



M inistering Together

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

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

February 2008

Coming Events

❖ **Jazz at Peace**

Sunday, February 10 at 5 pm
Peace Lutheran Church
3201 Camino Tassajara, Danville

In Honor of Black History Month
Harriet Tubman: Bound for the Promised Land

Jazz at Peace is a monthly Jazz Interfaith Service held on the 2nd Sundays of each month at 5 pm.

❖ **Peace in Israel/Palestine?**

Sunday, February 10, 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Walnut Creek Civic Park Community Center
1375 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek

Anna Baltzer will present a slide show entitled “Eye Witness Palestine.” Anna is a Jewish American woman who has spent eight months in the Occupied Territories over the past several years. Professor Hisham Ahmed will speak about the siege of Gaza and the Israeli/international campaign against it. Professor Ahmed is a Palestinian currently teaching at St. Mary’s College. Admission is \$10, \$5 for students and seniors. For more information, contact 925-228-5746. Sponsored by the Middle East Study Group.

❖ **Understanding Islam and the West**

Thursday, February 21, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
First Unitarian Church, San Francisco
\$20 at door

❖ **Judaism, Christianity, Islam: Mysticism, Fundamentalism and the World**

Saturday, February 23, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Presidio Golden Gate Club, San Francisco
\$145 for day (includes lunch)

Renowned religious scholar and commentator, Karen Armstrong, will present for both of these

events. To register, contact www.ciis.edu/publicprograms/spring08/armstrong.html or 415-575-6175.

❖ **World Day of Prayer**

Friday, March 7
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
1035 Carol Lane, Lafayette.

Registration begins at 9:30; program at 10:00. The theme is "God's Wisdom Provides New Understanding. The event is sponsored by Church Women United. All are invited.

❖ If you would like to receive email announcements of a wide array of local events of interest to the interfaith community, please contact eye4cee@aol.com

Publications by local authors

Rev. Greg Ledbetter of Shell Ridge Community Church in Walnut Creek has contributed three essays to a new soon-to-be-published lectionary commentary series entitled *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary*. His mentor in ministry, David Bartlett, is the co-editor of the series.

Chaplain Jurgen Schwing of Kaiser Hospital has published a chapter in the recent book, *Sharing Sacred Stories: Current Approaches in Spiritual Direction and Guidance*, Robert Frager (ed.) (Crossroad: 2007). His chapter is entitled “Spiritual Care at the End of Life.” He presented the piece at the World Congress for Psychology and Spirituality in New Delhi, India.

Chaplain's Corner



Thirty-five years ago I served as the director of a church-sponsored summer day camp program in San Francisco. One afternoon out in Golden Gate Park, one of the day camp leaders reported to me that a first grader in her group could not participate in the scheduled arts & crafts activity. He simply could not finger paint. "Why?" I asked. "Come and see," was the response.

The back of the almost six-year old kid's little body was covered with bleeding wounds. The child was in too much pain to even finger paint. As I administered first aid and sought to comfort the child, I also asked what and how this had happened. Sheepishly and in an almost inaudible voice he told me his mother had done this to him that morning. The kid's siblings, also in the program, reluctantly confirmed what the child had told me.

The mother, an active member of the congregation, was generally pleasant, cordial and friendly to me, and I suppose, to others. It became apparent that that kindness was rarely extended to her child, this child. We were to learn later, her other children were not subjected to this type and level of cruelty. Upon return to the church, I immediately reported what had happened to the pastor who in turn spoke with the mother. I was told the mother had agreed to restrain herself in the future. The child, she promised, would not come to us in that condition again.

A week or so passed. One morning as the children gathered in the church gymnasium in preparation for the activities of the day in the park, I was called upon again to attend to the same little kid. The child was sitting forlornly in the corner of the building by himself. He was bleeding from a huge

gash in the left corner of his forehead. Again I administered first aid and then, of course, promptly called his mother. I thought he had fallen or had been beaten up by older kids on the way to the church. This time he wasn't talking.

"Mrs. *Congenial*, I am calling because *Hank* has large cut and knot above his left eye, and..."

"*I KNOW*," she interrupted, "*I did it...he got smart with me, and I picked him up and threw him across the room and he smashed his head against the corner of the window sill...and, I'll do it again if I need to.*"

The pastor was just coming into the office as I finished my call with the dear woman. How he dealt with his parishioner, I do not recall. I believe the woman ultimately left the church. The children did not return to day camp the following summer.

It so happened that I shared this story recently with a young man who currently resides at the Orin Allen facility (Boys Ranch) in Byron. Just how we began a discussion of child abuse I do not remember. However this kid, also named *Hank*, sat silently listening, evidently paying especially close attention to the narrative.

When I was finished, *Hank* paused momentarily and then responded reflectively, but with pain in his voice, "You know Rev, when I was that age, the same thing happened to me...that bump on my head lasted for weeks..." Hank's eyes in that not-so-long ago wounded head, welled up with tears, but not a precious one dropped...

The "village" is dysfunctional.

Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley
Juvenile Detention Chaplain

Coaching for Leadership

The Lloyd Center at San Francisco Theological Seminary is launching a clergy coaching program. The field of coaching arose in business to assist executives and entrepreneurs to identify and achieve goals and objectives. In recent years, the coaching model has been applied to members of the clergy. Coaching is not psychotherapy. Nor is it mentoring. It is a one-to-one alliance with a person, trained in leadership development, who will assist you to identify your ministry goals and offer resources and guidance as you take progressive steps toward meeting those goals.

Some of the typical skills that clergy seeking coaching for include: strategic planning, time management, conflict management, stress reduction, personnel recruitment and renewing and refreshing one's spirituality.

If you think you might benefit from such a program, or would just like more information, visit www.sfts.edu/lloyd/coachingforleadership, or call Dr. Scott Sullender at 415-258-6652.

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

The new Islamic *Hijra* Year began on Wednesday, January 9. Muslims follow a lunar calendar in their worship. *Hijra* refers to the migration of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina as a result of the persecution of the pagans of Mecca. It is considered a major event for all Muslims. The first month is called *Muharam*, which means “the prohibition of fighting and bloodshed.” However, a sad event in the history of Islam took place on the tenth of this month, fourteen centuries ago, which culminated in the death of Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet. Shiite Muslims observe this event by wearing black. A number of Shiite communities in many parts of the world organize processions to express their deep sadness. Sunni Muslims also observe the anniversary, but calmly and not by processions. I believe that the Muslim world, while observing the anniversary, should emphasize tolerance, commitment to democracy, and respect for human rights.

The other observance in this month relates to the day when God saved Prophet Moses from the Pharaoh. In accordance with Islamic tradition, Prophet Muhammad noticed that the Jewish community in Medina was fasting on the tenth of *Muharam* (the Jewish community also follows the lunar calendar). The Prophet asked them about their fasting, and they told him that they were thanking God for saving Prophet Moses. The Prophet declared that he would be fasting on this occasion, and recommended that Muslims fast on that day as well.

□The Rev. Jim Stickney St. John's Episcopal Church, Clayton

[From a column to his congregation...] A couple of weeks ago I wrote about unwanted media attention, and now I have a high-tech variation on that theme. On Monday morning, I received three emails from people who have looked on our web site and have found the picture of the bird feeder upon which we place the unused Eucharistic Bread. All three emails were sent within a day of one another, which tells me that these are friends who share their findings. One was from the United Kingdom, one from the Solomon Islands, and one from the USA. All express concern that we might be doing something improper by disposing of Eucharistic bread in this manner.

I want to solicit your views on this practice, but I will not be coy about my views. I was surprised by this practice when I began serving here, but in a pleasant way. That is, I had never encountered it before, but I was far from shocked. Instead, I thought of passages such as the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus tells his followers not to worry about food since God feeds the sparrows. And Emily Dick-

inson has a couple of poems referring to this Scriptural image of God feeding the birds.

□The Rev. Richard Mangini St. Bonaventure Catholic Church, Concord

Whatever one thinks about the building of the new Cathedral of Christ the Light in downtown Oakland near Lake Merritt, it will become an architectural and religious site to see. Seventy percent completed, the dedication of the Cathedral will take place next September 25, 2008. Designed by internationally acclaimed San Francisco architect, Craig Hartman, who designed the new San Francisco International Airport, the complex brings together natural elements, theological tradition, universal religious themes, and practical daily life.

Some people are put off by the cost, 190 million dollars, because they think that it's the cost of “only a Church” to seat 1500 people. Once the complex is completed and in use, people will appreciate the farsightedness and boldness of the vision behind it. It will be a center for Catholicism in the Diocese of Oakland for hundreds of years to come. Pedestrian, banal, boring, “same-ole same-ole” it is not....

Our world needs many things today and spiritual-imaginative energy is one. The Cathedral will be a magnet drawing not only the Catholics of the Diocese of Oakland to pray and to celebrate in it, but the larger non-Catholic and non-Christian community as well.

□The Rev. Greg Ledbetter Shell Ridge Community Church

Can we talk...um...*privately*...and...*frankly*? The subject I'd like to broach is a bit delicate and certainly not suited for extensive pulpit pondering or dinnertime discussion. But having been announced in several public settings, by now nearly everyone I know – and plenty I don't – are aware of my recent travails with a kidney stone.

Kidney stones – or *renal calculi* – are hard mineral deposits (calcium oxalate is the most common) that can build up in one's kidneys for a variety of reasons. Most people are unaware of the presence of their stones until the stone decides it wants to see the world. It is the stone's journey through the ureter that causes ALL the problems. It's not the stone nearly as much as the backup and resultant swelling that it causes that is the source of the legendary pain of kidney stones (said to rival the pain of childbirth).

At the end of my five days of intermittent hospitalization and pain, successfully snared my stone at the end of its dash for freedom. It's an amazingly little “feller” – about the size of (and looking like) a radish seed (2-3mm).

Who knew that something so small could create such dramatic problems? That I experienced the stone during the Baptist Peace Fellowship National Association (BPFNA) Peace Camp has led me to ponder just how much influence tiny, but determined entities can have in our world. Of course, this is true both for good as well as for ill (e.g., Gandhi or Mother Teresa vs. 9/11 terrorists).

For SRCC, BPFNA, ABCUSA, PCBA, I4C and other acronym-ized entities with which we affiliate – all modest in size – this is good news. I trust that the analogy holds true, meaning small, thoughtful, committed organizations who intend for the good can have a disproportionately large impact on the world around us. I will say that had I not really always believed that, it would have made sustaining my own – and our shared – journey of life and ministry nearly impossible. But my stone has put the matter in sharp focus for me, and we need all the reminders and encouragement we can get.

**□The Rev. Alan Kelchner
Danville Congregational Church**

“Epiphany” means a demonstration or expression of the sacred. In this season we are encouraged to be mindful of God’s presence in the world, and we are asked to be especially attentive to “the holy” in the midst of our lives.

The poet Rainer Maria Rilke suggests that God speaks to us in words that we dimly hear, and he provides an evocative glimpse of God addressing you or me:

You, sent out beyond your recall,
Go to the limits of your longing.
Embody me.
Flare up like a flame
And make big shadows I can move in.

Let everything happen to you: beauty and terror.
Just keep going. No feeling is final.
Don’t let yourself lose me.

Nearby is a country they call life.

Dear friends of the Interfaith Council,

We are grateful for all of the following persons and congregations and organizations for their generous financial gifts toward the general work of the Council this past year. This list does not include those who gave toward the Winter Nights Shelter. (We will list those folks in our September issue, after the end of the WN fiscal year.)

The Interfaith Council survives on the giving of its

You will know it by its seriousness.
Give me your hand.

There are moments when I feel as if God has taken me by the hand, leading me through dark days of terror as well as days full of beauty. I have to remember to be mindful, lest I let myself lose touch with God.

Dear friends, I urge you to be mindful as well. And when asked, give God your hand. Trust in God to lead you through.

**□The Rev. John Sutton
St. Anselm’s Episcopal Church, Lafayette**

More than two decades ago, when I was single and living above a garage in Piedmont, New Year’s Day fell on a Sunday. I had not stayed up late the night before. I awoke and drove down to the early service at my home parish, St. Paul’s in Oakland. There were the normal eight to ten attendees there, who I also imagine had not stayed up late. (I brought the average age of the gathering down by about ten years.)

After the service I hopped in the Nova and drove home. The air was fresh and bracing and the streets were empty. I knew I was blessed to behold this crisp morning while others were sleeping off the excesses of the previous night. I had worshiped God, and I had this whole magnificent day in front of me, to do with as I chose! But it got better.

As I was traveling past Lake Merritt I was embraced by a warm and wonderful feeling. It was a transcendent moment, when I knew without a doubt that God loved me. And all of creation, for an instant, was perfect.

Whether I remembered the verse from Psalm 118 then or only now is not important – it described the feeling perfectly: *“This is the day that the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”* There it was, right in front of me: this beautiful day that God had created and for a magical moment, I had managed to not put anything between me and seeing it. My eyes were opened to the immediacy of God around me.

members, both individuals and congregations, and on other organizations who want to support our mission. Some gifts are dedicated to supporting the ministry of the Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley. We are grateful for these, as is Chaplain Tinsley.

Gifts that are undesignated go toward paying the salaries of our staff (Brian Stein-Webber and Nora Chuch), office expenses, the costs of the newsletter, program expenses, and the like. *Continued next page*

(Continued)

2007 was a good year for us financially. We finished just a few thousand dollars in the red. But since our reserve is now exhausted the Council's leadership recognizes the need to rebuild it. Therefore, we have (hopefully, temporarily) instituted a 10% budget cut for 2008, primarily in the positions of the executive director and office manager, both of whom will be working reduced hours. We will monitor the financial situation throughout the year, and make restorations as appropriate.

Our main hope is that member congregations who have not given recently would be moved to reinstitute regular

giving to the Interfaith Council. There are now 105 member congregations in this organization. Of all those who did not contribute to our regular budget in 2007, if each gave \$300, our situation would be greatly improved. We ask for your consideration.

And of course, we express our great appreciation for those listed on this and the following pages. Blessings on your personal and corporate ministries!

CONGREGATIONS

- Baha'i of Danville
- Buddha Gate Monastery
- Chestnut Avenue Community Church
- Christ the King Catholic Church
- Christian Scientist of Danville
- Clayton Valley Presbyterian Church
- Concord United Methodist Church
- Congregation B'nai Tikvah
- Danville Congregational Church
- Dar-ul-Islam Mosque
- El Cerrito United Methodist Church
- Episcopal Church of the Resurrection
- First Presbyterian Church
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
- Grace Presbyterian Church
- Hillcrest Congregational Church
- Hope Lutheran Church
- Lafayette United Methodist Church
- Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church
- Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church
- Orinda Community Church
- San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church
- Shell Ridge Community Church
- St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
- St. Joseph Catholic Church
- St. Mark's Lutheran Church
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church
- St. Perpetua Catholic Church
- St. Stephen Catholic Church
- St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
- Tice Valley United Methodist Church
- Trinity Lutheran Church
- Unitarian U. Church of Berkeley
- Unity Center of Walnut Creek
- Walnut Creek United Methodist Church

ORGANIZATIONS

- Church Women United
- Concord United Methodist Women
- Ecumenical Officers Committee

- First Congregational of Martinez-
Women's Fellowship
- Grace Presbyterian Women
- Hillcrest Congregation Women
- Ik Onkar Peace Fellowship
- Islamic Center of the East Bay
- Kiwanis Club of Martinez
- Kiwanis Club of Walnut Creek
- Lafayette United Methodist Women
- Pacific School of Religion
- William Kerr Foundation

INDIVIDUALS

- Leonard Albrecht
- John & Agnes Alden
- Betty & Robert Aldrich
- Cecelia Ambach
- Bob & Charlotte Anderson
- Diane Arney
- Laura Barnes
- Norma Beard
- Constance Belka
- Teresa Bengston
- Paula Bishop
- Machrina Blasdell
- Rita Flores Bogaert
- Thomas B. Bonacci
- Beverly Bortin
- Mary Kay Breazele
- Robert G. Brelsford
- Charles Burack
- Mohammad Chaudry
- Tim Christoffersen
- William & Nora Chuch
- Darlene Cioffi-Pargilla
- Joseph & Donna Clevenger
- Karrie Connors
- Tom & Betty Conrad
- Eugene & Pat Conroy

- Valerie Cookson
- Dean & Chris Coons
- Ann Coslett
- Louise Crowe
- Vella Cunningham
- Richard & Jill Day
- Alma DeBisschop
- Jacqueline DeGroot
- Dennis & Dolores Desmond
- Frances Dobin
- Linda Doran
- Elisa Dowd
- Donna Duensing
- Terry & Elizabeth Dunn
- Myrdell Dybdal
- Helen Ecklin
- Ronald & Linda Elsdon
- Martha Engelbert
- Gabriel Escobar
- Pat Evans
- Susan Evans
- Gayle Fehr
- Michael Fischer
- Larry & Elizabeth Fisher
- Shirley Fluhrer
- Hal Foster
- Pat Frazier
- Mollie Fujioka
- Glenn & Kathleen Fuller
- Mr. & Mrs. Sam Gallinger
- Lorri Gazzano
- Sue & Vernon Gibbons
- Glen & Peggy Gierke
- Yvonne Nair Gill
- Joe Goglio
- Frank & Madeline Gomes
- Jackie Goya
- Martha & Thomas Green
- Josh & Noga Gressel
- Roberta Gwynn
- Jean Haddock

Iftexhar Hai	John King	Rick & Sandra Mitchell	
Robert & Ann Haines	Werner & Egla Koeliner	Demarest Morrow	
Barbara Hannafan	Mary Patricia Kramer	Jack & Sumi Nakashima	Patricia & Jeff Spires
Mary Agnes Hardie	Harmesh Kumar	Larry & Barbara Nelson	Margaretmary Staller
Paul & Linda Hardwick	Rose Lackington	Jean Nickell	Brian & Mary Stein-Webber
Jean K. Harris	Beth Lamb	Linda Norman-Davis	Sandor & Faye Straus
Marsha Harris	Mary Lou Laubscher	Margaretha Northall	Gerry Sturm
Paul & Alice Hauer	Douglas Leich	Frances Orput	Evelyn Ternstrom
Harry & Claire Havens	Marilyn Levin	Mary Ostrander	Brian & Carolyn Thiessen
C. Douglas Hayward	David Moon Lew	Aaron & Fran Paxson	Christine Tomasello
Sherilyn Henry	Dolores Loague	Clinton & Sue Phalen	Helen Tousignant
Paul & Alice Heuer	Ellene Long	Stan & Mary Pieratt	James & Julia Towar
Diana Hill	Ted & Barbara Lynch	Dennis & Sharon Randall	Elizabeth Trinterud
Arthur Hollister	Victoria MacDonald	Lois Ransome	Maria Tumelty
Oliver & Rachel Holmes	Claire Mann	Edith Reed	Dorothy Vance
Robert Hopcke	Rabbi Milton Matz	Helen Rice	Jackie Wan
Carl & Orene Hopkins	Brian McCoy	Morris & Marjorie Richman	Francis Wang
Robert & Dorothy Howell	Lois McGee	Gail Rodens	Todd & Trinka Wasik
Charles & Marjorie Hull	Tom & Betty McGovern	R. & Barbara Ruppenstein	Gwen Watson
Betty & Theodore Iverson	Alan & Rowena McGregor	Leslie Rushing	John Watson
George & Mary Jacobs	Lynn McMichael	Natalie Russell	James Weston
Elizabeth Jewell	Henry Miller	David Sammons	Peter & Dolores White
Elmer & Gloria Kaprielian	William & Susan Miller	Beverly Schaff	Robert Williams
Dale & Vernita Kennen	Abraham Miller	Esther Sergeant	Ruth Wittman
Paula Kerr	Virginia Millson	J. W. Silveira	Carlton Young
George & Joan Kilian	Mary Marcia Minnihan	Paul & Janet Simons	Mark Zier
Jaleh Kilpatrick	Drew Minter	Pat Snyder	Frances Zurilgen

Another Chapter in Health Care Reform A Report from Health and Faith-in-Action Committee

ABx11 (Nunez) received an in-depth examination during an 11-hour hearing in the Senate Health Committee chaired by Senator Sheila Kuehl on January 23. A vote on the measure was postponed, however, and so the outcome is not known as this is written. The bill does not appear to have the votes necessary for passage. If it passes, an initiative will be on the November ballot asking voters to approve the funding mechanism.

The bill retains the basics of present health care financing system and makes adjustments that attempt to correct some of the most obvious problems. While many think this is a practical solution, others disagree.

An analysis of the bill by the Legislative Analyst Office raises questions regarding the adequacy of the funding, particularly over time. There may be great risk to the state budget if medical inflation or the cost of subsidies exceeds projections.

The League of Women Voters opposes the bill because it does not address the underlying causes of skyrocketing costs, and affordability is not assured for those who must purchase coverage under the individual mandate. Other organizations opposing include California Church Impact, California Nurses Association, Health Care For All, California School Employees Association, and the California Physicians Alliance.

SB 840(Kuehl), a single payer reform supported by all the above organizations, has passed the Senate and the Assembly Health Committee and will be moving forward as the legislative session progresses. The League believes it is the only effective solution. It would provide secure, affordable, comprehensive, truly universal coverage.

Information is available at www.ca.lwv.org, www.healthcareforall.org, and <http://dist23.casen.govoffice.com/>.

Social Justice Alliance of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

SOJA meets Wednesday, February 13, 2008, at 7 pm In the Interfaith Council Office, Room 205

Winter Nights Shelter Report

Currently Winter Nights is housing 34 homeless individuals: three babies, nine toddlers, nine teenagers, twelve parents and one elder.

Congregations which hosted our shelter during December and January: Peace Lutheran, First Christian Church of Concord, St. John Vianney Catholic, Temple Isaiah, St. Paul's Episcopal, St. Stephen's Catholic. Your good cheer and hospitality boosted our spirit!

Special recognition to our friends and sponsor: The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

Much has happened since our last newsletter, and I'll try to make this report as brief as possible.

What I Like Best. The partnerships that are formed because of Winter Nights Shelter is one of my favorite experiences. One night when we were at Peace Lutheran in Danville I stopped in to deliver fresh wash cloths and mentioned that I didn't recognize any Peace parishioners. "Tonight is B'nai night at Winter Nights!" The same happened three times at St. Paul's Episcopal—Temple Isaiah provided volunteers for three nights, Universalist Unitarians one night, and Grace Presbyterian one night. Putting aside our differences to work together for homeless families is a great opportunity to practice Interfaith.

New This Year. We have increased two of our ongoing services and added two new ones. Budget Counselor, Pat Kramer, Bank of America official, Blanca Valenzuela, and a matching grant from Temple Isaiah have added savings accounts for our guests to enhance their ability to save for housing expenses. Heather O'Connell, our Education Specialist, introduced a learning plan custom-made for each homeless child; Sharon Baugh, CC County Department of Education, has made sure that each new student is immediately placed in a school. New this year is Career Counselor Rosemary Dauenhauer, who will help our job seekers determine where in the marketplace they have the best opportunity to succeed. All these professionals offer their services pro-bono, as does our social worker, transportation team, executive director, and our many volunteers at the host congregations.

Three families will be presented to the Family-to-Family program for help with job seeking, daycare, housing, and more.

Thanks, Kraft. The Kraft Foundation granted Winter Nights Shelter \$5,000.00, which went for our new laptop computer, educational supplies, and additional mat-

tresses when the number of family members increased to 39. If you haven't already seen it, check out the great photo on the Winter Nights website of Denise O'Mara from Kraft Cares presenting the check to Brian Stein-Webber and Mahmood Barakzai.

Financial. Donations from individuals, congregations, and organizations continue to arrive, for which we are most grateful. We are just a few weeks short of reaching our goal of remaining open until April 28.

Your donation is making a difference in the lives of our families. As they move closer to their goals of stable housing and a wage that will enable them to be independent, the family members can be in a warm, safe place, with delicious meals prepared by members of the host congregations, and develop their plans with the case manager, for as long as they need to be in the shelter between mid-October, 2007, and April 28, 2008

Surprises. Members of the Homeless Summit and other friends of Winter Nights Shelter spend a minimum of 5.5 months each year planning for Winter Nights. Then the shelter opens and help arrives that we hadn't planned on and which adds new dimensions to our program. A few of these surprises are: group singing & guitar and harmonica entertainment by Dan Howard, duffel bags with rollers from St. John Vianney Parish for each of our clients, a Christmas Store at Temple Isaiah, eye exam and glasses for two clients, coats from Del Ray Elementary, money from the sale of gift tags made by second graders at Bancroft Elementary, childcare funding and gift cards from the Alamo Children's Guild, parenting and nutrition teach-ins from the First 5 Commission, several gifts from Candy Kathenberg and friends of the Orinda Chamber of Commerce, and a field trip to the Chabot Planetarium for all our homeless guests.

One Family Placed. One of our families, a divorced mother with two little ones, were placed in Mt. View

Shelter, which means they qualify for transitional housing and are on the list for obtaining it when an opening occurs. Joe Macaluso is working with all families to complete transitional housing and Section 8 applications. Housing and education are our two highest priorities.

A “New” Car. The hard-working father of one family earned a sizable wage during November, but due to the family’s automobile breakdowns & towing, the need for a new transmission, a gas-guzzling engine, etc., nearly all the earnings that could have gone for housing were spent on the car, which was needed for work. Fortuitously, Ron Weston, Executive Director of St. Vincent de Paul Society of Contra Costa County, had a 2005 Honda in good running condition in his

fleet of donated automobiles. Now the family can deposit part of their income into their new Bank of America Savings Account. Thank you, Ron and St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Aprons. As I visit at our hosting congregations, many of the volunteers are proudly sporting their Winter Nights aprons. Our new red aprons would make a great Valentine gift—there’s a big red heart in the center of our logo. Half of the \$20 contribution goes to our shelter.

We cherish the special aspects of our Winter Nights Shelter; and we never forget that our first priority is **Housing** for all our families. You, our friends, will help that dream become a reality for some of our guests.

Risking Conversation

Dr. Amer Aram, Dar ul Islam Mosque, Concord

Regarding the recent Annapolis meeting on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the crux of the matter is peace, security and justice to everyone in the region, including Israelis. The achievement of these lofty goals is in the interest of Palestinians, Israelis and the world.

Unfortunately, these issues were not discussed in depth in Annapolis. The conflict’s three basic issues from a Palestinian perspective are the Israeli control of their land, including Arab East Jerusalem, the sovereignty and boundaries of the proposed Palestinian state, and the right for Palestinian refugees to return. As for Israel, security and recognition by Arab states are primary issues.

The first step should be a cessation of violence between the parties. As interim measures, the Israeli government should declare a halt on all settlement activities in the Palestinian territories, eliminating the so-called unauthorized settlements and removing the checkpoints from the areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority should ensure the fulfillment of its obligations under previous agreements, particularly prevention of violence and transparency and accountability in its functions.

For the final settlement, Israel should agree to withdraw from all Palestinian territories occupied in the 1967 war, including Arab East Jerusalem. The borders should be in accordance with the Green Line, with some very minor adjustments. The Palestinian negotiating team is indicating that any adjustment should be from land equal in value and importance.

The other major issue is the right of return for Palestinian

refugees. The Palestinians believe that this right should be implemented through negotiations with the Israeli government, and should not drastically affect the demographic realities of the state of Israel. In accordance with international law, refugees’ wishes on whether to return to their homes or settle in another state or stay where they are and accept compensation should be ascertained.

A new demand has been raised that the Arabs accept Israel as a Jewish state. The exclusivity of Israel as a Jewish state is contrary to the historical and legal development of the state of Israel. The Balfour Declaration, which is considered the first step toward the establishment of the state of Israel, recognized the right of the indigenous Palestinians in the Holy Land. If the new concept of Israel as a purely Jewish state means to forestall the right of return for the Palestinian refugees and to expel 1.4 million Palestinians who are Israeli citizens, then the problems will be further complicated. The conflict will engulf the Palestinians, the Israelis and the entire region for years to come.

The question has also been raised regarding the benefits for Israel of withdrawing from Palestinian and Arab territories, and resolving the issue of Palestinian refugees. Israel would reap tremendous peace dividends. Particularly, it would achieve peaceful and normal relations with the entire Arab and Muslim worlds. Abiding by international law (ending the occupation of the land of others) is an obligation.

If this new initiative fails, the only option to achieve peace and justice in the Holy Land is for the UN Security Council to determine which steps to take to resolve the dispute. Hopefully, the United States would play an active role.

THE INTERFAITH COUNCIL OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY
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Interfaithcouncilofccc.net

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Permit #84

Ministering Together is published seven times a year by the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County, a non-profit organization.

All address changes and voluntary subscriptions should be sent to the above address.

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Executive Director..... Rev. Brian Stein-Webber
Chaplain.....Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley
Singing Messengers.....Jackie Wan
Office Manager.....Nora Chuch
Layout/Design.....Nora Chuch

Next Deadline: February 15, 2008
Please send copy marked to the attention of:
Interfaith Council Newsletter, 1543 Sunnyvale Avenue, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-1903
PH: (925) 933-6030 FAX: (925) 952-4554 E Mail: <eye4cee@aol.com>

THANK YOU CORNER

You are reading this newsletter because of the generous efforts of our volunteers. Our last issue was collated, folded, labeled and sealed by: Sandra Ellingson, Madeline Gomes, Mary Hogan, Tim Michelson, Leslie russing, Mayra Sanchez, Dick Shumaker, Dorothy Vance, Dolores White and Jean Witucki. Because our volunteers are very active, busy folks with other obligations, we can always use more helpers on our list. Please call Lenita (925) 672-1053 if you can help.

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Brentwood
Concord Baha'i Community
Danville Congregational Church
First Baptist Church, Martinez
An end to the violence in Kenya
The people and government of Pakistan following assassination of Benazir Bhutto
A peace agreement between Palestine and Israel

NOW AVAILABLE

John Bateson, Executive Director of the Contra Costa Crisis Center, wrote a book on nonprofit management that was published this month by Praeger Publishers. It is called *Building Hope: Leadership in the Nonprofit World*. It describes the challenges, frustrations, but most of all the joys of leading a nonprofit agency today. It is available at Amazon.com and other local libraries.

Cantor Jennie Chabon of Congregation B'nai Tikvah in Walnut Creek has just release a CD, *Shirei Tikvah*, with liturgical music for her congregation. She writes to her congregation, "I was inspired to make this CD when we started having our musical Shabbat services a few years ago. Since then, the services have been spirited, meaningful and most definitely successful. But, I have found that despite the number of people coming to the musical Shabbat services, and despite the enthusiastic responses I get from people each month, very few people participate and sing along with me! Ours is a community of music-lovers who don't feel very brave about singing at services, and I decided that it was time to change that pattern.

"So I embarked upon the project of recording a CD for the congregation... What I ended up making was a CD of complex, beautifully arranged music; a CD that you will hopefully love listening to, and that you will listen to so much that you end up learning our great melodies."

If you would like to obtain a copy of *Shirei Tikvah*, call 925-933-5397.