



Interfaith Inspirer

An Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth News Publication

VOL. XIV, NO. 8, August 2018



The Many Names of...

By Layla Ananda

For most of my life I have used and been comfortable with the word "God." It's a word we use at Interfaith, although we also honor many other ways to refer to the concept that lies behind the word. I'm grateful for that, as the concept is so much more important to me than that particular word, and I think that sometimes the word can get in the way of the concept.

In the process of learning about many religious and spiritual traditions over the course of my almost-seven decades, I've heard many definitions. It feels bold to try to state my own, but I'd actually like to encourage each of us to create our own definition of God, so here goes...

There is an energy that creates us, that enlivens us, that composes us. It moves our blood and our bodies – it is our blood and bodies. It moves our brains, makes our thoughts, our feelings, our hopes and dreams, our connections to ourselves and each other, to the seen and unseen. It moves mountains, oceans, planets, stars. It is everything: Soham or Hamsa (It is That) in the Hindu tradition; All Forms of All Things, says Swift Deer of the Sweet Medicine Society; God/Goddess/All That Is, say others.

It is one, and it is divided into the many – into atoms, into gods and goddesses, into ants and trees and human beings. War and peace, love and hate, happiness and sadness are all part of it - all aspects of one energy. We can call it God, or Love, or Great Spirit, or Allah, or, or, or.

I've been studying lately with a man named Tim Kelley, creator of the True Purpose Institute. He helps people find their deepest purpose and do their most meaningful work. He often says, "Everything serves." My longtime spiritual teacher, Gwendolyn Jansma, taught us that our circumstances were perfect for our growth. My guru, Maharajji, said "Don't you see, it's all perfect." Poet Wendell Berry, in "The Sycamore" says the tree is "a wondrous healer of itself" because "It has gathered all accidents into its purpose." "All shall be well," said Julian of Norwich.

How can all be well and perfect in our very troubled world? Many traditions affirm that "God" must include everything, even the things we hate and wish we could get rid of. Jesus brought that message by teaching us to love everyone. Ram Dass says, "Do what you do with other human beings, but never put them out of your heart." Can we expand our concept of God to mean loving and blessing everything? To me, it's the ultimate challenge, and totally necessary. My teacher Nancy Tappe taught me to seek peace in the midst of chaos, rather than trying to get rid of the chaos. So hard, but so worth the effort, I believe. Does it matter what we call this energy? To me, it matters a lot. I hope we each can find the name or names that bring us the most meaning, understanding, comfort, and ability to do our sacred work in the world. Since I first discovered Wicca in my early thirties, "Goddess" has been close to my heart. To sense this energy as relating to my womanhood has given me strength and self-acceptance. I have often wished for a version of A Course in Miracles, the Ramayana, and other religious texts, that used "her" instead of

"him" - not for everyone, but for people who, like me, could relate to it better that way.

"God/Goddess/All That Is" or "All Forms of All Things" actually says it best for me, because, ultimately, I don't think of this energy as having a gender or even a persona, although I love the idea of giving various aspects of it a name and identity, such as Shiva the destroyer, Ganesh the elephant god of good fortune, the joyful, flute-playin Hopi god Kokopelli, the mother goddess Demeter who brings winter from her sadness at losing her daughter Persephone, and so many others.

Lately I've been moved to use the word "Love" in place of "God." At the end of our services, I often sing, "May the blessings of Love rest upon you, May Love's peace abide with you, May Love's presence illuminate your heart, Now and forever more." I know there are atheists and agnostics among us, and I wonder if they would like to use a different word, too.

What do you think of the 12-step program's idea of "God" standing for "Good Orderly Direction?" That's certainly something I could use more of! Or the Native American tradition of having it as the center of a wheel, around which are the elements earth, air, fire, and water with their related animals, plants and human traits. There are so many ways to think about this.

How do you define the concept behind the word "God?" What words and ideas bring the most love, peace, comfort and meaning into your life? I hope we can find a way to share our thoughts on this topic – we have so much to learn from and teach each other.

Ministerial Miscellany
By Rev. Annie Kopko

Hello Everyone, Summer is coming to a close. I hope you have had a great one. It is beginning to cool off now, and September is one of my favorite months, not too warm, and not too cold. I am enjoying eating vegetables from my garden, my favorite gift of Mother Nature.

There are lots of exciting events this month. What I especially look forward to is the opening of the play by Kickshaw Theatre, Milvotchkee, Visconsin, on September 13th. It is the story of a woman dealing with the challenges of Alzheimer's disease. Their plays are always very good, very professional, and I am sure this new one will be no exception.

Scott McWhinney and his group "Path", will delight us with their music at Café 704 on September 8th. You will discover new ways to enjoy music. I bet there will be dancing too.

On Sunday, Sept. 9th we will have our yearly Gathering of the Waters, small containers of water that our community members and visitors have brought back from places far and wide, with a short story to share with the rest of us. It is always a very moving event to hear about and share what brings meaning to our lives.

On other Sundays we will have Gretchen Leonhardt, Cathy DeLauter, Marilyn Alf, and Randall Counts. I look forward to the fun and wisdom they will share with us.

Many thanks to everyone for their contributions to our blessed community. We are who we are because of the great love and care each of us offers to each other. I am eternally grateful and eternally blessed by how we all work together for the good of each one and our group. Herein lies our strength and beauty to serve and grow together spiritually.

Thanks and Blessings, Annie

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Community
Member
of the
Month
Ted Poprasky



By Jaclyn Morrow

We'd like to take this moment to give thanks to member of the month- Ted Poprasky. Walking into Interfaith on a Sunday morning can give one a relaxed and "taken care of" feeling. One person we can thank for that is Ted. He arrives early every Sunday morning to prepare the coffee and snacks, he manages the kitchen during potluck time and he even finds time to be a greeter.

As a spiritual student, Ted was led by an interest that began with Edgar Cayce and a fascination with channeling. He was steeped in a small community of spiritual seekers that studied and worked with the 8 Archangels. It is through this specific group that Ted found his way to Interfaith. 10 years ago he became part of Interfaith- he even helped Dave Bell build the offices upstairs. He enjoys being part of this community while continuing on his own spiritual path. This path has at times taken him out of Michigan, he's traveled to learn and practice with Lazaris- where he has experienced an inspiring awareness in spirit.

Travel is not new for Ted. He was born in southeast Michigan but after joining the army in the late 1960s he explored parts of the US while managing to avoid a forced visit to Vietnam- twice! His intelligence skills were better put to the test off the battlefield where he learned the great advice-"It's not what you know, it's how you figure stuff out." The army had Ted for 63.4 million seconds. But who's counting, right?!

Ted's next move was back to southeast Michigan where in the early 1970s, he made Ann Arbor his home. He learned upholstery and became an integral part of Materials Unlimited in Ypsilanti where he learned the art of stained glass. And it is beautiful.

Check him out on flickr at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/rainbowphoenixprisms/albums>. Ted is the creator of a prism called the Rainbow Phoenix. It creates an extra-ordinary phoenix shaped rainbow- hence the name of his stained glass company- "Extraordinary Rainbows."

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Volunteer Coordinator Corner
By Bob Hopkins

Volunteer Coordinator Corner

We regularly need to add to our pool of people who help to set-up and clean-up for potlucks – See Ted
We want one more person to help set up the altar flowers before the service - See Rev. Annie
We want people who will be responsible to set up the sanctuary before the service -- See Rev. Annie
We need someone to compose the brief bio of the Community Member of the Month – See Heide
We want to find people to help with all the aspects of the July yard sale – See Rev. Delyth
We are getting low on greeters and need an infusion of new committed people – See Randall Counts
We need to find people willing to help restore the sanctuary after each Café 704 – See Al Carter

APPRECIATION

THANKS TO: Janet Fry and Gretchen Leonhardt who have volunteered to welcome table.

THANKS TO: Erik Nowakowski who has stepped up to be a new board member.

CMM continued from previous page

His work is full of beautiful attention to detail and a wonderful array of colors and designs. Ted's spiritual path continues to be a part of his everyday life as well as an inspiration for his art. One piece in his collection is a work inspired by St. Germaine. The violet Flame is also a re-occurring theme that is used to link the artists spiritual growth, community and art.

Ted has spent a life time exploring and growing and sharing. We give thanks for his presence and work at Interfaith. Feel free to express your thanks to him in person- you'll probably find him smiling in the kitchen!

Mighty Violet Ray stream forth from the mighty Logos of the Great Central Sun

Anchor the rays of Transmutation, Forgiveness, and Compassion within my Heart

May this Violet Ray now emanate throughout my being

May this Violet Ray serve the Cause Divine

Mighty Violet Ray come forth in the emanation of Christ Consciousness

Mighty Violet Ray come forth in the emanation of I Am That I Am

Mighty Violet Ray serve all those who serve the Cause Divine

Align the great heart of compassion and the great will of the Divine Order to come forth in Cause Divine

Mighty Violet Ray I Am the I Am that I Am

Mighty Violet Ray I Am the Alpha the Omega

And So It Is

Very helpful aid to maintain Sacred Neutrality

Espavo,
Ted

**CAFE 704 CONCERT
SERIES
Saturdays**

Sept. 8: PATH with Scott
McWhinney
Oct 13: Benefit
Nov. 10: Lisa Pappas and Michael Weiss
Dec. 8th: Billy King

**September
Birthday Babies
Happy Birthday!**

5. Connie Snow
6. Amy Advay
9. Nicholas DePaul and Michael O'Shea
11. Laurel Beyer
21. Sue Booker
23. Mary Seibert

September Talks

Sept 2: PATH with
Scott McWhinney
Sept 9th ... water
ceremony
Sept 16: Laurel Federbush -harpist
Sept 23: Craig Brann
Sept 30: Jill Halpern
- story teller

September Music

Sept 2: Path (Sept CAFÉ 704)
Sept 9: Water Ceremony
Sept 16 Laurel Federbush
Sept 23 Craig Brann (10/13 Benefit Promo)
Sept. 30 Jill Halpern (10/13 Benefit Promo)

August Board Meeting Highlights

Ministers' Report:

1. Annie is still meeting with different people on Mondays and Fridays for open conversations about whatever comes up with those that arrive. Pretty equal time between personal and community based discussion. She would like to see more one on one
2. Future speakers are scheduled through the end of the year. Speakers have requested to participate, and have been suggested by members to Delyth.
3. Death Cafe training available in October; Annie and Delyth will attend the workshop with the intention of having a Death Cafe here at ICSG. Death Cafes meet all over the world.

Administrator Report:

1. Deep Spring's schedule is shifting to accommodate their changing priorities;
2. Kickshaw starts building their stage today; their schedule will be sent via yahoo group
3. Meta Peace Team will be here 10/28 for Sunday talk and then workshop on 11/17

Leadership Committee highlight:

Benefit Concert October 13th: Nancy Biehn is currently coordinating raffle items; Hope to have finalized by early September to begin promoting.

Alaura has confirmed musicians and is rehearsing.

Financials: We are currently ahead financially compared to the same time period last year.

Cocreation Team (CCT) Report:

1. updating its charter; preparing

to help ICSG explore the type of spiritual leadership that will best meet the needs of ICSG community members. Input from community members will be requested at QCC's, visioning and dialogue sessions, and online surveys. This will culminate in a formal recommendation to the board and community membership about moving forward with the formal ministerial transition and with the next five-ten-twenty years. A timeline of this exploration is forthcoming.

2. Ministerial transition exercise at June QCC and the only survey:

total participants: 70;

3. 70 participants on average are ready to move on from processing the departure of the senior minister in April 2018;

4. 70 participants on average are ok with our current structure of associate ministers and guest speakers for Sundays for now, not indefinitely;

5. 70 participants on average want a leader and are open to a structure that is not yet determined.

[comments from this survey are available by request].

6. General conclusion following this pulse check exercise and survey: the community is moving forward and ready to clarify who we are as a spiritual center and the type of spiritual leadership necessary to help us in our individual and collective spiritual growth.

Meeting adjourned at 3:10pm

Minutes submitted by Board Chair,
Mary Alice Truitt



SEPTEMBER GLORY

By Peggy Lubahn



Here in Michigan, September is the Month of Glory for the spider folk. They have spent their spring and summer hunting, growing, and spinning. Most have paired up and produced flocks of new little spiderlings, small as pinheads, into the great wide world. Each will find a good spot with a breeze, lift up its spinnerets, and send out an impossibly delicate thread of silk. Once the thread gets long enough, a breath of air lifts the youngster into the sky. The wind helps each one find a (hopefully unoccupied) fresh territory, at the same time putting a lot of space between the ever-hungry siblings. There's no telling where this once-in-a-lifetime ride will end; tiny ballooners have been found on ships in the middle of the ocean and on the slopes of Mount Everest.



Early in the morning, and after a rain, you'll see magical spider structures everywhere you look, each strand bejeweled with sparkling droplets of moisture. Delicately woven platforms are suspended from silken cables spun by the Bowl and Doily Spiders, who love to decorate evergreen shrubs. Villages of cartwheel orbs can decorate whole fields, each web expertly customized by its builder. And close to the ground, elaborate Tunnel Web constructions are built around the concealed waiting rooms of the resident hunters, where they relax until they feel the vibrations of their next meal.



I realize that many people don't like spiders; I used to be that way, myself. But this time of year, when most Michigan spiders don't have much longer to live, I hope you can set aside your dislike long enough to let yourself enjoy the beauty and wonder of what these amazing animals can create, with materials they manufacture with their own bodies. All without a manual, or a User's Guide, or even a diagram. That's worth a moment of appreciation, isn't it?



Youthful Spirits



We delivered a total of 25 jam-packed full backpacks to the AlphaHouse Children!

Thank you for all of you who contributed to our annual drive!



And here are some awesome food Mandela trays we made for the potluck!

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