



# Interfaith Community of Schenectady, Inc.

September 2013

Vol. 42, No. 1

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

## Interfaith News

~ Celebrating Forty Years ~ 1971-2011 ~

### *September Dinner Meeting*

Wednesday, September 11, 2013

Dinner 6:30pm

Program 7:30pm

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

#### **"Finding the way home to the religion of my Ancestors: Ifa"**

Guest Presenter: Eddie Ade Knowles, Professor of Practice, RPI.

Over 45 years ago I started chasing the rhythms of the drum. It was not a plan but a chance encounter as I journeyed to find my home to mother Africa. I truly wanted to know as an African of the Diaspora, what part of Africa did my family come from? Eventually my research ship landed and I learned of my connections through the stories told to me by mother about our family in Georgia, and by my father about his home on the Bahamian island of Eleuthra. From their memories and other research I found my way back home to my ancestral family, the Yoruba of West Africa. I found my way back to Ifa.

Eddie Ade Knowles is an accomplished musician with over 40 years of performance, residency, workshop, and recording credits as a percussionist. His artistic focus is on African and Afro-Cuban music and dance. "For over 45 years I have been a student of African, Afro-Cuban, and New World percussion," Knowles said. "This academic and artistic journey has infused my inner being with a sense of the importance of connecting with the rhythms of my mind, the rhythms of my body, and the rhythms of my work with students as an Artist Educator. I have come to realize that helping my students get in touch with the rhythms of their lives is an important window into understanding how they approach their being as individuals and members of a community. So, the focus of my work is on helping students learn to appreciate the significance of rhythm in their daily lives and to embrace the important synergy that exists between the drum, science, technology, and the arts. The drum is the nexus: the medium for communication, healing, and celebrating life.

**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](mailto:schdyinterfaith@yahoo.com), by September 11.**



## From our President

**Compassion – the need is here and now. Do unto others ...** Karen Armstrong, [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com)

World religions too often seem predicated on prejudice, when their true roots lie in compassion. The practice of compassion is central to every one of the major world religions – but sometimes you would never know it. Instead, religion is associated with violence, intolerance and seems more pre-occupied by dogmatic or sexual orthodoxy.

People don't even seem to know what compassion is; they imagine that it means to feel pity for somebody, whereas the root meaning of this Greco-Latin world is "to feel with" the other, realizing at a profound level that we share the same human predicament. This is crucial at a time when we are bound together – politically, economically, and electronically – as never before but have rarely been more perilously divided.

This is why we have launched a [Charter for Compassion](#). The charter will not just be a statement of intent, but will call for practical action: asking preachers, for example, to emphasize the importance of good interfaith relations; calling upon scholars to examine the difficult passages of their scriptures, and asking educators to find ways of presenting compassion to the young as a dynamic, attractive ideal.

Why is this important? Because the religions should be making a major contribution to what must be the chief task of our day: to build a global community where all peoples can live together in mutual respect and where the powerful do not treat other nations as they would not wish to be treated themselves. If we do not achieve this, it is unlikely that we will have a viable world to hand on to the next generation. Any ideology – religious or secular – that breeds hatred and disdain for others is failing the test of our time.

The first person to formulate what has become known as the Golden Rule was Confucius: "Do not do to others what you would not like them to do to you." It was, he said, the central thread that ran through all his teaching and should be practiced "all day and every day". It requires us to look into our own hearts, discover what gives us pain and refuse, under any circumstance whatsoever, to inflict that pain on anybody else. Every single one of the major faiths has developed its own version of the Golden Rule and has insisted that it is the prime religious duty.

"My religion is kindness," says the [Dalai Lama](#); faith that moves mountains is worthless without charity, said St Paul; the Golden Rule was the essence of Torah, said Rabbi Hillel: everything else was "only commentary". The bedrock message of the Qur'an is not a doctrine but a summons to build a just and decent society where there is a fair distribution of wealth and vulnerable people are treated with absolute respect. The religions also insist that it is not sufficient to confine your compassion to your own group. You must have what one of the Chinese sages called jian ai, "concern for everybody" – honoring the stranger and loving your enemies.

Why, then, do we hear so little about compassion from the religious? Because whether they are religious or secular, people often prefer to be right rather than compassionate. Certainly the religious traditions have a deeply intransigent strain. But we have a choice. We can either emphasize this intolerance, as extremists and fundamentalists do, or we can make a concerted effort to make the compassionate voice of religion audible in our troubled world.

Do we need God and/or religion to be compassionate? Of course not. That is why we hope that atheists and agnostics, instead of berating religion (a policy that, as history shows, tends to make religious movements more extreme), will also [take their place] working alongside the religious for a more compassionate world. Shalom, Salaam, the peace that passes understanding *Bob Long*



## IFC Council 2013-2014

### New Council Members

We welcome the following to the Interfaith Council:

Colette Odell, from Clifton Park, who comes with ecumenical and interfaith experience;

Scott Ebeling, of Watervliet, who, with his wife, Beverly, has regularly participated in Interfaith events.

### Returning Council Members

Audrey Hughes, Glenville, immediate past President

Sr. Carol Davis, Dominican Retreat and Conference Center, Niskayuna, current Vice –President

Sandy Goble, Schenectady, current Treasurer

Barbara Harris, Schenectady, current Secretary

Erica Berger, Schenectady

Christine Knowles, Troy

Stan Harris, Schenectady

Fran Madison, Scotia

Humera Khan, Schenectady

Gerry Pierce, Schenectady

Edith Kliman, Niskayuna

Bob Long, Niskayuna, current President

## Mark your calendars and plan ahead for Fall 2013, and Spring 2014

Monthly Gathering dates and places:

- September 11, 2013, Wednesday, Dominican Retreat and conference Center, Union Street
- October 20 or 27, 3:00 pm --Annual Concert: Place to be announced shortly
- November – at the Islamic Center of the Capital District, date to be determined
- December 3, 2013, Tuesday, Dominican Retreat and Conference Center, Union Street
- January 21, 2014, Tuesday, Dominican Retreat and Conference Center
- 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.

### Dominican Retreat and Conference Center becomes IFC's more regular gathering place

With everything on one level, from parking to dining room to meeting room, and with a kitchen staff who can cook for larger groups and provide vegetarian meals as well, the Dominican Retreat and Conference Center has offered and Interfaith has accepted the invitation to hold most of our gatherings at that facility, beginning this September.

### IFC Past-President to receive award

Congratulations to past president Audrey Hughes and Dr. Mussarat Chaudhry who will receive the Carlyle Adams Ecumenical/Interfaith Award from the Capital Area Council of Churches on Wednesday, October 2, 2013 at Albany Country Club. The dinner begins at 6 pm and is open to anyone interested. Both Audrey and Mussarat have received the Ludwig Interfaith Award from IFC.

### Yearly Contributions

Please remember that all yearly contributions from members and friends are now sought in January or early February each year. If you have not made your contribution for 2013, early Fall would be the helpful time to do so. Checks may be made to: Interfaith Community of Schenectady; mark the memo; 2013 contribution. Please let us know if your contribution can be matched by GE.



## Interfaith Community Co-Sponsors JCC 2013-2014 Film Festival

The Interfaith Community is co-sponsoring the showing of the film, "Disobedience: The Sousa Mendes Story," in the Jewish Community Center Film Festival on Saturday, March 1, 2014, 7:30 PM at the JCC Auditorium. The film depicts the true story of the Portuguese Consul in Bordeaux during WW II, Aristides de Sousa Mendes, who saved 30,000 refugees on his own, defying his government orders. A devoted Catholic, he decided to obey God's law rather than man's law. A speaker from the Sousa Mendes Foundation will lead a discussion. A reception will be provided. Bring a neighbor and/or friend(s).

## Payments for meals

The Council knows that there are times when, having made a reservation, something significant comes up and attendance at a gathering must be put aside. The Interfaith Community, however, pays for the number of reservations made each gathering, as well as those who come without reservation and pay at the door. If you have to miss a gathering after making a reservation, it would greatly help the financial situation of Interfaith if a payment might be made for the meal, which is \$10.00 of the normal \$12 collected when you enter. Checks may be made payable to the **Interfaith Community of Schenectady**.

## The Fall Interfaith Concert is in the planning stage. Here is an opportunity for you to have a part in it.

The Fall Interfaith Concert is one of only two fundraisers that Interfaith promotes each year. Be watching for 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.

***The Interfaith Community is seeking two representatives of your congregation*** to be present at monthly gatherings. Gatherings are generally held at the Dominican Retreat and Conference Center, 1945 Union Street, Niskayuna. Each gathering begins with a common meal and is followed by a relevant presentation. Representatives from congregations gain insight into interfaith engagement, communicate with their congregations the interfaith experience of today and share your congregation's interfaith/multi-faith values and experiences with the greater Interfaith Community. For further information, call Pastor Bob Long, President of Interfaith, 372-1083.

## Events of interest

Storytelling Moments of Our faith Lives—4 Monday nights: Oct 21, 28, Nov. 4 and Nov 18 (we skip Nov 11 Veterans Day) at The Diocesan Pastoral Center, 40 N. Main Avenue, Albany, NY (plenty of well-lit parking and handicapped accessible.) When we speak the big and little moments which have awakened, challenged, and deepened our faith lives, we learn how faith works wonders. In this 4-session class we develop community by sharing our tales one-to-one and practicing deep, uninterrupted listening. Occasionally some tell to the group and we discuss how stories carry layers of meaning. Come join this heart-opening experience. Marni Gillard is an excellent storyteller and coach, from the Roman Catholic tradition, with a variety of travel experiences, including living with a Buddhist family as a high school student and having a member of that household live with her and her husband for several months.

Grafton Peace Pagoda, Saturday, October 5, 11am, 87 Crandall Road, Petersburg, NY. Join us for the Grafton Peace Pagoda 20th anniversary Ceremony celebration Program. The program will feature multi-faith prayers for peace, speaker Dennis Banks (Ojibwa Nation) American Indian Movement leader, music and dance including Japanese Nou Drumming and a potluck lunch. [www.graftonpeacepagoda.org](http://www.graftonpeacepagoda.org) or 658-9301 for more info.



## **Pope to Muslims for end of Ramadan: Promoting Mutual Respect through education**

Below, please find the text of Pope Francis' message:

To Muslims throughout the World

It gives me great pleasure to greet you as you celebrate 'Id al-Fitr, so concluding the month of Ramadan, dedicated mainly to fasting, prayer and almsgiving.

It is a tradition by now that, on this occasion, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue sends you a message of good wishes, together with a proposed theme for common reflection. This year, the first of my Pontificate, I have decided to sign this traditional message myself and to send it to you, dear friends, as an expression of esteem and friendship for all Muslims, especially those who are religious leaders.

As you all know, when the Cardinals elected me as Bishop of Rome and Universal Pastor of the Catholic Church, I chose the name of "Francis", a very famous saint who loved God and every human being deeply, to the point of being called "universal brother". He loved, helped and served the needy, the sick and the poor; he also cared greatly for creation.

I am aware that family and social dimensions enjoy a particular prominence for Muslims during this period, and it is worth noting that there are certain parallels in each of these areas with Christian faith and practice.

This year, the theme on which I would like to reflect with you and with all who will read this message is one that concerns both Muslims and Christians: Promoting Mutual Respect through Education.

This year's theme is intended to underline the importance of education in the way we understand each other, built upon the foundation of mutual respect. "Respect" means an attitude of kindness towards people for whom we have consideration and esteem. "Mutual" means that this is not a one-way process, but something shared by both sides.

What we are called to respect in each person is first of all his life, his physical integrity, his dignity and the rights deriving from that dignity, his reputation, his property, his ethnic and cultural identity, his ideas and his political choices. We are therefore called to think, speak and write respectfully of the other, not only in his presence, but always and everywhere, avoiding unfair criticism or defamation. Families, schools, religious teaching and all forms of media have a role to play in achieving this goal.

Turning to mutual respect in interreligious relations, especially between Christians and Muslims, we are called to respect the religion of the other, its teachings, its symbols, its values. Particular respect is due to religious leaders and to places of worship. How painful are attacks on one or other of these!

It is clear that, when we show respect for the religion of our neighbours or when we offer them our good wishes on the occasion of a religious celebration, we simply seek to share their joy, without making reference to the content of their religious convictions.

Regarding the education of Muslim and Christian youth, we have to bring up our young people to think and speak respectfully of other religions and their followers, and to avoid ridiculing or denigrating their convictions and practices.

We all know that mutual respect is fundamental in any human relationship, especially among people who profess religious belief. In this way, sincere and lasting friendship can grow.

When I received the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See on 22 March 2013, I said: "It is not possible to establish true links with God, while ignoring other people. Hence it is important to intensify dialogue among the various religions, and I am thinking particularly of dialogue with Islam. At the Mass marking the beginning of my ministry, I greatly appreciated the presence of so many civil and religious leaders from the Islamic world." With these words, I wished to emphasize once more the great importance of dialogue and cooperation among believers, in particular Christians and Muslims, and the need for it to be enhanced.

With these sentiments, I reiterate my hope that all Christians and Muslims may be true promoters of mutual respect and friendship, in particular through education.

Finally, I send you my prayerful good wishes, that your lives may glorify the Almighty and give joy to those around you. Happy Feast to you all! From the Vatican, 10 July 2013



## What resources have helped you mature in ecumenical and interfaith trust?

One goal of the Interfaith Community for 2013-2014 is to continue to create a listing of resources suggested by participants and friends [you] for maturing in ecumenical and interfaith trust. Articles, books, people, films, DVDs, dialogues .. whatever you have found helpful. I offer three resources:

First is a book of spiritual guidelines called ***One Mountain, Many Paths***, [Double Eagle Press, Maplewood, NJ, 2007] given me recently. It is offered by Dr. Patrick Swift, who works in a hospital in Manhattan. His book is in response to a question that emerged in his mind and heart following the downing of the Twin Towers: "Is world peace still within our reach?" The Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy, President, The Interfaith Alliance, says of this book published in 2007: "Dr. Swift beautifully and thoughtfully shares with us a collection of the wise words from diverse spiritual traditions that can do for us what they did for him – evoke an appreciation for diversity, provide counsel that creates a longing for unity, instill peace within us personally, and inspire us to work for peace globally." Dr. Swift begins with words from Mahatma Gandhi: "Religions are different roads converging upon the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads, so long as we reach the same goal." Following are timeless words from Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Indigenous Faiths (such as Native American and African religions), Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism. I find it helpful to take one of these "wise words" with me into each day.

And then an autobiography published in 2010: ***I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced***, [Broadway Paperback, NY]. This is Nujood's own story of being given in marriage at age 10 to a man three times her age. It is a story of tragedy, triumph and courage. It rings a bell in my own grandmother's life [she was married, gave birth to my Mom, was divorced and remarried by 14 years of age, each time to a man almost three times her age].

Finally, ***Man's Search for Meaning, An Introduction to Logotherapy*** [meaning therapy], Viktor E. Frankl. I had the privilege to meet Viktor Frankl when I was in seminary at Southern Methodist University. Though I am not a therapist, his approach to "discovering some lasting meaning in life's events" has been a blessing to me, personally, and in my ministry as well. Developed within Auschwitz and other Nazi prisons, Frankl unfolded the concept of "meaning therapy." Frankl discovered that "any attempt to restore a man's inner strength in the camp had to first succeed in showing him that he had a future goal. Nietzsche's words, 'He who has a *why* to live can bear with almost any *how*' ... were essential. "What was really needed was a fundamental change in our attitude toward life ... it did not matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us ... [each] man's unique opportunity lies in the way in which he bears his burden." My ministry has been the beneficiary of Frankl's gift – a gift from Auschwitz which I continually remember.

- Rev. Bob Long

## Share your news with Interfaith Community...

**Welcome to The Rev. Sara Baron, First UMC, Schenectady** Rev. Baron most recently served at Park Terrace United Methodist Church in Apalachin, NY. She serves on the Upper New York Conference Leadership Team and is Co-Convener of the Conference's Reaching Our Neighbors Oversight Team. She holds a B.A. with Honors in Mathematics from Dartmouth College and a Master of Divinity Degree from Claremont School of Theology. She enjoys reading, knitting and downhill skiing.

**Get well wishes** to Audrey Hughes as she continues to recover from a fall and subsequent complications sustained this summer.

**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.

## Interfaith Calendar for May 2013

- 1 Ecclesiastical Year begins -- **Orthodox Christian** -- The way a Christian Church arranges a calendar of time and sets dates of special importance.
- 5-6 Rosh Hashanah -- **Jewish** -- Jewish New Year. A time of introspection, abstinence, prayer and penitence. The story of Abraham is read, the ram's horn is sounded, and special foods are prepared and shared.
- 9 Ganesh Chaturthi -- **Hindu** -- Festival honoring the god of prosperity, prudence and success. Images of Ganesha are worshipped.
- 10 Paryushana Parva -- **Jain** -- 8 day festival signifying human emergence into a new world of spiritual and moral refinement. Marked by recitations from Jain sacred writing and family exchange of cards and letters. Celebration of the natural qualities of the soul. The 8th day (Samvatsari) is most important and is focused on forgiveness.
- 14 Yom Kippur -- **Jewish** -- Day of Atonement. This holiest day of the Jewish year is observed with strict fasting and ceremonial repentance.
- Elevation of the Life Giving Cross - Holy Cross Day -- Christian -- Day of recognition for the Cross on which Jesus was crucified as a central symbol of the Christian religion.
- 19-25 Sukkot -- **Jewish** -- 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.
- 22 Equinox -- Mabon -- **Wicca/Pagan northern hemisphere** -- Observance of the autumnal equinox when day and night are of equal length. A harvest festival time.
- Ostara -- **Wicca/Pagan southern hemisphere** -- Welcoming of spring and the goddess-as maiden.
- 26 Shemini Atzeret -- **Jewish** -- Completion of the annual cycle of reading of the Torah.
- 27 Simchat Torah -- **Jewish** -- Day to celebrate the reading of the Law. Synagogue services involve readings, processions and blessing of the children.
- Meskel -- **Ethiopian Christian** -- Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Christian commemoration of the discovery of the True Cross by Queen Eleni (St. Helenea) in the 4th century ad.
- 29 Michael and All Angels -- **Christian**.

### Received over the summer

**Individual membership renewals:** Asa & Judy Kaplan, Jules Scheinzeit, Elyne Schulte

**Institutional membership renewals:** Church Women United, First Reformed Church-Schenectady

**New membership:** Josephine Cristy

**No Sweat Garage Sale:** Gerry & Eleanor Pierce, Audrey Hughes, Sandy & Dick Goble, Marilyn Soffer, Eileen Sowa

Thank you for your support!

### Coming at the Dominican Retreat and Conference Center

Living Mindfully - Living Gratefully—Saturday, October 19, 2013, 10:00 AM, Dominican Retreat & Conference Center, 1945 Union St, Niskayuna. Living in our "instant" fast-paced world can be overwhelming. Running from one responsibility to another, it's easy to feel overburdened, to lose our sense of inner peace. But by slowing down, and living mindfully and with prayerful gratitude we can reclaim the gift of joy that God has given us. Claudia Gregoire is a local nature photographer, Dominican Associate, and a volunteer at DRCC. Claudia combines her love of photography with Scripture, prayer, music and nature quotes. She encourages others to see in new ways the wonders of God's creation and open themselves more fully to the "miracle of the everyday".



**IFC OF SCHENECTADY**

811 N. Brandywine Ave  
Schenectady, NY 12308

Phone: 518-370-2150

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 Friday morning at 9:30 am at Faith United Methodist Church, 811 North Brandywine Avenue, Schenectady, 12308 on the following dates: [September 13](#), [October 11](#), [November 8](#), [December 13](#), [January, 10, 2014](#), [February 14](#), [March 14](#), [April 11](#) and [May 9](#). 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!**

**Watch for information on our  
Annual Interfaith Concert  
coming in October!**

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