



# Ministering Together

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

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

Summer Edition 2015

## From the Executive Director, Rev. Will McGarvey

Dear Friends,

The last year has turned out to have been quite a year. The rise of Daesh (the so called ISIS or ISIL) terrorists has turned the heat up in the Middle East. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was renewed around Gaza last summer. The recent police killings of black and brown people has led to violence on the streets in our own region. There was a hostage situation in Australia that has raised tensions there. To top it off, we hear of the Taliban massacre of almost a whole Pakistani school and the plight of the Yezidis and Assyrian Christians in Syria and Iraq. Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are on the rise in Europe and North America. The chaos in the world affects each of our communities differently, and yet we still find common cause together.

As I look back on this time at the Council, I will note the transitions of new leadership in our Winter Nights Program, the maturing of our Governing Board structure, a renewed support of Dr. Charles Tinsley's ministry at the Juvenile Detention Center and a new focus on Interfaith Dialogue by the Elected Council. We have also elected the first non-clergy Council President in some time, Terry Clark of LOPC and the Neighbor to Neighbor program.

Since I had a Sabbatical from my church work last July to September, I was able to be among many of our congregations in a way I won't be able to be being back at church. One day I chanted and prayed at the Walnut Creek Islamic Center for Eid al Adha and spent the afternoon praying in Hebrew and English with B'nai Tikvah for Yom Kippur. We helped host a meeting for clergy and congregational leaders about the new "No Wrong Door" approach the county is using to help returning citizens from state prison acclimate to life on Thursday, Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>.

One of the highlights of the year for me was watching "An American Mosque" while hearing the presentation from filmmaker David Washburn. He shared the Not in Our Town film of the arson at his grandparents synagogue in Sacramento. He then shared his new

## From the Council President, Terry Clark

Dear Friends,

Throughout the course of the year, your Interfaith Council (ICCCC) engages in and supports many activities, programs and events that reflect our dedication and commitment to fairness and justice, equal treatment and opportunities, caring for and loving our neighbors, and speaking out and advocating for those whose voices are being ignored. A most recent event, sponsored and organized through ICCCC leadership, was the **"RING OF SOLIDARITY"** on March 27, 2015 where well over 200 people of different faiths formed a circle of prayer around and for the Muslim community at their San Ramon Valley Islamic Center (SRVIC) mosque during their Friday Prayer Service.



At the **SOLIDARITY** event we had speakers from other faith traditions, responding to the impact on the local Muslim community of numerous discriminatory, oppressive, violent and murderous acts against people of the Islamic faith around the world and country as well as here at home; recounting our collective faith-based efforts over the years to support the Muslim community; and noting the organized and well-funded nature of Islamophobic activities here in the U.S. Afterward, hundreds of people from all faiths remained to talk with and get to know their Muslim neighbors. [Further details of the event can be seen on the ICCCC website.] The basic theme running throughout this day of support was "People of All Faiths Standing Together" and how going forward we can engage in further initiatives to demonstrate that solidarity.

In so many ways, that solidarity symbolizes the extensive outreach ministries of ICCCC as we carry out our mission to manifest care for our neighbors in response to the religious, social and quality of life needs in our Contra Costa community. These needs are being met through the extraordinary volunteer

movie and the conversation of the diverse group there that night was amazing. Other highlights have been the Ring of Solidarity event around the San Ramon Valley Islamic Center on March 27<sup>th</sup> and the launching of our new Interfaith Climate Action Network on Earth Day. As always, we had a wonderful Spring Concert at Sufism Reoriented showcasing the gifts of our younger people. The Fall Concert for International Day of Peace will be Sunday, September 20<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 pm at Peace Lutheran in Danville. (Save the date!)

We ask each of our 106 congregations to have at least one Interfaith program or Sabbath/service each year. We have many fascinating presenters in our county, and there are opportunities to show films together with other local congregations or offer your program with the whole East Bay by sending your promotional material to me at [eye4cee@gmail.com](mailto:eye4cee@gmail.com) to add to our website and eBlasts, where you can find a plethora of Interfaith programs and events. If you would like to have the Interfaith Council cosponsor and help with your event, please contact me. As always, Dr. Tinsley loves to help inform our congregations about his important work and how you can become involved.

We will have some exciting new initiatives this coming summer. We are hosting "Lunch and Learn" events with great speakers at Swagat Restaurant in Concord. We will be showing two short films on "Faith and Fracking" on Wednesday, June 24<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm. Site to be announced and we hope to start a new Holiday – "World Diversity Day" Sunday, July 5<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm! Save the date. Sometime this fall we hope to have a showing of "Waking in Oak Creek" a new documentary from Not In Our Town on the shootings at the Sikh Gurdwara in Wisconsin.

As we note the beginning of Ramadan for our Islamic sisters and brothers, let us find ways to be with them in fasting and prayer and join them for Iftars as they are shared with the greater community. Given the rise of violence around the world we will be doing more Rings of Solidarity this summer and beyond. Please visit the Calendar Events page at [Interfaithccc.org](http://Interfaithccc.org) for these and for all of the events going on in the East Bay.

*"We belong to each other..."*

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

Rev. Will McGarvey

planning and preparation efforts of our Governing Board of Directors, the Elected Council and our Executive Director Rev. Will McGarvey. Collectively, through the enriching prisms of all our various faith teachings and values which we share in dialogue regularly, this elected and appointed group sustains an abiding interest and passion for using their gifts and resources to do the much-needed work that would otherwise go undone.

You also see this work in our Voices of Poverty program which has become the Multi-Faith Action Coalition, organizing task forces and addressing advocacy and action on Shelter & Housing, Food Security, Jobs, Health, and Education; the many programs, activities and events of our Social Justice Alliance, including warm Winter Nights for the impoverished and homeless; the Juvenile Chaplaincy ministry; major International Women's Day and Interfaith Peace Project events; the ongoing efforts of our Health & Faith in Action group; speaking out against injustice and advocacy for the disadvantaged through our Rapid Response Media Team; organized Youth and Intergenerational Programs; and the numerous other events and activities regularly reported in the ICCCC website and Newsletters.

Passion to use our gifts, time and talents to serve those in need is what defines our efforts. If you are reading this, we know you have the interest and undoubtedly gifts and hopefully also the time and/or talents to devote to the ever-evolving and growing needs in our community. Help us define and meet those needs. As theologian and scholar Howard Thurman aptly noted: **"Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do that. Because what the world needs are people who have come alive."**

Will you "come alive" alongside the ICCCC Governing Board, Elected Council and Executive Director? Let us know your passions and concerns, and enter into dialogue with us on helping to define and meet the needs of those in our community – our neighbors – who require our love, care, advocacy and support. With your help, we can all make a difference, people of all faiths in solidarity standing together.

Peace and blessings,  
Terence J. Clark, President ICCCC

# Religious and Cultural Observances

## JUNE 2015

- 1 Lailat al Bara'ah \* - **Islam**  
(begins sundown on May 31)
- 4 Corpus Christi - **Catholic Christian**
- 7 All Saints - **Orthodox Christian**
- 16 Guru Arjan Dev martyrdom - **Sikh**
- 18 **Ramadan** begins \* - **Islam**  
(begins sundown on 17)
- 19 New Church Day - **Swedenborgian Christian**  
Sacred Heart of Jesus - **Catholic Christian**
- 21 Solstice  
Litha \* - **Wicca/Pagan** northern hemisphere (begins sundown on 20)  
Yule \* - **Wicca/Pagan** southern hemisphere
- 29 Saints Peter and Paul - **Christian**

## JULY 2015

- 2 **Asalha Puja day** \*\* - **Buddhist**
- 9 Martyrdom of the Bab \* **Baha'i**  
(begins sundown on 8)
- 13 Ulambana (Obon) \*\* - **Buddhist**  
Lailat al Kadr \* - **Islam** (begins sundown on 12)
- 18-21 **Eid al Fitr** \* - **Islam** (begins sundown on 17)
- 23 Emperor Haile Selassie birthday - **Rastafari**
- 24 Pioneer Day - **Mormon Christian**
- 26 Tish'a B'av \* - **Jewish** (begins sundown on 25)

## AUGUST 2015

- 1 Fast in honor of Mother of Jesus - **Orthodox Christian**  
Lammas - **Christian**  
Lughnassad (Northern Hemisphere) Imbolc (Southern Hemisphere) **Wicca Pagan**
- 6 Transfiguration of the Lord - **Orthodox Christian**
- 13-15 **Obon** \*\* - **Shinto**
- 15 Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary - **Catholic Christian**  
Dormition of the Theotokis - **Orthodox Christian**

- 29 Raksha Bandhan \*\* - **Hindu**  
Beheading of John the Baptist – **Christian**
- 30 Paryushana Parva \*\* - **Jains**

## SEPTEMBER 2015

- 1 Ecclesiastical year begins - **Orthodox Christian**
- 5 Krishna Janmashtami \*\* - **Hindu**
- 8 Nativity of Mary - **Christian**
- 14 Elevation of the Life Giving Cross – Holy Cross Day **Christian**
- 14-15 Rosh Hashanah \* - **Jewish**  
(begins sundown on 13)
- 17 Ganesh Chaturthi \*\* - **Hindu**
- 18 Paryushana Parva \*\* - **Jain**
- 22 Waqf al Arafa - Hajj \* - **Islam**  
(begins sundown on 21)
- 23 Equinox  
Yom Kippur \* - **Jewish** (begins sundown on 22)
- 22) Mabon \* - **Wicca/Pagan** – northern hemisphere (begins sundown on 22)  
Ostara \* - **Wicca/Pagan** – southern hemisphere (begins sundown on 22)
- 23-26 Eid al Adha - Sacrifice Day \* - **Islam**  
(begins sundown on 22)
- 27 Meskel - **Ethiopian Orthodox Christian**
- 28-Oct 4 Sukkot \* - **Jewish** (begins sundown on 27)
- 29 Michael and All Angels - **Christian**

## OCTOBER 2015

- 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**

## Chaplain's Corner

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



Following is the transcript of a video segment, "Thank God for Prison!" that appeared on the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) program, the "700 Club" [[www.cbn.com/tv/3861271883001](http://www.cbn.com/tv/3861271883001) Broadcast date: November 5, 2014] Thank God for Prison! CBN.com -Erik Trantum loves to ride.

"It's very serene."

He got it from his father. They didn't spend much time together, but he managed to pick up a few more of his interests.

"I drive a Monte Carlo. My Dad drove a Monte Carlo. I'm an electrician. My Dad was an electrician. He was a Vietnam vet and he drank a lot to deal with a lot of the stuff that he was trying to process. He would come home and he would be angry. He would take it out on us sometimes."

He also knew his dad as someone who never backed down. And one day Erik decided he wouldn't either.

"A bunch of guys from high school circled around me. One of them was like, 'Can I look at your necklace, like up close?' Then it just got passed around and all of a sudden everybody was acting like they didn't know where it went. At that moment I knew I had a decision. I either try to fight seven or eight guys and, you know, lose or just walk away and learn from that. So that's what I did. I felt defeated, I felt, you know, embarrassed. I said, from this point on, I'm going to never be a victim again and I'm going to do whatever I've got to do."

By that time his parents were divorced. His dad remarried and didn't come around as much. His mother struggled to keep Erik in line.

"I was out and drinking and stealing and doing all kinds of bad stuff already at 12 years-old. I mean, sometimes I was doing it for the rush. Sometimes I was doing it because I wanted some money or whatever. We stole clothes, we stole alcohol, and basically anything we wanted we tried to steal it."

His anger was violent and he often got into fights. One night at party, Erik and a friend exchanged words with another boy. A fight broke out. One of the boys was killed. Erik was arrested and charged with voluntary manslaughter. He was only 16.

"In my brain I just kept thinking, 'somehow this is going to work out.' And then like about a year was when court was done. That's when I knew concrete, I'm doing time. I'm not going home for a while."

Erik was sentenced to 11 years. He spent the first nine months in a juvenile facility.

"This is the crazy thing. I felt better in jail than I did on the street because in jail there was structure."

And for the first time someone encouraged him to get to know God.

"I really wasn't raised with anybody that was speaking into my life on a religious level or any other level, really. When I was in Juvenile Hall a guy started visiting me once a week named Reverend Tinsley. And he started sharing his faith with me. You know, he listened to me. I had so many questions - critical questions -about the whole idea of Christianity. And the guy was just like BAM every time. I got this answer; boom, boom, boom, boom every time. And I mean, he left me thinking, 'you know what? This stuff makes sense.' The way he was explaining it, I was like, 'That makes sense, man.'"

It was more than just finding answers that began to soften Erik's heart.

"Reverend Tinsley was the first man beside my father, that I ever let hug me, ever. And that was – that in itself, just the act, him wanting to just give me a hug had a huge impact on me at that age. All the stuff that I had been through and just feeling a physical touch of someone that was a man that actually cared about my welfare genuinely. It was amazing, you know? I mean it really set me in a different direction."

Erik says he felt like God was speaking to him through his reading. He asked a prison chaplain what it meant.

"I remember him smiling, he's like, 'Erik, God's calling you. Jesus wants you to accept Him into your life.' And at that point I was so like touched on an emotional like deep-soul level by the whole idea. I was on board in my heart I was just like, 'Yes, I'll do it!'"

At 17 Erik was transferred to a state penitentiary. He admits keeping his faith was hard.

"I was a Christian in prison. I still was in an environment where people were getting stabbed, shot, beat up. You know, I was surrounded by guys that had done a lot of bad stuff. And so, you know, this is just a real hostile environment."

After his release, Erik devoted himself to strengthening his relationship with Christ.

"God loves me. That's what I'd been looking for the whole time. I needed somebody to just put me straight. "

He also joined a group of men who, like his dad, love to ride. They're bikers for Christ. Like Erik, they want to do more than talk about God's love, they want to show it.

"As soon as God got introduced to me and I started understanding how much He loved me and how much He had my best interest in mind, it was just an immediate reaction to go, 'let's roll. It's You and me.'"

Note: Erik and I met 19 years ago. He recently celebrated his 36th birthday...

# 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*

Gun-violence and Murder Here and Abroad.

Recently my relative May Araim was killed by a bullet while she and other relatives were going back to Atlanta after having a day of sightseeing in Helen, Georgia. No doubt there are social and political implications for this murder. I would like at the outset to share her story. She was a good educator in Iraq and left after the invasion of 2003, and ultimately came to the United States. She and her husband were devout Muslims, and constant in their prayers, fasting and providing charity. We were always engaged in discussions about faith questions, and the freedom of religion we enjoyed in the United States. Whenever she called me, she would begin by saying "Peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you." She applied for United States citizenship and was so happy to pass the immigration test and to obtain American citizenship just days before her murder.

There are two questions that I would like to share with the readers. First, I believe that the Federal Government should be more actively involved in preventing gun-violence. It has been reported that recently the State of Georgia passed a law that allowed individuals to carry guns in public places. It is very important that the Federal Government be active in ensuring the safety of the lives of all Americans from gun-violence. While liberty is closely connected with individualism with an emphasis on the rights of the individual, including the right to bear arms, I consider the following definition explains liberty in a better way: "The maximum freedom of the individual within the context of the freedoms of other members of the society." Therefore, the right to bear arms should be regulated by the Federal and state governments to guarantee that there should be no loss of or threat to the life of any citizen.

The other aspect of this issue is that my cousin and other women relatives present were wearing the scarf, which is part of the Muslim belief that women should cover their hair. It is quite possible that the gunman saw them walking in the street (going to their vehicle) and began shooting at them.

While speaking at different congregations, sometimes I have been asked "Why do Muslim women cover their hair with scarfs?" My answer is: that is part of the Islamic faith, and it represents modesty. I add the following:

"In all the pictures you have for Virgin Mary, do you have any without her hair being covered?" That is the case with all monotheist religions. However, covering the hair is the free decision, and not imposed on Muslim women. Muslim women might wear or not. It is their choice.

I understand that there is turmoil in the Middle East and many other parts of the Muslim world. I condemn in the strongest terms the violence against innocent people whether by terrorist groups or government forces there including targeting journalists. I was particularly shocked by the gruesome murder of Americans and others in the Middle East. American Muslims are an integral part of this society, and what hurts America hurts us too. Furthermore, our freedoms including the freedom of worship are guaranteed by the Constitution. Therefore, every American Muslim should defend this country and its political values. It is sincerely hoped that the Administration of President Barack Obama, and state governments deal effectively with gun-violence and Islamophobia.

As for the threat from the so-called Islamic State (IS), the new Iraqi government has not been able to free itself of the legacy of sectarianism, adopt nonsectarian policies, and put an end to the corruption prevailing there. When all Iraqis become actively involved in the destiny of their country, the Iraqi people with the help of the United Nations and other peace-loving nations will be able to defeat IS. However, I have doubts that the efforts that so far have been taken will be a determining factor in defeating IS. There must be a comprehensive policy for the Middle East adopted by the United Nations and all peace-loving nations support to combat sectarianism, corruption and dictatorship, and in favor of peace, justice and respect for human rights. I still believe that the emergence, and the expected defeat of extremism and violence in the Middle East and elsewhere represents a government as well individual responsibility, and require political solutions. The best way to beat these evil phenomena is by the application of justice, political reform, democracy and education rather than war. Peoples everywhere, particularly the faith communities, as well as the media should help the Arab and Muslim worlds by promoting peace, justice, democracy, and the respect of human rights in order to put an end to corruption and malaise and this is the best course to defeat terrorism and extremism. As for gun-violence, we should support efforts by the Brady Campaign, and other organizations struggling to prevent gun-violence in our society.

## ❖ Fr. Paulson

*Christ the King, Pleasant Hill*

On Earth day, I had the privilege of attending an interfaith Gathering with Gwen Watson and a couple of others, which focused on climate change. This was non-political and focused on Mother Earth, given to us as a gift from God. "Creation is not a property, which we can rule over at will; or, even less,

## Your Words – Continued

is the property of only a few: Creation is a gift, it is a wonderful gift that God has given us, so that we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude," Pope Francis said. "Safeguard Creation. Because if we destroy Creation, Creation will destroy us! Never forget this!" Speaking to a massive crowd in Rome, the pope delivered a short address in which he argued that respect for the "beauty of nature and the grandeur of the cosmos" is a Christian value, noting that failure to care for the planet risks apocalyptic consequences.

All the world's major faith groups and religious leaders have made powerful statements on the reality of climate change and the fact that human actions are contributing significantly. Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Buddhists and indigenous peoples have all spoken out on the moral responsibility we have to take action. It was so inspiring for me to listen to various faith traditions, and how each of them value creation. We all face impacts of climate change on our region, from poor air quality to more heat and drought to rising sea levels. I was amazed to discover that many in our county's faith community have taken steps to lessen their contribution to this global challenge and others are in the midst of contemplating first actions

I am writing this because this summer, Pope Francis will deliver the first major encyclical of his papacy. It will be on climate change and the environment. While nearly everything the most beloved Pope of the century does is scrutinized closely in America, this particular call to the church is likely to receive an extra dose of attention because of the nature of the issue. Pope Francis issued a general encyclical on moral issues early in his papacy. But he chose to tackle climate change and the environment as his first real issue. But why climate? And why now?

The most obvious reason is one of timing. According to Jeff Nesbit, "this year, 2015, is a pivotal year for efforts to jumpstart a transformation of the energy system from a carbon-intensive one that is threatening to destabilize the planet to a low-carbon one that can slow the rise of the planet's temperature. World leaders are committing to long-term efforts to slow the use of carbon-intensive energy, and the Vatican wants to influence those deliberations that conclude in Paris at the end of the year. But the not-so-obvious reason is that climate change is rapidly becoming the moral issue of our time, and this pope both recognizes it and wishes to help direct the church in that effort." Let me conclude my letter with some more quotes from Pope Francis. **I look forward to the encyclical and I hope we as a community at CTK can make a difference in our world.**

"An economic system centered on the god of money needs to plunder nature to sustain the frenetic rhythm of consumption that is inherent to it."

"The system continues unchanged, since what

dominates are the dynamics of an economy and a finance that are lacking in ethics. It is no longer man who commands, but money. Cash commands."

"The monopolizing of lands, deforestation, the appropriation of water, inadequate agro-toxics are some of the evils that tear man from the land of his birth. Climate change, the loss of biodiversity and deforestation are already showing their devastating effects in the great cataclysms we witness."

### ❖ Rev. Leslie Takahashi

*Mt Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church,  
Walnut Creek*

One of the principles which states what we covenant to affirm and promote as Unitarian Universalists calls on us to engage in "a free and responsible search for truth and meaning." This means being willing to be open to new things and to find new ways to contribute in the world. In recent weeks, I have been reminded of one particularly potent source of learning: the role of being an ally to someone who has experienced discrimination. As a multiracial person, I understand what it is like to be in the role of the targeted person. This summer, I was reminded of the places where I am part of the dominant culture as I continued my service on the board of the Rainbow Center of Contra Costa County. The center has served the bisexual, gay, lesbian and transgender community since 1982. And I am an ally because I support people with those identities though they are not ones I personally experience. These truths came back to me as part of the Rainbow Community Center Board retreat in July, where I had the privilege of being elected president for a year and also as we prepared for our workshop on transgender experience. And I was simply astounded when more than 70 people showed up for that workshop! Truth-seekers and allies were abundant on August 20 in the Bortin Hall! Part of being an ally involves being aware of how I move in the world unencumbered when those who have a marginalized identity do not. As a woman and one with Japanese ancestry in this nation, I understand a great deal about what it means to move in opposition to the dominant paradigm. Being a light-skinned, straight, cisgendered,\* temporarily able-bodied person, I enjoy privileges everyday which I can easily take for granted. Learning to view the world through the lens of another's experience can help me more fully understand the world. And the most interesting thing is that looking through the lens of another helps me better understand my own life, my own identity and my own position in the world. I am glad to have been reminded this summer of the rich learning that can be found as an ally. Entering the fall in the spirit of learning appeals to my sense of order since, as the child of a high school teacher and a college professor, the academic calendar is wound through my

## Your Words – Continued

sensibilities. I am proud to be part of a congregation which is so engaged in learning and I am excited to enter into all the dialogue about growth which is at the core of what we do together as Unitarian Universalists. Through our services, our classes, our work as leaders, our community circles, we offer opportunities to people of all ages to continue to experience the wonders of growth in an ever-changing world. And for this, I feel grateful.

### ❖ **Harry Wittenberg**

*Congregation B'nai Tikvah, Walnut Creek*

Returning home from a long vacation visiting family in Italy and Israel, I can't help but make strong connections between places I visited and our own wonderful congregation. In Trani, Italy, Mary Ann and I visited one of the oldest synagogues in Europe. Serendipitously, we made a last minute appointment to get a tour of it and some history of a Jewish community that thrived there in the 15th and 16th centuries. The curator opened it just for us and gave us a private tour. We visited the great synagogue in Rome too, also of ancient origins and still having an active community today. Of course, Israel is rich in our history - but the greatest connection I made there with our community was attending a Shabbat service at a Reform shul in Netanya, with the presiding Rabbi Edgar Nof, one of the pioneers of Reform Judaism in Israel. He was so thrilled I was there that he asked me up to the bima to talk about our congregation. All of the congregants were interested in how we worship and we knew about the Reform movement in Israel. It was thrilling for them to hear how much we support the movement. At the end of the service, a number of congregants had many questions for me and Mary Ann. Interestingly enough, Rabbi Nof has visited Temple Isaiah, having strong connections there, and he is interested in visiting us the next time he comes to California. Another very interesting part of our trip in Israel was the conflict going on in Gaza. Everywhere we went, we were thanked for being "brave tourists" since tourists were scarce and the industry was hurting significantly because of so many cancellations.

Yet, aside from one siren on our first day there, we were not effected anywhere we went and at no time did we feel unsafe. My family connection ensured we went where it was safe – which was practically everywhere.

So why do I mention those events and how do I tie them together so I have a coherent newsletter article? To me, and I hope for you, CBT represents Judaism on so many different levels. From the historic perspective, we are the embodiment of a very long legacy of culture and faith. I felt a connection to our past through the places I visited. And being in Israel, truly a Jewish state, the passion and pride I felt there for being Jewish and living it day in and day out, was incredibly moving to me. Unless you experience it, it's hard to convey what it's like

being in a country where the majority of people are Jewish, where Jewish ritual permeates everything and the love of the country is so strong. Also striking was the diversity of people: European, African, Russian, Middle Eastern - an incredible melting pot of Jews and non-Jews alike.

And being Reform, we are a beacon to those congregations in Israel who are open to a different way to connect with each other and across faiths. So many secular Israelis, disenfranchised from ultra orthodoxy, are finding a way to worship that works for them and they look towards us for guidance and especially support. My mention of our interfaith congregation was welcomed.

Finally, what it all comes down to is our congregation – our community. This, to me, is what we are about. It's about celebrating Judaism together in a way that is open and affirming, accessible to all who want it and we are a group that keeps that legacy alive, together. I am proud to be part of CBT, and as President, I hope I can do more to keep our community strong, supportive, vibrant.

### ❖ **Rabbi Rebecca Gutterman**

*Congregation B'nai Tikvah, Walnut Creek*

The Psalmist wrote: "Teach us to number our days, that we may acquire a heart of wisdom." There could hardly be more appropriate words for the period of time we now find ourselves in, between the holidays of Pesach and Shavuot. (See my esteemed colleague and friend Cantor Chabon's column for more on Shavuot!)

This season is known as the Counting of the Omer. In ancient days, our ancestors would offer their first barley sheaf at the Temple in Jerusalem on the second day of Passover as an expression of thanksgiving. From there, following the commandment in the Torah, they would count ahead to Shavuot, a celebration of the full harvest. Today, while we are no longer primarily an agrarian people, we continue the practice of counting these days forward, from the evening of the second Seder to the night before Shavuot.

Like so many of our rituals, counting the Omer has acquired multiple meanings over time. Beyond its original agricultural significance, numbering these days has become a way for us to experience the link between physical freedom (marked by the Exodus from Egypt), and spiritual purpose — which began with the Revelation of the Torah at Sinai. Every year, as we tell the story of our redemption from slavery, we are reminded that the story does not end there. Freedom is just the beginning. Over time, our story becomes more complex, more heartbreaking, more interesting, and in the end more ours – holding at its center the obligation to remain true to the principles of Torah, and to live with a sense of God's presence in our lives.

## Your Words – Continued

Counting the Omer also gives us reason to think about how we make our actions count in the world. What sparks us to carry out an idea or good intention from a first seed sown all the way through to the harvest? In the midst of difficult times, how do we keep faith that there will be new revelations ahead? The simple act of counting these days— in acknowledgment both of where we are and where we hope to find ourselves, is in itself an act of strength and hope. Marking off this period of time, naming each day, helps us find our own expression of faith in tomorrow. This is how we make our days count. We count them!

Join us for two opportunities -- a Shabbat walk Saturday May 9 and a sunrise hike Sunday May 24 (details are on page 5) – to bring these reflections and points of contemplation outside the walls of our synagogue. Let's use our days to connect to each other and to Judaism in ways that are compelling and joyful.

And inspired by Psalm 90, may our numbering of these days bring us new sources of wisdom and insight as we move forward.

### ❖ **Jasmine Tarkoff,**

*Values in Action Isaiah Co-Chair*

From **Direct Service to Advocacy At Project Homeless Connect in Richmond**, I witnessed hundreds of people arrive to shower, get a blanket, receive free dental and medical care, apply for state assistance, and connect with nonprofit organizations offering a variety of vital services. Most of the clients were homeless; all were struggling to get by. Like the full-time social worker who is "sofa surfing" because she can't afford a place to live and wanted to enroll in the Cal Fresh food assistance program. Or the Jasmine Tarkoff woman who works full-time without adequate childcare for her five-year old and needed a list of local food pantries so she and her child could have enough to eat. The statistics concerning poverty in Contra Costa County are staggering. More than 3,000 people are homeless on any given night. Roughly 26% of households do not meet the economic self-sufficiency standard, although almost 90% of these households have one or more members who work. Most disturbingly, one out of every four emergency food recipients is a child. At Temple Isaiah we have lots of experience in offering direct services to people in need. We provide meals at local shelters, build homes with Habitat for Humanity, donate tons of food every year to local dining rooms and food pantries, and more. While this work is essential, it doesn't solve the systemic problem. At the end of Winter Nights last year we couldn't find enough housing in our county for all the families we served and had to send some of them to Solano County. As a colleague of mine put it, "it mops up the current mess but doesn't look at what is causing the mess in the first place." We're trying to change that. Over

the past six months a number of Temple members have helped create the Multi-Faith ACTION Coalition to address the root causes of poverty in our county. Over 65 faith-based organizations with hundreds of volunteers work on task forces on homelessness, hunger, unemployment, health, and education. We are starting to see results: the County Board of Supervisors now provides more administrative support for our local Cal Fresh program due to the advocacy efforts of some tireless Temple Isaiah volunteers. As we begin a new year of social action and advocacy, we are excited to welcome back Stephanie Snyder to lead ViA Isaiah's direct service efforts. We thank the many Temple members who volunteer in our programs and hope that those of you who have wondered about the right time to get involved will see the need in our local communities and the impact you can make right now.

### ❖ **Bob Lane**

#### ***What Makes a Good Restaurant a Good Workplace?***

The Economic Justice Task Force hosted a workshop last Sunday on the question above. The workshop was led by Saqib Keval of the Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC), a worker center for restaurant employees. Saqib has worked at all levels in restaurants, from dishwasher to chef and owner, and has long experience organizing workers. After giving a brief history of ROC, Saqib educated us about the reality restaurant workers face. Exploitation and abuse of workers is rampant: Many restaurants, including the "best" ones, pay the minimum wage of \$2.13/hour (for tipped workers), and theft by owners of this pittance is common. There are no benefits, including no sick leave. To avoid losing their jobs workers who are sick show up, prepare and serve food to customers. Sexual harassment of female employees is also common, and a racist hierarchy is pervasive: white workers get the better-paying "front of the house" positions (hostess, waiters), while people of color are relegated to the low wage positions out of sight (cooks and dishwashers). ROC is combating these abuses in several ways:

- provides training to help workers move up to the better paying front of the house positions;
- organizes nationally against "the other NRA" — the National Restaurant Association — which has lobbied fiercely to keep the national minimum wage at \$2.13/hour;
- helps organize protests against Darden Foods, owner of almost 2,000 "fast casual" restaurants like Olive Garden and Longhorn Steak House. Although Darden made \$500 million in profits last year, many of their 168,000 employees earn poverty-level wages. The CEO collected more than \$30 million, 1,989 times the annual wages of federal minimum wage earners (\$7.25 for non-tipped workers).

## Your Words – Continued

We can help ROC support restaurant workers: 1. ROC audits restaurants, naming those which need to improve work conditions, and praising others which treat their staff well. View and download the list (there is an app) at <http://rocunited.org/dinersguide/>, and let it guide your dining out decisions. There are also videos here showing how to talk to management about their treatment of workers. Use them to guide your own conversations. 2. To support the Darden workers in their fight for better wages, go to the Dignity at Darden web site: <http://www.dignityatdarden.org/who-is-darden-restaurants.html>.

### ❖ Mr. Barb Greve

*TRANSGENDER REMEMBRANCE DAY*

*~ 20 November ~*

Transgender Day of Remembrance was set aside to annually memorialize those who were killed due to transphobic hatred or prejudice. Originally to honor the life of Rita Hester, a transgender African American woman who was murdered in Allston, MA in 1998, today communities around the globe gather annually on 20 November for public worship and vigils. Sadly, an average of six people a month are killed for being perceived as transgender, while many more are physically and verbally attacked each month. Not surprisingly, most of these cases remain unsolved. There are no statistics for the number of suicides resulting from harassment for being transgender, but we can guess that it is likely to be high. I too have been on the receiving end of harassment and physical attack; have experienced discrimination in housing and employment. Despite all this, I have been extremely lucky compared with many transgender people. No one should have to rely on luck to find housing. No one should have to rely on luck to be hired or to keep a job. No one should have to rely on luck to safely live their life. Fear and religious belief are often the motivations behind many of these attacks. Thankfully Unitarian Universalism teaches us that there are many ways of being; that by cherishing our differences we can better understand and appreciate the world. But there is still much work to be done, some of which requires not just changing laws and hearts but also shifting our language to create space for a broader understanding of gender. I yearn for a time when instead of memorializing transgender and genderqueer individuals who have been killed for living their lives authentically, we will take time to celebrate the gifts these individuals offer our communities. Until then I will attend the vigils, not only to remember the lives lost but also to offer to the transgender communities a supportive religious voice. I invite you to take a moment on the 20th and remember the 71 lives lost this year. Share with your family and friends your appreciation of the transgender people in your life. Consider finding places where you can broaden

our collective understanding of gender and help make the world a more accepting place for everyone. May it be so, and may we be the ones to make it so.

### ❖ Rabbi Judy Shanks

*Temple Isaiah*

“A religious person is one who holds God and humanity in one thought at all times, who suffers harm done to others, whose greatest passion is compassion, whose greatest strength is love and defiance of despair” – Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel With deep gratitude, we have come together to begin a New Year and support one another through the important hours of Yom Kippur. During the Days of Awe we seek forgiveness for our shortcomings, a forgiveness we pray will lead to a renewal of our relationships with the Holy One and with our fellow human beings. Though a new year has dawned, and with it our fervent dreams for a time of true peace, we find ourselves still in a world divided ever more starkly between people of different nationalities, colors and faiths. The edges between us harden, not soften. Yet, as Rabbi Heschel teaches, our greatest passion must be compassion, and we must not despair. I know I cannot bring influence to bear on the geopolitical turmoil of the scale we currently witness. But I also know that we together, as a synagogue community, can impact our neighborhoods, our cities and our county through the strength of our love, compassion and refusal to despair. Four years ago we created Neighbor to Neighbor (N2N), our inter-faith partnership with Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church and the San Ramon Valley Islamic Center. Through joint study and worship we created bonds between these faith communities that have begun to bear good fruit in our community. This past year most of our N2N focus was on planning an interfaith pilgrimage to the Holy Land that was to take place this month. Sadly, we have had to postpone that trip for now. But I learned, or rather relearned, during our planning process how widely divergent are the understandings of Israeli history and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict both among members of the Temple Isaiah community and among members of other faith groups and the Jewish world. Although the trip was postponed, those who participated in the process gained invaluable skills in compassionate listening, respectful disagreement and civil discourse. We “travelled together” in a different way, grounded in a commitment to strengthening our ties to one another and to supporting each other’s sincere and thoughtful opinions and the ideals of our individual faiths. N2N will turn its eyes back to local needs this year: doing direct service for those in need, supporting our Multi-Faith

## Your Words – Continued

ACTION Coalition initiatives, standing together when we are informed of or witness prejudice aimed at any of our neighbors because of his or her faith, and deepening our understanding of one another's religious ideals through shared worship and study. Please join us! We need more representatives from Temple Isaiah in N2N. Contact me directly (rabbishanks@gmail.com) if you would like to learn more about your neighbors' faiths and share the richness and beauty of Judaism with them. In this New Year let us work locally to soften the hard edges that separate us and to learn to see each other for who we truly are: human beings created in b'tzelem Elohim, in God's image.

### ❖ Pastor Glenda

*St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Walnut Creek*

Some of the most helpful spiritual practices are the simplest and yet the most life-changing. Author, Byron Katie, says we should devote our time and energy to the endeavor of changing and healing our self rather than concentrating upon things we have absolutely no control over. The author, breaks life's challenges down into three categories. The process is easy. When we find ourselves in a dilemma, for example, annoyed, disappointed or fearful, we should consider one of the following categories. We ask ourselves, "is this my business, your business or God's business?" Byron goes on to give examples of each category. My Business: the welfare of my children, the way I treat people, my work performance, my personal growth, marriage, how I manage my home, time, finances etc. Your Business: how your friend mothers her children, the new car your friend purchased that you know she can't afford, who you think your grown daughter should be dating, where she should be living, etc... God's Business: natural disasters, accidents, life, death, and illness. God's Business also covers all those "what if" scenarios we mull over. If we consider what we think about, any problems that don't fall into the My Business category, are let go and released into God's care. There's an intriguing conversation between Peter and Jesus in the last chapter of John. Jesus is telling Peter about his life and what the future will hold for him. Peter isn't content to know about his life, he wants to know about John's life, also. "What about him?" he asks. "What's going to happen to John, Jesus?" Jesus said, that's not your business, "Follow me." Could it be that some of the burdens we carry are not ours to carry in the first place? My Advent practice this month will be to remind myself what my business is, and of equal importance, what it's not.

### ❖ Rev. John Sutton

*St. Anselm's Episcopal Church, Lafayette*

**Third Sunday of each month is now Water Conservation Sunday!**

*We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life. The Liturgy of Baptism, Book of Common Prayer, p. 306*

It has been a long time since water conservation was mandated in California. The last drought many of us remember was from 1987-1992. But scientists have documented that there was a drought in California that lasted from the year 850 until 1090 of the Christian era. 240 years!

Officials of the Contra Costa Water District recently voted unanimously to mandate a 25% water reduction. EBMUD provides water to most of the Lamorinda area, and should be issuing new guidelines soon. As stewards of creation, we are called to care for our environment, so this should be something that we can revel in.

But it is also something that we need to be smart and creative about. Beginning on Sunday May 17th, the third Sunday of each month will be Water Conservation Sunday. Ideas and suggestions for the reduction of water use will be provided. *Those who attend church on May 17th will get a free bar of soap. Come to a service that day and hear how your new bar of soap can help you conserve water.*

Doug Merrill has written pretty extensively on how to conserve water in Canterbury Tales. (Doug's information is accessible by going to our webpage: [www.stanselms.ws](http://www.stanselms.ws).)

But we are also looking for ideas from you! If you have an idea on how to conserve water please slip it through the office door. Maybe you can help our community with your suggestion.

The video below is a beautiful story of uncommon love and mercy:

[https://www.ted.com/talks/anand\\_giridharadas\\_a\\_tale\\_of\\_two\\_americas\\_and\\_the\\_mini\\_mart\\_where\\_they\\_collided](https://www.ted.com/talks/anand_giridharadas_a_tale_of_two_americas_and_the_mini_mart_where_they_collided)

## Your Words – Continued

### ❖ Anne Brown

*Winter Nights Highlights  
St Anselm's, Lafayette*

St. Anselm's ministry to homeless families in our area every year is an important and vital part of our outreach. Here are some of this year's highlights. High on the list are the dinners. They were a wonderful combination of comfort food, like lasagna, chicken taco soup, berry pie, fun food—like ribs, a taco bar, and Eva's Chinese dinner, stylish food, like a fancy chicken casserole and broccoli casserole, salty caramel ice-cream with biscotti. At one point, one of the guests said that the food had been so delicious we should open a restaurant!

Another highlight were the number of families and people relatively new to St. Anselm's who volunteered to cook - Joan Toney, the Pearce family, Abby Perry, Leslie Weaver, and Zoe Hekmaty.

Along with them were the young people. Alexander Grace and his Boys Team Charity helped to set up. William Grace came to cook. Charlotte and Eva Toney would have come, but they were sick. Alden Pearce helped out (Nathan was sick). Katheryn Dunn helped on her mom's night. Mollie Nelsen, Emily LaRoche and their Girl Scout Troop not only fixed the dinner, but also warmly included one of the guests, a 14-year old girl, who asked if she could help. Kudos to those young people for their willingness and to their parents for including those kinds of values and teachings in their upbringing.

Some of us volunteers were there a lot. The breakfast team, Sally Roberts and Michael Hollinger, Barb Thornton, Pam Green and I came every morning at 6 am to set out the breakfast. Barb walked there and back, as well as bringing dessert three nights. John McGraw spent the night every night, as well as being part of the breakfast team and helping out at dinner. Caroline Huddart brought hors-d'oeuvres several nights and sat and talked with the guests. Eva, of course, not only did the run-up but also cooked dinner two nights - that, as you may recall was only one week after she cooked that huge and amazing Harvest Festival dinner!!

Once again, our guests defied any stereotype that we may have about "the homeless". One young African American couple were there with their adorable 4-month old baby girl. The mother is a dental hygienist. She was so ill during her pregnancy that she had to quit her job. Her husband had a good job, until the employees unionized and the company moved to another state. He had been able to find only part-time work after that. While at St. A's, she got a job again in her profession. She was both relieved to have work and sad to have to give up the full-time care of her daughter

Another family was a father on disability with two sons - one a senior in high school, who was applying to colleges. The older had an AA degree but had decided to

postpone transferring to a 4-year college and to get a job, so he could help the family and give his younger brother a leg-up.

What I witnessed all week was the St. Anselm's spirit of welcome, inclusion and community-building that happens every time a new person comes to our church. Because of that, I had the sense that our guests felt at home, sensing that they were seen, that they mattered. I was proud to be part of us. Thank you all for being part of that, either directly or indirectly.

### ❖ Rev. Jack Shriver

*Clayton Valley Presbyterian Church*

We have just celebrated the spiritual highpoint of the Christian year, the resurrection of our Lord. What a moving and joyful experience it was to travel from Palm Sunday through Maundy Thursday and then to Easter Sunday. A very real highpoint indeed.

We are also approaching a high point in the life of Clayton Valley Presbyterian Church. Your pastor nominating committee has worked tirelessly and prayerfully for several months in order to find the pastor whom God has selected to lead this church into the future. Please continue to pray for this wonderful committee as they approach the culmination of their search.

Let me share with you some words from the book, *To Kiss The Joy*, by Robert Raines, which I think sum up the season we have just celebrated as well as the whole of the Christian faith.

"What joy that the ultimate power of the universe is saying to us in 1000 ways, if we can only hear, 'I love you no matter what happens to you, no matter what you do or where you go, I love you and I always will, and nothing can ever separate you from me.' That is all the news we need. That is enough, more than enough, to base a life on, to offer a death to. And it is Jesus who persuades us that maybe it just might be so -- not just his words to us, but our experience of him together. He is the one who tempts us to hope and to follow him into the future, that bearded Jew who broke conventions, crossed boundaries, met people where they were and took them where they never thought they could go."

May these words be the hallmark by which this wonderful church lives into the future.

# The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

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**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):**  
Peace Lutheran Church, Danville • San Damiano Retreat Center, Danville • St. Timothy's Episcopal Church, Danville • Ik Onkar Peace Foundation • Buddha Gate Monastery • Lafayette United Methodist Church • Lafayette – Orinda Presbyterian Church • Our Savior's Lutheran Church • St Anselm's Episcopal Church, Lafayette • St Perpetua Church, Lafayette • Temple Isaiah of Lafayette • Baha'i of Martinez • First Congregational Church UCC of Martinez • For those that experience Islamaphobia • For the Yezidi and Assurtan Peoples • 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.

◆◆◆ **World Diversity Day -  
What can we create together?**

Sunday, July 5th from 3-6 pm

Larkey Park

1st Ave. & Buena Vista Ave.,

Walnut Creek

(Just west of the Treat/Geary exit  
from 680)



We are starting a new Holy-Day - a time we consciously come together from multiple parts of the County to share our cultures, food, ideas, but most of all - we come together for genuine, in-depth, Inter-religious conversations around our hopes and dreams as the human race.

There are too few opportunities for people of different races, socio-economic classes, languages, cultures, political persuasions, differing-abilities, ages and demographics of every kind to meet and talk about who we are. This first year, we hope to meet at one centrally located park where people can meet, share a dish from their heritage and embark on meaningful discussions led in a World Café model of conversations where people can express themselves in word, art, drawing, song, drumming in multiple small group conversations. *There will be games for children and youth.*

There will be opportunities to harvest the conversations of other groups, and a sharing of what groups experienced. Generalized results will be shared in the next Ministering Together Newsletter and on our website.

Do you want to help plan this event? Contact Rev. Hubert Ivery at 925.240.3235 or [hivery@spiritquest1.net](mailto:hivery@spiritquest1.net) or Rev. Will McGarvey at 925.597.9797 or [InterfaithCCCC@gmail.com](mailto:InterfaithCCCC@gmail.com)

## SOCIAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE of the INTERFAITH COUNCIL OF CCC *SOJA Invites You. . .*

SOJA is a standing committee of the Interfaith Council. Its mission is to develop policy statements of advocacy and community witness on matters of social justice, fairness, acceptance, and understanding. SOJA also oversees the work of the Winter Nights Shelter and makes regular reports to the ICCCC Board of Directors.

The following reports were given at the June 10 Meeting. After a one-month sabbatical in July, SOJA meets on Wednesday, August 12, 7:00, in the WC United Methodist Church Library. All are welcome.

**CROP Walk.** Anne Crisp asks each ICCCC congregation to identify a liaison for the Walk who will come to a meeting at the Lafayette United Methodist Church on August 5, 2015, at 6:30 pm. Amber Blake, the CWS representative will be there. The meeting opens with a light meal at 6:30 pm, followed at 7:00 by a discussion of the work of CWS and ways to motivate and increase participation in the CROP Walk. Plan to come.

**Winter Nights Shelter.** Jo Kerner, Winter Nights Rep for SOJA, told us that the Homeless Summit Board voted to add another month if possible, to get the children through the school year. And that last month would be in congregations in East County - Pittsburg and Antioch area - if possible. Since the families are generally staying longer, WN is more like a permanent transitional shelter these days. Jo also sends us the 2014-15 results:

Families sheltered - 18

Persons sheltered - 61

Families exited to stable housing - 9

Persons to stable housing - 24

Congregations - 15 sheltering, 20 partnering

# on wait list at some time during the winter: 286 persons

**Immigration.** Anne Daniele, MICA member along with Dean & Chris Coons, sent us the news that at the previous MICA meeting 3 DACA applicants were awarded \$200 each to offset the high cost of DACA applications. The MICA May event at the Universalist Unitarian Church with Congressman Mark DeSaulnier as speaker had a turnout of 100. The feedback was positive. Anne stressed that the need is urgent in these and other areas for members of the faithful to be. . .

. . . willing to be part of an Accompaniment Team

. . . willing to join the Migrant Housing Task Force

. . . willing to support a summer job program for unaccompanied youth

. . . willing to donate & support \$200 sponsorships to assist DACA applicants

. . . willing to start a Jubilee Fund to provide debt relief for indebted migrants

. . . willing to donate to the Nueva Esperanza Campaign (emergency housing)

. . . willing to sponsor (\$25 or more per month) recently arrived children

**Multi-Faith Action Coalition Matters.** Doug Leich, an active member of the MFAC Housing & Shelter Task Force and Steering Committee, told us about his experiences at Action Camp in Los Angeles coordinated by Community Solutions. The campers were trained to assist with Zero2016 Housing in areas like Contra Costa County. He also reported on Assembly Bill 1335—the Housing Trust Fund for building housing for low-income individuals; and AB 35—the Housing Tax Credit. AB 1335 did not pass out of the Assembly; AB 35 passed.

**Taliban to Isis.** Frank Burroughs, SOJA member and retired diplomat, will be a guest lecturer at Cal State East Bay, Concord Campus, on August 12, time TBA.

**July 4.** The monthly Immigration Vigil at West County Detention Facility will be held from 11 AM until noon. The address is 5555 Giant Highway, Richmond.

**You Are Invited** to attend the August 12, 2015, meeting at 7:00 PM in the Library of WC United Methodist Church.

*Gwen Watson, Chair*

*Delores Loague, Vice Chair*