



Interfaith Inspirer

An Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth News Publication

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Spring is Here

By Annie Kopko

In case you had not noticed, (although I am certain you did) spring is almost here. Actually, for me, it is here. I heard the red winged blackbirds this morning. That trill is unmistakable. They seem to be arriving about a week early this year. It is usually March 7 when they arrive at my house. In my area of the world, very soon the chorus frogs will begin clicking and peeping, and the birds at our feeders and looking in wet areas for good nesting. This awakening is totally my favorite time of year.

I can't help myself. Every year at this time I start reading parts of "The Findhorn Garden. about the community in Northern Scotland, whose extraordinarily productive gardens became the talk of the World. I become totally inspired by the messages from Nature Spirits. As I go out into nature, I imagine what they may be saying to me.

When we ignore nature, (as I do so often), we are missing out on so much of the richness and the healing our world has to offer us at our most essential physical and spiritual levels.

By the time you read this, every morning there will be birds singing their spring mating songs outside your bedroom window. The sun is rising much earlier these days since the Winter Solstice. The vernal Equinox is already almost here.

Another book i love is Nature-Speak, Signs, Omens, and Messages in Nature, by Ted Andrews, a lifelong naturalist. He says: "Nature is the most powerful realm of magic and spirituality upon the Earth. It is the source of primal energies

and great spirits. It is an initiatory path, and within it are most of life's lessons and most of life's answers: teachings about life, death and rebirth. There are teachings of creativity and survival skills. Within it are doorways to other realms and a myriad of wonders along the way."

As the changes of nature stimulate sprouting and growth in the soil, so to does the increasing light stimulate our human bodies into expression of our life forces. We get new ideas about solving our issues, we work in a more creative way, and we start new projects.

So what are we learning? Nature is the signal we are offered to let go of the past. Keep the memories if we want. Let go of our attachment to those memories, both negative and positive. All of life has cycles, both short ones and long ones. We must respect these cycles of change.

We can enrich our lives by getting out there to reestablish our relationship and strengthen our communication with her. After all, she is our Mother, and her spirit is our one source of life on Earth.

So if we can go about our lives, realizing that we are, and that everyone we meet is, more than we think, yet connected to all of life and the Spirit of that life reflected in Nature, how then do we live?

Most can, but not all of us will choose to live with a feeling of certainty that we can yet be living in a healed state of being, and that there is absolutely nothing that touches us in the world that will ever be able to violate that beingness.

At the same time we are connected to everything in Nature, but we are more

than all of it. I can see that we gradually open to the fulfillment of our being spirit in the world, I keep wondering why it takes so long.

Always be appreciative, and receive that gratitude in your heart. Nature is blessing us every day with fresh air, clean water, and nutritious food, which we must have. Visits into nature heal us, body, mind, and soul, expanding our consciousness, lifting our hearts. We experience our unlimited Spirit; all things are possible.

Practice seeing everything with curiosity. Be filled with wonder as you observe the rhythms and relationships of all the parts of Nature: birds, plants, and water, the wind and weather. Open up your senses, allow nature to nourish your soul. Bring your sacred awareness into every part of your life. Bring nature indoors to remind you of everything that you are. For me, flowers are the best reminder.

Take trips into Nature, longs ones and tiny ones. Take a deep breath every time you walk out through your door. Notice how the birds are curious about you and what you are doing, They will notice you walking in Nature. Notice birds calling to get you away from their nest. Animals will notice you, squirrels will chatter at you. Walk quietly.



Ministerial Miscellany

By Lauren Tatarsky

Hello Interfaith Family,

March is upon us, and spring will soon be arriving. Certainly, it is a welcome shift! And what a time it is to be alive, isn't it? I find myself aware of a strong sense that this is a very big time indeed. There is so much change and so many new voices and such important work being done on a large scale to bring about a revolution of love. We get to be part of it, and that is a truly exciting moment. I find myself energized by the voices of young people, people of color, and members of the LGBTQ community who are rallying us all to rise to the occasion. We are rising! That is something worth celebrating. It is alive, full of energy, and bursting at the seams. It is requiring us to call on all our external and internal resources, to contain more, to step out of our comfort zones, and to wake up. If that's not the path of the spiritual warrior of love, I don't know what is! At Interfaith, we are offering a space for spiritual seekers to come together and share in the celebration of our awakening. That is something I am truly honored to be a part of and I continue to be humbled by the wisdom and power of all of you, and us together, as your leader and spiritual companion.

Here are some things to keep your eye on for the month of March.

Washtenaw Congregational Sanctuary Educational Event, March 11th 12:30-1:30

Immediately following service on Sunday, March 11th, we will have the director of Washtenaw Congregational Sanctuary educate us on how we can be involved as a community in the protection and safety of our immigrant population. We would like as many of us to attend as possible, since our involvement will be a community-wide decision. We will vote on our involvement in this important effort on **Sunday, March 18th at the ICSG Board Annual Meeting** (another important date to note). I look forward to seeing you on both of these important Sundays.

20th Anniversary Celebrations Continue!

As you noted in our newsletter for the month of February, there are many plans in the making to celebrate this year, our 20th anniversary year. Each month, we are highlighting a special guest speaker, bringing in spiritual perspectives from a broad sweep of the leaders in our wider community. We will also have a talent show in March and a big celebratory party in May. Stay tuned to our calendar and Featured Events page on the website. I am grateful to be sharing this time of growth and expansion with all of you as we embark on another month together.

With Love,

Lauren



*Community
Members
of the Month*



Dynamic Duo

It usually comes as a surprise, but Lindsay Passmore and I were told ahead of time we would be March's Community Members of the Month. I'm taking this opportunity to tell you about our wonderful partnership as board members and ultimately dear friends.

Before we were elected to the board, Lindsay was serving as our Web Master and I was Volunteer Coordinator. We did not know each other at all. I was in awe of Lindsay and knew I would be uncomfortable during the first board meeting, so I reached out to her for coffee and a chat. I met her cats and saw her lovely home. It was a nice visit.

When the new board determined the priorities for the coming year, it was a mere coincidence that Lindsay and I put our sticky stars next to the entry for finding a new minister. Ours were the only sticky stars, and it meant we were an automatic committee of two. We spent the first months preparing for the arrival of community members Michael Bratcher, Maureen McMahon, Tommie Parker, and Lisa Salisbury. Together we went on an close knit odyssey lasting (I think) 18 months!

Lindsay and I have distinctly different personality styles and approaches to life. She wants me to tell you about the Ministerial Search Committee's Myers Briggs test results. She came out as "intuitive" and "feeling", but I came out as "logical" and "wise". I remember the other MSC members were all closer to Lindsay's style than mine. I was a true outlier, the only one who always kept in mind where we were ultimately going, picturing how the final membership meeting would be run, and what the first year of transition would look like. It was kind of lonely "out there" but I was buoyed by their ability to stay in the moment and keep plugging away!!!

Another coincidence is that Lindsay and I are leaving the board at the same time, surrendering to others the final year of our second term. Lindsay is heavily engaged in her Master's in Social Work program at U of M, and I am mostly burned out yet committed to my volunteer work with the National Alliance on Mental Illness chapter in Washtenaw County where I recently became vice president.

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Sunday Celebration Services
are held at 10:45 a.m. at
704 Airport Blvd.,
(off S. State Street) near I 94



MISSION STATEMENT

*Spiritual seekers joining in
community to attract others of
like mind, creating an atmos-
phere and structure to foster
and stimulate our individual
and collective spiritual growth.*

Board
meeting this
month is on
March

The newslet-
ter submis-
sion
deadline is
March

March Talks

March 4th: Let's Talk About
Love, Lauren Tatarsky
March 11th: In the Name of
Unity, Lauren Tatarsky
March 18th: Standing in Your
Light, Lauren Tatarsky
March 25th: Beltane Celebration:
Welcoming Spring, Jeanne Ad-
wani

Mark your calendars!

CAFÉ 704 CONCERT SERIES Saturdays

March 10: Harmony Bones
April 14: Marlena Studer
May 12: Laz Slomovits
June 9: Paul Vornhagen & Tumbao
Bravo
July 14: OPEN
August 11: Alaura programming
September 8: PATH with Scott
McWinney
October 13: Benefit Concert
November 10: Lisa Pappas and Mi-
chael Weiss
December 8: Billy King

PEACE GENERATOR March 16

March Birthday Babies Happy Birthday!

3: *Lance Clark*
7: *Janet Fry*
13: *Cecilia Hernandez-Winchell*
17: *Paul Najar*
19: *Joe Bavonese*
20: *Cindy McNaab*
21: *Bonnie Dede*
23: *Tommie Parker*
26: *Rebecca Rowe*
and *Amalia Ortiz*
29: *Kevin Gilson*
31: *Donna Kendall-Cooper*

Volunteer Coordinator Corner By Bob Hopkins

This space will be used to identify volunteer needs and appreciation.
as of February 11, 2018

We regularly need to add to our pool of people who help to set-up and
clean-up for potlucks – See Ted
We want to build a committee that will help develop Abundance for our
Center -- See Mary Alice Truit
We can use an infusion of new people to help on the Caring Committee –
See Marilyn Alf
We want to find a new person to step up the job of Transportation Coordi-
nation – See Marilyn Alf

APPRECIATION

THANKS TO: Craig Harvey for agreeing to be the third person on the
Board member search committee

THANKS TO: Rob Fagerlund and Esther Reilly who agreed to help with
the Songbook Revision committee

THANKS TO: Idgie Patterson and Tommie Parker who agreed to help
with pot-luck prep and/or clean-up

THANKS TO: Lisa Teets who agreed to take over the Welcome Table
on the third Sunday each month

THANKS TO: Annie Kopko who agreed to be the Solicitor in general
for newsletter articles

March Music

March 4: Harmony Bones
(CAFÉ 704 Promo)

March 11: Lisa Pappas and
Michael Weiss

March 18: Jamei Tierney
(Poetry)

March 25: All of Us
(an A Cappella group)

February Board Minutes

By Tony Nader

**Present: Ray, Lindsay, Annie,
Marlena, Mary Alice, Kevin Gilson,
Steve, Lauren, Pat, and Delyth**

Absent : None

Lauren

There are three spots open on the board for the coming election. She has contacted a few good candidates. In regard to our long-term finances, she is researching church/temple organizations for ideas.

The Washtenaw Congregational Sanctuary, which support immigrants in danger of deportation, will give a presentation on March 11. We will vote on March 18 about supporting their efforts.

Lauren re-visited the idea of board members speaking before the collection each Sunday. The reason is even though attendance is growing, we are not converting it into contributions.

Mary Alice

She presented summaries of the previous two Visioning sessions, "Best of

what is"; and "Dreams of what may be." There are eight areas that need a vision statement. We are looking for volunteers before our April meeting, which will be on design/implementation. A long discussion followed. The topics of conversation included how do we transition to existing leadership, do we need more input and how do we best generate/broaden support. Amongst the suggestions: keep repeating the message and put out a survey. The most important question is to find out which areas people want to be involved in.

There was discussion on our Safe Church Policy. Lauren offered to finish creating a Sex Offender policy from the current drafts. There was a formal motion and second, board unanimously affirmed.

Delyth

Kickshaw theatre wants to discuss another show for the Aug. 21 - Oct. 7 time frame. We are interested in considering another commitment, depending upon the compensation. There was a brief discussion on the proposed budget for 2018.

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Although we will be turning in our board member name tags and doing non-board things on the third Sunday of each month, we will remain deeply interested in the well being of ICSG, and we will remain dear friends. Please know that Lindsay and I feel appreciated and grateful for being selected as Community Members of the month. It has been fun and funny to write our own article!



Oracle Card For March

By Peggy Lubahn

Meadowsweet's creamy flowers and summery smell are a reminder that change is one of the greatest features of being alive in this world, and that the best way to accept change is to celebrate it. Whether you are leaving a job, a relationship or familiar surroundings, or are joining forces with colleagues or a partner, this is a time to truly celebrate the change that is occurring.

The card may also be urging you to formally mark and celebrate a transition or major event in your life, or that of your family, that you've been tempted to ignore, such as moving or leaving home, reaching puberty, succeeding in a creative project, achieving a significant age, separating or divorcing.

MEADOWSWEET for Change

The deck: The Druid Plant Oracle

- Working with the magical flora of the Druid tradition by Phillip and Stephanie Carr-Gomm

Meadowsweet is a member of the Rose family and is found all over Europe as well as eastern North America; it prefers to grow in low, wet areas. The Druids used the plant in healing and to mark marriages, births, deaths, and coming-of-age ceremonies. Meadowsweet and Willow were the earliest sources of salicin, which was developed into our modern aspirin. The female face in the lower left corner of the card is that of Blodeuwedd, who was created from Oak, Broom and Meadowsweet and whose story is part of the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogion -- the story of Math, son of Mathonwy.



Photo: From National Geographic photographer Craig Burrows, who shoots with infrared light: infrared bee balm

Youthful Spirits

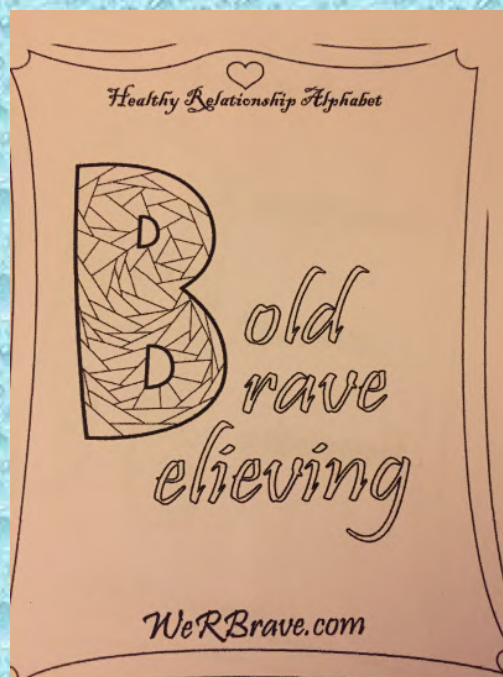
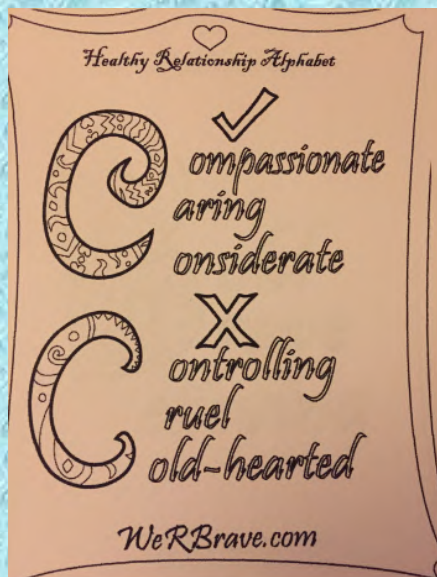
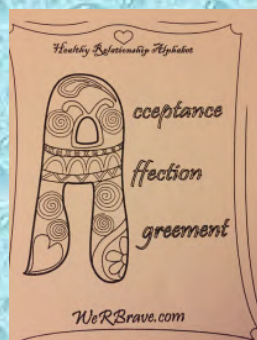
Trusting activities



"May there always be Sunshine"

May there always be sunshine
May there always be blue skies
May there always be Momma
May there always be me.
Poost vsig da boodyet sonsei
Poost vsig da boodyet nyeba
oost vsig da boodyet Mama
Poost vsig da boodoo ya.

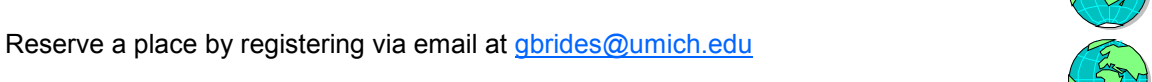
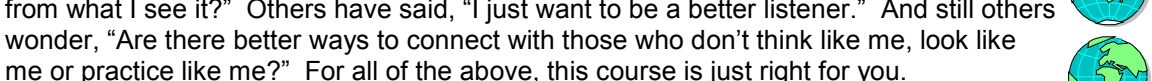
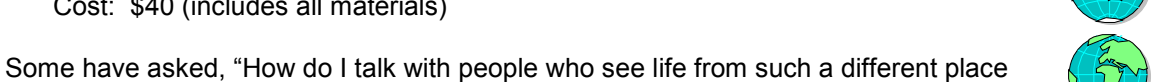
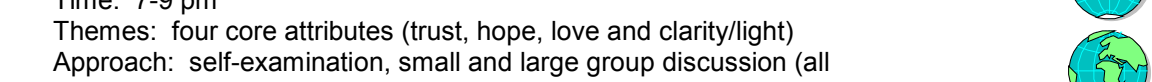
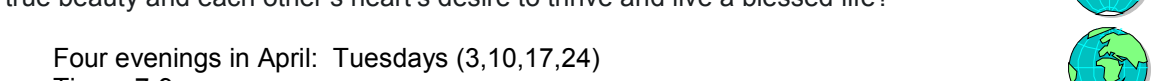
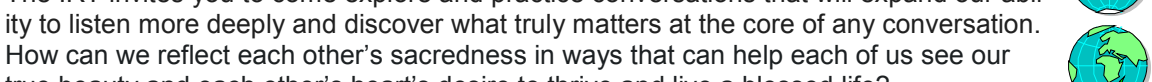
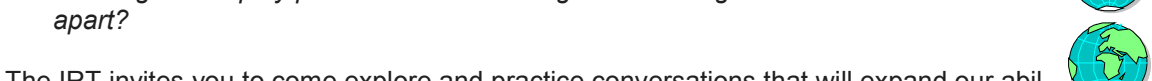
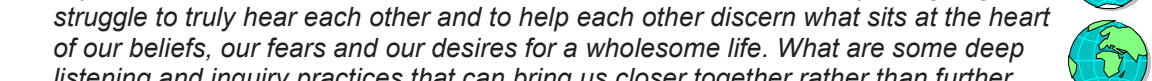
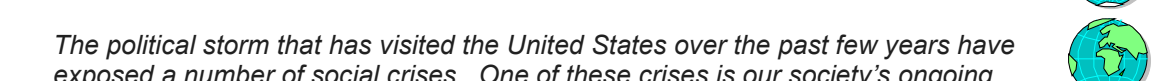
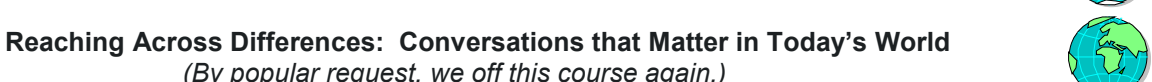
Birthday Boxes: we need shoeboxes, birthday wrapping paper, and "ingredients" to make an instant birthday party packet for children at the Alpha House :-)



Love, Light, and Laughter
Heide, Kellie, Tommy, Dawn,, and the Youthful Spirits



R



Reaching Across Differences: Conversations that Matter in Today's World

(By popular request, we off this course again.)

The political storm that has visited the United States over the past few years have exposed a number of social crises. One of these crises is our society's ongoing struggle to truly hear each other and to help each other discern what sits at the heart of our beliefs, our fears and our desires for a wholesome life. What are some deep listening and inquiry practices that can bring us closer together rather than further apart?

The IRT invites you to come explore and practice conversations that will expand our ability to listen more deeply and discover what truly matters at the core of any conversation. How can we reflect each other's sacredness in ways that can help each of us see our true beauty and each other's heart's desire to thrive and live a blessed life?

Four evenings in April: Tuesdays (3,10,17,24)

Time: 7-9 pm

Themes: four core attributes (trust, hope, love and clarity/light)

Approach: self-examination, small and large group discussion (all materials provided)

Location: Lord of Light Luther Campus Ministry, 801 S. Forest, Ann Arbor

Facilitator: Rev. Susan King, IRT Co-Director

Cost: \$40 (includes all materials)

Some have asked, "How do I talk with people who see life from such a different place from what I see it?" Others have said, "I just want to be a better listener." And still others wonder, "Are there better ways to connect with those who don't think like me, look like me or practice like me?" For all of the above, this course is just right for you.

Reserve a place by registering via email at gbrides@umich.edu