



Interfaith Inspirer



An Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth News Publication

VOL. XX, NO. 4 April 2024

Meditation Retreat: Nourishment for Mind, Body, and Soul

This two-day Meditation Retreat and fundraiser for the Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth began with an idea presented by Brett Koon at a board meeting last September. Brett offered to plan and organize the entire event and proceeded to find a venue and a caterer. He enlisted Interfaith members Carol Bardenstein, Jennifer Lenders, and Holly Makimaa to join him in offering their services free of charge. We are immensely grateful for their generosity and delighted that this weekend retreat is available to our community and beyond. One does not need to be part of ICSG to attend. All are welcome.

We hope you will join us in the peaceful energy of the Triple Crane Retreat Center in Chelsea, Michigan, on Friday evening, April 26, and all-day Saturday, April 27. The cost for the retreat is \$200. Four vegetarian meals are included in the cost and limited lodging is available for an additional fee. We want to make partial and full scholarships available for this event. If you have more to give to help others, please donate to the scholarship fund. If you need a partial or full scholarship, please email Delyth at delyth.balmer@interfaithspirit.org.



Rev. Brett Koon is an inspirational speaker, a meditation teacher, and leads meditation retreats. He has been meditating for 32 years, which is where he draws upon most of his teachings. His main thread of teaching is to help people let go

off who they are not so a deeper truth Of who they are can be revealed.



Carol Bardenstein is a song catcher and song leader who facilitates a range of community song circles, including song circles for life cycle events, song healing for bedside, and hospice singing. Carol discovered heart-centered singing with others as a deep and transformative spirit portal

nearly 15 years ago, and she's been singing her heart out and in with others and facilitating many others and facilitating many different kinds of song circles ever since! Grief, joy and everything in between, and all that you are, are warmly invited into her song circles, for expression, connection and communion in heart and song.



Rev. Holly Makimaa has been facilitating writing, storytelling, and spirituality workshops for over 25 years. She is an ordained Interfaith and interspiritual minister who honors the spiritual expression of all and loves to facilitate activities that call forth

and reveal the sacred spark in all. Holly maintains a private practice offering spiritual companionship, holistic journaling, transformational coaching, embodied spiritual practices, and personal rituals. She creates personal and group retreats here.



Jennifer Lenders is a lover of discovering conscious connections to the body and mind through mindful movement. For over 20 years yoga-as movement and meditation-has been the vehicle, tool and design of her personal spiritual path and her teaching to all ages and stages,

including in cardiac rehab. Jennifer infuses the transformational healing wisdom of the yoga tradition by centering the class in the heart of compassion, self-awareness, and encouraging a willingness to be curious and open in gentle exploratory movement and breathing practices.

Ministerial Miscellany April

Your Life, Your Story

By Annie Kopko

I am wondering how many of us have written out the story of our lives. These days our computers make it very easy. While others may like to read it, the process is actually for ourselves. We are not writing for what our lives could have been (although that would be a great exercise) but for what it really has been; how we feel about what we have been, what we have done and how we have touched and changed the lives of all the people we have known, worked with and played with. And as we do this process we get to review our lives for what we liked and what we did not like. We see who we have loved and lost, without really knowing why. We get an opportunity to be in touch with our compassion for ourselves. We decide how personal we want to be, or not. I have a notion that there is some true peace to be found in this process. I did some writing for Larry, my late husband, and for Larry's Father, Joe Toth, before he died. I imagine his great-grandchildren might be interested to know some of their family history that they have never heard. Now it is time to write my own.

I imagine the history that together we have created over 26 years at Interfaith, as part of our personal history, features many of the aspects above. And we will not be stopping anytime soon, so join us in the events we are planning. There is additional important information on our website: <https://interfaithspirit.org>. Sun. April 7, 1-3 p.m., Annual Meeting, Board Elections and more!

- Wed. April 10, 7-8:15 p.m., Community sing with Matt Watroba. All voices welcome!! Song books provided! Donations welcome.
- Sat. April 13, 7-9 p.m., Cafe 704 Concert, with Marlena Studer and Steve Ragsdale, in person or on Zoom, \$10.00.
- Sat. April 19, 7 p.m., Drummunity Drum Circle with Lori Fithian.
- Fri.-Sat. April 26-27, Meditation Retreat at Triple Crane Retreat Center in Chelsea, MI. Fundraiser for Interfaith. \$200.00

Many Blessings as you enjoy Spring!

Annie



April Celebrants

- April 01 Patricia Root
- April 01 Rob Russell
- April 04 Tracy Lee Odgers
- April 09 Malcolm Shaffner
- April 10 Lori Kempf
- April 10 Steve Orlovski
- April 12 Bill Stobby
- April 15 Scott Alf
- April 15 Charlotte Allen
- April 15 Tracy Worcester
- April 15 Shelley Koyl
- April 16 Leora Druckman
- April 16 Norah Reilly
- April 18 Catherine Powers
- April 22 Maggie Burkit
- April 24 Julie Brader
- April 25 Mary Alice Truitt
- April 27 Carol Jacobs

Adding another
candle doesn't make
you older, it makes
your life brighter!



April Volunteer Corner

by Annemarie Howse

Thank you to all who volunteered during 2023; many of you continue to volunteer today. Earlier this year, I created a Volunteer Appreciation Publication listing many of our volunteers for 2023 along with some of their photos. It was not possible to list everyone, for example those that provide food for potlucks and grace us with your presence and a warm smile. And we appreciate you contributing with your presence!

It's been a busy year already. The following are some of our accomplishments as well as opportunities for you to participate in 2024.

NEWSLETTER

The newsletter team has expanded and now consists of: Norah Reilly (Content Manager), Heide Kaminski (Layout), Bethany King (Editor), Annemarie Howse, and Delyth Balmer.

- Monthly Front Page Content **Calling All Writers!** We especially need topical content for the front page relating to the month in question. Examples are May - *Mothers Day and Meet the New Board* and June - *Father's Day and Summer Solstice*. - Interfaither Spotlight - We also need someone(s) to interview members of our Interfaith Community and write an article to introduce them. Heide wrote a great article last summer introducing us to Steve, Sheila, and Teresa (from Adrian) and Maripat and Tim (from Tecumseh). If you missed the article, it was in the August 2023 edition. There are many people that have been attending for quite a while to whom we smile and say hello, but perhaps would like to get to know them better. This is a great opportunity! Please contact one of the members of the newsletter team if you are interested in writing an article.

Submissions for newsletter articles need to be sent to Norah by the 10th of the month preceding the publication month. For example: submissions for the May edition would be received by April 10th. Articles received past the deadline may be held back for future editions, if appropriate. Norah's email address is nkreilly58gm@gmail.com.

SUNDAY SERVICES

- Readings and Mediations - Please sign up to provide a 3-5 minute reading or meditation during the service. The sign-up book is located on the table in the Social Hall.

- Welcome Table - Sit at the welcome table for approximately ½ hour after the service to welcome new people. We'd like each visitor to feel that they've been warmly welcomed and enjoyed a conversation with at least one person at our Center.

- Potluck - Mark your calendar for our potlucks on the first Sunday of the month! **Bring something to share** if you can. This is a great opportunity to meet other Interfaithers, and perhaps share a recipe.

CLEAN UP CREW

Darlene MacLeod, Janet Fry, Gretchen Leonhardt and Annemarie Howse have been busy sorting, cleaning, and discarding articles we no longer need. You may be called on to assist them with future projects. If you have a donation, please contact Delyth or one of the clean-up crew first, to be sure it is something we need and want.

Check out the Volunteer Appreciation Publication located on the table in Social Hall to see if there is a volunteer opportunity you might like to consider.

For more information about these and other volunteer opportunities, contact Annemarie at ahowse21@gmail.com or 818-667-2815 (leave a message).

Caring Committee

March 2024 Report

respectfully submitted by Annemarie Howse

The mission of the Caring Committee is to assist individuals or families primarily within the community of the Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth, and selectively support outreach groups or people that aren't part of our Interfaith Community, but we know about them through our members and affiliations.

Since the Caring Committee may not always be able to provide the services that are requested, we may reach out to the Interfaith Community for help. For example: if someone is moving or needs a ride, we might make an announcement or send an email with their request. We would then ask that you contact a member of the Caring Committee to let them know you are able to help.

During the month of February, the Caring Committee provided the following services:

- Cards & Flowers sent on behalf of the Caring Committee -1
- Cards sent by individuals within the Caring Committee -13
- Texts/emails - 9
- Phone calls -14
- Home/hospital visits - 6
- Services - 1
- Reiki - 5

These supports and services were provided to 18 different individuals or families in our Interfaith Community during the month of February.

Financial Report: There were no expenses during the month of February. We received a donation of \$50.00, giving us a balance of \$2,643.74.

Thank you for your generosity. We are grateful for our ability to be of service.



MOST BENEVOLENT OUTCOMES (MBOs)

by Lyriel Claire

I spoke about MBOs in a talk on October 15 and several people have suggested that the message be refreshed. If you want to view the talk again, the video is available at <https://www.youtube.com/user/interfaith704/videos>. The talk is called “Collaborating with the Flow.”

The process of calling forth a Most Benevolent Outcome (MBO) was channeled and developed by Tom Moore of TheGentleWayBook.com. A great deal of information can be found on his website.

MBOs are an easy way to direct your energy flow and make life work out to your benefit as well as for others. They consist in saying a starting phrase that aligns the Forces of the Universe in your favor. They work because you are **asking** the Forces for help in a specific way. You can ask for yourself and for others. You should be involved emotionally in the outcome and are not just asking to “test the Universe” or for meaningless personal gain.

Your request should begin with the following phrase:

If the request is for yourself:

“I ask any and all beings to assist in creating the most benevolent outcome for...” State your request clearly. It can be short or long — there are no rules! At the end you must add “Thank you.”

If the request is for someone else:

“I ask any and all beings to aid and assist [Name] in the most benevolent way [add what is wanted]. Thank you.” And then **LET IT GO!** Don’t obsess or or even think about the outcome. The Universe knows how to fix it all for you...in the Best Possible Way.

When requesting an MBO:

- It is not absolutely necessary for the wording to be exact, but do ask “any and all beings” and say “thank you” at the end. And, of course, it helps to envision the request being fulfilled.
- It helps immensely if you speak your request out loud. You don’t want to keep it silent in your head, because that is as far as it will go. Your voice has great power — use it! You may also write down the request if you prefer.
- Make the request from a calm state. Take a few very deep breaths and move into your center.
- And...don’t forget the all-important “thank you” at the end. This puts everything into play! It’s all ever so easy.

A number of Interfaith people have shared some lovely MBO results with me. Often they are used for every day things, which is perfect (parking, doctor’s visits, shopping...). This way you get used to working with MBOs... and it flows instead of lurching forward,

If you have any questions or need help crafting your MBO, please contact me: lyriel.claire@gmail.com



Quotes from Life’s Little Instruction Book

Submitted by Heide Kaminski

“Don’t forget that we are ultimately judged by what we give, not what we get.”

“Don’t work for recognition, but do work worthy of recognition.”

“Share your knowledge and wisdom.”

“Earn your success based on service to others, not at the expense of others.”

“Remember the credo of Walt Disney: Think. Believe. Dream. Dare.”

A Conversation with the Rats of New York

By Peggy River Singer

I asked to connect with someone who could speak for the rats of New York, since they've been getting a lot of attention in the news lately. Instead of my usual question-and-answer format for these interviews, I have invited Rat to speak freely.

Peggy: Whenever you are ready, my friend.

Rat: This is more suitable [than a formal interview], thank you. It is correct to acknowledge that we rats are a vitally important presence on this planet. I speak in terms of numbers as well as referring to the powers we possess and share with all who live here with us.

It is not a threat to refer to our powers. All living things have powers of their own, regardless of physical size. It is the powers of modeling good housekeeping, of setting an example, of drawing attention to our presence, to which I refer.

One can say that we rats were created for the task of calling humans to account for their own actions. We flourish in huge numbers when humans forget how to love respect the earth, this living world that is our shared home.

It is wise to understand and acknowledge that each individual's habits affect everything around us. This can be seen in every form of life which is capable of making choices.

Instincts in humans can be dulled by many circumstances. Choices made under these circumstances are often flawed and contrary to the individual and greater good.

We rats are living reminders of the benefits of making good choices. OUR good choices include safe places to live with many sources of food for our beloved families. To our knowledge very few humans are realizing this intentional aspect of our presence in great places [cities]. Instead of honoring us as teachers, we are blamed for spreading disease. That picture or story, as you may say, is one-sided and incomplete.

We are aware that many humans do acknowledge our ancient wisdom and capacities for healing the Earth and offering spiritual guidance to seekers. This gives us hope. It is good to look forward ahead to a

time when our peoples can live together in companionship and benefit from each other's presence in a balanced relationship. This is why people and rats have been brought together, to balance and support each other.

AUTHOR BIO

Peggy River Singer is a Lightworker, all-beings communicator, faerie ally, Reiki practitioner, and lifelong writer who combines her gifts to help create harmonious relationships among all who share the Earth. Previous columns and articles about her experiences and insights are posted on angelsfairiesandlife.wordpress.com. To request a reading, please call 734-548-0194.



A note from the Editor:

New York City is known for doing things bigger than everyone else. They had the tallest building in America

until September 11, they have incredible theater, the largest subway system, and the most populous metropolitan area in the country. It seems like everything in New York is done bigger than anywhere else. Unfortunately, this seems to be the problem with the rats of this city as well. New York's rats have become larger over time, making some, jokingly, think that they are the new dog in the area. They are simply getting that large.

The majority of rats in New York City are brown rats, also known as the Norway rat. These rats can grow to quite large lengths, but they aren't quite as close to cat-size, which you may have read in social media accounts. It is very rare for rats to grow to quite that size, although males can still weigh 350 grams and more, females slightly smaller at 250 grams. Despite being this big, they still need only the smallest of spaces to get into human habitats and commercial buildings, and this is what has made them such a successful species. Grab a quarter from your purse or pocket. That's all the hole a rat needs to squeeze into your home, and mice need even smaller spaces than this.

Reiki Reminder for Interfaith Members from Peggy Lubahn!

Hi everyone! I'd like to remind everyone that I'm still taking requests for Reiki healing free of charge to Interfaith members. This is a function of the Caring Committee.

Reiki (Ray-Kee) is a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing. Reiki energy helps you cope with tension, anxiety, and grief. It can also help when you're going through major life changes, illness and injury.

Please give me a call if you're interested, my phone number is 734-548-0194.

THE SUFI WAY and LEARNING FROM A MASTER

By Robert Hopkins

This column seems overdue. I will attempt to introduce the casual reader of this newsletter to our fearless leader of the Sufi Class. Kamau Ayubbi has been leading this group for so long that he began it before the start of the pandemic – live and in person at the Center. He was introduced to us by a fellow Sufi practitioner, Dr. Ali Hussain. Ali was completing a designated 4-week class at the Center on the essence of Sufism. Those of us who hungered for more were told that Kamau would be the perfect person to teach interested parties about chanting. In addition, he knew the moves associated with the Sufi special dance that has been characterized as the Whirling Dervish. As a lover of dance, I was intrigued. I was willing to learn about the chanting, but the dance was my central interest. This promised to be a great additional class of 4 sessions to teach us about the chanting and the dance. It has turned out to be so much more.

To say more about Kamau and his qualifications. Born in Los Angeles, he was not raised in the Sufi tradition. What he has learned of Islam and Sufism (in particular) as well as his mastery of Arabic -- with which he seems fluent – has all been learned in his adult years. His primary occupation is as a chaplain at the University of Michigan hospital. The limited number of practitioners of Islam in the hospital has opened the way for him to be the primary resource for those patients whose religious leanings are outside of Christianity. Our group has never focused on the immense learning he must have pursued and encountered in such faiths as Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and perhaps even Judaism. With all of this exposure, it is no wonder that long-time members of the group have called him our Imam. In all of his humility, he has never claimed this title for himself, but his knowledge base and teaching skills have been demonstrated repeatedly. What we have been able to learn from him and the sources that he has used will be the subject of the next installment of this column.



Spiritual Ponderings

By Heide AW Kaminski

Racism - a Mystery to me

I spent my first 25 years in Germany. My first encounter with racism was around 6 years of age. A mom with a half black daughter my age moved into our neighborhood. My mom said in a hush hush voice, “She has a black dad, we do not know where he is.”

At the time I did not realize how ridiculous her attitude was, as I was a hush-hush baby myself! I was born out of wedlock, which my mother hid from the public.

My new friend and I were the “Mulatto” and “Bastard” girls, terms attributed to kids like us at the time. We did not care. We liked each other’s company, regardless of skin color and social status.

The next time I encountered racism was when a family from Turkey moved into the apartment building next door. At the time Germany was in dire need of people who were willing to do the “dirty” jobs, jobs that Germans did not want to do - our employment rate was stellar. So we invited “guest workers” into our country which was mostly responded to by people from Turkey. I had a crush on the family’s teenage boy and made friends with his sister. I spent many hours with this family, eating with them, playing with the kids, and watching TV. I was treated like a family member. I did not care that they were Muslims and mom wore a burka.

My mother, a dedicated Nazi, on the other hand, hated them.

Within the first 25 years of our lives we develop schemas. This basically is the development of our world view. To me that included that racism was something incomprehensible.

Living in a multicultural city, Hamburg, Germany, I was friends with people of all sorts of colors, religions, and world views. I hung out with Arabs a lot, dark skin tones, Muslims. All I cared about was that my friends were awesome cooks and fun to hang out with.

Then, by fate, I moved to the United States. The racism against dark skinned people was just plain incomprehensible to me. My schema about dark skinned people with a different culture was fully developed, as in “what the heck???”

Several years ago, I started a job as a teacher in a prison. The majority of my students are black or Latino. One of my students, a former pimp, grown into a wise old man inside the prison, said to me, “I bet you neva was a white woman until you moved to the United States.” He was right! Until I moved into the United States, I was “just” a woman... YUP!



A Florida Transplant Speaks Out By Susan Slack

I replied to every caution from Florida friends last year after announcing I would be moving up to Michigan. "There's snow!" they said. "There's more to life than nice weather." I answered. It's been almost a year now since permanently parking here and I was correct in my reply. I might have cheated by timing my arrival for mid April - you know - daffodil season.

I left Siesta Key, one of the world's most splendidly sparkling beaches; at least that's often what the Chamber of Commerce told us. Many evening sunsets were spent facing west over the Gulf of Mexico, toward a masterpiece of pinks and oranges, and emerging moons over the silhouettes of seagulls, searching for one last French fry before bed.

After 25 years there, I learned to observe the subtle turning of seasons, like the changing location of the sun on the horizon as it disappeared into the water, determined by the time of year. And the extremely noisy seasonal visitors (Nope, not college breakers) but rather the black-bellied whistling ducks, sandhill cranes and black skimmers who all made sure we knew they were there.

But here in Michigan, thankfully, the changes are not so subtle. Driving around when I arrived, I was blown away by garden displays of tulips and daisies and irises and then lilies. Yes, it was chilly here and I swaddled myself up in many layers, like a person not wanting to pay for an extra bag at the airport. Temperatures were getting down to the mid 30s! That kind of weather in Florida would've made headlines. But here folks walked around in T-shirts and shorts – with NO MITTENS!!

Passing thru lilac season into roses and iris, temps went up to the 80s. Finally a chance to actually unhunch my shoulders. The warm weather made me feel at home, but neighbors felt no such nostalgia. They hardly managed to get to their cars without withering in the heat. All this and no alligators.

I loved discovering the many 'prairie' and 'rain garden' areas on the highways and parks. They are little spaces left to their own devices with some gentle care. There isn't much spraying up here I must say. The bees and the birds and the butterflies all love the banquets of native flowers and grasses. But those subtle blossoms fade in and fade out, each with their own special color and height and clientele. Some last only couple days or a week, so they warrant some special attention. I am learning to appreciate their fleeting nature

The warm sunny days whiz by, and everyone knows what's next so people make it a point to wear as little as the law allows up to the last possible moment, just before frostbite. The Huron river flows SSE into Lake Erie. I watch her moods and the wildlife she supports. I am meeting her plentiful tributaries. Different indigenous people. I loved discovering the many 'prairie' and 'rain garden' areas on the highways and parks. They are little spaces left to their own devices with some gentle care. There isn't much spraying up here I must say.

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The warm sunny days whiz by, and everyone knows what's next so people make it a point to wear as little as the law allows up to the last possible moment, just before frostbite. The Huron river flows SSE into Lake Erie. I watch her moods and the wildlife she supports. I am meeting her plentiful tributaries. Different indigenous people traveled and settled around these parts: Anishinabae of the Three Fires Confederacy – the Ojibwe, Ottawa & Potawatomi. And the Wyandot, Fox, Sauk, Shawnee, Kickapoo, Miami, Musketoon, and Cherokee. That's a lot of folks living or passing through this area and why not? All the swift streams provided rapid and safe travel for trade, hunting, and online dating.

We may not have the magnificent sunsets here, but oh boy, we have fall foliage! Our deep orange and bright scarlet trees will make you swoon. And that first whiff of fallen leaves on the ground is nostalgic, like nothing else. But as HBO fans know, Winter is Coming. After 25 years in a tropical climate I needed a plan. I got some boots a puffy coat, hat and big woolly socks. Before the move I vowed to walk every day to make friends with the weather and I have. The thing is, this winter hasn't been what Michiganders would call winter. Some are disappointed. I am not.

I have learned several things during the winter, and you might want to take notes. 1. Do not leave your water bottle in the car unless you like popsicles. 2. Do leave your gloves in the car if you're dashing into a store so you won't lose them in there. 3. Most places have places for you to hang up your coats as you enter. Really.

A walk in the woods before spring, reveals individual color grades and textures of tree bark. The forest feels naked, with no hidden secrets. Now that full-blown spring approaches I sort of know what to expect and will recognize birds from last spring. And of course there will be daffodils. But they will be gone soon after and I think that's the point of seasons isn't it? We breathe in, we breathe out?

Janice Joplin used to sing, "Get it while you can." Ram Das famously said, "Be here now." And consider the fabulous title of Jon Cabot Zinn's, *Wherever You Go, There You Are*. *And goodness knows who said, "It's all good." Yes it is.*

Susan Slack, author, musician and leader of Dances of Universal Peace.


<https://slacksusan.wixsite.com/susan-j-slack>

Message from Layla Ananda

My spiritual teachers, Gwendolyn Jansma and Nancy Ann Tappe, believed that love was the basis for our human existence. They used the word "soul" to represent our current incarnation, and the word "spirit" to indicate the totality of our being. They saw our emotions as "soul states" that were present in us for our growth and learning. In this system, each emotion can be used in a productive or a counter-production way, but either way, all emotions are aspects of love, and can teach us to expand our love.

Please check out the Soul States chart on the following page.

SOUL STATES

SOUL STATE (Beingness)	Effect	ETHERIC BODY (Experiences)	BODY (Sensations)	MENTAL (Assumptions)	EGO (Feelings/Actions)	Location
ANGER Greatest impact felt in career. Love is passionate – kill for love.	Productive ↑ Counter-productive ↑	Motivation/Charge ----- Irrational	Stimulation/ Adrenalin ----- Restlessness/ anxiety attack	Expectation/ Wants movement ----- Thinks defensive or destructive	Enthusiasm ----- Violence	Anger plays out in the etheric body, the body, mental, and ego
GRIEF Greatest impact felt in career. Love is of service – die for love.	Productive ↑ Counter-productive ↑	Controlled release ----- Sadness	Letting go ----- Tension	Relief ----- Misery/ something missing	Relaxation ----- Pain	Grief plays out in the etheric body and the body, communicates in the mental and ego
FEAR Greatest impact felt in personal social life. Love is possessive – demands love.	Productive ↑ Counter-productive ↑	Alert ----- Paranoia	Taking charge ----- Rigidity	Caution ----- Worry	Hesitation ----- Timidity	Fear plays out in the mental and ego
GUILT Greatest impact felt in personal social life. Love is self-effacing - give up everything for love, can't do enough.	Productive ↑ Counter-productive ↑	Conscience -----	Stress/tension ----- Regret	Change - something must be done ----- Doubt	Morality - make rules ----- Self-blame	Guilt plays out in the mental and ego
LOVE Impact felt in all areas. Love will not ask nor demand - your presence is all you will give.		Beingness	Active/functioning	Congruent	Unattached	Love has no action, love IS

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