

## **Interreligious Leaders Dialogue Group**

*Ad hoc* steering group meeting

April 29, 2010

First United Methodist Church, Campbell

**Present:** Garth Pickett, (Latter Day Saints), Samina Sundas, (American Muslim Voice and the County Human Relations Commission), Rev. Alan Jones (Campbell United Methodist, our host), Rev. Andrew Kille (Interfaith Space and Partner City Group), Joy-Ellen Lipsky (First Unitarian San Jose and Partner City Group), Rev. Charles Rawlings (Council of Churches of Santa Clara County), Rabbi Melanie Aron (Shir Hadash and the Interfaith Council on Economics and Justice), Diane Fisher (JCRC), and Tim Brauhn (Faith Acts Fellows and Interfaith Youth Core).

1. The general sense is that we should continue to meet, if not monthly, then at least on a regular basis for networking and relationship building
2. We reviewed some of the history of the group from its founding as a Jewish/Christian dialogue to a more inclusive group:
  - a. There has been a shift over the years from participation by mainline clergy to leaders and lay people from less well-known groups.
  - b. Overnight retreats at Camp Swig gave time and opportunity for more in-depth relationship building.
  - c. Developing themes and setting up locations and resources for meetings has been the responsibility of a single individual (based at NCCJ/ SVFACES), in consultation with participants.
3. Andrew Kille shared a diagram of current interactions and the need for some coordinating agency or function (the “neXus” for lack of a better term).
4. We reviewed what’s happening now in interfaith activities in the South Bay, using the list of organizations that came out of research for the Partner City profile submitted to the Parliament of the World’s Religions.
  - a. There is a lot happening, but it may be that “the good is being the enemy of the best”
  - b. There is a need to define the purpose of an interfaith group—is it for dialogue, for community action, for hosting civic events?
  - c. What is happening with the Partner City project? Andrew and Joy-Ellen were able to say that the Partner City group was continuing to discuss many of the same issues raised here, but there was nothing specific to report at this time. Can the Partner City discussions and the Interreligious Leaders discussions be brought together?
  - d. Tim Brauhn described the work among young people at Santa Clara University and Stanford; most people drop away from interfaith work when they graduate, due to the need to find employment; there are few opportunities for paid work in interfaith projects as yet.
5. Chuck Rawlings proposed that what was needed was to create a new interfaith organization that would take on the functions of the Partner City.

- a. There needs to be deliberate recruitment of participants from across the religious spectrum of the Valley to have a hand in shaping the new organization
  - b. Chuck volunteered that the Council of Churches would be willing to secure part-time staff; they have had success with paid interns from Santa Clara University
    - i. It was suggested that someone involved with the Local Religions Project at SCU might be interested in such a position. Andrew will contact Boo Riley (director of the project) to explore this possibility.
    - ii. If we can create a strong and open organization, that can provide a solid platform for going to funding groups
  - c. We need to focus on the big picture first—the overall shape of interfaith cooperation—before dealing with specific pieces like the Interreligious Leaders Dialogue group.
6. We'd like to hear from the leaders of other interfaith councils in the area to learn how they were formed, how they are structured, and what they are working on. Andrew will check with Carol Hovis (Marin Interfaith Council), Michael Pappas (San Francisco Interfaith Council), and Brian Stern-Webber (Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County) to see if they could meet with us in the future.
  7. Since there was already a meeting of the Interreligious Leaders Dialogue group scheduled for Wednesday, May 12, we decided to go ahead with that date. Samina Sundas volunteered to host that gathering at South Bay Islamic Association, 325 North Third St., San Jose.
    - a. There will also be another meeting in June (currently scheduled for June 16).

**NOTE:** Copies of the documents shared at the meeting (with updates from the discussion) can be found at the SouthBay Interfaith website: <http://www.southbayinterfaith.org/files.htm>

You can also get to them by going to [www.southbayinterfaith.org](http://www.southbayinterfaith.org), click on “Links,” and then on “Discussion Documents.”

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