



# Ministering Together

*“News, Comments, and Events of concern to the Religious Community”*

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

Summer Edition 2014

Dear Friends,

I’ve just finished reading Adam Braun’s book *“The Promise of a Pencil: How an ordinary person can create extraordinary change.”* In it, he recounts many of the lessons he has learned as he travelled abroad, felt the call to create schools in the poorest parts of the world, and struggled between leaving his job on Wall Street and working full-time at that important work. He recounts a conversation he had at a rooftop party in mid-town Manhattan being thrown by a media company. He had a conversation with a man who ran an investment fund, when he was asked what he did. He said,

*“I run a nonprofit organization called Pencils of Promise.” “Oh,” he replied, somewhat taken aback. “And you do that full-time?” More than full-time, I thought, feeling a bit judged. “Yeah, I do. I used to work at Bain, but left to work on the organization full-time.” “Wow, good for you,” he said...”*

Braun goes on to explain how this conversation led him to change his thinking about the term “non-profit.” He realized that perhaps he was responsible for the man’s response to him, and to ask why many of us use a negative word for 501(c)(3) corporations? Truly, it’s not an accurate term for the work we do in our congregations or other philanthropic work. We’ve allowed ourselves to be defined as “of little or no consequence: unimportant: worthless.”

It is all too easy for us to expect support when we describe our charitable ministry or project. We are working on behalf of others, aren’t we? So why do we present our most heartfelt yearnings for a better world first with what we don’t do? Because so much of our world only values profit and revenue? What about the social investment our many teams share everyday?

He shared this insight with his team and they started referring to themselves as a “for-purpose” corporation. They began to rethink how they were describing their work and it gave them a new clarity with which to help funders and volunteers connect with their goals.

Our congregations, monasteries, partners and volunteers find meaning in their connection and work with the Interfaith Council because we are a “for-purpose” organization. We meet regularly to do Inter-religious dialogue in a world riddled with religiously motivated violence. We join together in the many different life-saving ministries you will read about in these pages. Ours is the story of faith that not only seeks to understand the other, but we are a community that risks conversation that may be misunderstood – and, we continue to translate that conversation into making the world a better place.

Lately, we do this together through the work we are helping convene after the Voices of Poverty events – what has now been named the **Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition (Advocates & Communities Taking Initiative 4 Our Neighbors)** – 6 task-forces which are grass roots organizing to do faith centered advocacy around Shelter & Housing, Food Security, Jobs, Health and Education. *(For questions please contact Melody Howe Weintraub at [melodyhoweweintraub@gmail.com](mailto:melodyhoweweintraub@gmail.com))* Many of our 107 congregations have become involved and we are seeking more connections beyond our membership – including other “for-purpose” organizations – that can partner to transform Contra Costa County. Please consider where you or those in your congregation can tap into these task forces so that we can share our faith voices in advocacy to address poverty together.

Members of our Elected Council are in the process of calling each of our congregations to update our contact

information and ask for a liaison – one person in each congregation that “champions” our common work. Can you suggest a person who would be willing serve in this way? This is also the season when we begin to think of people who may be willing to be nominated to serve a 3-year term on our Elected Council. If you are willing to serve in either capacity, please email me at [eye4cee@gmail.com](mailto:eye4cee@gmail.com). We need your continued support – in giving of your time, treasure and talents – so we can see our purposes fulfilled.

"We Belong to Each Other."



Shalom, Peace, Salaam, Om Shanti, Solh, Amani, Paz, 평화, Ping On...

Rev. Will McGarvey, Executive Director

## Religious and Cultural Observances

### July

- 25 Emperor Haile Selassie I birthday - Rastafari
- 24 Pioneer Day - Mormon Christian
- 29-31 Eid al Fitr \* \*\* - Islam

### August

- 1
  - Lammas - Christian
  - Fast in Honor of the Holy Mother of Jesus - Orthodox Christian
  - Lughansad - Imbolc \* - Wicca/Pagan Northern and southern hemispheres
- 6 Transfiguration of the Lord - Orthodox Christian
- 5 Tish'a B'av \* - Jewish
- 10 Raksha Bandhan \*\* - Hindu
- 15
  - Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Catholic Christian
  - Dormition of the Theotokos - Orthodox Christian
- 17 Krishna Janmashtami \*\* - Hindu
- 29
  - Ganesh Chaturthi \*\* - Hindu
  - Beheading of John the Baptist - Christian
- 30
  - Paryushana Parva \*\* - Jains

### September

- 1 Ecclesiastical year begins - Orthodox Christian
- 8 Nativity of Mary - Christian
- 14 Elevation of the Life Giving Cross - Holy Cross Day - Christian
- 22 Equinox

- Mabon \* - Wicca/Pagan northern hemisphere
- Ostata \* - Wicca/Pagan southern hemisphere
- 24-26 Sundown to Sundown
- Rosh Hashanah \* - Jewish
- 27 Meskel- Ethiopian Orthodox Christian
- 29 Michael and All Angels - Christian
- 29 - October 3 Navaratri \*\* - Hindu

### October

- 3 Waqf al Arafa - Hajj Day \* \*\* - Islam
- 4
  - Yom Kippur \* - Jewish
  - Saint Francis Day - Catholic Christian
  - Dasara \*\* - Hindu
- 4-7 Eid al Adha \* \*\* - Islam
- 9-15 Sukkot \* - Jewish
- 13 Thanksgiving - Canada - Interfaith
- 16 Shemini Atzeret \* - Jewish
- 17 Simchat Torah \* - Jewish
- 20
  - Birth of the Báb \* - Baha'i
  - Installation of Scriptures as Gukru Granth - Sikh
- 21-25 Deepavali \*\* - Hindu
- 23 Diwali - Deepavali \*\* - Hindu - Jain - Sikh
- 24 Jain New Year \*\* - Jain
- 25 Hijra - New Year \* \*\* - Islam
- 26 Reformation Day \*\* - Protestant Christian
- 28 Milvian Bridge Day - Christian
- 31 All Hallow's Eve - Christian

# Chaplain's Corner



**Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley**  
*Juvenile Detention Facilities*  
Chaplain

In a memorandum dated January 17, 2014, addressed to "Interested Individuals/Organizations," the Contra Costa County Juvenile Justice-Delinquency Prevention Commission (JJ-DPC) shared: "(The) Commission is planning its 25th Annual Juvenile Justice Awards presentation on Saturday, May 17, 2014. We are honoring individuals and programs/organizations in Contra Costa County, who during 2013, have substantially contributed toward making our County a better place to live for juveniles. Awards may also be given to individuals and programs directly related to the prevention and intervention of juvenile delinquency."

For at least the past sixteen years, it has been my honor and pleasure to have nominated many young people for one of the Commission's awards, the "Juvenile Offender Success Story." Over the years I have nominated as few as one individual per year and more than once as many as seven or eight individuals for the award. The Commission has graciously given the award to all those whom I have nominated. Several times in this space, I have shared (prior to the ceremony), the short nomination essays. Since this has been done well before the Commission has made its selections public, names of the nominees have generally not been revealed.

The following essays have been submitted to the JJ-DPC for its consideration of those I have placed in nomination for the award this year:

*During extended periods of time spent in juvenile hall, in out-of-county placement and at the Orin Allen facility in Byron, \_\_\_\_\_ began to seriously and maturely re-examine and re-assess his education and life goals and objectives. Most notable evidence of this is the fact that he worked to complete his high school diploma last spring, 2013, even while in custody at OAYRF.*

*Shortly thereafter, the court allowed him to visit, on a couple occasions, Butte College where he prepared to matriculate in the fall semester. He did indeed enroll at the college in Oroville where he is now successfully completing his second semester. He will soon visit Central State University in Ohio and Kentucky State University as he contemplates transfer once required coursework at the community college has been completed.*

*During the winter break from school \_\_\_\_\_ returned home and worked at a local McDonalds to earn money for school expenses. His hard work has impressed the court to the extent that he is no longer on probation.*

*\_\_\_\_\_ began to weigh life options during a difficult period of time in juvenile hall and OAYRF. Realizing that those places were not for him AND determining that return to the community where he had gotten into trouble was not the wisest choice, he began to critically explore alternatives.*

*During a visit and tour of the Hanna Boys Center in Sonoma, \_\_\_\_\_ was introduced to a superior, but out of the ordinary educational opportunity and living situation. Along with the support and approval of his parents, \_\_\_\_\_ began the process to move onto that safe and scenic campus and to enroll in and complete his high school studies at the Archbishop Hanna High School. He intends to graduate at this time next year. It is his expressed intent to go on to college followed by medical school. Even now he is visiting college campuses as he prepares to avail himself of the myriad of intriguing and fascinating opportunities now well within his reach.*

*Truly a budding intellectual, this young man has the potential to develop the necessary skill set required to excel in college and beyond.*

*Early on while in custody, \_\_\_\_\_ recognized that poor decision*

*making on his part had caused him to be in uncomfortable places and spaces. It became clear to him that the time for change was at hand. An individual possessing tremendous talent and potential, \_\_\_\_\_ began to acknowledge that there are better ways to live than to do so in detention facilities sans freedom and choice.*

*Although dealing with the painful life reality of absent parents and a busy, over extended, but loving grandparent, this young man chose to explore the opportunity afforded him to complete his high school education at the Hanna Boys Center in Sonoma. Less preferable than a comfortable, stable two-parent home, but superior to a detention facility, \_\_\_\_\_ has accepted his present circumstances and has embraced the program at Hanna. He has excelled scholastically and socially. Although he has been a resident at Hanna for only six months, he is considered a leader and an exemplar for satisfactory and respectable behavior on campus.*

*He will graduate from high school in December and is preparing to go directly to college in spring semester, 2015. He has visited Butte College; is anticipating travel this summer to investigate the likelihood of attending Central State or Kentucky State universities.*

*At nearly eighteen years of age, \_\_\_\_\_ made some unwise decisions that resulted in a commitment to OAYRF. While in custody \_\_\_\_\_ began to realize and to understand the folly of some of his old potentially destructive ways. He made a concerted and deliberate effort to pursue positive and productive alternate ways to conduct his life affairs.*

*Toward that end he has worked for the past several months at the Juvenile Hall Auxiliary's thrift store, the popular Hall Closet. Previously he worked for a time in a local pharmacy. And, in anticipation of going on to undertake post-secondary studies, he has visited Central State University in Ohio, Kentucky State University and Butte College in Oroville.*

*\_\_\_\_\_ has enthusiastically embraced whole new and exciting levels of self-confidence and self-esteem that will certainly hold him in good stead as he prepares for his future endeavors.*

*This now-eighteen year old recent high school graduate came into the system as a very young, very disagreeable, very immature and obstinate teenager. Possessing one of the hardest heads on the planet, \_\_\_\_\_ had erroneously convinced himself that he could never move out of, and beyond, the negative mind set and life style that repeatedly landed him in custody in juvenile hall, OAYRF and finally in the YOTP program.*

*It is likely many are surprised by the great strides this young man has made. He had said on countless occasions he would never finish high school. He has recently accomplished that goal. He has visited Butte College, where he has explored the possibility of playing on that school's football team, a team that enjoyed an undefeated record last season.*

*Most notably, it is evident by his "swagger" and by what now comes out of his face, he genuinely likes, respects and loves himself, to an extent that throughout his teenage years had been veiled, at best. Remarkably, \_\_\_\_\_ has come to realize what a truly outstanding person he has become and is... VI*

*Last year, \_\_\_\_\_ managed to not quite get it following a stay at OAYRF. Consequently, and sadly enough, he found himself back at "the ranch" for another go around. That stint was quite enough for him! It was well past time to change outlook and perspective on life and its conduct. To his credit, \_\_\_\_\_ earned his GED while in custody and promised himself to turn it around and make things work. He recently celebrated his 19th birthday. For some months now he has been working two jobs, at UPS in Richmond and at the Juvenile Hall Auxiliary's Hall Closet thrift store.*

*During a visit to, and tour of, Butte College in Oroville, this young man renewed his resolve to move beyond what was and what had been in his life. Toward that praiseworthy end, \_\_\_\_\_ is preparing to enroll in college for the fall semester, 2014. He is confident that the tremendous strides forward he has made since his last period in custody will, through hard work and diligence, be sustained for the duration. He is feeling good about himself; much better than in the past. He now finds himself in a comfortable and peaceful space...*

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

## ❖ Amer Araim

*President of the Islamic Community Outreach of California,  
member of the Islamic center of Walnut Creek*

### Islam and Respect for Parents

In Islam there are special commands to respect and to deal with the parents by the utmost care. There are a number of quotations from Prophet Ibrahim in the Quran, and one of them is the following supplication: "O' my Lord! Make me one who establishes regular prayers, and also (raise such) among my offspring. Our Lord! and accept our supplication; Our Lord grant me, my parents, and the believers forgiveness on the Day of Judgment." S.xi, vs. 40 and 41. There is also a powerful command in the Quran: "Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age, say not a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor. And out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: 'My Lord bestow on them Your mercy as they took care of me during my childhood.'" S. xvii, vs.23 and 24. There is a chapter in the Quran called Luqman (the name of African sage,) which included another command concerning parents: "We have enjoined man concerning his parents- his mother carries him in her womb while suffering weakness upon weakness, and then weans him in two years- that is why we command him: Give thanks to me and to your parents, and keep in mind that, to Me is the final goal." S. xxxi v. 14.

There are many hadiths to Prophet Muhammad about the need to take care of the parents. One of them is that: "Paradise is under the feet of mothers." He also advised his companions: "(Take care of) your mother (and repeated that six times), and your father." Prophet Muhammad also said that "Human beings work will end at his/her death, except three aspects: a good son or daughter who prays to Allah for the sole of their parents; a charity, which was dedicated through his/her life, and people continue to benefit from it after his/her death, and a knowledge established by that individual, which benefits others after his/her death." In Arabic the womb is called (rahm) which is linked to rahma (mercy), Prophet Muhammad described the mercy of Allah toward human beings just like the mercy of the mother toward her baby.

I cherish the memory of my father though when he died sixty years ago, I was fourteen years old, and since I am the eldest boy, I took care of my family. He left me his agribusiness. The emphasis of my father was on education, including reading the Quran. He brought me the Quran, as a gift. When I was eight years old my father took me with him to the mosque in my home town Faluja to meet Palestinian refugees, who fled their homeland as a result of the Zionists attacks against them. My father words are still in my mind about Palestine. He said to me "Son, I want you to remember that the Arab governments are the stooges of the West,

and they betrayed the Palestinians. When you grow-up, I want you to remember your Palestinian brothers and sisters, and work for their return to their homeland Palestine." At the age of fifteen, I became involved in politics. Then I graduated from Law College, got my doctorate in political science, became a diplomat and senior political affairs in the United Nations. I worked on ending apartheid in South Africa. I am always thankful to Allah that He has bestowed on me so many bounties, and the most important among them is my faith in Allah, and my ability to fulfill his commands toward my parents and humanity. Among them my daily supplication: My Lord bestow on them Your mercy.

It is because of this that I pray for peace and justice in the Holy Land, and I supplicate to Allah to enable me to achieve this noble goal, and to serve humanity everywhere. Today, the international community is hoping to achieve peace and justice in the Holy Land by terminating the occupation of Palestinian territories occupied in 1967, and thus bringing to an end the sufferings of the Palestinian people, and to ensure that Muslims, Christians and Jews live in peace without fear of war and violence. I pray and hope that my brothers and sisters in the faith communities share with me my prayers.

## ❖ Bahai World News Service

<http://news.bahai.org/story/987>

### **In an unprecedented symbolic act senior cleric calls for religious coexistence in Iran**

NEW YORK — In a symbolic and unprecedented move, Ayatollah Abdol-Hamid Masoumi-Tehrani, a prominent Muslim cleric in Iran, announced today that he has gifted to the Baha'is of the world an illuminated work of calligraphy of a paragraph from the writings of Baha'u'llah, the Prophet-founder of the Baha'i Faith.

This move comes in the wake of several recent statements by religious scholars in the Muslim world who have set out alternative interpretations of the teachings of Islam in which tolerance of every religion is, in fact, upheld by the holy Qur'an.

"This is a most welcome and hopeful development with possible implications for the coexistence of the peoples of the world," said Ms. Bani Dugal, Principal Representative of the Baha'i International Community at the United Nations.

Ayatollah Tehrani states on his website (see translation of statement) that he prepared the calligraphy of the verse as a "symbolic action to serve as a reminder of the importance of valuing human beings, of peaceful coexistence, of cooperation and

## Your Words – Continued

mutual support, and avoidance of hatred, enmity and blind religious prejudice."

Ayatollah Tehrani presents this exquisite gift to the Baha'is of the world, particularly to the Baha'is of Iran, who he says "have suffered in manifold ways as a result of blind religious prejudice." He further states that this act is "an expression of sympathy and care from me and on behalf of all my open-minded fellow citizens."

In response, Ms. Dugal stated: "The Baha'i International Community is deeply touched by this act of high-mindedness and the sentiments of religious tolerance and respect for human dignity that prompted it."

The intricate artwork must have taken several months to painstakingly prepare by hand. It features at its center, a symbol known to Baha'is as "The Greatest Name" – a calligraphic representation of the conceptual relationship between God, His prophets and the world of creation. The gift measures at approximately 60cm x 70cm and is illuminated in a classical style. Ayatollah Tehrani's other artworks include the illumination of the Qur'an, the Torah, the Psalms, the New Testament, and the Book of Ezra. His illumination of the Psalms is currently being held in the United States Library of Congress.

The excerpt that Ayatollah Tehrani chose to cite in the gift is taken from Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i-Aqdas* – "Most Holy Book". It reads "Consort with all religions with amity and concord, that they may inhale from you the sweet fragrance of God. Beware lest amidst men the flame of foolish ignorance overpower you. All things proceed from God and unto Him they return. He is the source of all things and in Him all things are ended."

On previous occasions, Ayatollah Tehrani has with great courage publicly voiced concern about the ongoing and severe persecution of religious minorities, including the Baha'is in Iran. Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, hundreds of Baha'is have been killed and thousands have been imprisoned. There are currently 115 Baha'is being held in prison solely on the basis of their religious beliefs. Baha'is in Iran are denied access to higher education, obstructed from earning a livelihood, prevented from burying their dead in accordance with their own burial rites and subjected to the demolition and desecration and expropriation of their cemeteries, all because of their religion.

Ayatollah Tehrani's hope is that this gift "which will be kept by the Universal House of Justice [the international governing body of the Baha'i Faith] will serve as a reminder of the rich and ancient Iranian tradition of friendship and of its culture of coexistence."

### ❖ Rev. Dr. Frederick W. Weidmann

*Hillcrest Congregational Church UCC, Pleasant Hill*

Another day, another wave of gun violence in the United States. It's sick. It's us. In this case (the massacre in Kansas City yesterday) it was a white supremacist gunning down Jews.

Whenever killing is carried out by Muslim terrorists, the commentaries inevitably abound: why don't Muslim leaders condemn these things if they really think it's wrong? Of course, many do.

What about when such killings as what happened yesterday occur? The killer is a white supremacist who is a former "grand dragon" of the KKK. Do you know what you learn when you go on the KKK website? You learn that what the KKK is all about are "the principles of Western Christian civilization." You learn that the KKK is about "love NOT hate." Hmm.

White supremacists steep themselves in Christian language, Christian symbolism, and so-called Christian values. Where are all the Christian voices condemning such abuse of our language and symbols and values? Especially in these holy days, holy to Jews and Christians, let us recognize how devoid of the message of Christ any and all fear-mongering and any and all hate speech is; let alone the love of guns and the love of violence. What happened yesterday is sick and depraved. What's more, all the rhetoric and "values" that stand behind it are likewise sick and depraved. Unfortunately, all of it is part of the DNA of these United States.

What would Jesus Do? I know what he wouldn't do—stand for such sickness and depravity being claimed in his name.

### ❖ Margaret Northall

#### **Shades of Growing: The Interspiritual Tree of Living**

Trees cluster the hillsides  
This group, that small forest.  
Side by side, they show every shade of green,  
Some planted in a long row, others clustered, touching  
branches.  
They are all rooted in the same soil,  
Grounded in their roots, from original seed  
Richly soaked by the newly fallen rain.  
Roots intertwined and dispersed  
yet  
separate in individual nourishment to the  
One Tree it belongs  
Rain has fallen  
Wind has tossed raindrops from  
this branch, to that.  
Many are the trees that gather to surround  
the very hill of crosses,

## Your Words – *Continued*

of memories of the Many.  
There too, rain soaked soil, hold the wood,  
Reminding me of the same desire  
to sustain what has been created ;  
for whom all purpose of being  
Calls out for love, unity and peace.

Peace of this pasture and forest to you,  
Shalom of these light wind breezes, fall on you,  
Solh of the fresh spring rain, to you,  
Peace of the Four Noble Truths grounded in you,  
Salaam of the One and Only, gather in peace with you,  
Paz of the rich soil nourish you,  
Om Shanti to the branches reaching out to you,  
Paix in the roots of quieted being, gather you  
The wild hues of green call you to peace in each  
direction

In unfolding embrace  
Mystic love, your deepest practice  
Nourished in deep connection.  
Tender shades of green, hillside leaves  
quiver and dance  
Testimony to the One Unity, One Love

### ❖ Eileen Limberg

#### The Joy of Knowing We Are Not Alone...

When I agreed to write about the Gospel this week (back in March) little did I know how influential the word “advocate” would be in my personal and professional life two months later.

I want to start with the definition of Advocate from Webster’s.

- A person who argues for or supports a cause
- A person who works for a cause or group
- One that supports or promotes the interest of another

One aspect of my job in the parish has to do with Life & Justice. I monitor justice issues discussed in the Church and often share the Bishops’ comments in that section of the bulletin. I am the contact with the Diocese and lead and support JustFaith groups at St. Bonaventure.

Recently, I was asked to participate in a grassroots Interfaith effort to end poverty in Contra Costa. The group’s goal is to bring together faith communities across the county to share resources, see where there are gaps and raise our collective voices in advocacy for the poor and vulnerable. The statistics are staggering. I volunteered to help with advocacy.

Advocacy is a part of our Catholic Teaching that goes hand-in-hand with Charity. But many of us, me included, are leery of getting involved in something we may not know a lot about. Being involved on a political level is something I know very little about (except in theory) and have had no real experience in.

But, I went to a meeting and expressed interest in helping address education needs. Notice the word “helping”. So God, in all His humor and sense of irony, had the group select me as convener. All I could think was “Why God? I don’t know what I’m doing?” Then I realized I was not alone.

In the Gospel, Jesus reassures the disciples that as a community, a family, they have an Advocate. Someone who will be with them always. Someone to work for their cause and support and help them find a voice. We know that is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not only our Advocate – she prompts us to go out in the world and share our gifts. To advocate for others.

Pope Francis tells us the same thing. We need to go OUT in the world, even if we are “bruised, hurting and dirty” and serve. We need to be out “in the streets” and not cling to our own security. Though the call to be an advocate can be scary, it is answering that call that is part of discipleship. We bring our gifts to this call, may it be leadership, creativity, contacts or just presence. Embrace it and share the Joy of God’s presence with the world.

(If anyone is interested in learning more about the group I’ve mentioned, please let me know. There are other groups handling Shelter, Food, Health Care, etc. We can always use help!)

### ❖ Rev. Leslie Takahashi Morris

*Mt Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church,  
Walnut Creek*

While walking in the Mass Moral March [in North Carolina] in my yellow t-shirt, I was struck that as Unitarian Universalists not only do we stand on the side of love, we stand on the side of hope—hope that real change can happen not in some other life but in this one and precious world of which we are a part. As we walked on that cold morning with environmentalists, Planned Parenthood, union reps, civil rights advocates and other religious witnesses in that state where people are being denied their voting rights, someone took up the chant: “Tell me what democracy looks like.” To which the marchers would respond: “THIS is what democracy looks like!”

So we might ask today: tell me what this larger hope looks like?

Hope looks like the face of many of our elders who broke free from rigid expectations in their communities of origin. Hope is in the heart of the person who attends a grief group, is a Phone Buddy, has a pastoral visitor, gets a meal delivered after getting home from the hospital, participates in the Caregivers support group, joins a community circle.

Hope is in the heart of the man who gets a good meal at our community. Hope is in the eyes of woman who can no longer drive and who looks forward to being driven to that dinner by her church friends.

## Your Words – Continued

Hope is in the relief of the young mother, living states away from her own parents who can meet with other experienced and caring folks, who knows that her baby has her village to raise her.

Hope is in the heart of the immigrant who is visited by a volunteer from one of our congregations through the detention visitation program and who carries a message back to her children whom she left in the middle of the night and whom she has no way to phone. It is in the new partnership we are nurturing with CCISCO through which we can know how best to support our neighbors.

Starr King President Rebecca Parker asks, "Is it even possible to be religious alone? Or, is there an importance to religious community life that needs to be claimed anew, while protecting against the liabilities and dangers that community life can pose." In addition to providing places for support and care, she suggests that congregations can be "communities of resistance" which she describes as "countercultural habitations in which people learn ways to survive and strive that can resist and sometimes even transform an unjust dominant culture." In other words, places where we learn to put hope in our battered hearts and in the hearts of our neighbors.

That is the tradition we continue here.

### ❖ John Sutton, rector

*St. Anselm's Episcopal Church, Lafayette*

*My father's sister, my Aunt Cherie was probably the most gifted person I have ever known. She was attractive, athletic, artistic and smart. But most of all she embodied grace. She had an inner beauty that made her different and unforgettable.*

*Aunt Cherie, at the age of 18 toured Europe with a number of other young women led by Ruth Brown, my grandmother's close friend. She kept a travel log and I have a copy which I treasure. It has her observations written in cursive pen with virtually no errors. AND, she drew pictures of what she saw with great artistry.*

*Over the last weeks in the Lenten series we have reflected on the horrors of the Holocaust. I have been reminded of Aunt Cherie's notes from her visit to Vienna on November 14-15, 1938 which I want to share with you.*

### November 14 -15

These last two days have been a hideous surreal nightmare...I found it hard to believe that I wasn't living in the Middle Ages – how can there be such conditions existing in a modern progressive world?

We came back from Budapest ignorant of the fact that the day we left Vienna a thousand Jews were murdered in the "ghetto," their bodies filling the streets – Neither did we know that big black trucks had been cruising around the city for days, picking up thousands of Jewish men (and truckloads of children) and taking them, herding

them like animals no one knows where – flogging them with leather horse whips, setting fire to the beards of old men – and why? because they were Jews!

All the synagogues in the city were bombed and burned, all the Jewish stores were boarded up, their merchandise confiscated and much of it destroyed, and men, women, and children who were not taken by the trucks were turned out of their houses out to the streets. Isn't it short sighted and barbaric!

The real excuse for this (some said the Jews were communists and parasites) was the shooting of Herr von Rath by a Polish Jew of seventeen years, in Paris – The man who took us to find Christmas tree ornaments three days ago has disappeared with fifty thousand other Viennese Jews and no one knows where they are. We counted on Kartnerstrasse alone, from the Opera to St. Stephen's, one hundred and twenty six stores which were completely boarded over, and in which we had been shopping three days before!

We drove past the main police station, a sinister looking building on Franz-Joseph Kai, and got out of the car and talked to several of the hundreds of crying women - Just then two of the big black trucks drove silently into the building. A burly looking soldier in black (One of the "Black Guard," the most dreaded of Hitler's soldiers) came up to us, and a young man standing near said that the Black One had said that it would be better that we leave.

Still unable to really believe it, we drove about, seeing several more black trucks and many moving vans, moving Germans into the houses of Jews. One woman to whom we talked, asked if we could help her, and she took us to her apartment, where we talked with the rest of her family that had not been taken. They did not speak English and as we could not speak German, I spoke French with the girl. It was the same old story – the woman's husband had been whisked off, her house and all her belongings were no longer hers, and they could not leave Germany – Already a great number of the Jews have committed suicide, and indeed what is left for them? When the telephone rang, the woman said faintly, "Oh God\_\_\_" and the rest of them grew pale – We found our later from the American Consul that if we had been caught there, we would have been imprisoned immediately – regardless of nationality. We took one of the women home to where she would spend the night, and on the way we were followed. My heart began thumping wildly, and I wound casually in and out of streets and over the Danube and back, trying to lose the persistent follower – we finally got her to the dwelling, and to our great relief, discovered that the follower was the boy who translated the Black One's command. He and some friends of his asked us to go out to "Manhardt's" again, and although we were very tired from following black trucks on their dark missions about the city (we really trailed three or four) we accepted

## Your Words – Continued

gladly, delighted at the chance to talk to someone.

The young von K. whom we had first met, was most interesting and spoke with a delightful English accent: He and his funny brother “of the motorcycle” were of the Austrian aristocracy with long titles. Over the new wine they told us how weary everyone became of all the injustices and how futile and dangerous it was to even talk about it. They had seen three revolutions and took this current violence with great calmness. Of course “The man with the sword is more powerful than the man without the sword,” and just now the detestable Nazis are riding on the crest of the wave, but it cannot last for long. Hitler has made his greatest, and I hope his last mistake.

At nine the next morning, Miss Ruth and I met von K. ... (titles) for breakfast. He showed us some particularly nice shops on Kartnerstrasse, and then, with the woman we were trying to help, Miss Ruth and I drove over to see the American Consul. At least two hundred Jews were lined up outside, waiting in vain to get visas to America. They were crying, the poor hopeless things, and did not know where to turn – Oh, it was frightful! Miss Ruth came out of the consul’s office shaking, and we both cried from sheer panic where we were in the car. The consul had said that it was extremely dangerous to stay in Vienna another minute and to leave the country as soon as possible. There was no law or order left and even a small boy on the street could shoot us – the mob gone mad! Even for having the Jewish woman in the car we could be imprisoned!

I was terror-stricken, and for a wild moment considered how it would be never to see Mother or Daddy or the Cadet again – After hearing her, we went back to the hotel and threw everything into our suitcases. Von K. and I went to buy film for everyone, a good investment for leftover marks, and spent about an hour looking for the right kind and an etching of St. Stephen’s for Miss Ruth. Since I had not yet been in the church, we entered, and enjoyed the moment of quiet in the dark interior, the only light glowing through tall colored windows. How peaceful – and outside? I certainly appreciate his taking me on my errands – I wouldn’t walk alone on the streets! Not for anything! Something must be done – this wholesale slaughter cannot continue. I think the nations must band together and accept the Jews (if Germany does not want them) but – with their money and possessions. They are being robbed by the German government. It really is too frightful, and nothing, nothing that can be said or is said, is exaggerated – we saw only part of it – but enough!

We left immediately after a feverish lunch, and drove to Semmering, one particularly beautiful mountain section of Germany. Up through the thick, thick fog and into the clear air of the mountains. I am so thankful to be out of Vienna!

### ❖ Rev. Kathi McShane

*San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church, Alamo*

The March 9 issue of the New York Times Sunday Magazine carried a lovely and very touching article called “Animating Owen,” written by Ron Suskind, a journalist who has written about many important pieces of American life. This time he was writing about his own son, Owen Suskind, who at three years old, began to suffer with “regressive autism”, a disease that took him from being a bright and engaged toddler to a withdrawn, anxious, uncommunicative child. The only thing that seemed to give Owen any comfort or joy was watching, over and over again—obsessively—every Disney movie that his parents could find and play on video. “The Little Mermaid,” “Peter Pan,” “The Jungle Book”—Owen knew every scene of every story, the words and movements of every character; and there were scenes that he rewound and repeated until they made his remarkably patient parents and older brother groan.

This pattern continued for Owen through difficult and unsuccessful experiences in elementary school and high school, through relationships with multiple counselors, therapists and learning consultants. Owen not only had difficulty learning in school, like other severely autistic children, he seemed to have no natural emotional consciousness or ability to make connections with other people.

What Owen’s family and counselors began to notice over time, though, is that Owen seemed to be teaching himself emotional lessons by watching and imitating Disney characters. What emotional cues and responses he could not find in himself he could learn and practice through the characters he saw in the Disney movies. From the article:

*“At our prompting, [Owen] tells us how various [Disney character] sidekicks would solve his problems, quell his fears. He does it in the characters’ voices, seeming to channel insights that are otherwise inaccessible to him. Griffin [a psychologist working with the family] tells the group how he has recently channeled Rafiki’s voice on why change is so hard and how we manage it, and Jiminy Cricket’s on the meaning of conscience and how to converse with that “voice in your head.”*

His counselor asked him to imagine how Merlin would advise a boy like Owen who was concerned with high school’s ending and what would come next. Owen replied, in an imitation of Merlin’s voice, “Listen, boy, whistle the graduation song a little bit every day. By the time the big day comes, you’ll be fine.”

Owen had no ability to be emotionally connected to his own life, and so he learned to make connections by watching and imitating the actions and emotions of the characters in Disney movies. What “healed” him and

## Your Words – Continued

gave him a path to wholeness was a brilliant adaptation of what those animated characters knew. Owen's persistence and longing for a "real" life drove him to study those characters, and the patient love of his family surrounded and supported him as he learned to do the things that did not come naturally for him.

It struck me, as I read this article, that the way Owen learned to live the life that he wanted for himself, but that he could not always feel his way to, was a sort of "pilgrimage"—stepping into the footprints that the Disney characters made for him. He used their words, and even their voices, on his way to making their emotions his own.

That's the same thing we're doing this Lent, as we immerse ourselves in the life of Jesus, through the Gospel of Mark. None of us is as consistently loving or faithful as we'd like to be. So we're walking as close to Jesus' heels as we possibly can get, repeating his words, copying his interactions with other people, trying to see the world the way he did—hoping to match our ways to his. That's what a pilgrimage is: living his story until it becomes our own. It's a pilgrimage I'm glad to be on, and one that I'm glad to be walking with you.

### ❖ **Shelter Inc. Contra Costa** *Martinez*

#### **Feeding the Body & Mind**

Sarah, a single mother of two, listens, taking careful notes as she learns about nutrition.

"No one ever taught me what was healthy and what wasn't. I'm learning how to prepare healthy food for my family," says Melissa a mother with one child.

On a recent Monday, they were among 18 others at the Mountain View Emergency Family Shelter in Martinez attending Food Smarts nutrition workshops. Hosted by Leah's Pantry and funded by Kaiser Permanente, Food Smarts empowers homeless parents and their children to make positive changes in their diet and lifestyle.

"Our definition of self-sufficiency includes stable income and housing, as well as having the tools to make good choices, whether serving and eating healthy foods or putting a priority on being physically active," says Tim O'Keefe, SHELTER, Inc.'s Executive Director.

Families also learn by example, observing volunteers working in the shelter's large kitchen. Community and faith organizations come together every day, donating, cooking and sharing meals with residents. "Volunteers are incredibly important to our organization; our food budget is less than \$1,000 a year, but we feed over 40 people, three times a day," says Site Coordinator Martie Steinmetz.

White Pony Express is one organization that helps, delivering over 4,500 lbs. of fresh produce to the shelter since October 2013. The nonprofit is run completely by volunteers, toting extra fresh food from orchards, grocery stores and restaurants to people who may otherwise go without.

"The belief is in not creating more, but in sharing what is already there," says White Pony Express' Co-organizer Gary Conner.

Nutrition and shelters do not always go hand in hand; many serve inexpensive, high fat, high carb, canned food, but SHELTER, Inc. serves the whole person, inside and out. O'Keefe explains, "When we give parents and children the tools to make healthier choices, we know they are likely to continue making healthy choices after they leave our care and are in their own homes."

### ❖ **Rabbi Raphael Asher** *Congregation B'nai Tikvah, Walnut Creek*

A year ago my mother's faculty of speech was impaired by a stroke. Her thoughts remain clear, but it's a chore to get out a complete sentence. It came as a pleasant surprise, then, at last year's Seder to hear her sing all the Passover melodies from the Yontov Kiddush to Chad Gadya. Music, it seems, resides in a more secure and more durable part of the brain.

Synagogue music occupies a special place in my own consciousness because when I was very young my mother was the Temple choir in our small southern shul. While my father delivered sermons that went way over my head, my mother's soft soprano voice was teaching me "Mi Chamocho" and "Adon Olam." That's just one reason why I've never underestimated the importance of the Cantor in services from Aviva Katzmann to Cantor Richards and Cantor Chabon. We rabbis may stir or fry the mind and heart, but music soothes even the most secular beast.

As we anticipate this year's Purim (March 15) and Passover Seders (April 14 and 15) we should be attuned and cognizant of the power of a familiar melody. This year's Purimshpiel will include a Beatles' playlist—and we should by all means acknowledge the impact of popular music on the human spirit. However, it is music of our own folk and liturgical traditions which can clear a path in our cerebral gray matter, even when our speech and intellect might fail us.

### ❖ **Cantor Jennie Chabon** *Congregation B'nai Tikvah, Walnut Creek*

Everyone associates Purim with costumes, groggers, and the famous Purim spiel, but there must be more depth to the holiday than silliness and hamentaschen. It's true that on no other holiday are we

## Your Words – Continued

encouraged to drink (even get drunk!), send and receive gifts, dress up in costume, and make noise in the sanctuary, but is that really all there is to it?

The story that we read in Megillat Esther is deceptively simple. It opens with the banishment of Queen Vashti and the beauty contest in which Esther is chosen to become the new queen. The courtier, Haman, becomes the new prime minister, but Mordecai, Esther's uncle, refuses to bow down to him. Fueled by anger at Mordecai for his disobedience, Haman convinces King Ahasuerus to order a decree calling for the massacre of the entire Jewish population in the kingdom. Mordecai and Esther then realize that it is their job to save the Jewish people. Esther entrances King Ahasuerus with wine and food and then reveals that she is Jewish and asks him to save her people from wicked Haman's plan. Haman is hanged, the Jews are saved and Purim becomes an annual holiday of drinking and merriment.

Simple story, simple message, right? Not necessarily. In order to understand the deeper meaning of Purim, it is important to look at the holiday through a historical lens. Most scholars and historians agree that the Purim story is based on the Jewish community that was living in Persia in the years following the Babylonian exile from Jerusalem, ca. 515 BCE. Once the shock of the exile had worn off, the Jews assimilated very well into Persian society. They were successful and comfortable and well-respected in their new world. In fact, when the Temple was rebuilt and they were able to return to Jerusalem, most Jews chose to stay in "exile"—their new home.

This is the context of the Purim story. Looking at the story from this perspective, it is interesting to consider who Esther and Mordecai were before it became their responsibility to save the Jewish people. They were most probably non-religious, assimilated Jews living happily in Persian society. How do we know this? It is unlikely that a religious girl, especially someone from the minority of Jews who remained observant during exile, would enter into a beauty contest to marry the gentile king. Modesty aside, a girl from a traditional family would never put her Shabbat or kashrut observance at risk in order to marry the king. Nor would her family even consider allowing her to marry a Persian man.

This one piece of information about Esther and Mordecai completely changes our understanding of the Purim story. Our heroes were not observant Jews who were so committed to their faith that they put their lives at risk in order to save their people. Our heroes were assimilated, non-practicing Jews, who discovered the depth of their pride in their heritage only when it was threatened. They probably assumed that Haman would only attack religious Jews, not the Jews who were more Persian than Jewish. They must have been quite shocked to discover that all Jewish families were in danger.

One of the many lessons of Purim is that you don't have to be a religious Jew, or even Jewish at all, to make

a difference in the survival of the Jewish community. Interfaith couples who choose to raise their children as Jews, Jews and non-Jews who devote their time, money or talent to helping the Jewish community, children, adults...all of us can make a difference. In the Purim story we celebrate Esther and Mordecai's bravery. This year, let's celebrate our own bravery by committing, each of us, to the future of this Jewish community.

### ❖ Lou Smith

*Caring Minister, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Lafayette*

During the Stephen Ministries leadership training seminar that I attended for one week in February, I was introduced to a short book entitled "The Good Listener" by James E. Sullivan. It is only 125 pages, yet it contains some very insightful comments and observations.

The author discusses the "power" of "listening" in our daily lives, and the extreme importance of listening deeply into someone who really "needs to be heard." He observes the "listening" is important to maintaining and enhancing relationships in our lives. He says, "...the most efficient 'tool' that we have for making friendships is our power to listen to each other with care, attentiveness, and respect."

The book discusses some of the challenges to effective listening such as: pretending to listen, listening without patience, and listening but not understanding. Then, after explaining the challenges, there is a long discussion of "steps to good listening." These steps include: stepping out of my own world, sensing your deepest feelings, and giving an appropriate response.

The author explains further:

*"The first and foremost requirement is that I must step out of my own world, my thoughts and feelings. I have to put aside – at least for the moment – my own perceived notions and prejudices and my own point of view. This is an essential step, and it is no easy task. And yet, for me to hear and understand you, I have to break out this world of mine, or I will never see things as you see or feel what you feel... Now I don't have to leave my own world forever. ...What I must do is leave my own world for the space of time that I am listening to you."*

The hopeful result is that you will feel that you have been heard. As the author points out, really being heard and understood, without any blame or judgment, can be very therapeutic. This is the case when we are experiencing life's many difficulties, or sometimes when we just sense that we need to talk and be heard.

Copies of this short book are available in our library, and also through Stephen Ministries or amazon.com.

## Your Words – Continued

### ❖ **Rabbi Roberto Graetz** *Temple Isaiah, Lafayette*

A few weeks ago I had the pleasure of traveling once again to Washington, DC with our tenth grade class. Together with Temple Isaiah's Youth Director, Ira Rosenberg, and Joanne Peterson, 27 members of the Confirmation Class spent four days in the L'Taken Seminar, organized by the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism. Their time was invested in learning Jewish values, the ways of Washington politics, visiting sights of historic and cultural interest and, finally, walking up to the Hill to lobby at our Congressional Representative's and Senator's offices. The issues lobbied were chosen by the teens from a list provided by the RAC on legislation that may make its way to a vote in the near future and on which our movement has taken a position. The RAC runs this program six times a year. This weekend it was not just Temple Isaiah teens; our group, the largest contingent of any synagogue, was among the 450 teens from 25 congregations around the country.

I want to share with you my thoughts about the teens we brought with us to DC. These rowdy tenth graders are who Rabbi Miller and I teach week in and week out at Noar Night, but when it is time to get serious, they do so. They are intelligent, committed, in love with themselves, with their classmates, their Judaism, and their community. When you are about to spend four days with them in a hotel, four to a room, you fret a little...but for naught. They had fun mingling with teens from far-away communities, they took advantage of each opportunity to socialize and play, they stayed up in their rooms in friendly conversation until dawn called them for a minimum of sleep. But when it was time to get serious, they participated with enthusiasm. You could see them contributing to discussions in small groups, standing up to play their parts in a mock lobbying of Senators for or against Conflict Mineral (ask them, they'll tell you what these are); and on Sunday night, under time pressure and working in teams, choosing, researching, and writing on the issue they would lobby the next morning on the Hill.

In their best clothing (for some, not exactly appropriate for the DC Winter) they walked up to the Congressional Office Buildings, the temperature below freezing and the wind blowing. They met with Staff members of Senators Feinstein and Boxer, visited with the Supreme Court, and then walked to Congressman George Miller's office. As an aside, this was the first time in many years where every one of our teens belonged to the same congressional district. We had years in which we had to split ourselves into as many as four groups, since you can only lobby your own Representative.

We had not told the teens that it was very likely that Congressman Miller himself would be there to greet them. They were excited and eager to meet him (and a

little nervous about the lobbying they would do in his presence). Not only did he greet them and insisted on having each kid introduce him/herself, he listened attentively to them (they did great!), reflected and reacted to their requests on issues as difficult as gun control and the environment, funding stem cell research and a woman's right to choose. He then told them about life as a congressman in DC, directed questions at them and basically urged them not to become cynics and to remain engaged in the political process, bringing to it the values they learn in our Reform synagogue in Lafayette. I am quite convinced that this last hour in DC will be a memorable one in the formative lives of our teens. I wish you would have been there with us. You would have been proud of and inspired by our teens.

## Events & Announcements:

**+++ Health and Faith in Action** Wednesday, Sept 3rd from 12 – 1:30 pm John Muir Wellness offices at 1656 N. California Blvd., Walnut Creek. Bring your own lunch and invite a friend!

**+++ Contra Costa CROP Hunger Walk** Sunday, October 19th 1:00 pm Civic Park, Walnut Creek. 3K Walk to raise funds for global hunger and the Winter Nights Shelter. Bring Friends Bring Families Bring Pets! • [www.cropwalkonline.org/ContraCostaCA](http://www.cropwalkonline.org/ContraCostaCA) • 925-356-8822. Download the flyer here: [Flyer 2014 Contra Costa CHW3k](#)

**+++ ICCCC Annual Meeting** Sunday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> 6:00 pm Concord United Methodist Church 1645 West Street, Concord. Bring a potluck dish to share and enjoy our annual reports and celebrating our ministries together.

**+++ MIDC 2014 Disaster Conference Workshop: Emergency Planning for Congregations** Wednesday, November 12th at 7:00 p Walnut Creek United Methodist, Social Hall 1543 Sunnyvale Ave., Walnut Creek

Is Your Congregation Ready for the NEXT Major Emergency or Disaster? The next tragic event will more than likely be an Earthquake on the Hayward, Concord, or Calaveras Faultlines.

However, it could also be a toxic chemical spill from an accident on one of our many industrial railroad lines or sidings--to say nothing of the potential for a major spill or explosion at one of our five major oil refineries!

Come and spend an evening with representatives from the Contra Costa VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters) for a primer of 'How You Can Help to Prepare Your Congregation for the Next Major Disaster or Natural Emergency. Members of the Contra Costa VOAD will be present to discuss possible follow-up seminars.

# Events & Announcements...

## HELP SOMEONE “FEEL BETTER ON THE INSIDE”

A long time Caring Hands volunteer related that her care receiver told her, “When you come, I don’t *look* any different on the outside. You can’t see inside me, but when you come to see me, I *feel* much better on the inside!”

That’s what Caring Hands does; it helps seniors “feel better on the inside!” Caring Hand’s purpose is to provide care to promote continued independence and to help combat loneliness. Volunteer hours are flexible. Best efforts are taken to create a perfect match between the volunteer and the care receiver.

Please consider attending the next Caring Hands Training on May 30, at John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek by calling **925-952-2999** for more information and begin the volunteer process. For additional information watch the video at [www.johnmuirhealth.com/caring\\_hands](http://www.johnmuirhealth.com/caring_hands).

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO STAFF COMMUNITY FOOD PANTY & CLOTHING ROOM at HILLCREST!

The Community Food Pantry and Clothing Room have been operating at the Hillcrest Congregational Church campus for the past 60 years. As a designated outlet for the Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano counties, the Food Pantry gave an emergency 3-day food supply to 3,000 children and adults in 2013. The Clothing Room also served 3,000 people in our community last year, providing new and gently-used clothing to men, women, teens and young children.

In order to continue to serve our community, we are in need of additional volunteers to work in the Community Food Pantry and Clothing Room. Both rooms are open from 9:00 to 11:45 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

If you would like to explore how you can help, please contact Bill Cunningham at the Hillcrest Church office, 925-689-8260. See how you can become part of this important service to our community!

## “Understanding Islam: Fifty Questions”

As the members of the interfaith community in Contra Costa County and beyond are aware, I have been visiting churches, schools, colleges and other social and religious institutions to promote understanding and cooperation between all faiths. I reflected on this experience in a book titled “Understanding Islam: Fifty Questions.” After publication of the book, I have been receiving invitations to discuss my experience, and to further promote interfaith dialog and understanding. My

recent visit to the Congregational Church in Martinez inspired me to write this piece. There was a real interfaith dialog, and I am grateful God for being able to undertake this mission. I want to continue this important goal of my life. I will be delighted to visit any congregation or institution. Please call me at this number: 925-934-1794.

- Amer Araim

## Thanks!

On behalf of SABH foundation, I would like to thank you for your participation in our 2014 Annual Diversity Spring Festival. Your willingness to share your time and talent made all the difference in the success of our festival.

This festival is a small attempt to build bridges and understanding between different faith groups and to promote goodness and services for humanity without any expectations.

Thanks to your efforts and participation, we made a difference in helping bring people together with their families. We hope you will join us next year in making more memories.

With Gratitude,  
Sarah Tell and Dr. Harmesh Kumar  
Therapeutic Residential Services Inc.

**You can play a direct, personal role in helping to end hunger in the Contra Costa County. Think about donating as little as two hours a week!**

**White Pony Express is a 100% volunteer-based non-profit that redistributes approximately 18,000 lbs. of fresh, delicious, healthy food each week to those in need. We need more volunteers to get the food delivered to these neighbors!**

White Pony Express (WPE) partners with food retailers with a surplus and delivers free of charge to those in need via thirty-eight 501(c)(3) organizations in CCC. Some of the more well-known donors are Nob Hill Foods, Whole Foods, Costco, Sprouts Farmers’ Market and The Cheesecake Factory—but there are a hundred additional donors who contribute their excess to this program. White Pony Express distributes throughout the County from Brentwood to Richmond and from Martinez to Walnut Creek. Some of our better known recipient partners are Bay Area Rescue Mission, Shelter, Inc., Loaves & Fishes, Love A Child, Don Brown Shelter, and Shepard’s Gate -- but there are over 30 other shelters, meal providers, pantries and homes for the disabled that we serve every week. Most are served several days a week.

WPE operates fifteen hours a day, seven days a

## Events & Announcements...

week. Volunteers are needed for 2-4 hour shifts. Our primary need is for daytime volunteers during the hours from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Help us serve those in need by transporting food; setting up and organizing food distributions and/or cleaning our onsite premises. *Join us* for this rewarding work! Contact: Vince Karakashian at [vkarakashian@gmail.com](mailto:vkarakashian@gmail.com) or 925-876-0402.

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### Pacific School of Religion Berkeley, CA Summer Session 2014

August 4-8: **Preaching Women: Examining the (Her)story and Role of Women Preachers and Enhancing Their Craft**, Yvette Flunder (presiding bishop of the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries and author of *Where the Edge Gathers: Building a Community of Radical Inclusion*)

Register online at [www.psr.edu/summer](http://www.psr.edu/summer)

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### Project Homeless Connect

- Tuesday, August 5, 12:00 Noon – 5:00 PM for setup, or
- Wednesday, August 6, 6:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Richmond Memorial Auditorium,  
403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond

Volunteers are needed for Project Homeless Connect 2014, an annual, one-day event to provide assistance to people who are experiencing homelessness in Contra Costa County. Project Homeless Connect routinely draws more than 1,000 people and provides food, medical and dental care, haircuts, pet care, shelter and many other services.

The Aug. 6 event is coordinated by Contra Costa Health Services' (CCHS) Behavioral Health Division and co-sponsored this year by the City of Richmond and Chevron. On August 6 sign up for a half-day shift (6:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.) or a full-day shift (6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Project Homeless Connect is made possible each year through the efforts of hundreds of volunteers, who engage with participants, ensure that lines move smoothly, provide services, staff tables, serve meals and distribute donations to our consumers.

Anyone interested in volunteering is urged to contact the Homeless Program as soon as possible. Early sign-ups help staff to plan and keep track of areas of need. Anyone 18 or older can sign up. Volunteers will be provided with training and instructions. Meals are provided Aug. 6.

To volunteer or learn more visit

<http://cchealth.org/homeless/phc/> or call 925-313-7700.

### The Future Is Now Intergenerational Summit on Racial, Economic and Environmental Justice

August 15 (Fri. night) through  
August 17 (Sun. noon) Sat. Evening Performance  
open to the public  
1798 Scenic Avenue, Berkeley, CA  
\$35- \$50 sliding scale

Three days of conversations, collaborations, workshops, mural arts, spoken word, and skill sharing. Building our Movement Across Generations, Exploring Beautiful Resistance, and Creating the World We Want to See While Living in the Current System.

Featuring Kazu Haga, Mahsea Evans, Jakada Imani, Josue Bustos, Rev. Deborah Lee, Saif Alsaegh, Shauen V.T. Pearce, Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb, Rev. Kristin Stoneking, Cesar F. Hernandez, Rev. Osagyefo Sekou and young organizers and activists from the Bay Area and Southern California

Sponsored by The Fellowship of Reconciliation and Pacific School of Religion  
Register: [www.blazingforward.org](http://www.blazingforward.org)  
For more info: Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb  
Freeman Fellow @ The Fellowship of Reconciliation  
[rabbilynn@earthlink.net](mailto:rabbilynn@earthlink.net) 805-259-5030

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### August 25<sup>th</sup> is IPCA's Global Day of Prayer for Prison Ministries.

This day is set aside each year to remember those who minister in prisons throughout the world. The International Prison Chaplains Association (IPCA) encourages you to remember Prison Chaplains, prisoners, ex-offenders, their families, volunteers, and their faith communities throughout the world. It is a time to be grateful for those who have been called to this challenging yet rewarding work.

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### Save the Date: Habitat for Humanity 9/11 Community Revitalization Day – updated date and time!

Saturday, September 13th from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.  
Join us for a clean-up and green-space service projects in Bay Point and the surrounding areas. More information to come. If you'd like to help plan this event, email Victoria Bommarito at [VBommarito@HabitatEBSV.org](mailto:VBommarito@HabitatEBSV.org) or Rev. Will McGarvey at [eye4cee@gmail.com](mailto:eye4cee@gmail.com).

# Social Justice Alliance

## Of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

*All are welcome at the August 13 SOJA Meeting  
7:00 pm, WC United Methodist Church Library*

### SOJA Members and Their ACTION Agenda

*Immigration, Housing, Winter Nights Shelter, Mid-East Update, Multi-Faith Coalition, and Legislative Advocacy were discussed at the last Meeting.*

**Immigration.** MICA members **Dean and Chris Coons** and **Delores Loague** reported the DACA group plans to bring applicants together to prepare for being accepted as Dreamers. Members of MICA continue to hold Prayer and Testimonial Vigils at the Richmond Detention Center on the first Saturday of the month from 11:00 am until noon. In April a demonstration was held in San Francisco to mark the Two Million Deportations during the Obama Administration. SOJA members thanked **Delores, Dean,** and **Chris** for serving as SOJA's liaisons with MICA.

**Housing and Homelessness.** Currently the City of Concord is reviewing its Housing Element, and **Delores**, who has attended the community meetings, reported that Concord needs 3,478 additional housing units. She also continues to advocate for low-income housing and homeless shelters on the former Concord Naval Weapons Station.

**Gwen** announced that 33 Winter Nights family members were hosted during April by Concord United Methodist Church (partnering with Good Shepherd Lutheran); Orinda Community Church (partnering with Santa Maria Catholic Church; and Christ the King Catholic Church in Pleasant Hill. **Joe Macaluso**, Winter Nights Case Manager, is assisting the families with applications to Mt. View Shelter with the prospect of Transitional Housing in the future and to Contra Costa Interfaith Housing apartments. He also helped two families apply for the April session of Homeless Court, and he accompanied them as they appeared before **Judge Austin**, to get their driving record expunged. The Judge sent his greetings to Winter Nights, his first Homeless Court clients. One of the shelter families departed, due to their acceptance by the Seneca Program.

**Meals on Wheels.** **Carol Louisell**, Director of Community Engagement or the Meals on Wheels and Senior Outreach Services program, was the guest speaker. She told us about parts of the program that enhance the quality of life for older adults yet are less widely known: Friendly Visitors, Exercise Program, Geriatric Care, Home Care Providers, and others. There are 600 volunteers and 150 Friendly Visitors. Meals cost \$7.15 each. Prospective volunteers can call **Carol** at (925)954-8736.

**Multi-Faith Coalition on Poverty.** After a meeting in March at First Presbyterian Church in Concord, several subcommittees were formed to continue the research and prepare to advocate for the poor in Contra Costa County. Housing & Shelter; Food, County Budget & Advocacy, and Employment were among the topics to be handled through subcommittees. Rabbi Michael Lerner gave the keynote at the May 18<sup>th</sup> report from the task forces, which continue to study poverty in the county and are preparing a presentation for the Board of Supervisors. Please call Will McGarvey if you'd like to be one of the voices.

**"The Pepper Tree Kingdom, A Memoir,** was reviewed by **Frank Burroughs**, a member of SOJA. He told us about his and his Iranian wife **Mahin's** years as residents of Iran. He received rave reviews on the book.

**Mid-East Matters.** **Imam Dr. Amer Araim** reported that he is following the policy decisions of Secretary John Kerry as they affect the Palestinian and Israeli situation.

**Interfaith Council.** **Will McGarvey** brought us up to date on the latest news from the Council. He highlighted the Concert at Bnai Tikvah on May 4, followed by a reception for **Rabbi Raphael Asher**. He also mentioned a large general meeting of the Multi-Faith Coalition on Poverty to be held at Christ the King Church at 3 pm on May 18. **Will** announced that an Interfaith Council Appeal letter will be mailed soon to all congregations. We agreed to help with publicity and follow-through.

**Gwen Watson, SOJA Co-Chair**

## **Mountain View Emergency Family Shelter in Martinez Needs Our Help!**

Did you know that Mountain View Emergency Family Shelter in Martinez run by Shelter, Inc. is the ONLY emergency family shelter in Central and Eastern Contra Costa County. They serve mostly young families with the average age of a child around 5 and the average age of a parent around 28. They allow homeless families to stay together by providing transitional housing for up to 90 days. After 90 days they are placed into transitional or permanent housing. "We offer a critical service to the homeless in this county," said Terry Webb, the Case Manager at the facility. "I've seen hundreds and hundreds of families come through here. Rarely do I see the same people come through a second time. The idea to end homelessness works."



At Mountain View, up to 30 residents receive more than just a cot to sleep on and a hot meal. For an average of 90 days, each family works with a case manager one-on-one to identify barriers preventing them from overcoming homelessness. They also have access to an employment specialist, parenting and nutrition classes, tutors and counseling. Over 140 men, women and children rely on the shelter every year and the facility is an important step for homeless families working toward self-sufficiency.

Has your community signed up to share food at The Mountain View Shelter? Please contact Martie Steinmetz, Site Coordinator of the Mt. View House Shelter (1391 Shell Avenue, Martinez, CA 94553) at (925) 228-6920 or [maritess@shelterincofccc.org](mailto:maritess@shelterincofccc.org) to help – especially these upcoming weeks!

- 11/17 – 11/21
- 12/8 – 12/12
- 12/22 – 12/26
- 12/29 – 1/2

**Please join me and Donate** to Shelter, Inc. for the Mountain View Emergency Family Shelter by going to the website [shelterincofccc.org](http://shelterincofccc.org) or mailing a check to:

Shelter, Inc. RE: Mountain View Emergency Family Shelter support  
1815 Arnold Dr., Martinez, CA 94553

## **Save the Dates!**

**20th Anniversary Celebration Dinner to honor Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley's 20 years of service at the Juvenile Detention Facilities!** Sunday, September 7th at 6:00 pm First Presbyterian Church of Concord, 1965 Colfax Ave., Concord. Come help us honor the faithful service of Dr. Tinsley with a potluck dinner and program. Please RSVP by email to [InterfaithCCCC@gmail.com](mailto:InterfaithCCCC@gmail.com).  
More information to come.

### **Habitat for Humanity**

- **Groundbreaking at the Muir Ruidge, Martinez project** Saturday, September 6<sup>th</sup> (time tba)
- **9/11 Community Revitalization Day** Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon

### **Join the ZimbabWEcare Family Festival !**

September 20<sup>th</sup> at 11am-2pm and the event will include Kids making toys which will be sent to Zimbabwe, face painting, crafts, authentic Zimbabwean food (for purchase), and the amazing CREAM ice cream. Children are invited to bring a used game or toy to be sent to children in Zimbabwe.

### **International Day of Peace Activities**

Sunday, September 21<sup>st</sup>

- 3:00 pm, Father Tom speaks in Rossmoor
- 7:00 pm, Interfaith Council Concert at Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church

# The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

1543 Sunnyvale Avenue  
Walnut Creek, CA 94597  
www.interfaithccc.org

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**E-mail Jessica Natal at [eye4cee@aol.com](mailto:eye4cee@aol.com)**

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County depends on contributions from member congregations and individuals who support our mission of promoting interfaith understanding. To make a tax deductible donation, please make your check to Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County and mail it to our office at 1543 Sunnyvale Ave, Ste. 103, Walnut Creek, CA 94597. For credit card donations, please visit our website: [www.interfaithccc.org](http://www.interfaithccc.org) . Thank you!

**THANK YOU CORNER:**  
The Interfaith Council is blessed to have dedicated volunteers who come together to collate, fold, sticker and label our newsletter in preparation for mailing. We'd like to thank the teens at People Who Care for their help with the winter edition.  
If you are interested in being part of this joyous band or interested in taking on the role of mail-out coordinator, contact Jessica at (925) 933-6030 or [eye4cee@aol.com](mailto:eye4cee@aol.com).

**PLEASE PRAY FOR... (in our rotating circle of prayer):**  
St. Bonaventure Catholic Church, Concord • St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, Concord • St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, Concord • Ygnacio Valley Presbyterian Church, Concord • Baha'i of Danville • Community Presbyterian Church, Danville • Congregation Beth Chaim, Danville • Danville Congregational Church • Danville Stake Church of Jesus Christ LDS • First Church of Christ Scientist • For those that experience Islamaphobia • For the new Interfaith Youth Council • Congregations going through clergy transition. • The kind-hearted souls who deliver Meals on Wheels. • Those seeking employment. • Those that are homeless. • Those that are ill.