



Interfaith Community of
Schenectady, Inc.

Fall 2020

Vol. 49 No. 1



Interfaith News

~ Celebrating 50 Years of Interfaith Partnerships in 2021 ~ Est. 1971 ~

Welcome to our 2020-2021 Program Year!

We're going virtual!

Join us Wednesday, September 16 at 7:00 pm via Zoom
"Poetry as Witness"

Our speaker, Leslie Neustadt, will discuss her work with the International Women's Writing Guild and with people with different abilities.

*To join us, simply send your email address to schdyinterfaith@yahoo.com by 5pm, September 15.
The Zoom link will be emailed to you the day of the program.*

*These programs are being offered free of charge.
If you'd like to support IFC with a financial gift so we may continue offering these programs, please send your tax deductible donation to IFC, c/o Edith Kliman, 2263 Sweetbrier Rd, Niskayuna, NY 12309.*



From our President

Personal Reflections:

Throughout this liminal spring and summer, I have taken part in writing, reading, and listening events powered by non-profit organizations and offered online. In a recent 5-week class, I studied the poetry of Naomi Shihab Nye, the daughter of a Palestinian father and an American mother whose published work includes poetry, young-adult fiction, picture books, and novels. Her poetry resonates with me. Nye was one of five poets whose work we studied. Each week participants were challenged to write a poem of their own in a similar style. I always enjoy opportunities to stretch my creative muscles; I loved working through these exercises!

I am sharing one of Nye's poems here, because I love the imagery. Her descriptions of kneeling on hard ground surrounded by olive trees, and the images she creates of the participants, reminds me of a time when I lived on an island in the Mediterranean and regularly witnessed saints-day processions. As the featured saint or other holy person's statue passed down the street, mounted on an elaborately decorated platform with long poles for the carriers, the most intensely devout knelt on the pavement. Nye's descriptions mirror my remembrance.

Important Updates:

During the pandemic lockdown remote meetings became the norm. After a series of canceled events, Interfaith decided to move online for the safety and convenience of both our constituency and our guest speakers. Our evening presentations are now powered by zoom. To access our meetings, you need an internet connection via cellphone, tablet, or computer, you need to have zoom loaded on your device, (it's a free download), and you need to have registered with our office at least a day ahead of the meeting date.

Each event will have a specific link which will be emailed to you the day of the meeting. Our meetings start at 7:00pm, you should be logged in and ready to participate at that time. Zoom offers the opportunity to ask questions – these should be typed into the "chat" function. They will be read by the convenor at the end of the presentation, asked of the presenter, and answered as time allows. During the program we will ask you to "mute" your device so that background noise does not interfere with the presentation. Only those persons who have registered will receive the zoom meeting information.

The programs are our gift to you. In keeping with our tradition, our programs will continue free of charge. Our expenses also continue. Please help us keep Interfaith active and functional. We are a registered non-profit organization; your contribution is tax-deductible. Make your check payable to Interfaith Community of Schenectady, and mail it to our treasurer, Edith Kliman, at 2263 Sweetbrier Road, Niskayuna, NY 12309.

For your convenience and ours, and effective immediately, our newsletters will be sent to you via email. Please make sure your email address is current. Call or email our office if you need to change or update your information. The benefit? No more waiting for the mail carrier to deliver. No more paper cluttering your desk! You receive our news on your computer, read it online and delete or save it as you see fit. Our newsletters will be published quarterly, and should arrive in your inbox prior to the first week of each quarter. This edition marks the start of our new distribution system, and is for the 4th quarter of 2020, but is coming to you a few weeks early to include information about our September meeting. The next edition will be sent out towards the end of December. Posts on our Facebook page and on our website will include updates between newsletters, as well as brief email alerts.

Shalom, Salaam, Namaste... peace to all.

Miranda Rand. President



Fall/Winter 2020 Monthly Meeting Dates and Topics**In keeping with tradition, we offer these lectures free of charge.**

(Should you choose to show your appreciation, donations would be welcomed. Please mail your check made payable to Interfaith Community of Schenectady to our treasurer: Edith Kliman, 2263 Sweetbrier Road, Schenectady, NY 12309)

Thursday, October 22: 7:00pm

Melanie Puerto Conte: Working Group on Girls of Schenectady, Inc. *The History, Evolution, and Continuance of an Organization Working with Girls in the Schenectady City School District to Help Them Realize Their Potential*

Melanie is President of Working Group on Girls, Inc. WGGGS Inc. was the recipient of our Stamper Community Service Award several years ago.

Wednesday, November 18: 7:00pm

Joann Rafalik: *SiCM has Transitioned... from A Christian Church-Supported Organization*. Joann is Interim Director of SiCM. Her presentation will focus on the process SiCM is undergoing to move from a Christian church supported organization to one that is supported by houses of prayer from many faith traditions. This meeting will include our annual awards' presentation; St. Joseph's House, a drop-in hospitality center adjacent to the SiCM offices on Albany Street, in Schenectady is the recipient of the Stamper Community Service Award; Paula Weiss, founder and coordinator of the interfaith youth storytelling program, Children at the Well, will receive our Robert and Dorothy Ludwig award.

December – NO MEETING.**Wednesday, January 27: 7:00pm**

The Rev. Dr. Tim Coombs and the Rev. Kathleen Gorman-Coombs: *Schenectady Clergy Against Hate: The Principle and Purpose of the Organization*. Tim and Kathy co-pastor Trinity Presbyterian Church in Scotia. Both are active members of Schenectady Clergy Against Hate.

Wednesday, February 24: 7:00pm

The speaker and topic will be announced in the next newsletter.

For the months of March, April and May, the dates and topics are not yet confirmed

Community News**Eyes Wide Open NENY, Inc**

A recent letter from Debbie Fowler, founder and board president of Eyes Wide Open NENY, informed us that the building they rented at 1774 Van Vranken Avenue, Schenectady, had been sold and that the new owner had other plans for the space they used. The building housed their craft thrift store, their offices and was used as temporary shelter for victims of Human Trafficking. They also fell victim to New York State coronavirus restrictions which shuttered their retail space and prevented them from offering services. When the lockdown lifted, many of their volunteers felt themselves unable to return to work out of fear of contracting the virus. The board voted to dissolve the corporation. As soon as their paperwork is completed, they will cease to exist. Eyes Wide Open was the recipient of our Stamper Community Service Award in 2019. Debbie Fowler was a guest speaker at one of our dinner meetings earlier this year. Debbie had a wonderful dream to rescue and rehabilitate tweens, teens and young women who'd become victims of human trafficking and she worked hard to achieve her goals. We are greatly saddened to learn that the corporation must now dissolve.

August 24, 2020, proclaimed, "Fazana Saleem-Ismail Day"

On August 24, 2020, the City of Albany issued a proclamation declaring August 24, 2020 Fazana Saleem-Ismail day. Fazana, a research scientist at SUNY, Albany, died of stomach cancer on June 25, 2020. She founded Jazzy Sun Birthdays to provide children living in shelters, "a real birthday party", worked to discredit Islamophobia and consistently educated about Muslim faith traditions. Although Fazana was not a member of the Interfaith Community of Schenectady, we are proud to share news of this well-deserved recognition, in honor of all she did to further interfaith relations.

Albany County Interfaith Coalition Prayer Service:

At a prayer service held on June 4, 2020, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs hosted a prayer service at which Imam Djafer Sebkaoui, the Muslim chaplain at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), spoke these words: "Hopefully this time will unite us to not only get rid of the pandemic of coronavirus, but the pandemic of racist injustice and discrimination. (Quoted in *Oikoumene* the newsletter for the RCDA Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs).



Different Ways to Pray: Naomi Shihab Nye (Copyright © 1995)

There was the method of kneeling,
a fine method if you lived in a country
where stones were smooth.
The women dreamed wistfully of bleached courtyards,
hidden corners where knee fit rock.
Their prayers were weathered rib bones,
small calcium words uttered in sequence,
as if this shedding of syllables could somehow
fuse them to the sky.

There were the men who had been shepherds so long
they walked like sheep.
Under the olive trees, they raised their arms—
Hear us! We have pain on earth!
We have so much pain there is no place to store it!
But the olives bobbed peacefully
in fragrant buckets of vinegar and thyme.
At night, the men ate heartily, flat bread and white cheese,
and were happy in spite of the pain,
because there was also happiness.

Some prized the pilgrimage,
wrapping themselves in new white linen
to ride buses across miles of vacant sand.
When they arrived at Mecca
they would circle the holy places,
on foot, many times,
they would bend to kiss the earth
and return, their lean faces housing mystery.

While for certain cousins and grandmothers
the pilgrimage occurred daily,
lugging water from the spring
or balancing the baskets of grapes.
These were the ones present at births,
humming quietly to perspiring mothers.
The ones stitching intricate needlework into children's dresses,
forgetting how easily children soil clothes.

There were those who didn't care about praying.
The young ones. The ones who had been to America.
They told the old ones; you are wasting your time.
Time?—The old ones prayed for the young ones.
They prayed for Allah to mend their brains,
for the twig, the round moon,
to speak suddenly in a commanding tone.

And occasionally there would be one
who did none of this,
the old man Fowzi, for example, Fowzi the fool,
who beat everyone at dominoes,
insisted he spoke with God as he spoke with goats,
and was famous for his laugh.

**THE INTERFAITH COMMUNITY OF SCHENECTADY, INC.
ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION FORM**

Please complete this form, choose a contribution level, and mail it with your check to our treasurer:
Edith Kliman, 2263 Sweetbrier Road, Schenectady, NY 12309

The Interfaith Community of Schenectady, Inc. was established on November 17, 1971. It is the first organization in New York State to encourage participation of diverse religious institutions and organizations. It's goal has been to foster dialogue and create better understanding between groups of different faiths.

INTERFAITH OFFICERS FOR 2020

Miranda Rand, Presidentmirandarand411@gmail.com/**518-393-5047**
Colette Odell, Vice-President**518-371-0634**
Humera Khan, Secretaryhumerak19@gmail.com
Edith Kliman, Treasurer**518-346-0025**

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENTS: Rev. Bob Long & Sr. Carol Davis, OP

COORDINATING COUNCIL: Erica Berger, Karen Bond, Zarina Chaudry, Scott Eberling, Rev. Josselle Gagliano, Audrey Hughes, Humera Khan, Edith Kliman, Rev. Bob Long, Gerry Pierce, Miranda Rand

***PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERFAITH COMMUNITY OF SCHENECTADY, INC.
IS OPEN TO ALL RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS OF ALL FAITHS***

I (We) wish to contribute: (please mark the level at which you wish to make your contribution)

LIFE: \$600 payable in one payment of \$600, or six annual installments of \$100.00 each

PATRON: \$100 annually (individual *or* household)

SUSTAINING: \$60 annually (individual) \$70 annually (household)

CONTRIBUTING: \$35 annually (individual) \$45 annually (household)

SUPPORTING: \$25 annually (individual) \$35 annually (household)

I AM *CURRENTLY EMPLOYED BY GE* and my check is eligible for the GE Foundation Matching Funds program. My check has been reported.*

**GE Foundation Matching Funds program will no longer match contributions to nonprofit organizations made by retired employees.*

THANK YOU

Your contribution helps to offset our overhead which consists of telephone service, secretary's salary and associated expenses, Chaplaincy program, and costs associated with presenting programs.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____ DATE: _____

EMAIL: _____

IFC OF SCHENECTADY

811 N. Brandywine Ave
Schenectady, NY 12308

Phone: 518-370-2150

E-mail:
schdyinterfaith@yahoo.com

office hours:
Tuesday 4-5pm
Fridays 7:30-8:30am
Others as needed
Schenectadyinterfaith.weebly.com



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Coordinating Council Meetings

Council Meetings Visioning and planning are accomplished at the monthly Council Meetings.

Council Meetings are generally held the second Thursday of the month by Zoom meeting and begin at 9:30 am.

Upcoming dates:

October 8

November 12

December 10

Our love, support and thanks...

Condolences: We send our love and sympathy to Zarina Chaudrey, member of our Coordinating Council, whose husband, Ashraf, died earlier this summer.

Thank You: We are grateful for the financial contribution received from **Faith United Methodist Church**. The church provides us free meeting space and storage, a mailing address, and a small office; sending us a financial contribution as well is beyond generous. Thank you so much. Also, to **Eleanor Tunny** who recently mailed us her annual contribution.