



# Interfaith Inspirer

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## Exploring the Day of the Dead Article by Annie Kopko

The Day of the Dead is celebrated by Spanish speaking peoples all over the world, and has been for hundreds of years. It is celebrated by Catholics these days on Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>, as All Souls Day.

Halloween, celebrated on Oct 31<sup>st</sup>, is the modern version of the Celtic festival of Samhain, when people would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off ghosts. They felt that the veil between the worlds was the most thin at this time of year.

Catholic Spaniards conquering the Americas 500 years ago found the Aztecs celebrating their dead ancestors and supporting their spiritual journey, in a month long series of rituals as they had been doing for 3000 years and more.

When The Catholics made every indigenous community catholic, they tried to get rid of the celebration, but found they could not stop it, thus changed the dates, shortened it and moved it into one of their own, following all Saints day on Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>, calling it all Souls Day

To celebrate the Day of the Dead in churches and in their homes people make altars and decorate them with painted skeletons, photos, and flowers, and bring food that was loved by the family member. They go to cemeteries to clean and decorate the graves.

I think it is interesting to note that all indigenous cultures of our planet have holy days to honor the dead in some way. These festivals are most often in the fall when the harvesting has been completed and the plants are at the end of their cycle.

In those times, people were more connected to the earth and her cycles and especially recognized that human beings also have their own cycles. Our body has its own cycles within its 80 years. It wears out eventually, going through many changes.

These days we have managed to get away from our natural cycles, and to create a lot of fear around the subject of death.

Imagine if we were to respect and celebrate death in the way that our ancestors have done, as a very neces-

sary part of our nature. Imagine if we were to have no fear of death.

Perhaps we would have less fear of life as well. Perhaps we might stop this sense of competition and divisiveness that we have with each other.

Perhaps we could measure our success on how much we are able to love and serve each other.

Life is never over, we live forever as spirit. I believe we return again and again in different bodies to explore this fascinating relationship between life and death, man and woman, animal and human and nature.

It is part of life to die to everything, yet our spirit will never stay still, it will continue to explore and expand.

Letting go of everything makes us sad. When we lose a loved one, there is a period of mourning, time to reflect that is different for all of us. We forget how close this person really is. They have merely changed form.

Our culture has forgotten to recognize and respect the formless among us. There is a mystery of life and death we will never solve, partly because words cannot fully express it.

It is helpful to remember:  
Within every emotion is its opposite, and within each difficulty are the seeds of its resolution. Within every birth of a person, or an idea, there are the seeds of change and death.



## Ministerial Miscellany

By Rev. Annie Kopko

About this time of year I think of crawling under my covers and staying there for the winter.

Since there is no chance of that, I do start to think, what is my next challenge. Mind you, there are no big big challenges, like going back to school, but maybe this year I will clean up some of the clutter in my house, and start by making lists and posting my goals on my mirror (it's a big one). Ask me how I am doing with this one in a couple of months.

I guess for most of us, there is no lack of challenges, the wonder is how to meet them and complete them. While you are doing that, take some time to come to Interfaith and nourish your soul. Sunday services will do that, but there are also many other ways to give and receive the joys of life.

Blessings to All, Annie

## Community Member of the Month

# Joyful Jack



By Jaclyn Morrow

This month we are happy to show our gratitude for Jack Richards. Or perhaps you don't know his name but have enjoyed the refreshing, unintrusive, inspired background guitar during first Sunday potlucks- yep, that's the guy!

Jack is much more than a musician. He's an all-around caring person that positively affects his community in as many ways as he can. Well, for starters he's a member of the official Caring Committee of Interfaith. He's also of the "how can I help" variety. He has been very dedicated to helping the Interfaith community by setting up and cleaning up for events. Most recently the service for John Causland, the yard sale this summer, and any events that have happened in between!

Jack was raised in Grosse Pointe where he fell in love with the water early on. He has always been a hard worker, and by the age of 12 had earned enough money shoveling snow that he bought himself his first sailboat! His mother had taught him that being on the water, and being in the forest was their church. Which is a good thing too because when it came time to go to that other church (you know the one that happens inside a building of some sort), he would hide on top of the garage until his mom left on Sunday mornings!

After High school, Jack pursued many adventures. He graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a double major in Special Education and Geology. He moved out to Seattle after college for a change of scenery and became a Home Health Aide. He spent several months living in Europe. Traveling from youth hostels to camping out on the land, this was just the adventure to continue his path. He'd always been spiritually conscious from his early beginnings of awareness with water and earth, later he was inspired by musicians as they "followed their own peace". He knew he had the creativity to become himself. This is perhaps the most beautiful lesson that we can hope for each other.

He eventually did move back to Michigan. Jack says he "fell back in love with Michigan". He moved to Ann Arbor and found Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth by first finding the Unity Church of Ann Arbor. He's actually here with us now because of Heide Kaminski (Thanks Heide!)

Jack is inspired by books such as Miquel Ruiz the 4 Agreements, The Mastery of Love and Siddhartha. He became a student of the Course in Miracles and loved the comradeship included in the study. He is a good listener and enjoys eye contact and the energy of a real conversation.

You can find Jack at Interfaith almost every Sunday. But if you don't see him here he plays open mics all across Ann Arbor and Ypsi- sometimes a few times a week! He loves to play Joni Mitchell, Clapton, Allman Brothers, Moody Blues... so if you're in the mood for a peaceful, easy feeling- search him out. Just ask, he'll be happy to share. He always is.

Thanks Jack!

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### Volunteer Coordinator Corner

By Bob Hopkins

This space will be used to identify volunteer needs and appreciation as of as of September 30, 2019

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

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

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

We could use a person at the Welcome table on the fourth Sunday of the month – See Bob

We would like testimonials from people who have gained from their volunteer experience -- see Bob

We need people to help with transportation –see Donald, the Transportation Coordinator.

### APPRECIATION

THANKS TO: All of the people who helped to prepare, execute and participate in the Quarterly Conversation in Community.

### October Music

6: Nutshell (Café 704 promo

13: Laurel Federbush  
(Harp)

20: All of Us

27 Ceremony with music (Layla Ananda)

### October Birthdays Happy Birthday!!!

15: Judy Bell

21: Lorri Coburn

22: Jill Crane

29: Craig Harvey

### October Talks

Oct. 6. Maureen Muldoon "Living in the Wow"

Oct. 13. Bob Hopkins "Love and Tithing"

Oct. 20. Rev. Annie Kopko "Secrets of Spiritual Growth"

Oct. 27. Layla Ananda "The Veil Between the Worlds: A Wiccan Samhain Ceremony"



## SQUIRRELS: Beyond the Cute

By Peggy River Singer

Squirrels. They're everywhere. They're so common that you kind of block them out after a while. Then one day you're driving along minding your own business, and suddenly one of the furry hoodlums sprints across the road right in front of your car. It's almost like he was actually WAITING for YOUR car so he could give you a heart attack as you desperately try to avoid squashing him without causing an accident! What was that little maniac THINKING, anyway?

Prepare to be amazed.

### Home Sweet Home

Tree cavity dens are choice real estate in the squirrel world, but you're much more likely to spot leaf nests (dreys) in trees -- yesterday I counted eleven, just at one corner of our property. Each squirrel builds several dreys in his or her territory, and uses them to get out of the rain, to hide before a hawk spots them, for storage and for naps. Designs range from simple platforms to sophisticated "penthouses" so well-built they can last for ten years.

### Nothing Beats NUTS For Fine Dining

My apartment is in prime squirrel habitat on the eastern edge of Ford Lake. Occasionally we see Red and Gray Squirrels; but big, flashy Fox Squirrels are in charge. We have lots of black walnut trees where I live, and squirrels LOVE the nuts. Unfortunately, walnuts are encased in a tough green husk when they fall from the tree; and gnawing through the husk and then the hard-as-stone shell to get to the nut meat takes up valuable time and energy. So the squirrels bury the walnuts in the loose soil of my flower bed, then dig them up months later. By that time, the pesky husk has rotted away.

Squirrel-ologists at UC Berkeley offered Fox Squirrels several different kinds of nuts. The squirrels toted the nuts home [where tiny cameras were waiting] and went through them with all the concentration of a trick-or-treater organizing his candy loot. First they separated the almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts and peanuts into piles. Then they organized them according to size, quality, perishability, nutritious value, and (presumably) how well they liked each

kind. Finally, the nuts were transferred to several nests which featured different storage conditions, or they were buried. Splitting up the food stashes helps make sure that even if some of the nuts are stolen, there will still be plenty left; and the whole process helps the squirrels recall what they've got where.

### But Wait, There's More...

*"Don't just waltz in here and try to start conversations with total strangers!*

*BE. BECOME. Then the sharing will flow."*

This excellent advice came from a Red Squirrel named Tuu-liss. I was new at animal communication back then, and thought I would practice with him because I'd seen him during previous visits to his lakeside home. I hadn't been expecting to be schooled by a master, but I'll never forget the lesson.

Years earlier, I met a squirrel elder who showed me an ugly tumor on his body. I offered to get him veterinary care, but he declined. He had dedicated his life to downloading toxic energies and processing them, transmuting them within his body, for the greater good.

I used to feed both birds and squirrels with a mixture of oatmeal, peanut butter and raisins; and it was very popular. One day a big female squirrel I called Mama was sitting on my fence with her back to me, and I saw a fungal infection on her skin. I began to put out extra oatmeal mix to make sure she was getting enough to eat. A month later, Mama showed me that her bare patch had grown, and the skin was painfully inflamed. Finally, I realized what she was trying to tell me: the food might have been kindly meant, but it was not what squirrels are designed to eat; and it was making her -- and probably other squirrels as well -- very sick. I felt devastated.

I replaced the mix with dishes of water containing Bach flower essences. One day in early spring, I looked out the window and there was Mama. For just that moment we connected heart to heart, and her big brown eyes were full of gratitude and love for the healing essences I had offered. Her skin was now almost completely normal. Another lesson learned.

### The Rest of the Story

This article begins with squirrels and cars. I've asked about this, and have been told that it's partly a squirrel game. It can also be a gift to the humans involved: the sudden shock pulls our attention away from our distracted thinking and back into our body (where our attention should be when we are driving). And, it reminds us that humans are NOT the only species that matters.

Squirrels have a unique ability to captivate and inspire humans. By simply going through their daily lives, they remind us of the importance of balancing work and play, rest and activity; to plan for the future while living in the moment; and to remember that LIFE offers so much more than the structures of our daily routines. That's quite a bit of wisdom in a small furry package.



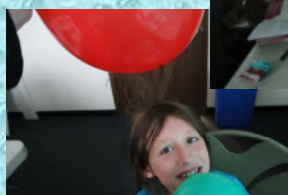
# Youthful Spirits



We always have a blast



Outdoor Explorations



Chain Reactions

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

*and Laughter*

## CONSTRUCTION OF A PRAYER – PART THREE

By Robert Hopkins

**O Creator of the Universe Who was manifested in Jesus Christ, Buddha, Confucius, Gandhi, Quimby, Moses, Muhammed, Bah Allah and Rumi.** This is how the prayer I say five times daily begins. The idea of opening the prayer with the nine citations of nine revered and inspirational people from history. I wanted to celebrate that the spirits of each of these Masters gave clear and historical evidence of the power and influence of the one Creator. Further, I wanted to acknowledge that each of them is recognized as a significant world religious movement that is an important part of my heritage as a member of the Interfaith community. I would propose to consider each in turn. This installment will consider the first three.

Jesus the Christ would seem to need no introduction to Western Civilization. He has been revered by almost all sects of Christianity as the only true Son of God or Son of Man. Many branches of Christianity cite that Jesus is the Divine Son of God born of the Virgin Mary, conceived after a visitation from the angel Gabriel. Various other branches emphasize that Christ is a symbol, not a last name. Rather than insisting that Jesus was the unique Son of God, the assertion is that the Christ is the perfect expression of our Creator in all human beings. This would allow for a harmonious view of Jesus with other religious schools of thought. The emphasis on the Christ allows one to see that Jesus was a more full expression of that divinity than any or most other people who have ever lived. Regardless of whether one sees Jesus as the only Son of God or a most complete expression of divinity, there can be little argument that Jesus is a true manifestation of the Creator of the Universe. All Christians seem to agree that the public ministry and teaching of Jesus was cut short after only about three years when he was crucified. They all agree that he was resurrected from the dead in under three days and ascended into the heavens after being seen by many of his most intimate followers. With around 2.4 billion adherents, split into three main branches of Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox, Christianity is the world's largest religion.

Buddha may be almost as well-known as Jesus. After all Buddhism is cited as the world's fourth largest religion, having about 520 million followers. Buddhism was

founded in India, growing out of the life experiences and teachings of Siddhartha Gautama. The life story of the Buddha begins in Lumbini, near the border of Nepal and India, about 2,600 years ago, where the man Siddhartha Gautama was born. Wikipedia indicates that there is some dispute, but the Siddhartha was born of a royal family and lived a luxury and ease. He was 29 when he became aware of the plight of the less fortunate and left his royal life to find a path to ease the suffering of his fellow man. He studied meditation with the great masters of the day and was just short of his 35<sup>th</sup> birthday when he achieved enlightenment as he sat meditating under a Bodhi tree. From that day forward, he devoted the rest of his life to teaching what he had learned from his enlightenment. He is quoted as saying. ***"I teach because you and all beings want to have happiness and want to avoid suffering. I teach the way things are."*** *He served as a teacher the remainder of his days and thus had quite a lengthy career – some 45 years. "I can die happily. I have not kept a single teaching hidden in a closed hand. Everything that is useful for you, I have already given. Be your own guiding light."* – *The Buddha, while leaving his body at the age of eighty*

Confucius was a Chinese philosopher and politician of the Spring and Autumn period in ancient China. It is thought that Confucius was born on September 28, 551 BC in the district of Zou near present-day Qufu, China. His father Kong He (or Shuliang He) was an elderly commandant of the local Lu garrison. The philosophy of Confucius, also known as Confucianism, emphasized personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, justice and sincerity. Confucianism developed in response to Buddhism and Taoism and was reformulated as Neo-Confucianism. With particular emphasis on the importance of the family and social harmony, rather than on an otherworldly source of spiritual values, the core of Confucianism is humanistic. It is quite difficult to get an exact number of practitioners of Confucianism, per se. Chinese traditional religion is described as "the common religion of the majority Chinese culture: a combination of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, as well as the traditional non-scriptural/local practices and beliefs." In 2012, there were estimated to be 394 million such adherents.

In ancient China the followers of Confucius competed successfully with many other schools during the Hundred Schools of

Thought era only to be suppressed in favor of the Legalists during the Qin dynasty. Following the victory of Han over Chu after the collapse of Qin, Confucius's thoughts received official sanction and were further developed into a system known in the West as Neo-Confucianism, and later New Confucianism (Modern Neo-Confucianism).

Confucius is traditionally credited with having authored or edited many of the Chinese classic texts including all of the Five Classics, but modern scholars are cautious of attributing specific assertions to Confucius himself. Aphorisms concerning his teachings were compiled in the *Analects*, but only many years after his death.

Confucius's principles have commonality with Chinese tradition and belief. He championed strong family loyalty, ancestor veneration, and respect of elders by their children and of husbands by their wives, recommending family as a basis for ideal government. He espoused the well-known principle "Do not do unto others what you do not want done to yourself", the Golden Rule. He is also a traditional deity in Daoism.

Confucius is widely considered as one of the most important and influential individuals in shaping human history. His teaching and philosophy greatly impacted people around the world and remains influential today.

According to the *Zuozhuan*, Confucius returned home to his native Lu when he was 68, after he was invited to do so by Ji Kangzi, the chief minister of Lu. The *Analects depict him spending his last years teaching 72 or 77 disciples and transmitting the old wisdom via the Five Classics*. During his return, Confucius sometimes acted as an advisor to several government officials in Lu, including Ji Kangzi, on matters including governance and crime.

Burdened by the loss of both his son and his favorite disciples, he died at the age of 71 or 72. He died from natural causes. Confucius was buried in Kong Lin cemetery which lies in the historical part of Qufu in the Shandong Province. The original tomb erected there in memory of Confucius on the bank of the Sishui River had the shape of an axe. In addition, it has a raised brick platform at the front of the memorial for offerings such as sandalwood incense and fruit.



## 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").