



# Interfaith Community of Schenectady, Inc.

April 2014

Vol. 42, No. 8

**Goal:**  
Sharing together,  
One God —  
One Community

## Interfaith News

~ Over Forty Years of Interfaith Partnerships ~ Est. 1971 ~

### *April Dinner Meeting*

Tuesday, April 8, 2014

Dinner 6:30pm

Program 7:30pm

Dominican Retreat and Conference Center  
1945 Union Street, Schenectady, NY 12309

### **Learn about Human Trafficking**

*Human trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery. It is currently the second largest type of criminal activity, exceeded only by the illegal drug trade.*

Presenters: FBI Special Agent in Charge Andrew Vale  
FBI Special Agent Donald Chu  
Public Relations... Merrill Einbinder

**Dinner is \$15. Program only is free. If you require a vegetarian or kosher meal, please let us know when you make your reservation. Reservations due to the IFC office, 370-2150, or [schdyinterfaith@yahoo.com](mailto:schdyinterfaith@yahoo.com), by April 2, 2014.**

***Day-long Awareness Workshop on Human Trafficking to follow April Gathering of Interfaith with same focus.*** Sisters and Staff at the Dominican Retreat and Conference Center will offer this Awareness Workshop on Wednesday, April 9, from 10:00 am through 1:00 pm. Registration begins at 9:30 am. The cost is \$20.00 a person which includes lunch. Human trafficking is described as modern day slavery, because it controls a person by force, fraud or coercion – physical or psychological. The intention is to exploit a person for forced labor, sexual exploitation, or both. Human trafficking is the fastest growing criminal industry with profits estimated at more than \$32 billion dollars annually. Ask someone from your congregation or community to attend with you.



## From our President

**Essential Prayer** John Dominic Crossan, Roman Catholic Biblical scholar in the forefront of today's biblical endeavors, published ***The Greatest Prayer*** [Harper One Books] in 2010. I share from the prologue:

"The Lord's Prayer is Christianity's greatest prayer. It is also Christianity's strangest prayer. It is prayed by all Christians, but it never mentions Christ. It is prayed in all churches, but it never mentions church. It is prayed on all Sundays, but it never mentions Sunday. It is called the "Lord's Prayer," but it never mentions "Lord."

"It is prayed by fundamentalist Christians, but it never mentions the inspired inerrancy of the Bible, the virgin birth, the miracles, the atoning death, or bodily resurrection of Christ. It is prayed by evangelical Christians, but it never mentions the *evangelium*, the gospel. It is prayed by Pentecostal Christians, but it never mentions ecstasy or the Holy Spirit.

"It is prayed by Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopalian and Roman Catholic Christians [I might add United Methodists as well], but it never mentions congregation, priest, bishop, or pope. It is prayed by Christians who split from one another over this or that doctrine, but it never mentions a single one of those doctrines. It is prayed by Christians who focus on Christ's substitutionary sacrificial atonement for human sin, but it never mentions Christ, substitution, sacrifice, atonement, or sin.

"It is prayed by Christians who focus on the next life in heaven or in hell, but it never mentions the next life, heaven, or hell. It is prayed by Christians who emphasize what it never mentions and also by Christians who ignore what it does.

"You might respond, of course, that there is nothing strange there at all. It is, you might say, a Jewish prayer from the Jewish Jesus; hence nothing Christian or even Jewish Christian is present. But that only invites us to start the question of strangeness all over again. It does not mention covenant or law, Temple or Torah, circumcision or purity, and so on.

"What if the Lord's Prayer is neither a Jewish prayer for Jews nor yet a Christian prayer for Christians? What if it is ... a prayer from the heart of Judaism on the lips of Christianity for the conscience of the world? What if it is ... a radical manifesto and a hymn of hope for all humanity in language addressed to all the earth?

"The Lord's Prayer is, for me, both a revolutionary manifesto and a hymn of hope. It is *revolutionary*, because it presumes and proclaims a radical vision of *justice* that is at the core of Israel's biblical tradition. It is a *hymn*, because it presumes and produces poetic techniques that are at the core of Israel's biblical poetry." [pp1-2]

[The Lord's Prayer] ... "is intended first of all, within Christianity itself. It is surely our greatest prayer – whether we call it the "*Abba*" prayer with the early Christians, the "Our Father" with the Catholic community, or "Lord's Prayer" with Protestant tradition. It is certainly the official prayer of Christianity.

I have absolutely no presumption that the greatest prayer of Christianity must be, or even should be, the greatest prayer for other religions. But I ask this of any and all of them. Does your greatest prayer speak exclusively to the followers of your religion? Or does it speak to the conscience of the entire world? I propose that the greatest prayer in every religion should speak to all the world and for all the earth." [p. 8]

May all of our prayer speak with, for and on behalf of all the world and all the earth.

*Aho, Alafia, Shanti, Salaam, Shalom, the peace which passes understanding* **Bob Long**



## Interfaith Awards

***The May gathering will be the Annual Meeting, including presentation of the Ludwig Interfaith and the James Stamper Community Service Awards.*** The Gathering will be held on Wednesday, May 7, at the Dominican Retreat and Conference Center. Dinner will be at 6:30 with program at 7:30 and brief annual meeting to follow. Rabbi Moshe Mirsky of Temple Beth Israel, Niskayuna, will be the guest presenter. Rabbi Mirsky is in the Orthodox Jewish tradition and will offer an orthodox perspective through the focus "Judaism and Everyday Life." Necessary business items [budget, nominations, etc.] will be conducted. Reports will be provided in an annual booklet for reading following the meeting.

***2014 Interfaith Award to be presented at May Gathering*** The Robert J. and Dorothy S. Ludwig Interfaith Award, recognizing individuals and groups who have expressed significant ecumenical and interfaith engagement in the area, will be presented to Rabbi Matthew Cutler of Congregation Gates of Heaven. Since arriving in Schenectady Rabbi Cutler has been involved in a wide variety of interfaith activities in Schenectady, the Capital District, and most recently in Africa. His leadership has opened the way for dialogue among many faiths and for cooperation among members of many faiths in serving the larger community together. We honor and celebrate his spiritual guidance and his leadership in the community.

***2014 James Stamper Community Service Award also Presented at May Gathering*** Given each year by Interfaith to a person or group that provides significant service within the surrounding community, this year's award will go to Quest – a community-based organization dedicated to serving youth. Started 22 years ago by Judy Atchinson, at the invitation of Father Michael Hogan in the cellar of Sacred Heart St Columba's church, Quest feeds hot meals, does HIV/AIDS testing, offers ballet, pregnancy prevention, women's support groups, free movies, tutoring, science exploration, bicycling, arts, bucket drumming, and intervention programs ... all free. Quest works with some of the most under-served families in Schenectady. Quest functions as family in all it does, practicing accepting, challenging, affirming love. QUEST provides a safe environment, counseling, art and recreation programs that keep kids in school, out of trouble and on track for better lives. There are more than 175 QUEST kids. Quest helps children and youth that others turn away. QUEST helps children realize their self worth and sense of pride. QUEST kids are in control of their lives. They are: Out of gangs: 76% of QUEST kids leave gangs and stay out for good; Out of trouble: QUEST kids have a recidivism rate 62% lower than kids not in QUEST; In school: QUEST kids go back to school and stay in school; In Control: QUEST kids have lower rates of accidental pregnancies. We celebrate Quest's gift to the Hamilton Hill area and to all of Schenectady.

## Looking to 2014-2015

The Interfaith Council will have dates and many gathering focuses for the Fall, 2014, through Spring, 2015, available for presentation at the May meeting. Programs will have varied focuses expressing differing aspects of its objectives. With dates, places, and in many instances programs set this early, you may mark your calendar early and give Interfaith activities high priority in your fall, winter and spring.



## Regional Interfaith-Ecumenical

The Muslim faith offers a wide variety of engagements from its various facilities throughout the Capital District. Prayer is offered five times daily, either at a Mosque, or wherever one finds oneself at a time of prayer. Imam Djafer Sebkaoui of Troy relates that most Mosques offer regular worship and prayer times, counseling, marriage, youth ministries, funeral preparation and services, grief counseling, and ministry of welcome and orientation for recent immigrants. Celebration of family is also a significant part of relating. Study and maturing in understanding of faith opens the way for heart, mind and spirit to relate with the eternal and offer a blessing to those around. The Islamic Center of the Capital District has a day school, and many mosques have weekend learning and events. Worship, prayer, study and outreach is open to all who wish to participate

An important aspect of outreach for Muslims is engaging college students. There are Islamic college groups functioning at RPI, SUNY Albany, Union, Sage and Skidmore Colleges. Islamic youth in Troy assist with a Soup Kitchen on a monthly basis. Islamic students at Union have participated in regional Muslim gatherings and in emergency relief. Food is also provided on a monthly basis. At times food is cooked and taken to people seeking food.

A further outreach ministry in which several Imams participate is prison ministries. Imam Genghis Khan, a member of the Islamic Center of the Capital District coordinates Islamic ministries within the Schenectady County prison systems. Imam AbdurRahman Yaki invests time at Comstock Prison. Other Imams and members of congregations also invest in ministry within prisons offering a chance for a reconciled and fulfilling future to many who have had little hope.

Imams and members of Islamic congregations participate readily in Interfaith activities throughout the region. From Interfaith at the local level to participation in Capital Rejoin events Muslims of differing perspectives share their faith, love and joy of life openly and freely with those of other faiths.

The Islamic Community also has access to resources from the Islamic Relief USA's domestic programs which aim to alleviate poverty, hunger and suffering in the U.S. IRUSA offers:

Community grants toward access to health care, to promote sustainable socio-economic development and to elevate standards of living;

Emergency relief, especially in times of disaster;

Giving grain food pantry working with local community members to provide food aid to neighbors in need;

Pathways to success for refugees and impoverished families to deliver a program that provides valuable financial education and a matching-dollars component to empower individuals to build a better future for themselves by helping attain affordable housing and job training/vocational skills, or to develop a small business.

Refugee services offering training specializing in leaders; cross-cultural communication; mentoring; tutoring for English; counseling for best practices in interviewing, resume building and job seeking; and soliciting and distributing Zakah and essential household items for those in need;

Service for kids provides food to low-income children who rely on school for their meals at summer schools, after-school programs, camps and community facilities;

Day of Dignity creating an opportunity for caring individuals from diverse communities to provide services to their neighbors in need. This project aims to mobilize communities to establish long-lasting efforts to continue the service year-round.

The Pastoral Care Department at Ellis Hospital is looking for volunteers to help staff the reception desk to greet visitors, answer calls, deliver mail to patients, distribute reading materials to various locations, and other administrative duties. Hours are negotiable. Inquire with Rev. Tony Green , Manager of Pastoral Care, at 518-243-4064 or [greenat@ellismedicine.org](mailto:greenat@ellismedicine.org)

## Share your news with Interfaith Community

**Welcome to The Rev. Monsignor Edward B. Scharfenberger**, a priest from Brooklyn, who has been named the next Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany. We look forward to meeting him and pray for both him and Bishop Hubbard during this time of transition. Several events in coming days will receive, welcome and install him as Bishop.

**Share Your News with Interfaith** Individuals, congregations and community groups are asked to share their news with Interfaith: notices and articles, awards, birthdates, special anniversaries, deaths, hospitalizations or illness. It is wonderful to share good, as well as sad, news – especially because it opens the way for the healing love among us to flow like refreshing streams.

## Received in March

**Individual membership renewals:** Edith Kliman, Miranda Rand, Joan Stanavich, William & Ruth Haase

**Contribution:** Helga Schroeter (Life member)

Also, funds through the GE matching gifts program were received.

Thank you for your support!

## Thanks to all for 2014 donations made

Please note a change in nomenclature: we will no longer be using the term “dues” as per ever since 1970s. We will be using the term “donations” because “dues” is not appropriate for a not-for-profit according to IRS. So, we comply willingly.

Because of: 1) the significant response of membership donations to date, and 2) because of the increase in asking for monthly gathering meals, we are on solid ground. Please remember, however, that most membership donations are now in for the rest of the year. As of the end of February, Interfaith's income surpassed expenses by \$370. We are keeping up with all obligations, including supporting the chaplain at Sunnyview.

## Attendance has increased this spring

Monthly attendance at Gatherings remained steady during a cold January and has increased considerably in cold and blustery February and March. The last two gathering have seen over 50 people for the programs. Several new attendees of recent programs have chosen to become a part of Interfaith.

## Publicity to be enhanced

In recent years, Phyllis Boyd successfully helped us expand publicity by increasing the places where publicity is sent and providing it on a regular basis. This year, with a “home base” for gatherings at the Dominican Retreat Center, it has been possible to establish dates and secure presenters well in advance. This has made it possible for people to place gathering dates in calendars early and be present for events that might have been announced too late in the past. With early fixed scheduling, it is now possible to develop more helpful means of publicity, including fall and spring fliers/posters and also meet deadlines for area Interfaith media.

***Won't you share the blessing of Interfaith Community with others!*** No matter how many means of communication are available to us today, word of mouth from people passionate about an inspiring community or relationships is still the most effective means of communication. Don't keep a good thing to yourself. Share with others with similar values. Invite them to attend with you. Ride together.

## Coming Events

### ***Upcoming Church Women United Celebrations***

Church Women United of Schenectady and Vicinity is offering two celebrations on the theme, "We Are in God's Hands," and "We Are God's Hands."

First: an Annual Human Rights Celebration. ***Please note change of date from earlier publicity.*** Topic: "Through God Our Hands Can Protect." Today many are concerned with the tragedy of human trafficking, so this is timely. The program will be held at Emmanuel Friedens Church, 218 Nott Terrace (near State Street), Schenectady, from 9:30 to 11:30, on Saturday, April 5. For further information, call Nancy R. Bellamy, at 399-8508.

Second: May Friendship Day. The topic is "Through God Our Hands Can Serve." To be held at the Burnt Hills United Methodist Church, 816 Route 50, Burnt Hills, beginning at 9:30, on Friday, May 2. To learn more, call either Sharon Buell at 384-0313, or Sandra Gardner at 882-9515.

Additionally, Church Women United in New York State is holding a two day conference at the Albany Ramada Plaza, 3 Watervliet Avenue Ext., Albany, NY 12206, from 3:00 PM on Friday, April 25 thru 2:00 PM, Saturday, April 26, 2014. The National President of CWU will attend; several workshops will be available. Registration is \$25.00 and should be sent to Mary Jo Semler, CWU in New York Treasurer at 571 Coburn Street, Elmira, NY 14903, by April 13. Her telephone number is 607-734-6602. Further information: contact the NYS President, Barbara Williams, of Schenectady, at 869-8812, or by email at [bjw2011-cwu@hotmail.com](mailto:bjw2011-cwu@hotmail.com).

***Engaging Native Americans to listen, learn and change ourselves.*** The Albany district of the United Methodist Church is offering an opportunity on Saturday, April 5, from 1 – 5 pm, to gather for training to engage with Native Americans. Training will include information of historical reality and offering tools and skills for looking ahead with an aim toward healing of relationships and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. Email [AlbanyDistrict@unyumc.org](mailto:AlbanyDistrict@unyumc.org) to register. The event is free; registrations are asked so that adequate resources will be available.

***Schenectady CROP WALK 2014*** Join teams from dozens of organizations locally in the 2014 SICM-sponsored CROP WALK. Secure a funding packet and sponsor form from Schenectady Inner City Ministries, or supporting groups, collect sponsors and contributions, and bring them with you to the Emmanuel Friedens Church, Nott Terrace and Chapel Streets, on Sunday, May 4, at 1:00 pm. The walk is a great time with others from the community and a way to practically make a difference in the lives of those who are less able to have basics in necessary quantities.

***SICM-sponsored Days of Service*** The first Schenectady Inner City Ministries Day of Service is planned for April 5<sup>th</sup> for putting together Easter bags for the children who come to the pantry around Easter time. Items have been contributed by many over the past few weeks. The gathering place will be the SICM offices on Wendell Ave. The second Day of Service will be a clean-up day in many of the city's outdoor parks on April 26. Members of congregations of all faiths are encouraged to gather together, to share in a community project, while at the same time getting to know one another and learn a bit about each one's tradition.

## Interfaith Calendar for April 2014

- 8 *Ramanavami* -- **Hindu** – Celebration of the birth of Lord Rama, hero of the religious epic poem, The Ramayana. The day involves telling of stories and going to the temple.
- 12 Lazarus Saturday -- **Orthodox Christian** – Celebration of the resurrection of Lazarus by Jesus, celebrated on the eve of Palm Sunday; revealing that Jesus in "the resurrection and life" of all mankind.
- 13 Palm Sunday -- **All Christians** – Celebration of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The day begins Holy Week. It is observed by worship celebrations and parades using palm branches.
- Mahavir Jayanti -- **Jain** – Festival honoring Lord Mahavira on the founder's birthday. Shrines are visited. Teachings are reviewed and reflected upon.
- 14 Baisakhi New Year -- **Sikh** – Start of the New Years. Greetings that wish good life in coming days are exchanged. In Sikhi the day commemorates the founding of the Khalsa, a distinctive Sikh brotherhood.
- 15 Lord's Evening Meal -- **Jehovah's Witness Christian** – Jehovah's Witness primary annual celebration taking place in the evening.
- Hanuman Jayanti -- **Hindu** – Celebration of Hanuman who was an embodiment of Lord Rama. Devotion and selfless work are encouraged.
- 15-22 Pesach (Passover) -- **Jewish** – 8-day celebration of the deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. The story of the Exodus is recounted, and the ongoing struggle of all peoples for freedom from internal and external tyranny is celebrated. A special meal is a central feature.
- 17 Maundy Thursday -- **Christian** – Observance of the first Lord's Supper during Holy Week. A celebration of Jesus' interpretation of his ministry as servant, sacrificial compassion for justice.
- 18 Good (Holy) Friday -- **All Christian** – Remembrance of the crucifixion of Jesus and related events.
- 20 Easter -- **All Christians** – The most holy of Christian sacred days. The day commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from his death by crucifixion. Observances include worship services beginning at sunrise, special music, feasting, and parades.
- 21 First Day of Ridvan -- Baha'i – Commemoration of the twelve day period in 1863 when Baha'u'llah declared that he was God's messenger for this age. Work is to be suspended on days 1, 9, and 12 of the festival.
- 23 St. George Day -- **Christian** – Remembrance of a person who, in the 4th century, was a martyr and became an ideal of martial valor and selflessness. Legend of killing a dragon is connected with this patron saint of England.
- 27 Yom HaShoah -- **Jewish** – Jewish Holocaust Day. The day has been established to remember the six million Jews killed by the Nazis in 1933-45. It is observed by many non-Jews as well.
- 29 Ninth Day of Ridvan -- Baha'i – Celebration of the arrival of Baha'u'llah at a sacred garden.



IFC OF SCHENECTADY

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Tuesday 6-7pm  
Fridays 7:30-8:30am  
Others as needed  
[Schenectadyinterfaith.weebly.com](http://Schenectadyinterfaith.weebly.com)



**Coordinating Council Meetings**

The Council will meet on the second Thursday at 9:00 am at Faith United Methodist Church, 811 North Brandywine Avenue, Schenectady, 12308 on the following dates: **April 10 and May 8**. On occasion these may have to be changed.

**You may attend Council Meetings if you are interested.** Members and friends are invited to attend any Council Meeting to observe. If there is an interest that you would like considered, please contact Rev. Bob Long, 372-1083, at least two weeks ahead. Thank you.

**Do we have your email????**  
**Please send your email address**  
**to us at**  
**[schdyinterfaith@yahoo.com!](mailto:schdyinterfaith@yahoo.com)**

**Check us out at**  
**[Schenectadyinterfaith.weebly.com](http://Schenectadyinterfaith.weebly.com)**

"Peace is always  
Beautiful"

-Walt Whitman