



January-February 2009 www.iffp.net P.O. Box 5413, Takoma Park, MD 20913 (301) 270-6337

REVEREND JULIA'S REFLECTION

We are on a journey as always.

We just spent December preparing to see the light, waiting with hope and joy!

On Christmas morning we experienced the light—at least a hint of it. The gospel writer states that, "Christ is born today!" Today! Not yesterday or tomorrow but now in us...born. This spirit of love and justice and compassion is in all of us!

And when this spirit is born in us, it can grow. There are twelve nights between Christmas and Epiphany. Epiphany can be a time we feel G-d within us growing (we'll celebrate on Jan 11). We can have an experience of Oneness, a glimmer of knowing there is nothing that can separate us from love. We can love. We have the capacity to be filled with it. We have seen G-d. Where do we all see G-d? Is it in the moon high in the sky so full and beautiful or in the sun so warm and radiating? Or do we see G-d in our children—so innocent and real and alive.



Then we celebrate the coming of justice as we remember the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King (which we'll celebrate on Jan 25). Because Love is within us we want to reach out and love and embrace the marginalized, kiss the unlovable, touch the untouchables and bless those who have been cursed. This is the calling of Love—to serve.

In Late February, we will begin to prepare for Easter through the Season of Lent. The word "Lent" means the 40th day (before Easter) and it also means "long" because the days (light) are beginning to grow longer.

What are we preparing for?

The lengthening of our own light?

The strength of our own being?

An old Hasidic Jewish tradition teaches that everyone should have two pockets in their coats. Each pocket is to carry a slip of paper. In one pocket, there is a slip of paper that reads: "I am dust and ashes." In the second pocket, there is a slip of paper that reads: "For me, the whole universe was created." Therein lies the tension we all carry within us. Lent is a time to focus more on our ashes and dust pocket. To humble ourselves in the sight of G-d, the whole universe. To remember we are just a grain of sand on this big beach called "Life" as we make our way towards the Easter Season.

I look forward to being with all of you on this Journey!

Your rev,
Julia

FROM THE BOARD

Dear IFFP Members,

Arrivals and departures - what the holidays seem to be made of! The biggest news from the Board is that in November we hired an Interim Director of Religious Education (DRE), Rev. Beth McCracken-Harness. Rev. Beth dove right in, and has been busy converting our curriculum to a consolidated electronic format, meeting our fantastic teaching teams and observing them at work, and presenting at Gatherings. Her arrival has been a joy as staff and Board are discovering her professionalism and enthusiasm. Please take a moment to introduce yourself to Beth in the coming weeks.



And departures. We grieved with Rabbi White at the tragic loss of his adopted son, Grant, and Rev. Julia performed the funeral with Rabbi in West Virginia. A notable departure from IFFP is that of our Treasurer (half-way through his third year of service) and former bookkeeper, Mike and Maureen Ellner and baby Hannah, who will move from DC to Philadelphia in January. They will leave a gaping hole in our Board and in our community, but we wish them well in their quest for a new spiritual and physical home. Thank you both.

You should have received a letter in your mailbox last month. Yes, the annual appeal for your faith community has arrived. With the departure of foundation support in hard economic times, we greatly appreciate member donations. Foundations look favorably on internal fundraising, so we are striving for a 100% rate of member giving, whatever the amount. Board members committed to giving at least \$100, annually.

In our ongoing quest for Board excellence, we have taken time these past months to develop position descriptions for board members. When you wonder what board membership entails, we can now show you.

Hope your holiday season was filled with on-time departures and arrivals!

Jennifer Liebreich
Board Chair

IFFP CALENDAR: JANUARY & FEBRUARY

JANUARY

January 11 – Gathering: Epiphany--G-d With Us

Sunday School - Session 11
Adult Group - Epiphany
Yoga

January 25 – Gathering: --"Our Call to Justice" (Special guests are Fr. Dennis McManus and Karen Summerville and her Gospel trio)

Sunday School Session 12
Adult Group: Fr. Dennis McManus, Karen Summerville & the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King

FEBRUARY

February 1: Gathering: Tu B'Shevat "Tree of Humanity"

Sunday School Session 13
Adult Group: Tu b'Shevat. The Tree of Life
Yoga

February 8: Gathering: Tikkun Olam

Sunday School Session 14
Adult Group: Tikkum ha'Olam. Healing the Earth
Yoga

February 22: Gathering: --"Sin: Missing the Mark"

Sunday School Session 15
Adult Group: Lent
Yoga

February 27- March 1: Women's Retreat

UPCOMING IFFP EVENTS

Celebrate at our Festive Purim Carnival, Sunday, March 8th! Brings Friends and Family

Our Purim Carnival is always a fun-filled, joyous family event! We'll start with a short Gathering and the 3rd graders will act out the Story of Esther, the Megillah, as we shake groggers (noisemakers) to drown out the name of the evil Haman. Then the Sunday School classes, COA Prep and COA will provide lots of fun with games, Purim mask making, pie throwing, face painting, and more! Run under the parachute, dance the hora, march in the costume parade, and enjoy visiting with other IFFP members.

It's a chance for us to dress up with our kids and be the beautiful, brave Queen Esther, the wicked Haman, the brave hero Mordechai, or King Ahasuerus. **Please bring groggers and lots of hamantaschen to share.** This is a day all the family will enjoy. This is also one of the best times to invite interfaith friends or family members to experience our wonderful community.

Invite friends and family, and join us for a festive day. We'll also have a Silent Auction and Craft Show again this year. We look forward to seeing everyone and having fun—please remember to bring your hamantaschen, costumes, and groggers.

—Susan Ryder, Program Coordinator

Purim Carnival – Silent Auction & Craft Show

Crafty Folks Wanted! IFFP will be holding its 2nd annual silent auction & craft show. Last year, the show raised \$300 for IFFP and was a great opportunity for members of the IFFP community to show off some of their other talents and skills.

If you are interested in participating as a crafter, artist or interested in contributing something absolutely fabulous to the silent auction, please contact me.

—Jose Dominquez

Grandparents/Grand Friends Day at IFFP March 15

Last year we started a wonderful new tradition at IFFP, Grandparents Day! It was a great success so we will be holding Grandparents/Grand Friends Day again March 15. We will be extending personal invitations to all grandparents and “grand friends” to join us for this special event and will be collecting email and mailing addresses in January. Grandparents/Grandfriends will be invited to attend the Gathering with their families, have refreshments with Rabbi White, Rev. Julia & Jen, then have the option of attending the Adult Group led by Fr. Dennis McManus or visiting their grandchildren's Sunday school classes.

This special day gives grandparents, who are always welcome to visit Gatherings, an opportunity to also visit their grandchildren's classrooms to see first hand how their grandchildren are being educated in their religion. It also gives grandparents who haven't visited a chance to meet Julia, Beth and the Rabbi, to see how the group really functions and to ask questions that may be of concern to them. We hope that having a special day for grandparents might make them all feel welcome and more comfortable asking questions about what they experience. If you have any questions, please contact Susan, Sury3@aol.com.

Men's Night Out

Men's Night Out, Sunday, March 15 at 7 pm (tentative date) -- in Philip's Bregstone's Basement (den of iniquity) in Takoma Park-- Desert Island Discs #3 (plus jam band -- get DOWN with the guys). Everyone brings in a REMARKABLE song or piece of music on CD, plays it, and explains why it's important in his life. Men of all or no musical interest and abilities are welcome. Food and drink will abound. After we're all done, some of us hang out and jam on the instruments. Please RSVP to Philp Bregstone, or Danny Weiss.

This fall, thanks to the organizing genius and generosity of our very own Phil Bregstone, the men of IFFP had another power outing. It was an evening not to be missed. "Men's Night Out" at IFFP started several years ago, inspired by the annual IFFP women's retreat. Our outings provide a wonderful opportunity for the IFFP guys to hang out, have fun, and get to know one another better than we would by just attending IFFP Gatherings and Sunday school.

Our latest outing had the perfect balance of outdoor fun, great food, scintillating conversation, and... smoke. About 8 or 9 of us played a hard game of soccer next to Phil's house. Having thoroughly exhausted ourselves and brought our hamstrings to the near pulling point (for some of us, at least!), we gathered sticks and hauled our chicken bratwurst and beer to Phil's backyard for a campfire and brat's-on-a-stick dinner. Yum, yum.

With a mix of new members and old-timers, we shared our thoughts and feelings about many things, including why we are part of IFFP, what we hope to gain from it and what changes we might like to see. The fire's smoke grew thick as our conversation dug deeper into the meaning of inter-faith life, and the clock ticked away. Being the responsible men that we are, we tamped down the ashes, cleaned up, and headed back to our family duties. I feel safe in saying that each and every one of us enjoyed this Men's Night Out and look forward to the next one in March.

To all the men of IFFP, I strongly encourage you to join us for Men's Night Out. Stay tuned for the next announcement. We guarantee it -- you will not be disappointed.

ADULT GROUPS

As some members have delved into "Interfaith 101" this fall, so have others explored topics like gratitude and the meaning of Christmas and Hanukkah songs from our different faith (and nonfaith) perspectives. As we look past those two holidays into 2009, we're finding there's lots more to talk about! Please plan to join us for these adult groups. And please, contact Larry Bostian with any questions, suggestions, and criticisms, about both the content and the format of Adult Group.

January 11. Epiphany, traditionally celebrated on January 6 (thus the "twelfth day of Christmas"). Here's a definition I found online:

1. a. A Christian feast celebrating the manifestation of the divine nature of Jesus to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi. b. January 6, on which this feast is traditionally observed.
2. A revelatory manifestation of a divine being.
3. a. A sudden manifestation of the essence or meaning of something. b. A comprehension or perception of reality by means of a sudden intuitive realization: "I experienced an epiphany, a spiritual flash that would change the way I viewed myself."

Hmm, there's something in these definitions for everyone.

January 25. Georgetown's Father Dennis McManus will join us as we look at the legacy of Dr. King, whose passion for justice was rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition, especially the story of Moses and the delivery of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. We are fortunate to have guest artist Karen Summerville lead us in some gospel singing in the gathering, and we'll invite her to join us for this discussion.

February 1. Tu b'Shevat. The Tree of Life. Whatever you may think of the Bible, it's got a ton of great metaphors. Help us explore how these metaphors apply to 21st century America and to IFFP.

February 8. Tikkum ha'Olam. Healing the Earth. There are many Biblical passages that speak of God's healing the earth (and of God's power over nature, too). Poets and songwriters return often to this theme, as well. Bring your favorites and share them as we celebrate this lovely intention.

February 22. Lent. For centuries the Christian tradition has been to begin preparing for Good Friday and Easter on Ash Wednesday, which inaugurates the period of Lent, often marked by abstinence and repentance for our sin. Many of us are uncomfortable with the whole idea of sin, but what if we thought about it from the perspective of the original Greek word, hamartia, which translates "missing the mark?"

FUNDRAISING

Combined Federal Campaign, CFC

The period for completing the Combined Federal Campaign pledge form has been extended to January 31, 2009. Our listing is on page 35 and our # is 27138.

IFFP Commemoration Tradition

IFFP gratefully acknowledges the following contributions:

In memory of Father Tom Groenewold, who co-officiated at our wedding, by Mary Beth Cisneros and Michael Rosenman.

\$40 for 40, in honor of the Rabbi, by Stephani & Scott Abramson.

In honor of Julia & the Rabbi by Nina & Jimmy Mrose in thanks for their help after the death of Nina's father.

SPRING WOMEN'S RETREAT, FEB 27 – MAR 1—FINAL CALL!

Are you ready for a late winter getaway to Berkeley Springs?

This year's retreat comes extra-early – February 27-March 1 – so we need those RSVPs **now**. We'll be staying at Angel's Watch, the fabulous house we rented two years ago. This house can only hold 18, however. If we go over that, we'll have to rent a second house, and it would be easier to do that sooner, rather than later.

It's in a lovely wooded area, and the last time we went, many women took advantage of the nearby state park spa during breaks from the retreat program. Others took walks in the woods or wandered around charming Berkeley Springs. Please check out Angel's Watch at <http://www.berkeleyspringscottagerentals.com/cottage.asp?code=AW>

Please send us an e-mail if you think you'd like to attend. RSVP to Geneva Collins.

For those who have never been before, these retreats are energizing, festive, relaxing, bonding events, full of laughter, spiritual succor, optional yoga and nature walks, and a lot of truly memorable food. It's a wonderful way to get to know other women in IFFP.

(Note: The cost will depend on attendance numbers, but in the past couple of years, about 20-25 women have attended and the cost for the weekend has been about \$140-\$170 for those staying both nights.)

We'll be working in the coming weeks to choose a theme and facilitator, so stay tuned. If you have ideas, please let us know. This year's planners are Geneva Collins, Carol Muskin and Antoinette Eates.

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Dear IFFP members,

Thank you for letting me join you and your children in your wonderful community. Worship in the Gatherings has been very meaningful to me. The music has stirred me and the Jewish holidays and texts have been inspiring. Rabbi White's meditation and Freddie's memories about Hanukkah were a treat for me. And I have also enjoyed getting to know you and your children. Thanks for your welcome!

I've been at IFFP for a little over a month now and have been to all the classrooms. I have seen well prepared teachers and many engaged and excited children. Part of what interested me in the job of Director of Religious Education was the level of commitment that this community has to educating its children. I have been involved in a lot of religious education, but have rarely seen this level of commitment to the children's education.

Speaking of their education, I've been in and out of classrooms showing kids the Advent wreath and helping them make holiday presents for their teachers. I look forward to spending some more concentrated time in the classrooms helping the teachers and getting to know them and the kids.

I am setting up meetings with all the teaching teams so that I can find out what concerns teachers have and get their input into the curriculum. IFFP is planning to publish the curriculum (and I have a lot of experience writing curriculum), so I will put all the curricula into electronic form and then start editing it.

Shalom!

Beth McCracken-Harness

NEW NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Adam Korengold has taken on the role of Newsletter Editor. He, his wife Melissa Golding, and their family joined IFFP in November. Melissa grew up in northwestern Pennsylvania and is Catholic. Adam was raised reform Jewish in Rockville, Maryland. (He attended synagogue at Temple Sinai in northwest Washington.) They met while working in Washington, DC and now live in Alexandria, Virginia, on land that was once part of the Mount Vernon estate. Rabbi White co-officiated at their wedding. They decided to join IFFP both to provide an interfaith community for their children, and to join a group where they could share the religious traditions which they both value.



Both Adam and Melissa are writers, which should help Adam in his new role. Melissa is a freelance writer, and is the press officer for the National Association for Business Economics. Adam is director of research and consulting services for the Public Affairs Council, and has been responsible for a number of publications and research papers throughout his career.

Maeve already loves Sunday school, and the whole family is thrilled to be a part of the community which has now become an important part of their lives.

IFFP Board Chair: Jen Liebreich

IFFP Board Vice Chair: Stephani Abramson

IFFP Coordinators: Adult Group: Larry Bostian • Celebrations: Jessica Vistnes • Membership: Mary Beth Cisneros • Website: Mark Shellenberger • Newsletter: Adam Korengold

IFFP Staff: Spiritual Director: Rev. Julia Jarvis, 301-270-6337 (office) • DRE: Beth McCracken-Harness • DRE Assistant: Karen Jackler • Spiritual Advisor: Rabbi Harold White • Program Coordinator: Susan Ryder, Sury3@aol.com • Bookkeeper: Susan Priester