



Interfaith Inspirer

An Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth News Publication



Alaura Massaro Receives Service Award!

In 2011 the board established a very special award called the “Judy Bell Service Award” and presented it to, none other than, Judy Bell!

In Paul Jurgensen’s words, “This is not to be an annual award. It will only be given when it is determined that a special magnitude of service has been demonstrated over a long period of time.”

On May 26, 2024, the second of such awards was presented to Alaura Massaro. Her creativity and dedication through the years (since 2001) have been filled with love and grace.



Paul Jurgensen, Alaura Massaro, Rev. Delyth Balmer, Judy Bell, and Rev. David Bell

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A Remembrance of My Father

by Røb J. Fagerlund

Father’s Day is coming up and it got me thinking about my father. Arthur Carl

Fagerlund was born to Swedish immigrants in 1914 – the year World War I started. He lived through the Great Depression and World War II. One of his fondest memories was working on a dairy farm in the summers to put himself through college. The beauty and peace – despite the hard work – made an impression on him. He was especially fond of recalling working with the black, white-faced dairy cows. Nature remained a love of his for the rest of his life. That I share a love of Nature makes me feel connected to him to this day. I often feel his presence with me when I’m outside.

When he began his career as an electrical engineer in Jackson, his favorite part of his job was going out to do inspections on the substations that were out in the country.

In my mid-teens, we moved to the countryside north of Jackson, MI. Dad had a very large vegetable garden and loved working in it. The first year, though, deer and rabbits ate everything, so in the following year he doubled the size of the garden. From then on, the deer and rabbits never ate more than half of the garden. Every year he planted and tended the garden that he shared with both his family and the animals.

While he and I were out in his garden one summer day, he paused, looked up, and watched the hawks “makin’ lazy circles in the sky.” [Oklahoma, Oscar Hammerstein II, Richard Rodgers]. Then he turned to me and said, “I think when I come back, I’m going to come back as hawk”.

My Father continued on page 8



Reflections on April Meditation Retreat

By Marice Clark

*Where once there was a heart closed
tight with fear,
Now, there is a heart wide open with joy,
extending love.*

Since participating in the meditation retreat in Bali, I have been looking for opportunities to improve my meditation skills and to meditate with others; so, when the meditation retreat weekend at Triple Crane was announced, I was all in.

Friday evening of the retreat weekend, my most direct way to reach Triple Crane was congested, so the map took me on a more scenic route. As I wended my way along the back roads, I listened to 'The Miracle of Mindfulness' by Thich Nhat Hanh. Peaceful energies surrounded me as I focused on each NOW moment. I smiled in anticipation of spending the weekend with friends participating in activities that were sure to fill my being with joy.

The weekend began with a delightful Mediterranean dinner. After dinner, Brett led us in one of the most beautiful meditations I have ever participated in, entitled 'Hands on Heart'. As we gazed into the eyes of the other, these words filled my heart, "There you are. I've been waiting for you. I feel the joy you bring with you. Your presence fills my Heart."

Saturday morning began with a mindful movement exercise led by Jennifer Lenders with Holly Makima assisting. We were asked to participate in a silent breakfast and it was interesting to see how others maintained their silence; refraining from looking at others, glancing and smiling, or simply nodding.

Jennifer led us in a movement and breathing activity followed by the 'I Am' meditation by Brett. Holly led us in a journaling experience which invited us to look within and ask, "What blocks you from living as the truth of who you are?" The answers were as varied as the number of participants, but they could be boiled down to not believing Who We Really Are. We can know in our minds, but until we believe in our heart, there will always be blocks.

Carol Bardenstein led us in many heart-opening chants, and at one point we went outside and sang to the sky. The meditation retreat was truly a heart-warming experience and left me feeling energized and peaceful; ready to once



again navigate life's challenges by practicing non-resistance and mindfulness. All the participants agreed that the weekend had been a special one and they want to make it an annual event. Should this happen, make room for it in your schedule. You may just find out "what blocks you from living as the truth of who you are".

Randall Counts, along with members of his break-out group, answered the question "if we didn't have fear how would we live our life?" with this Haiku:



**Raccoon in a tree
Who-oo-oo-oo-oo-oo-oops!
Lands with a giggle**

Confidence © 2024

by C. D. Tchalo
(All rights reserved)

Along with patience, faith, and sense,
we need to know self-confidence.

The lack of it breeds discontent
with self, friends, and predicaments
and in the heart leaves a dent
which halts delight's establishment.

A full supply can lift the soul
and make it joyous, free, and whole,
for we are meant to live in light
for our own and others' delight.



Ministerial Miscellany

June 2024

by Annie Kopko

Ever since my husband Larry died in 2021, I have been finding and clearing up many papers. Like me, Larry would

write down quotes on small pieces of paper. I found one this week that I think is worth sharing:

"To Bless means to wish, unconditionally and from the deepest chamber of our hearts, unrestricted good for others and events; it means to hallow, to hold in reverence, to behold with awe that which is always a gift from the Creator. To Bless is to invoke divine care upon, to speak or think gratefully for, and to confer happiness upon, although we ourselves are never the bestower, but simply the joyful witnesses of life's abundance."

~Pierre Praderand from The Gentle Art of Blessing

You may have noticed that I always end my monthly Ministerial Miscellany with my Blessings to you, but I have never had such a clear statement of the meaning before this. Also, I must not forget to Bless myself, but I surely do. Oh, that's right, whenever I bless another, I am also blessing myself. You do too!

You will certainly find Blessings by joining the events at Interfaith. Please check our website for meetings, classes, spiritual study groups, and special events: interfaithspirit.org. Most information is on the home page, with more information just a click away!

- Saturday, June 1, 7:30 PM Drum & Dance Jam with Curtis Glatter. Donation.
- Saturday, June 8th, 7 PM Cafe 704 with David Mosher, in person or on Zoom. \$10.00.
- Wednesday, June 12th, 7 PM, Community Sing with Matt Watroba. All voices welcome! Song books provided. Donation.
- June 15th, 7 PM, Drummunity with Lori Fithian, Donation.

And these **Special Solstice Events**

- June 21st, 8 PM, Solstice Meditation with Norma Gentile. Tickets \$20.00.
- June 22nd, 7 PM, Solstice Sing led by Lori Fithian. Donation.
- June 29th, 7 PM, Dances of Universal Peace with Susan Slack. \$10.00 suggested donation.

Blessings and Love,

Annie



June Celebrants

June 01 Staci Haarer

June 03 Fritz Sauer

June 04 Marlena Studer

June 04 Bob Songer

June 05 Melanie Fuscaldo

June 06 Dawn Swartz

June 07 Denise Carbonell

June 08 Ted Poprafsky

June 09 Mary Sapienza

June 10 Laurie Knerr

June 10 Paul Jurgensen

June 16 Lu Evergreen

June 23 Max Jones

June 24 Jean Balent

June 24 Layla Ananda

June 24 Nooshin Sobhani

June 24 Annie Kopko

June 27 Sharon Hayward

June 27 Heide Kaminski





Volunteer Corner

June 2024

by Annemarie Howse

Want to get to know other folks in the Interfaith Community better? Become a volunteer!

Some volunteer positions require a few hours every week, while others require just a few minutes occasionally. Here are some opportunities you might be interested in:

- Greeter—Once a month or as needed. Arrive around ½ hour before service starts to greet people as they come in. See Randall Counts for more information.
- Welcome Table—Sit at the welcome table for around ½ hour after a Sunday service to provide a welcome packet and engage the visitor/new person in conversation. See Layla Ananda or just sign up. There is a sign-up sheet on the welcome table.
- Potluck - We have potlucks on the first Sunday of the month. Please remember to bring something to share. Although we'd love to enjoy your favorite dish, we also appreciate pre-made goodies from the deli or something quick from the grocery store. Remember that our visitors or someone new will not know to bring something so we want to be sure there is enough food for all to enjoy. If you can come early to help set up or stay later to help clean up, that would be awesome! See Annemarie Howse or Janet Fry.
- Sunday Speakers - Each of us is a storehouse of priceless information! See Rev. Annie Kopko to discuss a topic or two you may want to share.
- Readers and Meditators - Sign up to provide a reading or lead the meditation on Sunday. The sign-up sheet is on or near the welcome table. See Annemarie Howse.

- Writers for the Newsletter— This is OUR newsletter. That includes everyone who walks through the doors of Interfaith. We have ideas (for content) and we'd love to hear any of yours. This can be monthly or occasionally. Please speak to Norah Reilly, Annemarie Howse, or Bethany King.

For these and other volunteer opportunities, contact Annemarie at ahowse21@gmail.com or, call or text 818-667-2815 and leave a message.

Please submit articles and other content for the Interfaith Inspirer to Norah Reilly by June 10th for the July publication. Content that is not time-sensitive may be held back for future publications.

send email to: nkreilly58@gmail.com



"Hands and Hearts"
Hands that offer help
and hearts that care,
Volunteers give love so rare.



Rev. Annie Kopko plants flowers and Todd Johnson assists by watering.



Caring Committee

April 2024 Report

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, yet we know about them through our members and affiliations.

Since the Caring Committee may not always be able to provide the requested services, 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 can help.

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

- * Cards & Flowers sent on behalf of the Caring Committee - 1
- * Texts/emails - 6
- * Phone calls - 11
- * Visits - 1

These supports and services were provided to 6 different individuals or families in our Interfaith Community during the month of March.

Financial Report: Expenses during the month of April totaled \$102.11. We received a donation of \$355.00, giving us a balance of \$3,311.63.

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

Note: The Caring Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month. This means that our reporting is always a month behind since our June 6th meeting will include a discussion of the services and support provided during May.

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.



Happy Father's Day!

Please join us after the service on Sunday, June 16th to celebrate "Dad," Grandfather" or that significant male role model in your life. The Caring Committee will be providing fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese and crackers, coffee and tea, and an opportunity to share our stories.

Haiku based on a trip to Hidden Gardens

by Cooper Holland, Barb Fisher and Sandy Hill

Down a winding path
Bright green inch worm rides
On Cooper's back





Meet Your Community Todd Johnson

I am from a small farming town named Williamston where I grew up with my parents and four brothers, with two loving grandparents named Gordon

and Adeline who were always close by. My original spiritual path laid out by my parents and community was of the Lutheran denomination of Christianity up until the age of 14. I once dated a Methodist and during that time (a year or two) sang in the choir. My spiritual search, however, took me on a more philosophical and esoteric path, from Carl Jung to Buddhism and other approaches. I've done a lot of inner work and feel that the presence of God has protected me from some near-death experiences, intervening on some very close calls.

I was led to Interfaith by what I can only describe as spirit, a magnetic pull which seemed to draw me here to continue my spiritual growth which has changed much over the years. I have always admired the community feel of the Ann Arbor area; it has always felt very inviting and I am loving being part of this community! One of my favorite aspects of Interfaith is the complete absence of any feelings of judgment when I am there. I feel so grateful to be part of a community of people who respect and honor all backgrounds and spiritual paths with our focus on growing together, offering a hand to anyone who needs support.

Something unique about myself, I come from a very musically-inclined family. My brothers and I all played violin growing up and later in band all through our high school days. Music has always been an important aspect of our life experience!

Todd has been attending Interfaith since October 2023 and has served as a greeter most every Sunday since.

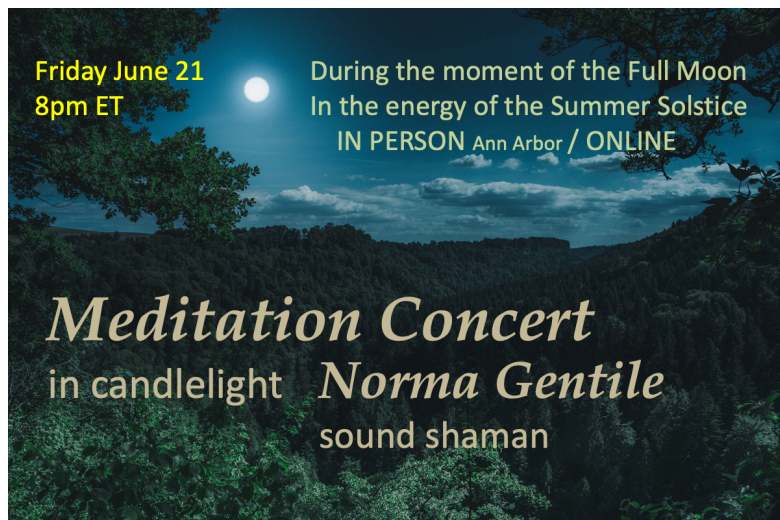


Board Communications ICSG Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes Summary May 19, 2024

by Peggy Lubahn, Secretary

- **Sound System Upgrades:** The Tech team has suggested upgrading our sound board to a digital system with an approximate cost of \$5000. There is currently a balance in our Sound System Fund of \$5480. A board member also raised the suggestion of looking into upgrading our video equipment. The Tech Team will be asked to prepare quotes for the sound system upgrade and to research and make suggestions for video improvements.
- **QR Codes:** Using QR Codes for ease of accessing our website or other information was discussed. A recommendation was made for Delyth to add a QR code to the printed song lyrics provided a Sunday services and to the Monthly bulletin. It was also suggested we could include a popup QR code at the end of the service for Zoom participants, saying "Thank you for attending, here's a handy way to donate if you'd like to help support Interfaith and our programs."
- **New Closing Song Words:** The Board suggested we have new placards made that show the new closing song words to replace the placards currently hanging in the Sanctuary. Delyth will look into costs.
- **Meet-up:** Our Meet-up account allowing for up to 3 groups is currently being used by only one group. We will investigate whether Café 704 and/or Sunday services could be hosted on Meet-up.
- **Summary Financial Data:** The numbers are healthy, Year to date January – April 2024 shows a net income of \$5,426. Our building rent goes up 5% starting in May. Sunday in-person attendance continues to rise.
- **Board Retreat May 31 and June 1:** Board members will be meeting at Triple Crane Retreat Center in Chelsea.

June Special Events



Sacred Songs and Medieval Healing Chants

sung in full candlelight

Friday, June 21 at 8:00 PM

Sponsored by: Interfaith Center
for Spiritual Growth

Suggested Donation: \$20 at door (cash/check)
or in advance online at healingchants.com

Norma creates a colorful harmonic tapestry with singing bowls and audience toning, upon which she sings chants composed nearly a thousand years ago by the seer and saint, Hildegard of Bingen.



Solstice Sing led by Lori Fithian, Jean Chorazyczewski and friends

Saturday, June 22 at 7:00 PM

Come celebrate the height of summer with
a group SING (and/or play) for the SUN!

Donations appreciated

Bring your voices and add an instrument if you like... We've picked out a fun set of summer songs for the evening, and we'll project the lyrics and chords up on a screen so all can sing and jam along! Info: lorifithian@mac.com

Summer Solstice Dances of Universal Peace with Susan Slack

Saturday, June 29 at 7:00 PM

Some people call this practice
Moving Meditation

Suggested Donation: \$10.00

Susan Slack has been leading these dances
for over four decades.



Spiritual practice in motion

For more information go to : <https://slacksusan.wixsite.com/susan-j-slack/dances-of-universal-peace>



My Father - continued from page 1



Years later, after Dad had passed, my mom, Bonnie, my brother and my sister-in-law (Ed & Kathy) and I were sitting by the living room window in our home. Someone said, "I wish Dad were here," – it might have been me – and suddenly outside the front window a huge Red-Tailed Hawk landed and looked in the window. He stood there for a while, and we all knew Dad was with us. Then slowly, gracefully, he flew away. That is a true story.

This is another one: Near the end of his life before his passing, Dad had stopped speaking. Once he saw me taking care of Mom, and he looked at me and said the last words I would ever hear him speak. No, he didn't say, "I love you." I knew he loved me, so that would not have meant nearly as much as what he did say.

Now, I was a problem child – especially in my teens. I caused him a lot of grief, pain, and sorrow. So, when Dad said his last words to me, it hit me like the proverbial ton of bricks. It still takes my breath away when I think of it today. He said, "I'm proud of you, Rob." Wow. Thank you, Dad.

Before I end this writing, I want to tell you the second to last thing my dad ever said to me. One beautiful, sunny, summer day I asked Dad if – in his wheelchair and not speaking – he wanted to go outside. I assumed yes, and we went outside. For a few minutes, he looked at the Sky. Then he smiled, and gently began tapping his chest over his heart. Softly he murmured, "Good...good, good...good, good...good..."

The final summation of a life well lived was this grateful awareness.

"Good."



MUSINGS OF A SERIAL SEEKER

A-wá-ciŋ Practice

By Steve Wyse

When I was in my teens, I loved going to our Methodist church. I would go even if the rest of my family didn't. Over time, I began to sense that something just didn't feel right. I observed that the people in my church spent a lot of time talking about and talking to God. But very little time actually listening to God.

Today, my practice is grounded in other forms of spirituality including Buddhism, Indigenous, and Shamanic traditions. Occasionally, I still enjoy visiting a Christian service. Forget the sermon. I go because I enjoy being in the presence of Spirit in a way that grounds me in my heritage. I don't take communion, and I usually don't sing hymns. I just sit quietly in the back. Eyes closed. Basking in a blissful state of awareness as Spirit reveals herself to me.

This practice of listening is something that I've developed over time. I call it awáciŋ. Awáciŋ is a Lakota Sioux word that means to meditate upon, to believe in, to trust. Awáciŋ is a state of mind that I use to connect to, and to listen to, the natural world, the spiritual world, or to whatever medium I wish. This form of listening is both meditation and mindfulness combined.

I use awáciŋ when I'm being creative. I use it to enter the synergetic "flow" of creativity that is Spirit. I use it when I'm hiking, listening to the elemental spirits in the woods. I use it when I need to be empathetic. I use it as I go through my day observing my inner dialog. I use it when I'm messing up. If for no other reason than to be aware that I'm messing up. Truly, awáciŋ has become one of my superpowers.

Love yourself, you're amazing!

Steven sometimes Wyse

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