



“Can We Influence History?”

by Rev. Alan Jones, Chair

In recent months there has been an unprecedented growth in bridge-building between people of different faith traditions. It has been thrilling to share in conversations where new insights are shared and new sensitivities developed. Meeting in homes, in mosques, churches and temples, people have been struggling to understand a world view which is different from their own.

In the same time period, around the world, we have also seen painful expressions

of religiously-motivated violence, and expressions of deep religious prejudice and hate. Our city and our world need a strong interfaith Council. San Francisco needs to be modeling a religious community where mutual respect and appreciation are celebrated. We need to be building personal and community relationships across the divides.

We live in a city where there is a great deal of cynicism about moral values and ethics within the political

community. Working together as a strong network of religious people we can reshape our city and we can influence history. Please sign up and join the San Francisco Interfaith Council. Invite others to do the same. Reach out to other religious communities in your neighborhood. Let's build a movement and heal a troubled world with spiritual values of justice, peace and love.



Celebrating our diverse faiths and spiritual traditions, the San Francisco Interfaith Council brings people together to build understanding and serve our community.

SFIC Mission Statement



S U M M E R
J U N E 2 0 0 2

FAITH JOURNEY

By Rev. James DeLange, Lutheran Minister



Since retiring from professional ministry two and a half years ago, I have had the luxury of observing the church in action from two unfamiliar vantage points: the pew in church and from the gallery at synod and church wide assemblies.

What is becoming clear is the ever-increasing marginalization of religion in our society as a contributor to the social, cultural and civic fabric of American life. The heated rhetoric in denominational assemblies, the divisiveness over sexual issues, the authority of sacred texts and the authority of bishops, the push for congregations to garner greater market share and to fire their pastor when it doesn't happen are all, I believe, symptoms of a crisis of fear on the part of religious leaders everywhere. The fear is that their authority is irrelevant except with the faithful few - that the entire religious enterprise in America has, to use a sports metaphor, been benched.

What has emerged to fill the vacuum, particularly since September 11, is the re-emergence of civic religion. Freedom. Patriotism. Duty, Honor, Country. The flag. Parades. High flying

rhetoric and punditry, all implying that the Almighty is on the side of America and its values. These are the verbal and liturgical symbols of the moment. But let us remember what the verbal and liturgical symbols were before Sept.11: Celebrities; entertainment passing itself off as news; entertainment passing itself off as religion; political cynicism; the marketplace. They will be back.

I have also observed that since the disenchantment with institutions that began in the 1960s, two generations of Americans have now grown up without ever hearing the faith story, let alone be invited to believe in it. And, as more people become educated about the history of religion without ever having been religious, they learn mostly the dark side of the story: The Crusades; the Inquisition; the Salem witch trials; the church's support of slavery; prohibition; misogyny; the persecution of gays and lesbians. Rarely mentioned are the positive contributions that religion has made, particularly in American life: The Abolitionist movement, the Settlement houses, the hospitals and the vast majority of our

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Thanks to our Donors

We're pleased to acknowledge the following donors: **SF Foundation/Faiths** for the Chaplaincy Program under the direction of **Rev. Toni Dunbar**; **The Richard and Rhoda Goldman** for operations; and **The Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund** for support for the Spiritual Life Mentoring Program. We have also had support from SF Foundation for capacity building.

Sustainers \$1,000:

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Glide Memorial UMC
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Grace Cathedral (Episcopalian)

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Rev. Harry Chuck
St. Francis Lutheran Church
St. Mary's Cathedral (Roman Catholic)
St. Ignatius Church (Roman Catholic)
Third Baptist Church
Zen Center

Juvenile Hall Chaplaincy Program

By Rev. Michael Gilmore, Committee Chair

It is with great joy, that I am able to report to you that the Chaplaincy Committee is busy working on the Aftercare and Mentoring programs that are being developed. We are presently seeking more volunteers to become mentors to help guide our youth.

Mentor Training has begun. The mission statement, objective and goal of what the San Francisco Interfaith Council will call the "Godparent program" is also in progress of being finalized by the committee. Presently, Rev. Dunbar is also working with three other organizations that provide mentors to youth from the Juvenile Justice System. They aim to work together in order to form a citywide, standardized mode of training for Mentors.

In April, our San Francisco Juvenile Hall Spiritual Life program, held a Minister's Luncheon at St. Mark's Lutheran Church. It was here that a collaboration between the different ministries of Juvenile Hall

was initiated. Rev. Toni Dunbar continues to work on this collaboration in hopes of increasing the visibility of faith-based organizations and individuals volunteering at the Youth Guidance Center.

We would also like to thank **Douglas Pumpetch**, our Youth Out-reach Worker, for doing such an excellent job with the youth. One of our former clients from Juvenile Hall, graduated from High School with a 4.0 GPA and has, therefore earned a scholarship to Fisk University. He and Douglas also received an acknowledgement for Outstanding Youth at New Liberation Presbyterian Church. Douglas continues to keep close contact with the youth from Juvenile Hall and their family members, empowering the youth to seek and attain brighter futures.

We intend to say more in future newsletters, but for now let it be said that, the committee needs your support and prayers.

Shelter Meal Prayer

*Almighty and eternal God,
You have called us to your table and
shared with us the fruits
of the earth.*

*May your grace enkindle in us
love for the many people whom
poverty and misery reduce to a condi-
tion of life unworthy of
your children.*

*Arouse in the hearts of those
you have blessed with abundance the
determination and passion to share
your abundance with others.*

*Let our hands be the hands with
which you serve food to those
who hunger.*

*Let our hearts be the hearts through
which you make your presence
known to those who yearn for you.*

Amen.

- St. Ignatius Church

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Faith Journey

nation's colleges and universities, not to mention the inter-faith efforts toward mutual understanding to which our organization is committed.

However, along with many of the faithful, I don't mind being a marginalized remnant. Our religious institutions, particularly local congregations, continue to provide a refuge for the weary, the troubled, the lonely and the hurting. That includes just about everybody at one time or another. If God put us here to serve, as most religions teach, this simply means that people of faith have to be unapologetic in pointing out what **Paul Tillich** called "the structures of grace in history".

Along with millions of others who maintain their faith and at the same time want to maintain an intellectual honesty, I freely admit that the church in its history has adjusted its theology and back-filled its interpretation of sacred texts in the light of scientific discovery and social

progress. I now recognize that much of the Biblical story is a mixture of truth and myth and if I try to decide which is which, it is a never ending and fruitless exercise. It may keep a few theologians employed, but it does little to call me to faith in what the ancients called the *Mysterium Tremendum*.

As I have grown older and have seen the generations rise and pass before me, I have also come to appreciate more the gift of life itself: how God surrounds my life with wonderful people, beautiful places and things to see, hear, smell and taste. As the great **Louis Armstrong** said, "What a Wonderful World!" More frequently now, the common table prayer has greater meaning to me: "Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts which we receive from Thy bountiful goodness."

(At each meeting of the SFIC, one of our members shares their Faith Journey. This was offered on April 11, 2002.)

Child Care Task Force

We continue to build and strengthen our nation as we grow together in facing challenges as a nation, as communities, as families and as individuals. The San Francisco Interfaith Council, by adopting the Child Care Task Force, continues to support the growth and strengthening of families, the core & foundation of this nation. The Child Care Task Force works with low-income families by providing their children the tools that will help give them a brighter future.

Recently, the Task Force became a Local Advisory Board for a national program called FIRST BOOK. Our program provides 6 books for each child in a year's time that they use in their own home. Most of these children have never had their own books before. Now they get six!

We had First Book Family Night at Holy Family Day Home in the Mission District and Grace Child Development Center in Bayview/Hunters Point with preschoolers and their families. **Mary Norris** engaged the kids, their parents and their siblings with "Caps for Sale". She read the book, acted it out and had the kids act it out. **Mary Culp** facilitated a group discussion with the parents of how they spend time with their children around books.

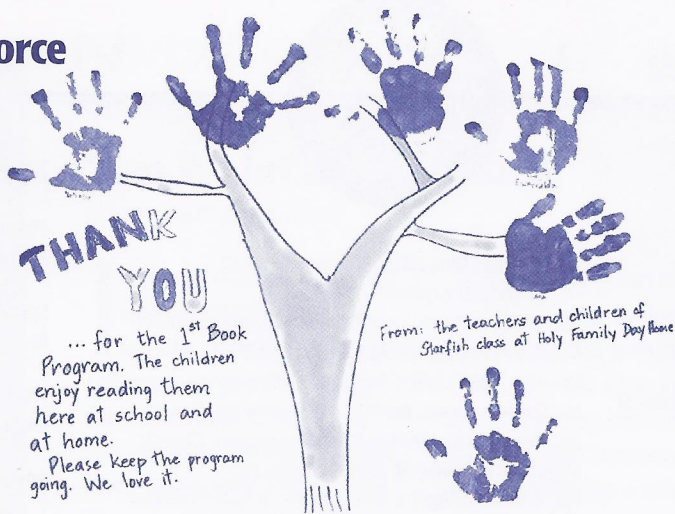
Space for Rent

Wednesday & Sunday evenings at:
St. John's United Church of Christ
501 Laguna Honda Blvd. (Woodside Ave.)
San Francisco, CA 94127

The Sanctuary: seats 200 with 50 more in the balcony. A piano and an organ are available for use. The Assembly Hall (Diehl Hall): also has a piano. Kitchen also available.

Call Bill Catherwood,
Church Administrator
at 415-731-9333

Email: office@sfstjohnsucc.org



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Donate Money For Books

Fifteen dollars will buy a set of six books for one child. \$150 will buy a set of books for 10 children and, \$300 will supply a small classroom.

Make checks payable to FIRST BOOK

and mail to Mary Culp at:
264 Yerba Buena Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94127

- Provide Leadership

Become a member of the Local Advisory Board (LAB) for First Book that reviews applications from child care agencies and help develop plans to raise money to continue to supply books

- Join The Child Care Task Force

Facilitate programs to meet the needs of pre-school children in low-income families.

Both groups meet monthly, usually at 9:00 a.m. over refreshments..

For more information contact Mary Culp: (415) 337-1722

E-mail: Ma2HaCulp@aol.com

SAN FRANCISCO INTERFAITH COUNCIL

Annual Meeting

Thursday, June 20, 2002

4:30 – 7:00 p.m.

Jones Memorial United Methodist Church

1975 Post Street, San Francisco

(underground parking off Avery St.)

Religions' New Roles in Today's World

Join special guests for points of view and discussion.

Imam Abu Qadir Al-Amin, Center on Juvenile & Criminal Justice, SF Muslim Community Center

Prof. Joseph D. Driskill, Assoc. Prof. of Spirituality Pacific School of Religion

Rev. Cn. Charles Gibbs, Exec. Director, United Religions Initiative

Moderator – **Rev. Alan Jones**, United Methodist Mission

What are acts of healing and justice? Can faith make a better world?

How do many faiths work together? Can faith help mental illness?

Please join us. Meet others engaged in the work of the interfaith community. Celebrate our diversity and enjoy the good will of people working together to make San Francisco a better place.

4:00 Tour of the new sanctuary of Jones Memorial UMC

4:30 Fellowship & Refreshments

5:00 SFIC Business Meeting: Presentation of Officers & Program Reports

5:30 Panel Discussion Questions & Discussion

7:00 Closing Prayer

Please call us at 415-474-1321 by Monday, June 17 if you plan to attend.

You're invited to duplicate this announcement to include in your service bulletin or post on your community bulletin board.

SFIC Leadership 2001-2002



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Vice Chairs:

- Rev. Amos Brown, *Third Baptist Church*
- Sister Chandru Desai, *Brahma Kumaris Center*
- Rev. P. Gerard O'Rourke, *Archdiocese of SF*
- Rev. Cn. Frances Tornquist, *Grace Cathedral*

Secretary: Lois Peacock, *Zion Lutheran Church*

Treasurer: Rev. James DeLange, *St. Francis Lutheran*

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Project Asst./Bookkeeper: Sr. Elizabeth Padilla

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Mr. Alan Wong, *Cumberland Presbyterian Chinese Church*

For Information, call:

Child Care Task Force

Mary Culp 337-1722

SpiritLife Program at Juvenile Hall

Rev. Toni Dunbar 753-7557

Winter Shelter & Food Program

Rita R. Semel 673-2190

Administrative Office 474-1321

- Prayer Breakfast
- Program Information
- Membership Information

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**San Francisco
INTERFAITH
COUNCIL**



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diverse faiths and
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