



Interfaith Community of
Schenectady, Inc.

Winter 2020

Vol. 49 No. 2



Interfaith News

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

We're virtual!

Join us Wednesday, January 20 at 7:00 pm via Zoom

Schenectady Clergy Against Hate

Rev. Tim Coombs and Rev. Kathy Gorman Coombs will bring information about Schenectady Clergy Against Hate.

To join us, simply send your email address to

schdyinterfaith@yahoo.com by 5pm, January 19, 2021.

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:

With COVID running rampant again and many of my favorite activities such as eating out or going to the movies severely limited, I pause to breathe out my frustration and to breathe in my appreciation for the Interfaith Community and especially for our Coordinating Council.

The pandemic shut down disrupted us--it disrupted the way we'd been 'conducting business' for years and it forced us to look at different ways to hold meetings, take in money, and imagine the future.

In 2021 our organization will turn 50. Like many non-profits in these turbulent times, we are wondering how our future will be. We've been thinking, strategizing, hoping and praying. Here below are some of the issues that have engaged our time and energy; issues that we continue to wrestle with.

First, we engaged with a consultant for a free evaluation. Two things concerning the way we operate surfaced from that meeting: *relevancy* and *recruitment*. Due to the high cost of continuing with this service, we decided to try and work through our issues on our own.

Second, in response to this decision, our Coordinating Council now meets for an extended period each month. Vice President, Rev. Joselle Gagliano, as an interfaith chaplain and former attorney, is an experienced retreat leader. It is under her careful guidance that we have been brainstorming our future. Although much fruitful discussion has ensued, no clear-cut revelations have surfaced.

Just as we look forward to what the future holds for us, so we continue to debate, to keep the issues identified by the consultant in mind and (hopefully), to safely hold a grand and joyous, in-person, 50- year celebration.

Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas, Shalom, Peace. May we find the good in each other, live our lives richly; experience the blessings of friendships that come from mutuality and genuine respect.



Miranda Rand, President. Sending out love to the universe.

Here is a poignant poem that I found recently that speaks to me about the things we yearn for at this time of year, both as individuals and as an organization.

Winter Stars

I went out at night alone;
The young blood flowing beyond the sea
Seemed to have drenched my spirit's wings—
I bore my sorrow heavily.

But when I lifted up my head
From shadows shaken on the snow,
I saw Orion in the east
Burn steadily as long ago.

From windows in my father's house,
Dreaming my dreams on winter nights,
I watched Orion as a girl
Above another city's lights.

Years go, dreams go, and youth goes too,
The world's heart breaks beneath its wars,
All things are changed, save in the east
The faithful beauty of the stars.

- Sara Teasdale

EVENING LECTURE MEETINGS ON ZOOM

After conferring with the various storytelling organizations in the Capital District and some other organizations who hold monthly meetings, we have established the *third Wednesday* of each month as our set meeting date. Traditionally we do not meet in December, nor during the late spring and summer months. Our program year is January – May and September – November.

UPCOMING MEETING DATES AND SPEAKERS:

January 20: Rev. Tim Coombs and Rev. Kathy Gorman Coombs will bring information about Schenectady Clergy Against Hate.

February 17: Watch for an announcement on our website or our Facebook page, the speaker is not yet confirmed. (the Holocaust Survivors Education Center has been invited).

March 17: Storyteller Sandy Schuman: *A Rabbi, a Prophet and a King.*

April 21: Watch for an announcement on our website or our Facebook page

May 19: Round Table Discussion convened by Rev. Joselle Gagliano and Rev. Bob Long: topic and panel to be determined

All meetings start at 7:00pm, are by reservation only, and are accessed through a zoom link.

A reminder will be posted in your email inbox asking you to sign up for the event. Registering in advance ensures you receive the link the day of the event.

\$ FINANCES:

No-one wants to think about them, let alone talk about them, yet they are the vertebrae of any healthy organization, non-profits in particular!

Here at the Interfaith Community, ours are somewhat dire. Each month we pay out for the zoom platform we hold our meetings on, for our secretary's hours, for insurance, postage, telephone, our portion of support for the Sunnyview chaplain, speaker honorariums, etc. Each month we take in whatever our constituency sends us by way of donations or annual contributions. *We have no guaranteed source of revenue.*

Traditionally we have offered free access to our monthly lectures. While there was always a basket out for free will offerings and mention was generally made of our appreciation of these, it was seldom that anyone put anything *in* the basket.

When we gathered for dinner at the Dominican Retreat and Conference Center, we charged a very small amount over the per-person cost billed to us by the retreat house. Occasionally a guest paying cash would offer a bill and ask that the change be considered a free-will offering. Beyond that our income stream relied on people on our mailing list making their annual (tax deductible) contribution. Part of our monthly discussions at the Coordinating Council meetings have focused on cash flow and how to increase it. Moving slowly into the 21st century, the Coordinating Council voted at its December meeting to add a PayPal button to facilitate electronic contributions. We are *considering* a modest charge for attending the zoom lectures.

We are also looking for a new treasurer. After years of dedicated service, Edith Kliman would like to retire. Anyone who is interested should contact Miranda Rand, our president, via email, (mirandarand411@gmail.com) or text her at 518-229-5105. The treasurer, when appointed, serves on the Coordinating Council.

Edith has served conscientiously, with zeal, and with tremendous angst over our dwindling checking account. For almost the same amount of time, Gerry Pierce, who also serves on our Coordinating Council, has worked alongside Edith. They have made a great team. Due to ongoing health issues for himself and his wife, Eleanor, the Pierces have moved to the Assisted Living facility at Kingsway Community. Gerry is no longer able to be involved in the financial operations of Schenectady Interfaith, though he will remain active on the Coordinating Council.

On another page of the newsletter, is our Annual Contribution Form. Any monies received by December 31 will count for fiscal year 2020. If you have not already made your contribution, please take a few minutes to fill in the information on the form and mail it with your check to our treasurer, Edith Kliman. Her address is on the form.

We are grateful to the following who have contributed in 2020:

Karen Bond ~ Scott Ebeling ~ Joselle Gagliano and Michael Perman ~ Bobby and Stan Harris ~ Audrey Hughes ~ Edith Kliman ~ Bob Long ~ Charles and Sharon Maneri ~ Colette Odell ~ Gerry and Eleanor Pierce ~ Miranda Rand ~ Eleanor Tunny ~ First Reformed Church of Schenectady ~ Faith United Methodist Church ~ First United Methodist Church of Schenectady



AWARDS NIGHT:

November 18 was Awards Night – brought forward from May, when coronavirus restrictions and an abundance of caution prevented us meeting in person for this annual event.

For many years it has been our tradition to present two awards on behalf of the Interfaith Community of Schenectady. In years past we have had special plaques made inscribed with the name of the award and the name of the recipient which would then be presented in person. This year, even before the coronavirus restrictions, our Coordinating Council voted to honor the awardee with a monetary contribution and a certificate of appreciation.

Our awardees this year were **St. Joseph's Place** – a drop-in hospitality center run by the Sisters of St. Joseph in a building adjacent to the SiCM offices and Food Pantry on Albany Street in Schenectady.

Sisters Ann Christi Brink, CSJ and Linda Neil, CSJ accepted the **James Stamper Community Service Award** on behalf of St. Joseph's Place and explained some of the history behind the opening of the center – when an historic Catholic church closed in the Hamilton Hill area of Schenectady, their former pastor, Rev. Michael Hogan, was keenly aware of the underserved needs of the people in the community. He contacted the Sisters of St. Joseph and working together, Father Hogan and the sisters created what is now an oasis in an otherwise barren landscape on lower Albany Street where physical and spiritual nourishment is dispensed in equal measure.

Our **Robert J. and Dorothy S. Ludwig Interfaith Award** is presented each year to a person who has shown outstanding commitment to furthering interfaith relations through their work and attitude. This year the Coordinating Council chose **Paula Weiss**, founder of Children at the Well, an interfaith youth storytelling program which gathers tweens and teens in the Capital Region and coaches them to become storytellers, presenting folk tales and stories of faith crafted from their countries of origin.

Paula was as delighted to receive this honor as we were to bestow it on her.

REFLECTING ON A LIFE LIVED WITH INTENTION:

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS: MARCH 8, 1948 – NOVEMBER 7, 2020

Rabbi Sacks was an Orthodox rabbi, philosopher and leader who captured the world's spiritual and moral imagination like few before him. His obituaries appropriately praise him for his "towering intellect," as an "ultimate communicator and original thinker," with a "courageous moral voice" of "unfailing insight and boundless compassion."

In his talks and writings, Sacks wove together Jewish wisdom and the best of the Western philosophical tradition to craft a unique message of hope, firmly on the side of moral certainty yet wonderful in its tolerance and openness. He was a man of his own people, yet somehow, he became a voice for everyone. He could speak persuasively on the importance of the state of Israel and the threat of anti-Semitism and publish work in the *Islamic Monthly*. It is hard to overstate the importance of his life and message for people of all faiths.

...In the world of academic Biblical study, far too often the best scholars cannot connect their work to real life.

...Every now and then, we are lucky enough to have teachers who give us the best of both worlds: rigorous scholarship, powerfully taught in language that anyone can understand, with application for everyday life.

Rabbi Sacks was such a teacher. We would do well to learn from him.

With the death of Rabbi Sacks, the world has lost a powerful voice for good. ...He will be missed but not forgotten. May his memory truly be a blessing.

Sometime during the second century, Rabbi Judah Ha'Nasi taught that upon receiving bad news, such as the death of a loved one, it is right to say *Baruch Dayan Ha'emet*, "Blessed be the true judge." One of his students taught that in the age to come when everything is set right, we will no longer say "Blessed be the true judge" but simply "Blessed is the One who is good and does good." Together with the family of Rabbi Sacks, we look forward to that day.

(adapted from an article by Timothy Keidering: *In Memory of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks* and published in *The Bruderhof*, a publication of the Bruderhof Community, an intentional Christian community of more than 3,000 people living in twenty-eight settlements on four continents).

Carolyn and James Weeks, members of the Albany, NY, Bruderhof Community, spoke to us about their work and values at our February 2020 dinner meeting.



Happiness Chemicals and how to hack them



DOPAMINE

THE REWARD CHEMICAL

- Completing a task
- Doing self-care activities
- Eating food
- Celebrating little wins



OXYTOCIN

THE LOVE HORMONE

- Playing with a dog
- Playing with a baby
- Holding hand
- Hugging your family
- Give compliment



SEROTONIN

THE MOOD STABILIZER

- Meditating
- Running
- Sun exposure
- Walk in nature
- Swimming
- Cycling



ENDORPHIN

THE PAIN KILLER

- Laughter exercise
- Essential oils
- Watch a comedy
- Dark chocolate
- Exercising



@sumbu.official

INTERFAITH COMMUNITY COORDINATING COUNCIL CHANGES:

I am immensely proud to work with the members of our Coordinating Council. For many years, long before I became involved or even knew of the existence of the organization, the council operated to provide guidance and oversight to the work of Interfaith Schenectady, to promote Interfaith relations and ensure responsible use of the treasury. These hard-working individuals, both past and present, have contributed a vast amount of energy, enthusiasm and thoughtfulness to the organization. They deserve our praise!

Due to coronavirus restrictions and council members' individual needs, we have reassigned some titles and responsibilities.

Colette Odell, Vice President, has been a supportive, caring and generous member of the council. For some time now, due to her health and more recently due to her lack of electronic connectivity, she has been unable to attend council meetings. In an increasingly competitive environment, we need a fully functioning council to conduct business and make decisions. In September 2020, the council voted to elect Colette Vice President Emeritus and to appoint Rev. Joselle Gagliano as vice president in her stead. Humera Khan, Secretary, has been a loyal member of the council for years. Humera has tirelessly attended meetings, recording meeting discussions and decisions and reporting them back to the council. It is a thankless task! It is also incredibly difficult to sit in a meeting, participate in decision making and record events.

In addition to faithful attendance at meetings, Humera has shown her support for Interfaith Schenectady by arranging for the Islamic Center of the Capital District to host a dinner meeting once a year and, in consultation with her Imam, to provide a lecturer or panel discussion for the presentation. Additionally, Humera chose a menu, arranged for food delivery and organized the women of the Islamic Center to serve and decorate the hall at First Reformed Church in Scotia when we held our annual galas.

Our constitution allows for an Assisting Secretary on the council. Karen Bond, who has served on our council for several years, has taken minutes for Humera when she could not attend a meeting. To give Humera a well-deserved break and continue the tradition of excellent notetaking, Karen has graciously agreed to become Secretary and Humera has moved to serve as Assisting Secretary. This means that someone who is experienced with recording decisions made at Coordinating Council meetings will be able to step in if needed. In November 2020, the council voted to appoint Karen Bond, Secretary and Humera Khan, Assisting Secretary.

Our Coordinating Council

Miranda Rand, President

Colette Odell, Vice President Emeritus

Karen Bond, Secretary

Members at Large:

Erica Berger, Zarina Chaudry, Scott Ebeling, Audrey Hughes, Gerry Pierce, Rev. Bob Long

Rev. Joselle Gagliano, Vice President

Edith Klein, Treasurer

Humera Khan, Assisting Secretary



SiCM IS GOING INTERFAITH!

On November 18, Jo-Anne Rafalik, Interim Executive Director of SiCM (Schenectady Community Ministries), made a presentation at our monthly zoom meeting. In it she traced the history of SiCM, from its inception, through its various iterations to the present, as they look to expand their base beyond the Christian churches which currently support them by making financial and in-kind contributions and sending representatives to their monthly assembly meetings. SiCM has begun to invite other faith communities to be a part of their organization. Congregation Gates of Heaven has accepted the invitation.

An ad-hoc committee was formed to discuss ways SiCM might frame their invitation to faith communities in the Schenectady area to become part of the SiCM community. Joselle Gagliano and I recently accepted an invitation to serve on the ad-hoc committee as representatives of the Interfaith Community of Schenectady. The ad-hoc committee is chaired by Rev. Dustin Wright, pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church on Guilderland Avenue in Schenectady and includes representatives from the Unitarian Universalist Society of Schenectady, a member of the chaplaincy department at Ellis Hospital, a representative from St. Joseph's Place, (the hospitality center run by the Sisters of St. Joseph that is adjacent to the SiCM building on Albany Street), and members of SiCM staff.

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 2020/2021

Miranda Rand, President mirandarand411@gmail.com / 518-393-5047
Rev. Joselle Gagliano, Vice-President revgagliano@gmail.com
Colette Odell, Vice President Emeritus 518-371-0634
Karen Bond, Secretary kbond337@yahoo.com
Humera Khan, Assisting Secretary humerak19@gmail.com
Edith Kliman, Treasurer 518-346-0025

COORDINATING COUNCIL: Erica Berger, Karen Bond, Zarina Chaudry, Scott Ebeling, Rev. Joselle 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: _____

WINTER FESTIVALS OF LIGHT:

Diwali:

Diwali is a Hindu festival during which candles, firecrackers and clay lamps known as *diyas* are lit to signify the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil. If you wish to greet someone who is celebrating, you can say "happy Diwali," or *saal mubarek* which means "Happy New Year." Typically, Hindus go to a temple to pray to the god Ganesh or Lakshmi, practice charitable giving and service and celebrate by eating traditional sweets and savory foods, exchanging gifts and practicing gratitude. Diwali lasts for five days.

Advent:

Advent is a Christian festival, a season of looking forward with prayers, worship and scripture readings during the four weeks preceding Christmas. Many churches have an Advent Wreath with candles (traditionally 3 purple, one pink, lit on the third Sunday, and one white, this latter being lit on Christmas Day or Christmas Eve to signify the birth of Christ). Some traditions have names for the candles (which are lit one a week in rotation, from the first Sunday to the last. The candles are named Hope, (the prophecy candle), Peace, (the Bethlehem candle), Joy (the shepherd candle), and Love, (the angel candle). Each week the candles are relit until all five candles are lit on Christmas day/eve.

Hanukkah:

Hanukkah is an 8-day Jewish festival which celebrates the victory of the Maccabees over the army of the Seleucid Empire in about 165 BCE. The word Hanukkah means dedication, referring to the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after having served as a temple in honor of Zeus during Greek occupation. Known also as the Festival of Lights, Hanukkah begins on the 25th of the Jewish month of Kislev. A special candelabra, called a hanukkiah, with 8 branches (perhaps a ninth) is used. It may burn oil or candles. On the first night, one light is lit with the help of a special light called the *shamash*, the second night two, and so forth until the eighth night when all are lit. Because the six branched menorah of the Temple used oil as its fuel, Hanukkah foods are fried in oil. Typical foods for Hanukkah are *latkes* (potato pancakes) and *sufganiyot* (jelly donuts).

Kwanzaa:

Kwanzaa, an African American holiday dedicated to civil justice rather than a particular religion, was founded in 1966 during the aftermath of the Watts riots. The festival has seven African Heritage principles: *Umoja* (Unity); *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility); *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination); *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics); *Nia* (Purpose); *Kuumba* (Creativity); and *Imani* (Faith). Kwanzaa is celebrated for seven days. Symbols include a mat (*Mkeka*), a *Kinara* (seven branch candle holder), and a unity cup (*Umoja*), for remembering and giving thanks (*shukrani*) to African ancestors. Traditionally, families decorate their homes with *kente* (colorful African cloth), fresh fruit and objects of art.

The greeting for each day of Kwanzaa is *Habari Gani?* Which is Swahili for "How are you?"

(Information about Hanukkah contributed by council member, Edith Klein. Information about Diwali and Kwanzaa largely obtained from Wikipedia, information about Advent contributed by council member, Miranda Rand).



IFC OF SCHENECTADY

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E-mail:
schdyinterfaith@yahoo.com

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



Don't forget
to like us on
Facebook!



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:
January 14 February 11 March 11 April 8

Our love, support and thanks...

Condolences: We send our love and sympathy to Rev. Bob Long at the recent loss of his son-in-law.

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.