

Ministering Together

The Interfaith Council
of Contra Costa County

February

2006

Coming Events

■ Living, Dying and Grieving

Saturday, February 4, 8:45 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. Awakening Retreat Center, 9701 Deer Valley Rd., Brentwood;

Ron Valle and **Mary Mohs** present this one-day workshop for professionals and others. Topics include fear of death; suicide and sudden death; stages of dying and grieving; working with those in coma; avoiding burn-out; and near-death experience. Cost is \$125 (\$20 extra for CE). For information and to register, please contact 925-933-7171 or 925-755-8822. ■ **Side By Side: A Journey with Depression**

Friday, February 3, 7:30 to 9:30 P.M. Hillcrest Congregational Church, 404 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill

Stand-up comedian **Brian Wetzel** describes his struggle with depression in a funny and inspirational show that has attracted sold-out audiences in churches, colleges and Napa State Hospital. Due to mature themes this show is not appropriate for children or young teens. Suggested free will offering of \$15.00.

■ Forum on Homelessness

Sunday, February 12, 11:30 A.M. Orinda Community Church 10 Irwin Way, Orinda **Glen Watson** will be the speaker at the forum on issues surrounding homelessness. This event open to all interested persons. For more information, call 925-254-3222.

■ Handy Dandy: Justice vs. Religious Conscience in Two Acts

Saturday, February 11, 8:00 P.M. Sunday, February 12, 1:30 P.M., Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church 55 Eckley Ln., Walnut Creek An anti-nuke nun and a law-and-order judge butt heads and bump hearts.

Tickets for this benefit event are \$13.00. For information or reservations, contact (925) 934-3135.

■ **Bob Hurd in Concert** *Sunday, February 12, 4:00 P.M. St. Monica Catholic Community 1101 Camino Pablo, Moraga* Bob Hurd, internationally acclaimed musician and composer, will lead a celebration of music and prayer to benefit the Nevada Desert Experience. For more information, contact 925-376-6900. ■

Witnessing Darfur: Genocide Emergency *Tuesday, February 21, 7:00 to 8:30 P.M. Temple Isaiah 3800 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette*

This urgent film will be shown and DVDs made available to your congregation or organization. Also, there will be postcards for you to use to collect signatures for the "**A Million Voices for Darfur Postcard Campaign.**" Sponsored by Dear Sudan: Love, Contra Costa County.

For more information, contact 925-939-7218 or cmhirsch@astound.net

■ One Nation Under God: A History of Prayer in America

Sunday, February 26, 3:00 P.M. First Church of Christ Scientist 2619 Dwight Way, Berkeley **James Moore** will speak on his new book, *One Nation Under God*. He will show how political leaders, soldiers, artists and ordinary Americans have turned to prayer throughout our nation's history. **Peter Allen** will present interludes of music as well. A donation of \$10 is requested to help re-roof this historic building. For more information, contact 925-376-3908.

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World Day of Prayer: *Friday,*

March 3, at Salvation Army Church, 3950 Clayton Road, Concord. Church Women United invite all men and women of faith. Coffee and registration at 9:30 A.M.; worship and prayer service at 10:00 A.M. ■ **Viewing My Life - Past & Present: Memoir Writing** *Tuesday, March 14 San Damiano Retreat, Danville* **Ursula Caspary Frankel** will lead this retreat about exploring the deep places within us where past and present meet. Activities will involve prayerful reflection, writing, sharing and laughter. Cost is \$55. For further information, contact 925-837-9141.

Director's Letter Here's a heads-up.

We may need your help in the coming months to make a case before our county supervisors and city officials. Remember when, two years ago, the county made severe cuts to its budget because of projected shortfalls, and the funding for the family shelters in Martinez and Concord was cut entirely? A consortium of people came together under the *Task Force to Save the Family Shelters*. On the back of the First Five grant, we were able to reach full funding for last fiscal year and this one. We also received substantial and generous funding from the Leshner Foundation for this year and next.

But the Task Force, when it was first formed in July of 2004, pledged that it would dissolve after two years, presuming that our local jurisdictions would be able to "re-up," after financial crises had abated. Well, you have seen the news that the county now has to trim, for the third time in three years, tens of millions of dollars from its budget. It is crunch time. We know that our elected county and city representatives care about the emergency shelters. They are the ones who promoted, funded and set them up in the first place. We also know that there is widespread support for them in the religious community. Many of you are involved in providing food and supplies, a service that

literally keeps them in business. So the *Task Force to Save the Family Homeless Shelters* will be asking you to lobby county supervisors and city council members to do what they can (maybe more) to contribute toward these invaluable programs. The two shelters run on about \$700,000 per year. They are staffed 24 hours a day by competent supervisors and other professional staff. Clients are being placed in permanent housing more quickly than ever. The staff has sufficient tenure and knowledge of the needs of homeless families that they are doing a better job than ever. So please stand ready to stand up for the shelters. More specific information will be available for you to act upon. We appreciate your partnership. The larger issue has to do with how our governments — through budget shortfalls created by unwarranted tax cuts and a war machine — are abandoning care for the poor. Let's be clear: private support can never match what we can do through our government. Dropping government programs will always diminish the level of services that are available, no matter how many religious groups or other non profits seek to take up the slack.

Like global warming, we are creating conditions that won't be able to be ameliorated for decades, if ever. Please, let us collectively wake from our slumber.

A Prayer

By Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, quoted by the Rev. Jim McGee, St. John Vianney Catholic Church, Walnut Creek "God of Compassion, You let the rain fall on the just and the unjust. Expand and deepen our hearts so that we may love as You love, even those among us who have caused the greatest pain by taking life. For there is in our land a great cry for vengeance as we fill up death rows and kill the killers in the name of justice, in the name of peace. Jesus, our brother, You suffered execution at the hands of the state, but you did not let hatred overcome you. Help us to reach out to victims of violence so that our enduring love may help them heal. Holy Spirit of God, You strengthen us in the struggle for justice. Help us to work tirelessly for the abolition of state-sanctioned

Health and Faith-in-Action

The Health and Faith-in-Action Committee of the Interfaith Council is calling for stories of faith and health. We want to hear from our readers. Please consider submitting an account of how your faith journey has been an important part of your experience of illness and health. This newsletter will provide a 200-word column space in the monthly newsletter for your stories. Our committee's interest is to have our

Chaplain's Corner Several kids I have worked with will all reach their eighteenth birthdays this year:

three in the spring, two in the summer. One of these youngsters I first saw in diapers at his great-

interfaith community share with each other the centrality of faith in our journeys with illness, health and well-being.

- *Trinka Wasik and Brent Adams, Co-Chairs*

grandparents' home seventeen years ago. I have known his family since long before he was born. He is now residing in a college dormitory in Chico after earning his GED while in custody. He enrolled in

classes at Butte College in Oroville, and I picked him up on the day of his release from the Orrin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility (OAYRF). We were in such a hurry to get him to school, he jumped in the van wearing "county clothes" and changed in a McDonald's bathroom along the way! Another of these young people also recently passed his GED, while on the electronic monitor (JEM), also shortly after his seventeenth birthday. We met when he was a very young, but large, teen who was mad at the world and under the mistaken impression that he was truly bad. During our initial encounter, I asked him to show me his fists. I took both of his fourteen-year-old fists in my hand. I then pointed to his head and I told him he had far more power in that big hard head of his than "in these little fists." His mumbled response: "Nobody's ever called my fists little." Judge Haight referred this kid to me following a court hearing. The probation officer told me the judge felt this kid could benefit by a visit from me. I had dozens of visits with him, and this kid is still grateful to the judge for the referral. He is working. I took him to the interview—he was offered the job on the spot. He too intends to enroll in college classes for the spring semester, maybe at Butte College. Two others currently on JEM are in school and preparing to take the GED. If they pass the exam, both intend to go to Butte College in January. I have known the elder of the two since he was fourteen. The tearful kid was brought to

me on his first of several visits to juvenile hall. He told me recently he thought I was a policeman sent to extract a "confession" from him. He shared, "I didn't know what that collar meant!" I have come to know this young man and his mother quite well, and we have spent a good deal of time together. He now knows just what that collar represents. The younger kid I met only a year or so ago. He accompanied me on a six-thousand-mile automobile trip to Pennsylvania and back last January. What torture I subjected him to! He was not allowed to wear a "do-rag" in the car; we had no DVD player, and the radio was kept silent. He could not "sag" his pants or wear gym shorts under them. He was particularly puzzled by the fact that while we were at a remote rest stop at 2:00 a.m., I did not go to sleep until he returned to the car from the payphone fifty yards away. "Rev, you're jus' too overprotective!" He too is studying to take the GED. Once he has passed the test, it is his current desire to join the others at Butte College. The eldest of the group first crossed paths with me when he was nine years old. My preliminary task during our first meeting was to dry the little fellow's tears. There were no parents in his life. Maternal grandmother was the legal guardian, who died shortly after our initial contact. He had no one and drifted from group home to group home for more than a few years. I suggested to the probation department that the Summit Center might be an

appropriate placement. I had shortly before been appointed by the Court as his "surrogate parent for educational purposes," the eighth of nine. He completed a tremendously productive year at the Summit Center. Then I enrolled him in a boarding school in Pennsylvania, thus the long drive last winter!

Transition to that setting was challenging at best. He did, though, earn reasonably good grades while away at school. He came home at the end of the semester and by summer's end announced his wish not to return to Pennsylvania. And, as it turns out, with all the high school credit he earned at Mt. McKinley School and at the boarding school, he was, at the beginning of this semester, only nine and one-half credits short of graduation. He is diligently working on that now, through independent studies. He plans

to enroll at Butte College in January, and to reside in the dormitory in Chico. He wishes to go on from there to Morehouse College in Atlanta, the alma mater of one Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. One of our kids is presently attending Morehouse College.

Currently there are eight of our Contra Costa kids enrolled at Butte College for the fall semester. The above kids, along with maybe a half dozen others, are preparing to join this group of eight in the spring semester. If they all continue to "follow through," and we continue to send our kids up there, we may have to request that a whole wing of one dormitory building be set aside exclusively for the sons and daughters of the County of Contra Costa!

Grace and Peace. *Rev. Dr. Charles Tinsley*

Your Words

Excerpts from "**Freedom to Believe**" Reprinted from **ONE COUNTRY**, newsletter of the **Baha'i International Community**

The freedom to hold beliefs of one's choosing and to change them is central to human development. It is the individual's search for meaning and the desire to know who we are as human beings that distinguish the human conscience. We applaud the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for its 2004 Human Development Report, "Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World." For the first time in the Report's fifteen-year history, it acknowledges cultural liberty as a "vital part of human development" and affirms the "profound importance of religion to people's identities." The individual's search for truth and meaning is an activity most intimately linked with the human conscience and with the desire to see the world through

one's own eyes and to understand it through one's own faculties of perception and intelligence. As such, it is inextricably linked with all facets of human development.

Due to pressure from dissenting States, however, [recent] United Nations treaties have used weaker language to define this right, failing to uphold the unambiguous standard set by the [Universal] Declaration [of Human Rights]. The Human Rights Committee has identified the freedom to change religion or belief, freedom to manifest beliefs, non-coercion in matters of religion, and non-discrimination on the basis of religion as core components of this right. As signatories to the Universal Declaration and subsequent treaties and global commitments,

governments bear the primary responsibility to create, safeguard, and promote the necessary conditions for the enjoyment of the freedom of conscience, religion, or belief for all of their citizens.

Ultimately, a long-term preventive strategy must be rooted in efforts to educate children and adults alike, equipping them with literacy skills and opportunities to learn about other systems of belief. Within a culture of education, people who can read the writings of their own religion as well as those of others, who are free to question and discuss, and who are able to participate in the generation and application of knowledge will be better prepared to counter the forces of ignorance and fanaticism. The responsibility to uphold universal principles of

freedom of religion or belief also rests with religious leaders. In a world harassed by violence and conflict in the name of religion, leaders of religious communities bear tremendous responsibility for guiding their followers towards a peaceful coexistence. Too often, those acting in the name of religion have fanned the flames of

The Rev. John Bennison, St. John's Episcopal Church, Clayton

I'm remembering and celebrating the humble life of a simple poet (and former U.S. senator) Eugene McCarthy, who died yesterday at the age of 89. He was a gentle soul who gave hope — and with that hope, he gave a kind of hopeful joy — to a generation of young Americans in the tumultuous 60s; when he essentially dismantled his own political career in coming out in opposition to the Vietnam War before it was expediently safe to do so.

Now, if you know me at all, it may not come as much of a shock

Cantor Leigh Korn, Temple Isaiah, Lafayette

Once Simchat Torah had passed, I took a little vacation to New York City where I had lived for four years. It did not take long for me to remember the omnipresence Jewish aura surrounding this great city. Yarmulkes abound, you find Torah study happening on the subways, and at lunch my first day there, I was sitting next to a table of two women trying to decide whether or not they would attend the URJ [Union of Reform Jews] Biennial in Houston.

It made me think how different, and challenging, it can be to live as a Jew in the East Bay. We truly have to work at it. We are not inundated with Jewish references everywhere we go. We cannot count on a majority of our

The Rev. Greg Ledbetter, Shell Ridge Community Church, Walnut Creek

A few weeks ago at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, I heard former UN weapons inspector Scott Ritter conclude sadly that as citizens and a nation, we have not done nearly enough to seek to understand the great complexities of the world cultures around us — particularly those with whom we

hatred and fanaticism, themselves serving as the greatest obstacles in the path of peace. Yet the religions and faiths of the world with which the majority of the earth's inhabitants stand identified have imparted a vast spiritual, moral, and civilizing legacy, which continues to succor and guide in these troubled times.

or surprise if I told you I was once part of McCarthy's "children's crusade" in 1967, during my freshman year at DePauw University. Is part of that winter and spring traipsing the farm fields of Indiana, leafleting the corn belt and trying to engage Midwest farmers who had little appreciation or interest in a peace candidate.

As we all know, McCarthy didn't win his party's nomination. Humphrey did, only to be soundly defeated by Nixon;

and after the Chicago anti-war street protests at the

“On Being Jewish in The East Bay”

colleagues to be Jewish or understand why we observe the Jewish holidays.

Our children are often the sole Jews in their classes and, as a result, their classmates and playmates are often not Jewish. The vocabulary of our peers is not peppered with Jewish expressions, and to find a decent Kosher deli is nearly impossible. At initial inspection, it surely seems easier and more comfortable being a Jew in a metropolis like New York. And yet, I believe that being a Jew in the Bay Area is more of a blessing than an apparent curse. I believe that we all must truly make a choice to be Jewish living in an area where we are the vast minority. We take nothing for

are at odds. It is much easier to declare them "enemies of our way of life" and then rally support to destroy them. Politics and religion that can succeed only by uniting their followers against real and imagined enemies are no friend to us or our world's hopes for peace with justice. As American and glob-

Indeed, religions have reached to the roots of human motivation to lift our vision beyond purely material conceptions of reality to embrace higher notions of justice, reconciliation, love, and selflessness in the service of the common good.

“Remembering Eugene McCarthy”

Democratic National Convention all but doomed Hubert's chances. We also all know how the war ended with a brokered peace of sorts, and American forces finally fleeing that debacle.

And history would go on to show the poet of hope and a solemn joy spoke a truth that the world at that time could not bear, nor was it prepared to hear. But just imagine, what if we had?

granted. The choice we make to raise our children as Jews is not always an easy one, but we do it thoughtfully and lovingly.

Converts to Judaism have often been referred to as Jews-by-Choice. But aren't we all really Jews by choice? To be Jewish in our area is not something that happens easily. We choose every day to continue to express ourselves as Jews through synagogue participation, education of our young people, and personal practice. While on the surface, it seems easier to be a Jew in a place like New York City, I think the satisfaction we get thoughtfully and courageously building our Jewish homes, lives, and community is a gift to be treasured.

“Time to Seek Understanding”

al citizens and followers of Jesus we can do better than that! In the coming year, let us continue to commit ourselves to seeking solutions for our world that don't involve turning one people against another, that don't deepen old suspicions and create new ones, that don't make the poor the

scapegoat for the challenges the rich face in seeking to remain that way. Let us sustain our commitment to facing the chal-

The Rev. Bryn Smallwood-Garcia, I realized how busy and un-spiritual my life had become over the Christmas holidays when, taking my 9-year-old daughter Lela to the San Francisco Zoo, I began our day with my head stuck in my map. I found myself plotting our day's trek and the optimal time to

Trinka Wasik, First Church of Christ, Scientist, Danville

Mary Baker Eddy, discoverer and founder of Christian Science, explores the depth of what Jesus'

"It is not well to imagine that Jesus demonstrated the divine power to heal only for a select number or for a limited period of time, since to all mankind and in every hour, divine Love supplies all good."(S&H p 494:13)

She recognized that Jesus' healings weren't God setting aside His own laws, but a revelation of His universal spiritual laws — laws that supersede those laws based on material observation. Like Thomas Edison bringing laws of electricity into practical usage, Jesus demonstrated spiritual laws of Love that were practical for

Katrina Disaster Relief Stories

- from *Contra Costa Recovery*

Teams Several congregations in Contra Costa County have sent teams to help in the recovery and rebuilding efforts along the Gulf Coast, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. **Barbara Abel of Lafayette-**

Presbyterian Church writes the following about their

November trip to New Orleans: "Yesterday we divided into three teams: a mudding-out group, a chain saw group and a roofing group. The mudding-out team found that the area where they were to work was completely gray--the houses, streets, trees--the world was gray. Many houses were off their foundations and sitting in the middle of the street.

Inside everything was covered with putrid, toxic mold. ~~Black, yellow and green mold was growing on the walls, ceilings, floors, everywhere!~~ There were not enough respirators to go around, so many of the "mudders" had to wear painter's masks. Since everything was toxic, it was decided that no one would

lenges ahead with solutions that do not involve violence and war. As Martin Luther King, Jr. proclaimed:

Orinda Community Church "Joy in the Moment"

linger with each animal and still cover all the sites.

Meanwhile, Lela was dragging me to see a giraffe feeding right beside the fence, and a zebra in full pursuit of an ostrich in the background! Fortunately her joy and in-the-moment enthusiasm was contagious and shook me out

healings mean to all of us as God's beloved children. In her textbook,

anyone who appealed to them in the way that he taught us.

Jesus could heal. So could prophets before him, and disciples after him. And Mrs. Eddy also healed, demonstrating her understanding of the universal, divine laws of Love he taught. She wrote down in *Science and Health* the principles of healing she discovered, so that anyone, of any faith tradition, could apply these healing principles, and heal as Jesus did, and instructed us to do.

"He that believeth on me [understandeth me], the works that I do shall he do also." (John 14:12)

mud-out without a respirator! "The chain saw gang headed out to cut down trees while another group built stairs for homes that had lost their entryways. The "tarpers" continue covering homes without roofs. The "mudders" were sent to a warehouse along the Mississippi to gather food, clothing, cleaning materials, Clorox, disposable diapers, school supplies and toys. The morning was spent packing boxes. In the afternoon, the teams distributed goods to families in a three-story apartment building resembling a cement bunker that withstood Katrina, and where many residents rode out the storm." Bobbie Dodson of the same congregation shares: "It has been an eye-opening week. While it's almost impossible to grasp the enormity of the devastation and disruption to people's lives, it seems everyone we've met on the various projects has an upbeat, positive attitude, thanking God that they are alive, for their family's safety, and for what everyone has done to help them. Their faith is truly amazing and inspiring! There

"Wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows."

of my Type-A agenda for the day. Who cares how much you accomplish at the zoo, and who cares how efficiently you cover all the exhibits? What in the world had I been thinking? I was thinking as one who lives in this world, and not in God's Realm of Love.

"Healing Principles"

Science & Health with Key to the Scriptures, she states,

When I opened myself to these principles of God's love, I experienced profound healing. For many years, I was considered infertile due to a brain tumor. I decided to seek healing through prayer and study of the Bible and *Science and Health*.

This study inspired me to understand God's love better by living a new understanding of love in my own life. I was completely and permanently healed. I became pregnant. My son is now nearly seven years old.

will be a continuing need for volunteer mudders, wharf rats and chain saw operators for at least a year. Other types of volunteer skilled and unskilled jobs will come up as needs arise. Many of the residents have been gouged for \$4,500 to cut down a tree or to have a house mudded out. Anyone interested may contact the School of Urban Missions, 511 Westbank Expressway, Gretna, LA 70053. The phone number is (504) 362-6364. Some people have worked for a week and returned, others have come for a week and stayed a month."

Julia Philbert of San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church in Alamo tells of her trip to Pascagoula, Mississippi: "We

heard story after story from those we encountered, but were amazed by the positive spirit, determination, and blessings the warm people of Mississippi shared with us. Until you actually see the devastation, it is hard to imagine the widespread impact it has had on so many people. There were people still waiting for FEMA trailers or for them to be hooked up, and many of the people didn't have flood insurance because their homes weren't technically in flood zones. As you got closer to the Gulf coast, home after home had been completely leveled. Flying out of Gulfport, the area looked like it had been hit by an atomic bomb."

SOCIAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE SoJA meets Wednesday, February 8, at 7 P.M., at Interfaith Council Office. **All are welcome.**

■ **WINTER NIGHTS:** Since October 17, Opening Day, 77 family members have resided in our Winter Nights Shelter. Some of them have left us; we found permanent shelter beds for 20 family members and an apartment for one family. In early January our families submitted applications for rental assistance, and are currently in the SHELTER, Inc. database.

Several of them have jobs, have saved money while living in our host congregations, and hope to be able to move to apartments soon. Since our last issue of "*Ministering Together*," Winter Nights has been hosted by: **Shell Ridge Community Church** partnering with **B'nai Tikvah Synagogue; Walnut Creek United Methodist; Church of the Resurrection** partnering with **Hillcrest Congregational Church; Our Savior's Lutheran; First Christian Church of Concord; St. Stephen Episcopal** partnering with **Unitarian Universalist Church; Temple Isaiah; St. Paul Episcopal; and St. Stephen Catholic.** Our guests and staff are grateful for the spirit of caring and generosity shown by the volunteers at each host group. Volunteer hours continue to be about 250 each week.

We are happy to announce that **Helene Weber**, a member of Temple Isaiah Synagogue and a retired social worker, has agreed to help with pro-bono case management.

Our dream is to attract other volunteer case managers to work with Helene in helping to steer our clients to services that move them closer to permanent affordable housing. Two of our unmet goals continue to be: (1) finding circles of about six to eight families interested in adopting a homeless family and (2) finding a building to serve as a Winter Nights Shelter next season. If you can help with either of those dreams, call Gwen Watson at 925-930-9965. Our dedicated staff, led by **Mahmood Barakzai**, continues to direct the work of the program. A special thanks goes to **Nurse Al**, who

shows up at our shelter whenever our guests require his medical attention. We are very grateful to our donors who responded with great generosity to our Winter Nights appeal letters. You are an awesome group!

■ **CONCORD NAVAL WEAPONS STATION:** An interfaith group convened by SoJA to participate in the Redevelopment Process of the CNWS. **Delores Loague** from Concord United Methodist Church will chair the CNWS Task Force, and **Susan Jaffe** from the Jewish Federation will Vice-chair. **A dinner and workshop will be held on March 27, at Concord United Methodist Church, spearheaded by the Interfaith Council and East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO).** The keynoter will be **Barbara Johnson**, Chief of Staff for Congressman George Miller, speaking on the rights of the homeless to a closed base as specified in the McKinney-Vento Act. Discussion groups will follow.

All are welcome. ■ **HEALTH CARE:** Pat Snyder directs us to check out the web site www.CitizensHealthcare.gov. She will continue to track and report on the Kuehl bills. ■ **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY:** The 14th annual gathering to celebrate the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was held on January 16 in the Community Center in Walnut Creek. The hall was filled with people anxious to renew their commitments to being all they can be to bring peace into the world nonviolently. The theme was "The Power of One." **Rabbi Raphael Asher** acted as Master of the Ceremony in his new role of President of the Interfaith Council, with his affirming style and presence. **The Shell Ridge Ramblers** from Shell Ridge Community Church, under the direction of **Rev. Greg Ledbetter**, and the **choir from the Second Baptist Church in Martinez**, under the leadership of **Sandra Williams**, kept the mood lively yet poignant. Short words of greeting were shared by **Rev. Brian Stein-Webber, Mary Alice O'Connor** of

the **Mt. Diablo Peace and Justice Center**, and **Kathy Hicks, Mayor of Walnut Creek**. **The Rev. Laurie Manning, of Hillcrest Congregational Church** in Pleasant Hill, delivered the keynote address, which received a standing ovation; **Imam Dr. Amer Araim** of Dar-ul-Islam Mosque in Concord said the final prayer, and **Dorothy Vance** gave a resounding challenge. All rose to bond together and sing "We Shall Overcome." ■ **HURD CONCERT: Bob Hurd**, liturgical musician and composer, known and acclaimed world wide, will lead a celebration of music and prayer at **St. Monica Catholic Community on Sunday, February 12, from 4:00 to 5:30 P.M.** St. Monica is located at 1101 Camino Pablo in Moraga. A free-will offering will benefit the Nevada Desert Experience. The NDE office in Las Vegas has been ~~working since 1992 to close the Nevada Test Site~~ where U.S. nuclear bombs have been tested and stored since the 1940s. Come to enjoy the music and support the work of the NDE. Pace e Bene is an organization which grew out of the NDE activity, and is a training program for nonviolence education and practice. They have a beautiful website describing

Loaves & Fishes Feeds Thousands Yearly

Loaves & Fishes is a local organization, staffed largely by volunteers, that has developed excellent community support. The people whom our six dining rooms currently serve find themselves in situations that do not allow them to cook for themselves. Loaves & Fishes becomes a refuge for them. Over 60 congregations, service groups, community organizations, and individuals provide the majority of the volunteer teams that prepare and serve daily ~~meals. The dining rooms and Catering Kitchen utilize~~ approximately 1000 volunteers, who contribute over 50,000 hours each year. **Loaves & Fishes serves approximately 850 meals each day.** We try to do this in a responsible manner by being fiscally conservative and by using the volunteers

Transition Welcome to the Rev. Judith S. Durff, Associate Pastor for Spiritual Formation at Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church. She writes: "A call came in October 1986, when I had one of those inexplicable moments in which God seems to directly and quite plainly answer a prayed question, 'Do you have anything you want me to do with my life?' Without hearing words, I had a strong sense that God [was] suggesting seminary... This call was astounding, for it was not in my plans or imagination to do such a thing. I was 42, happily married to my college sweetheart, Tom, living very comfortably with two

their resources and events. Check it out at paceebene.org.

■ **VIDEOS FOR PEACE:** The Mt. Diablo Peace and Justice Center has an excellent series Friday nights, consisting of an optional 6:30 p.m. potluck with a video and discussion at 7:00 p.m. Call 925-933-7850 for more information and specific dates.

■ **SCHOOL OF AMERICAS WATCH:** The national strategy meeting to close the SOA will be held this year in San Francisco on February 18 and 19. Father Roy Bourgeois and some staff will be present. A preliminary gathering to prepare input for this meeting will take place in early February. Our local Contra Costa group will schedule a meeting at the home of **Natalie Russell** soon. Even if you are already on her list, please call Natalie at 925-934-0759 or e-mail her at ~~russell1626@juno.com to express your interest,~~ and you will be notified about the details. It will probably be on a Monday evening, with optional potluck.

There is a good possibility of Congressional legal action to close our tax-supported model school of torture in the U.S. (SOA).

who help us regularly. What it comes down to is that the Board of Directors and the staff rely on the generosity of our supporters, through donations of money and time.

The vast majority of financial support comes from individuals, foundations, religious congregations, businesses, service organizations and the governments within the community. While Loaves & Fishes benefits from this support, the Board is constantly striving to broaden our donor base to ~~provide financial stability for the future.~~

Will you become a supporter of Loaves & Fishes? Do you know someone else whom we might contact? Let us know by reaching us at 925-837-8758. Sincerely, *Rick Richardson*, Executive Director

wonderful children, Robert and Jessica, and one dog.

I argued with God, but finally decided to explore the sense of call. The call of God has again come unexpectedly, but I am excited about God's invitation to move out into a new place at LOPC. Trusting that God

is preparing the way, like Sarah, I laugh at God's timing!"

Help Bring Mental Illness out of the Shadows! Support the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill Walk to be held in San Francisco Saturday, June 3, in Golden Gate Park. For more information contact

Chet Watson at 1-925-682-7195 or frchet@sbcglobal.net.

out in the spring. It is entitled ***Dying and Grieving: A Sacred Journey***, and will be published by Yes International Publishers. You may order it through your local bookstore

New Book by Local Authors Ron Valle and Mary Mohs of *Awakening* have authored a book that is due

2005 General Contributions We are grateful beyond words for the generosity of congregations, organizations and individuals who support the various work and ministries of the Interfaith Council. We list your names below. You are our lifeblood. Please let us know if we have inadvertently omitted your name, or otherwise have made a mistake.. (Contributors to the Winter Nights Rotating Shelter program will be listed at a later date..)

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Welcome !

We warmly welcome these three organizations into the membership of the Interfaith Council:

■ **Ik Onkar Peace Foundation**, whose mission is to promote divine consciousness through spiritual practice, workshops, conferences, seminars and publications; to reduce greed and strive to promote economic and social justice, preserve planetary beauty and resources, work toward peace within ourselves and in relationship to each other and harmony in the world, promote peaceful conflict resolution and prevent war. Ik Onkar is a Cooperation Circle of the United Religions Initiative and has members throughout the East Bay. ■ **Rossmoor Interfaith Council** has been in existence for over 20 years, and prides itself as being the first interfaith group in central county. They meet regularly for mutual understanding, advocacy and cooperation. Member organizations include St. Anne's Catholic Church, Pilgrim Congregational Church, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Congregation B'nai Israel, Hope Lutheran Church, Tice Valley United Methodist Church, Grace Presbyterian Church, and the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. ■ **Christian Science Church in Orinda** is a group of individuals deeply committed to God and Christianity, believing in the collective power and healing effect of spiritual thinkers in our society, and wishing to make our greater community a better place to live in all ways. Located in Orinda Village, they are merger of two former congregations.

Thanks to our wonderful volunteers for collating, folding and labeling the December-January issue of our newsletter. We appreciate **Betty Alton, Madeline Gomes, Dorothy Vance, Grey Whipple, Ruth Wittman, Jean Witucki, and Brian Stein-Webber**. If you would like to be part of this fun-loving group, please call **Lenita** at (925) 672-1053.

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- ★ Good Shepherd Lutheran, Concord
- ★ Northminster Presbyterian, El Cerrito
- ★ First Baptist, Martinez
- ★ St. Monica's Catholic, Moraga
- ★ Hillcrest Congregational, Pleasant Hill
- ★ Peacemakers everywhere
- ★ Displaced Victims of Rita & Katrina
- ★ Victims of West Virginia Mining Accidents
- ★ Mayan Indians of Guatemala, victims of earthquake and mud slides.
- ★ Winter Nights Families & Volunteers
- ★ Pakistan Earthquake Victims
- ★ Victims of California Floods

THANK YOU CORNER:

Next Deadline: February 14, 2006

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