



M inistering Together

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

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

May-June 2007

Coming Events

❖ Laughter Yoga Club

Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.
Episcopal Church of the Resurrection
399 Gregory Ln. Pleasant Hill

You do not need a sense of humor to participate. There are no jokes, stories or stunts. The interaction of participants makes you laugh. For more information, contact Mary at 925-788-3080 or laughingwithmary@yahoo.com.

❖ May Friendship Day

Friday, May 4, 11:00 a.m.
Grace Presbyterian Church
2100 Tice Valley Rd., Walnut Creek

Church Women United invites women of all denominations to celebrate their friendships. A potluck salad lunch will be followed by speaker Linda Blagburn on helping congregations develop strategies for fighting hunger. For more info, contact Diana at 925-947-5999.

❖ Life and Death: A Requiem for the Victims of Darfur

Sunday, May 6, 7:30 p.m.
Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church
49 Knox Dr., Lafayette

This concert of Renaissance and contemporary music for voices in solidarity with the suffering millions in the Sudan will help raise funds for relief work agencies. Tickets are \$25/\$10, and are available at www.ave-music.org.

❖ Building Inclusive Communities:

A Convening for Faith and Immigrant Leaders
Tuesday, May 15, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Center
2140 Durant Ave., Berkeley

The FAITHS Program is sponsoring this presentation on current challenges to civil and immigrant rights, as well as media resources and training for congregations. The program is free, and includes a boxed lunch. To RSVP (by May 10), contact 415-733-8541 or trc@sff.org.

❖ Faith Celebration

Saturday, May 19, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Los Medanos College

Meet Faith-Based Leaders in your community and get information on:
Fellowship, Counseling, Social Services, Children & Youth Programs, Missions, and more

❖ Israel from a Bedouin Perspective

An Evening with Ismail Khaldi
Tuesday, May 29, 7:00 p.m.
Congregation Beth Emek
3400 Nevada Court, Pleasanton

“Pluralism in Israel Today”, discussion on the various cultures and religions of Israel and the importance of relations between Israel and the U.S.

Free and open to all. For more information call 925-5238 or e-mail Jenny@jfed.org.

❖ Community Educational Forum on Immigration

Wednesday, May 30, 7:00
Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church
55 Eckley Lane, Walnut Creek

Discussion on problems, concerns, solutions
For more information call Gail Rodens at 925-229-1277

❖ God Is Not Abusive

Thursday, May 31, 8:30-10:30 a.m.
Concord Police Department
1300 Galindo Drive, Concord

A continental breakfast meeting and discussion about a critical issue that affects people from all faiths and walks of life

RSVP: Call Nancy Prescott at 925-372-7364

❖ Book Study

Saturday, June 2, 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Orinda Community Church
10 Irwin Way, Orinda

MESG open meeting on Jimmy Carter's book, read the book and be prepared to discuss it.

Free of charge

Director's Letter



shelter program under our aegis, Hal again willingly did all the accounting for it.

Dear friends,

For several years now, this newsletter has featured a section called "Transitions." We keep track of the important comings and goings among our member congregations. Leadership is important, and no place so much as in faith communities, where leaders are looked to not only for their organizational abilities, but also, and probably more so, for their ability to inspire faith in others.

Well, I'm taking the liberty of bringing one of those transitions into my column. Because the person transitioning is someone who has been very, very important for the Interfaith Council. He has arguably been the quietest person around, but his work has been vital. I'm talking about our treasurer and bookkeeper, Hal Foster, who has figured that, now that he's well into his 80s, it might be time for him to retire from this responsibility.

I met Hal in the interview process six and a half years ago, and it was with him and former president Steve Harms that I ate – I think it was Chinese food – when talking about my salary package. Ever since then, I and the Council as a whole have relied on Hal for accurate, complete and timely record-keeping and reporting.

Hal was already retired from being a Presbyterian pastor and an executive for Satellite Homes when he was tapped by Rev. Roger Reaber of Grace Presbyterian Church in Walnut Creek for this job. He took up the mantle willingly and gracefully. And when the Homeless Summit started the Winter Nights

Hal is the kind of guy you want for a treasurer. He's scrupulous with details, patient, deliberate. Did I mention that he also has a sense of humor? So thank you, Hal, for your years of service to this organization.

Now here's the thing. We're looking for Hal's replacement. Could it be you? Or someone you know? Our first desire is to have someone volunteer for this position (either treasurer/bookkeeper or simply bookkeeper). The person we're looking for needs to be familiar with full-charge bookkeeping, responsible for everything but deposits and payroll. He or she needs to know how to do double-entry bookkeeping, preferably live in Central Contra Costa County, and, if acting as treasurer, be able to serve on the Executive Committee. Normal duties should take about three hours per week, and you may work from either your home or the Interfaith Council office.

Hal's been warning for a while that his "retirement" is coming. He is giving us notice, and could orient someone to the system before he officially finishes. So we're looking for someone pretty much immediately. If you are interested in helping out, or know someone who might be, let me know right away by calling the office (925-933-6030) or on my cell-phone (925-285-7256). I promise I'll drop everything to talk with you. I would thank you. The Interfaith Council would thank you. Hal would thank you!



Transitions

Welcome (belatedly) to **the Rev. Matt Prinz**, who is now the pastor of Ygnacio Valley Presbyterian Church in Concord.

Welcome to **the Rev. Gerald Chinnen**, who has come onto the pastoral staff at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, in charge of the caring program, including deacons, Stephen Ministry and Senior Ministries. Rev. Chinnen is a graduate of the University of Hawaii and Fuller Theological Seminary. After ordination in 1981, he started two churches in Honolulu, then served congregations in San Mateo and another in Hawaii.

We regret to learn that the **Life Knowledge Center** in Pleasant Hill, a member of the Interfaith Council, and headed by Nancy Fitzgerald, is now closed.

Chaplain's Corner



The juvenile court schools have, in most instances in preparation for this program, prepared and tested more GED candidates, successfully, in the past ten years than in, I understand, the forty previous years combined.

Additionally, many young people have earned the high school diploma. Some have earned both. Unfortunately, the probation department has put a damper on the earning of the GED and the diploma, citing an inability to place young people in out of home settings once they have completed high school.

Recently an EOPS counselor/TRIO assistant director accepted an invitation to go out to dinner with me and the students at Butte. A juvenile court judge and the two juvenile court school principals have been invited to accompany me to Butte College and to the dormitory in Chico. All parties have agreed to come; a date is to be set in the near future. Tours of both facilities will be conducted by students, who in all cases, were once students in the court schools, several *very* recently, and defendants in juvenile court hearings presided over by this judicial officer.

The climate on campus has improved immeasurably. The students' level of comfort is reflected in telephone conversations, text messages, and most importantly in their grade reports. They are eating well and not getting into trouble. The support staff at Butte College, in particular, those who deal directly *with* and *to* the needs of "my students" are beginning to look at "those kids" as "our students" as well. The heretofore animosities and discomfort are, following years of effort, experience and hard work, fading into welcomed oblivion. The kids, this population whose future, the data indicated, was bleak at best, are now exposed to the mainstream institution of higher education, a place where, they could not hope to venture, as society had dictated, or so they (and *too* many others) were led to believe...

Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley
Juvenile Detention Chaplain

Currently young people with whom I have worked attend several schools across the United States, with the largest number presently enrolled at Butte College. Visitations to colleges in the South and Midwest are planned this spring for students preparing to complete their community college experience and to transfer to four year institutions.

The "after care" project to recruit and to monitor with the goal of retention, continues to be "work intensive" and as has always been the case, work in *addition* to ministry to the young people in custody and to their families.

Although in the past the majority of students have failed to complete their courses of study, failed to remain on campus more than a semester or two, the current group of students, those at Butte College and elsewhere, have excelled in that area, in simple terms of longevity *and* in terms of grades.

Five of the fifty-five students who enrolled at Knoxville College, beginning in 1998, have since been murdered. Several others of the remaining fifty are serving long state and federal prison sentences. However, one of the original Knoxville "kids" is presently completing bible college in another state. Another is married (I officiated), has three daughters, and he and his wife recently purchased a new home. He is a licensed barber and has a job in the telecommunications industry. Although most of the group have been out of contact, occasionally some surface from obscurity and call just to "check in." Their calls are always pleasant surprises. Now and again the caller shares something along the lines of "going to Knoxville was the most important turning point in my life." Others have kindly and sincerely offered, "You saved my life..."

Milestones

Congratulations to **the Rev. Brian Joyce** of Christ the King Catholic Church in Pleasant Hill, who celebrated the 45th anniversary of his ordination in March.

Congratulations also to **Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa County**, who served their 3 millionth meal in March.

Anonymous Prayer Ascribed



We have heard from the new rector at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Walnut Creek, the Rev. Sylvia Vasquez, that the anonymous prayer printed in the last issue of Ministering Together, beginning "May God bless you with a restless discomfort about easy answers..." was written by the Right Reverend Gene Robinson, Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire.

Rev. Dr. Russell Peterman
First Christian Church, Concord

When I was in college I spent a summer traveling through England studying the architecture of cathedrals and what they communicated about the church's understanding of who God is. We were able to trace how the buildings began to change as the image of how God acts in the world continue to evolve. It was fascinating.

The first one that we studied was in Durham. It was the oldest of them all. Sir Walter Scott once described this place as "half fortress, half house of God." Beside the door was a plaque that stated clearly, "In the middle ages the Cathedral provided a refuge for fugitives. Anyone who had committed a serious offense could claim sanctuary by knocking on this door. The fugitives were given 37 days to organize their affairs. They had to decide either to stand trial or to leave the country by the nearest port."

As I remember this I'm struck with how much differently we tend to view church today. Now the mentality is to gather to be built up, "fed" is the word that I hear used the most. We come to be inspired how to be better persons. But back in the Middle Ages people came to the cathedrals seeking shelter and protection. The word sanctuary actually means, "a place of refuge or safety."

This week we have welcomed 30 people into our church building, offered them shelter, food, and true Christian hospitality. Without this program they would be on the street or living in their cars. It is one of the things that I am most proud of that we do as a congregation. It transforms us and reminds us what it means to truly be the church!

There is a story about an ancient Rabbi that asked his disciples, "How can you tell when the night has ended and the day was on its way back?" One of his followers ventured a guess, "When you can see an animal in the distance and tell whether it's a sheep or a dog?" The rabbi shook his head. Another responded, "When you can look at a tree in the distance and tell whether it's a fig or peach tree?" Finally the rabbi responded, "It is when you look on the face of any person and can see they are your brother or sister. Because if you cannot do this, then no matter what time it is, it is still night!"

I look forward with great anticipation when there is no need for ministries like Winter Nights to house people who would otherwise be homeless. But until there is, I am incredibly grateful for churches like this one who offer sanctuary to our brothers and sisters in the name of Christ who loves us all, and rejoices when we find home in the loving embrace of God.

Carol Richardson, Senior Warden
St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Brentwood

"... to walk humbly with God." This line of song has been running through my head since early morning. I have been trying for a week to write a suitable Lenten letter for the WinePress newsletter but so far I had nothing to show for it but two pompous half finished letters and a new blank page. Panic was beginning to set in and I only know of one cure for panic...

My mind slowed down as I began to pray and I could feel that sense of peace that always comes when I ask for guidance and am ready to pay attention to whatever God sends my way. That line of song complete with melody and harmony floated into the ears of my heart. Woven through the melody was a continuous feeling of peace that I have learned to recognize as God, as Holy Spirit. If the feeling had words this morning it would go like this:

"Don't worry, I have it covered and you will all be okay until you have a priest at St. Alban's again. You will be each other's spiritual guides and companions while you journey through Lent this year. You will pastor each other with kindness, understanding and good humor. You will make new friends and heal old wounds and you will see me in each other's eyes and smiles and feel my arms around you at the Peace. I will watch over the ones who have left St. Alban's to follow other paths. They will be okay too. Walk humbly with me and let me lead. It's going to be a good journey. I love you."

Hazzan Marc Dinkin
Congregation B'nai Shalom, Walnut Creek

I have been preparing B'nai Mitzvah students since I was in graduate school at JTS in 1970. I can clearly state without hesitation, that it remains a joy for me to do. The CD has replaced the tape and the record, but nothing has taken the spot of a twelve year old embarking on this trip. From that first anxious moment when he or she enters my office, to the finished product six months or more later, the transition in most cases is remarkable. Those first few sessions are flavored with nervousness. After all, these young people know that they are going to be chanting extensively in Hebrew, and reading a speech in front of a large crowd. It has to be disconcerting. Add to that, most of these individuals are in seventh grade when the curriculum stiffens while homework increases.

It remains my primary goal to create a positive experience for the student and family. I do have an advantage here, as most families have made it clear to their child, that this joyous time is to be shared by all, and the simha itself is of outmost importance. In addition, the students have each other, and in some cases siblings they have seen go through it, to provide a model as an inspiration.

I am often asked how I can avoid complete boredom when the blessings and prayers are identical, and the only variations are the Torah and Haftarah texts. That's the easy part!

Each youngster needs to be encouraged and treated in a different manner. During the course of a couple of hours, I need to be multiple personalities to adjust to each person. This is a challenge to me. The words and attitude required for each lesson have to be self-regulated. It is literally switching gears on the fly.

I am deeply impressed that at the culmination of this process, our B'nai Mitzvah present themselves in a mature and positive fashion. I "catch" these youngsters at the time in life where hopefully they would be growing emotionally regardless. It is so thrilling that the Bar or Bat Mitzvah is in place to provide them with one more guide.

Rev. Rick Mitchell
Shell Ridge Community Church, Walnut Creek

I am amazed that just a few weeks ago, a beautiful new baby girl came into our lives. It already seems like Eliza Kate Mitchell is a long-time member of our family. Even though she has been "in the process" of becoming one for nine long months, and even though she was "expected" and eagerly anticipated, the actual reality of having her here and holding her is, indeed, a miracle of life itself.

Religious groups have long sought to celebrate birth as having a "religious" significance. Though each child is certainly a precious gift from God and a soul come into the care of parents and their supportive community, the reality and experience of such a new life brings us the very essence of the sacred.

In some traditions, new babies are christened or baptized, and in others, like ours here at Shell Ridge, there may be a "dedication" of the child at a young age. It has often been said that the event is properly seen as more of a dedication of parents, family, and congregation to the care and "bringing up" of the child within the community of faith. We have been privileged to participate in such a ceremony several times, and we have tried to live up to

the special opportunity and responsibility it represents.

But we need also to remember that such formalities are made in response to our belonging to a community and their desire to have our wishes and dreams commemorated with the community. Many people have very significant communities of friends or loved ones that exist outside or in addition to the ties of a congregation.

In a very real way, these informal communities may have as much or more significance than those that are more formalized. We are blessed by God and by each other in all of these relationships – and in gratitude we can celebrate in our own lives.

It is in honor of the God-given power of choice and discernment that we acknowledge the different ways in which people come to find and nourish the presence of community and love in their own lives. Those who know me recognize my belief in ecumenicity here – the conviction that people's need are more important than any claims of membership in groups they may belong to.

Within these informal circles of friendship and community, there is the opportunity to form lifetime ties with others in our lives. And, the Good News is that these ties can also be formed within the faith traditions we relate to – as well as in addition to them.

As one who does value very highly the church community – and counts many of my dearest friends among its members, I rejoice in the deep enrichment and challenge to better life it affords. Praise be to God and to the one who came to show us what life can be in the company of friends and family who care for each other ultimately and unconditionally.

Rev. Alan Kelchner
Danville Congregational Church

We didn't even know what moderation was. What it felt like. We didn't just work; we inhaled our jobs, sucked them in, *became* them. Stayed late, brought work home – it was never enough, no matter how much time we put in. We ordered things we didn't need from the shiny catalogs, more than we could use. We redid living rooms in which the furniture was not worn out. We bought new cars because we worked hard, and we deserved nice things.

We didn't just eat: we stuffed ourselves. We have gained only three pounds since the previous year, we told ourselves. Three pounds is not a lot. We had gained about three pounds the year before, too. And the year before that. We did not do the math.

We felt that it was important to be good to ourselves, and

that this meant that it was dangerous to tell ourselves no. Repression of one's desires was an unhealthy thing. *I work hard*, we told ourselves. *I deserve a little treat*. We treated ourselves every day.

And if it was dangerous for us to want and not have, it was even more so for our children. They must never know what it is to want something and not have it. It will make them bitter, we said. So we anticipated their need and desires. We got them both the doll and the bike. If their grades were good, we got them their own telephones.

There were times when we felt uneasy about our sense of entitlement. We wondered if fevered overwork and excess of appetite were not two sides of the same coin. *Probably yes*, we decided.

Suddenly we saw it all clearly: *I am driven by my schedule, my work, my possessions, and my hungers. I do not drive them; they drive me. Yes, this is how it is*. We arose and did twenty sit-ups. The next day the moment had passed; we did none.

After these moments, we were awash in self-contempt. *You are weak. Self-indulgent. You set no limits*. We looked for others whose lives were similarly overstuffed; we consoled each other. "This is just the way life is," we said to one another. "This is modern life." We felt oddly defensive, though no one had accused us of anything. *I have a full life. I work hard. I play hard*.

When did the collision between our appetites and the needs of our souls happen? Was there a heart attack? Did we get laid off from work, told we were extraneous? Did a beloved child become a bored stranger? Did a marriage fall silent and cold?

Or, by some exquisite working of God's grace, did we find the courage to look truth in the eye and, for once, blink? How did we come to know that we were dying a slow death? And the only way back to life was to set all our packages down and begin again, carrying with us only what we really needed?

Rev. Roger Reaber
Grace Presbyterian Church, Walnut Creek

I saw a great Easter card: on the cover it read "Revenge of the Giant Chocolate Bunny." It depicted a Godzilla-size bunny saying to the man in his hand "I think I'll start with the toes ...no... maybe the ears, or maybe alternate ear, toe, ear, toe...and like that..." Inside it simply read "Happy Easter." That seems clear—but what does that mean?

The city of Walnut Creek has tried to hide Easter by having a Spring Egg Hunt instead of an Easter Egg Hunt because officials didn't want to offend anybody. We know, however, that the bunny is really dropping Easter blessing behind, not just random spring eggs. It is not about chocolate or family get-togethers. It is not about pastel decorations or marshmallow Peeps. All these things just make it more fun.

Chocolate, jelly beans, plastic eggs with hidden prizes are all grand additions to the story of Jesus rising from the grave. Certainly the story doesn't need these additional frills, and at times they do make the storytelling confusing, particularly when teaching children; but in teaching children they help us interpret that our God is one life, love, parties, and special treats. And that is a wonderful lesson. And that is what Easter means. It means that God offers us love and life. It means that God loves you.

Most people have no problem in celebrating a Bunny dropping eggs. This is evident in all the Bunny stuff sold and eggs that are colored. Unfortunately some of these same people have a hard time understanding a God who loves them and hopes they will enjoy abundant life. So, when you greet someone with a "Happy Easter," add to that "God loves you."

And when it comes to eating Chocolate Bunnies I like to start at the ears, I don't know why. I do, however, thank God for all of the blessings of this season. Happy Easter! God loves you!!!

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

I would like to give a little background on the "tone" of the upcoming Prayer Vigil for all those who died in Iraq.

In the fall of 2005 Joni and I visited in Japan with our son and daughter-in-law, and we met her parents for the first time. They live in Tokyo, an ancient city filled with historic temples. One afternoon we were about to leave the hillside where many temples are located when we saw an immense statue of the Buddha, made from concrete. We decided to enter the temple, not knowing anything about it.

We made our suggested donation of a few hundred yen (a few dollars) and were each given an already-lit thick stick of incense. We saw others place their sticks in a large bowl, and we did the same. We could tell people were praying, and we did the same, but not to Buddha.

Really, I felt like a religious tourist. I wanted to get closer to this immense statue, and soon enough we were close

enough to the base of the concrete Buddha that we saw it was actually hollow inside, and one could walk in. So that's what we did. And what did we find?

We walked past row after row of polished oak file cabinets, like an old library, with thousands and thousands of 3x5 cards filed away. The interior of the concrete sides of the Buddha statue was pierced here and there by modern stained glass windows depicting soldiers and sailors at war. We finally realized that the file contained the names of all the military personnel who died at the hands of the Japanese in the Pacific theatre of World War II. In addition to American names, I recall names from Australia and New Zealand, as well as Canadian names.

This was no government institution. It was instead a religious response, brought into being sometime after the Japanese defeat, to pray for all the people killed by Japanese during the war. And it was a living institution. As we were leaving I heard the distinctive sound of a hollow stick being beat slowly, then more rapidly, and I caught a glimpse of a monk scurrying off to a prayer service, just as if I were running late for the 10:00 Sunday morning service after spending too long with the Emily Dickinson Bible study and I had heard the outside bell being rung.

So there are Japanese Buddhist monks still praying every day for the people killed by Japanese soldiers in that war. Our modest donation to that temple, added to the thousand of donations made by the Japanese; keep the temple going. (Say, it's a stewardship illustration!)

Anyway, that's what's behind my "tone" for the prayer vigil on Tuesday evening. It's not about the wisdom of invading Iraq. It's not a proxy vote on George W. Bush. It's just prayer for our own soldiers who have died. Prayer for the Iraqis who have died. And prayer for ourselves who are grieving by all this dying, perhaps more than we consciously know.

Sister Marti McCarthy, SSS From JERICHO Newsletter

Several years ago at my niece's wedding, I was talking with some of her friends who had graduated with her from Stanford. At the time I was working in Olympia, Washington in a multi-faceted homeless program. One of the young men at the reception commented: "Isn't it nice right now that any one who wants a job can have one?"

As I thought about the varieties of people I have worked with over the years, I didn't know what to say. I knew people with such limited skills, that it would take extended time and resources to make them "job ready."

Their early lives and education had prepared them for little. I thought of those struggling with mental illness – people who looked like anyone else but whose internal responses made full-time – or even more than a few hours of work - impossible. I thought of transportation barriers, sick kids, and fragmented child care. And, yes, I knew some people who may have just preferred not to work.

But mostly, I thought in those seconds before I responded, how little we know of one another across the income divide. What I said was: "Your experience is so different from mine that I don't know what to say."

To his credit this young man, soon to be on his way to a good job in St. Louis – Stanford diploma on the wall – responded: "You know, my wife and I were talking the other day and I said that the reason we view the world as we do is because everyone we know is just like us."

I think about that conversation often as I try to make a case for that other part of the world that I have come to know. When I see the CalWorks budget cuts for children, the assumed amounts that low-income people can pay for health care, and the growing disparity in our state between rich and poor, I wonder how we can bridge the divide. I also know that middle class people have benefited from a variety of "supports" that we mostly take for granted.

At their graduation that same year, parents and students were reminded by their guest speaker, Mario Cuomo, of the public benefits that had helped their parents bring them to that place. The mortgage interest deduction alone over the years would have paid for their tuition. Yet few of us think of the interest deduction as the "public assistance" it is.

I guess it depends on one's vantage point – or put another way, on one's advantage point. It depends on from which side of the divide you are looking.

Judith Holloway Orinda Community Church

Last week the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its latest report about what effect global warming is having and will have on the earth's ecosystems as well as what the inhabitants of the planet might experience in the future... The predictions are pretty scary and the litany of widening droughts, extreme weather, and melting ice is familiar to most of us at this point. As a person of faith and a Christian, what I found most disturbing was the report's new and powerful emphasis – almost a witness – on global warming as the causative agent in an

emerging *humanitarian catastrophe*.

Your Words Continued

time has come.

This disaster is not limited to the human population. Scientists also anticipate that a third of all species will most likely go extinct by the middle of the century due to their inability to adapt or migrate to a more supportive habitat.

The greatest burden of human-induced global warming is going to fall to those who already live on the thinnest margins of survival. The rich industrial countries of Europe, North America and Australia that have done the most to *cause* global warming are also able to afford more protection from its effects – although eventually it will profoundly affect all of us. As a Christian, this bothers me – a lot! In the past, I’ve had some comfortable distance from humanitarian crises, knowing that it wasn’t my fault and believing that donations would help. Not this time... This time it’s much harder to let myself off the hook. The IPCC report is very clear. Unless we all work together to mitigate global warming now and provide some real assistance toward adaptation for the world’s most vulnerable, massive suffering and death will ensue, and we are complicit and at risk. This is an unprecedented moral issue and certainly a Christian one.

But we have to be willing to change the way we do things. We are still a society that has choices about what we do, how we do it, and how what we do affects others (although as resources diminish, that window becomes narrower). This is where the “happiness” factor comes in. What if responding morally to global warming actually makes economic sense and creates lives with more meaning?

What if cruciform living, acting with love toward others and all of life, is actually the best way to run a world? It certainly seems to me that the dog-eat-dog competitive model of free market/corporate capitalism has run its course. Through global warming it is now exposed as not only a failed theoretical model, but one in which progress as defined by an ever-expanding product for an ever-expanding market on a finite plane is experienced as a devastatingly destructive concept. In its life-destroying properties, it is also clearly antithetical to living a Christian life...

At this point, change, affecting how we live and do things, is inevitable. The question is, do we act to change now while we still have choices, or later, when we are forced to change by climate-driven catastrophes in the midst of immense suffering? That we can thrive better by creating different economic models is a thought whose

Can we confront that enriching ourselves individually in our current system of economics – for less and less real satisfaction – impoverishes others throughout the world? Global warming invites us, demands that we ask ourselves as a culture and as Christians if it is possible that living less individualistically, out of caring for others and the planet, could also make us happier.

Some members of St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church, Danville

A letter addressed to the Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop, ECUSA, and the Right Reverend Marc Handley Andrus, Bishop of California

...We write to communicate our profound sorrow over the divisions within the Anglican Communion, and within the Episcopal Church, stemming from disagreements over the ordination of women, the ordination of persons living in a same-sex relationship, and the authority of Rites of Blessing for persons living in same-sex unions.

We are called as Christians to honor a baptismal covenant that calls us to respect the dignity of every person. In a world that is fraught with tension and discord, we come to church to be reconciled by God to one another and to make that witness known to all. We despair that we are expending time, energy and resources that would be better used to further the Church’s mission in the world.

When we look at the life of Christ and his ministry, we recognize a constant and consistent guiding them: love one another. Christ’s message, ministry and mission were radically inclusive. Based upon our prayerful consideration of scripture, tradition and reason, we believe that the ordination of women, the ordination of homosexual persons to all orders of ministry, and the blessing of same-sex partners wishing recognition and loving support from the faith community are compatible with Jesus’ teachings and example. Furthermore, we believe that the issue involved is not simply one of tolerance and inclusion, but is rather fundamentally one of justice.

We respect that Christians of good faith disagree on these issues. We pray for the reconciliation and healing of our church, for continued discussion where there is disagreement, and for all parties to see the wisdom of compromise and solutions where there seem to be insurmountable differences...

FAREWELL TO WINTER NIGHTS 2006-07

What a six-and-a-half months it's been! For our clients, the members of our host congregations, and our donors, I think we can agree that October 16, 2006, to April 30, 2007, has been a time of many blessings.

For our clients a big blessing is the sense of **community and family** that formed. For our host congregations, the **partnering** that took place. And for everyone the **services** that were sought and provided that carried our guests to a better place than when they arrived at the Winter Nights Shelter.

One of my favorite stories is the 16-year-old high school junior who was so embarrassed to be coming into a shelter that she refused to get out of her family's car that first night. By the next day—after being welcomed by the group of teens who were living with us—she was comfortable and had joined the **family spirit**. Her date for the prom picked her up at our host congregation, **Good Shepherd Lutheran**; she looked beautiful, and was cheered on by the rest of the WN family.

The spirit of **Partnering** has been present at several host sites. There weren't a sufficient number of weeks to accommodate the congregations that wanted to participate in the program, so groups from one would offer to help another. I remember the week we were in Antioch. The first night's dinner was prepared and served by the host, **First Baptist Church** of Antioch. The second night, **St. George's Episcopal** was the provider. The third night was **St. Ignatius Catholic**. Members of three different faiths sharing meals with each other and the 32 homeless individuals residing at **First Baptist**.

We are proud of the fact that all of our homeless families and elders were able to move to some form of shelter or housing during the time we were open: **low-income apartments, transitional housing, non-rotating shelters, shelter-plus-care, rooms with home-owners, etc.** We are proud of those who found jobs and held them. We carried a van load of children to school each morning. Several memories stand out for me: **Heather** offering Lynn and her daughter two rooms in her home until they could find an apartment in Benicia that they could afford; **Pat** offering a room in her home to Dorothy and her two zebra finch birds until she can locate a place to live; **Joe** sitting for hours with our clients—even after “lights out”—filling out housing applications and then hand-delivering them to the service providers; **Valerie** visiting one of our clients

in the emergency room at Mt. Diablo Hospital late one evening; the pastor of one of our churches quietly giving a Raiders' football to one of our fathers who was an ardent fan. These are just a few of the memories I carry away. There are many more. They are all rooted in the spirit of faith, family, and community that existed during our time together.

At **Orinda Community Church**, where we closed the shelter, **Pastor Frank Baldwin** and members, held a beautiful closing ceremony the last weekend. I know I speak for all when I say, “we close with praise and thanks.”

Winter Nights Update

St. Anselm's Episcopal Church, Lafayette; First Christian Church of Concord; and Christ the King Catholic Church, Pleasant Hill, hosted Winter Nights during the month of March. Our final month, April, found us at **Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Concord; First Baptist Church, Antioch; and Orinda Community Church**. They provided a warm, safe place to sleep each night, delicious meals, and caring volunteers. On behalf of the homeless guests and staff, I want to thank you for your generosity and support. We couldn't do it without you.

A complete status report on this season's Winter Nights Program will be in the next issue of *Ministering Together*.

CNWS INTERFAITH TASK FORCE

The Task Force, convened by SOJA, meets monthly. At the last meeting, **Susan Jaffe** included these items in the minutes: **Dan and Mary Agnes Hardie** reported on the homeless needs assessment, **Ed Shockley** discussed permanent supportive housing and affordable housing programs in other areas of the state, **Larry Risman** reported on a meeting with **Susan Bonilla, Phil Lawson** mentioned that the City is accepting Requests for Proposals by developers, **Kathie Pongrace** led the process of drafting a Mission Statement.

Task Force members will be a force at upcoming City of Concord CNWS workshops on April 21, June 16, and August 4.

The April Task Force meeting was held at St. Agnes Church in Concord. All are welcome to attend the May meeting. For information, please call Delores Logue, 672-6870.

Next SOJA Meeting: Wednesday, May 9, 7 PM, Interfaith Office—All are welcome.

Thank you corner:

Special thanks to our faithful, hardworking newsletter volunteers who collated, folded and labeled our last edition of "Ministering Together." They are: Madeline Gomes, Diana Hill, Mary Hogan, Tim Michelson, Dick Shumaker, Dorothy Vance, Grey Whipple, Dolores White, and Jean Witucki.

Please Pray for:

- Victims of the horrific shooting at Virginia Tech.
- The mentally ill and those who provide treatment and support.
- Rev. Cathy Tharalsen, American Baptist Minister from Danville, who suffered a massive heart attack in the airport in VanCouver, BC last week.
- Betty Alton, I4C newsletter volunteer, recovering from surgery for cancer and to repair a broken ankle.
- The United Nations.
- Victims of recent storms around the U.S.
- The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County.

Congratulations, Singing Messengers



On June 5 we will celebrate the 35th anniversary of dedicated service by men and women who have served in the three teams of musicians visiting the convalescent and assisted living facilities in Contra Costa County.

A luncheon is being planned at the Holiday Inn in Concord at 1050 Burnett Avenue, beginning at 1:00 p.m. Advanced reservations must be made at the cost of \$10 per person for those who are presently serving, also alumni and spouses. A letter of invitation will be sent to those whose addresses we have.

Help us find the Alumni!!! Please call if you can help us find any former members who may have moved or changed their names since being on the yearly roster. Call the Interfaith Council (925-933-6030) and leave a message for Jackie Wan with your phone number or e-mail address so she can contact you. We are contacting the ones that we know. Deadline for making reservations is May 22. Response is expected by the deadline.

Next Deadline: June 15, 2007

Please send copy marked to the attention of:

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