

Summer 2008

Changing Faces

Marcus White Has Moved On

At the end of May, Marcus White left his position as Executive Director of the Interfaith Conference to assume the position of Director of Community Partnerships with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. While saddened to see him leave, the staff and Cabinet of the Interfaith Conference wish Marcus well in this new position. Marcus has been on the Conference staff for 16 years, first as a program coordinator and for the last seven years as Executive Director. We have all benefited from his talents and he will be sorely missed. His knowledge of the community and relationship building skills will prove as invaluable to the Foundation as they have to us. A reception to honor Marcus was held at the Milwaukee Jewish Council on May 20. Many friends of Marcus and the Conference attended to share their appreciation and thanks.

Interim Executive Director Named

In order to insure a smooth transition Judi Longdin, a long-time cabinet member and current Executive Committee member has been named Interim Executive Director. She

began to serve in this capacity on a part-time basis on June 3 and will work closely with the staff, Executive Committee, Cabinet and Conference Committees as we imagine the next chapter of our leadership.

Judi has been a member of the Interfaith Conference Cabinet for many years, representing the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and has served on numerous committees. She also serves as the Director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interfaith Concerns for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Judi became involved in Ecumenical and Interreligious efforts as a result of her work for justice and continues to promote dialogue and relationship building as key factors in bringing about a just society. She looks forward to working with the excellent staff of the Interfaith Conference who will carry on with much of the programming work in this time of change.



Marcus White



Interfaith Conference is a
United Way Donation
Write-In!

The *Alike and Different* curriculum is available once again! It is an activity and resource guide teaching about self-esteem, friendship, diversity, and conflict resolution for grades kindergarten and up. *Alike and Different* is great for use in congregations, classrooms, with youth groups at and home. Copies are available for sale at \$20 each (including postage) for quantities of 1-3. Discounts apply for larger quantities. For more information go to www.interfaithconference.org or call 414-276-9050.

Recently Interfaith Conference has become eligible as a write-in for the United Way of Greater Milwaukee Community Donor Choice Campaign. Now when you make a donation to the United Way, either part or your entire donation can be designated to support the work of Interfaith Conference. So remember Interfaith Conference when you fill out your next United Way donation, and give back to the community in more than one way!



Calling Young Advocates!

I-CAN youth groups are invited to participate in Pebbles for Peace a program of the House of Peace. Pebbles empowers high school youth to design and implement projects that address the issues related to violence. **This year's theme is Youth and Media: Promoting a Positive Milwaukee.** Participants will have the opportunity to meet with members of the local media as well as Milwaukee dignitaries and community leaders. This is a great opportunity for our young advocates. Pebbles will take place on November 18 from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at Cardinal Stritch. \$5 per youth. For more information contact Lisa Calderone-Stewart at 414-545-6006 or go to www.tomorrowspresent.org.

“It is a great time to be the Interfaith Conference”

“A Great Time to be the Church” is an oft-quoted title of a book written by former ELCA Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson. It was written at a time of particular struggles in mainline denominations, and expresses the particular importance and timeliness of our mission and ministry in such times.

I would borrow that theme to describe the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, where we boldly declare **“It is a great time to be the Interfaith Conference.”** At just such a time as this, with the challenges before us as a community, we as the interfaith voice are all the more needed. With tensions between faith communities globally, we provide a familiar place of honest and healthy discussion. With local challenges such as violence, housing, racism, the environment, and a struggling economy, the Interfaith Conference understands these to be

our collective concerns, with collective hopes.

“It is a great time to be the Interfaith Conference” as this organization goes through this time of leadership transition. In this time we hear of the strong commitment of our judicatory leaders to the Interfaith Conference, and we celebrate the gifts and the passions of Judi Longdin, who serves as our interim executive director. **“It is a great time to be the Interfaith Conference”** as we imagine together how we might best shape our work as we move together into a future where interfaith connections will be all the more vital to the health of our community, and our world. Thank you for your support, in prayer and in finances, as we celebrate a time such as this.

Bishop Paul Stumme-Diers
Chair, Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee

A Message from Judi Longdin, Interim Executive Director

As I take on the duties of Interim Executive Director, I am humbled by the work that has been accomplished and the relationships that have been developed by the directors and staff of this organization. I am also excited by the enthusiasm and dreams that staff, cabinet and committee members have for the current work and the future of the conference.

I have always been inspired by the Interfaith Conference and its dedication to the mission to affirm the solidarity of the human community and the dignity of each person. The sentiment has deep resonance for Catholics familiar with the Documents of Vatican II which insisted that justice was a constitutive dimension of the Christian faith.

Those twin concepts of solidarity and the dignity of each person are the bedrock of the Interfaith Conference. They are the principles that ground our vision - principles that are accepted by each member judicatory. While we may differ in practice and belief, we are

bound together as people of faith by our common belief in the dignity of each person and the recognition of our need for one another and the power of joint action. We are inspired by a religious impulse to work together, whenever possible, to achieve justice.

The Interfaith Conference is the voice of the religious community in Milwaukee against injustice and has been for almost 40 years. While we may not always agree on what constitutes absolute justice we do know where injustice resides. Lines of people waiting for food vouchers, homeless shelters filled to capacity and beyond, lack of affordable housing, unemployment, lack of access to decent health care and other vital services should not be the reality in Milwaukee. Together we have and will continue to make a difference.

As we begin to envision the future, we look forward to your continued support for our many programs. This edition of the newsletter will give you a taste of what's to come. See you at the CROP Walk!

Milwaukee and Waukesha Housing Trust Funds Foster New Developments

The Milwaukee Housing Trust Fund Coalition has remained strong and active in the continued push for revenue sources. In anticipation of the proposed 2009 Budget, the Milwaukee Housing Trust Fund has taken recent steps to persuade the Mayor to set aside \$1 million dollars in the budget for the Milwaukee Housing Trust Fund.

On June 18, a group of nearly 200 supporters gathered in the City Hall rotunda to rally for the \$1 million dollars in the 2009 budget. Staggered cheers and cascading banners billowed from City Hall, representing Milwaukee's need for not only new affordable housing, but also new jobs and renewed economic vitality. Look for more action in the city of Milwaukee as the Milwaukee Housing Trust Fund Coalition persist to ask the Mayor to put more dollars in the 2009 Budget.

The Waukesha Housing Trust Fund Coalition is also busily moving forward. Recently their title has changed to the 'Waukesha County Affordable Housing Task Force'. Focused on two areas, the Waukesha County



Supporters gathered outside the Mayor's office on June 18, prepared to file through the Mayor's doors to exemplify their support for \$1 million dollars in the 2009 budget for

Affordable Housing Task Force has formulated ways in which to create public awareness in Waukesha County, as well as gather information. In addition to these two tasks, the Waukesha group is working hard on drafting a proposal that will be unveiled at an upcoming Fall event.

For more information, contact Heather Dummer Combs at 414-276-9050 or heatherdc@interfaithconference.org.



MAIR Explores Life Cycle Events

On a beautiful evening at the close of May, the Milwaukee Association for Interfaith Relations launched a series on major life events. A capacity audience at Immanuel Presbyterian Church listened to speakers from various traditions. Jerry Johnson, a MAIR committee member and musicologist represented the Bahá'í tradition. Mike Vater, a member of the Shambhala Center and a retired professor of Philosophy spoke from the Buddhist perspective. The Christian view was presented by Rev. Jean Dow, MAIR committee member and associate pastor at Immanuel Presbyterian. Rabbi Roxanne Shapiro, Religious Educator from Congregation Shalom, spoke on Jewish beliefs and practices and Ahmed Quereshi, a MAIR committee member and Islamic Society of Milwaukee Board member represented the Muslim tradition.

Audience members were intrigued by the commonalities among the traditions as well as the distinctions in practice and philosophy and the various understandings of the purpose of life which inform these beliefs. Given the focus on death, many in the audience were left wondering what happens following death. Based on audience reaction the next program in the series will deal with the question of life after death. Future programs will focus on other major periods in life such as adolescence, marriage, and child-rearing. Your suggestions for topics are always welcome. Dates for upcoming programs will be set in the fall.

MAIR serves as a resource to the community by offering educational programs and opportunities to engage in dialogue that will lead to better understanding and provide a foundation for common action. MAIR also provides speakers to congregations and others who seek to broaden their understanding of the religious traditions in the greater Milwaukee area. The Speaker's Bureau list is currently being updated.

Cathedral Center Provides More Volunteer Opportunities

Interfaith Conference continues to be an active partner with Cathedral Center. Our role is primarily to coordinate volunteer opportunities at the shelter. Groups of volunteers provide hospitality to the guests every evening of the year. While the volunteer list is extensive, there are still spots open for the 2008 year. This is a great opportunity for a small group to provide a healthy snack and good conversation to the guests.

Other volunteer opportunities are also available at the Cathedral Center including homework tutor and front desk receptionist.

If you're interested in these or other volunteer opportunities at Cathedral Center, contact Heather Dummer Combs at 414-276-9050 or heatherdc@interfaithconference.org.

Land and Shelter Conference July 27-28 2008

The **Interfaith Earth Network** will hold its fourth quarterly conference on Sunday, July 27 from 1:00 -7:00 p.m. and Monday, July 28 from 9:30 a.m.- Noon at the Urban Ecology Center. The conference theme is "Land and Shelter" and the keynote address: "A Crossroads: The Intersection of Sustainability, Development and Spirituality" by Dan Davis, Senior Vice President, C.G. Schmidt, Inc.



Afternoon workshops will include: *Urban Environmental Pollution and its Consequences: Land, Shelter and the Concept of Urban Ecology*, Dr. David Petering; *Home Energy Efficiency*, Anne Megan McCormick; *Rediscovering the Living Land*, John Hoff; *Christian Perspectives on Land*

and Shelter, Pastors Jaime Washam and Margaret Schoewe and *Bahá'í Perspectives on Land and Shelter*, Don Quintenz. For further information on the conference, workshops and presenters please go to the new website www.interfaithearthnetwork.org.

Join us at this important event and the continued development of this new interfaith network wherein we are learning to better care for each other and our world.

CROP Hunger Walk 2008 Rapidly Approaches



Sign up for the 23rd annual Greater Milwaukee CROP Hunger Walk this Fall. Whether it's raining or shining, the CROP Hunger Walk will take place on Sunday, October 12 starting from the McKinley Marina. Registration is free and will begin at 12:30 p.m. The walk will begin at 1:30 p.m.

The Greater Milwaukee CROP Hunger Walk is both a charity walk and a food drive. Non-perishable food items will be collected by Hunger Task Force from 12:30 - 2:00 p.m. The food will be delivered for free to food pantries throughout Milwaukee County. Last year food donations exceeded 16,000 pounds while more than \$64,000 was raised for continued anti-poverty work domestically around the world. For more information contact Nicole Carver at 414-276-9050 or nicolec@interfaithconference.org. Visit our webpage www.interfaithconference.org/CROPWalk.htm.