so he can hear me. I shout so Arpaio knows I am not afraid of him." She's crying now, speaking softly. "I'm not a smart person. If you lost your children, what would you do?"

We're very quiet. Someone else talks to her. He has an immigration lawyer friend in Phoenix. The rest of the evening, she stays near us, but she doesn't start shouting again. She doesn't need to. She has been heard. Some of us wondered if our witness was succeeding in Arizona. What does it matter that a few thousand religious people kept vigil outside a jail? In that moment, as I watched anger touched by compassion melt into grief and hope, I learned. The success of a faith community's witness is measured not by policy changes, but by changes in people. We touched hearts in Phoenix, and our own hearts were touched. That woman and other people I met that week know we are with them now; they are with me. Any letter I write, any action I join, any changes I advocate: I'm doing it for them. I'm doing it for us. Somos Arizona.

■ **Rabbi Raphael Asher
Congregation B'nai Tikvah
Walnut Creek**

The High Holydays recalibrate our speech patterns from 1st person singular to first-person plural, from "I" to "we." In Olympic terms repentance is a team, not an individual event.

We have sinned and we will contritely return as a corporate group and not, at least not explicitly, as Joe or Josephine Shmo. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur can impact each of us individually and deeply, but the liturgy and large number of congregants give our internal issues good cover and good company.

Our change in grammar can also have a positive effect on our character. After a summer or a whole year of self-absorption, Yontov can re-focus our perspective from personal achievement to the well-being of our community.

A Yiddish word, which is now firmly in the American lingo, is “to Schvitz,” commonly meaning “to sweat” either in anxiety or at the gym. However, to schvitz or to be a “Schvitzer” has taken on the alternate meaning to boast or be a braggart. Let me use it in a sentence: “Grandma wore her best clothes to shul; she was a real schvitzer.” Or more currently: “They tweet and schvitz about every primo moment in their vainglorious lives.”

It might be worthwhile during services to contemplate the connection between bragging and perspiring. Certainly both can create a similar aura both individually and collectively. Please consider this year how our humility and a greater concern for our collective can enhance our personal and communal fragrance.

Shana Tova u'metukah. May it be a good and sweet year for all.

■ **Loel Bartlett Miller**
Member, Sufism Reoriented
Walnut Creek

FRANCIS IN THE SCHOOLS: A Program for the Coming Era

On May 27, 2012, San Francisco celebrated the 75th birthday of the Golden Gate Bridge, an iconic symbol recognized around the globe. Earlier in this year of celebration, friars from Assisi visited San Fran-

cisco, fulfilling their dream of touring their sister city in the West. Passing through the Tenderloin district, gesturing toward the diseased, homeless, poor, and mentally ill who filled the sidewalks, they confided to their hosts, “How is it possible that this city, so loved throughout the world, could allow its citizens to live in such squalor and in obvious need?”

Murshida Carol Weyland Conner of Sufism Reoriented in Walnut Creek has long been distressed by this unacceptable situation, poignantly noted by these friars. In response, last year she launched a pilot program for school children, called “Francis in the Schools”, to introduce our children to the powerful legacy of the city’s namesake, Francis of Assisi. Murshida Conner hopes to foster in San Francisco’s future citizens a strong self identity based on the message of Francis, whose honoring of the divine light that flames in the hearts of all men is celebrated around the world. To date, she has offered seven one-day programs to underserved children from the Tenderloin, the Mission district, Bay View-Hunters Point and Chinatown, reaching over 1,000 children, assisted by volunteers from the Consortium of the Arts of Sufism Reoriented.

The Consortium singers, dancers and actors enact scenes from Francis’ life. Francis is introduced as a wealthy, frivolous youth, who chances to pass a leper on the road. Seeing the unmistakable misery in the leper’s eyes, he is compelled to help him. Francis’ rowdy companions urge him to come away, but Francis wraps his velvet cloak around the leper, exclaiming, “I MUST help him -- for there is no one else.” And so began his lifetime of service to his fellow man.

Murshida Conner reaffirms Francis’ insight: “**There is no one else.**” Indeed, we are invited to become golden bridges, reaching out our open hands to all in need, as did Francis. “Francis in the Schools” offers our children more than simply the gift of bread; it offers *love*, the real gift which will lead us all into a coming era of unity, brotherhood and lasting happiness.

**■ Dr. Harmesh Kumar
Sikh Temple
Pittsburg****Making Sense of the Wisconsin Massacre**

We all have been struggling to come to grips with the Wisconsin shooting last Sunday at the Sikh Gurdwara and less than a month ago in Colorado Theater by James Holmes. Last year it was Laughner of Arizona who wounded congresswoman Giffords and many others, and many more such individuals before that.

I have been reflecting on these recent incidents and was immediately hijacked on a tragic memory lane and started thinking about the incident at Columbine High School on April 20th in 1999 where some teenagers murdered many children. What can we make out of these senseless killings and the people who were behind these killings? Who can we blame as a community? How can it happen when we have the best and highly paid police force and other intelligence agencies? Are our leaders responsible for these incidents? Are our mental health professionals to blame or are our mental health professionals not doing enough to predict the violence? Some of the following thoughts come to my mind that I am going to share with all of you.

We cannot escape as a society, community, nation, and even at the global level from these violent incidents. However, together we need to find some answers to deal, cope and prevent these incidents from happening. It is not the responsibility of the police department alone, but who should we look up to help us? We need to help ourselves, as Benjamin Franklin said, that, "God helps those who help themselves."

Do we understand the implications of our daily duties and chores we fulfill in raising our kids, supporting our families, in making our livings? Do we understand how our policy makers contribute to making our system more functional or difficult?

I have been observing the world we have created in our homes through TV and in our work environment through the internet.

There has been a lot of concentration in the media about wars, currently Syria, Afghanistan and there is talk about an attack by Israel on Iran. Some of our role-models and leaders have spoken in terms of recreating another country's infrastructure to that of a medieval age or stone-age era. There is constant talk about the war on terror and a display of killing machines used to sustain that war. The words we use even in our daily life either playing sports like "go and kill that guy," etc. contributes to this lessening of human life. Are we paying attention?

When President Clinton was asked about the connection between Columbine and Kosovo bombing, he told the reporter he did not want to think about Kosovo and wanted to focus on Columbine.

We should be asking if our formal education system failing us in our attempt to live as one community. Is it dividing us between different classes or segments? Is this the goal of current education systems? My thinking is that the goals of our education system needs to create an enlightened individual who can serve the less fortunate who did not have the emotional, financial, social, or spiritual resources to get enlightened. If this is not the case, then the less enlightened will not understand the enlightened.

Sometimes I wonder who we are fighting with? Who is responsible for creating the troubled souls like Jared Lee Loughner, Jeffrey Dahmer, Theodore (Ted) Kaczynski, Timothy McVeigh, Osama Bin Laden? Which religion or social group is immune from producing or manufacturing such hateful minds?

We have heard many times from our media about their concerns about the Pakistani madrassas – or schools teaching hatred to young minds. I want to ask our leaders in the USA, can they deny such madrassas or schools in America? Many of my friends including the son of Satwant Singh Kaleka, president of Wisconsin Gurdwara, talked about the soft attacks on his community members including himself in the state of Georgia by white supremacists. Our history is replete with such soft attacks

Your Words—Continued

either based on race, caste, religion, sexual orientation, or on people whose souls are broken due to PTSD from the trauma of warfare. These groups are in every country on the face of the earth. What can our government do to stop this, or can they even do anything to stop prejudice or hatred? Or is it our duty at the individual level to practice within ourselves the ways to create peace within and then spread that peace around our surroundings? Have we considered what emotional and psychological scars these people have suffered which has led them to indulge in such gruesome crimes?

The other dangerous fuel we use is commercial games (virtual or real) in America and it is spreading to other countries like India and China where we teach kids how to "kill or hate" their enemies. They practice it in their own homes with computers, iPads, iPhones and tablets etc. Our leaders also provide wonderful role-models by demonizing their opponents as we have seen in recent political campaigns.

We need to focus on respect, dignity, respect and love for all. We need to reflect what it takes to stop the hurt and pain for ourselves and to express the love we need to apply to others.

There are groups in Sikhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Hinduism whose main motive is to show their superiority over other religious groups even though it is every religion's core value to spread the message of hope and respect for everyone and serve the humanity with love. Are we listening and applying that message in our individual lives?

Saint Kabir said many centuries ago, "*when your enemy dies do not celebrate because your friend will die too.*" The only way to save the world and younger generations from violence is to understand and accept the people as part of your extension.

I will end with a quote from Guru Nanak Ji, "*Accept all people as your equals and let them be your only sect; conquering ourselves, we conquer the world.*"

■ Rev. Alexis Easton
Brentwood Community United Methodist Church
Brentwood

If you lived in the US as a child, do you remember the AUTHORITY that the Church and the Bible had when you were growing up? Even if you didn't grow up in a Christian or church-going family, you likely had friends who did. Even if you didn't read the Good Book, you heard it quoted by others (who may or may not have actually read it regularly, but knew enough to quote a few verses!). The Church and the Bible had Authority with a capital A.

We in the United States are presently living through a crisis of authority which impacts all our institutions (family, education, government), none more than the Church. Periods of intense change and disputes over authority are always challenging and confusing. They are also fraught with tension and conflict, sometimes violently so. We understand that we cannot return to simpler times, that we must move forward... but how?

An Anglican bishop named Mark Dyer has observed that about every 500 years, the Christian Church is compelled to hold a Giant Rummage Sale. (The Bishop is being both witty and serious.) During the decades of the Rummage Sale, church institutions are shattered so that renewal can occur. At the conclusion of the Sale, stability is re-established... for a time..., but the Church has been transformed in crucial ways into a different institution. Friends, we are in the midst of the most recent Sale!

The last Rummage Sale was the Protestant Reformation. Although October 31, 1517 is often given as the start of the Reformation – the day Martin Luther nailed 95 Theses of protest against the Pope and Roman Catholic Church practices on the Wittenberg church door -- tension and debates within the Church had already been going on for over a century. By 1517 it had become clear that the fundamental debates boiled down to this question:

Where now is the authority?

Protestantism answered with fervor: Authority is with the Bible, the Word of God, the scripture – *sola scriptura, scriptura sola*. Everyone learned what those two Latin words meant – *only the Bible*. And along with the concept of *the priesthood of all believers*, Protestantism claimed a clear, new authority for centuries... which now, approximately 500 years later, is in upheaval. We are asking questions about authority again.

For the Church, disputes about the Bible – its authority and interpretation -- are at the center of our present Hinge Time. The confusion of the times is reflected in many Christians being uncertain how to engage with Scripture, how to claim a vital relationship with the Bible: (How) is it the Word of God? (How) is it true? What kind of authority does it have? How does it guide how I live?

Writer Phyllis Tickle in *The Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why* calls these 500-year upheavals Hinge Times. She mentions that a few Jewish and Islamic scholars are beginning to investigate whether such cycles may be identifiable in the history of their faith. Could there be perhaps an even wider pattern inclusive of the faiths of the People of the Book? We shall see. In the meantime, may we trust the Holy One and live with Grace through this Hinge Time.

■ *From our Faith Leaders Across the Nation:*

**Martin B. Copenhaver, Senior Pastor
Wellesley Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ
Wellesley, Massachusetts**

UCC Still Speaking Devotional
August 28, 2012

The Facts of Death

Excerpt from 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

"The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

Most parents seem to be able to remember the time they explained to their children what are sometimes called "the facts of life." I don't remember much

about such conversations with my own children - except, as I recall, their frequent use of words like "yuck."

What I do remember with blazing clarity, however, are the conversations I had with them about the facts of death.

Our daughter Alanna's first confrontation with death hit like a surprise thunderstorm. She was six years old. She and a little friend of hers encountered a dead frog crushed on the dirt road next to our house. At the time Alanna was, as she put it, "the master" of a pet frog. She adored that frog, so I imagine it was particularly difficult to see one of her frog's wild cousins flattened on the road.

To make matters worse, her friend offered some worldly commentary: "There's nothing to get upset about. Everyone ends up like that... you, that frog, your mother, your father, your brother..." (I never did like that kid.)

Alanna responded by running home in tears. I still remember - without wanting to remember - the grief-stricken look on her face as she burst through the door. I remember scrambling to find something to say, desperately trying to control a conflagration of grief when it felt like all I had was a tea-spoon with which to douse it. I held her as she cried for what seemed like hours. One's first encounter with death is never a trifling thing.

When we get older we sometimes speak of death in sanguine ways. We might say, for instance, "It's a part of life," or, "She will always be with us in spirit."

My children, however, seemed to know from the start that death is serious business. Death is an enemy, and a greedy one at that.

The victory we have over death in resurrection is not a victory over some trifle. No, it is an enormous victory to be celebrated as only victory over an ominous enemy can be celebrated - with joyous echoes in every cell of our being.

Social Justice Alliance
Of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County
All are welcome at the September 12 SOJA Meeting
7:00 pm, Interfaith Office

SOJA Members and Their ACTION Agenda

Health Care, Immigration, Middle East Matters, CROP Walk, MLK Celebration, Faithful Citizenship, & Winter Nights Shelter were among the topics which interest us.

Single Payer Health Care. One hundred people attended *The Health Care Movie* followed by a Q&A session led by **Pat Snyder** at St. Stephen's Catholic Parish in Walnut Creek. The movie features Canadian citizens telling their health care stories about the Single Payer Program, its services' availability, and its cost. It received rave reviews. Co-sponsored by St. Stephen's and Christ the King Parishes; co-chaired by **Natalie Russell** and **Gwen Watson**.

Immigration. Several SOJA members joined the MICA Immigration Task Force. **Delores Loague, Dean Coons, Chris Coons, and Dorothy Vance** reported on the plans for MICA members to attend the County Hearings on the proposal to add 150 beds for prisoners and immigrants in Contra Costa. MICA and CCISCO will lobby to replace the beds with services like job training, housing, food, etc. At the September 6 Hearing with Assembly Member Loni Hancock in attendance, the County leaders who serve on the Probation Panel took the 150 beds off the table and formed a Commission to provide re-entry services for prisoners leaving the jails.

They reminded us that Prayer Vigils are held every 3rd Wednesday at the West County Detention Center where prayers, music, and story telling are shared. **Rev. Debby Lee** leads the Prayer Circle, and a sizable group from Mt. Diablo Peace and Justice Center wearing yellow Immigration T-shirts attend regularly. **Bob Lane** leads them.

Middle East Matters. **Dr. Amer Araim** greeted us at the beginning of the meeting and then left to join his family as they celebrated a meal to mark the end of Ramadan.

MLK Celebration. **Natalie Russell**, who chairs the Martin Luther King Celebration each year for SOJA has contacted a keynote speaker, and arrangements for the event are underway. **Natalie** will report on the details in the near future.

Winter Nights Shelter. **Gwen Watson**, the Shelter's Executive Director, summarized some of the achievements of the 2011-2012 Shelter: 107 homeless individuals were helped, the majority children. **Joe Macaluso**, accompanied shelter residents to Homeless Court, and their driving records were expunged. Susan Nakashima joined the Shelter Staff as Manager of volunteers and correspondence. When Winter Nights closed for the summer season, all clients were offered a place to live. Only one did not accept the offer.

Gwen said it was a very good year.

UPDATE:

Gwen thanks **Rev. Alexis Easton** for assisting the Winter Nights Board of Directors, the Homeless Summit, during the transition period between I4C Executive Directors. One week after he was named Interim Executive Director of the Interfaith Council, **Rev. Will McGarvey** met with **Mahmood Barakzai**, Shelter Program Director and Personnel Manager, and **Gwen** for a briefing. **Will** plans to attend the September Homeless Summit. **Mahmood** reports that most of the staff from last year will return when we re-open on October 8, 2012, at St. Anselm's Episcopal Church. Our Grant Writer **Jo Kerner** deserves special recognition for preparing applications in the midst of selling her home and moving into a new one. The Traveling Tutors, under **Judy Stillman's** direction, will meet next week to organize their educational materials and plan their Homework and Reading Chart activities. Movie Tickets Shout Out: The top prize for hours of reading with a congregation volunteer is a Movie Ticket. The next time you go to the theater for a movie, would you consider purchasing an extra ticket and donating it to the Winter Nights Reading Program! Thank you.

CROP Walk Contra Costa. Anne Crisp, CROP Walk Chair, reminds us that this year's Walk will be on Sunday, October 7, with registration at the Gazebo at Walnut Creek City Park, Broadway corner Civic. Each year something new is added. This year a musical group will serenade us before the Walk begins, and all walkers will wear a yellow shoulder ribbon with the CROP Walk logo on it. At 1:30 pm Rev. Will McGarvey will bless the walkers as they head for the four-mile-long trail. Please join us and bring along family members, neighbors, your doggie friends, too.

Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center. We recently bid farewell to our friend Mary Alice O'Connor. Now we welcome Crystallee Crain as the new Executive Directive. No grass is growing under her feet, as the Center co-sponsors a panel on Ballot Measure 34 the night of Tuesday, September 25, 7:00 pm, at Christ the King Parish Hall, 199 Brandon Road, corner Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill.

Faithful Citizenship. Death Penalty Panel, Tuesday, September 25, 7:30 pm, at Christ the King Church, 199 Brandon Road, Pleasant Hill. Panelists are: Ron Ahnen from St. Mary's College, President of California Prison Focus; Jeanne Woodford, Executive Director, Death Penalty Focus, former Warden of San Quentin; and Daryl Stalworth, Asst. District Attorney for Alameda County. Co-sponsors: Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center, Christ the King Parish, Catholic Diocese of Oakland, and Death Penalty Focus. Free of Charge. All are welcome.

"Pros & Cons of the Eleven State Ballot Measures," presented by the League of Women Voters at Christ the King Parish Hall, 7:00 pm, Thursday, October 4, 2012. All are invited. No charge. Those attending will carry home a copy of the Pros & Cons. CTK address: 199 Brandon Road, Pleasant Hill.

Coming Events

■ Ten Days of Peace

September 11-21
Oakland Peace Center
111 Fairmount Ave., Oakland

The Oakland Peace Center (a network of Oakland and Bay Area non-profits working to create peace and justice) is hosting Ten Days of Peace, beginning on September 11 (Axis of Friendship Day, when people remember our solidarity with one another) and concluding on September 21 (International Day of Peace, when we join with people all across the globe in ending violence). Each day has different programming from an author talk on the Iranian independence movement to yoga to the practice of a gift economy to presentations by civil rights hero Bob Moses and Kingian Nonviolence practitioner Bernard Lafayette. Come for any part of this exceptional series, and invite your friends! The whole collection of the Oakland Peace Center's Ten Days of Peace can be found at <http://oaklandpeacecenter.org/>.

■ Book presentation "The Qur'an: With or Against the Bible?"

Sunday Sept. 23 at 2:00 pm
South Bay Islamic Center
325 N. 3rd Street, San Jose

Who wrote the Qur'an? What is the Qur'anic view on the Prophets, especially Moses and Jesus? What does the Qur'an teach about Interfaith Relations? Does the Qur'an render Women as Second-Class Citizens? Does the Qur'an Promote Violence? These and other questions will be discussed in an open and frank manner with Dr. Ejaz Naqvi, author of the new book "The Qur'an: With or Against the Bible?" which talks about the similarities between the Holy Scriptures of Muslims, Christians and Jews. This event is free and open to people of all faiths. Please RSVP so that we can make the necessary arrangements for refreshments. This New "Book Club" event is being organized by the Media Committee of the SBIA. For those interested to read the book in advance of the event, you can purchase it online at the link here: Here for Barnes and Noble. Dr. Naqvi is available to present his book and lead interfaith dialogues around the county. Contact him at enaqvi786@yahoo.com for more information.

■ Neighbor to Neighbor Interfaith Series and Dialogue -Jews, Christians and Muslims:

The Abrahamic Faiths Learn From and With Each Other
Sunday mornings in October at 9:30 a.m.
Temple Isaiah

Coming Events—Continued

3800 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette

Oct. 7: Rabbi Roberto D. Graetz, Temple Isaiah
 Oct. 14: Pastor Judy Durff, LOPC
 Oct. 21: Imad Aboussi, SRVIC
 Oct. 28: Members of TI, LOPC and SRVIC

On the fourth Sunday, a panel of lay people from each faith will describe their faith journeys. This series is modeled on the very successful programs presented at LOPC from which our Neighbor to Neighbor Interfaith initiative with TI, LOPC and the San Ramon Valley Islamic Center was created. Please plan to join us in the New Year as we establish closer bonds with our neighbors of faith. (925) 283-8575.

■ CROP Walk – Save the date OCTOBER 7 to end hunger one step at a time!

Sunday, October 7, 1:00 p.m.
 Civic Park
 1375 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek

CROP HUNGER WALK 2012 - The walk raises funds for Church World Services with 25% of the funds designated for the Winter Nights Program. Crop Hunger Walk 2012 packets are now available. Contact Anne Crisp at 925-356-8822 or annecrisp@yahoo.com for a packet and more information or individuals wishing to participate may just show up at Civic Park.

■ UN International Day of Peace

Saturday, October 20, 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
 Bay Area Family Church
 2305 Washington Ave., San Leandro

Keynote speakers will be Rev. Charles Gibbs, Herb Behrstock, and Pastor Kevin Thompson. There will also be music from the choir "Nadeshiko", Interactive workshops, a beautiful Bridge of Peace Ceremony, and a chance to have lunch together with your new-found brothers and sisters. Organizers include the Universal Peace Federation, the United Religions Initiative, the United Nations Association of the East Bay, the Women's Federation for World Peace, and Women's Interfaith Circle of Service. Current co-sponsors include AHIMSA of Berkeley, American Clergy Leadership Conference, Bay Area Family Church, Carry the Vision, Centers of Light, The Chaplaincy Institute, Geeta Society, Healthy Communities, InterConsultUSA, Interfaith Center at the Presidio, Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County, Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue, Pathways to Peace, Principled Academy, Service for Peace, Suscol Inter-Tribal Council, and UNA-USA San Francisco Chapter. With special thanks to Inlay-Arts.com

for helping us with the new website [Bay Area Peace Forum](#). For more information call (510) 483-4712 or email bafcoffice@gmail.com. \$10 suggested donation.

■ SHELTER, Inc.'s Hike For Shelter

Sunday, October 21st

(By yourself, with a few friends, your family, corporate team or hiking club, your participation will increase awareness and raise funds to prevent and end homelessness, one family at a time.) SHELTER, Inc. of Contra Costa presents the third annual Hike for SHELTER, a hiking fundraising program that brings together neighbors, friends, families and local groups for a one-day event to raise awareness about homelessness in our community. Hike for SHELTER is for all levels of abilities from walkers to seasoned hikers. Before the big day, enjoy the local trails by training individually or with a group at our optional training hikes every weekend leading up to the event. Hikers will take to Mount Diablo and complete any one of four trails of their choosing depending on fitness level. For more information, go to www.shelterinccccc.org or contact hike@shelterinccccc.org.

David Swanson Event

Saturday, November 10, 2:00 PM
 Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center, Owl Room,
 55 Eckley Lane, Walnut Creek

Afternoon presentation by the Host of Talk Nation Radio, Coordinator for www.rootsaction.org, Veterans For Peace. Co-sponsored by Friendly Favors.

~
Send your event to Will McGarvey at
eye4cee@gmail.com

For a more detailed listing of events go to at
<http://interfaithccc.org/> click on Events. Contact us to subscribe to our regular Events E-mail.

New contact information:

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Susan Nakashima, Office Manager
Phone: (925) 933-6030
E-mail: eye4cee@aol.com



The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County presents:

The Making a Difference Awards

We know how much each congregation – and their members – contribute to the work of the Interfaith Council. We would not be able to do our work together without each and every one of them. So this year, as we prepare for the Annual Meeting on November 18th, we ask each congregation and agency of the Council to nominate their own “Making a Difference” awardee, which will be honored with a printed Certificate, and on our website.

The Executive Committee of the ICCCC has established a two-tiered recognition program called “**Making a Difference**.**”** We invite all of our member congregations and agencies to nominate a person of excellence whose service to the interfaith community (in leadership, service, encouragement, and/or participation) is “Making a Difference” within and outside your particular congregation or agency.

We invite all congregations and agencies connected with ICCCC to submit the name and a paragraph describing the service of their nominee. We will recognize all nominees in a list of names and congregation/agency on our website and on our mailed newsletter. Submissions will need to be received by Nov. 1st.

A sub-committee of the Executive Committee will make a recommendation of which individual will receive the Annual ICCCC “*Making a Difference Award*” of the whole Interfaith Council at our Annual Meeting on Sunday, November 18th at Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church (55 Eckley Lane, Walnut Creek). The evening begins with a true potluck begins at 6:00 pm, and the main event begins at 7:00 pm.

Please send your nominees to eye4cee@aol.com.

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

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Secretary.....Loel Bartlett Miller
Treasurer.....Myrdell Dybdal
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Chaplain.....Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley
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THANK YOU CORNER:

Special thanks to our faithful newsletter volunteers who collated, folded, stickered and labeled the previous issue of *Ministering Together*: Elsie Boarman, Catherine Cromwell, Madeline Gomes, Diana Hill, Bob and Mary Hogan, Jean Lind, Lois McGee, and Dorothy Vance. We value these fine folks for their generous gift of time and energy. If you would like to join this joyous band of volunteers, we would welcome you. Please call Lenita at 925-672-1053.

PLEASE PRAY FOR (in our rotating circle of prayer):

Rev. Will McGarvey as he takes the reins as Executive Director of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County.
Winter Nights Staff as they prepare for another season of providing shelter to our homeless brothers and sisters.
Concord United Methodist Church
Peace Lutheran Church, Danville
Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church
First Congregational Church, Martinez
Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley
Jackie Wan, Singing Messengers Director
St. Monica's Catholic Church, Moraga
The Alzheimer's Association and others in the fight against Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.
The people of Syria struggling with civil war.