



Interfaith Community of Schenectady, Inc.

March 2013

Vol. 41, No. 6

Goal:
Sharing together,
One God —
One Community

Interfaith News

~ Celebrating Forty Years ~ 1971-2011 ~

March Dinner Meeting

Thursday, March 14, 2013

Dinner 6:30pm

Program 7:30pm

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

“No Matter What” Parenting

BJ Rosenfeld, presenter

Ms. Rosenfeld will give a humorous and insightful talk about parents confronted with children who opt for religious paths different from than their upbringing.

Ms. Rosenfeld is president of the Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation.

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 March 10..

Coming Wednesday, April 17!

The April gathering will focus on the essential ingredients of the Buddhist faith. The guest presenter will be Susan Spang, a Buddhist Monk.

We will meet at the Dominican Retreat and Conference Center, 1945 Union Street, Niskayuna, at 6:30 for the meal, followed by the program.

Bring friends or someone new who has shown an interest in interfaith engagement.



From your president...

The following is from the last entry by Rabbi Matthew Cutler, Rabbi of Congregation Gates of Heaven, Schenectady, before leaving for home from Ghana

"This is the last night in Ghana. The plane leaves tomorrow at 11 AM and what an incredible 6 weeks it has been. The teaching and the learning, the building of friendships and toilets, the dedication of the spirit and the rejuvenation of the soul – these were experienced in ample measure. So now let me frame the experience and try to bring closure as the bags are packed and farewells have been said.

Earlier in the week, I went to the WEB DuBois Center. I knew of Dr. DuBois as a leading African American educator and scholar. But did you know that he moved to Ghana at the age of 93 to start work of the Encyclopedia Africa? This leader of Pan-Africanism was undertaking a huge task. He died at the age of 95 and is buried in Accra. As the tour began, the site-guide started his presentation: "Born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts..." What? Really? The father of modern day African nationalism was born near Camp Eisner. Why didn't I know that? O wait – I sort of did; there is a plaque on Route 71 when one drives from Schenectady to Great Barrington. The guide continued: "The museum in Great Barrington has a timeline..." A Museum? Where? I promised the guide that I find it and send him pictures when I got there.

This story frames my Ghana experience. Like most Americans, I knew very little about African history and culture. I knew where to find Ghana on a map. I knew the capital and with some coaching from Richie Weiskopf, I learned to pronounce it correctly before I left. But I was grossly ignorant of so much. I read a guide book, a biography or 2 – but still, so much was unknown to me.

So what did I learn? It was all taught to me by people who left a great imprint on my soul.

1. Africans don't have much, but what they have – they will share with you. The people of PramPram and in particular, Pastor Manu and his family, embrace a blefono with love and encouragement. They welcomed me with open arms, not expecting me to give, but rather, they welcomed me for making the journey to share life with them. The "stuff" – books, computers, printer, sports equipments and toilets that we brought were secondary. These things were appreciated and our hosts graciously accepted those elements that supported their lives, but for which they had neither demanded or asked!

2. Building a better world is a team effort. No one individual succeeds when one person gets the best. It is not a competitive environment in that regard. Take for example Prof. Rabi Musah's invitation to look up her family, which I did. What I found was Blanche, the "Cake Boss" of Ghana who employs 45 people who share the work load in turning out beautiful cakes and pastries. Well respected by everyone, she needs her people to be dedicated to the job. They call her Madam, but their children call her Auntie. And when I left the bake shop, I dare not tell you how many bags and boxes of goodies I received!

3. Not everything is perfect in Ghana. I learned this from 2 groups of foreigners I met at the hotel toward the end of my stay. Terry and Ann retired from Nottingham England and spend 3 months in the far north of the country every year. North of Tamale, near the Burkina-Faso border, they saw a different Ghana than I experienced. Their region is far poorer than mine with limited agriculture and water resources. The south is 75% Christian, but the north is 90% Muslim. There is a dividing line around Kumasi which separates which religion is dominant, as well as the economic growth potential – it doesn't exist beyond a few hours north of Accra, which is the city of Kumasi. There is far greater need in the north for social services and financial support. Terry and Ann run a nutrition center which saves children – not only from malnutrition but from the custom where malnourished children were taken into the forest and hacked to death because they were seen as possessed by an evil spirit.



“The political ugliness of West Africa was described to me by 2 Swedes who were “consultants.” I am not sure regarding what they consulted; but, after a few drinks, it became clear that these 2 were former military personnel and were well versed in issues involving “security” and the flow of trouble in the region. The armed conflicts in this region have brought Chinese and Eastern European weapons into the area that only intensify tensions. The arms seem to float from one region to the next where there is conflict. Mali is a perfect example, but the French pushed the al-Qaeda rebels back so that now they are heading in mass to Darfur in the Sudan. Then there is the drug problem – Africa is the transit point for Cocaine cartels of South America. Most cocaine in Europe and a significant amount of the cocaine in the US passes through an African port. And then there is the problem of human trafficking and the issue of piracy which is now being done more and more by “westerners” and not Somalians. Hanging with these guys was like reading a Tom Clancy novel!

4. America has held Ghana back as much as it has encouraged it to move forward. The first president of Ghana, Dr. Nykrumah did a lot to move the country forward – the work on infrastructure and the vision for the future, especially a Pan-Africa, is impressive. However, he worked closely with China and the USSR in the early 1960’s to do it. It is not a tale out of school to say that the CIA was involved with the coup that toppled his presidency in 1966. The result was a stagnation in moving Ghana forward, indeed all of Africa, for decades.

5. Wherever you go there is always someone Jewish! Rabbi Larry Milder was right when he penned a song with that phrase as the title. There are about 300 Israelis here, ChaBaD comes twice a year. The Israelis are supportive of each other as they build their lives here. Unlike the Ghanaians, most Israelis have come as individuals. They seek their fortune and build a comfortable life for themselves; then they go back to Israel. There is a group of people who claim to be Jews who live in Sefwi Wausa, two hours from Kumasi. They are a “lost Jewish tribe” who have some Jewish rituals and read the Old Testament as well as having a small Torah scroll. It was fascinating to see them – their story amazes me: the chief had a vision that they were Israelites many years ago. And because of their rituals, it was plausible. As Jews, they petitioned the government for their own school which was neither Christian nor Muslim, and it was granted. The Joint Distribution Committee in Israel also supports them.

6. Food tastes better when it is home cooked! Now I doubt that I can get Banku or Fufu in the States, but I hope to find a good West African grocery store so I can try to recreate the foods I found here. Now – I’ve just got to figure out what Palava is!

So when I leave here in a few hours, some things will come with me. First is the strong bond I have with Pastor Manu. I pray that we will be friends for years to come. I want to build that connection and the connection that is beginning between Gates of Heaven and The Bethel School. I want to take those core values of care and concern for people that is so communal in Ghana and replicate them back in the States. I also pledge to keep learning and sharing the stories of Africa that need to be told!

My pledge to myself is not to forget what I learned here. I promise to tell the stories of what I gleaned and experienced. I resolve not to forget the need to support the people in PramPram. And I intend to keep learning about Africa, so that it will not be just a place on a map, but a place in my soul!



Three Native American expressions of Spirituality

From the vision statement for Tecumseh, Shawnee Native American leader:

"Live your life so that the fear of death can never enter your heart. Trouble no one about their religion; respect others in their view, and demand that they respect yours. Love your life, perfect your life. Beautify all things in your life. Seek to make your life long and its purpose in the service of your people ... Always give a word or a sign of salute when meeting or passing a friend, even a stranger, when in a lonely place. Show respect to all people and bow to none. When you arise in the morning, give thanks for the food and the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies only in yourself. Abuse no one and no living thing. For abuse turns the wise ones into fools and robs the spirit of its vision. When it comes time to die ... sing your death song and die like a hero going home. [Copied from: Native American Spirituality Website; Canada]

Great Spirit Prayer Chief Dan George, Salish -- 1899-1981

O Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the wind, whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me. I need your strength and your wisdom. Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset. Make my hand respect the things that you have made, and my ear sharp to hear your voice. Make me wise so that I may understand thee things that you have taught my people. Help me to remain calm and strong in the face of all that comes towards me. Let me learn the lessons hidden under every leaf and rock. Help me seek pure thoughts and act with the intention of helping others. I seek strength not to be greater than my brothers and sisters, but to fight my greatest enemy – myself. Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes, so that when life fades as the fading sunset my spirit will come to you without shame.

Grandfather Cries Charles Phillip Whitedog

Grandfather, do you know me? I am your blood. The son of your son. I come to ask you a question Grandfather. Grandfather, don't you know me? Can I stop being Indian now? There are others that want to be Indian, and if they can start from nothing, I should be able to stop from something? Grandfather, don't you know me? Grandfather, I don't look like you. I don't know what you know. It would be easy for me to hide behind my paler skin. No one would know the pain I feel, or see the tears I cry for your Great Grandchildren. Grandfather, don't you know me?

Grandfather, look what I have done to our world. Mother Earth is on her knees. The Snake and Owl rule the day. I don't understand the language you speak Grandfather. Grandfather, don't you know me? Grandfather, I want my Pepsi, Levi's and Porsche too. I want to go where the others go, and see the things they see too. I don't have time to dance in the old way Grandfather. Grandfather? Grandfather, why are you crying? Grandfather, why are you crying? Grandfather, please stop crying. Grandfather, don't you know me?

Robert Ludwig bequest now received in full

The final payment has been received of the bequest directed to the Interfaith Community by one of its founders and long time leaders, Robert Ludwig. The total amount received from the bequest is \$24,359 [the designated gift of \$25,000 minus Interfaith's portion of costs of settling the estate]. The money is invested in a responsible manner over a long period, as Interfaith can access only the earnings and not the principle. The earnings will be transferred to another account with the investment firm and invested at the same rates, accumulating until significant need may call for its use in the future.

We express deep gratitude to the family of Bob Ludwig both for Bob, who was such a precious gift to us, and for the financial symbol of Bob's love and care for Interfaith engagement.

Share your news with Interfaith Community...

Congratulations to the First Presbyterian Church of Albany which recently celebrated its 250th anniversary.

Congratulations and best wishes to Brian Wright upon his retirement after 17 years as head of the Schenectady County Human rights Commission.

Share Your News with Interfaith Individuals, congregations and community groups are asked to share their news with Interfaith: notices and articles, awards, birthdays, 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 February

Individual membership renewals: Jeannette Gottlieb, Ria Soellner, Paul Tocker, Beverly Eisenstadt, Gerry & Eleanor Pierce

Institutional membership renewals: Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Bellevue Reformed Church

Thank you for your support!

A special way to honor or remember. Gifting is a wonderful part of celebrating a special occasion. You may receive many precious gifts on your birthday, anniversary, or other special occasion. You may give gifts to others on their special days. No gift is more precious than the gift of the love and compassion of the Eternal One received in and through your faith ... and the love and care of others.

God asks us to re-direct our great love for God through specific gifts for others. God works through us that others might live more fully the Life that was intended for them. In this way we honor and glorify God. God's way of giving is deeply meaningful. Therefore, to celebrate your special day, or that of a family member or friend, won't you consider a gift to the Interfaith Community of Schenectady in their honor or memory. We trust that you will also feel honored by this same gift.

Events of interest

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CDPHP Free Noontime Organ Concert Series at Proctors on their Main Stage on March, 19, April 23, May 21 and June 11.

Events in the Hindu Community, Pleasant and Sixth Streets in Mont Pleasant [Schenectady] to which you are invited:

March 9th is one of the most important holy days in Hinduism. It is Maha Shivratri, the celebration of The Night of Lord Shiva. We Hindus hold a ceremony at night and sing and pray to God in that form. This is the night when the Lord performed the Tandava Nritya, or Dance of Primordial Creation, Preservation and Destruction.

March 31 is Phagwah or Holi. This is a joyous Spring festival in which Hindus gather together to celebrate goodness and conquering evil. We throw colored powders into the air and onto each other! We dance, sing and eat wonderful food. It is a big party! Everyone is welcome.

Events offered to the Community by the Dominican Retreat Center, 1945 Union Street, Niskayuna, NY 12309

- March 6 morning: Harmonies of Heaven and Earth with Fr. Rich Broderick
 March 13 morning: Labyrinth Walk with Sr. Ethel Detz, OP
 March 20 morning: Heart of Earth; Heart of Sky: Maya Cosmology with Kathy Hatfield
 March 15-17: Life Skills for Women Survivors of Sexual Abuse with Sr. Carol Davis, OP
 March 22-24: Coloring the Shapes of Our Faith: Mandalas as a Path to Prayer with Br. Mickey O'Neil McGrath.

An Interfaith program led by Rabbi Don Cashman and Imam Yaki

Saturday, March 9, 7:30 P.M.

Schenectady JCC Jewish Film Festival The film "**DAVID**" will be the focus for interfaith learning and sharing. Daud, an Imam's son from Brooklyn, inadvertently befriends a group of Jewish boys at their orthodox school. As their friendship develops, David, as he known to the kids, is drawn into a complicated dilemma. Winner Ecumenical Prize, Montreal World Film Festival.

Ticket cost \$9, \$5 JCC and Islamic Community Center members, \$3 student. Reception included. Held at the Robert & Dorothy Ludwig JCC of Schenectady, 2565 Balltown Road, Niskayuna, 12309, 377-8803.

Good Friday Stations of the Cross Walk -- March 29, Noon

The annual Good Friday Stations of the Cross walk will begin at Christ Episcopal Church, State and Swan Streets, at noon. The walk will proceed to the location of many outreach ministries of various agencies within the city, ending at the City Mission. At each location a traditional reading from the walk of Jesus will be shared. Hymns and songs of faith will be sung as everyone moves from site to site. Please NOTE: the walk does not return to the place from which it began – there is no loop; you will have to arrange for transportation from the end [about 12 blocks away] to the beginning if someone cannot meet you at the end and you cannot walk back.

Interfaith Calendar for March 2013

- 1 Saint David of Wales – **Christian** -- Celtic saint known for his wisdom and missionary work.
- 2 -20 Nineteen Day Fast -- **Baha'I** -- Fast to be observed by adult Baha'is in good health – sunrise to sundown - no food or drink.
- 10 Meatfare Sunday -- **Orthodox Christian** -- Observance, two weeks before the start of the Great Lent, preparing the faithful for the celebration of the resurrection of Christ. This is the last day for eating of meat before the Great Lent.
- Maha Shivaratri – **Hindu** -- Festival in honor of Lord Shiva and his marriage to Goddess Parvati. Ceremonies involving prayers and hymns take place mostly at night.
- 17 St Patrick's Day -- **Christian** -- Celebration of Patrick who brought Christianity to Ireland in early days of the faith.
- 18 Clean Monday - Lent begins -- **Orthodox Christian** -- Firsts day of Lent.
- 19 Saint Joseph's Day – Christian -- Remembrance of Joseph, husband of Mary the mother of Jesus.
- 20 Equinox -- The time when the sun is directly above a point on the equator. The equinox will be either Vernal or Autumnal depending on the hemisphere.
- 21 Naw Ruz (New Year) -- Baha'i -- Observance of the vernal equinox symbolizing spiritual growth and renewal.
- Norouz (New Year) -- Persian/Zoroastrian -- Zoroastrian New Year.
- 24 Orthodox Sunday -- **Orthodox Christian** --first Sunday of Lent. Restoration of icons to the church is celebrated.
- Palm Sunday – **Christian** -- Celebration of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The day begins Holy Week. It is observed by worship celebrations and parades using palm branches.
- 25 Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin – **Christian** -- Celebration of Gabriel announcing to the Virgin Mary the coming birth of Jesus as the Incarnation of Creator God.
- 26-27 Pesach (Passover) First two days -- **Judaism** -- Jewish 8 day pilgrimage festival celebrating the Exodus from slavery to freedom. Also known as Passover.
- 26 Khordad Sal (Birth of Prophet Zaranhushtra) -- **Zoroastrian** -- Remembrance of the birth of Prophet Zarathushtra.
- 27 Magha Puja Day -- **Buddhist** -- Celebration of the presentation of teachings by Lord Buddha to an assembly of holy men.
- Lord's Evening Meal -- **Jehovah's Witness Christian** -- Jesus celebrated the Passover with his apostles, dismissed Judas Iscariot, and then instituted the Lord's Evening Meal to be celebrated annually.
- Holi -- **Hindu** -- Spring festival dedicated to the god of pleasure. It is observed in a colorful and boisterous manner. People shower each other with colored water and smear red and green powder on each other.
- 28 Maundy Thursday – **Christian** -- Observance of the first Lord's Supper during Holy Week.
- Hola Mohalla – **Sikh** -- Day when mock battles are fought and martial arts are displayed.
- Birth of Prophet Zarathushtra -- **Zoroastrian**.
- 29 Good Friday – **Christian** --Remembrance of the crucifixion of Jesus and related events.
- 31 Easter -- **Christian** -- 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.



IFC OF SCHENECTADY

811 N. Brandywine Ave
Schenectady, NY 12308

Phone: 518-370-2150

E-mail:
schdyinterfaith@yahoo.com

office hours:
Tuesday 3-4 pm
Fridays 12:30-2 pm
Others as needed
Schenectadyinterfaith.weebly.com



Coordinating Council Meetings

Friday, March 8, 2013
Friday, April 12, 2013
Friday, May 10, 2013
Friday, June 14, 2013

All meetings are held at Faith United Methodist Church, 811 Brandywine Avenue, Schenectady, and begin at 9:30 am.

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**

Hindu prayer for peace

Peace to the earth and to airy spaces!
Peace be to Heaven, peace to the waters,
Peace to the plants and peace to the trees!
May all the Gods grant me peace!
By this invocation of peace, may peace be diffused!
By this invocation of peace, may peace bring peace!
With this peace the dreadful I appease,
With this peace the cruel I appease,
With this peace evil I appease,
So that peace may prevail, happiness prevail!
May everything for us be peaceful! Atharva Veda 19.9.14