



Ministering Together

News and Interfaith Events for the
Religious Community of Contra Costa County

Fall 2022

Executive Director's Letter



Dear Friends,

As we move from autumn to winter, you may be busy keeping up with your congregational programs, educational series, and making plans for winter's special services of welcoming the light back into our northern hemisphere. In this Ministering Together, we are focusing on the work of our ICHANGE program, supporting the work of our two Interfaith Chaplains who serve as Juvenile Chaplain. Please take the time to read through the articles inside so you can see the fabulous work of these change agents serving the young people of our county so well.

As you will see, the ICHANGE Mentoring Program that 6 volunteers have spent the year in preparation to be able to walk with young people inside Juvenile Hall so they can be a present help and presence to them as they transfer back to life on the outside. They are just getting underway as this letter is being written, so please pray for them as they begin this important work supporting the young people.

Also, please consider going through the excellent training put together by the leadership team, including our matchless Meg Kelley, a former educator from Grace Presbyterian, who organized the trainings early in 2022. We need mentors from many different faith traditions who are willing to prepare for a ministry of presence, reminding these young people to make better choices for their own future, which will help our whole county become close to our ideal of the Beloved Community.

We belong to each other...

~ Rev. Will McGarvey



Chaplain's Corner

Rev. Alexandria Spearman



Autumn Greetings, Beloved Community!

I'd like to share with you some insights from a story I recently heard on my travels to The Bhagavad Gita Museum in Los Angeles, CA called, "The Little Soul and the Sun". The story shares with us that there once was a soul who wanted to "experience itself as that aspect of God called **complete forgiveness**." A friendly soul came along and tells the little soul that it will volunteer to do something necessary for forgiveness but that in the moment of injury the little soul must remember who the friendly soul truly is and remember its desire to experience God. So the two make a contract to remember.



When we encounter one another in community and an injury occurs, some of the questions we ask include: how do we forgive? How do I remember to forgive in the moment? This is how, we tell and retell the stories. We remember. We remember that we have forgotten! Forgotten that the injury has come from one who is truly a friendly soul, who is there to encourage your desire to experience God. In the moment, we forget all that has passed and remember. Forgetfulness is a gift.

I don't know about you, but as an aunt who shares joyous occasions with my nieces and nephews, I cherish our relationships. Granted as a children's minister and a juvenile chaplain who identifies with the people, who were likely women, who were bringing children of all ages to Jesus, I enjoy youthful connections and their insights on the world. With our story in mind, I begin to

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Chaplain's Corner (continued...)

consider this: what if the friendly soul has presented itself to me as a child? What could a child possibly do to cause me injury? No. I am not encouraging you to denigrate or think of our children negatively, but instead to do the opposite. To think in stories and listen to the journey of their soul which led to them to the place where they are—right in front of our very eyes. Breathing. Listening. Empathizing with the story of their human experience. Choosing to rise up and allow ourselves to remember. “Remember” those who have been separated in Corrections by crossing the threshold to witness and represent the human/communal desire to be complete and forgiving. Forgetfulness is a gift.

Here at ICHANGE—Interfaith CHaplaincy Affirming a New Generation of Excellence, our mentors are grounded in interfaith chaplaincy praxis, which includes workshops on healing-centered compassionate listening, and trauma-informed social emotional learning. We seek to understand and agree that in the process of “re-membering” we must allow ourselves to move from asking, “what can I do?” to “what must be done?”. What must be done, you ask? Private listening, public re-membering, and personal resourcing. How do we make this happen? It starts with self! It starts with you! It starts with the human in you. It starts with the Mentor in you!

Interested? Pray about it and follow this address to sign up and learn more!

<https://forms.gle/uKs2G1AU3UnVwpjj7>

Eternally grateful,

~ Rev. Alexandria Spearman

ICHANGE is the initiative of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County, the Interfaith Chaplaincy of Juvenile Hall, the Department of Probation of Contra Costa County, and community volunteers working in collaboration with the Juvenile Justice System, community-based organizations and services, and the young adults and families of Contra Costa County.

Praise for the 1st ICHANGE Cohort!

To close the final quarter of the year, the theme most befitting our team simply shouts, “When the Gates Swing Open!” Our mentors-in-training have been as steadfast as a farmer planting seeds. During our season they have shown great determination and perseverance in tending to their task in spite of adverse conditions, namely the respiratory virus known as COVID-19 whose ghastly impact is global. When it looked like our seed would seemingly never sprout, we received word that the gates of the facilities were open and that visiting in person could begin once again. I am inspired by our entire team and look forward to all the harvest that lay in wait! Stay tuned!

ICHANGE provides training in evidence-based mentoring practices while encouraging mentors to draw on their own compassion and life experience to support justice-involved youth.



Rev. Alexandria Spearman at CCC Juvenile Hall

Interfaith Books, Movies, Documentaries and Plays recommended by the Elected Council of ICCCC.

<https://www.interfaithccc.org/2022-2023-interfaith-books-movies-documentaries-and-plays-recommended-by-the-interfaith-elected-council-of-contra-costa-2022/>



Breaking News!

Juvenile Hall has reopened to volunteers and our first cohort of mentors began meeting with youth in October!

ICHANGE — The Interfaith Chaplaincy Affirming a New Generation of Excellence offers healing-centered spiritual care and mentoring for justice-involved youth. **ICHANGE Mentors** support youth as they identify strengths, develop new skills, and move towards the future with hope to *become the change they want to be!*

Our Mission:

To provide justice-involved youth with the spiritual care and mentoring of supportive adults from the community that will:

- Offer healing-centered spiritual care that is culturally sensitive and responsive, trauma-informed, strengths-based, and grounded in restorative practices.
- Guide youth as they develop critical reflection and social/emotional skills that will enable them to explore new possibilities, develop and fulfill their goals, and to avoid further justice involvement.
- Assist youth in identifying their internal strengths and the external assets that will provide continuing support as they leave Juvenile Hall and become responsible adults and contributing members of the community.

Requirements for Mentorship:

ICHANGE offers training to caring people of faith as they draw upon their own compassion, spirituality, and life lessons and commit to support and assist justice-involved youth. Applicants must be 21 and successfully complete the following:

- **ICHANGE** Orientation; application and references
- Five 1.5 hour training sessions
- Department of Probation screening requirements
- A 2-hour on-line training in Child Abuse Reporter Training/Certificate
- Orientation and tour of Juvenile Hall

Upon completion of the above, each mentor is matched with a young adult and commits to weekly meetings at Juvenile Hall, (located in Martinez) for a total of one year. All mentors are required to provide Covid immunization records and receive quick response testing upon each visit to youth.

Our next training will begin Winter 2023.

Join Us! For more information or to arrange an **ICHANGE** presentation for your congregation or organization, contact Meg Keeley, Training Coordinator: mek.ichange@gmail.com

~ Meg Keeley

From Interfaith Juvenile Chaplain *Rev. Julius Van Hook*

"If I can help somebody, as I travel along
If I can help somebody, with a word or song
If I can help somebody, from doing wrong
No, my living shall not be in vain
No, my living shall not be in vain
No, my living shall not be in vain
If I can help somebody, as I'm singing the song
You know, my living shall not be in vain"

When Alma B. Androzzo wrote this song for Mahalia Jackson, she had no idea that it would lay on my heart as my mission in life. She had no idea that it would be the banner over my head. She had no idea that I would use it not only to encourage myself but others as well!



Greetings Contra Costa County,
I am in continual joy as we work together as a unit to bring about justice, peace, and love within our

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NOVEMBER ICARE PROJECT — THANKSGIVING FOOD BAGS

On Sunday, November 13th, Peace Lutheran Church conducted an inspiring interfaith service at their beautiful church where we celebrated our differences and prayed together in unity and then an enthusiastic group of volunteers assembled 60 boxes of Thanksgiving fixings for families in need for Monument Crisis Center. In addition to Peace Lutheran, other project cosponsors and volunteers included Temple Isaiah, the B'hai Communities of Walnut Creek and of Central County, and the Tri-Valley Hindu Community. Thanks to the generous financial donations from all of these communities, project coordinators shopped for all the requested items which cost 30% more this year than last. The funds also allowed the purchase of 35, \$25 gift cards.

Every participant expresses how inspiring and fun it is to do these projects. They meet new people they might not otherwise meet and share in doing something truly meaningful.

Join us in future ICARE projects. Go here for details and to sign up: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409084ea5ab28abff2-future> or contact Terri Moss for details, terrimoss55@gmail.com

Involve Your Faith Community in an ICARE Project: We Can Help!

Here are two easy ways we can help you engage your community in an interfaith ICARE project:

- 1) Invite us to speak to your social justice teams or clergy about how ICARE works and the value of participating in an interfaith service project.
- 2) Create an interfaith service to introduce your faith community to different faith traditions during your regular faith service; and after your service, launch into an ICARE service project. This makes a wonderful event of sharing and working together. People find ICARE project involvement extremely rewarding. Find out for yourself!

Contact Dave Longhurst or Terri Moss for details.

Upcoming ICARE Service Opportunities:

We are planning several engaging service projects for 2023 and welcome your questions, input, and/or expressions of interest. Here is a list of upcoming projects you might consider building into your calendar:

February: Food sorting at [White Pony Express](#)**

March: Breakfast bags for Trinity Center

April: Hygiene kits (*Honoring Moms*) for [Monument Crisis Center](#)

June: Food prep and service at [Bay Area Rescue Mission](#)

July: Back-to-school backpack drive for Monument Crisis Center or [Shelter Inc.](#)

August: Food sorting at the [Food Bank](#)

October: Food prep and painting at Mountaintop Family Center (*Shelter Inc.*)

November: Holiday food bags for Monument Crisis Center

December: Pack and deliver food boxes for students during holiday break (*Food for Thought*)

Please refer to the **Future Projects** tab at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409084ea5ab28abff2-future> and start planning now to engage your faith community in the coming year.

If you have suggestions for projects and/or want to cosponsor a specific project, please contact

Dave Longhurst at DaveLonghurst10@gmail.com or **Terri Moss** at terrimoss55@gmail.com.

**The Baha'is of Contra Costa County Central have volunteered to make this a bi-monthly event for their community and would like other communities to help. If your faith group would like to volunteer for one or all of these bi-monthly projects, please contact Dave Longhurst or Terri Moss.

Needed: ICARE Committee Members!

*We welcome additional ICARE committee members! You do not need to be a member of the Elected Council to serve on a committee—consider extending an invitation to others in your faith community who would enjoy brainstorming with Committee members and planning/ coordinating service projects with local nonprofits. If Interested, contact **Terri Moss** or **Dave Longhurst** (above).*

Rossmoor Corner

This has been another season of exciting events promoting inclusion and pluralism in Rossmoor.

Diversity Festival

The second Annual Rossmoor Diversity Festival was held on October 11, with over 1000 people attending in the spacious Rossmoor Event Center.

It was an event of awareness, togetherness and fun. Fourteen Rossmoor clubs had displays celebrating their culture, with six of them providing entertainment, including singing and dancing from their cultures. Guests were able to picnic with food from five food trucks outside the Event Center. Rossmoor Golden Rain Foundation CEO, Tim O'Keefe provided an inclusive welcome. The Chinese American Association of Rossmoor shared a video celebrating inclusion.



Last Big Questions Forum of the Year



On October 17, the Big Questions Committee held the last forum of the year, addressing the question, *How Is Peace Possible in Today's World?* The events traditionally feature two speakers representing different spiritual paths.

On October 17, the first speaker was Dr. Erika Baines, representing Sikhism. Dr. Baines is past President and Chair of the Interfaith Council of the Contra Costa County. She now is the Sikh elected Council Member of the Governing Board. Currently, Erika is a Professor Emeritus. She gave up her teaching career to dedicate her last few decades to public service work and regenerative and responsible farming.

The second speaker was Mahmoud Ohadi representing Zoroastrianism.

Mr. Ohadi is a retired engineer and graduate school educator in computer education and electronics. Born in the Iran, he was brought up as a

Muslim, but throughout his life, as he was learning about life and the role of humanity in our world, he became convinced that with all the resources we have on earth no one should go hungry or be without shelter.

The Big Questions committee and the Interfaith Council of Rossmoor will be considering the BIG QUESTION for 2023. If you have suggestions, please email Sara Blackstock at blackstocksara7@gmail.com

Youtube link for the Big Question:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ogBFwRBHTw&list=PLXLvylblUDdG5KeZwGtK0eKgH4aNH2u_H

The whole playlist of three years of Big Question programs can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXLvylblUDdG5KeZwGtK0eKgH4aNH2u_H

For questions about the Interfaith Council of Rossmoor, contact Susie Kohl at susie@springtide.org

~ Susie Kohl

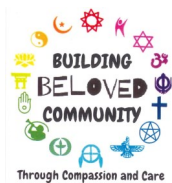
From Interfaith Chaplain (continued . . .)

community. I trust that your faith has been strengthened this year as we traversed through the ups and downs of a lingering pandemic. I have stopped by just to encourage you in all the work that you do. I've come to tell you that YOU are important, YOU have an assignment, YOU have a supportive community, and YOU are powerful beyond measure! As you continue to work toward BELOVED COMMUNITY, know that our efforts are not in vain. Know that our giving, our sharing, our reading, our art, our conversations, our dancing, our praying, and our singing are not in vain! May you be blessed this Autumn season and may you feel the warm presence of liberating light as you walk along, bringing with you everyone you know.

~ Rev. Julius Van Hook



I4C Fundraiser Dinner & Auction - Nov 6

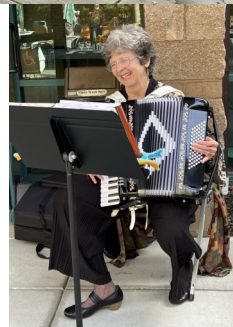


Many thanks to ALL for your participation in and donation to our First ICCCC Fundraiser Dinner and Auction. It was a wonderful success!

Thanks to Meg Keeley for her diverse musical entertainment and to Maya for her vibrant and colorful Hindu dance. Thanks also to the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir for their rousing performance.

Finally, thanks and congratulations to the Board and staff for a job well done!

~ Diane Maltester, Chair



Monthly Meaningful Mondays

a Monthly Online Chat and Check-in
NOW on First Monday of each Month*

****This is a change from our previous weekly meetings.***

For those that are able to join we can share some best practices, support one another, and share the needs of the community together.

Topic: ICCCC Meaningful Mondays

Time: 12:00 PM Pacific Time

Register in advance for this meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/tZYqdOmprijHd0upoM17uzGXXnmgljlyDqr>

After registering you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. That link will work on any future meetings, so save the link, which will be unique to you.

SOCIAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE (SOJA)

Meets the second Wednesday of each month from 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm.

*****All meetings now on Zoom due to COVID-19*****

WHAT WE DO:

- Speak out collectively on issues of conscience
- Advocate for social justice at the policy-making level
- Act when speaking out and advocacy fails
- Organize community forums to address critical issues
- Arrange time for interfaith worship, dialog, community and understanding

All are welcome !

Zoom Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/94533838950?pwd=WEEwZGNVcFpobS9qazNIbG5EYS9EZz09>

Meeting ID: 945 3383 8950

Password: 5878423

One tap mobile:

+16699009128,,94533838950#,,1#,5878423#

The Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County

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Vice-chair.....Dave Longhurst
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Executive Director.....Rev. Will McGarvey
Juv. Det. Chaplain.....Rev. Julius Van Hook
Asst. Juv. Det. ChaplainRev. Alexandria Spearman
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To request a paperless newsletter and to receive our bi-weekly E-Blasts,

E-mail Charlotte Ginn at eye4ceeoffice@gmail.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 I4C or Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County and mail it to our office at our new address!

404 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523. For credit card donations, visit our website: interfaithccc.org. Thank you!



PLEASE PRAY FOR... (in our rotating circle of prayer):

St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church, Concord; First Lutheran Church, Concord; New Life Christian Fellowship, Concord; First Christian Church, Concord; First Presbyterian Church, Concord; St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, Concord; Concord United Methodist Church, Concord; St. Bonaventure Catholic Church, Concord; Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church, Concord; Christian Science Church of Pleasant Hill, Pleasant Hill; Christ the King Catholic Church, Pleasant Hill; Faith Lutheran Church, Pleasant Hill. For those that experience Islamophobia or Anti-Semitism; Black Lives Matter leaders around the country; congregations going through clergy transition; the volunteers who deliver Meals on Wheels; those seeking employment; those living without shelter; those who are ill; families separated at the border or with members detained in the US; those detained during COVID-19; refugees and asylum seekers from Afghanistan; an end to Russia's war on Ukraine; an end to nuclear weapons.