

NeighborhoodVoice

FROM NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT NETWORK MEMBERS AND THE CITY STAR



The City Star is a proud partner of the Neighborhood Empowerment Network (NEN), a coalition of city agencies, nonprofits and community organizations that are sharing new ideas and best practices to make San Francisco a cleaner, greener, safer place to live. To learn more about the NEN, visit www.empowersf.org. This column appears every Monday.

Interfaith Council Addresses Hunger in the City

By Michael Pappas

SFIC Executive Director

Born out of the Loma Prieta earthquake and the city's homeless crisis, the San Francisco Interfaith Council has played an integral role in bringing people together, building understanding and serving the community for nearly two decades.

Comprised of a proactive board of directors, led by the Rev. **James DeLange** and Executive Vice Chair **Rita R. Semel**, the council recently appointed **Michael Pappas**, Master of Divinity, as executive director to coordinate its ambitious agenda.

The council convened the highly successful "Creating a Culture of Preparedness: Disaster Preparedness Congregations Workshop" at St. Mary's Cathedral on May 9. Supported by the San Francisco Foundation and the Department of Emergency Management, 200 participants from more than 80 congregations attended the workshop.

Together with Swords to Plowshares and the Coming Home Project, the council

recently hosted another powerful workshop for regional clergy on ministering to families and veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq.

"Hunger in the City" is the council's dominant programmatic theme for the upcoming season. Partnering with the city and neighborhood congregations, the council will co-sponsor Project Homeless Connect in Bayview-Hunters Point on Sept. 10 and the CROP/Hunger Walk, a program of Church World Services, in the Presidio on Oct. 19.

Scholars from the three Abrahamic Traditions will address the theological understanding of hunger Oct. 26 at Congregation Emanuel. This quarterly dialogue brings together Muslims, Christians and Jews to discuss the concepts of the Abrahamic faiths.

The council's Interfaith Winter Shelter will commence the Sunday prior to Thanksgiving and run through February. This collaborative effort of four hosts and 24 meal-providing congregations is staffed by Episcopal Community Services in conjunction with city agen-

cies. Last year, this respected program housed and fed 8,900 homeless men. Next year will mark the 20th year of the council sponsoring the program.

The council will host the 11th annual Mayor's Interfaith Prayer breakfast at the Cathedral Hill Hotel on Nov. 25. Special recognition will be given to the San Francisco Food Bank and congregations with programs designed to alleviate hunger in the city.

Each year on Thanksgiving, the council sponsors San Francisco's only interfaith prayer service. This year's observance will take place at the First Universalist Unitarian Church from 10 to 11 a.m. Nov. 27.

On the second Thursday of each month at the Urban Life Center of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, the council invites the community to a breakfast from 8 to 9:30 a.m.

Presentations are made on timely issues and a participating member gives a faith journey. All are welcome.

For more information, visit www.sf-interfaith.org. To subscribe to the online newsletter, e-mail michael@sf-interfaith.org.