



# Interfaith Inspirer

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## Life lessons from Minecraft

*By Jaclyn Morrow*

At this point I'm sure you've heard of Minecraft.

Even if only spoken about rapidly and in an unusual language by a kid nearby. Or perhaps you've even kindly nodded your head while being told about mining and crafting and zombies and creepers and all sorts of other things. The interest in this video game runs the gamut, of course. And I just so happen to be living with a 6 year old who is obsessed. Obsessed. He wants desperately to play it with his friends- to "join". He plays the game, he reads books on the subject, he watches videos, and he plays pretend Minecraft- running around in the yard "mining" for things in the grass.

It's a fascinating game really. The player has freedom to build and create anything they can imagine. The freedom must feel invigorating for any kid who realizes the limited amount of control they have in their own lives. We could discuss for hours (or maybe not quite that long...) the different levels of educational value the game offers. However, I was recently smacked in the face with another lesson Minecraft contributes and it has nothing to do with math.

There are two ways to play Minecraft. You can play in survival mode or creative mode. As my son was talking to me about

his latest venture in creative mode - I put my arms out to steady myself as the heaviness of what he was saying finally hit home.

Survival or Creative.

I have been living in survival mode for as long as I can remember. Running around putting out internal fires or grinning and bearing it through experiences. I've survived. I've pretended, I've forced. And then I've tried again. Continuously giving myself second chances. And a multitude of attempts at personal compassion, it's ok if I failed at that, I'll try again. There's never enough money, there's never enough time and of course there's never enough energy. And sometimes it just doesn't feel like there's enough optimism.

In survival mode, you have to constantly search out all of your own resources. You're responsible for your own survival, all. on. your. own. The searching sounds exhausting, it's a constant climb to get ahead of the game. You see- in Minecraft, there are dangerous things that lurk outside at night. You must always have a safe place to sleep every night or else you'll be attacked by all sorts of creatures. I imagine it's possible to succeed but it takes a lot of practice and a lot of dying. The good thing, though, is in Minecraft you can respawn every time you die. Phew. Of course you get good at surviving. Every respawning is a chance to fix your mistakes and work harder and faster and more efficiently. You

can build a sturdy shelter in no time flat- you survive the night. Your character- avatar?- doesn't die of hunger.

But what if I'm tired of barely surviving? What do I have to prove? Why do I feel like I have to do this all on my own?

What if I chose to live in creative mode. Here, you have everything you need. You have enough resources, enough energy, enough food. You need only to use your skills to put your shelter together and create your community. Sure, it might sound too easy. I mean- you have everything? Where's the fun in that? When I first heard about this I thought it sounded like the wimpy way out. This person is obviously not interested in working hard for everything in their lives. They like to take the easy way out. They don't have MY work ethic. Or my need to... suffer...

Hmmm. Maybe creative mode IS where it's at.

So from now on, I am choosing to live in creative mode. I'm choosing to realize I have everything I need. I'm choosing to realize I don't have to suffer in depression, exhaustion and feeling of lack. Everything I need already is. I mean the proof is there! Spirit provided me with a 6 year old obsessed with Minecraft and through it- reminded me of something I already knew. Thank you Lyric for being one of my teachers.

Satnam.

**Ministerial Miscellany**  
By Rev. Annie Kopko

"Everyone must take time to sit and watch the leaves turn" is a quote from Elizabeth Lawrence. I do not ever sit and watch them turn, but I love how gradually and powerfully they make their colorful statement. Chances are better that I will sit and watch them fall from the trees. Here comes my lesson in letting go that Marilyn Alf spoke so eloquently of. And although I love the long somewhat warm fall season we have in Michigan it is always with a pang of loss that I say goodbye to summer and its warm days, even though I love the squash and beans and kale and chard that linger way past summer in the garden. At the beginning of every new season, I feel a sense of change and some uncertainty, but whatever comes my way, I try to open myself to the possibilities each season offers me.

There are some changes at Interfaith, just the usual as we create and recreate the community that we want to be, loving, consciously expansive, and warmly welcoming to all who join us. There are some really great events coming up:

Kickshaw theatre finishes its last performances this weekend (last one 4PM on Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup>)

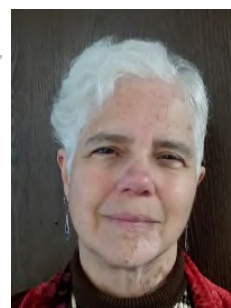
Lucinda Kurtz will be speaking this Sunday, and after the service, she and Oran Hesterman will be leading a workshop on the Practice of Forgiveness. It is from 2-5PM. More details are on flyers at Interfaith and on the website: [Interfaithspirit.org](http://Interfaithspirit.org) (the workshop will not be at Interfaith, but close by)

**Get ready to join everyone in a grand musical fundraiser for the center. Details are on the website and on flyers available at the center. We have 3 extravagant raffle prizes, and chocolate treats for you to munch on, while you enjoy the music and stories from many artists. Tickets will be \$20.**

**May we always be grateful for all of our Blessings, Annie**

**Community Member of the month**

**Lovely Leila**



By Jaclyn Morrow

It is with full hearts we recognize Layla Ananda and the role she plays in the breadth of our community here at Interfaith. She has been an active member for little over a year and she is already finding ways to offer her skills, training and passions.

Over 20 years ago, Layla became part of a group of women that celebrated Wiccan rituals. From there she was drawn to the words of a spiritual teacher - Gwen. Gwen's work was called Awakening to Higher Energies. Layla's spiritual path can be called eclectic. She has found wisdom in Native American and Buddhist teachings, as well as many others. Layla has had friends at the Interfaith Center since its birth. She has lived in Ann Arbor since 1979. Born in Detroit, graduating high school from Midland and college from Michigan State University, she is not a stranger to the lower Peninsula!

Layla's life and work has been an interweaving of 3 things. She worked as a director of training and executive director in the US-Canadian student housing and food co-op movements, an exciting place to be in the late 70s and early 80s. Her work was a lot of responsibility and with that came growth and opportunities for travel.

Another branch in Layla's work is as a psychotherapist. She graduated with a master's degree from the Center for Humanistic Studies (now the Michigan School of Psychology). She worked in clinics and had a private practice, and found ways to offer her heart and ear to many people.

And the third direction is music. Third but definitely not least! Preschools, day-cares and many more communities were blessed to have Layla teach and lead sessions. She taught private voice and guitar lessons as well.

Now retired, the beauty and connection between these 3 paths becomes more apparent. They all come in handy. Recently, Layla has been presenting Bystander Intervention Training for Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice.

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### Volunteer Coordinator Corner By Bob Hopkins

This space will be used to identify volunteer needs and appreciation as of June 25, 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 one more person to help set up the altar flower 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 want to find people to help with all the aspects of the July yard sale – See Rev. Delyth

We are low on greeters and need a small infusion of new people – see Randall

#### APPRECIATION

THANKS TO: Janet Fry and Gretchen Leonhardt who have volunteered to help with the yard sale

THANKS TO: Mark Charles who has volunteered to help with the potluck set up

THANKS TO: Marilyn Alf, Marice Clark and Darlene who have agreed to help with the altar flowers

*Continued from page 2*

This program teaches people how to use peaceful methods to interrupt harassment and bullying. Layla also is a trainer with the Meta Peace Team, and serves on peace teams to help events such as rallies and marches remain nonviolent - such important work!

American Red Cross has utilized her mental health training and allowed for her energy to be helpful in a Hurricane shelter that really needs someone with her skills and heart.

This takes us to today. Right now, Layla manages 3 non-profit websites in town- including Interfaith's! Her facilitated community meetings (with Khristian) after the Minister transition were crucial and perfect. She is on the Co-Creation team, and Chair of the Communications team here at Interfaith as well.

There are not words to explain our gratitude for Layla's behind-the-scenes support and care. This community is what it is because people share their hearts and strengths. This dynamic feeds Layla as well. She feels blessed that she can give to the community because she gets so much from this good, loving family.

Join Layla and Singing for Comfort- every 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month at Interfaith. Everyone is welcome to come sing peaceful, soothing songs, many of which come from the Threshold Singers of Ann Arbor. They sing for people who are crossing a threshold of illness, death or other life event. So come raise your voices together and let's sing in gratitude for a powerhouse of inspiration.

Thank you Layla for everything you do!

### CAFE 704 CONCERT SERIES Saturdays

Oct 13: Benefit

Nov. 10: Lisa Pappas and Michael Weiss

Dec. 8th: Billy King

**October  
Birthday Babies  
Happy Birthday!**  
**10 Joyce Jurgenson**  
**15 Judy Bell**  
**21 Lorri Coburn**  
**22 Jill Crane**  
**29 Craig Harvey**  
**30 Brad Nelson**

#### October Talks

7 Lucinda Kurtz

"Forgiveness & Return:  
The Essence of Jewish High  
Holiday"

14 Rev. Annie Kopko

"Exploring Taoism"

21 Norma Gentile

"Meditation & Chant"

28 Suzanne Camino

"Non-violence as a Means to  
Personal and Global transformation:  
The Work and Vision  
of the Meta Peace Team"

#### October Music

7 Don Allen~Clone Box  
Project

14 Dancers for Life

21 Meditation and Chant

28 Special Music: "All of  
Us"

## **September Board Meeting Highlights**

*Submitted by Nancy Biehn*

### **Administrator Report:**

- Enlightened Soul Expo next weekend at Skyline High School on September 22 and 23rd. We will be tabling there; Delyth working on materials to pass out.
- Kickshaw until October 7th; Benefit Concert on October 13th.
- Death Cafe Workshop on October 20th; we are registered to send Annie and Delyth.
- Open source model for community building provided by the 92nd Street Y, called Benjamin Franklin Circles. They reached out to us as an interfaith organization with resources available to us at no cost include a tool kit and meeting prompts for deep conversations about virtues, values, and convictions about spirituality and spiritual practice in our world today. We should be able to start this by January.

### **Financials:**

We are in the red at this point (January-August), but we are doing better than last year at this time. Net income is up approximately \$5000 from our Net Income at this time last year-although still in the red for this year alone. We will plan for ways to bring up our Net Income before December.

### **Ministers' Report:**

Annie will be meeting on Mondays only from now on; by appointment for requests. There is a lot in the job description, is it all feasible?

### **Policy Update:**

There are several policies needing to be finalized by the pro bono arrangement; whistleblower, grievance, conflict resolution, safe church, and other necessary

statements of boundaries and roles of accountability. Getting the language right is very important to us, we do not want to rush. It's all been a deeply valuable learning experience that can only make us a stronger community. We are also expecting to draft a leadership transition plan by the end of the year.

### **QCC:**

Cancel September 30th meeting because Kickshaw will be using the space at that time.

### **Rescheduled for Sunday October 28th 1 - 3 PM**

A structured agenda of open discussion followed by a six-month update to the community about lessons learned during this transition. Co-creation team planning to facilitate workshop for attendees to share input about specifics related to spiritual leadership.

### **Social Justice Initiatives:**

There are no Congregational Sanctuary meetings happening now. There are three Uncomfortable Conversation groups currently meeting once per month. They meet in participant's homes at this time.

Talk of scheduling Non-violent Communication Workshop, perhaps for January. Meta-Peace team workshop in November.

How do we decide on what we pay for; what type of workshops qualify? New things related to social justice and how it relates to our community interests compiled for the community profile in 2015/2016. Many individuals from the community step forward with ideas.





## THE MYSTICAL MEANINGS OF CAT COLORS

By Peggy Lubahn

*Kate Sitka is a respected Animal Communicator living in British Columbia. Her friend Penelope Smith is another well-known*

*Animal Communicator who lives in California. Kate wrote about cats and the significance of their fur colors in 2011, based on observations the two have shared from thousands of readings.*

It seems that, in general, only cats seem to have obvious color-concurrences to their “mission” in life (whether it’s healing, helping with spiritual growth, grounding, being a clown, etc.). In other words, they seem to use fur colors to signal what exactly it is that they’re up to. Here’s a list of the most common groupings, as observed by me and Penelope Smith. Now, keep in mind that not EVERY orange cat is a member of the “Orange Cat Contingent”, but all members of the Orange Cat Contingent make sure they have orange coats.

### Orange tabby

Big change. Cheerful, jollying you along, leaders, encourage leadership in their families, encourage self-confidence, bold, brash, encourage global change (they’re major environmentalists). Sometimes they minor in energy healing (as many cats do!) They hold the “vibration” of sunlight, energy, optimism, catalysts. Orange cats may present themselves as signs to encourage you in a new beginning, to encourage you on your way.

### Brown Tabby

Grounding. Keeping you down to earth with love, snuggles, companionship, humour. Big snugglers, big lovers. They are awesome at helping you to love yourself, to become independent from the opinions of others, to remind you to connect with nature and connect with your true self and what you really want in life. They’re great at calming you down and helping you through hard times.

### Black & White (Tuxedo)

Sacred clowns! Tuxies are born to raise the vibration of the people around them, constantly, through clowning! My friend’s tuxie invented the most ridiculous way to eat his food: he backs his butt up the wall behind the food dish and eats his food while doing a handstand. He does this “because it’s funny”. Check out all the toilet-trained cats on you-tube – so many of them are tuxies! They do it “because it’s funny”. They also like to invent games and get into mischief (and are known to flush their toys down the toilet once they’ve learned how to operate it!) They’re all about living in the moment and making this moment brighter, happier.

### Black

Physical healing. Traditional herbalists often had black cats, which is how they became associated with “witches” and “bad luck” in some countries. In other countries, black cats are ac-

tually considered to be sacred and good luck! Black cats are often medically intuitive and are excellent at scanning the bodies of humans and recommending particular plants with certain energy signatures. I think black cats and herbalists have been working together for thousands of years, and that herbalists developed a close, animal communication relationship with their little helpers! Today, the black cats throw suggestions into the brains of their loved ones to encourage good health. They also seem to have a proud history of being muses to writers and artists, helping to hold a supportive, creative space.

### White

I’ve noticed that many psychics and animal communicators seem to find themselves in the company of white cats. White cats seem to have this spiritual connection, this ability to help and support their humans in raising their own resonance so they can tap into and connect with the “divine”, be it nature, spirits, other animals or their own healing gifts. White cats are often born deaf (as with many white dogs). Deafness in animals often ramps up their dependence of their telepathic abilities, (as does blindness) and consequently, white cats often choose deafness to amplify their ability to communicate telepathically with their humans, to facilitate their teachings. That’s one hell of a devotion!

### Siamese / Point coloring

Siamese are a breed more than a colouring, but they’ve been cross-bred so much that point colouring appears in many different types of housecats. In general, point-coloured cats take great pride in their ancestry and their spiritual responsibilities. They’re extraordinarily devoted, and demanding of respect. A Siamese-heritage cat has a way of asking “Do you know who I am?” And so asks you, “Do you know who YOU are?” They model pride, spirituality, history and wealth. They remind you to take pride in your own heritage, your own history and to demand respect.

### Tortoise-shell & Calico

These are the cats of artists! They’re introspective, beautiful, often shy and introverted, and they seem to dress up every room they enter. They’re excellent muses. Often they give the human permission to be a loner, to be introspective, to be different, unusual, to contrast with their own environment. They understand this life experience, and commiserate.

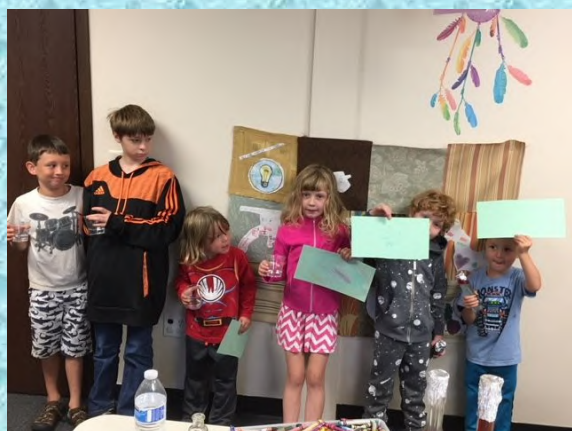
### Grey / Silver

Childhood. Many people who have owned grey cats knew them when they were children. Grey cats pop up in fluffy, long-haired, flat-faced bodies, and when they do they’re often speaking to the \*inner\* child of the adults in the house, helping the human to reconcile past experiences in this life and in their past lives. Sleek, short-haired grey cats are much more active, and seem to do the best job at snapping the humans out of their “head” and into the moment, connecting them to their irrational inner wants and needs, which are really our spiritual wants and needs. When it’s not possible for the humans to meet or act upon their spiritual wants and needs (because sometimes, life sucks) the grey cats are amazing at holding that space of hope, supporting the humans through their limbo, until the “sun can shine” in their life again. Grey cats really help us to clear the clouds from our lives.

# Youthful Spirits



**Our next service project is the annual homeless blessing bag project. Check our list posted in the classroom for what we need!**



**We make sure that your kids always have a very enjoyable experience at the Center!**



*Love, Light, and Laughter,  
Heide, Kellie, Tommy, and Dawn*



## Thoughts On Bein' Green\*

by Rob Fagerlund

There is a song you've heard that has been covered by Tony Bennett, José Feliciano, Don Henley, Jim Henson, Lena Horne, Frank Sinatra, Van Morrison, Diana Ross, and the Boston Pops. When I heard it performed in concert by Ray Charles, I was moved to tears. It stands, in my opinion, as one of the greatest pop and, certainly in Ray's hands - as one of the greatest soul songs ever written.

And it's by my friend Kermit the Frog.

I've never met anyone who doesn't like Kermit the Frog. He stands as one of the major everyman...er, everyperson...everyfrog? - characters of our age. There is never a question of whether or not you are seeing the genuine frog. His unpretentious affability is inspiring. Let's take a closer look at Bein' Green. It's more than just a cute kid's song.

### It's not that easy bein' green

Having to spend each day the color of the leaves

When I think it could be nicer being red, or yellow or gold

Or something much more colorful like that

In this first verse, Kermit simply tells a truth we can all relate to. It's not easy being true to who we are as a person. In fact, it's difficult. Horribly difficult, perhaps, at times. Each of us has experienced grief and sorrow and loneliness and fear and frustration and pain and anger and despair at some point in our life. Perhaps it is unavailable. I don't know. In any case, Kermit does not whine or

complain about being who he is. He simply says it's not easy. It's not easy bein' green

It seems you blend in with so many other ordinary things

And people tend to pass you over 'cause you're

Not standing out like flashy sparkles in the water

Or stars in the sky

Here Kermit says why it's not easy. Not that he's not rich, not that he doesn't have a fancy car, (although Fozzie has a Studebaker\*\*), but he says he has been "passed...over" by people. Many of us have felt abandoned, neglected, rejected, or that we have not always gotten all the love we long for or that we feel we deserve. Perhaps that too is part of the human condition.

But green's the color of Spring

And green can be cool and friendly-like

And green can be big like an ocean, or important

Like a mountain, or tall like a tree

"But..."

Wait a minute, Kermit seems to say. This kind of thinking will get him nowhere.

In a burst of musical mindfulness, Kermit begins to be aware of his True Beauty. He realizes he is like Spring and like the ocean and like a mountain and like a tree - friendly and important and tall.

When green is all there is to be

It could make you wonder why, but, why wonder, why wonder?

I am green and it'll do fine, it's

beautiful

And I think it's what I want to be

Having traveled through pain and doubt and introspection, Kermit, in the final verse, dispenses with such introspective doubting. "Why wonder?"

Instead, in a supreme act of faith, he says proudly and happily, "I am green and it'll do fine, it's beautiful, and I think it's what I want to be." He has found that beauty is not only all around him, but is within him, indeed IS him, as well.

It is this conviction, I believe, this conviction of the specialness and beauty of who we are, that can lead us to inner peace, and to meaningful lives in connection with others.

Here, try it yourself. Sing along with me and the frog.

When [-your name here-] is all there is to be

It could make you wonder why, but, why wonder, why wonder?

I am [-your name here-] and it'll do fine, it's beautiful

And I think it's what I want to be.

Namaste.

fc

\* Bein' Green is copyright Joe Raposo, 1970 by Jonico Music, Inc. and Green Fox Music, Inc.

\*\* As seen in the 1979 movie, the Muppet Movie.

## Mindfulness & Compassion Workshop



with Mindful City Ann Arbor and  
Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice

*In 2016 and 2017, many of our congregation participated in discussions on Race, with many sessions led by La'Ron Williams. One of the goals was to raise awareness of systemic racism and inequality in our culture. One of the persistent challenges we considered was how we go about changing these systems. The Boards of Mission Action and Christian Education sponsored the earlier series and are joining again to offer another opportunity to participate and grow.*

When confronting injustice produced by human systems of indifference and intolerance, it is important for people of faith and conscience to find sustainable practices to help remain faithful to the fundamental principles underlying their engagement.

Mindfulness practices, along with worship, help individuals to discover a stronger spiritual presence within themselves as well as a sense of interconnectedness, love and compassion for other humans.

Compassionate behavior occurs when 1) people are aware of suffering of those around them, 2) people want to help alleviate that suffering, and 3) they take action to accomplish that.

We are inviting ICPJ and Mindful City Ann Arbor to lead a 3.5 hour workshop, teaching mindfulness and compassion practices. In this introductory workshop several core principles of mindfulness and compassion will be explored. Through experiential activities, discussion and reflection, participants will discover how mindfulness relates to compassion for self and others. Participants will be guided in specific practices that they can use in daily life to cultivate greater empathy and equanimity.

**Sunday October 28, 1:00 PM – 4:30 PM in the Memorial Lounge  
at First Baptist Church (517 E Washington St, Ann Arbor 48104)**

**Registration fee \$35 *Space is limited so please register early***

Register online at <https://mindfulnesscompassion1stbaptist.eventbrite.com>