

M inistering Together

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

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

July– August 2007

Coming Events

Housing Rights Workshop Time and place of your convenience

Housing Rights, Inc. of Berkeley is making its staff available to provide workshops to tenants, prospective homeowners, homeowners and landlords on a variety of topics. If you are interested, contact Wanda Remmers at 510-548-8776, ext. 310, or check out www.housingrights.com.

Priests I've Gone to Jail With Tuesday, August 7, 7:30 p.m. Christ the King Church 199 Brandon Rd., Pleasant Hill

Human rights attorney Bill Quigley will present this talk. All are welcome and admission is free. For more information, call 925-682-2486.

Project Homeless Connect - Rescheduled Tuesday, October 16, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Willow Pass Center 2748 E. Olivera Rd., Concord

The County Homeless Program is putting on this second one-day, one-stop shop to offer a variety of services to people experiencing homelessness.

Volunteers are needed to complete medical applications, provide employment services, provide mental health, alcohol and drug counseling help and referral, greeting, translation, serving food, massage and the like.

To help, contact 925-313-6124 or cchealth.org.

Director's Letter

Dear friends,

One of my continually treasured experiences in this position with the Interfaith Council is to be able visit with religious leaders in regular monthly meetings. Such groups exist in the San Ramon Valley, Rossmoor, Pleasant Hill, Walnut Creek, and the so-called “Lamorinda” (Lafayette-Moraga-Orinda) area. (There are others, of course, but not all of them are interfaith. I am interested in being invited to the truly interfaith ones!)

At a recent Lamorinda meeting, the topic moved to fear. I can't recall all of the content, but participants discussed how rampant fear is in our lives, and how it forms many of our motivations. There is much to fear – crime, environmental toxins, terrorist acts, disease, invasions of privacy, unemployment, which can in turn lead to poverty, and homelessness. On a philosophical or psychological level, we can fear rejection, loss of meaning, breakdown of important relationships, even an angry God.

The result of our fear of perceived dangers is that we can pull back from engagement with the world. Chil-



dren are not allowed out of the front yard, we go out of our ways not to travel through particular neighborhoods, we instinctively shun certain kinds of persons. The media are constantly alerting us to new threats. We may even get the idea that our leaders use fear to manipulate us. After 9/11, our lawmakers agreed to measures which would have been unthinkable in a more serene time. Justification for continued military involvement in Iraq is given as “better to fight our enemy there than here.”

I have no doubt there are truly things to fear in our world today. But it was the agreement of those Lamorinda religious leaders that one of our particular common callings is to combat fear. Religious leaders know how to do this. In the Christian Bible, I John 4:18 says “There is no room for fear in love; Perfect love casts out fear.” Other religious traditions can find the same message in their scriptures. How often do angels and other revelations bring the message “Fear not!”?

One reason for this admonition is because fear leads us in a downward cycle. To protect ourselves, we use violence, and it is more than a maxim that violence breeds more violence. The end of a gun barrel, the

explosion of a bomb, look the same no matter whose side you're on.

So, religious people, I urge you to become fearlessly loving. Stand on the strength of your theological convictions. Say no to the trumping up of peril. Resist your prejudices. Question your preconceptions. Wonder about the truth. Be willing to accept the best explanation. Assume that everybody is human. Take a risk for compassion's sake. In these ways will fear be overcome.

Just on the day of this writing, the Vatican has issued a document entitled "Pastoral Care of the Road." Most of the news stories I have heard and seen so far are tongue-in-cheek, making light of the matter. But in reading the new "Ten Commandments" for driving, I am impressed. They include such religiously insightful items as "The road shall be for you a means of

communion between people and not of mortal harm" and "Bring guilty motorists and their victims together...so that they can undergo the liberating experience of forgiveness." And a very helpful 10th commandment, "Feel responsible toward others."

The coverage reminds me that the truly serious can be and is easily trivialized in much of our modern media. It took me some web-surfing to find out that these driving commandments comprised only one-fourth of the total document. The other sections deal with helping street women, street children and the homeless. Wow! I think it is brilliant to bring the wisdom of religion (here, the Catholic Christian tradition) into our road life, and to consider that there is much pastoral work to be done on our mean streets.

Byron

Chaplain's Corner

Most weeks I "deliver" thirty or forty "sermonettes" that often last longer than a traditional sermon preached from the pulpit. The recipients of these "mini" sermons are those young people in custody *and* those with whom I continue to work well beyond their last periods of confinement in juvenile facilities. "After care" for some has lasted twelve years!

It is most pleasing to know that young people do *at times* pay attention to that which has been shared. In many instances folks who have not been around for years will call and say thanks for the assistance rendered during difficult times in the past. There are about fifty individuals who are in constant contact. Some are away in school, others are engaged in gainful employment and raising families. Some are slowly, but surely (I think) moving in that direction, as they move into their mid-twenties. Change indeed has occurred, and, is occurring.

One Saturday afternoon last summer I was in a luncheon meeting on the Peninsula when I received a frantic telephone call from one of "my kids" who was at the time just short of his twentieth birthday. We had first met in Byron when he was fourteen years old. Abandoned by parents, he had lived in foster care for most



of his life. He got into trouble and spent most of his teen years under the supervision of the probation department. While in custody he earned the GED. Afterward he went on to adult school and earned his high school diploma; he has since completed two years of college.

It seemed the young man had been walking across a local community college campus when an alleged minor infraction attracted the attention of a campus police officer. Although the infraction *may* have warranted a citation, the officer apparently proceeded to over-react. The young man sustained cuts and bruises to his face and broken teeth. He called me to immediately tell me how his head was viciously "smashed against a bus bench," how he was bleeding and holding pieces of his front teeth in his hand.

I directed him to take down the names of the several witnesses and then to proceed to the nearest hospital, a short distance away. He again called me from the emergency room where doctors treating him had called in the local police to file a report. They also took detailed photographs of the wounds. When the city police officers determined that the injuries to this young person had been at the hands of the campus police, they left, indicating the matter was outside

their jurisdiction.

The emergency room physician directed the young man to seek emergency dental care for the broken tooth and presented him with a rather substantial medical bill. During our third or fourth call of the afternoon, I stressed to the young man that he needed to do exactly as the physician had advised where the tooth was concerned. And, I told him he needed to make an appointment the first thing on Monday morning with the college president. I was quite encouraged on Monday when he again called to tell me he had been to the dentist and he had made an appointment with the college president for the following day. The teeth were repaired. The cost was significant.

The young man appeared before the college president at the appointed time with a witness list, photos and medical bills in hand. He later told me the president seemed a bit unconcerned about the issue until the president was told, "I'm one of Reverend Tinsley's kids." "The president," according to the young man,

"moved closer and then really began to pay attention..."

A report was filed. An attorney was contacted. A formal complaint was filed. At this writing, attorneys for the defendant have offered a reasonably adequate out-of-court settlement. The medical and dental bills will be paid.

More importantly, though, a formerly impatient, impulsive, poorly informed young person *listened, paid attention, followed through and learned how to do things in an acceptable, legal and correct manner*. He learned to function, in this instance, the way folks in the mainstream function. In the not-so-distant past I would never have expected his calculated, meticulous response and execution in such a situation. I am so very proud of him. Change, notable and remarkable change, indeed has occurred. A colossal stride in the right direction! Most encouraging!

Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley
Juvenile Detention Chaplain

Your Words – Windows on each other's lives of faith

Rev. John Sutton St. Anselm's Church, Lafayette

When Bishop Andrus was greeting people at the door after the service last month, my daughter Kate was standing in line behind four-year-old Halley Orear. Kate told me that when Halley's turn to meet the Bishop came, she asked him, "Are you the one who makes the cookies?" The Bishop deftly replied something along the lines of, 'No, but I like cookies!'

I was humored and puzzled by Halley's question. Later that week, Halley's mom Amy was in the parking lot picking up Halley from preschool, and we shared the story. Amy told me that she had prepared Halley for the Bishop's visitation the previous week. She told Halley that it was going to be a special day at church on Sunday because Father John's boss was coming. Halley informed her mom that Father John worked for God, and Amy, side stepping the details of working relations between Bishop and Priest told Hal-

ley that the Bishop was in charge of the churches. That seemed to satisfy Halley.

Halley must have figured that since the Bishop was in charge of the churches, and the best thing about church was the cookies after the services, he must be the one who made the cookies!

Really, quite a logical assumption, and an important insight for us adults to have when we plan a path for leading our children to an understanding of a loving God.

The Bishop doesn't make the cookies but he leads a community of cookie-makers; not so unlike Santa and his elves. When our turn comes to host coffee hour, we may think of it as a necessary duty, a 'cost of membership.' We may forget the fact that it is a true ministry, in the very best sense: that for a four-year-old the treats after the service are the tangible manifestation that God cares for her.

Frank Baldwin
Orinda Community Church

Did anyone watch that documentary movie “The Lost Tomb of Jesus,” that was shown last month on the Discovery Channel? By the time it actually aired there’d been sufficient hype and counter-hype in the various media to satisfy me that I’d already seen enough. The story, of course, is that some limestone bone boxes (ossuaries) found in a 1st century A.D. tomb in Jerusalem bear the biblical name “Jesus,” “Mary” and “Joseph.” Documentary film maker Simcha Jacobovici asserts that these ossuaries once contained the earthly remains of Jesus Christ, his mother and brother. Nearby was a box labeled “Mariamene e Mara,” and another labeled “Jude,” claimed to represent Mary Magdalene and her previously unknown son by Jesus.

Although the movie reportedly sensationalizes these revelations, the ossuaries in question first came to light back in 1980. Knowledgeable archeologists and historians who have studied the artifacts are not convinced that these ever had anything to do with Jesus of Nazareth and his family. The names Jesus, Mary, Joseph and Jude were common in 1st century Palestine, and other evidence linking the boxes to the New Testament narrative is utterly speculative. I would assume that the movie was released a few weeks before Easter with the sole intention of offending the Christian community enough to generate a bigger (albeit angrier) audience. “Lost Tomb” publicity emphasized the idea that if this is the burial place of Jesus, then there was no resurrection: the old “science contradicts scripture” argument. Unfortunately for the producers, real scientists familiar with the situation flatly contend that the underlying data here so shaky as to be considered bogus, if not fraudulent.

In pondering the mysteries of Easter, Christians recognize the difference between resurrection and resuscitation. As Christian Century magazine editorialized a week ago, “Jesus rising from the dead can’t simply mean that he had his mortal body back—in that case he’d have to die a second time. Jesus’ raised body was an unusual kind of body – he walked through walls, for example. Paul talked about the resurrected body as a ‘spiritual body,’ whatever that means. Could something be left behind after a resurrection?” The “something left behind” was a vivid presence of Christ, a sense of his indomitable love so powerful and real that the disciples knew he was not dead but beside them forever. He lives among his followers, and the Good News that he proclaimed and embodied lives with him. Have a joyous

Easter!

Ron Dunn
San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church

I recently read of a fascinating architectural accomplishment currently unfolding in Germany. It seems that, beginning in the 1960’s, the preferred building materials of East Germany were prefabricated concrete slabs. Facing a severe housing shortage, the East Germans used these slabs to hastily erect shoebox shaped residential apartments. Not only did the use of these concrete slabs allow for rapid construction of new apartments, but it was also very economical.

After East Germany and West Germany reunited, the demand for these ugly but economical buildings began to drop, leaving approximately one million unoccupied units. Faced with this unusual housing crisis, two young architects looked upon it as a wonderful opportunity. The Biele brothers chose to see these units as more than just the dwindling remains of communist culture. They chose to see these units as the source of badly needed raw material.

The Biele brothers learned that they could secure these concrete slabs for nothing more than the cost of hauling them away. They then proceeded to recycle them into single-family homes. By bolting the slabs together, cutting out the windows and putting on an exterior finish, construction workers have been building homes that are reflective of both German and California architectural styles. Construction cost savings are approximately 40%.

This is clearly a “win-win” situation for the people of Germany. Abandoned housing is being transformed into new, economical housing that is meeting the needs (and tastes) of a whole new generation of Germans.

As you might imagine, my interests in this story (recorded in the magazine, “Fast Company” September 2006) are not so much architectural as theological. For, if you pardon the pun, it represents a “concrete illustration” of what it means to be speaking of God’s transforming grace. Suffice it to say that in God’s unfolding grace, nothing is wasted and nothing is discarded. Instead, it is merely used in a different way to bring about a remarkable change.

Our vision statement speaks of being a people “transformed by grace.” While that sounds impressive and important, we are sometimes at a loss to describe what we really mean when we make that statement. I suggest that it may be as simple as saying that by the

power of God, our “old lives” can be recycled and made into “new lives,” lives that, in fact, represent something beautiful for God.

I believe that when the Church of Jesus Christ is truly fulfilling the “blue print” that God has provided, it will be about the business of directing its energy and passion towards the primary purpose of changing lives, of allowing God’s Spirit to recycle the old “concrete blocks” of our lives into a new creation of God’s deign.

As we think about who we are and what we are called to be about as the community of faith, I can think of no better reference point than the one offered in 1 Peter 2:4: “Come to him, a living stone...and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.” By the work of God’s Spirit, we are being built, bit-by-bit, block-by-block, into a spiritual house, one whose true architect is God.

Rabbi Raphael Asher Congregation B’nai Tikvah, Walnut Creek

At last month’s Jewish Film Festival I spoke after a film we sponsored on a lesser-known Holocaust episode that directly involved my 19-year-old father in 1940. The movie, “Friendly, Enemy Alien” tells the story of some 1500 German-Jewish refugees who were interned in England, shipped under inhuman conditions by our Allies to Australia, interned again there out of fear of everything German until Pearl Harbor reshuffled perceptions. They were then given Australian army uniforms to help fend off the Japanese.

The term “Friendly Enemy Alien” is not only an oxymoronic phrase depicting confusions of wartime, but also suggests the quick and ironic ways people can be categorized and recategorized according to the exigencies of the moment. The day after December 7, 1941 German-Jewish enemy aliens became soldiers-in-arms, and shortly thereafter Japanese Americans were rounded up in internment camps here in our own backyard.

Human beings continue to need categories with which to label the others. It is just too disconcerting to think that under some circumstances peoples collectively may be altogether virtuous, and then overwhelmingly noxious when circumstances change. Allied soldiers become sadistic beasts, Australian xenophobes become mates, suspect Jews become worthy citizens and veterans.

Having completed Purim we may freeze our perceptions of Persians as evil Hamans. Ancient events and the movie “300” make it easiest to just fossilize our ideas of Iran into one stereotype or another. Let this year’s Passover free our minds to admit a complexity that allows for many shadings

of all peoples. Sure, there are Hamans and Pharaohs, but there are also Egyptian Anwar Sadats, and Cyrus King of Persia was one of the great deliverers of the Jewish people from harsh exile back to their home in 6th century B.C.E. Jerusalem.

May the wonderful flavors and the fresh start of the Passover season open our minds to the subtleties of life

Fr. Brian Joyce Christ the King Church, Pleasant Hill

This Monday evening Bishop Vigneron visits us to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation with 82 of our teenagers who have been preparing for much of a year. We also celebrated confirmation with 25 adults the Holy Saturday Easter Vigil and look forward to confirming another group of 16 adults at the end of the month.

Those of us whose “confirmation memories” go back to the middle of the century (unless we were raised in an Hispanic culture where confirmation was celebrated at infancy) probably recall three moments: the bishop asking questions of a bunch of fairly nervous kids; being told we were “soldiers of Christ,” and receiving a slap on the face from the bishop to remind us of the need for a strong backbone and stiff upper lip if we were to follow Jesus! All those moments are long gone, but still instructive for Christian life – especially confirmed Christian life.

The questioning by bishops is pretty much optional now depending on the bishop, plus whenever I’ve seen it in recent years, it’s been more of a discussion starter rather than testing for information. For me, the lesson to be learned is that Christian life and Catholic tradition always include the mind and reason as well as faith and belief; they include too the challenge of adult learning every day of our lives – always more to learn, digest, understand and wrestle with – the mysteries of faith, the awesome wonders of God.

The label “soldier of Christ” no longer appears in catechism or conversation about the sacrament of Confirmation. There always was something out of kilter in being named a “soldier” to follow the Prince of peace! We believe that Confirmation gives us the strength of God’s Spirit to witness to the faith and stand up for our beliefs. Hence for a while there, in more aggressively military days, it made some sense to use the soldier language. Witnessing to the gospel of Christ is more likely to call for demonstrations for peace, compassion and forgiveness than for soldiering; actually that takes more courage,

strength and Spirit, not less.

And finally, the famous “slap in the face” now long gone from the Sacrament of Confirmation. Actually it was, of all things, a greeting of peace! “In days of old, when Bishops bold would slap your face, to show God’s grace” (I made that up!), the Bishop would actually say “Pax tecum” (Peace be with you). With long lines of kids to confirm, and a Latin phrase not heard or understood, the kind tap of the Bishop’s hand became a slap that catechists then explained as a reminder of the need to be strong.

Well, the slap is gone but the need for a Spirit of Courage is still there. May we confirmed Christians all – confirmed with God’s Spirit to stand up for justice and freedom, to stand against oppression and exploitation, to be blessed with the conviction that with God’s grace we can make a difference in this world.

Rabbi Roberto Graetz Temple Isaiah, Lafayette

There is a controversy in the larger Jewish community. It has to do with how we relate to Israel and the relationship between criticism of particular policies of the State of Israel and anti-Semitism. We all watch carefully what goes on in the world. There is no denying that anti-Jewish sentiment is growing. If you repeat a lie often enough and you make it big enough people will end up believing it.

So, today we are witnesses to pseudo-academic gatherings of Holocaust deniers, pseudo-pacifists calling for divestment, a

former United States President accusing Israel of apartheid and ignoring the threats to her existence... and the tide is turning. Israel becomes, for some, a dirty name; Jews become suspect by association.

Almost as if taking advantage of this hostile environment, some Jewish defense organizations are willing to accuse any Jew with questions or reservations on the treatment of Palestinians, the policy of demolitions, or the building of barriers that separate farmers from their lands, of aiding and abetting the enemy.

Those of us in the liberal community see it differently. Affirming our love of Israel, we wish to see her flourishing, her borders secure, her children at peace. We never say things that are not said in Israel itself by those who participate actively in her political life. We think that the unity of the Jewish people is affirmed when we dialogue about every issue, even the difficult ones, with each other. And we don’t like to be bullied!

The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism launched a campaign some years ago promoting pluralism in Israel with the motto “There is more than one way of being Jewish.” This needs to apply also in the Diaspora, and especially in the United States, where the largest Jewish community in the world lives securely.

We stand with Israel and affirm our love for the land and its people, even when occasionally we need to voice our criticism of a particular policy and work actively to shape the Jewish State according to the values we bring to the table here, in our time.

Point of View—Risking Conversation

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

Israeli Occupation Passes the 40-Year Mark

On June 5, 1967, I had completed one year of my assignment as diplomat at the Iraqi Embassy in Washington, D.C. At that time, the debate on the Vietnam War was at its peak in the United States. That day will never be removed from the memory of the peoples of the Middle East, because Israel defeated the Arab armies. It is still considered their worst defeat since WW II.

The Iraqi ambassador to Washington was bidding farewell and returning to Baghdad. I asked him whether he had discussed the war with US officials, considering that the war brought about a shift in the position of the US government from previous appearance of neutrality to more open support for Israel. He said that he informed the chief of the

Iraqi desk at the State Department that “no one in the Arab world could defend the friendship with the United States due to its obvious tilt in favor of Israel.” The reply of the official was: “Those who care about the United States’ friendship in the Middle East should find the way to defend it.”

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 of 1967, a plan to solve the conflict, was adopted in November (more than five months after the cessation of hostilities). Despite including the principle of inadmissibility of acquiring a territory by force, the language of the resolution was subject to different interpretations. The occupying power (Israel) was in a more advantageous position to unilaterally interpret the resolution. In the past 40 years, all the parties declared their commitment to Resolution 242 as well as Security Council Resolution 338 (1973),

Point of View—continued

which was adopted after the 1973 war waged by Egypt and Syria to liberate their occupied territories.

Despite the many UN resolutions to bring peace to the region, as well as regional and bilateral efforts to resolve the conflict, the crux of the matter, i.e., the plight of the Palestinian people, has not witnessed a positive change. However, there has been one important development: since the late 1980s, the representatives of the Palestinian people have become directly involved in the negotiation process, and the international community has realized that the conflict can no longer be considered as merely between the Arab states and Israel.

The central issue in the conflict is the right of the Palestinian people to have their own state on their territories occupied by Israel in 1967. This land of the mandated territory of Palestine must be shared among its indigenous people, the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Please note that the West Bank and Gaza, on which the Palestinians, supported by the United Nations and the international community, are struggling to build their own state, represent only 22 percent of the mandated territory of Palestine, while Israel within its 1967 borders has the remaining 78 percent. Therefore the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the refusal of Israel to agree on an amicable and negotiated settlement to the issue of Palestinian refugees, are hindering the efforts to implement the Arab peace plan, which was adopted by the Arab Summit of the Heads of States in Beirut, Lebanon in 2002, and reaffirmed recently in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Resolving these two issues will open the door for all Arab states to establish full diplomatic and other relations with Israel, and hopefully will close forever the chapter of wars and conflicts in the region. Peace and justice in the Holy Land represent Palestinian, Israeli, Arab and American interests. I am convinced that the greatest contribution to world peace is to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of peace and justice. Ending the 40-year-old Israeli occupation is the first important step.

Rev. Norm Luecke First Congregational Church, Martinez

Some years ago, I was making a living waiting tables at the Flamingo Hilton Casino Hotel in Laughlin [Nevada], a two-thousand-room hotel/casino. It was up and running 24/7 and almost always very busy. Occasionally after a shift, I would take the quarters I had received from my tips, usually a handful, and feed them into the quarter poker ma-

chines at the bar. As long as you play the machines, the drinks are free, and the bartenders make good drinks for their fellow employees, not the freebies the general public was served. Most nights I would slowly feed my quarters in until they were gone, but once in a while, I'd get a flush or a straight and go home with an extra \$37.50. Once I hit "4 of a kind."

It was a nice way to unwind after a busy eight-hour shift. But there were a large number of my fellow employees who took to gambling fatally. They would get their check on payday and never leave the casino until it was gone. Then they would live off tips until the next payday. It was an addition, a compulsion, an obsession – one more roll of the dice, one more spin of the wheel, one more shuffle. Sometimes they would get way ahead for a while, but they would not quit until they were broke. The casinos loved it. They'd get their money back and their help would be more likely to come to work the next day, because they were broke.

Our nation's behavior in Iraq is very much like the behavior of the gambling addict. Somehow if we keep throwing/gambling more lives and more money on the table in Iraq, sometime soon we're going to come up a big winner.

- On the first roll of the dice, the payoff was weapons of mass destruction – they weren't there... *Roll again.*
- Now it's to remove Saddam from power! Payoff: tyrant gone – Iraq's happier. Well, they ought to be happier. Why aren't they? *Roll again.*
- Well, the payoff we really want is elections; the Iraqi's need to self-govern themselves. Throw some more lives and money on the table. Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds, enemies for centuries, ruling together – better give that one a little time... *Roll again.*
- We need to train the Iraqis to keep the peace. Payoff: then we can stand down as they stand up. *Question:* How do you train someone to do something you don't know how to do yourself? *Answer:* You don't. We give that up...*Roll again.*
- Now it's the surge – I'm not clear what the payoff is supposed to be – are you?

Question: How many blank checks do you give to a gambling addict?

SOJA Meets Wednesday, August 8, 2007, at 7:00 pm, I4C office — All Are Welcome!

CROP WALK: Gwen Watson reports that the CROP Walk will share a quarter of the funds raised with Winter Nights. She asked that SOJA and I4C members help recruit a Chair and a Treasurer for the October 7 CROP Walk in Walnut Creek.

IMMIGRATION: Gail Rodens has agreed to report on immigration issues at SOJA meetings.

HEALTH CARE: Pat Snyder reports that SB 840 has passed the senate and is now in the Assembly Rules Committee. AB 8 (Nunez) and SB 48 (Perata) have both passed their respective houses, and the authors have formally announced that they will be combined. No info on when, but presumably fairly soon. There are numerous reports that the Governor's staff is sending them language to insert in the bills, so his proposal or parts thereof will be included in the combined bill, it seems.

There was a good but not huge crowd for the legislative briefing held by Sheila Kuehl and rally in Sacramento on June 12, sponsored by the CNA, at which Michael Moore spoke. At the briefing there were also three individuals who had appeared in his film, "Sicko" -- an MD regretting having served as a medical reviewer for Humana, a rescue mission director telling about patient dumping on skid row in LA, and a woman whose 18-month old had died because Kaiser refused to authorize treatment in a non-Kaiser ER. "Sicko" was shown at 3:30 for an invited audience, and Pat attended. She reports that Moore focuses on people who have insurance, but still suffer lack of access or huge debt--making the point that even if you have coverage you are not safe. He has interviews with people in France, Canada, Britain and Cuba extolling their systems and stating they don't want ours. Pat thought he made some of that sound better than it is, although it is definitely much better than ours in all cases. Moore pleads at the end for us to become a "we" society, moving away from our current "me" point of view.

The convinced and committed audience loved the movie. The proof of the pudding will be how the general public reacts. It absolutely ignites a push for solutions, but we will have to wait and see what the impact actually is.

CNWS: Dolores Loague reports that the CNWS Interfaith Task Force remains committed as advocates for the homeless and low-income individuals. A meeting on June 16 was to refine the "wishes" of interest groups for re-use of the land on the closed base. Through a board-game technique, members were assigned groups that would place chips marked "housing, open space, commercial, recreation," etc., on maps of land. These maps will be studied and reports made at the August Re-use meeting. Members of the Interfaith Task Force attending were:

Delores Loague, Dan Hardie, Susan Jaffe, Ed Shockley, and Gwen Watson. Non-profits are being contacted and urged to submit proposals by September 26.

MID-EAST: Last month Natalie Russell reports that the Living Room Dialogue in May was a nice meeting, good food, just a matter of getting acquainted. Amer discussed the situation in Palestine. He also shared the unexplained delay by the United States government in issuing Mrs. Aram citizenship documents.

SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS WATCH: Natalie Russell quotes from statements by two U.S. Generals who currently oppose the Iraq War. "The U.S. has failed to secure the peace. . . We went in with a bad plan. Stay the course is not a strategy," stated Major General Paul Eaton at a Senate Hearing September 25, 2006. "Somebody had to speak out. If not me, who? How long are we going to continue down this road to nowhere?" Major General John Batiste said as he resigned over the war after 31 years in the Army. These two statements were placed as an ad in the *Columbus Ledger*, Georgia, June 4, 2007, by two decorated Vietnam veterans—Charlie Liteky, Medal of Honor; and Roy Bourgeois, Purple Heart.

WINTER NIGHTS PROGRAM: It was a Very Good Year.

During the six and a half months the Winter Nights Shelter was open, 98 persons (36 families) were sheltered and provided with case management, transportation, three meals a day, referral and placement in housing and social services, and tutoring for students of all ages in an environment of friendship. We are especially proud that 63 persons (23 families) were placed in appropriate and available housing—45 persons (17 families) to a home or apartment and 18 persons (6 families) to permanent shelters. Winter Nights Case Manager, Joe Macaluso, continues to seek housing for two families and one elderly individual who remain in temporary quarters.

A latecomer to the 2006-07 shelter, "Adopt-A-Family," is operating and will continue to be offered when the shelter opens October 15, 2007. (See article which follows for a brief description of that program.)

It was a good year because we had:

conscientious, dependable staff members led by Program Manager Mahmood Barakzai; welcoming and compassionate volunteers at the congregations; an experienced, knowledgeable grant writer, Lorri Gazzano; hard-working moving crew members, led by Bob Russell; professional case management by Joe Macaluso; transportation conducted by Valerie Sloven; disciplined and accurate scheduling by Sue Phalen; a donated Oasis site at St. Vincent de Paul Headquarters in Pittsburg, thanks to

SoJA - Continued

Ron Weston; a great website managed by Michael Cohen and designed by Jan Thomas; oversight by the Homeless Summit members; budget counseling by Pat Kramer; planning and leadership by Steering Committee members Sandy Anderson, Natalie Russell, Pat Snyder, Brian Stein-Webber, and Gwen Watson; hundreds of individual, congregation, and business donors; coordination with other nonprofits and County agencies; and sponsorship by the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County.

Wish List:

Back-up Driver with Large Truck
Twin-size Sheets: 30 Fitted, 40 Flat

Adopt-A-Family:

Adopt-A-Family's mission is to form a Team which will

work in conjunction with a professional charity counselor as a friend, guide, and resource for a needy family striving to better themselves.

Participants in the program include a Coordinator, Charity Counselors, Pastor or other Congregation Leader, Needy Family, Team Members, Team Leaders, and Members of the Faith Group.

Dick Sanders organized Adopt-a-Family at St. Isidore Parish, Danville, four years ago. He would welcome an opportunity to share experiences. Contact him at rwsanders@sbcglobal.net.

Winter Nights plans to offer Adopt-A-Family early next season; this will expedite families and elders moving into housing units.

SOJA will not meet in July. Please join us for the August 8 Meeting.

TRANSITIONS

Welcome to **Rabbi Michelle Fisher**, who comes to Congregation B'nai Shalom in Walnut Creek.

Welcome also to **Rabbi Alissa Forrest**, who starts this month as assistant rabbi at Temple Isaiah in Lafayette, with particular emphasis on youth and education. She worked in the education department of the synagogue in 1999 to 2001. She writes, "I'm really excited to come back to Isaiah in this new role. A big part of working with youth is creating a community, giving kids an opportunity to work with each other, to get to know other Jewish young people in the area."

Farewell to **the Rev. Patricia Stout**, who has left Clayton Valley Presbyterian Church in Clayton. She writes to her congregation: "For almost a year, I have felt God was calling me toward hospital or hospice chaplaincy. In March and April, the way became more clear... Our life together has been suitably challenging and profoundly rewarding. I give thanks for all of you and all that I received through being your pastor for this time in both of our lives."

Farewell also to **the Rev. Donna Morrow DeCamp**, who is stepping down from leadership at Tice Valley United Methodist Church in Rossmoor. She writes them, "As we reflect on the farewells we experience, remember that during the past several weeks, we've been reading scrip-

ture that illustrates how Jesus bid his farewells to the disciples. Also, remember that my leaving you is NOTHING like Jesus leaving. Yet, as mentioned in a recent sermon, I think these texts help us and give us assurance, whether we are the one leaving or the ones left behind, that God is with us. We are not alone!"

Filling Donna's shoes will be **the Rev. Joanne Peterson**, who is also leaving Walnut Avenue United Methodist Church in Walnut Creek. She writes her old congregation: "My first week as your pastor found me outside hauling sand, bricks and rocks as we started to build our wonderful outdoor labyrinth. Even with sore muscles and blisters, we laughed, prayed and got to know each other. I often refer to that three-month physical labor endeavor as the "Walnut Avenue weight reduction plan"! But we poured ourselves into it and made a difference in the spiritual lives of so many people in this community. I have many wonderful memories from my time here as your pastor these past eight years."

In turn, filling Joanne's shoes will be **the Rev. Sun Hee Kim** of Fremont. Rev. Kim will be working on a half-time basis.

Farewell to **the Rev. Gary Ost**, who retires from St. Luke Episcopal Church in Rossmoor.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

To **Rev. Greg Ledbetter**, pastor of Shell Ridge Community Church in Walnut Creek. He has been named the 2007 recipient of the Edward H. Rhoades Urban Ministry Award given by National Ministries of the American Baptist Churches, USA. The award will be presented to him at the ABC Biennial Convention in Washington, D.C. on June 30.

Linda Doran, I4C executive committee member, who was named Valiant Woman for 2007 by our local unit of Church Women United. Linda is a member of St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Orinda.

The Rev. Richard Mangini, Pastor of St. Bonaventure Catholic Community in the Clayton-Concord area, celebrated his 40th anniversary of ordination as a priest on May 17th. The parish celebrated his anniversary in combination with the 50th Anniversary of the parish on May 12th with a Mass at the parish church, followed by a gala celebration at the Oakhurst Country Club in Clayton. Four hundred family members, parishioners and other clergy, joined the celebration.

Thank you corner:

We are greatly appreciative of our faithful newsletter volunteers. Our May issue of **Ministering Together** was collated, folded and labeled by Sandra Ellingson, Diana Hill, Mary Hogan, Tim Michelson, Dick Shumaker, Dorothy Vance, and Grey Whipple. If you'd like to join this fun group, please call Lenita (925) 672-1053. We're always glad to add to our volunteer list. Is YOUR congregation represented on our list??

Please Pray for:


- The singing Messengers
- Recently high school and college graduates
- Local teachers and school districts
- Police and Firefighters
- An end to Israel-Palestinian hostilities
- San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church, Alamo
- Dar-ul-Islam Mosque, Concord
- Baha'i of Danville
- St. Joseph Catholic Church, Pinole

ATTENTION: Central Contra Costa Churches—The Baha'i communities of Contra Costa County are looking to purchase and/or share a facility in Central Contra Costa County. If this is a possibility for you, please call: Hugh at (925) 528-9413 (cell) or (925) 253-0412.

*To: Singing Messengers
 From: Vernita Kennen
 Past President of I4C Executive Committee*

It's a long way from Minnesota to California, so I am afraid I will not be able to be a part of the festive luncheon at the Concord Hilton on June 5th.

You certainly do become the hands/faces/voices of God as you bring joy and music into the lives of those who need them so badly. May God continue to bless this very special ministry.



Next Deadline: August 15, 2007

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>

**The Interfaith Council
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1543 Sunnyvale Avenue
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- Council President.....Rabbi Raphael Asher
- Executive Director.....Rev. Brian Stein-Webber
- Chaplain.....Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley
- Singing Messengers.....Jackie Wan
- Office Manager.....Nora Chuch
- Editor.....Lenita Shumaker
- Layout/Design.....Nora Chuch