

# M inistering Together

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

**The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County**

**Winter Edition 2013**

## **Message from Interim Executive Director, Rev. Will McGarvey**



Dear Friends,

I've enjoyed my last five months serving each of you as Interim Executive Director of the ICCCC. Most of all, I've been impressed by all of the heartfelt interfaith connections throughout our county, and beyond.

I'm happy to report that due to decreased staffing costs last year and your generosity in December the ICCCC was able to end the year in the black. We still covet your support and openhanded giving in 2013 to help us increase our operating funds if we are to return to our previous staffing model.

The Executive Board and I have been working hard at revisioning and restructuring the organization. We will have new bylaws to present to our member congregations by mail in February, and we ask that you save the evening of Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup> for our ICCCC Spring Meeting. A majority of those in attendance will vote to approve the new bylaws, which will include voting on members of our Interfaith Council each year in November and the establishment of a governing Board of Directors elected of 6-9 people from among the Interfaith Council itself to oversee our corporate duties. We hope this will free the larger Interfaith Council to be able to respond to community needs and do dialogue on a regular basis. The evening will begin at 6:00 pm at Hillcrest Congregational (UCC) – 404 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. Please bring a dessert to share.

As a part of our revisioning process, we are hosting two more focus groups in different parts of the county to hear from you or your congregation members about how we can work together better in the future. We have had groups meet in Danville, Lafayette and Antioch. Our next meeting is Sunday, Feb. 24<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm at Sojourner Truth Presbyterian Church (2621 Shane Dr., Richmond). If you cannot attend but have ideas for our future, please let me know. I'd be glad to meet.

As the Ministering Together newsletters have gone to being a quarterly publication, do go to our website for information on upcoming events. [www.interfaithccc.org](http://www.interfaithccc.org). If you would like me to add your events or announcements to our more frequent eBlasts, please email me directly at [eye4cee@gmail.com](mailto:eye4cee@gmail.com).

*“We belong to each other.”*

*Will*

## *"We Belong to Each Other"* Religious and Cultural Observances

### FEBRUARY 2013

- 2
  - Candlemas - Christian
  - Presentation of Christ in the Temple - Anglican Christian
  - Saint Brigid of Kildare - Celtic Christian
  - Imbolc and Sughnassad \* - Wicca/Pagan Northern and southern hemispheres
- 3
  - Four Chaplains Sunday- Interfaith
  - Setsubun-sai - Shinto
- 10
  - Transfiguration Sunday - Christian
  - Chinese New Year - Confucian, Daoist, Buddhist
- 12
  - Shrove Tuesday - Christian
- 13
  - Ash Wednesday - Lent begins through March 23 Christian
- 14
  - Nirvana Day - Buddhist
  - Valentine's Day - Christian
- 15
  - Vasant Panchami - Hindu
  - Nirvana - Jain
- 24
  - Purim - Jewish
  - Triodion begins - Orthodox Christian
- 26 - March 1
  - Intercalary Days - Baha'i

### MARCH 2013

- 1
  - Saint David of Wales - Christian
- 2 -20
  - Nineteen Day Fast - Baha'i
- 10
  - Meatfare Sunday - Orthodox Christian
  - Maha Shivaratri - Hindu

- 13
  - L. Ron Hubbard birthday - Scientology
- 17
  - St Patrick's Day - Christian
  - Cheesefare Sunday - Orthodox Christian
- 18
  - Clean Monday - Lent begins - Orthodox Christian
- 19
  - Saint Joseph's Day - Christian
- 20 Equinox
  - Ostara - Wicca/Pagan northern hemisphere
  - Mabon - Wicca/Pagan southern hemisphere
- 21
  - Naw Ruz (New Year) - Baha'i
  - Norouz (New Year) - Persian/Zoroastrian
- 24
  - Orthodox Sunday - Orthodox Christian
  - Palm Sunday - Christian
- 25
  - Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin - Christian
- 26-27
  - Pesach (Passover) First two days - Judaism
- 26
  - Khordad Sal (Birth of Prophet Zaranhushtra) Zoroastrian
- 27
  - Magha Puja Day - Buddhist
  - Lord's Evening Meal - Jehovah's Witness Christian
  - Holi - Hindu
- 28
  - Maundy Thursday - Western Christian
  - Hola Mohalla - Sikh
  - Birth of Prophet Zarathushtra - Zoroastrian
- 29
  - Good Friday - Western Christian
- 31
  - Easter - Western Christian

Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley  
Juvenile Detention Chaplain



Following the college graduations attended in the spring, college visitation trips for prospective students in the summer, and the normal, *always* challenging, never routine service to, and for, the young people in the facilities through the end of July, 2012, it was time to “stand down” for a bit. On the last day of July, I underwent surgery to correct a chronic heart condition that first presented itself four years ago. Some weeks of rest and convalescence at home followed the operation, and the resulting ten day hospital stay. All indications are, I am delighted to report, the procedure was successful.

More pleasing though, three months after the surgery, the several physicians involved in my care, gave the “green light” for the resumption of travel. At the end of October, I traveled back to the Midwest to visit the recent graduate of Central State University in Ohio, and to “check on” and lend support to the student who began his studies there in August. One of the young people who accompanied me on this trip had successfully completed a program at the Orin Allen facility just days before we departed. All “system alums.”

While in the area, we also called on another individual, a not-so-young person anymore, whom I met in juvenile hall back in 1998, just prior to his eighteenth birthday. He was among the first group of ten students who enrolled at Knoxville College that fall semester, fourteen years ago. This man is now married, (I officiated, four years ago), the father of a healthy and happy, one year-old son, the holder of a home mortgage and an employee of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. He graduated from the World Harvest Bible College in Columbus, Ohio about six years ago. His well-accomplished wife is a graduate of Kentucky State University, Indiana Wesleyan University *and* the World Harvest Bible College.

He invited me to speak at an affair he has organized, called “Men’s Huddle.” An ecumenical, interracial group of Christian men gather monthly for breakfast in a restaurant in downtown Frankfort, Kentucky, where he and his family reside. Their discussions are wide-ranging and far-reaching. Issues have included those surrounding faith, commitment, and service and responsibility to the community. I spoke on the topic, “Fatherhood to the fatherless...”

All-day trips up to Butte College in Oroville have also

resumed. It is estimated there have been about ninety such trips; more than three-hundred young people have accompanied me there over the years. We are well known on the campus, at the dormitory and of course at the local Hometown Buffet restaurant in Chico. Even now, six additional trips to the college and the dorm are scheduled through the month of May. The majority of those now waiting to travel there, and are completing their application materials, are also still in custody, representing more than ten percent of the current population at the Orin Allen facility. They have plans for life beyond; they are understandably and justifiably eager to get started and excited about the prospects...

Several young people have expressed interest in applying for admission to *both* Central State and Kentucky State universities. The 126 year old HBCU schools are ancient rivals, particularly in the area of athletic competition. These young men want to play football for one or the other of the schools. They will have the opportunity to visit (and compare) the schools when we fly back there in mid-February. Where rivalry is concerned between these institutions, I am forced to remain neutral, although we have two recent graduates (and a current student in good standing) of Central State University—(Go Marauders!), my paternal grandfather graduated from Kentucky State University in 1923—(Go Thorobreds!).

When this essay is completed I will immediately begin work on two letters of recommendation. The individuals who have asked for my assistance in these matters, both spent periods of time at juvenile hall in Martinez and the Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility in Byron. Both began their post secondary education studies at Butte College. One earned his undergraduate degree in Ohio in May 2011; the other will graduate from St. Mary’s College in May 2013. One is preparing to go to graduate school to study in the area of rehabilitation counseling. The other young person is applying for admission to law school. There was a time in the not-too-distant past when folks had truly written them off. Presenting as two more “statistics,” nothing more, so even they may have thought. I am shouting to all who will hear, “Look at them now, just look at them now!”

Eighteen years later, still having and enjoying an exceptionally good time with this incredibly remarkable and fascinating, always out of the ordinary, ministry. God is, and has been so tremendously good. Again, and to think FDR thought the U.S. presidency was, “The Grandest Job in the World.”

■ **Fr. Brian Joyce**  
**Christ the King Church**  
**Pleasant Hill**

I'm sure, that like myself, you have received many holiday cards and greetings. One that I received needs sharing. It was from Paul Wilkes, friend, author, film maker and U.S. Coordinator of the Home of Hope in India. He writes: "A good New Year to you, with measures of peace, determination, patience and boiling anger about this Church of ours." I saw a similarly concerned letter from twenty three active Catholic parishioners to Archbishop Burnett. In it they say, "Now we are increasingly concerned about the direction in which we see our Church heading. It is apparent that the Catholic Church in the U.S. is suffering from a shortage of native born priests who are able to adequately minister to the needs of the laity and consequently extremely disheartened to hear of the hierarchy's opposition to considering possible solutions that could include changes in celibacy requirements and the removal of discrimination between genders beginning with the opening of the Diaconate to qualified women. We recognize there is an increasing population of younger people (sadly, including many of our own children) who do not believe the Church is relevant to life today and no longer attend Mass or receive the Sacraments on a regular basis."

What gives me hope and insight about the Church today is a change in definition from the one I grew up with. Years ago we thought of the Church as a "perfect society" or as a club you need to belong to, to be "saved". The impression given was "outside the Church (and faithful attendance) there is no salvation". Recently after the experience of Vatican II and years of pastoral experience I think much more of the Church as a demonstration, like the demonstrations for peace, civil rights and workers' rights. The Church as a demonstration is a very necessary instrument for God's gospel and presence in the world and in our lives.

- My old friend, Fr. Bill O'Donnell, who was described at his death as "the saint of Berkeley" and with more than 200 arrests, was more than familiar with public demonstrations, always gave the advice that three things are necessary to be part of a demonstration: 1. That you show up; 2. That you make a friend; and, 3. That you have fun. As our parish mission statement says the whole point of the demonstration as a Church is to hear the gospel and make a difference. But to do that some of us must be faithful in showing up at least some of the time, making friends and building community and having enriching fun in terms of our spirituality, our hope and our joy. When it comes to having fun, I've included a poem that reminds us what God does for us. Of all things it is entitled "**Send in the Clowns**" by Stephen Sondheim.

***Send in the Clowns***

***O Holy One,***

*what good news it is  
 that when the wine of abundant life gives out,  
 you find a way to keep the celebration going.*

*Just when we are convinced that the worst thing  
 that can happen is what always happens,  
 you send bright signs  
 that the party has just begun.*

*Just when we are happy to descend into despair,  
 you send in the clowns  
 and place party hats atop our frowning faces,  
 daring us just to try to not smile.*

*Into this world of wonder,  
 your beloved Cosmic Celebrant came,  
 with the last word on the subject—  
 silencing the political party poopers  
 and the religious prudes—  
 pronouncing blessing without end  
 and no good reason to stop the music.  
 Hallelujah! Blessed is your name.  
 Amen*

■ **Rev. Gail Doering**  
**Clayton Valley Presbyterian Church**  
**Clayton**

As I sit in Peet's Coffee in Concord writing this letter, there are people all around me drinking and chatting and enjoying their hot beverage of choice. There are displays of holiday coffees, teas and mugs. Everything seems pretty "normal." At the same time, as I read the news online, I know that violence is escalating daily in Gaza, Tel Aviv and other lands that I just visited two short weeks ago, an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico is on fire after an explosion and a minimum of 11 people are injured, and Iran is still not cooperating with nuclear inspectors. It is a striking contrast to the mood of the coffee shop in which I am currently sitting and working.

We wonder what in the WORLD is happening. We either shake in fear and despair or we go about blithely ignorant and proclaim that there is nothing we can do about all these matters so we should simply ignore it and move on. We are confused, and rightfully so. But, as Christians and members of the body of Christ, we are also called to have hope. We are called to follow Christ. We are asked to shine a light where there is no light. We are a people of prayer and a people of good works.

As we enter this Advent and Christmas season, we sing lots of songs about peace, light, hope, promise, love, joy, and the heralding of the birth of Jesus Christ. Do we mean it? Are we cognizant of what we have and how much we have to give? Are we believers in the peace and hope of which we

sing? I can admit that I am not always so confident.

When I was in Bethlehem (only 52 miles away from the violence in the Gaza Strip), we worshipped at a tiny Arabic-language, Lutheran church in Beit Sahour. There were probably only 15 or so people in attendance at worship. But the singing was robust and though I did not understand a single word of their service, I understood the depth of their belief in gospel good news and their passion for peace. Toward the end of the worship, a young couple, the only young couple there, brought a 6 week old baby forward for dedication and blessing. He was the image of sweetness, innocence and peace. The congregation passed him around with love and tenderness. The parents beamed with pride. It struck me as almost odd and ironic, as one of my traveling companions said, “he doesn’t have a care in the world.” My response to her was, “if he only knew....”

Upon further reflection, “if he only knew what?” Perhaps the world can turn because what that little boy and others might know is a light that shines brighter than any dark spot or blemish or taint that the world can throw at it. Maybe what that little boy will know is a peace that passes all understanding. Perhaps what he and we can know this Advent and Christmas season is “One True Light.” Amen and amin.

■ **Fr. Peter Champion**  
**St. John’s Episcopal Church**  
**Clayton**

One of my favorite bumper stickers proclaims, “God bless the whole world—no damn exceptions!”

No matter how often I see it, it always brings a smile to my face and a shake of my head, followed by an “Amen.”

I like this sentiment because it reminds me again and again that it isn’t my job to decide who God blesses and who God doesn’t. An opinionated person like me needs that reminder with some frequency. It reminds me that I don’t see the whole picture, but that God does. I need that reminder too. And finally, it reminds me that blessings aren’t really mine to give—that God can and does bless those I thoroughly disapprove of.

The refrain of the Thanksgiving hymn “We plow the field and scatter,” printed above, brings a smile to my face in just the same way, and for the same reason. When good things happen in my life, it isn’t my doing; God is the giver of all good gifts, and the proper response is to give thanks.

If only things were always that simple! In times of stress and transition, when the future looks and feel scary and uncertain, it can be very difficult to cultivate an attitude of thankfulness. And it can become far too easy for us to cultivate a negative attitude. Why? We want certainty, and in times of stress and transition, it usually isn’t forth-

coming.

This month we celebrate Thanksgiving, and we do well to remember that the Pilgrims gave thanks in the midst of great uncertainty. They had been through adversity and then experienced abundance. What did the future hold for this small group of people far from all that was familiar? If any had reason to feel uncertainty, it was them. Yet they saw “God’s almighty hand” at work and gave thanks.

Here at St. John’s, there is much to feel uncertain about. What does the future hold for us? As your priest, I wonder what the future holds for me. What will our new shared ministry look and feel like? Will I be a part of it? Will we experience abundance or scarcity? I crave certainty, even though I know it won’t come fast enough to ease my heart and mind. If my read on the mood at St. John’s is accurate, I’m not the only person feeling this way.

So, what do we do? I can’t tell you what to do, but I can tell you what I try to do. On any given day, I try to trust God and give thanks. I do my best to thank God that all good gifts around us are sent from heaven above, and I try to thank God for all his love. That helps me remember that God sees the big picture I can’t see, and that it is God who’s in charge, not me. When I’m able to do this, my whole perspective changes.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if each of us was able to recognize God as the giver of all good gifts and to thank God with all our hearts on a daily basis? You know what they say, don’t you? Practice makes perfect... Will you join me in trust and thanksgiving?

■ **Rev. David Takahashi Morris**  
**Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church**  
**Walnut Creek**

During October, our focus in the ministers’ class on world religions has been on Buddhism. This opportunity to reconnect with the origins and teachings of this particular belief system has been very fruitful for me and reminds me of the ways that gifts are found in the unexpected places.

The Buddhist concept of *dukkha*, or suffering, is what sometimes gives this religion a bad rap. “What a depressing thing,” people say, “to say that all of life is suffering.” The irony in this is that the Buddha focused on this because he understood that to understand something is to be freed of it. His core teaching around suffering name its existence as a reality and also suggest ways to be freed of this very basic part of human life.

As I approach half a decade of life, I am aware that life is suffering—and it is also unmitigated joy. The paradox of human existence is to embrace both and to feel the richness of both. When the man who was to become the Buddha was a child, his father thought the best way to keep him happy was

to never let him see the pain of the world. When, after a life of indulgence and pleasure, Siddhartha found out that poverty, pain, and death existed, he was devastated. Too often our liberal religious communities take that approach—looking only at the sunny side, practising the power of “positive thinking.” And yet when the inevitable realities of *dukkha* emerge, these tools often prove inadequate.

The Buddha also taught about the *sangha*, the community of disciples who could support one another as they searched for truth in their own ways and on their own paths. How fortunate we are to have our congregational community where we can share laughter and tears, point out the beauty in the world to one another and also hold one another in our wrestlings with its harder edges.

How grateful I am for this vibrant, courageous, and joyous community!

### ■ Rev. David C. Lee St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Pleasant Hill

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 13. Lent, a period of forty days prior to Easter (Sundays are not included in the count) is a time when Christians prepare for the Resurrection of our Lord. It is a time for personal observance of fasting, repentance, moderation and spiritual discipline...a time to ponder and recommit to the calling of discipleship. It is also a time for the corporate body of Christ, the church, to be reminded of its purpose, its calling to be the community of Christ in, but not of, the world. Here's a little tale – The Parable of the Lifesaving Station – which offers a cautionary reflection on what it means to be the church of Jesus Christ:

On a dangerous seacoast where shipwrecks often occur, there was once a crude little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought for themselves went out day and night tirelessly searching for those who were lost.

Some of those who were saved and various others in the surrounding area wanted to become associated with the station and gave of their time, money, and effort to support its work. New boats were bought and new crews trained. The little lifesaving station grew. Some of the members of the lifesaving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. They replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building.

Now the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they decorated it beautifully because they used it as a sort of club. Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work. The lifesaving motif still prevailed in the club's decorations, and there was a liturgical lifeboat in the room where the club's initiations were held.

About this time a large ship wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet, and half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick. The beautiful new club was in chaos. So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwrecks could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split among the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted upon lifesaving as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a lifesaving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station. So they did.

As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a club, and yet another lifesaving station was founded. History continued to repeat itself, and if you visit that seacoast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown. In the parable, there is a moment when what was a lifesaving station turns into a club. From there forward, the primary reason for joining that club was to enjoy the benefits of membership. Previously, the primary motivation was that of serving the souls – non-members – who otherwise would have been lost to shipwreck on that rocky seacoast. The impact of that shift was that, eventually, those rescued (now by independent contractors) were no longer welcomed into the clubhouse. They first had to be cleaned up and made respectable!

When a community operates as it should, biblically speaking, it will without a doubt attract many. Yet, it must constantly resist the tendency to turn inward with the desire to simply meet the needs of its “members.” This parable asks us to evaluate the “real time” contribution of our experience as a faith community in making an actual difference in the lives of our surrounding community – the non-members whom Christ has called us to serve.

As you practice your Lenten disciplines to renew your personal sense of calling as one of Christ's disciples, perhaps you will ponder, as well, what it means for the body of Christ to faithfully demonstrate its calling?

## ■ Rabbi Roberto Graetz

### Temple Isaiah Lafayette

What can we think when a young man grows up within the ranks of the Boy Scouts organization as a valued member of his troop, earns his badges and awards, and fulfills the rigorous qualifications for Eagle Scout, only to find himself disqualified because of his sexual orientation? We imagine the angst and torment he and his family feel when they understand he has been excluded, banished, from the very community he respects and loves. Just so has a superb candidate for Eagle Scout in our neighborhood been denied his due, solely on the ground that he openly affirms his homosexuality.

For decades, many of our Temple Isaiah families have had children involved in Boy Scouts activities, earning Eagle awards and accolades, and our community has saluted and celebrated their achievements. We have lauded the many adults from our Temple Isaiah community who have been in supportive and leadership positions in the Scouts. It is not surprising, then, that when the young man in Moraga was denied his Eagle Scout award, the incident would have an impact on our communal conversations at Temple Isaiah regarding our own children's involvement in the Boy Scouts going forward.

Fully ten years ago, the Reform movement, through its governing bodies and constituencies, issued a strong recommendation favoring full inclusion of gay Scouts and troop leaders, in contradiction of the BSA policy forbidding their participation. This recommendation is in keeping with the Union of Reform Judaism's policy that our congregations be welcoming and affirming of the sexual choices our members make within monogamous, respectful, and loving relationships. Temple Isaiah is proud to be part of a consortium of congregations that warmly welcomes and affirms the sexual identity of all of its members.

Throughout its history, the Reform movement has held that change is necessary when a law or text or tradition stands in opposition to a moral imperative. Though two verses in the Book of Leviticus (18:22 and 20:13) describe male homosexual behavior negatively, we believe that those two lines cannot take precedence over an overarching value that permeates Jewish religious literature: all human beings are created in the Divine image. Rabbi David Saperstein, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism in Washington DC, said in Congressional testimony in support of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) that "regardless of context, discrimination against any person arising from apathy, insensitivity, ignorance, fear, or hatred is inconsistent with this fundamental belief. We oppose discrimination against all individuals, including gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, for the stamp of the Divine is present in each

and every one of us."

Even beyond the 'battle of the texts,' we looked as a movement to the consequences of discrimination. If we can understand the dire outcomes of civil rights violations against adults in society, how much more should we understand the effect this bias has on the young. We must protect and affirm our children when their core identities are in formation, when attitudes that will have life-long impacts—positive and negative—can be either promoted or prevented. It can no longer be acceptable to "work around" a discriminatory and hurtful policy with an implicit "don't ask, don't tell" in some organizations. It did not work for long in the United States military and it will not work for the Boy Scouts of America, as we have now seen locally. Though we cannot change the Scouts national policy, we can work hard within and outside Temple Isaiah's walls to create an awareness of the damaging consequences of such policies on all our youth and on our communities. Together we can affirm as precious the value of every human being. Let us teach our children that the spaces, groups, and activities we create for them are safe ones, open to growth and exploration, free from bullying and/or discrimination.

## ■ Valerie Sloven

### Winter Nights Shelter

#### DAYS AT THE OASIS

For many years I have worked for the Winter Nights Shelter Program as van driver and day site manager. The Oasis, as the day site is known, is located at St Vincent de Paul in Pittsburgh. It is a bright, cheerful place for babies, toddlers, school age children and their parents. It is also a place where clients in our program can meet with our case manager, Joe Macaluso, to develop a case plan. Clients have access to a computer for job and housing searches, a phone, printer/ copier, and fax machine. There is a shower and dressing room with towels and toiletries for clients to use.

Many of our families move from Winter Nights into stable homes, and a few have stopped back over the years to say hello. It is always gratifying to see a family that has lived through difficult times find stability. This year, our ninth, three such families have paid a visit to the Oasis.

Parents J. and T. and their 17 year old son T.J. resided at Winter Nights for a couple of months. Both parents had major health issues while living in Arizona and lost their jobs. They moved back to the Bay Area to be closer to family. While at Winter Nights one parent found a job, and shortly thereafter a small studio apartment in Antioch. They received assistance with the deposit and with furnishing their apartment. Almost a year later they live in the same small studio and dream of a bigger



place. J enjoys her job working at a shelter in Antioch for the mentally ill. T. is hoping to be hired soon. Son T.J. is graduating from continuation school in Pittsburg and is learning to drive. His parents have taken to cycling to save money and stay in shape. This family was highly motivated to get a job, save money and leave the shelter. While with us, J. did not like sleeping on a mattress on the floor--it was very hard on her back, and at the time they stayed with us we had a LOT of babies and toddlers. When your own children are grown your tolerance for sharing your sleeping quarters with crying babies and high energy tots greatly diminishes.

S., a single mother with a teenage daughter and a baby son, juggled work and school and also volunteered at her daughter's volleyball games. And she did it with grace and humor. S. and her family continue to thrive. They live in an apartment in Antioch that is subsidized by Shelter Inc. for up to two years. S. works in the medical field and wants to continue her schooling and become an RN.

P. had a two year old son L. when they came to Winter Nights more than three years ago. P. had an older daughter that she had lost custody of and who now lived out of state. L's father was in and out of jail. P. had a serious mental disability that made it difficult to hold a job or stable housing for herself and her son. This family needed to be in permanent, affordable housing with support services tailored to her unique challenges. With help from case manager Joe, P. now lives in the Garden Park Apartments in Pleasant Hill and L is now in kindergarten. This is the first time P has really had a place to call home and she is very proud of where she is now.

These stories are some of many successes for the Winter Nights program. Not every outcome is positive, but the program provides a platform for many clients to get their lives on track by supplying food, shelter, guidance and tools for finding permanent employment and housing.

## **Coming Events**

### **■ Swami Vivekananda's 150th Birthday**

Saturday, February 23, 10:30am - 3:30pm

Palace of Fine Arts Theatre  
San Francisco

Morning discussion: Michael Krasny, KQED Forum Host; Jacob Needleman, Philosopher & Author; Ann Louise Bardach, Journalist; Swami Tattwamayana, Vedanta Society.

Afternoon: Freedom: The Song of the Soul ~ A Multimedia Presentation. No charge. Complimentary Lunch pro-

vided with RSVP. Registration: [www.sfvedanta.org](http://www.sfvedanta.org).

### **■ World Day of Prayer 2013**

Friday, March 1, 9:30 a.m.

Lafayette United Methodist Church  
955 Moraga Road, Lafayette

All people of faith are invited to join with folks from 170 countries in celebration of World Day of Prayer. Coffee and registration begin at 9:30 a.m., followed by the prayer service from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. The program was written by women of France, encouraging welcome for migrant people worldwide. The event is sponsored by Church Women United. For more information, call Lenita at 672-1053.

### **■ Interfaith Concert Sponsored by the Interfaith Council of CCC**

Sunday, March 3, 3 - 5 p.m.

Christ the King Church  
199 Brandon Road, Pleasant Hill

The concert, entitled "All Are One!" will be held 3 - 4:30, followed by light refreshments in the foyer. For more information please contact Loel at (925) 788-9793.

### **■ Interfaith Youth Game Night**

Sunday, April 28th from 5:00 to 8:00 pm

Temple Isaiah, 945 Risa Rd., Lafayette  
Come up Risa Rd. and around the building to the Social Hall

Youth grades 9-12 from all of our congregations are invited to participate in our first every Youth Game Night! There will be food, games, and sharing. Free! We will begin a conversation about what the teens would like to include in an Interfaith Summer Camp this summer. We will be organizing a Youth and Young Adult Leadership Initiative for those willing to help plan and lead the Camp. For more information, please contact Rev. Will McGarvey at 925.597.9797 or [eye4cee@gmail.com](mailto:eye4cee@gmail.com). Go to the events page at [www.interfaithccc.org](http://www.interfaithccc.org) for a map.

### **Homeless Veterans in Need of Housing**

Shelter, Inc. of Contra Costa County provides supportive services for veterans in need of housing.

[www.shelterincofccc.org](http://www.shelterincofccc.org), (925) 957-7579  
Contra Costa County Homeless Services



**Social Justice Alliance**  
**Of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County**  
*All are welcome at the Feb. 20, 7:00-8:30 pm SOJA Meeting,*  
*Interfaith Council Office*

## SOJA Committee Reports

- Martin Luther King Celebration, entitled “Sowing the Seeds of Peace (in a culture of violence): A very successful event on January 21 at WC Civic Center—near capacity audience. . . dynamic, inspiring keynoter, Dr. Donna Allen. . . music. . . legislators’ and honored guest greetings. . . Litany for Peace by Natalie Russell and Margli Auclair. . . Invocation, Benediction, and Prayer for Peace. . . “We Shall Overcome” Closing. . . Refreshments. . . Literature on Tables. . . Conversation. Congratulations to Natalie Russell, Chair, and her team.
- CROP Walk is looking into Corporate Sponsors. . . HR35—Higher Education Legislation—is under consideration. . . Gun violence: Mayors’ Breakfast will be a SOJA co-sponsorship. . . Four SOJA members participate in the MICA Immigration Advocacy project: Delores Loague, Dorothy Vance, and Dean & Chris Coons. . . The Single Payer Health Care Program will have a higher profile as the bill comes to the State Assembly; Pat Snyder, the Contra Costa leader for Single Payer, is a SOJA member and will report at the Feb 20 meeting. . . Winter Nights briefing follows.

## WINTER NIGHTS SHELTER

- **Time to Sign Up for 2013-2014 Winter Nights Shelter.** Sue Phalen, St. Paul’s Episcopal, is the shelter’s scheduler. Contact information: suephalen2@yahoo.com; (925) 935-2586

### Our Weeks since November.

- From mid-November until the end of January the word “Hospitality” and “Generosity” were the order of each day: renting a large white tent for the congregation so our families could have the large hall for tents. . . washers and dryers for laundry. . . showers. . . volunteer tutors when schools were in session. . . music during dinner. . . sing-alongs. . . movies with popcorn. . . family cooking activities. . . food bingo. . . outings to Chuck E Cheese, Oakland Zoo, Christmas gifts, Santa, photos. . . bowling & horseback riding. . . New Year’s Party. . . all organized by loving and caring coordinators: **John, Jim, Christine, Rebecca & Jonathan, Leslie, Brian, Angie, Nora, Debbie, Lynne & Maria.**

### Much Good News about Our Families.

- Mom and her twin daughters were welcomed into Berkeley Beds & Foods Program; Mom & Dad with 7-month old daughter moved into Mt. View Shelter; Mom with two sons and two jobs moved into an apartment with rent subsidized by Shelter Inc for a year, furniture provided by CCIC & SVDP, and the Elks Club sent along a \$200 award for her hard work and positive attitude; a Mom with a son and a Section 8 Voucher will leave us this week for an apartment in Antioch.
- The other families continue to job search and work with **Jim Pfohl** on completing their resumes. . . several attended the SVDP Workforce Workshop. . . one of our Moms is headed for Opportunity Junction on February 4. . . and a few, with **Valerie’s** help with their applications, have received financial assistance from the HOPE Conference for auto repairs and new tires.
- **Bill Shaw** tells me that several returning volunteers from past years have noted how supportive this session’s families are of each other and how well they get along. And I add that they’ve become a family.

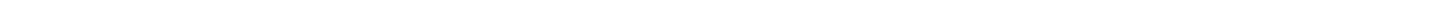

### Kudos to the Winter Nights Staff.

- Through three sets of holidays, **Mahmood Barakzai** and our wonderfully dedicated staff showed up for their shifts, made new friends in the congregations, and had fun, too. I want to thank them all: **Mahmood, Bill, Valerie, Nashin, Debra, Kathleen, & Xiamara.**

- By Gwen Watson & Natalie Russell, Co-Chairs of SOJA

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