



Interfaith Inspirer

An Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth News Publication



Gratitude by Marian Orihel

As I start this essay, I am sitting here, looking out my open window in Urubamba, in the Sacred Valley of Peru. I hear

only two things in this moment: a variety of birds singing and the Urubamba River. Gazing on the face of a mountain across the river, I am surrounded by an abundant array of blooming flowers, unique plants, and flourishing trees. At least several of the flowers here have an intense fragrance, which accounts for many of the hummingbirds I see.

Gratitude in this moment takes no effort at all.

Later, I will see this young man, Gabriel, whom I have known for half of his 31 years. He has always called me his *madrina* (godmother). How Gabriel and I met and grew to care for each other is a very long story for another day. Yet, he has become a part of my family of the heart, as I am part of his. Gabriel was an important part of my healing when my daughter died, and I was a source of support that helped him return to and finish high school. In the process of many Skype calls, emails, and visits, I helped Gabriel feel valued and worthwhile, and we both felt our connection grow.

In This Issue

- p. 1 - Gratitude by Marian Orihel
- p. 2 - Meet Parina Bowers by Norah Reilly
- p. 3 - Ministerial Miscellany by Annie Kopko,
November Birthdays, Haiku, and Poetry
- p. 4 - Volunteer Corner by Annemarie Howse
- p. 5 - Expressions of Gratitude
- p. 6 - Caring Committee Report and Thanksgiving Potluck
- p. 7 - The Fae of Oakwood Park by Peggy Lubahn
- p. 8 - November Special Events



I am here to visit Gabriel, to meet his partner Elizabeth and their 3-month-old daughter, Cielo. To still be able to make this trip (#19), in spite of my never-ending struggles with the high altitude, is something I am grateful for.

I returned to Peru this month, both to visit and to achieve a type of "reset" to restore my equilibrium and shaken foundation after a rugged six weeks of multiple losses. The people of Peru have always been so kind, welcoming, and generous with their care and support of me. I decided to revisit Peru, see Gabriel, and at the same time, begin again my previous practice of writing three things I am grateful for each day while on this trip and continuing this practice at least through Thanksgiving.



Gratitude truly is a practice that is worthwhile, as numerous studies confirm multiple benefits: improved emotional well-being, a stronger immune system, improved sleep, stronger relationships, positive brain changes, and increased resilience to name just a few.

But starting a practice of gratitude can be challenging when you are dealing with an aging, weakening, and uncooperative body, heart-breaking family issues, loneliness, major illness or injury, chronic pain, financial worries, and ever-increasing losses of loved ones.

That is where the actual practice comes in. It helps us maintain our focus and not lose sight of who we really are, where our gifts lie, where our supports exist, and what we need to do. Gratitude helps us see and accept what actually is, yet helps move us toward what needs to be, beyond ourselves and our suffering to something more, something better, something hopeful.

Gratitude continued on p. 5



Meet....

Parina Bowers

by Norah Reilly

Parina Bowers was born in the town of Maktupur but grew up in the neighboring village of Tundav in Gujarat state in India, where she lived until her late teens. From the age

of eighteen months to twelve, she lived with her grandfather, Khodabhai, with whom she became close. Every morning Parina and her grandfather walked a half mile to the neighborhood puja (temple) stopping regularly to allow Khodabhai, who lived with severe asthma, to rest and catch his breath. As devout Hindus, Parina and her grandfather cherished this daily opportunity to offer prayers of devotion and thanks.

By the time she turned nineteen, Parina was eager to join the rest of her family in America where they had started a new life. Joining the family in Chicago, she found herself faced with the same gender restrictions that she had lived with in India. But she had a plan. She knew if she could support herself, she could not be forced to accede to family expectations, and just three days after her arrival in Chicago, she found a job. That job proved to be her ticket to freedom, and a few short years later, she moved to Huntsville, Alabama. After relocating, Parina chose to cut contact with her birth family.

In Huntsville, Parina met Neil who would become her husband and with whom she had three children, Ethan and twins Eliza and Isaac. Neil was also of Indian heritage yet did not have any sense of or inclination toward spirituality. This difference in spiritual outlook proved to be too much for the marriage, and in 2020, the couple divorced.

Once more securing work, this time as a cashier, Parina put herself through college, first earning an Associate Degree in Accounting from Washtenaw Community College, followed by a Bachelor of Business Administration and a Master of Business Administration from Walsh College.

In 2022, she met Cristo Bowers through a dating app; she recalls they talked for hours. Each person was surprised and delighted to discover that the other shared their deep appreciation for spiritual knowledge and fulfillment. A second date followed, and then a third, and in just two short years, they were married. She wears a meaningful necklace of Lord Ganesha, which Cristo gave her, symbolizing his intention for her to return home safely each day. The first time that Parina came to the Center with Cristo was at a private Halloween party hosted by Cristo and Parina, although it was some time before she attended a service. It was at that time that she felt she had found her home.

Her ongoing spiritual quest has seen her try a variety of spiritual venues; now, Interfaith and the community here are an integral part of her inner landscape. She shared that the spiritual practices she values most are meditation and service to others. At present, she works at the University of Michigan Center for Global Health Equity, where she is engaged in efforts to develop solutions that effect meaningful change to the health and social inequalities faced by so many people around the world.

Parina's heroes include Edgar Cayce and Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi. She particularly feels Arun's book, "The Gift of Anger," to be especially important and profoundly impactful for her. At the Center, she loves meeting people and is always struck by how "everything feels alive" and how the people here come together for and with each other.

One change that Parina would like to see happen here at Interfaith is for there to be increased emphasis on the inclusion of children in the service, along with structured activities for them.

A unique thing about Parina is that she has done a fantastic job of maintaining and celebrating her Indian culture while, at the same time, embracing the freedoms she has found here.



Ministerial Miscellany

**The Little Things
are the Big Things**
by Rev. Annie Kopko

I have a favorite poem that I have often used at weddings over the years. It is called "The Art of Marriage" but I think it could be called "The Art of Relationship" just as well. The first two lines go like this: "Happiness in marriage is not something that just happens. A good marriage must be created. In marriage, the little things are the big things."

I think about these words often, because I like to think that we care enough about each other to notice that our response to one another is so often based on the way we are thinking about the little things that happen between us and the people we live with and see daily and weekly at home, at play, and at work. Of course, this is not necessarily true; even though we may be making kind gestures to each other daily, many go unnoticed or are taken for granted.

Considering that Thanksgiving is coming up soon, may I suggest that each day we give at least one heartfelt "thank you" to someone who has made a gesture of kindness to us, perhaps making our lives just a little bit more delightful and easier. Doing this makes us, as well as another, feel better. Let's not just express *what* we are thankful for but also *who* we are thankful for in our lives. You might be surprised how much someone we meet is trying to make our day better. I attempt to notice this as often as possible. It does take a certain amount of care, awareness, and mindfulness. Have fun!

As our Holidays come closer, there are lots of events at Interfaith that will give us all opportunities to practice and be aware of kindness and to express our gratitude. Information is on our website at interfaithspirit.org. Kindly join us!

Blessings and thank you,

Annie



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

November 1 Susan Thompson

November 2 David Snyder

November 4 Holly Makimaa

November 4 Sally Searls

November 6 Carol Perrault

November 7 Bethany King

November 8 Cathy DeLauter

November 15 Bob Hopkins

November 16 Jana Healy

November 21 Anna Marie Henrich

November 26 Al Carter



Haiku from Dexter

by Barb Fisher, Sandy Hill and Cooper Holland



Does it take absence
To finally acknowledge
True gratitude...

Something Told the Wild Geese

by Rachel Field

*Something told the wild geese
It was time to go..
Though the fields lay golden
Something whispered,—'Snow.'*

*Leaves were green and stirring,
Berries, luster-glossed,
But beneath warm feathers
Something cautioned,—'Frost.'*

*All the sagging orchards
Steamed with amber spice,
But each wild breast stiffened
At remembered ice.*

*Something told the wild geese
It was time to fly,—
Summer sun was on their wings,
Winter in their cry*



Art by
Brooklyn
Swenson

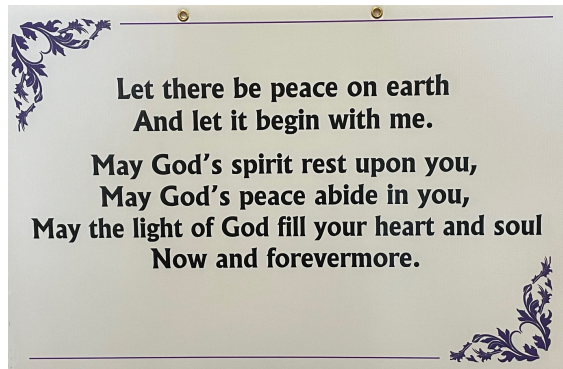


Volunteer Corner

by Annemarie Howse

*Unless someone like you
cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better.
It's not.* - Dr. Seuss

Thanks to a handful of dedicated volunteers, renovations are being made to our sanctuary to improve the quality and comfortability of our Sunday services.



Alaura Massaro created new lyrics and melody for our benediction song, and Lyriel Claire created the design and ordered new posters to display the lyrics. Above is a photo taken of the sign as it is displayed on the north and south walls of our sanctuary.



You may have noticed that things are a lot brighter these days at Interfaith! We can thank Lance Clark and Randall Counts for bringing light back to the Sanctuary.



Lance Clark



Randall Counts

Please remember to thank our volunteers when you see them. You will find many of them participating in our Sunday services, as well as before and after services. Those that work behind the scenes may be listed in our bulletin, on our website, or highlighted in our monthly publication of the *Interfaith Inspirer*.

If you would like to be involved, ask one of our volunteers for more information or contact Annemarie Howse, Volunteer Coordinator, by text 818-667-2815 or email ahowse21@gmail.com

Volunteers Needed

We need people to help set-up and/or clean-up for our annual Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner on Thanksgiving Day.

There will be a sign up sheet at the Center beginning Sunday, November 3. You may also sign up through meal train at <https://mealtrain.com/3v2m48> or by scanning the QR code found on page 6, along with more information.



Malcolm Shaffner carving the turkey- Thanksgiving 2023



Annemarie Howse and Marilyn Thomas inspecting the buffet line.



Expressions of Gratitude

During the month of October, we asked people what they were most grateful for. This is what they said:

I am grateful for friends and family who love me even when I forget to love myself; the sublime beauty of late afternoon sunlight as it graces everything it touches; the rich and sustaining kindness of my Interfaith family; laughing so hard with friends that we end up in tears; and the ache of unsatisfied wishes that moves me toward seeing what I need to be and strive for. ~ Norah Reilly

I am glad to have a voice to raise within the chorus of truth in collaboration with folks at the Interfaith and our community at large. ~ J.G.

My hearing. ~ Anonymous

I am grateful for the guidance and wisdom of the spirit. For the health and vibrance that has pervaded my life. For all the love I have received and all the love I have given. In short, a life filled with love. ~ Bob Hopkins

I am grateful for my health and the peace that's received from Interfaith Center. ~ Anonymous

I am grateful to have found such a loving community, many of whom have become dear friends. I am grateful for my partner, my fur babies, my health and my home. ~ Annemarie Howse

I am grateful that I exist, and have the consciousness to know that I am.

I see this as a miracle, because the odds seemed to be astronomically opposed to the possibility. Because of the odds, I believe that I/We must have been created.

Therefore, I am grateful to that which created me; Deeply grateful for the love, patience, and guidance I have received from the creator through the creation. ~ Randall Counts

Gratitude continued from p. 1

My hope for you in this season of gratitude and Thanksgiving is that you reconnect with your gratitude by finding a practice that works for you. It might be quiet nature walks, loving conversations, meditation, prayer, journaling, reading, painting, dancing, singing, and yes, even writing three things you are grateful for each day. With some intention and effort, you may find your way back to your true self and to Spirit/God, possibly rekindling joy in the process.

My last few days in Peru, I became extremely ill, so much so that I actually called the hotel night person to get a doctor for me. I will spare the details that led to that call, but the end result was that I had salmonella poisoning. Within 30 minutes of the call, I had three medical professionals in my room, including a doctor and nurse, and they stayed several hours to give me IV fluids and medicines, plus the hope that I would be well enough to fly home in 2 days.

So, what was I grateful for that miserable day? I was grateful that a medical team could be found to come see me so quickly, that treatment and medicines existed to help me improve, and for all the care and comfort that was provided to me by the medical professionals, the hotel staff, and for Gabriel, who came over to express his love and concern and to say good-bye. Those were not small things to be grateful for.

In the weeks ahead, as we surge toward the multiple upcoming holidays, which seem to arrive faster each year, I want to end by expressing my thanks to Cooper, who told me about ICSG, and to all of you who have made this a place to call home each week. My gratitude for each of you is infinite.

Caring Committee Third Quarter Report

By Annemarie Howse



During the third quarter of 2024 (July, August and September) the Caring Committee provided the following services:

- Transportation-2
- Cards and flowers sent on behalf of the committee-3
- Cards sent by individual members-6
- Texts/emails-125
- Phone calls-29
- Home or hospital visits-4
- In-person support (other than home or hospital)-8
- Services such as providing a meal, helping someone move or light home repairs-2
- Outreach-0
- Reiki (provided remotely)-9

These supports and services were provided to 26 different individuals or families in our Interfaith Community during the third quarter of 2024.

Financial Report-Our balance on July 1 was \$3,417.98. The amount donated to the Caring Committee during this quarter was \$100. The amount spent was \$300, leaving us with a balance at the end of September of \$3217.98. We thank you for your generosity and are grateful for our ability to be of service.

You will find a complete list of our Caring Committee members, along with their contact information, in the Sunday bulletin.



ICSG Annual Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner Thursday, November 28, at 1:00 pm.



- Turkey will be provided by the Caring Committee. Please bring a side dish or dessert.
- Set-up crew will need to arrive at 12:00.
- Guests should arrive by 12:45 for mingling and to find the appropriate space on the buffet line for your shared dish.
- If your dish requires any preparation (reheating, slicing etc.) we ask that you arrive a bit earlier.
- Dinner will be at 1:00 pm.

Please go to <https://mealtrain.com/3v2m48> or use the QR code to sign up and let us know what you will bring and if you would like to assist with set-up and/or clean-up.

There will also be a signup sheet at the center near the greeting station and welcome table.



The Fae of Oakwood Park

by Peggy Lubahn

For this article, I'm using the term "fae" to refer to fairies, elves, gnomes, and other non-human, supernatural, or mystical beings. Creator invited them to Earth billions of years ago to care for all living things, and they have been here ever since.

This is my tenth year at this apartment complex on Ford Lake in Ypsilanti. On move-in day I was welcomed by an elegantly perfect goose turd formed from twisted and woven grasses which had been deposited right in the center of my front step. Inside, I found a huge "daddy long legs" who spent several days on the wall next to my front door. I knew then that it had been a good decision to move to this place.

My former condo was an "open house" for fae folk for twenty years, so as soon as my stuff was moved in, I "announced" that all fae folk would be welcome and safe in my new home. Now that I live next to an impoundment of the Huron River, fae who travel this natural highway are more easily able to find a place to rest for the night. A sort of "welcome sign" has been erected at my door, which is visible only to non-humans.

POPULAR QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK ME

How many fae people are in your home at any given time?

At least thousands. Since they stay in non-physical energetic form, there is no practical limit to how many can be comfortable under my roof.

How do you know the fae are there if you can't see them?

I can feel their presence. In times of severe weather, it does feel more crowded; however, my visitors are very considerate and careful to control their energies so I don't feel overwhelmed.

Do any "bad guys" like trolls ever try to come in?

Sometimes. My house rule is that any being who is in need of shelter is welcome as long as they're willing to behave themselves and do harm to none. Often, they go up in the attic or under the building. They are told that they will be evicted if they cause problems. So far, that has happened only three times.



Who takes care of all these fae beings?

There are greeters, organizers, ambassadors, translators, and other such folk to help take care of everyone's needs.

Do you put out food every day?

Not every day, but I do share things like fresh fruit, chocolate, popcorn, and my Saturday night beer, and I put out a pretty little flowered bowl of fresh water in the evening. Some fae can enjoy human food and drink, but most do not, so they must make their own arrangements and probably trade and barter with other visitors. No one goes hungry or thirsty.

How do you invite the fae into your home?

If you are reading this, I can pretty much guarantee that you already have fae housemates of some kind. You might simply say out loud that now you understand all this, and your unseen visitors are welcome. Freshly baked bread or a few chocolate chip cookies will always be appreciated!

So then, what do you DO with your fae guests?

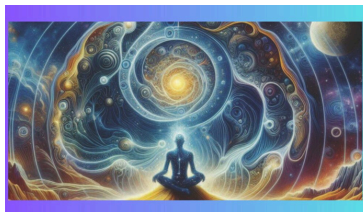
Well, I read *The Night Before Christmas* out loud to the fae children on Christmas Eve; I can feel them sitting on my arms and shoulders. On May 1 – a major fairy holiday – I read out loud from a short book of poems about fairies. On July 4, we all watch the fireworks on television. Other than that, you might warn them when you are about to get out the vacuum cleaner, move furniture around for cleaning, or that company is coming. You might also get into building fairy houses and fairy doors or planting fairy gardens. There are lots of possibilities!



AUTHOR BIO

Peggy River Singer is a Pleiadian Starseed, Lightworker, all-beings communicator, faerie ally, and lifelong writer. More of her articles and channelings are posted on angelsfairiesandlife.wordpress.com. To request a reading, please call 734-548-0194.

November Special Events



The Anatomy of a Thought Form

Presented by **Cristo L. Bowers**

Saturday, November 2

2:30–5:30 pm

Required Donation: \$20–\$40 (sliding scale)
 Limited to 50 attendees



How to register:

- At the door.
- Call or text Parina Bowers at 734-358-6762.
- Scan Parina’s Venmo QR Code.

Cafe 704 presents ...

Paul Vornhagen & Aron Kaufman

World Music Duo

Saturday, November 9

7:00-9:00 pm (doors open at 6:30 pm)

Tickets: \$10.00–on person or on zoom.

<https://interfaithspirit.org/cafe-704-coffeehouse/>



Paul Vornhagen is:

- A leader of two critically acclaimed bands (Tumbao Bravo and his Quartet).
- Private music teacher, composer, producer and recording artist.
- Winner of six Detroit Music Awards.
- His band recordings have been featured on many NPR programs and several film sound tracks.

Aron Kaufman is:

- Nationally honored educator and accomplished composer.
- A leader of his own sextet, The Dream Ensemble.
- In 2017, he was commissioned to compose music for the documentary film, “Cuba’s Forgotten Jewels.”

“Welcome to our world. A journey through the rhythms of the Middle East, Africa, Cuba, Trinidad, Jazz and more.”



Community Sing with Matt Watroba

Wednesday

November 13

7:00-8:30 pm

Sponsors and/or donations of \$5–10 each needed to keep this event going.



Drumcommunity Drum Circle with Lori Fithian

Saturday, November 16

7:00-9:00 pm

Donations are appreciated