



M inistering Together

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

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

October 2006

Coming Events

❖ CROP Walk

Sunday, October 1, 1:00 p.m. registration
Walnut Creek Civic Park
Corner of Civic and Broadway

Be a part of this 4.2-mile walk to raise money for world hunger and the Winter Nights Shelter. Sign up as an individual or congregational group and get sponsors. Sponsored by Church World Services. For more information, contact www.cropwalk.org.

❖ 2006 Elections Briefing

Thursday, October 5, 9:00 to 11:30 a.m.
First Unitarian Church
685 – 14th St., Oakland

Sponsored by the Social Justice Program and FAITHS Program of the San Francisco Foundation, this event is aimed at understanding the statewide propositions 1C (Housing and Emergency Shelter Trust Fund Act), 89 (Statute regarding political campaign public financing, corporate taxes, and campaign contribution and expenditure limits), and 90 (Constitutional Amendment regarding government acquisition and regulation of private property). Reserve space with Michelle Chambers at mmc@sff.org or 415-733-8539.

❖ An Inconvenient Truth by Al Gore

Come to any one of these free screenings of the recent movie, sponsored by California Interfaith Power and Light. Call the individual church.

Sunday, October 1, 7:00 P.M.
Lafayette Christian Church
584 Glenside Drive, Lafayette

Monday, October 2, 6:30 P.M.
Hillcrest Congregational Church
404 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill

Wednesday, October 4, 7:30 P.M.
Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church
55 Eckley Lane, Walnut Creek

Friday, October 6, 7:00 P.M.
Lafayette United Methodist Church
955 Moraga Road, Lafayette

Thursday, October 12 7:00 P.M.
Temple Isaiah
3800 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette

❖ Amy Goodman Speaks

Saturday, October 7, 12:00 noon
Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church
49 Knox Dr., Lafayette

Award-winning journalist and host of the radio/TV news hour, Democracy Now!, talks about her new book, “Static: Government Liars, Media Cheerleaders, and the People Who Fight Back.” Donation \$20 at door, \$15 in advance.

Tickets available at <http://www.mtdpc.org> or the Lafayette Book Store, 3579 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette. For more information, contact 925-933-7850 or info@mtdpc.org.

❖ Sharing Ramadan

Saturday, October 7, 4:30 p.m.
Islamic Center of Contra Costa
2836 Clayton Rd., Concord

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) co-sponsors this event, inviting friends, neighbors and others to break the fast during Ramadan on this day. The *Iftar*, or fast-breaking meal, is complimentary. To reserve your place, visit <http://www.myvillage.us/my/ramadan>.

❖ Jazz at Peace

Sunday, October 8, 5:00 p.m.
Peace Lutheran Church
3201 Camino Tassajara, Danville

Join this popular returning jazz series, with artists Anton Schwartz and Inga Swearingen. Free admission. For more information, contact 925-648-7000.

❖ What is Compassionate Listening?

Monday, October 9, 6:30 p.m.
Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology, 2301 Vine St., Berkeley

Come to learn about the Compassionate Listening Project, which is dedicated to teaching skills to heal polarization, cultivate healthy relationships, and build bridges between people, communities and nations in conflict. Training sessions in Compassionate Listening will also be held October 29 and November 5. To learn more, contact Sr. Marianne Farina at 510-883-2081 or

mfarina@dspt.edu.

❖ Israel: Land, People and Peace

Wednesdays, October 11, 18 and 25, 7:00 p.m.
Saint Timothy's Episcopal Church, Grace House
1550 Diablo Rd., Danville

Join this series of presentations to understand the situation in the Middle East and the many dimensions to achieving peace and security for two peoples. Admission is free. For more information, contact 925-837-4993 or www.sainttimothysdanville.org.

❖ Catholic Charities of the East Bay

The Bishop's Annual Bay Public Policy Breakfast.

Wednesday, October 18, 2006
St. Columbia Catholic Church
6401 San Pablo Ave. at 64th St., Oakland
Keynote address on Immigration and the Church by The Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron, Bishop of Oakland

❖ Holy Convergence II

Sunday, October 22, 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Peace Lutheran Church
3201 Camino Tassajara Rd., Danville

Join many Contra Costa congregations for this family event celebrating the many fall religious celebrations in October. There will be music, food, crafts, discussion, dancing, music, labyrinth walking and more. For more information, contact 925-648-7000.

❖ Working Toward Peace in the Middle East—Various venues

Thursday through Sunday, October 26 through 29

Ron Young of the U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East will be visiting to moderate and lead various presentations in the county. Details are listed on page two.

❖ World Community Day
Friday, November 3, 9:30 a.m.
St. Mark's United Methodist Church
451 Moraga Way, Orinda

All are invited to this inter-faith worship and learning experience, sponsored by Church Women United. Worship joyfully and learn

More Coming Events

about similarities of various faiths. Call Lenita Shumaker, (925-672-1053 for more information.

❖ Interfaith Council Annual Meeting

Sunday, November 5, 7:00 p.m.
Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha Sikh Temple
2150 Crestview Dr., Pittsburg

All members and friends of the Interfaith Council are encouraged to attend our Annual Meeting to welcome new member congregations, approve new Executive Committee members, hear progress from the last year and celebrate the Spirit's collaboration. Call 925-933-6030 to confirm your attendance.

❖ Commemoration of Kristallnacht, The Night of Broken Glass

Thursday, November 9, 7:30 p.m.
Contra Costa Jewish Community Center
2071 Tice Valley Boulevard, Walnut Creek

The Guest Speaker will be Rolf Schuette
Consul General of Germany in San Francisco

There will be a screening of the acclaimed documentary, "Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Pacifist and Nazi Resister."

Admission: \$7. For more information, email riva@jfed.org or call 510-839-2900 extension 253.

❖ Humanity as family:

Celebrating global community through music, art & dance.
Sunday, November 12, 4:00 p.m.
St. John Vianney Church
1650 Ygnacio Valley Road, Walnut Creek

Come to this wonderful interfaith concert and art display. Freewill offering to benefit Winter Nights Shelter. For more information call 925-933-6030

❖ Project Homeless Connect

Wednesday, December 7, all day
Richmond Auditorium
403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond

Partners around the county are organizing this one-day, one-stop shop to offer a variety of services to people experiencing homelessness. (You may have heard about the San Francisco version already.)

Volunteers and in-kind donations are being solicited right

Interfaith Council Annual Meeting
Sunday, November 5, 7:00 p.m.
Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha Sikh Temple
2150 Crestview Dr., Pittsburg

Dear Friends,

As you can see from the first two pages, there are significant events taking place in the next few months. This is the "busy season" of interfaith work. Please take note of what is happening, and attend what grabs your attention. If there is an event which you want us to publicize for you, let us know. And allow me to highlight these events:



7:00 p.m.

Round Table Discussion for Religious Leaders
Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, Oak Room, 49 Knox Dr., Lafayette

Friday, October 27

7:30 p.m.

Shabbat Service
Congregation B'nai Tikvah
25 Hillcroft Way, Walnut Creek

Saturday, October 28

7:00 p.m.

Palestinian Voices
Walnut Creek United Methodist Church
1543 Sunnyvale Ave., Walnut Creek

Sunday, October 29

3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Islamic Center of San Ramon
23 Pebble Ct., San Ramon

Each of these events has a different slant, and Mr. Young will provide leadership and resourcing in each place. We are still welcoming support for his visit, both financially and for hospitality. If you would like to help, contact the Interfaith Council office at 925-933-6030 or eye4cee@aol.com.

Interfaith Council Annual Meeting

The time of year is coming when we meet once again to conduct our own business. We will welcome new congregations, affirm new leaders, hear reports, and celebrate relationships. The place is the Shri Guru Ravidass Sabha Sikh Temple, located at 2150 Crestview Dr. in Pittsburg. A map is shown on the opposite page. All 102 constituent congregations of the Council are encouraged to send a representative or two. In true Sikh fashion, the temple members will provide delicious food. If you know you are coming, it would help if you could notify the Interfaith Council office at 925-933-6030.

Other Opportunities

I feel so blessed to be in an area where so many events and efforts of such high quality are taking place. Jazz, interfaith concerts, inspiring speakers, global warming awareness raising, joint projects, good political involvement – these things are happening because of people like you. Keep up the good work.

Project Homeless Connect

Partners throughout the county are uniting to put on a one-day, one-stop shop for homeless people in Contra Costa, to help them get connected to services and resources. The date is Wednesday, December 7, and the place is the Richmond Auditorium. What we need now are **VOLUNTEERS and DONATIONS**.

We know that many of you will be very interested in helping out. You can be present on the day to welcome and guide the clients around the premises. You can help them complete applications for medical and dental care. You can serve food or provide transportation. If you have the expertise, you could do something in your specialty area, such as do eye exams, provide translation, do massage or foot care, provide legal assistance.

Donations are also needed, from clothing, blankets and sleeping bags to backpacks, strollers, food, soap and gift certificates.

December 7 is going to be here soon, so please respond right away, if you can. You can visit cchealth.org or call 925-313-6124 or email cbelon@hdsd.cccounty.us. Checks may be sent to GRIP/Project Homeless Connect, 597 Center Ave., Suite 325, Martinez, CA 94553. Please consider being involved in this very important program.

Working Toward Peace in the Middle East

We are privileged to welcome Mr. Ronald Young of the U.S. Interreligious Committee for Peace in the Middle East at the end of this month. He is an experienced and respected mediator and organizer on the national and international level, and will lead us in a wide spectrum of events, helping us to be agents and advocates for peace. Here is what is planned:

Thursday, October 26

9:30 to 11:00 a.m.

Political Science Class of Dr. Amer Araim,
Diablo Valley College
321 Golf Club Road, Pleasant Hill

Chaplain's Corner



Nearly seven years ago a shy little fourteen year old and I became acquainted at the Orin Allen facility in Byron. Dennis was housed right along all the older, bigger kids in "Dorm 1", (this was before "Dorm 2", the "little room", was built.)

He had been abandoned by his parents and had resided in a half dozen foster homes and then in a series of group homes and had good reason for not trusting very many people. According to him, a succession of promises had been made by care givers, social workers, probation offices and others, and were either partially kept or entirely ignored. Undoubtedly he thought I was just another "grown-up" issuing empty assurances and guarantees...

We spoke a few more times before he completed his program at the ranch. But, since he had no home where he could return, he was sent once more off to a group home. Although we did not correspond during his time at the group home in another part of the state, I had kept up with his progress. I knew several members of the staff at the group home and was provided with periodic updates about his progress.

Shortly before his eighteenth birthday, he asked to be returned to the Bay Area, because upon reaching the age of majority, the home county money stops and it was the group home's practice to take the new adults to a motel and drop them off. He would be "stranded" 350 miles from home, so he waited out the final days before his eighteenth birthday in juvenile hall here.

It was at this time that a compassionate probation officer called to ask: "Do you know Dennis? Could you help him? The kid will be eighteen in a matter of days. He has earned the GED and essentially has no where to go..."

We became "reacquainted" and together we addressed the issues at hand; near-future living arrangements, education plans. After provisions for housing were made and secured, and he was released from custody, we began to focus attention on school. "I am not ready to go to college," was the constant and familiar refrain.

Dennis had made arrangements to live in the home of a former foster parent and to get a job. I did not hear from him for several months he had apparently become tired of my consistent attempts to persuade this sharp, now eighteen year old to pursue higher education. I was pleasantly surprised when I received a telephone call from him, he was still convinced that he was not prepared to go to college, but he needed my assistance because he wanted to finish his high school diploma.

The registrar at the Martinez Adult School where I took him to enroll, asked the same question I had asked days

earlier, "Why". The kid already had the GED, but he was determined. So all concerned echoed one another as we responded in unison, "OK, let's get started."

The process was nearly derailed early on when the young man got off the bus from Richmond directly in front of the Martinez Adult School. Backpack in hand, moving enthusiastically toward the school entrance. Dennis was stopped by an overzealous Martinez police officer who asked him, "What are you doing in my town?" Dennis called to inform me. A simple telephone call to the Martinez police chief from a third party resolved the problem for us.

Dennis went on to earn the high school diploma. Two years ago he entered Butte College, rather reluctantly at first. He completed a year there and then decided to come back to the Bay Area for a year to attend a local community college. With one semester to go before transferring to an out-of-state university, he decided to return this fall to Butte College. A living arrangement with the former foster parent ended the day before we left. With the majority of his belongings in a dozen or more trash bags, we set out for Chico. The Sojourner Truth Presbyterian Church Board of Deacons graciously provided some assistance for housing, but a co-signer was required, same problem he had encountered before.

This fall three others are enrolled at Butte College, with the aid of Easter Hill United Methodist Church Women, Juvenile Hall Auxiliary, Church Women United, Auxiliary teachers in Juvenile Hall and a Bay Area TV station news anchor.

At the age of 21 Dennis set out to find his biological parents. He recalled his middle name and his father's first name. I suggested he call 411 for information.

When he asked "Do you know Theodore Baxter? a voice at the other end of the line replied "He is my son." The grandmother put him in touch with his father, who invited him to come by to visit. His father was cordial, but guarded, it was a bitter sweet experience.

Sunday morning I took the kids, including Dennis, to church in Chico. Dennis was so moved by the sermon and the experiences of the previous day, he joined the church, the historical Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. That evening Dennis made contact with friends who were looking for a roommate in an apartment complex. He moved in the next morning, without a co-signer.

Once everyone was fed, on campus, in classes, provided with books, supplies, places to live...I said a prayer of thanksgiving, then I steered my car south and west. There was a smile on my face.

Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley
Juvenile Detention Chaplain

Raphael Asher
Congregation B'nai Tikvah

. . . [A] classic scene from "Annie Hall" [shows] Woody and Diane standing in line at the movies with some professor from City College is spewing forth his theories on Marshall McLuhan and the Media. The professorial arrogance is driving Woody ballistic until he walks off the screen, stage left, and pulls in McLuhan himself to tell the guy how pompously off base he is. The younger Woody turns to the camera and comments about how nice it would be if matters could be so clearly resolved in real life.

The Jewish community had such an epiphany recently when Mel Gibson showed some true colors to the LAPD. He had previously spewed forth on film what was clearly to us thinly veiled hateful fulminations, but denied that neither the "Passion" nor he was anti-Semitic. But now, with more than a few drinks under his seat belt, he told the world what he really thinks. *We knew it all along!*

However, what more do we Jews know about what some consider the "Gentile Mentality?" We in the American Jewish community certainly know not to reduce it all to some core anti-Semitism. On the contrary, within these last few post-war generations, we have learned a lot about the decency and diversity of Christian America and have in no small way admired the talents and strengths of America's heartland. We Jews have been known occasionally to be so enamored of such qualities as to mask our own by imitation.

The historical dynamics are complex to say the least, and they are now compounded with so many interfaith families, conversions to Judaism, and an abundance of non-Jewish energies within synagogue life. There are now few if any American Jewish families who have not needed to make some essential attitude adjustments since we left the 60's and the eastern urban ghettos.

In order to understand these dynamics better I intend to dissect the theme of "Jews and the 'Nations'" in each of my Holyday sermons. And as we worship this year in both a Lutheran and Catholic Church I may ask us all to sort through the jumble of thoughts and emotions that we hold on this richly evolving topic.

We all loved Annie Hall's fashion and style ("la de da!"), and we all acknowledged the wit and neuroses of poor, dear Woody. At the beginning of this New Year, I'll be asking us all to unravel a few of these deep affections in order to prepare for a sweet and quite unanticipated Jewish future.

Susan Whalen
Orinda Community Church

This is back-to-school week in Orinda, the time of the year when our All-Church Picnic celebrates the return of summer vacationers and the Learning Community goes geared up for fall classes. As a Learning Community teacher, I can tell you its almost impossible to overestimate how much our children learn from us in the church community, and, perhaps more surprisingly, how much wisdom they lovingly give back. One recent example was occasioned by my driving my son and daughter to day care, running a few minutes late, after we'd jammed in the basketball, bicycles, sack lunches, the extra T-shirt, the sun block, everything they'd need for the day. The deep questions kids ask never seem to come at particularly holy moments. They generally come when I feel inattentive and harassed, thinking about the laundry and dishes and hardly aware of my surroundings, like a cosmic lightning bolt that strikes the ground in front of me, and orders you to *wake up!* Once we were finally on our way, my daughter suddenly asked, "Why does everybody think about God so much?"

I pondered this for a moment while trying to grasp what was being asked here, and what the response would be. I finally said to her, "One reason why is because they want to know the answer to some important questions. What are we here for? What are we supposed to be doing? Katie looked at me as if I was slightly dense. "To take care of nature," she said. "You know, the plants and animals."

...Katie loves to talk to every kind of animal, to look at bugs, touch flowers and care for every kind of plant. She's in love with the natural world. And of course, growing up with a committed environmentalist for a mom and in our postmodern, politically correct Bay Area, an answer like this is to her as natural as breathing. "Well," I said to Katie, "you have a point. After all, the Bible says our job is to be stewards of God's creation; although sometimes it seems nature takes care of itself better on its own, than when humans get involved." The whole history of environmental damage, of which my daughter is well aware, seemed to stretch before us. Katie just looked at me and explained, patiently, as you would to a small child, "Well, everybody makes mistakes."

[Our] conversation ended there. But the conversation in my head had just begun. The fact that we haven't done such a good job of protecting the environment doesn't diminish for her for a moment the fact that it remains our mission to do so. I grew up worrying about nuclear winter and the destruction of the rain forest (long before we even thought about global warming) so it's been easy to slip into an environmentalist despair, thinking there is

no turning around our identity as mindless destructors of the Garden of Eden. Katie obviously sees it differently. She's prepared to be gentle with the whole of humanity, to accept all failings of my generation, to learn from the mistakes, move on and be the stewards of the earth that God meant them to be. It was as though, for a moment, I was touched by the essence of God's grace. This is how I envision God's approach to humanity; constantly stumbling, constantly failing, yet being picked up, dusted off, set back on our feet with a gentle admonishment, "Everybody makes mistakes sometimes." It was as though the angels were singing to me, at least until we pulled up to our destination and were surrounded with kids and harried moms. Then conversations about God were traded in for "Is there a cupcake in my lunch?" and "Why did you forget my swim goggles, why?"

As our Learning Community kids once again settle into the fall routine, I hope every adult in the church knows that they are welcome to engage with our children, any time, and so receive some of the gifts they have to offer. Our kids may be too short to spot in the pews, but if you listen you can hear their youthful voices talking, and singing. Or maybe that's the angels.

Roger Reaber **Grace Presbyterian Church, W.C.**

Abi and I made our annual pilgrimage to Clayton Bowl. There is nothing like bowling only once a year to aid a person's development of humility. Abi's first ball went straight into the gutter so I coached: "Abi, think about what you are doing." Her friend, Tracy, was then up and bowled with a little more success.

I approached the lane with confidence. I envisioned a strike but would have been pleased with any pins crashing to the floor. I was in perfect form as I approached the line. Muscle memory take over as I gracefully swung the ball behind me and brought it forward. I made only one little mistake. I forgot to let go of the ball. As it went forward so did I. As it crossed the black line so did I. As it hit the floor so did I! Abi said I looked like Bambi, in the Disney Classic, who did the splits trying to stand on the ice. I felt like a walrus bouncing and sliding across the beach. It is slippery on the other side of that black line. At least I did better than the ball. I stayed out of the gutter.

If I could have only one moment of my sabbatical caught on tape I wish that this could have been it. I laughed so hard I cried. Abi and Tracy were stunned by my athletic ability and laughed with me.

Here are a few lessons of the experience:

1. Before you coach someone you need to know what you are talking about.
2. Some lines are not to be crossed.
3. Some times it is important to let go.

4. Try to stay out of the gutter.
5. When you make a mistake get up and try again.
6. Never take yourself too seriously.
7. Sharing a laugh can be bonding.
8. Enjoy special times with special people.

Canoeing with Sam was an equally rewarding experience. We tipped over only twice and we laughed a lot. Be careful out there. You might find yourself laughing.

Fr. Richard Mangini **St. Bonaventure Catholic Church, Concord**

"Behind Mel's Meltdown" – That was the lead article in People magazine's August 14 issue — the first People magazine I ever bought. The article raised two very interesting questions about alcoholism and about the Catholic faith.

I admire Mel Gibson as an actor and a filmmaker. In the end of his arrest and all the vile anti-Semitic thoughts that he spewed forth will probably not have a devastating effect on his career. However, he could become a great model as a recuperating alcoholic for all those closeted drinkers who don't think that they have a drinking problem.

According to the magazine article, in a few hours Mel went, from being a "genial sort of drunk" to a belligerent threatening person who "launched into a bizarre tirade" against Jews. This is often the behavior of an alcoholic. Mel Gibson has admitted that he has a life-long problem, has had it under control, but lost it again.

The medical science of alcoholism teaches that once you are an alcoholic, you remain an alcoholic. It has nothing to do with faith or good will. It has to do with the chemistry of the body. At best, you become a "recovering alcoholic" for the rest of your life. You can never take a drink again without the horrible consequences to follow. But it is not just a physical or chemical program. Alcoholism masks psychological and emotional issues, usually having to do with self-esteem, love and abuse, relationships with parents what were not affirming.

Alcoholics take refuge in work, in unhealthy relationships, in destructive behavior and in unwholesome versions of religion. The article points out that Mel Gibson has said bizarre things before about others, and about the Catholic Church; that he is building his own chapel where others who believe as he does can come to a Latin mass. It is very clear that Mel Gibson is not in the mainstream of Catholic Church Life. There is no amount of Latin or rigorist practice of the Catholic faith that is going to cure alcoholism and all the emotional issues that accompany it. And it is not

Your Words Continued

“his Church or his father’s”. It is the worldwide Roman Catholic Church. I have no wish to debate Mr. Gibson. I am sure that his razor sharp mind and command of the English language could cut me and my opinion to shreds. However, I have spent 40 years observing alcoholism - how it ruins those who cannot recover from it, how it devastates family life. I have heard hundreds of miracle stories about the connections between alcoholism and family issues. I have seen people kill themselves because they could never become a disciplined, recovering alcoholic.

There are many “recovering alcoholics” in our parish community who are living completely recovered lives. It is their children, however, who are often still dealing with the effects of their previous life of alcoholism. Some of Mel Gibson’s children may not escape either. How can I speak so authoritatively here? Because I have seen so much and the facts are in.

We have a Recovery Ministry in the parish composed of recovering alcoholic parishioners who have come forward to offer their experiences and their support. They receive only one call or so per month—a Christian support group to help fellow Catholics to navigate these perilous domestic and personal issues.

Does this mean that we have less alcoholics living in Clayton and eastern Concord? No. You would have to come only to the Monday evening closed AA meeting and the other addiction groups that meet throughout the week to know that is not true.

So why all the hype about Mel Gibson? Because he is

a worldwide theater figure who is admired by many and he has the superstar qualifications to be a model for alcoholism recovery. I encourage you to pray for Mel Gibson and for his personal recovery.

MUSLIMS OBSERVE RAMADAN

Dr. Amer Araim

On September 23 Muslims all over the world began fasting, which is one of the important pillars of Islam. The month of fasting is called Ramadan and it is the ninth month of the lunar calendar. Muslims refrain from eating and drinking from dawn to sunset. Muslims also recite more often the holy Quran which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad in Ramadan. The verses of the Quran concerning Ramadan read as follows: “O’ believers, fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may achieve *taikwa* [constant consciousness of Allah, guarding the self against evil temptations and self-restraint].” “The month of Ramadan in which the Quran is revealed is a guidance for mankind, with clear teachings showing the right way and a criterion of truth and falsehood.”

In addition to fasting, Muslims conduct special extra prayers each night, recite the Quran, supplicate to Allah by always praising and remembering Him and providing food to the poor.

After a month of fasting, Muslims will celebrate the breaking of the fast, and that is one of the major feasts in the Islamic tradition.

Point of View—Risking Conversation

THE PLIGHT OF PALESTINIANS REFUGEES

Dr. Amer Araim, Dar-ul-Islam Mosque, Concord

Israel continues to build Jewish settlements on land usurped from Palestinians. United Nations and United States’ Administrations considers this an obstacle for peace in the region. The only viable solution is the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 and finding an amicable solution to the plight of Palestinian refugees. In return, all Arab countries are ready to establish normal relations with Israel. I refer here to the repeatedly stated position of the Palestinian leadership that the right of return of Palestinian refugees should be implemented through negotiations with the government of Israel and without adversely affecting the Jewish character of the state of Israel.

The question is repeatedly raised why the Arab states do not settle the Palestinian refugees in their own countries? The answer is that there are rules of international law governing the situation of the refugees. Any refugee should be given the choice between going back to his/her home or accept compensation and settle in another country. Fur-

thermore why should the Arab states assist Israel in its ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians? Why would a Jew from Russia or Ukraine, who has never been to Palestine, be allowed to go and settle in Palestine, with the help of United States taxpayers’ money, while Palestinians who were expelled less than sixty years ago by the Israelis not be able to go back to their homes?

Unless these questions are answered on the basis of justice there will always be tension and conflict, which we the people of faith should work hard to resolve on the basis of our own articles of faith, i.e. to end human sufferings. Accusing everyone who opposes oppression of the Palestinians as anti-Semitic does great disservice to the fight against Anti-Semitism and against bigotry and chauvinism.

Let us work toward peace and justice in the Holy Land, let us refrain from personal attacks, let those who preach anti-defamation avoid defaming others who are concerned about peace and justice in the Holy Land. It is in the best interest of the Palestinians, the Israelis, Jews, Arabs, Muslims, Christians, the United States of America and the entire world to have peace and justice in the Holy Land.

Social Justice Alliance-SoJA

FOR THE SOCIAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE (SOJA) MEMBERS, OCTOBER WILL BE A MONTH OF ACTION AND DISCERNMENT:

October 1 – We launch the month by walking 4.2 miles on the Iron Horse Trail for our brothers and sisters around the world who are hungry and who do not have safe water to drink. **Contra Costa CROP WALK** will send 75% of its walkers' donations to **Church World Service** to distribute to agencies that help the hungry, and 25% will benefit our **Winter Nights Family Shelter**.

October 8 – The **Concord Naval Weapons Station Interfaith Task Force** will sponsor a **Concord City Council Candidates' Forum**. A presentation on housing for homeless and very low income residents on the closed base will open the event. Then questions will come from the audience. **Concord United Methodist Church** on West Street will host the forum from 3-5 PM; **Alpha Quincy** from the **League of Women Voters** will serve as moderator. All are invited.

October 16 – Opening Day for the 2006-2007 session of the **Winter Nights Family & Elder Shelter**. As September ended, we began receiving calls from potential future guests. We are presently hiring staff [if you are aware of qualified applicants, please ask them to check out "Employment Opportunities" on our website's Home Page. www.cccwinternights.org.] Other preparations involve trying to buy a "new" van with 74,000 miles on the odometer, bringing our mattress supply up to quota, launching the "Adopt a Family" program, and finding a volunteer case manager, financial and credit counselor, and parenting circle leader.

October is also the month that **Brian and I** will send out an appeal letter for funds that will help keep **Winter Nights** open until the end of April. We are most grateful for the \$22,000 in our account which makes it possible to open on the 16th in Antioch. Our total budget is \$122,000. Our donors know that they get a big bang for their buck, since the congregations provide gratis the meals, in-kind services, and use of their facilities. We provide 24/7 paid professional

staff, transportation, and operational expenses. We are proud of how far we make the money go, and know that you agree with us.

Three friends of **Winter Nights**--**Sandy Anderson, Jill Harcke, and Jackie Pels**--included **WN** in their birthday celebrations. The **Lamorinda Interfaith Ministerial Association** and **St. Perpetua Parish** will dedicate their Thanksgiving Collections to **Winter Nights** as will the **Interfaith Council's Peace Concert** in November. On behalf of our homeless children and their parents, we thank you for your generosity.

Lorri Gazzano will continue to apply for grant money from foundations, and she'll tell them how we all pitch in and support this great program.

October is also a month of discerning how informed we'll be as voters. This general election ballot is quite long, with races from Governor to School Boards, a bond for a Housing Trust Fund, a county proposition on the Urban Limit Line, and much more. Check out the **Smart Voter, Secretary of State, and Legislative Analyst websites** for nonpartisan help with the issues. You can pick up Easy Voter booklets and Pros & Cons of the ballot measures at the **League of Women Voters Office**, 500 St. Mary's Road, #14, Lafayette; best to call first 283-2235. Practice Faithful Citizenship!

A Quick Look Back at September. We dedicated the **SoJA** meeting in September to a most informative talk on the "impact of immigration on our country" by **Carolyn Krantz, Pastoral Associate at St. Peter Martyr Parish**, and well known for her organizing expertise. She left us with valuable background information on the subject. We who were present that evening agree that every Social Justice group could benefit from Carolyn's presentation.

The members of **SOJA** voted to endorse the **DECLARATION OF PEACE** in time for the **International Day of Peace, September 21**.

Several leaders and friends of the **Concord Naval Weapons Station Interfaith Task Force**, under the

leadership of Marco Montenegro and Rev. Phil Lawson of the East Bay Housing Organization, went as a group to visit Alameda Point, the reuse of the Alameda Naval Air Station. They agree that it was time well spent. Individually, Task Force members have also been scheduling tours of the closed Concord Weapons Station.

THINK ABOUT IT

Some people from around our county (and Alameda County, as well) are already making plans, flight arrangements, hotel/motel reservations, etc. to head to Fort Benning, Georgia to participate in the gathering of School of Americas Watch. The designated weekend is November 18-19, the anniversary date of the massacre of Jesuit priests, (professors at the university) and their housekeeper and her daughter. The brutal attack took place at midnight at their home. The killing brigade was led by graduates of the SOA at Ft. Benning, trained by U.S. staff and funded by U.S. taxpayer money. That is only one of many, many incidents that have murdered thousands of innocent people.

Saturday, November 18, is filled with stories, songs, events (such as lectures, nonviolence training, and

more). At the gate, guest speakers and many giving testimony fill the crowd with spirit and determination. On Sunday, November 19, a solemn and very moving procession takes place. It is a very spiritual event. Each year, some are so moved that they attempt to "cross the line" onto the base and are arrested. This year one group is calling for 1000 grandmothers (and grandfathers, too) to "cross the line" as a body of wisdom and experience against torture, etc. and other subjects taught there. We will see whether that develops!

Many participants arrive on Thursday night or Friday to take advantage of many classes, films, etc. and then stay through Sunday and join in supper gatherings and/or support at the jailhouse for those who were arrested, and then return home on Monday.

It is an amazing experience! So, think about coming this year! We will hold a meeting in late October or early November to form community among all of us who plan to go. So far, three high schools and at least one college locally are planning groups on their own, but we hope will join us at our meeting. Call Natalie (925) 934-0759 or Gwen (925) 930-9965 for information. Think about joining us!

Transitions

Welcome to **the Rev. George Washburn**, who has started as the new priest at St. John's Orthodox Church in Orinda. Welcome also to **the Rev. Diane Miller**, who begins an intentional two-year intern ministry at Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church in Walnut Creek. Diane previously worked for eight years at the Unitarian Universalist Association in Boston, which led to her nomination as UUA President.

Farewell to **the Rev. Valerie Valle**, who leaves St. Alban's Episcopal Church in Brentwood to become the Rector of St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church in Arroyo Grande, California (central coast). She writes, "My ministry at St. Alban's has been incredibly fulfilling, and I will miss all of its people deeply. Twelve years is a long time for one pastor to serve a church. We have accomplished a great deal together during those years. The church has grown in size and spirit, we have welcomed people to Christ, we have served the community, we have taught our children about a loving God, we have loved and supported one another through tough times, and we have celebrated with one another during good

times."

Farewell also to **the Rev. Laurie Manning**, who leaves Hillcrest Congregational Church in Pleasant Hill to become Minister of Skyline Community Church in Oakland. We are grateful for her wider leadership in the areas of social justice and Interreligious understanding.

And farewell to **the Rev. David Shirer**, who leaves Chestnut Avenue Community Church for West Side Baptist Church in Wichita, Kansas. He writes, "I have always jokingly said that Kansas is a great place to be from. I know that my Midwestern upbringing has tempered my view of the world, and I believe for the positive. It has allowed me to maintain my openness despite living in an urban setting. I've always missed the powerful thunderstorms (short of the tornados!) and the close proximity of my family. It is nice to think that I will be returning to both... The last six years as pastor of CACC have been both challenging and wonderful. I would not have given up the opportunity to be with each of you in times of joy and sadness."

Thank you

Many thanks to **Madelyn Gomes**, who donated a very nice microwave oven to the Interfaith Council office. It's beautiful!

Thanks and appreciation to all the wonderful volunteers that faithfully come together to collate and fold the newsletters under the leadership of **Lenita Shumaker**. If you wish to join this group please call Lenita at 925-672-1053

Next Deadline: October 15, 2006

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