



# M inistering Together

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

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

March-April 2008

## Coming Events

### ❖ 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.

### ❖ Clergy and Lay Leader Roundtable

Wednesday, March 5, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.  
12230 San Pablo Ave., Richmond

STAND! Against Domestic Violence and the West County Providing Sanctuary Committee are sponsoring this faith leadership discussion of domestic violence. Topics will include the dynamics of domestic violence, how that violence impacts victims and the wider community, and what faith communities can do to respond and educate. Breakfast and a light lunch will be provided. Please RSVP to Kathryn Burroughs at 510-231-2382 or [kathrynb@standagainstdv.org](mailto:kathrynb@standagainstdv.org).

### ❖ Jazz at Peace

Sunday, March 9, 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, April 13, 5:00 p.m.  
Peace Lutheran Church  
3201 Camino Tassajara, Danville

The headliner for March 9 will be Clairdee and the Ken French Trio, and on April 13, the John Calloway Quintet. Learn more about these free concerts at 925-648-7000 or [peacejourney.org/jazz\\_at\\_peace.htm](http://peacejourney.org/jazz_at_peace.htm).

### ❖ Surge For Peace

Saturday, March 15  
11:00 a.m. – March begins at Walnut Creek BART Station  
12:00 noon – Rally begins at Civic Park in Walnut Creek

This march and rally coincide with the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the War in Iraq. You are encouraged to bring drums, bells or whistles. Sponsored by the Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center, Lamorinda Peace & Justice Group and Grandparents for Peace. For more information, go to [www.SurgeForPeace.us](http://www.SurgeForPeace.us).

### ❖ Benefit Choir Festival

Sunday, April 13, 3:00 p.m.  
Grace Presbyterian Church  
2100 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek

The Interfaith Council and Grace Presbyterian are sponsoring this splendid celebration of music, featuring choirs and musicians from within the larger faith community. Come to enjoy a variety of styles and groups. The free-will offering will benefit all of our organization's ongoing work. For more information, contact 925-933-6030.

### ❖ Health and Hope for the Mentally Ill and Their Families Through Faith-Based Community Support

Thursday, April 17, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.  
John Muir Concord  
2540 East St., Concord

The National Alliance on Mental Illness – Contra Costa and the Interfaith Council are co-sponsoring this presentation by Kim Engelmann, pastor of congregational care at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, and author of *Running in Circles*. Contact 925-933-4012 or [xnamicc@aol.com](mailto:xnamicc@aol.com).

### ❖ Using the Labyrinth to Walk into the Heart of God

Friday April 18  
San Damiano Retreat, Danville

Jane and Craig Wirth will present on the history of the Chartres labyrinth, and how to walk a labyrinth as a way to draw closer to God. Cost is \$75, including lunch. Register by contacting [www.sandamiano.org](http://www.sandamiano.org) or 925-837-9141.

### ❖ 5th Annual Diversity Vaisakhi Festival

Saturday, April 26, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Todos Santos Park, Concord

All religious groups and the whole community are invited to attend and take part in this musical and cultural fair centered on the new year celebrations of the Punjab region of India. Corporate sponsorships are available. For more information contact Harmesh Kumar @sbcglobal.net or 925-356-0122.



## Chaplain's Corner



*Dear Rev. Tinsley, Rev I myself need help, I need help to start a new life. I just need to get this program over and get out of here. Rev when I get out I need to get baptize so I can get clean and wish all my csines away. Rev Im sorry for Harting your fullings it aint like its your life but you cear for me and you want to see me doing something in life. Rev I gest need help because I don't what to indup died or in CYA and I deinitly don't what to leva my mom. So please help me thank you I love you Father.*

A year ago I shared in this space the above letter from a young person I had worked with while he was in custody and while he completed court-ordered community service under my supervision. Too, he attended church with me on a number of occasions. In the article last year, some may recall, I discussed in detail the very dreadful nature of the life he had lived to that point in time, to the tender age of fifteen. He had been, reportedly, out in the street, on his own, since the age of eight. He had survived, barely.

The young man was back at the Orin Allen facility in Byron when his letter and the brief story of his life appeared in this newsletter. We sat down together and read the article. He was, of course, unable to accomplish that task on his own. He was so very pleased that I “took the time” to write about his plight and to include his note to me in the article. The tears began to flow as he phoned to

tell his mother and uncle about the item in *Ministering Together*. The young man’s small chest was puffed out to its absolute limit, with pride, as he left me to return to the dormitory. He promised to show all the other kids what “The Rev” had written about him...

Unfortunately the kid continued to experience significant difficulty in maintaining himself while in custody. Conflicts with peers and staff were frequent. Our weekly encounters were long, drawn out and intense. Even after he completed his period of detention, he found ways to violate parole. Although he was short in stature, he was long on attitude.

As is all too common with so many of this population of young people, although this kid was showered, while in custody, with suggestions for positive conduct of life in the future, he went back “home” to the streets. The old, overwhelming sights, sounds, and smells of those streets took over. Once more he “went underground” and I did not hear from him, or about him. Not a good sign. Regrettably, it is rare that I go out into those streets and look for someone. Oh, it has happened, but over a thirteen year period, I can count those times on the fingers of both hands.

I read last night a short article online that recently appeared in the *Oakland Tribune*. Despite my little young man’s expressed desire to the contrary, at the age of sixteen, just days before Christmas, he did indeed “*indup died* .” May he rest in peace. He never experienced any here.

Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley  
Juvenile Detention Chaplain

## *Transitions*

A delayed farewell to **Sister Roberta Carson**, who has announced that she will be leaving St. Bonaventure Catholic Church in Concord in June. She writes to her congregation, “By the summer, I will have ministered thirteen years here among many of you. Together we have seen the parish expand in so many ways, but particularly with people: families with children. Through the years I have learned much from you and admire you parents and grandparents specially. What God has done in your lives is truly a blessing of great magnitude... I don’t know where to begin to thank all of you for the hospitality, the music, the ambiance, the prayers, the Eucharist, and much love extended to me by the staff, those sharing in various ministries, all the volunteers who quietly have given much in sharing in the parish, all the many families and children who have touched my life.”

Newly-called rector to St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in Concord, **Rev. Dr. Pamela Redding**, writes to her congregation, “When I first visited you all during the search process, I began to fall in love with the parish and its people and believed the Holy Spirit was working with you and with me to bring us together... I am excited to be part of the good things God has in mind for us in the future.”

Welcome to **Father Wayne Campbell**, who is the new pastor of St. Monica’s Catholic Church in Moraga.

**□Rev. Shell White**  
**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church**

Because worship is the central activity of our life together, it is very important for us to understand as much as we can about this important activity. I believe worship is the window to the heart of God. It is the best way to connect with the one who calls us "beloved." We must move away from thinking we are the audience, passively receiving. In worship, God acts and we get to respond. Worship is one of the best ways to encounter the living God.

Robert Webber, author and conference speaker, informs us that in our prayers, music, Communion, baptism, and hearing God's word read and preached, we encounter the mystery of God. Worship at its deepest level is not about us, not about performance, not about entertainment. It is about participating in God's story. Worship is doing God's story.

We have been blessed by receiving a ten thousand dollar grant from the Lilly Foundation so we can enrich our worship life. Gail Doering put in the many hours required so we could benefit from this exciting program. A Worship Renewal Team was formed. They have been studying a great book, *Worship is a Verb* by Robert Webber, arranged for Marcia McFee to open our minds and hearts to the renewal of our worship services in a community-wide workshop. Plus, this creative team is in the process of introducing us to new forms of worship for each of our liturgical seasons. For example, during the season of Epiphany—the season of light—our chancel area was filled with candles.

For Presbyterians and other denominations, the story of God is told through the Church year. Incarnation, Resurrection, and the return of Christ to establish a new heaven and new earth where Jesus is Lord over all creation. Our culture seems less interested in living this exciting story and increasingly more interested in self. For many the issue has become "How can God help me? How can God help my life be less stressful? How can I be happier?" While these desires are natural needs, there are many more approaches to worship that can meet our ultimate need—closeness to our loving Creator.

**□Rabbi Raphael Asher**  
**B'nai Tikvah**

With Lisa Wenger and Jared Goldin commandeering over 40 B'nai Tikvah volunteers, I write this with the confidence that our congregation has provided a week of

warmth and shelter to a number of homeless families through February 4th. Under the direction of the Interfaith council's Winter nights program, some 20 churches and synagogues tag-team to ensure that these homeless are sheltered and fed and can hopefully muster some savings during this gray and dormant season.

These are not the chronic homeless for whom the Federal government scrapes together meager drug treatments, mental health evaluations, and cots to keep them out of our nation's eyesight. These are often families with young children or teens who like so many in our society have not been able to make mortgage payments and/or been laid off in our anxious economy. Our congregants have long-witnessed in our 7-year cooperation with Shell Ridge Church how these families just need a breather from the callous whims of fate in order to strategize for their future.

The Jewish calendar intuitively prepares for these dormant months. Last month for Tu biShevat we attuned our children to the idea that especially when skies are gray, the fields bare and the trees are stripped of foliage, this is the time when the earth welcomes seed for Spring. And next month's Purim celebration inserts moments of madness and fun as our patience for sunshine is put to the test.

It seems to me that this year especially our participation in Winter Nights is a kind of seed—planting for the people involved. I hope that our efforts will prepare the ground for a full harvest as these families get back on their feet. And as Purim encourages gifts for the needy (*Matanot L'evyonim*) as well as gifts for one another (*Shalach Manos*), let us realize that the charitable giving we do for the stranger is integrally connected to the subtle blessings we receive even at this season of inclement weather. So it is that we even praise God "for shifting winds and falling rains" during these months, and we can do so more joyously this year knowing that these families could watch the weather from our synagogue windows rather than be threatened by the elements.

**□John Bateson**  
**Contra Costa Crisis Center**

I've worked in the nonprofit sector for 27 years, including the last 11 years at the Crisis Center. That's a fairly long time, long enough to have learned a few things.

I've learned that when you've worked at one nonprofit agency, you have worked at one agency. Every agency is different. The same is true with nonprofit boards: no two are alike.

I've learned—to my surprise—that deceased people donate as much as corporations and foundations. It is true. Bequests constitute 10 percent of charitable giving, the same as corporate and foundation support. Annually, 83 percent of all money that's donated comes from individuals, which is why successful fundraising focuses on individuals more than other sources.

I've learned that when it comes to staff, the best people to hire are givers, used to helping others. It's a lot easier to teach someone how to do something than it is to teach a person to be compassionate.

In contrast, I've learned that the best board members are leaders. It's easier to teach a leader to fall in love with your agency than it is to teach a well-intentioned person to become a leader. Good boards lead, not follow.

For programs, I've learned that a "one-size-fits-all" model usually fails because it ignores racial and cultural differences. The belief behind treating everyone the same is that if the system works as it should, everyone is served equally. In practice, though, services often end up being ethnocentric—designed by and for one group. They have little value to people in other groups except those who are most assimilated.

In doing strategic planning, I've learned that asking "What's our dream?" is better than "What's our mission?" For one thing, dreams don't have boundaries. They are not confined by money, time, or reality. Also, you don't have to explain what a dream is—everyone has them. People don't walk around with mission statements in their heads, though. Plus, dreams change. The dreams a person has as a child are different from the dreams he or she has as an adult. Periodically asking "What's our dream?" is a good way to keep everyone focused. I've written about these and many other things in a new book titled *Building Hope: Leadership in the Nonprofit World* (\$49.95; Praeger). It's available in local libraries.

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

### Regarding Pakistan

I wrote most of this article before the elections in Pakistan and the announcement of the results that indicated the success of opposition parties. I am pleased that one of the largest Muslim countries which suffered from violence and military rule has been able to hold democratic elections. It should not be a surprise that the tragic death of the former prime

minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, was condemned by all people who are concerned about democracy and decency. Muslims in our area also expressed their outrage at this terrorist attack. Despite the assassins' bullets and the suicide bombing, the people of Pakistan went to the polls with confidence. The reality is that the world is suffering from a lack of stability and progress. The only way to reverse this trend is through a democratic and nonviolent process to involve all people in determining their future.

The rise of Bhutto to power in an Islamic society was a notable achievement, despite the fact that her rule did not bring about socio-economic changes of which the Pakistani society is in dire need. There is a serious concern about the question of democracy in the Muslim world, and the ability of women to govern Muslim countries.

But I believe that Islam is not an obstacle either to democracy or to women assuming political leadership. The lack of democracy and the prejudice against women are motivated by backwardness and tribalism rather than by religious tenets. There are democratic experiments in Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, Morocco and now Pakistan, as well as in some other Muslim countries. In Indonesia, Bangladesh and Pakistan, women came to power through democratic elections. However, democracies in the Muslim world need to be strengthened. Democracy is a process. Therefore, international organizations and existing democracies should assist in strengthening such processes. People everywhere deserve a democratic, non-corrupt and decent government.

The Muslim world needs the support of the international community to achieve real democracy and the United Nations could help. During the Cold War, the two major powers supported their respective allies in the Muslim world, who in turn took advantage of that situation to control their people and prevent democratic transformation. Since the end of the Cold War, there have been democratic changes in many parts of the world, and in some Muslim countries. There are major problems facing Muslim countries in this regard, including traditionalism and tribalism. Families are controlling power (which includes wealth and prestige) and would like to maintain it.

The available path for the Muslim world to end the chaos and turmoil prevailing there is through democratic and peaceful transformation of their societies. The United States should push for democracy in the Muslim world and actively involve the United Nations in promoting legitimate governments and respect for human rights.

**□The Venerable Jian Hu, Sunnyvale Zen Center**

Q1a: If there is no soul, if all we are is our mind and we are simply a physical manifestation of existence, what is it that connects us from one life to another? How does my karma find me?

A1a: We can view the body as a manifestation of part of the mind. When the body dies, the mind does not go away, but continues as it always does. It's just that our conscious perceptions go through a drastic change because of the failing of the sense organs. In other words, the "world" that we perceive becomes very different. In time, our perception settles into a more stable process, which we call (the beginning of) the next life.

What connects us from one life to another and to our karma? Our "connection" is never severed, so there is no need to "connect." We are always "living" with the full force of our karma unfolding itself. What confuses us is that we mistakenly think that "death" (of the body) is an end, but it is not. It is just a stop in the continuous, interconnected, evolving and unfolding of the network of all sentient beings' karma.

Q1b: ...If my mind is part of the whole network, and is released from my body in death, how does my karma know it is my mind that is reaping the effects it has caused and not someone else in the network? Is my karma completely my own?

Am I feeling the effects of everyone's karma as well?...

A1b: Don't think of yourself and your karma as two things, then you won't have the problem of "how does my karma find me." Your hands don't have a problem finding you, do they?

Q2: Doing good results in good karma while causing harm results in bad karma. What about all the gray areas? For example, if a doctor feels that he has done everything he can, provided excellent care and is at peace with his actions, but the patient feels the doctor lacked experience, over-promised, misdiagnosed and caused him harm, how does the karma play out?

A2: Good and bad karma are relative. So in some cases, good-intentioned actions can lead to undesirable results. A person who is very rich may be unhappy because of his wealth. Another who faces many challenges in life may become wiser and stronger because of his experience.

So we know that good/bad karma are conventionally designated, and are in fact empty in nature. A wise person can turn suffering into blessing. Buddhism teaches us to be honest, compassionate, and grateful, and not to blame others when we suffer, even if others seem to be at fault; there are much more complicated karma entanglements. Accept what happens, plant good deeds for the future, and don't worry too much.

***Risking Conversation***

**□Rev. David Zarri  
St. Agnes Catholic Church, Concord**

I have been meaning to respond to Natalie Russell of St. Stephen's Catholic church since her article appeared in the October/November issue. The years since Vatican II have brought many changes, and many innovations that were never intended by the Council. Many changes were implemented too quickly, and without adequate forethought and planning. There has also been a sad lack of catechesis and study by the majority, even of Catholics !

This has naturally led to much misunderstanding. Several theologians have written articles and books, and also have taught error, without appropriate correction by Catholic bishops. Several have been allowed to continue to teach at Catholic universities ! Some priests have taught error, again without correction. It goes on ! It is no surprise that so many, including many Catholics don't know or understand the Catholic Faith !

Natalie's dismay concerning Pope Benedict's reiterating the Church's teaching about being "the One True Church", echoes much similar feeling and outcry by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Such was the case a few years ago when the Church published "Dominus Jesus". But this is simply what the Church has always taught and always will teach ----- the Truth ! My brothers and sisters, the Catholic Church does not "make this up as it goes" ! It only teaches what was handed on from the Lord Jesus Christ !

We must have the proper understanding ! Only what was founded by Christ can truly be called a Church. Christ founded only one ! Christ promised that Church freedom from error in matters of faith and morals. How could He have done otherwise ? ! Though our Protestant brothers and sisters have separated themselves from that one Church, they do share a relationship, though a broken one. We do seek unity !

Many efforts are ongoing. But there can only be real unity in the Truth ! Let us remember that the Truth is not some thing, but Somebody ! His name is Jesus Christ !

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Those who are not Christian, we can call brothers and sisters because we are all children of the One God ! This interfaith council is but one example of how we can work together to accomplish much good. It's very good at some point to dialogue about our individual beliefs. There is some truth in all faiths. But it would be a false ecumenism to believe that "some spirit of Vatican II" allows the Church to change her core teachings to accommodate the times ! Yes, we must work together ! But Catholics who understand their Faith know that we are called to share the Truth, this incredibly good news ! People are free to accept or reject it !

Space here is limited ! I wholeheartedly encourage all my brothers and sisters, especially Catholics to learn the Faith ! Please read what Pope Benedict actually said. ([www.ewtn.com](http://www.ewtn.com).) Study "The Catechism of the Catholic Church" ! You will be surprised by Truth ! (At St. Agnes, Concord, we have an ongoing weekly DVD series of Fr. John Corapi, S.O.L.T. teaching "The Catechism of the Catholic Church" ) You are most welcome to contact me for more information ---- David Zarrì (925) 686-9277 or [davidl-zarri@earthlink.net](mailto:davidl-zarri@earthlink.net). Most Sincerely In Christ.

### **□ Riva Gambert, Director, Jewish Community Federation of the Greater East Bay's Israel Center**

#### Israelity

The Israel I love is far removed from the country that is described in Dr. Amer Araim's articles. Having lived in Israel for several years and worked for the past twenty-seven to bring Israeli culture to the Contra Costa community, I know Israel to be a nation that has brought extraordinary contributions to our global society, including medical discoveries and scientific technology that fight disease, reduce global warming and increase food production in arid countries.

In contrast to the imagery that often pervades Dr. Araim's articles, Israel is a liberal democracy which, despite nearly sixty years of fighting for its very right to exist, has continued to guarantee religious, civil and social equality to all of its citizens. Israel's citizens include not only Jews but also Christians, Muslims, Druze, Baha'is and members of other religious groups. All of Israel's citizens, including Arab Israelis, enjoy the right to vote. There are three Arab political parties in the country's parliament and they represent a wide array of political views – from the far left to Islamic fundamentalism. Israel also boasts several newspapers that represent the views of its Arab citizens. Unlike many of the surrounding Middle East countries, Israel has vigorous freedoms of press and speech where journalists are able to deliver their diverging views in print as well as on television and the radio.

While many countries in the region only protect the religious rights of Muslims, Israel celebrates complete freedom of religion for all of its citizens. No one is prevented in Israel from following his or her faith. For instance, the Baha'i religion is persecuted in Iran but is warmly welcomed in Israel; the Baha'i World Center, the spiritual heart of the Baha'i community, is actually located in the Israeli cities of Haifa and Acre.

Like many Western countries, Israel has an independent Supreme Court which can be petitioned by any citizen if he/she feels that his or her rights are being violated. Indeed, the Supreme Court has ruled in favor of Arab Israelis and against the government.

In Israel, Arabic joins Hebrew as an official language, so official documents, including legislation, are printed in both languages. Road signs and film subtitles also appear in Arabic.

Israel's pluralistic society is also reflected in the fact that an Arab citizen is a member of the Israeli cabinet and an Arab judge sits on the Supreme Court. Arabs and Druze are senior officers of the Israeli army, including at the rank of general. Moreover, a Bedouin Israeli (who is a Muslim) currently represents his country Ministry in San Francisco as the Vice-Consul of the local Israeli Consulate.

In regard to academia, Arabs have equal access to all of the country's universities. For instance, Haifa University has a student body that is 20% Arab. One-third of the staff of Israel's Hadassah Hospital – one of the most highly rated hospitals in the entire Middle East – are Arab.

For those of you who applaud an open society where people's individuality is respected, you should know that Israel gives equal protection under the law to gays and lesbians. In fact, gays and lesbians in Israel don't have to follow America's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, as Israel is one of twenty-four nations that allow openly gay individuals to serve in the military. As David Saranga, a former officer in the Israeli Army noted, "It's a non-issue... You can be a very good officer, a creative one, a brave one and be gay at the same time."

It is my hope that you will learn more about the Israel that I have come to love. One way is to visit the country. Another is to do some research. As a first step, I highly recommend the website [www.israel21c.com](http://www.israel21c.com) which will provide you with "isreality" – a look at the real Israel. And if you want more information, a speaker, or a film to see, email me at [riva@jfed.org](mailto:riva@jfed.org).

## Social Justice Alliance of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

SOJA meets Wednesday, March 12, 2008, at 7 pm in the Interfaith Council Office, Rm 205  
*All Are Welcome*

**CNWS Interfaith Task Force.** The Task Force, convened by SOJA, is celebrating its second anniversary by circulating a “**PETITION CONCERNING CONCORD NAVAL WEAPONS STATION REUSE.**” This group has studied the issue of homelessness in the City of **Concord**, neighboring cities of **Walnut Creek, Pleasant Hill, Martinez, Pittsburg, Clayton**, and the adjoining unincorporated areas of **Contra Costa County**. We learned that the estimated number of homeless in only these cities is 1,566, while 8,500 very low income households in these cities are at high risk of becoming homeless in the future. This advocacy is guided by the federal law governing base closure, which has a homeless assistance component; it is also guided by the County’s Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. The Co-Chairs of the Task Force—**Delores Loague, Concord United Methodist Church; Dan & Mary Agnes Hardie, St. Bonaventure Catholic Parish; and Susan Jaffe, Jewish Community Relations Council**—ask that you assist with this endeavor if your congregation is located in one of the six cities listed above. Completed petitions are to be returned by March 15 to 1543 Sunnyvale Avenue, Walnut Creek 94597, Attention SOJA.

**SOJA’s New Banner.** **Gail Rodens**, who assumed the responsibility for designing and shopping for a new SOJA Banner, will present it at the March 12 meeting. Most participants at the annual Martin Luther King event each January are familiar with the huge, long banner displayed on the stage. We’re very proud of that one, but decided we needed a smaller one for rallies like the “Peace Surge” march and the Vaisaki Festival. Hope many of the Ministering Together readers will look for SOJA and join us at these events and others.

**Winter Nights Shelter.** During February our Shelter housed 35 homeless family individuals—3 babies, 6 toddlers, 5 young ones aged 5-9, 7 teenagers, and 14 adults. Our thanks to **B’nai Tikvah Synagogue—partnering with Shell Ridge Community Church; Saint Monica’s Catholic Church; St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church, and St. Bonaventure Catholic Church—partnering with St. Francis Catholic Church**, the congregations that hosted our families last month. Members of the Homeless Summit (the shelter’s oversight committee) are grateful to them and to **St. Perpetua and Saint Monica Churches** for their donations of

\$1,000 and \$3,400 respectively. These donations, and others, as well as requests written by **Lorri Gazano**, our grant writer, will help assure that Winter Nights can remain open until our target closing date of April 28. This will give Case Manager **Joe Macaluso** and **Family to Family teams** time to help our families with rental assistance for accessing apartments. It will also extend the tutoring provided by congregations under the supervision of Education Specialist **Heather O’Connell**. The Homeless Summit meets March 3 to discuss the value of Winter Nights Shelter and decide whether or not to re-open in October 2008. All are welcome. For further information, contact **Gwen Watson, Director**, 930-9965.

### More on Health Care Reform – and the Budget

The health care reform bill (ABx1 1) sponsored by Speaker Nunez failed to pass the Senate Health Committee after an eleven hour hearing looked intensively at the major issues raised by this incremental approach. Opinions differ about what will happen next. Possibly some elements of the bill will be reintroduced. However, the fact that the leadership of both houses will change following the defeat of Proposition 93 will undoubtedly have an impact on developments.

In the meantime, SB 840, Senator Sheila Kuehl’s single payer legislation will be considered in the Assembly, having already passed the Senate. Advocates continue to work to educate the public about this comprehensive, universal, affordable, secure, and publicly accountable plan. Information is available at [www.ca.lvw.org](http://www.ca.lvw.org), [www.healthcareforall.org](http://www.healthcareforall.org), and <http://dist23.casen.govoffice.com/>

This past week the Legislature voted a number of spending cuts that will have a major impact on the poor and vulnerable. Among them are a 10% rate cut for payments to MediCal providers, reductions to CalWorks, and to the Regional Centers that serve disabled individuals. The cuts in MediCal rates are very problematic, as California is already 41<sup>st</sup> among the states in payments to providers. In addition, every dollar of reduced payments will mean a dollar less of federal matching funds. The result will be an estimated reduction of \$1.1 billion spent on health care for the poor. Access is already difficult for many eligible people and will become more so as a result of these cuts.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Resources for families**

Keith and Sandra Williams announce the opening this spring of the Resource Family Life Center, on 1020 Las Juntas Street in Martinez. The purpose of the Center is to provide practical, educational and emotional support to help build better families.

They will be offering classes in parenting, teen living, conflict resolution and building lasting relationships. You may inquire about classes and groups at 925-682-3368, or come to the above address on Monday nights at 6:30 p.m. Registration fees are based on a sliding scale.

### **Nutrition and Sewing for Children and Families**

Joy Parsons, a long-time teacher in the community of gymnastics, is offering ongoing classes in nutrition and sewing for small and large groups. She can particularly gear her curriculum to elementary schools and scout groups. If you haven't met her, you most likely know someone who has, and who can give you a sterling recommendation of her.

Making good food choices is a skill that adds health, happiness and longevity to our lives. And the ability to sew is something that makes us more than consumers. We become manufacturers! To learn of Joy's offerings and reasonable rates, you can contact her at 925-300-6494.

### **Be a Cooking Hero**

The Mountain View Family Shelter in Martinez continues to need teams of cooks who can prepare meals for their 30 residents on Monday through Friday evenings. SHELTER, Inc., who operates the shelter, has gratefully relied on the generosity of congregations and community groups (and individuals) for this tremendously important service for many years.

Groups that have helped this calendar year so far are Lafayette/Orinda Presbyterian Church, Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church, St. Catherine's Catholic Church in Martinez, Concord United Methodist Church, St. Ignatius Catholic Church in Antioch, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Pleasant Hill, Congregation B'nai Shalom in Walnut Creek, and St. Agnes Catholic Church in Concord. You are wonderful!!!

If you would like to "re-up" for another stint, or are interested in finding out how this service works, please contact Gloria deVries at 925-228-6920. She will be delighted to hear from you.

### **Get Connected and Get Answers**

Whether you need help, want to help, or just like to know what's going on, 211 Contra Costa is the place to start. Just by dialing 211 from any local prefix, you can access information about 2,500 health and social services available to Contra Costa County residents.

People know to call 911 for emergencies, 411 for directory assistance, and 511 for traffic information. Now you can dial 211 to find out about all kinds of health and social services that exist in the community.

211 is a national, toll-free, three-digit phone number. Calls are answered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by trained information and referral specialists. In our county, service is provided by the Contra Costa Crisis Center, with financial support provided by United Way of the Bay Area, the John Muir/Mt. Diablo Community Health Fund, First 5 Contra Costa, the Contra Costa County Employment and Human Services Department, the Dean and Margaret Leshar Foundation, and others.

### **Darfur Refugee Relief Project**

Hillcrest Congregational Church is planning a project to inform the public of the current refugee crisis in Darfur, and to offer the public the opportunity to join Hillcrest in assembling "health kits" to be distributed to refugees in Darfur and other troubled regions in the world. On Sunday, March 20<sup>th</sup>, a member of the San Francisco Darfur Coalition will give a talk about the Darfur refugee crisis at Hillcrest Congregational Church, 404 Gregory Lane in Pleasant Hill. The presentation will begin at 11:30 a.m., and is open to the public.

From March 30<sup>th</sup> to April 25<sup>th</sup>, volunteers will be gathering supplies to assemble the health kits: towels, washcloths, toothbrushes, band-aids, etc. On April 26<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m., volunteers will gather at Hillcrest to assemble the health kits for shipping. Anyone interested in attending the talk, collecting supplies and/or assembling the kits should contact the church office at 925-689-8260 or [hill.ucc@ix.netcome.com](mailto:hill.ucc@ix.netcome.com). Please give your name and phone number, so a member of the project team can contact you to coordinate your participation.

**THE INTERFAITH COUNCIL OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY**  
1543 Sunnyvale Avenue, Walnut Creek, CA 94597-1903  
*Interfaithcouncilofccc.net*

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**Next Deadline: April 15, 2008**  
**Please send copy marked to the attention of:**  
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**PH: (925) 933-6030      FAX: (925) 952-4554      E Mail: <eye4cee@aol.com>**

**THANK YOU CORNER**

The Interfaith Council is able to send this newsletter to you because our wonderful volunteers are willing to give up a couple of hours to collate, fold, label and seal it in preparation for mailing. Your last edition was prepared by: Diana Hill, Mary Hogan, Tim Michelson, Leslie Russing, Mayra Sanchez, Dick Shumaker, Dorothy Vance, Dolores White, and Ruth Wittman. Thank you, Volunteers! More workers would be eagerly welcomed to join this fun-loving

**PLEASE PRAY FOR:**

Clayton Valley Presbyterian Church  
El Cerrito United Methodist Church  
Greater Richmond Interfaith Program  
Baha'i Community, San Ramon  
St. Luke's Lutheran Church  
Faith-based and non-profit groups facing financial uncertainties due to the downturn in the economy  
Winter Nights staff, clients and volunteers  
Rev. Robert Rien of St. Ignatius of Antioch Church, whose residence was recently burglarized.

**English Tutors -**

Volunteer to help non-English speaking adults to read, write and speak English well enough to function in our society. We will teach you to be a tutor.

Three tutor-training workshops will be held on Saturday, March 1, 9-1:30, Tuesday, March 4, 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Saturday March 8 9-1:30

Diablo Valley Literacy Council,  
4000 Clayton Road, Concord, CA 94521.

There is a \$15 non-refundable registration fee.

For more information or to register, please call Shirley Mattes at 925-685-3881.

DVLC-Diablo Valley Literacy Council is a private, non-profit organization composed of all volunteers with no paid staff. DVLC has been in continuous operation since 1978.