



Interfaith Community of Schenectady, Inc.

December 2013

Vol. 42, No. 4

Goal:
Sharing together,
One God —
One Community

Interfaith News

~ Celebrating Forty Years ~ 1971-2011 ~

January Dinner Meeting

Tuesday, January 21, 2013

Dinner 6:30pm

Program 7:30pm

Dominican Retreat and Conference Center
1945 Union Street, Niskayuna, NY

Program tba

Dinner is \$12. 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, by January 13, 2014.

Mark your calendars now for our 2013-2014 Program Year meeting dates

Monthly Gathering dates and places:

- February 11, 2014, Tuesday, Dominican Retreat and Conference Center
- March 4, 2014, Tuesday, Congregation Gates of Heaven, Ashmore and Eastern Parkway, Schenectady
- April 8, 2014, Tuesday, Dominican Retreat and Conference Center
- May 7, 2014, Wednesday, Dominican Retreat and Conference Center.

When you can plan ahead, it is possible to invite friends and neighbors to this aspect of our shared life which you hold significant. Please do so regularly.



From our President

Strange and Discomforting Interrelationships A few years ago, Diana L. Eck, who leads the Harvard Pluralism Project, wrote a book dealing with diversity and pluralism. Though directed toward Christians, I believe the findings are applicable to all faiths. "We cannot live in a world in which our economics and markets are global, our political awareness is global, our business relationships take us to every continent, and the Internet connects us with colleagues half way around the world," says Eck, "and yet live on Friday, or Saturday, or Sunday with ideas of God that are essentially provincial, imagining that somehow the one we call God has been primarily concerned with us and our tribe."

Making a further distinction, Eck says that pluralism is more than just diversity. "Being a Christian pluralist means daring to encounter people of very different faith traditions and defining my faith not by its borders, but by its roots." I believe that I could apply the same conclusions to Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Native American Spirituality and other faiths. The language and engagement of pluralism are not just the language and engagement of differences, but the language and engagement of interaction, involvement and participation. It is the language and engagement of "traffic, exchange, dialogue, and debate."

Such engagement does not come automatically. It requires learning and practicing skills. Listening and receiving are essential. Unfortunately many of us are not very patient at these skills. First and foremost, we must listen to and learn of our own faith; then we must also listen to and learn of the faith of others. "Americans on the whole," says Diana Eck, "have a high degree of religious identification ... and yet a very low degree of religious literacy." In this time, when the interaction of increasing number of world faiths becomes a part of our daily life, we all need to raise the bar higher. If we do not know much about our own faith, the sourcebook of our faith, the history of our faith, the beliefs and supporting texts of other faiths ... if we do not know the nature of religious language [so as, for example, to separate it from political language applied to faith], and the nature of religious experience, then it is difficult to evaluate both our own religious faith and also that of others. Listening and learning are essential. Searching passionately, celebrating likenesses and acknowledging differences are vital for the health of religious faith. The purpose of such engagement is not to achieve agreement, but to facilitate fruitful relationship. The understanding and experience of each faith is enhanced in dynamic relationship with other faiths.

Eck uses some images for such pluralism. One is that of a symphony orchestra. Each instrument contributes to the music of the whole, but each instrument maintains its own distinctive sound. Yet, because an orchestra usually follows a script that is already composed before it is played, Eck prefers the symbol of a jazz ensemble. "In jazz," she observes, "the playing is the writing." The players must collaborate with each other and invent their contribution while giving close attention to the music of every other instrument. Because our varying faiths are living religions that are dynamic and not static, engagement releases growth of understanding and maturity within each faith and also between faiths.

Ultimately, the test of religious pluralism is in response to the inner call of all dynamic faiths – reaching out in hospitality and generosity to "the neighbor." It is frequently the case that participants of differing faiths are inspired to dialogue and share more fully when they have found themselves in the common service of compassion and fairness within wider circles of community. Discovering the joy and satisfaction of such service, participants are often inspired to ask of each other, "Why are you doing this?" "What is there about your faith that leads you to share God-goodness in this way?" Amazing dialogue follows, with blessings for all involved.



Prayers for Peace - You are invited to use them during the month of December.

An Internet Prayer For Peace O God, you are the source of life and peace. Praised be your name forever. We know it is you who turn our minds to thoughts of peace. Hear our prayer in this time of crisis. Your power changes hearts. Muslims, Christians and Jews remember, and profoundly affirm, that they are followers of the one God, Children of Abraham, brothers and sisters; enemies begin to speak to one another; those who were estranged join hands in friendship; nations seek the way of peace together. Strengthen our resolve to give witness to these truths by the way we live. Give to us: Understanding that puts an end to strife; Mercy that quenches hatred, and Forgiveness that overcomes vengeance. Empower all people to live in your law of love. Amen. --- Source: Pax Christi

Make Me An Instrument of Your Peace Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love, Where there is injury, pardon, Where there is doubt, faith, Where there is despair, hope, Where there is darkness, light, Where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, not so much to be understood as to understand, not so much to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, it is in dying that we awake to eternal life. --- St. Francis of Assisi

Sufi Prayer for Peace Send Thy peace O Lord, which is perfect and everlasting, that our souls may radiate peace. Send Thy peace O Lord, that we may think, act and speak harmoniously. Send Thy peace O Lord, that we may be contented and thankful for Thy bountiful gifts. Send Thy peace O Lord, that amidst our worldly strife, we may enjoy Thy bliss. Send Thy peace O Lord, that we may endure all, tolerate all, in the thought of Thy grace and mercy. Send Thy peace O Lord, that our lives may become a Divine vision and in Thy light, all darkness may vanish. Send Thy peace O Lord, our Father and Mother, that we Thy children on Earth may all unite in one family. --- Inayat Khan, founder of the Sufi Order in the West

Native American Prayer for Peace O Great Spirit of our Ancestors, I raise my pipe to you. To your messengers the four winds, and to Mother Earth who provides for your children. Give us the wisdom to teach our children to love, to respect, and to be kind to each other so that they may grow with peace in mind. Let us learn to share all good things that you provide for us on this Earth.

Buddhist Prayer for Peace May all beings everywhere plagued with sufferings of body and mind quickly be freed from their illnesses. May those frightened cease to be afraid, and may those bound be free. May the powerless find power, and may people think of befriending one another. May those who find themselves in trackless, fearful wilderness -- the children, the aged, the unprotected-- be guarded by beneficent celestials, and may they swiftly attain Buddhahood.

Hindu Prayer for Peace Oh God, lead us from the unreal to the Real. Oh God, lead us from darkness to light. Oh God, lead us from death to immortality. Shanti, Shanti, Shanti unto all. Oh Lord God almighty, may there be peace in celestial regions. May there be peace on earth. May the waters be appeasing. May herbs be wholesome, and may trees and plants bring peace to all. May all beneficent beings bring peace to us. May thy Vedic Law propagate peace all through the world. May all things be a source of peace to us. And may thy peace itself, bestow peace on all, and may that peace come to me also.

Jewish Prayer for Peace Come let us go up the mountain of the Lord, that we may walk the paths of the Most High. And we shall beat our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation-- neither shall they learn war any more. And none shall be afraid, for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.

Muslim Prayer for Peace In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful. Praise be to the Lord of the Universe who has created us and made us into tribes and nations, That we may know each other, not that we may despise each other. If the enemy incline towards peace, do thou also incline towards peace, and trust God, for the Lord is the one that heareth and knoweth all things. And the servants of God, Most Gracious are those who walk on the Earth in humility, and when we address them, we say "PEACE."

Christian Prayer for Peace Blessed are the PEACEMAKERS, for they shall be known as the Children of God. But I say to you that hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To those who strike you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from those who take away your cloak, do not withhold your coat as well. Give to everyone who begs from you, and of those who take away your goods, do not ask them again. And as you wish that others would do to you, so do to them



Providing information about regional ecumenical and interfaith groupings

In the next few Interfaith Newsletters we will be introducing, one at a time, many of the ecumenical and interfaith groupings in the region. We begin with the Capital Area Council of Churches

Capital Area Council of Churches For over 70 years, the Capital Area Council of Churches has been directly involved in bringing congregations together as part of the ecumenical movement. The Council has been dedicated to responding to critical needs in the Capital District of New York State.

The Capital Area Council of Churches (CACC) was founded in 1941 as the Federation of Churches of Christ in Albany, N.Y. and Vicinity. Throughout its history the Council has been committed to the ecumenical mandate in a changing world: working together, exploring our many divergent viewpoints, seeking to bear faithful and effective witness in our time and place. The Council will work with and encourage member churches to move toward a faithful future of service, advocacy, and celebration.

An ecumenical fellowship of some 90 churches, primarily located in Albany County, its mission is carried out through a variety of projects and activities. Among them are:

- Ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and special events
- Ecumenical worship service on Good Friday
- Emergency Overflow Homeless Shelter
- Communication of ecumenical and interfaith news through our monthly newsletter, "***Connection***"
- Involvement with the planning and maintenance of the Interfaith Prayer Room at Albany International Airport
- The Ecumenical Witnesses at Baptism program, whereby members of other churches serve as witnesses to baptisms in local churches
- Celebration of our unity in Christ

Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation

For over 70 years the Council has been directly involved both in bringing churches together as part of the ecumenical movement and in responding to critical needs in the Capital District.

Looking ahead at the Dominican Conference and Retreat Center

Upcoming programs at the DCRC, 1941 Union Street, Niskayuna, NY 12309:

12 Step Presentation "Having had a Spiritual Awakening", January 5, 2014, 1:30-4:30pm, with Sr. Kay Kanick, RSM

"Dreaming in Winter" Retreat Weekend for Men and Women, January 10-12, 2014 with Sr. Carol Davis, OP

"Introduction to Spiritual Journaling", January 17, 2014, 7-9pm with Maggie Whelan

"Writing the Prayer of Your Life", January 18, 2014, 10am-3pm with Maggie Whelan

"Chicken Soup for Body and Soul", January 28, 2014, 6:30-8:45pm with Sr. Ethel Detz, OP

For more information call the Dominican Retreat and Conference Center at (518) 393-4169.



Share your news with Interfaith Community...

CONGRATULATIONS to All Saints Episcopal in Round Lake” “ Our Vestry is pleased to welcome the Rev. Scott Evans as the new Priest of the congregation. He starts with us first weekend in December.”

CONGRATULATIONS The Board of Directors of the Capital Area Council of Churches has announced that Ms. Deborah Riitano will serve as the Council’s next Executive Director, effective January 1. Ms. Riitano is known to many in the Capital Region’s ecumenical and interfaith community. A long-time member of the Parish of St. Vincent de Paul, she serves as coordinator of the Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NNORC), a project of Jewish Family Services of Northeastern New York. She has been a board member of the Sidney and Beatrice Albert Interfaith Lecture Series at the College of Saint Rose and has served as the President of CACC Board of Directors since 2011.

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 November

Individual membership renewals: Marilyn Soffer, Catherine Boyd, Richard & Barbara, Preisman, Norma Hudson, Fr. Carl Urban, Linda Woodward-Stein, Jean Gordon, Rev. Bob Long, Ria Soellner, Kathleen Duff, Neil & Jane Golub, Eileen & John Sowa, Paulyn Cox, Phyllis Boyd, Ruth Larson, Doris & Frederick Cullern, Hugh Nevin, Joy Coneway, Alan Schick, Sondra Christian

Institutional memberships: Bellevue Reformed Church, Church of the Immaculate Conception, Congregation Gates of Heaven
Thank you for your support!

From the Coordinating Council

Membership Contributions Membership contributions have not been increased since the beginning of the Interfaith Community in 1971. Everything else has increased significantly, including Interfaith’s costs. At the October Council Meeting it was decided to increase slightly the suggested contribution levels. Beginning January, 2014, contributions will be sought at the following levels [yes, you may do more if you wish, many do]:

- Life Members -\$600 (payable in six annual installments)
- Patron Members - \$100.
- Sustaining Members [Individual] - \$50 Sustaining Members [Household] - \$70
- Contributing Members [Individual] - \$35 Contributing Members [Household]—\$45
- Supporting Members [Individual] - \$25 Supporting Members [Household] - \$35

Institutions/congregations are asked to be as generous as possible as the Interfaith Community provides ministry which individual congregations/institutions cannot easily duplicate and which provides benefits to them.

Please remember this change....

In the past contributions were asked by all members on the month in which they joined Interfaith. The Interfaith Council now asks that you offer your “gifts of support and encouragement” at the beginning of each new calendar year ... within the months of January and February of each year.

If you haven’t made your contribution during 2013, we ask that you, as an individual, family or organization, make your gift to the effective work of Interfaith before the end of the year. To all who have provided gifts to date in 2013, we express thanks. We offer gratitude to all who do so through the end of the year.

Interfaith Calendar for December 2013

1-24 Advent -- **Christian** -- Time of preparation for observing the birth of Jesus Christ. Advent begins on the Sunday nearest November 30 and is the beginning of the Christian worship year. Advent is observed with the lighting of advent candles, display of wreaths, and special ceremonies. Advent also anticipates the coming again to earth of Jesus Christ. The season continues through December 24.

6 Saint Nicholas Day-- **Christian** --Celebration of the birth of Saint Nicolas, patron saint of children and role model for gift giving. Many churches named for this saint who is also the Dutch version of Santa Claus.

8 Rohatsu - Bodhi Day -- **Buddhist** -- Celebration of the enlightenment of Buddha.

Immaculate Conception of Mary -- **Catholic Christian** -- Day of celebrating the belief that Mary, mother of Jesus, was preserved from original sin all of her life. A day of obligation and required church attendance.

12 Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe -- **Catholic Christian** -- Day honoring of a legendary appearance of the Virgin Mary near Mexico City in 1531 c.e.

16-25 Posadas Navidenas – **Christian** -- Hispanic Christian feast of The Lodgings commemorating the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem in preparation for the birth of Jesus.

21 Solstice -- Yule -- **Wicca/Pagan northern hemisphere** -- That time when the earth is most inclined away from the sun. It is the most southern or northern point depending on the hemisphere. Litha -- **Wicca/Pagan southern hemisphere** -- Celebration of the sacred marriage in which energy of the gods is poured into the service of life.

Yule – **Christian** -- Celebration of the light dawning in Jesus. Also a Norse pagan celebration of the winter-born king, symbolized by the rebirth of the sun.

24 Christmas Eve -- **Christian** -- Celebration of the arrival of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem for or the birth of Jesus. It is observed with worship, candle lighting, manger scenes and festive meals.

25 Christmas -- **Christian** -- Celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Observed by prayers, exchanging of gifts, and family parties.

26 Zarathosht Diso (Death of Prophet Zarathushtra) -- **Zoroastrian** -- Anniversary of the death of Prophet Zarathushtra.

28 Holy Innocents -- **Christian** -- Day of solemn memory of male children killed by King Herod in the attempt to destroy Jesus.

29 Feast of the Holy Family - **Catholic Christian** -- Celebration of the love between the family of Jesus.

31 Watch Night -- **Christian** -- Occasion to thank God for bringing people safely through another year. Controversial history. Protestant European Christian history dating from 1733 and in US 1770. Some sources link the observance to Black Christian celebration of Emancipation in 1862.

First UMC, Schenectady, attaches special meaning to its tree at YWCA

The Methodist Church [now United Methodist] was one of the earliest denominations to move across the USA. Its presence offered very helpful promise of hope and confidence to those facing a hard life. At the same time, it also [too willingly at times] reflected the cultural values of the time. Its history is strewn with leaders [many clergy and laity alike] taking leadership in a broad process to strip Native Americans of any connection with their culture, history and spirituality.

Today, as the heart of the "way-Jesus-offers" more fully guides United Methodist spirituality, there is growing acceptance and appreciation of Native American spirituality and understanding of life. As a small and symbolic act of reconciliation, and a sign that there is much more to be learned in relationship and understanding leading to a more full reconciliation, First UMC has "decorated" its tree at the YWCA with symbols both of past abuses and misuse and of hope for a new and uniting future.



IFC OF SCHENECTADY

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E-mail:
schdyinterfaith@yahoo.com

office hours:
Tuesday 6-7pm
Fridays 7:30-8:30am
Others as needed
Schenectadyinterfaith.weebly.com



Coordinating Council Meetings

The Council will meet on the second *Thursday* at 9:30 am at Faith United Methodist Church, 811 North Brandywine Avenue, Schenectady, 12308 on the following dates: [December 12](#), [January 9, 2014](#), [February 13](#), [March 13](#), [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

