

2023 Annual Report of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County



**Sunday, October 8th at 6:00 pm.
Beth Chaim Congregation**

I4C Annual Meeting Program:

- 5:30 - 6 pm** Mingling, including visiting the silent auction tables
- 6pm – 6: 50pm** **Potluck Dinner under the Sukkah**
6:10 pm Rabbi Dan Welcome & explanation of the Sukkah
6:35 pm Dave and Diane Welcome
6:45 pm Time for mingling/silent auction (inside)
6:55 pm Everyone move Inside
- 7pm – 7:05pm** **Read Covenant**
- 7:05pm – 7:20pm** **Executive Director Report**
Accomplishments/impact over past year
Pass the Bylaws
- 7:20pm – 7:35pm** **Committee Verbal Reports (see pages 3-6 for the written reports)**
ICARE video/report
SOJA/ICAN
ICHANGE
Singing Messengers
Development/Board
- 7:35pm – 7:45pm** **Desserts** *(Check Auction Items while getting dessert)*
Auction Closes
- 7:45pm – 7:55pm** **Making a Difference Awards**
 - Jo Kerner
 - June Kirk and Fr. Tom Bonacci
 - Rabbi Dan Goldblatt and Rev. Steve Harms
- 7:50-8:00 pm** **Recognize retiring Elected Council members**
Rev. Sharon Campton, LOPC
Terri Moss, Temple Isaiah
Rev. Channing Miller, Interfaith Council of Rossmoor
Diane Maltester, First Christian Church of Concord (DOC)
- Introduce and vote on new Elected Council members (room for eight more).**
Pastor Josie Asensio - Antioch Seventh-day Adventist
Rev. Dr. LaTaunya Bynum – Regional Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
of Northern California-Nevada
Andrew Scharlach - Temple Isaiah, Lafayette
- If you would like to nominate someone, or you are feeling personally called to be nominated to the EC, please let Rev. Will know, and we will follow the Gov. Board process to joining after the meeting.*
- 8pm – 8:15pm** **Auction Items purchase and pick up.**
- 8:15pm – 9pm** **Benediction and Cleanup**

I4C Program Reports:

Executive Director Report

- Meaningful Mondays Book Study, Holy Envy by Barbara Brown Taylor and Welcome to the Wisdom of the World by Joan Chittister, first Mondays at noon, except holidays
- Two retreats at San Damiano on Nurturing the Beloved Community, with Chief Phillip Scott and Father Tom Bonacci
- We did dialogue and came up with a new Covenant, which you heard at the beginning of the meeting.
- International Women’s Day, International Day of Peace programs held.
- Coping with Nationalisms Program on our YouTube page, featuring Fr. Tom Bonacci
- Faith based advocacy with SOJA, Faith in Action East Bay and FAME on housing. Earth care lobbying for ICAN with California Interfaith Power & Light. For a bill that would end the torture of solitary confinement in California jails and prisons with National Religious Coalition Against Torture.
- Helped host the Interfaith Council of Rossmoor’s Big Questions series, and spoke in the series.
- Tabled at the Earth Fest with ICAN and ISRV’s Earth Day event at Peace Lutheran.
- Helped host the MFAC & Hope Solutions Religious Leader’s Luncheon
- Trans Day of Visibility Program with the RCC
- National and Regional Days of Prayer events
- Ramadan Iftars, preached on Good Friday at Christ the King, Jewish Press Conference on “HereI Am Anti-Semitism campaign at Temple Isaiah, spoke at an East Bay Housing Org event
- We wrote a letter to the Antioch City Council and Police Department on Police violence there
- We tabled at the Walnut Creek Volunteer Fair in Civic Park
- Bay Area Interfaith Leadership Council (five county Councils) produced three public service announcements: addressing Anti-Asian Hate, Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia with the #WeBelong messaging. See them all at: <https://www.bayareainterfaith.org/psas.html> and our YouTube page.
- Staff development and training for ICHANGE Mentors, grant preparations
- Murshida Carol Connor’s Memorial celebration
- Port Chicago 79th Anniversary Commemoration
- 2023 Parliament of the World’s Religions in Chicago with the largest team from the Bay Area



ICARE (Interfaith Community Action REvitalization)

Our interfaith initiative, ICARE, recently celebrated its third anniversary of doing good in our communities. We scope out group service opportunities at local nonprofits and then invite two or more faith communities to work together on the project. These events provide a wonderful opportunity to make new friends AND to bless people in need.



Here is a summary of our service projects over the **past three years**:

Number of project- 47

Nonprofits served - 13

Participating faith communities - 41

Number of volunteers - 1400

Volunteer service hours - 4000

And here is a summary of our 15 wonderful service projects over the **past year**:

- Community **grounds cleanup** in Antioch - supporting *Antioch Police Dept*
- 60 Thanksgiving **food boxes** acquired and delivered to *Monument Crisis Center*
- 2000 Food boxes** packed and delivered to Richmond School District benefiting 500 needy families for two weeks over winter break- supporting *Food for Thought*
- Food sorting** on six separate days through the year at *White Pony Express*
- Food preparation and meal service** at *Trinity Center*
- 600 breakfast bags** bought, assemble and delivered to *Trinity Center*
- Food preparation and meal service**, warehouse work at *Bay Area Rescue Mission*
- 100 hygiene kits** in honor of Mothers Day acquired and delivered to *Monument Crisis Center*, to benefit mothers plus diapers for their babies
- 50 hygiene kits** acquired and delivered to *Jewish Family and Community Services*, to benefit Ukrainian refugees
- 45 pints of blood** donated to *Red Cross*
- 150 back-to-school backpacks** and supplies acquired and delivered to *Shelter Inc.*
- 40 fence boards painted** for tiny homes and delivered to *Rebuilding Together East Bay*
- Food sorting** at the *Food Bank of Contra Costa/Solano County*
- Interior walls painted for STEM lab** at *New Life Movement*

Many thanks to the dedicated faith communities that participated in these service projects over the past year:

- Bahai's of Walnut Creek
- Bahai's of Central County
- Bahai's of San Ramon/Dublin/Pleasanton
- Beth Chaim
- B'nai Tikva
- Faith Christian Fellowship
- First Christian Church, Disciples of Christ
- First Church of Christ, Scientist (Pleasant Hill)
- Islamic Center of Zahra
- Islamic Center of San Ramon
- Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church
- Mt Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church
- Peace Lutheran
- San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church
- St Mary's High School
- St Peters CME
- Temple Isaiah of Lafayette
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Antioch
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Walnut Creek
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Danville
- TriValley Hindu Community

What a blessing to join together to serve in our community. We appreciate your ongoing support and hope more will join us in 2024! You can learn about our upcoming service projects at

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409084EA5AB28ABFF2-icare#/>

Social Justice Alliance/Interfaith Climate Action Network



(SOJA) Committee: This committee does advocacy in partnership with other area groups, focusing on issues of racism, welfare reform, health care, homelessness, hunger, discrimination, police reform, climate change, immigration and related social justice issues.

SOJA members monitor the actions of government at all levels by attending and advocating at City Council and County Board meetings. They participate in Lobby Days in Sacramento meeting with legislators on pending bills before the Senate and Assembly. This past year they participated in four of these Lobby Days on different issues. It works closely with the Interfaith Action Coalition, California Interfaith Power and Light, East Bay Housing (EBHO), Faith Alliance for a Moral Economy (FAME), Shelter Inc., the Poor Peoples’ Campaign, Conscious Contra Costa, and many others on their key issues. It publishes letters to government officials on justice.

During the past year SOJA was instrumental in the enactment of ordinances for Rent Stabilization and Just Cause Eviction ordinances in Antioch and similar pending ordinances in Concord. It was significantly involved in last year’s election and campaigned for candidates who shared justice values. This was particularly true in regard to the City Council election in Concord, where the Concord Naval Weapons Station was a key issue. This development seems to be finally on a promising path.

Housing has been a particularly important issue for SOJA and during the past year. It has worked with City Councils to help submit strong housing elements to the State. These housing elements will determine a city’s housing programs for the next eight years. SOJA has also been in the forefront in supporting SB 4, which would allow housing units to be constructed on lands owned by faith-based organizations. This bill is currently on the Governor’s desk to be signed.

Climate change will continue to impact all aspects of our lives as individuals and communities. **ICAN**, under the umbrella of SOJA, works very closely with California Interfaith Power and Light (CIPL) to advocate with state and local governments to address important climate issues. Extensive groundwork has been done on a massive \$15 Billion Bond Measure, which will be presented to voters to address many climate related issues. This will require massive support from the interfaith community.



This next year will be particularly exciting for SOJA. The Concord Naval Weapons Station project will begin to move forward with exciting possibilities for affordable housing in Concord. New housing ordinances will be implemented in Antioch and Concord. There will be an election in 2024 with key issues at the local, state and national level. Issues of racism, climate change, immigration and police reform will still need vigilant monitoring and attention. SOJA is pledged to be an interfaith light on all these issues.

ICHANGE: Chaplaincy Department: ICHANGE Report

(Interfaith CHaplaincy Affirming a New Generation of Excellence)

Rev. Julius Van Hook – Director of Spiritual Care and Chaplain
Rev. Alexandria Spearman – Chaplain, ICHANGE Program Manager



As we close our third quarter (“Extending Community Involvement”), we would like to thank each and every one of you who remains steadfast and committed to the work of juvenile justice. This work is arduous, complex, and in-demand. Thank you for your prayerful and actionable contributions.

As you know from our last report, the Chaplaincy Department is intricately tied to the new Community Pathways Program that the Probation Department has developed for “out-of-custody” youth and Transitional Aged Youth (TAY). We have successfully developed a Questionnaire with Probation and with the youth to capture an assessment of the needs and to provide it to those who are transitioning. We have successfully applied for the Leshar Grant to assist us in this project. The Leshar Foundation grant would support these expanded services.

- Partner with other nonprofit organizations (Beat The Streets in East County, Rainbow Community Center in Central County and New Life Movement in West County and places of worship where the majority of our justice-involved youth reside, to:
 - connect with appropriate community services
 - enroll in education/training programs,
 - explore career options,
 - engage in cultural activities and
 - develop job readiness and life skills necessary for independent living.

- Provide material resources to support and incentivize youth upon reentry based on need, and availability, including but not limited to:
 - Gift cards (e.g., groceries, gasoline)
 - Cell phone (probation programming communication)
 - Clothing
 - Transportation
 - Educational supplies

These partnerships will provide a seamless and caring transition to wrap-around services that will support their effective reentry into civilian life. The additional services will also provide the resources needed for the youth to get off to a good start. All of these services will help our youth to have accessible resources and brighter hope in the future, which is key to reducing recidivism of our youth.

With weekly regular follow-up meetings, the Chaplains will stay connected with the staff of partner organizations and with the reentry youth to ensure that they can achieve their goals. These touchpoints also provide an opportunity to evaluate how well their particular plan is working for them.

Fundraiser updates: Thank you to the donors who have contributed thus far!! We continue our efforts to equip each unit with Spiritual Care materials. You may donate reading materials or funds for us to purchase culturally relevant study Bibles, Qurans, Devotionals, prayer mats, devotionals, study workbooks, etc. All items must be soft cover and without staples. We appreciate your support!

DONATE HERE: <https://bit.ly/3gJjN8r>

Updates:

- Community Pathways Program is underway! We are surveying T.A.Y. for their needs and moving forward to connect them with their resources.
- We have successfully identified diverse Chaplains to join our team to meet expanding needs and demands. Interviews are underway!
- Successfully partnered with “Brothas of the Drum” for a Healing in Music Company: Drum Circles and Sound Healing Experience. Facilitating a group playing drums/percussion instruments increases concentration and focus, helps develop communication skills, and encourages them to listen and communicate effectively with one another. Drumming is often used in music therapy, especially played with bare hands. This therapeutic activity helps people express and address issues that otherwise are difficult to share.
- With our support against the mistreatment of Antioch residents by Antioch police, we’ve witnessed dropped enhancements on youth charges. Whereas, we had been emphasizing the atrocity that sends children to adult prisons, we have witnessed a change. Our youth who were scheduled to go to a adult prison will now remain in Juvenile Detention and will be ready to receive all of the out-of-custody support we are currently building!
- We have received our Decisions for Change workbook material and are moving forward with our mentors to support our healing-centered methodology.
- Our Chaplains attended the Contra Costa County Restorative Justice Stakeholders Meeting and provided critical insights and perspectives.
- We continue to provide Chaplaincy Services to our youth: spiritual counseling, death notifications, responding to crisis and emergency situations, help clarify spiritual concerns, religious beliefs and ethical issues related to custody care, provide spiritual and emotional support to loved ones of our youth, providing spiritual support to staff, provide copies of Holy Scriptures from diverse faith traditions, work collaboratively with the Multi-Disciplinary Team, demonstrate a healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community and personal experience, providing sacred and religious rituals ad practices, providing spiritual discernment, formation and guidance to youth, normalizing continued spiritual and emotional care during, before and after interaction with the justice-system and more!

Singing Messengers

Hello, fellow ICCCC members. I often think of our various missions and the amazing reach and positive outcomes each accomplishes. Clearly steadfast dedication and hours of hard work goes into every project. I am proud to walk among you. I am Marjorie Musante, Director of Singing Messengers.



Although our Singing Messenger mission involves the very enjoyable task of uplifting and inspiring senior facility residents through music, it doesn’t happen without significant dedication and long hours of work on the part of our membership which has now grown to more than 50 singers. On a weekly basis, our three singing teams visit facilities throughout Contra Costa County, delivering musical programs complete with costumes, props, rhythm instruments and lots of smiles. Happily, most of our 57 facilities are back on a regular basis after the pandemic. The Singing Messenger tradition has survived more that 50 years, and hopefully will endure far into the future.

Our audiences vary from a few guests to 20 or 30 residents. During performances, it is heart-warming to witness the joyful energy growing in the room. Guests begin to sing along, clap their hands, and even want to dance with us at times. There is nothing like a room full of smiles to make your week! And, hopefully, we have helped brighten the day for our residents.

The behind-the-scenes work that makes all this happen requires many hands. There would be no place to sing without the very hard work of organizing singing assignments for all three groups. I have huge gratitude for those who helped in this monumental job. This involves contacting senior facilities, establishing their permission for our visits, creating a finalized season itinerary which is then sent to members and facilities electronically and in hard copy. I also want to thank the creative team who met with me in June to sift through music and shape our fall, winter, and spring programs. It was a productive meeting filled with laughter. Many thanks to those who help run, collate, and distribute our music. Also, my appreciation goes to those who helped to gather props, instruments and costumes.

It continues to be challenging keeping up to date with frequent facility changes- in name, in ownership, in staff and contact information. What used to be the rare change on our itinerary has become routine. However, we make every effort to adjust and offer our services to the new team of employees. Why bother? Because we, Singing Messengers, are blessed to be able to spread the **healing power of music** to those in need. Come join us if you would like!

Singing Messengers Marjorie Musante, Director (925) 933-3866

Development

Development Committee Report 2022-23
Submitted by Greg Kremenliev, Chair

I assumed the position of Chair when my Co-Chair, Christine Nadeau, had to step aside for health reasons. One of Christine's greatest accomplishments was to introduce us to the "Matching Grant" program in which a donor specifies that they will match dollar for dollar every donation up to a certain limit. Christine has been able to find two anonymous donors who have each put up \$10,000. We met the first match last fall and have just launched the second campaign. For those of you not familiar with matching grants, it is a technique that KPFA has used to help keep the lights on for decades. It relies on supporters of an organization realizing that they can double their donation during the matching drive. Please help us put this over the top this fall.

Most of our other work has been focused on foundation and government grants or contracts. The Board passed a resolution recently making it the policy that any proposals or contracts that I4C undertakes contain at least 10% for organizational operating expenses. We have incorporated this approach into our recent proposals to the Leshner Foundation and the San Francisco Foundation and are in ongoing discussions with ICHANGE program to implement this with our largest funding source (Contra Costa County Probation Department).

Our Leshner proposal revolves around partnering with three wonderful local non-profits (Beat the Streets, New Life Movement and the Rainbow Center) in programs focused primarily on at risk youth. We've applied to the San Francisco Foundation for a small (\$25,000) grant to help with operating expenses. Given Rev. Will's relationship with the Foundation, we feel good about our chances.

Moving forward, we believe that in order to not only continue but expand the work of our organization, we need to think bigger and develop relationships with major funders. Any of you who has a connection/working relationship/seat on the Board or other “foot in the door” please let us know. And remember to contribute both as a faith community and an individual to our Fall matching fund drive.

Governing Board Report from the Co-Chairs

As we look back over the past year, we feel grateful to be engaged in interfaith work with such wonderful people. We are inspired by your dedication and count it a privilege to learn from you and be inspired by your deep commitments to the divine and/or wholesome values.

We are deeply grateful for the contributions of so many. We express appreciation to our Executive Director, Rev Will McGarvey, for his tireless service and ongoing commitment to strengthening the interfaith council. Our two full-time youth chaplains, Rev Julius Van Hook and Rev Alexandria Spearman, are dedicated to improving the lives of justice-involved youth - thank you for your service. We appreciate our office staff, Charlotte Ginn and Christina Shih, for their wonderful support.



Terri Moss (former GB member), Dave Longhurst and Diane Maltester (Co-Chairs) at the Parliament of the World's Religions..

Thanks also to members of the Governing Board - your ongoing contributions are critical to leading our organization forward. And finally, thanks to members of the Elected Council for serving as an ambassador to your respective faith community.

We appreciate your feedback - please don't hesitate to share what you find most enriching about interfaith work and what you would like to see changed.

We appreciate the opportunity to serve you and our community and look forward to contributing to the ongoing interfaith work of the interfaith council.

Diane Maltester and Dave Longhurst
Co-Chairs

Dessert time!

Making a Difference Awards

Jo Kerner

Jo served as a tutor for Winter Nights starting in 2008, and then learned how to be the primary grant writer for the program from 2011 to her recent time of retiring from this important volunteer work. She was an invaluable volunteer that helped with the transition of WN as an independent non-profit.

June Kirk and Father Tom Bonacci

June Kirk has been a part of the Interfaith Peace Project since it moved to California in 2006, and currently serves as their Board President. She is the Docent for the Antioch Interfaith Peace Center

and Library, and hosts multiple small groups that meet there regularly. She was instrumental in the new website marking their 20+ years of work at <https://www.interfaithpeaceprojectlegacy.org>.

Father Tom founded the IPP on Sept 11, 2001 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and brought the IPP here to California in 2006. Since then, their work of Interfaith understanding has expanded to multiple retreat centers in Northern California run by members of their organization. Father Tom continues to teach and share leadership within ICCCC and throughout the world. The website includes blog posts, a calendar and a library of valuable insights of Interfaith wisdom at <https://www.interfaithpeaceproject.org>.

Rabbi Dan Goldblatt and Rev. Steve Harms

Rabbi Dan Goldblatt has served Beth Chaim Congregation since 1993. He has taught at I4C retreat events, helped create Interfaith San Ramon Valley (ISRV) and helped the broader community address Anti-Semitic events all over the county. He was also instrumental in the Interfaith response to the Islamophobia experienced by the San Ramon Valley Islamic Center when they were met with hostility getting their worship space approved in the zoning process after 9/11.

Rev. Steve Harms was serving as President of the Council of Churches in 1997 when we became the Interfaith Council, making space for people of all faith traditions to join the council beyond just the SOJA, which included Catholics and Jews at the time. Rev. Steve is one of the leaders of ISRV and has served at Peace Lutheran for many years, which also hosts Jazz at Peace.

These two religious leaders have been described as “friends first, colleagues second.” as described in this 2009 J Weekly article below. It’s only right that we honor them together here tonight.

<https://jweekly.com/2009/03/27/a-good-fit-church-leaders-reach-out-to-the-local-jewish-community/>

Recognizing retiring EC members

- Rev. Sharon Campton, LOPC**
- Terri Moss, Temple Isaiah**
- Rev. Channing Miller, Interfaith Council of Rossmoor**
- Diane Maltester, First Christian Church of Concord (DOC)**

Introducing and vote on new EC Members

Pastor Josie Asencio, Antioch Seventh-day Adventists

Josie Asencio (Ah-SEN-see-oh) is the Pastor of the Antioch Seventh-day Adventist Church. She was born in Southern California and her parents were both born in Guatemala. She speaks both Spanish and English and will readily admit that her Spanish is a continual work in progress. She began pastoring in 2005, received a B.A. in Religious Studies in 2006, completed her M.Div. in 2010 and was ordained in 2014. She is a trained chaplain, has completed a residency and her 5th unit of Clinical Pastoral Education in a hospital setting and is currently a Doctoral Student at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary pursuing a degree in Pastoral Care and Counseling.

People know she is near because of her boisterous laugh, and she finds every opportunity to use it. She enjoys going on adventures such as sky diving, cliff diving, trips to Hawaii, shore scuba diving and is a Disney fanatic. She believes that her community of faith has helped her to deepen her relationship with the Divine and is excited to hear the stories of how other have also encountered the Divine in their communities of faith.

Rev. Dr. LaTaunya Bynum, Regional Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Northern California-Nevada

The Reverend Doctor LaTaunya M. Bynum has been the Regional Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Northern California-Nevada since September, 2014. She is a graduate of Chapman College (Bachelor of Arts), and The School of Theology of Claremont (Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry). She was ordained September 14, 1980 at her home church, United Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Los Angeles, in the Pacific Southwest Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). LaTaunya has served on several boards and committees through the years including the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Pension Fund Board, Council on Christian Unity and Interfaith Ministry, the Council on Theological Education, the boards of Chapman University and the Disciples Seminary Foundation, and from 2019-2022 served as the President of the College of Regional Ministers.

Special Training: Clergy Ethics Training and Anti-racism training. She has lead workshops and seminars on congregational transformation and transition, anti-racism training, and clergy ethics. She has also received Level 1 Coaches Training

Andrew Scharlach – Temple Isaiah

I am a member of Temple Isaiah of Contra Costa County, a Reform synagogue in Lafayette. For the previous 25 years, I was a member of Congregation B'nai Shalom, a Conservative synagogue in Walnut Creek, and I also have been involved with the Jewish Renewal movement and other innovative approaches to Jewish spiritual expression. My personal approach to religious practice combines elements of Jewish ritual, mindfulness meditation, transcendent experience, and social action. I have a strong commitment to interfaith and intercultural interaction and collaboration, especially in pursuit of a more just, equitable, and livable world for everyone.

Until my retirement in 2018, I was a Professor of Social Welfare at the University of California at Berkeley and Founding Director of the Center for the Advanced Study of Aging Services. My research and teaching focused primarily on policies and programs designed to enhance the well-being of older adults and their families, including the characteristics of aging-friendly communities, the experiences and service needs of family caregivers, quality assurance in long-term care, federal and state aging policies and programs, and model training programs in aging services. I also worked as a social worker in nursing homes and other care facilities, and provided consultation and training to social workers and other health and mental health professionals. I currently work as a hospice volunteer, have served on Boards and committees of various local Jewish organizations, and was a member of the Jewish Burial Society for Contra Costa County.

Auction items announced.

Benediction

Rev. Rodney Lemery, incoming Co-Chair

“A flower cannot be by herself alone. A flower has to “inter-be” with everything else that is called non-flower. That is what we call inter-being. You cannot be, you can only inter-be. The word inter-be can reveal more of the reality than the word “to be”. You cannot be by yourself alone, you have to inter-be with everything else. So the true nature of the flower is the nature of inter-being, the nature of no self.”

— Thich Nhat Hanh



Pics from the 2023 Parliament of the World's Religions

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<http://interfaithccc.org>

<https://www.youtube.com/c/InterfaithCouncilOfContraCostaCounty>