



Interfaith Inspirer

An Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth News Publication

VOL. XV, NO. 04, April 2019



Recognizing Yourself as Creator of Personal Ritual

By Jaclyn Morrow

Spring has sprung and it has me thinking about personal ritual.

Wikipedia defines ritual as *a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and performed according to set sequence. Rituals may be prescribed by the traditions of a community, including a religious community.*

I define personal ritual as a tradition that you have created for yourself. A tradition that may have come to replace prescribed ritual- or traditions that other people have given you. Growing up Catholic we had a plethora of things that were yearly prescribed rituals. As a teenager, I rocked the Jesus shirts and felt really cool walking around with charcoal on my forehead on Ash Wednesday. My family celebrated along with all other Catholics during Lent- by eating frozen fish sticks on Fridays. Shrug- we did what we could. There may have been a part of me that understood why I was doing those things, but mostly I felt cool. Like I was part of a special club.

It's not a club that I belong to anymore. I actually made that a ritual too. Several years ago, my faith went through a transformational process and I created my first personal ceremony. I divorced the Catholic Church on Easter. I went to Easter mass as usual and when it came time to renew our vows- I intentionally did not. It was quiet, and it was deeply personal. Then the question arose, now what?

This is a question many of us may be asking ourselves, and maybe we are comforted by continuing the ritual of Sunday morning services here at Interfaith. It's cozy and familiar and it's fine tuned for our selves of Now.

But what about those Big seasonal rituals that the Church gave me? In my 20s I desperately tried to give Christmas a more spiritual flavor. I would bring incense and dried herbs to burn in the fire. I would try to introduce readings that touched on the Winter Solstice season. It fell on deaf ears. Finally I realized my family just wanted things to be how they were.

My family's traditional Christmas may not be the nature connected ritual I was looking for, but it's actually quite wonderful the way it is. My brother was born on Christmas (unfortunately my mom and dad did not name him Jesus like my 8 year old self so enthusiastically suggested!). So as a token of our appreciation to the Doctors, Nurses and all other people that work on the holiday, we began delivering cookie trays to the hospital, fire stations and EMT stations around town on Christmas morning. It is a beautiful thing and perfect for us.

Eventually, I left Christmas alone and I claimed Winter Solstice. Revisiting my Irish/Celtic heritage, I found power in the spiral and in the quiet. I designed my Winter Solstice ceremony. I build a huge spiral out of branches and finish it at the fire pit. My sons have started to help me build it. I get a new candle as my Winter Solstice candle. For the last couple of years I've been making my candle out of beeswax and coconut oil for the ceremony. We sing a song at night and walk the spiral with our candle, we light it from the fire pit and take a moment at the center. It's fluid now, but for the first couple of years it felt forced, inorganic, insincere even. But you know what? Now it feels like a comfortable blanket that I return to each year. Slightly different each time, but steeped in depth and meaning and intention. It is the perfect spiritual ritual for me and my family.

In the last 3 years I have added a little something more. I began tapping my maple trees. The first year, I boiled it all down inside, which isn't the smart way to go because it creates too much steam for the inside of your house. Last year, I created a system to boil some of it down on a fire. A fire which I built myself with the tree branches from our winter spiral.

I create fire with the dried logs of my quiet introspective winter to boil the sap of spring. The sap water evaporates and mixes with the smoke and in its place I'm left with a condensed sweet gold. It is the most beautiful thing I've ever tasted. It tastes of sweetness and smoke, but also of empowerment and peace.

We can feel empowered to create our own rituals.

I invite you to try something new this year and deepen your ceremony. I invite you to share it with friends and to know that you are the creator. Sat nam.

Ministerial Miscellany
By Rev. Annie Kopko

Welcome to Spring! And the opportunity to sow, sew, and so some seeds of joy, harmony, and bliss into the fertile thoughts of our own consciousness.

April is a beautiful season of changes that are totally and delightfully obvious. But as you see your blessings in the signs of Spring, are you also able to see your own signs of spiritual growth that have occurred since this time last year? Although spiritual growth is a journey without destination, you will always have signs along the way. (Here are just a few, as food for your contemplation)

Do you find that you are happier and more peaceful, no matter what is going on around you?

Do you find that your relationships are heading toward a deeper and more satisfying connection with people?

Are you feeling kinder to yourself and to people around you and more compassionate? Can you serve fearlessly?

Are you able to appreciate the people, events, and experiences, both wanted and unwanted, that you encounter, and then let go?

Are you feeling more creative?

Do you just feel better wherever you are?

However you feel, Interfaith has activities that help you feel good. See further details on our website (thanks to Layla)

April 2nd, Death Café, where we discuss any and every aspect of Death in small confidential groups. 6:30-8:30PM

April 6, Drum and dance jam led by Curtis Glat-ter. 7PM

April 13th, Café 704, Spirit Singing Band, 8PM Come early to get a good seat (we fill up fast) and to see Artisan 704 crafts for sale.

April 27th, Club 704 with Eric Moore. Club 704 is a new and repeating event designed for younger adults.

May 4th DIY Yard Sale/ Boot Sale. Sell your things from the back of your car and give us ½ of earnings. We will also sell donated items from inside.

In every Sunday Bulletin you will see repeating events like pot luck Sunday, 2 Course in Miracles study groups, Friday transmission meditation, Tuesday community pot-luck and other activities, with all the details.

Many Blessings, Annie

Rituals	Page 1
CMM	Page 2
Community page	Page 3
Peggy's Column	Page 4
Youthful Spirits	Page 5
Feb. Board Min.	Page 6
Fundraiser flyer	Page 7

**Community Member
of the Month**

Amiable Al



By Jaclyn Morrow

All hail the Grand Poobah!

Hahaha just kiddin'. I felt the introduction to this moment when we give Al Carter some well deserved recognition needed some extra flare. Because let's face it- there is more love and flare radiating from Al then should be legal!

I must say it was a great pleasure interviewing Al/ aka Owl/aka the Grand Poobah/aka... the list goes on. You may be familiar with Al's name because he is The Guy Who Started Cafe 704. Yeah- he's THAT guy. He's quick with a relevant joke at open mic time on Sundays and he can be seen handing out Bolo ties to participants at the Family Contra Dance. He is a full blown supporter of the community here at Interfaith.

And we are full blown supporters of him. It's full circle.

Al's parents were school teachers in Metro Detroit. His family was Methodist. Hard core. Fire and brimstone. In the summers he played the part of city boy working on his uncles dairy farm. Maybe his sense of humor came from some of those times- when the joke was on him. Al is no stranger to being the outsider. You might even say he's claimed non-compliance as his own. The black sheep in the family, he did the "devils work" as a bartender to put himself through college. You've got to ask him about that story- it's a good one. See, while I could tell you all the beautiful details of his stories- I hesitate to rob you of the wonderful experience of hearing it from the horse's mouth. Al is a delight to chat with and we here at Interfaith give thanks for his humble presence.

He found his way to the Interfaith community back in 1998 when the group met at Newport Rd. He started going to meetings regularly to support a friend and her 2 daughters. I can only imagine how grateful she was for his support- and how lucky those girls were to have a guy with such innate "dad-humor" in their lives.

After college, Al made a go at being a Jr. High School Math and Science teacher. His timing was off and he was soon whisked away into a career of nature and park services. He became the DNR at the Lexington Harbor up in the thumb. And I quote, "I was so ill suited for most of the roles I had to play". The people he came across are better off because of his influence. Who knows what ripples he caused?

We do know Al has caused ripples in Ann Arbor. His history here is full of night time pop up art galleries and fashion shows. If you're lucky maybe you've seen his infamous (well actually now FAMOUS thanks to Ariana Grande, but that's another story) black and white coat embodying the character of Cowboy Pimp.

Continued on page 6

Volunteer Coordinator Corner

By Bob Hopkins

This space will be used to identify volunteer needs and appreciation as of March 24, 2019

We regularly need to add to our pool of people who help to set-up and clean-up for potlucks – Step up

We want responsible people to set up and tidy up the sanctuary before or after the service – Step up

We can always use treats for after Service – See Ted or just bring them in

We could use people at the Welcome table on the fourth and fifth Sunday of the month – See Bob

We need people to assist with transportation – See Donald Prescott -Hart, transportation coordinator

We need a people to help with the new Cub 704 designed to attract the young -- See Bob or Donald

We need people interested in participating in the May 4 yard sale -- See Delyth for details.

APPRECIATION

THANKS TO: Ian Campbell and Amanda Saracino who have agreed to be greeters on first Sundays.

THANKS TO: The newly elected board members (or at least they will be when you read this).

THANKS TO: The carpet cleaning crew who gave all or part of their Sunday afternoon, March 24: Delyth Balmer, Mark Charles, Randall Counts (coordinator), Ray Fix, Craig Harvey, Bob Hopkins, Tommy Kaminski, Jules Loukos, Joy Pendeleton, Ted Popafsky, Darlene Schultz, Steve Schultz and Dawn Schwartz

ANNOUNCEMENT AND POSTING

The Interfaith Round Table of Washtenaw County will be looking for new leadership as both George Lambrides and Susan King will be retiring in September, 2019. The current model is a co-directorship, each a 5-7 hour a week appointment, but both appointments could be combined into a 10-15 hour a week position. We are looking for people who value multi-religious engagement, have a commitment to creating a local culture of understanding and inclusion among religious identities,

and can focus on taking this organization to the next level of growth and expansion. Additional information is available including a job description, an outline of duties and responsibilities, background information, and compensation. All applicants, including those looking to add some hours to their current responsibilities, will be considered. If interested, please contact Bryan Weinert (IRT Board Chair), 734-883-5720, bryancweinert@gmail.com.

Due date for applications: March 31, 2019

April Music

7: Spirit Singing Band

14: Laurel Federbush

21: Jeanne Adwani

28: Jill Halpern

April Talks

7 Rev. Lyriel Claire: Tools for the Inner Journey: What is Your Unique Essence?

14 Swami Atmananda Saraswati

21 Brett Koon: Birthing The Authentic You

28 Rev. Annie Kopko



April

**Birthday Babies
Happy Birthday!**

1. Pat Root, Rob Russell
9. Malcolm Shaffner
12. Tom Headrick
15. Joanna Courteau
16. Norah Reilly
27. Carol Jacobs



JASPER THE CAT TALKS ABOUT HIS PAST LIVES

By Peggy
Lubahn

Peggy: Are you ready, Jasper?

Jasper: Yes. I've had many lifetimes as other kinds of animals. Hawks, owls, hares, beasts of all kinds. Every

life teaches us something. Animals and humans are alike in that sense.

Now, then. I remember a tiger, I think it was my mother parent. That was a very short life, I was very weak at birth, the last to breathe air [the runt of the litter], and it was hard, so very hard, to lift my head. My mother SO BEAUTIFUL SHE WAS, in body and spirit, grieved for me even as I slipped away, darkness came upon me as I felt her great tongue gently gently blessing me with love and HOPE. My heart fills with the emotions even now, recalling that moment so vividly...

The next life after that was my choice, and I chose to be a lion. A lion of India you understand, I had decided to stay in India after being a tiger cub. It was my hope that I would be able to meet my tiger mother in physical form, but it was not to be. The Gir Lions [living in the Gir Forest] are quite different from what I have heard of African lions. We are more graceful, more lightly built is a good way to say it, seemingly less massive in muscle, very beautiful in our way. In this life I was a male, a young male ready to find my own way in the world as my father lion did not wish me to challenge him, as is the way among lions.

So I set off away from all that was familiar, walking many miles and days. I had a male friend with me, we thought we might start our own lion family together, this is not unknown among lions.

Peggy: Did you have any ideas about which way to go?

Jasper: We had listened to the elders' stories about what lay in each direction, so we had what you call a mental map in our minds of the terrain, dangerous places, and good places to hunt, that sort of thing. We knew it was best to keep away from humans, but had never so much as sniffed one before in our young lives.

Plenty of stories gave us plenty of reasons to avoid those ones!

It was one day when we smelled rain that something wonderful happened! We also smelled a girl tiger! My friend immediately took the lead and we found her resting, licking blood from her muzzle. What a beautiful sight she was, so sleek and serene...

Peggy: And what happened next?

Jasper: Sorry, I was enjoying the remembering. Well, I cannot say she was glad to see us, we were lions, after all, and she had a kill to protect. And though the time of matings approached, she was not yet feeling that power. I shall say she sneered at us as unworthy creatures and beneath her notice, and she commanded us to move on.

And so we decided together to continue our travels. We had heard of a great forest, a forest within a forest, as you might say, where very special lions dwelled.

Naturally we desired to be Very Special Lions ourselves! [joke] It was a very long journey, as much as a moon, before we realized we had found the place.

Peggy: And what was it like?

Jasper: [A long, low moan.] It was death, it was all death. The humans had come before us. The great trees were felled, the stink of humans was everywhere.

That night we grieved with those who had died there in that naked, ruined forest. With the trees and the animals and the plants, we grieved...

[Jasper closes his eyes and starts to sway slightly back and forth, singing the song of those who were lost.]

*Oh beauty, oh vibrant life, oh springing joy!
In this place of burdens, let the life return in its own time.*

*Too much to bear is this sorrow.
Too heavy lies the burden of death.
We sing our grief, we sing our sorrow,
We sing hope for the future, the future forest,
Which is greater than Man's greed.*

And we opened our eyes, our amazed eyes, and saw the spirits of all those who had died, singing and laughing in the sunlight and the moonlight, joyful in death as they were in life, dragonflies playing in sunbeams. All were there just as they had been before Men came. And we were told: **Your hearts have been heard by the All Highest. This place will bloom again. Go in peace.** [Jasper opens his eyes, he is very intense.]

Do you *see*, do you *understand*? All hearts are one heart, a great heart, too great to be permanently harmed by the Darkness.

We are done.

Youthful Spirits



- We are happy to help you celebrate your child's birthday at the Center, just let us know the date and bring some treats to share. Remember, we are a nut-free environment.

Did you know?

- Our children always prepare a snack for the community for potluck Sunday. It's part of our service oriented philosophy.
- We always try to align our lesson to the message for the adults
- We have a room for teens! If you know of any teens who might want to help us grow a teen group, please bring them to the Center!
- Whenever possible, we do an "intergenerational" lesson

Help needed!

As part of his studies in environmental science at U of M, Tommy, our beloved nursery worker, has to attend a 6-week science camp from May 19—the end of June. He will be unable to attend to his job as the nursery worker during that time :-(We are looking for stand-by people who can fill in for him during this time. Kellie and Heide will assist you!

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

Board Meeting Minutes February

By Nancy Biehn

Ministers & Administration

- Speakers scheduled through March
- List of approximately 20 speakers from the last 1.5 years has been compiled for speaker selection and assignment moving forward.
- Discussion about creating a Ministerial Support Group of sorts to potentially be Service Leaders or to be on call as needed when Annie, Delyth or Dave are unavailable.
- New Speaker Lyrial Claire will speak for the first time on April 7.
- Ali Hussain will be speaking and teaching on Sufism

Finances

- Our finances are in the black by \$406 to start out the year. January was a stable month in terms of income and expense.
- Reviewed and discussed finance spreadsheet which was reordered and regrouped to look at the budget and expenses based on functional areas. What are our objectives and critical areas that can be related to our operations? Good for focus on where to put our energies assets. This focus will help us set goals for future stability and growth.
- AV Equipment: Monies have been budgeted of \$1000 for a projector which was purchased for \$500. Erik leading this effort to improve the Sunday Service experience. There will be more expenses for equipment and hardware with a potential cost of \$2000. Delyth can approve costs up to \$1500. A recommendation for costs will be presented. The Board agreed to move forward on this.

Vision/Mission

Current Vision Draft: *We are a supportive community that explores universal truths underlying all paths of spiritual growth.*

Considerable discussion about what's missing or not missing from this. Do we want to add something about Divinity or Oneness? There is a sense that we are "All One" or "Love" or "God" or "The Divine" and this may be missing from our Vision.

Current Mission Draft: *We join together to inspire our individual and collective spiritual growth by providing weekly fellowship, learning opportunities, community service, and social events to create a vibrant and diverse spiritual community.*

In order to have a Leadership Search of some kind started, do we need to have some clarity and specific language on the Vision and Mission statement?

Motion made to move forward with the other objectives of the Co-Creation Team: Plan and execute the formation of a Leadership Search and continue with the organizational plan based on the vision of the community. **Approved.**

Motion made that during the Board Retreat in April, Co-Creation Team will be invited to work together with the Board to flesh out the spiritual language of the Vision and Mission. **Approved.**

Ray's term is up in 2019 - not seeking re-election
MaryAlice's term is up in 2019 - seeking re-election

Erik's term is up in 2019 - seeking re-election

Becky's Term is up in 2019 - seat open

Dolores/Nigel's term is up 2020

Nancy's term is up 2020

Susan's term is up 2020

Continued from page 2

If you're lucky maybe you've seen his infamous (well actually now FAMOUS thanks to Ariana Grande, but that's another story) black and white coat embodying the character of Cowboy Pimp.

He lent his support to a community of artists and when the galleries shut down he set his sight on a monthly music gathering at Interfaith. He figured he could do bands and he missed the connection of the gallery scene- and so Cafe 704 began. A friends daughter was dating a guy in a rock n roll band called High-strung. Al booked them for the first Cafe. It was a success!... well mostly, but I guess it depends on how you define success... Thankfully Al did not give up and neither did the people helping him. Cafe 704 is a vital part of

the energy of the Interfaith Community and we give thanks Al had the insight to get and keep the ball rolling!

Al is a giving and positive questioner of all things. He pushes buttons and gives warm hugs. He offends on both sides of the aisle- an equal opportunist! We are grateful that he is there to hold his own as a support system in the intimate and open community that is Interfaith.

So next time you run into Al, ask him what kind of shenanigans he's into. Pull up a chair and engage in the conversation, listen to that story. I promise you won't be disappointed.

Grocery Card Fundraiser ("Scrip" program) Update

Background:

This is a way for local food stores to contribute to Interfaith about 3-5% of whatever you spend at these stores. It costs you nothing more, and it really does help the Center. The only place that still requires actually buying cards at the Center is Peoples Food Co-op. For questions or to buy cards you can find Craig Harvey in the social hall after service, or phone Craig at 734-971-8576. And here are the details about each store's program (Kroger, Busch's, Arbor Farms, and People's Food Co-op).

Kroger shoppers:

Please look at the bottom of your Kroger receipt and verify that it includes the following notice. If it doesn't, then please sign yourself up!

****Kroger Community Rewards****
At your request, Kroger is donating to
INTERFAITH CENTER FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

To link your Kroger-Plus account to Interfaith just go to:

<https://www.kroger.com/account/enrollCommunityRewardsNow/>

Look at the "Community Rewards" section of your account info and edit it as needed to make the Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth (#82808) your preferred organization. Whenever you go shopping, just do your usual swiping your Kroger-Plus card or entering your phone number to identify yourself to the system. It may take a couple weeks for you to be fully in the system, after which the bottom of your receipts will always mention Interfaith.

Busch's:

If you don't have a Busch's MyWay account, you first need to do that at <http://buschs.com>.

Then connect your MyWay account to the Interfaith Center using their "Cash for Education" feature.

- To enroll in Cash for Education log into your MYWAY* account and select Cash for Education from the dropdown menu underneath your name.

- Choose up to four organizations that you would like to support per quarter.

- Be sure to use your phone number at checkout.

Reminder: You must have a valid email address and opt-in to receive emails to participate in this program. Please also note that participants will need to re-enroll on an annual basis (easier after you have your MyWay account).

Arbor Farms:

No cards or phone number to worry about! All you need to do is tell the cashier that you want to credit the Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth (or just say "Interfaith Church" which they recognize more easily). You just have to remember to **mention it every time you shop**.

Peoples Food Co-op:

Buy \$50 or \$100 card(s) from Craig at Interfaith. When you use them up, buy more of them at the Center. You can pay with cash or check made out to the Interfaith Center (or just "ICSG").