



**Interfaith Community of** Oct 2012  
**Schenectady, Inc.**

**Vol. 41, No. 2**

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

## **Interfaith News**

*~ Celebrating Forty Years ~ 1971-2011 ~*

# *Our 15th Annual James Stamper Interfaith Concert*

**Sunday, October 28, 2012 ~ 3:00pm**  
Congregation Gates of Heaven  
852 Ashmore Avenue, Schenectady, NY 12309

*Scheduled to appear*

**Bugler Mark Eiser**

**African Choir, Emmaus United Methodist Church, Albany**

**Hindu Prayer in Song and Dance**

**Church of the Immaculate Conception Choir, Glenville**

**Ne'imah Jewish Community Chorus**

*Admission is free. A free-will offering will be received.  
Refreshments served immediately following the concert.*

**It's not too late for you to have a part in our concert program.** The Fall Interfaith Concert is one of only two fundraisers that Interfaith promotes each year. Included with this newsletter is a form you may use to join others in sponsoring the concert. Your gift will go a long way to help with the effectiveness of Interfaith in months ahead



## From your president...

### Experience Matters

In 2005 William Sloane Coffin wrote "*Letters to a Young Doubter.*" Each letter is addressed to "Tom," an imagined bright, young friend. This question and response form was used by Coffin because he believed that as we love questions that open our faith to greater understanding, we live our way into answers. In Chapter 25 he writes: "You wrote that you may take a summer job as a lifeguard at a suburban swimming pool 'to make good money to buy a car.' I suggest you inscribe on the soft places of your heart the words of ... John Ruskin: "The primary reward for human toil is not what you get from it, but what you become by it." As a suburban lifeguard you may become a car owner and even a bit more charming ... But what else?"

"Let me tell you a story. Years ago, when I was university chaplain, there taught on campus a well-known scholar of American literature. He was from Louisiana, white and a bit racist. In 1961 I was a member of a small racially mixed group of so-called "freedom-riders," trying to desegregate interstate bus travel. We were arrested and jailed in Montgomery, Alabama. As it was a pretty tumultuous time, the incident received widespread publicity, and consequently I received a lot of hate mail ... There were also some friendly letters and one in particular that I loved. It came from an elderly white woman who lived in New Orleans. She marched, pretty much on her own, through the swamps of segregation only to emerge on the other side with far more knowledge and obvious credibility than was generally ascribed to us "Northern Liberals ..."

"This woman and I became pen pals, and in the course of our correspondence she revealed that she was the mother-in-law of the well-known university professor I mentioned earlier. Eventually she came north to visit her daughter. I invited her to lunch, and she regaled me with tragic/inspiring tales of black/white relationships in New Orleans. At the end of lunch I suggested that her distinguished son-in-law might not go along with her views. At that, with the sweetest possible smile, she took her distinguished son-in-law out at the knees. She said, "No, he wouldn't go along with all my views. But you see, he was born conservative and has never had an important experience."

"Born conservative and has never had an important experience: wouldn't you call that a pretty fair description of a lot of university students today? I'm convinced every first-world student should have a third-world experience, either abroad or here in the states. Abroad, American students would find out first hand what poverty and economic exploitation is all about, and why all third-world citizens should really be given a vote for the American president, so great on their countries is the impact of American foreign policy. A third-world experience at home would sharpen insights and deepen convictions about what the country needs. Almost all today's students agree that "all men [people] are created equal." But how many *fee*/the monstrosity of inequality? That's another type of knowledge altogether.

"These are the kinds of important experiences some very bright students and faculty lack ... If instead of sitting by a suburban pool you went door-to-door in a poor city district, you would certainly hear points of view far different than what you're used to, and you would be useful to boot. You are a topflight student, Tom, in a torch-carrying university. But you have to experience far more of life. Values are less taught than caught in "important experiences." Ethical principles and moral theories motivate no one. Empathy and courage spring from the heart. Remember that the greatest perils to the planet arise not from the poor and ignorant for whom education is an answer; they are caused by the well-educated for whom "self-interest" is the problem. And I'll tell you something else: action tends to lead to more ways of thinking than does thought to new ways of acting.

"Why do I sound overwrought? Because every spring commencement I used to ask myself, "After their years here, are our students more or less concerned about their neighbors' needs?" I concluded that the humanities for too many students were but the cultural icing on an economic cake, especially when 'enrich thyself' is the country's prevailing ethos. There are a lot of ways to get rich, Tom: one is to have lots of money, the other is to have few needs. Try the latter and find a summer job less boring."

Shalom, Salaam, Santi, the Peace that passes all understanding. *Bob Long*



When the Interfaith Community of Schenectady was founded in 1971 after preliminary conversation, its purposes were these:

- To foster greater understanding of the beliefs and practices of all people;
- To oppose bigotry and racism of any sort or manner; to promote cooperation in social action working through existing agencies;
- To assist each other in carrying these same objectives out in the varying congregations in which we all live out our faith.

The purpose was to increase understanding of the faith of people with whom we shared community. Let us learn from one another. Celebrate with one another. Share core values. Discover together that we have more in common than we have in difference. Hold hands in celebration of the fullness of life we all profess and offer. Delve more deeply into the inner meaning and mystery of our own faith even as we reach out to grasp the meaning and mystery of others' faith. Fulfilling this purpose has been rich. It has blessed us immensely. It was the right pathway for that time. It provided significant energy and movement toward each other. Much is still right for today.

Things changed a great deal through the 1980s into the early 2000s. There was a movement away from community and into separation, away from "us" and into "me." This movement permeated all of culture, from social behavior to politics to economics to communication and even to focus on religious faith. While not all bought into the pattern, the movement was to once again attend more closely to "our own."

Today's setting is again changed. The speed of communication and rapid interchange of all dimensions of life across the globe have brought the wider world close at hand. World events interact with great acceleration. This calls forth a new urgency for interfaith engagement.

Many who are younger are unknowledgeable about other faiths, much as in the early 70s. Others have been intentional in the creation of fear and hatred for "those not like us" as a means to gain power and control. Even those who do not buy into such a campaign of fear know the divisiveness and suspicion that it has brought into the thinking and feeling of our society, and yes, also the practice of faith as well. Today's need for ecumenical and interfaith engagement is both for knowledge of the essentials of each others' faith and to break through the fear that is wrongly projected onto those who believe differently. The need is to discover the significant elements of trust, caring love, fair-justice, acceptance, hospitality and generosity that are at the heart of differing ways to live faith. In discovering these realities, fears can be laid aside and suspicion can be replaced with affirming trust.

With this understanding before us, the Interfaith Council has dedicated a significant part of this year's emphases to encountering the essence of differing faiths. Monthly gatherings will, by in large, focus on interacting with a different faith through presentation by one or more of its representatives. We have already begun in September when Imam Djafer Sebkhauoui spoke of the Islamic faith .

What becomes all too undeniable as we gather together is that it is not the "faiths" that are causing the fear, suspicion, and in many cases actual aggression. It is the purpose to which fearful and power-seeking people employ faith to divide and conquer that actually creates apprehension and aversion. It is all but impossible to fear and mistrust people who stand in solidarity with you and you with them. Establishing such a solidarity of affirmation and community is the purpose of the Interfaith Community of Schenectady today.

We invite individuals, families and organizations to join us as we reach out to each other with acceptance and respect, affirming and uplifting each other in a maturing community of grace.

## Share your news with Interfaith Community...

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**We welcome The Rev. Mark J. Webb** who was elected bishop on July 19, 2012, at the North-eastern Jurisdictional Conference held in Charleston, W.Va., and who became Episcopal leader of the Upper New York Area of the United Methodist Church effective September 1, 2012.

**Congratulations to Rev. Robert White**, who is currently the Interim Executive Director of the New York State Council of Churches.

**Congratulations to Rev. Vernon Victorson**, who is serving as Interim Executive Director of the Capital Area Council of Churches.

**Congratulations to The Rev. Richard Weihing**, the new Albany District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church.

**Congratulations to** the Capital Region Theological Center on their 10th Anniversary.

**Congratulations to Neil and Jane Golub** upon receiving the 2012 Rabbi Michael M. Szenes Humanitarian Award from Congregation Gates of Heaven presented to them at a gala in their honor.

**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 September

**Individual membership renewals:** Ralph & Catherine Boyd

**Institutional membership renewals:** First Reformed Church– Schenectady, Jewish Federation of NENY

**No Sweat Garage Sale:** Rev. Robert Long

**We made a change this year** -- In the past “dues”, which we prefer to call “gifts of support and encouragement,” were asked by all members on the month in which they joined Interfaith. The Interfaith Council acted early in 2012 to bring the receiving of “gifts of support and encouragement” to a calendar year. As expenses occur monthly, it is important for us to receive funding throughout year. We ask that you, as an individual, family or organization, make your “gift of support and encouragement” to the effective work of Interfaith before the end of the year, if you have not done so already. To all who have provided gifts to date in 2012, we express thanks. And we offer gratitude to all who do so through the end of the year.

**Please don't forget** that all donations made to IFC are eligible for the GE Matching Gifts program. All you need to do is report your gift the GE.

***The Interfaith Community is seeking two representatives of your congregation*** to be present at monthly gatherings. Gatherings are held monthly at differing congregations in the Schenectady Area. Each gathering begins with a common meal and is followed by a relevant presentation. Representatives from congregations gain interfaith insight to communicate with their congregations in return. They can also share their congregation's multi-faith values and experiences with the greater Interfaith Community. ***I ask clergy and laity from congregations of all faiths to discern who might be representatives from your congregation and support them as they attend gatherings.*** For further information, call Pastor Bob Long, President of Interfaith, 372-1083.

## Interfaith Calendar for October 2012

- 1-7 (1-2 Primary Obligation Days) -- Sukkot -- **Judaism** -- Feast of Tabernacles which celebrates the harvest and the protection of the people of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness dwelling in tents. Temporary dwelling places have leaves for a roof so the sky can be seen. In temperate climates, night is spent in the Succoth.
- 4 Saint Francis Day -- Catholic Christian -- Recognition of service to people and appreciation of the natural world, as practiced by St Francis and the Franciscan Monastic Order which he founded.
- 8 Shemini Atzeret -- **Judaism** -- Completion of the annual cycle of reading of the Torah.  
Thanksgiving -- **Canada – Interfaith** -- Interfaith celebration of the created earth.
- 9 Simhat Torah – **Judaism** -- Day to celebrate the reading of the Law. Synagogue services involve readings, processions and blessing of the children.
- 16-23 Navaratri -- **Hindu** -- Festival of the divine mother honoring Durga, wife of Shiva, and seeking her blessings. Also observed as a celebration recalling the days of Lord Krishna.
- 18 Saint Luke -- Apostle and Evangelist – **Christian** -- Remembrance of Luke, disciple of Jesus.
- 20 Birth of the Báb -- **Baha'I** -- Honoring of the founder of the Babi religion, forerunner to Baha'u'llah and the Baha'i faith.  
Installation of Scriptures as Gukru Granth – **Sikh** -- Scriptures, the Adi Granth, are honored as perpetual Guru.
- 24 Dasera -- **Hindu** -- Celebration of victory and valor. Lord Rama is remembered as winning a victory over evil.
- 25 Waqf al Arafa -- Hajj Day -- **Islam** -- Observance day during Hajj when pilgrims pray for forgiveness and mercy.
- 26-29 Eid al Adha -- **Islam** -- Festival of Sacrifice. The day after Arafat, the most important day in Hajj ritual. A three-day festival recalling Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience to Allah.
- 28 Milvian Bridge Day – **Christian** -- Day of solemn reflection on the relationship of the spiritual community and the powers of civil government. On Oct 28, 312 c.e., Emperor Constantine prevailed in a battle and proceeded to make Christianity the legal religion of the Roman Empire.  
Reformation Day -- **Protestant Christian** -- Anniversary of their tradition and its emphasis on the place of the Bible and religious freedom. On October 31, 1517 c.e. Martin Luther posted a belief statement on Wittenberg Church door. The date of public observation is the Sunday before October 31.
- 31 All Hallows Eve -- **Christian** -- Celebration of mystery combining prayers and merriment involving children and families. It is a prelude to All Saint's Day.

**Faith United Methodist Church Carl Lecture Series presents**

**Shawn Lawrence Otto**

**“Faith, Science and Democracy in the US Elections”**

**Sunday, October 21, 3pm**

**603 State Street, Schenectady**

**This is a free event and all are invited to attend.**



## IFC OF SCHENECTADY

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Tuesday 3-4 pm  
Fridays 12:30-2 pm  
Others as needed  
[Schenectadyinterfaith.weebly.com](http://Schenectadyinterfaith.weebly.com)

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Mailed October 16

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### Coordinating Council Meetings

Friday, November 9, 2012  
Friday, December 14, 2012  
Friday, January 11, 2013  
Friday, February 8, 2013

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)**

**We're on the web!**

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

*Event info!*

*Membership info!*