
Interfaith Families Project

May 2006 www.iffp.net P.O. Box 5413, Takoma Park, MD 20913 iffp@verizon.net 301-270-6337

FROM THE BOARD

The Board met April 25th, and in addition to our regular business we had a lengthy discussion concerning the establishment of IFFP satellite communities. Several families -- member and non-member families -- have expressed an interest in affiliating with IFFP to begin satellites in their own communities. The New York interfaith community began hosting satellite groups several years ago. This is a challenging yet exciting project and we are grateful to **Sue Katz Miller** who is working with the Board to develop a plan that will enable us to support satellite groups but also ensure that our own IFFP gets all the attention and nurturing it needs. We will update you on this project as it develops.

The Board, staff, and a few IFFP members are developing plans for fundraising from outside organizations and foundations. We believe there are sources of funds for an organization like ours and that this additional funding will help IFFP's long-term development. Contact **Danny Weiss** or **Ian Spatz** if you want to help with this effort.

Finally, I just want to say that as IFFP's year is coming to a close I am feeling grateful for many things about our community, but especially I am thinking about the people who do so much to make IFFP work. I will not name them all here, but a few in particular who are making or have made recent transitions.

Holly Cooper has been the newsletter editor for two years and is ready to take a break, beginning this summer. She has been a wonderful editor, creative in style and very attentive to the little details and to the big picture. We owe her a heartfelt thank you for all her hard work. The newsletter position is open and volunteers are welcome. We will soon publish a newsletter every other month instead of every month, so the job will require less work -- in case that persuades any of you to volunteer.

Two Board members are leaving who started serving the same year I did -- **Betsy Keeler** and **Sam Lawson**. **Betsy** has been the vice chair and not only did she greatly facilitate the search process for our spiritual director by letting the Board repeatedly meet at her house, but she has been a wonderful person to work with and has contributed greatly to IFFP's growth and many activities. **Sam** has been the head of the Adult Group for the past two years and has announced he is ready to pass the baton. I feel very appreciative for all the thought and time that Sam has put into the adult group as he helped build on what has become a very important part of IFFP. To both of you -- and your families -- thank you.

And while I am on the topic of expressing appreciation, I want to say how much I am enjoying working with IFFP's staff. It is not just that we now have three staff instead of two, which makes a big difference. But the three people in particular are caring, thoughtful, and creative people and it is a pleasure to work with each of them -- **Susan Ryder**, **Ellen Jennings**, and **Julia Jarvis**. They really have IFFP's best interests in their hearts and minds and I am excited about the coming year working closely with them.

To Holly, Betsy, Sam, Susan, Ellen, and Julia, and to everyone who makes IFFP's wheels go round, you are greatly appreciated.

- [Danny Weiss](#), Board Chair

MAY - JULY 2006

May 14	Sligo Middle School <i>Mother's Day</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemplative Service, 9:30 a.m., with Rabbi Harold • Gathering, 10 a.m., with Rabbi Harold • Special "Women Only" Adult Group with Rabbi Harold, 10:45 a.m. • Community Service for men and kids, Sligo Creek, 10:45 a.m. 	May 20 (Sat.)	Young Couples Barbecue 4 p.m. at the home of Andrew Levine and Kerri Mullins-Levine
May 21	Sligo Middle School <i>COA Recognition and Teacher Appreciation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemplative Service, 9:30, with Rabbi Harold • Gathering, 10 a.m., with Rabbi Harold • Reception in honor of new COA graduates and teachers, 10:45 a.m. 	June 4	Sligo Middle School & Wheaton Park <i>A Time to Mourn & Leave Taking Ceremony</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering, at Sligo, 10 a.m., with Rev. Julia and Ellen • Community Potluck Picnic at Wheaton Regional Park immediately following
June 11	Sligo Middle School <i>Father's Day</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemplative Service, 9:30 a.m., with Rabbi Harold • Gathering, 10 a.m., with Rabbi Harold • Special "Men Only" Adult Group with Rabbi Harold, following Gathering • Picnic and play by Sligo Creek for women and kids, following Gathering (picnic and games will be in Sligo cafeteria if it rains) 	July 9	Sligo Middle School & Daleview Pool Gathering and Pool Party <i>A Time to Restore</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gathering at Sligo, 10 a.m., with Ellen • Pool Party following Gathering, Daleview Pool, 901 Daleview Drive, Silver Spring (picnic will be in Sligo's cafeteria if it rains)

MAY IFFP EVENTS

Sunday May 14th: Special Mother's Day Gathering and Adult Group with Rabbi Harold & Rev. Julia, plus Community Service Program -- Grandmoms Welcome!!!!

Join us for a Contemplative Service at 9:30 with the rabbi, followed by a special 45 minute Gathering, led by **Rabbi Harold**, in honor of Mother's Day. Following the Gathering and refreshments, all IFFP women will have a "Women's Time with the Rabbi" while the men and children participate in a service project to honor Mother Earth, a Sligo Creek Clean Up (wear work clothes and bring gloves, trash bags available at the school).

Children will have the chance during Joys to come forward and say one thing they are grateful for about their mothers.

Sunday May 21st: Coming of Age Recognition with Rabbi Harold, and Teacher Appreciation, Gathering and Reception

Please join us for a Contemplative Service with Rabbi Harold at 9:30, followed by a 45 minute Gathering led by the rabbi, with a Coming of Age Recognition Ceremony and Teacher Appreciation. A reception will follow.

- [Susan Ryder](#), Program Coordinator

Young Couples

Please join us for the last IFFP young couples event of the year! **Kerri Mullins-Levine** and **Andrew Levine** will be hosting a barbecue on Saturday May 20 at 4:00pm. Directions will be emailed closer to the date. Please contact Kerri Mullins-Levine if you have any questions or do not receive the invite. Hope to see you there!

- [Kerri Mullins-Levine](#), Young Couples Coordinator

JUNE & JULY IFFP EVENTS

The Nursery, Sligo room 118, will be available during our summer Contemplative Services, Gatherings, and Adult Groups.

June 4th Community Picnic at Wheaton Regional Park following Gathering at Sligo

On Sunday, June 4th, **Rev. Julia** and **Ellen** will lead a Gathering at Sligo Middle School on “A Time to Mourn.” We will have a “leave taking” ceremony for three of our wonderful member families who are moving away: **Felise & Mark Shellenberger, Courtney & Alan Rice, and Jessica Landman & Dan Mullaney.**

Following the Gathering, we’ll have a great community potluck picnic at Wheaton Regional Park. We’ll meet at the parking lot off Shorefield Drive near the carousel where there are lots of picnic tables. We’ll set up the food on tables and picnic all around the area. Please bring a blanket to sit on, and balls, frisbees and other outdoor games you may have. **Rev. Julia** is threatening to have games for adults and kids, Jews vs. Christians, so come prepared for a fun afternoon. For those of you who aren’t familiar with Wheaton Park, there’s a glorious kids’ train ride (adults love it, too), a carousel, large playground, a lake, the beautiful Brookside Botanical Gardens, the Nature Center, and Wheaton Stables are just a walk away. Be sure to bring money for tickets for the carousel and train. Alternate rain plan: community potluck in the Sligo cafeteria.

IFFP will provide paper goods and beverages for our potluck. As usual, food assignments are based on the last name of the female head of household. If the last name begins with:

- A-J: Bring a side dish or salad
- K-Z: Bring a main dish
- Board Members: Bring dessert

Please bring food packed in coolers or dishes that can stand up to sitting out in the heat. We do not want our send-off picnic to send people off with a case of food poisoning!

Directions to Wheaton Park from Sligo: Take Dennis to Georgia Ave., turn right and continue on Georgia north. Cross University Blvd. and Arcola. Make a right turn at Shorefield (after the small

shopping center with Han Au Reum Asian food store). Follow to end of the street and turn into the parking lot to the right, near the carousel and train station.

- [Susan Ryder](#), Program Coordinator, and [Geneva Collins](#), Celebrations Co-Coordinator

June 11th Gathering with Rabbi Harold and Father's Day Adult Group

Now it's the men's turn! The rabbi will lead both the Contemplative Service and Gathering. Following the Gathering, the men will have an Adult Group session with the rabbi, while the women and children picnic and play in Sligo Creek Park (rainy day back-up: picnic and play games in the cafeteria).

- [Susan Ryder](#), Program Coordinator

July 9th Gathering at Sligo and Swim Party at Daleview Pool

Please join "the most reverend to be" **Ellen Jennings** for a Gathering at Sligo, "A Time to Restore," followed by a swim party at Daleview Pool! (If it rains, we'll picnic in the Sligo cafeteria instead.)

Daleview Pool, 901 Daleview Drive, Silver Spring, is located in a secluded, quiet area. It has a regular pool, kiddie pool, trees and shade, picnic tables and grills (and many IFFP folks are pool members). Please bring your bathing suits, towels, and a picnic lunch for your family and spend the afternoon swimming and visiting. Guests pay \$5.00 per person.

Directions from Sligo: Make a left onto Dennis, cross Sligo Creek Parkway, make a right onto University. Continue going north on University, cross Colesville Rd., pass Eastern Middle School on left near Franklin. Approximately 5 blocks after Franklin, make a left onto Buckingham (E. Wayne on the right side of University), right onto Linton Street, and left onto Daleview (www.daleview.org).

- [Susan Ryder](#), Program Coordinator

NOTES FROM THE DRE

Dear Friends,

It's been a wonderful Sunday School year, and I am so grateful to all the teachers, parents, and kids who made it such. Thank you!

I want to focus this month on our Coming of Age Program. May is the month for our COA Ceremony, and, as usual, it was amazing. Though the ceremony is usually held on an IFFP Sunday, this year's class was so large (nineteen kids!) that the parents decided to hold it on a Saturday at the 4-H Conference Center in Chevy Chase. It was a fabulous morning. Friends and family almost filled the auditorium and it was a wonderful testimony to the many years these kids have spent in the IFFP Sunday School Program. The COAers presented projects on everything from Just War Theory to Music to Special Olympics. Each of them had done community service, met with a mentor throughout the year, and put hours of time and effort into preparing oral and visual presentations. It was both impressive and inspiring.

Rather than trying to put it in my own words, I'd like to share some more about the COA year by quoting **Rev. Heather Kirk-Davidoff**. She (along with **Rose Sadler** and **Sam Seligman**) taught the class and deserves great praise for the dedication, patience, and commitment she shared with these students. Shepherding nineteen middle schoolers through a Coming of Age Program is no easy task, but Heather clearly stepped up to the plate and batted a home run (sorry, no better analogy comes to mind!).

Here are her words about the COA Program, Class and Ceremony:

This ceremony is the culmination of many years of religious education--although some of the participants in this program are fairly new to IFFP, many have been a part of our community since pre-school. It has been our privilege and delight to watch them grow into the thoughtful, engaged and unique people they are today.

This year, our class met 16 times between September and April. Our curriculum focused on decision-making. In the fall, we talked about the tools that we can use to make good decisions, specifically rules, goals and values. We discussed some of what Christianity and Judaism has to say on each of these issues, and talked to a number of fascinating guest speakers who told us about a decision they had made, and how they made it.

In January, we turned our attention to situations where decision-making is difficult or problematic. We talked about evil, sin, the Holocaust and the crucifixion, all in rapid succession. Our conversations got pretty intense sometimes, but each kid in the class gave serious thought to how to respond to some of the most difficult moral, ethical and theological questions of our day.

Along the way, we did manage to laugh a lot, to play some goofy games and to eat a lot of snacks (thank you, parents!).

At the end of each class, we asked each kid to take a turn with "show and tell", telling the class about a "spiritual tool", something that helped that student connect with his or her spirituality. From teddy bears to volleyballs, books to guitars to knitting needles, we came to understand that there are as many ways to construct a spiritual life as there are people.

Every year I almost burst with pride as I watch our incredible young people share their projects and celebrate the completion of our Coming of Age Program. They are a true testimony to everything we are trying to accomplish in the IFFP Sunday School: they are open, they are curious, they are diverse, they are passionate, and they are compassionate.

I hope you will join us on Sunday, May 21st, as we celebrate the COA Class at our Gathering. We will also honor and appreciate all of our teachers that day.

Peace to you and yours,
Ellen
ejennings@post.harvard.edu

IFFP TEEN HAPPENINGS!

Wasn't it inspiring to hear from the IFFP teens at last Sunday's Gathering? I was so moved to hear how IFFP made a big difference in their lives and how they will carry these learnings with them to college and elsewhere.

Equally inspiring was to hear the 19 Coming of Agers (now officially IFFP teens) last Saturday, May 6th, at the 4-H Conference Center at their mega Coming of Age Ceremony. All of them were thoughtful, creative, and passionate, and there seemed to be some bonding between them. Three hours flew by. Even my COA prep daughters, Jeanne and Lauren, liked it! Afterwards, I talked with many of the parents and some of the COAers about next year's teen group. Everyone seemed excited to get something started and to stay together. Already, I met with **Cindy Allen** to plan this month's trip to Cape May for a

work/play weekend with 8 IFFP teens. We also started looking at next year and the adventurous, challenging activities we can do.

What do we need to make this happen?

- 1) A teen leader to help lead the group. If you know anyone who would be willing to meet with our teens 1-2 times a month either Friday or Sunday evenings, please let me know ASAP!
- 2) A Teen Advisory Committee to work with me and the leader in making IFFP's Teen Group the best! I already have the delightful **Cindy Allen** and talented **Rob Liebreich** working with me. Please call me if you are interested.
- 3) Finally, your thoughts about some activities, ideas, or skills you'd like to contribute to this worthwhile effort. Maybe you know a great theme park we can go to, or a great speaker who could engage the kids.

If you aren't yet involved with any IFFP activity, maybe this is just what you were looking for! Call **Julia** at (301) 270-0514 for more information about the revived IFFP teen group.

- [Julia Jarvis](#), Spiritual Director

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Adult Group Planning Committee

Interested in planning new programs for Adult Group? Know of speakers who would like to engage with IFFP members? Then ... we want you to join the new Adult Group Planning Committee coordinated by New Board Member **Colette Matzzie**. We have ideas, **Rev. Julia** has ideas, **Rabbi Harold** has ideas, but we know you have ideas too! So please join our newly forming Adult Group Planning Committee. We will meet in person and by e-mail this summer to put together an exciting lineup of speakers and discussion topics for next year. If interested, contact Colette at (301) 270-8980 or cmatzzie@phillipsandcohen.com.

We Need You! New Committee Chair Opportunities for Next Year

We thank all our wonderful members who chaired or served on our committees this year. It takes a lot of people hours and effort to provide all of our great programs, activities, and community support. *We really need every one of our members to help with one at least one activity or committee each year.*

Our major need right now is someone to become our new **newsletter editor** after **Holly's** final issue this month!!! The newsletter will go on an every-other-month schedule. It's a great way to contribute to IFFP and really only requires a compact period of work every other month. Holly would be happy to instruct any one who's interested!

One of our most important committees is the **New Member Committee**. We really want to make our new members feel a part of our community and that takes time and attention, phone calls, arranging mentors, social visits, lunch planning, and more, as you all know. It's also a very gratifying position and lots can be done by email and telephone. **Tova Sanders**, herself a new member this year, really put out major efforts to assist and then chair this committee as **Cheryl Leanza** welcomed her new daughter. We need five or more members working together on this committee. Please join **Tova** and **Lisa Wilcox** in being the Welcome Wagon for IFFP!

The **Celebrations Committee** needs a new co-chair to work with **Jessica Vistnes**. **Jessica**, thankfully, will continue to organize the Holiday Party and Seder. We do need someone to replace **Geneva Collins**, organizing community picnics and potlucks in the fall and spring, etc.

We also need a new **Greeter!** **Lisa Henderson** and **Erica Burman** have been the first faces everyone sees at IFFP - a very important position when it comes to visitors. **Lisa** is leaving the table and moving to a classroom as a teacher. This position requires arriving by 9:50, setting up the tables with the name tags, etc., greeting visitors, answering questions, and taking the supplies home. If you enjoy speaking with people, this is the place for you!!

Other positions and committees of importance: **Set up** - this requires arriving at 9:30 and helping to set up the chairs and panels.

We'd like to start a new committee next year to oversee the nursery. The **nursery "supervisor"** would be in charge of the "donation can" and sign up sheet that are on the chair outside the door; check with the nursery workers to be sure that things are running smoothly, and report as to whether the number of workers is correct (or needs to be more or less). This person would also make sure that there are enough toys in the toy boxes and that they are in good condition. He/she would occasionally substitute old toys with improved toys purchased at resale shops, etc. **Susan** will continue to schedule the nursery workers.

If you would like to volunteer for any of these positions, please contact **Susan**, Sury3@aol.com.

- [Susan Ryder](#), Program Coordinator

Rev. Julia is looking for volunteers for the teen group, too – see article on pages 5-6.

Yahoo List Serve

Don't lose touch over the summer. Join the list serve!

To get your weekly bulletin and other IFFP news, join IFFP's free list serve by sending a blank e-mail to iffplistserve-subscribe@yahogroups.com. Please send a copy of your e-mail to **Jeff Kenton**, our list serve coordinator, at jkenton@verizon.net.

You can send non-commercial e-mails to our membership from the Yahoo Groups website. If the message is not directly related to IFFP, please put "off topic" in the subject line.

WOMEN'S RETREAT

Fourteen fabulous women spent the weekend of April 28th to 30th escaping from their usual surroundings and spending time away with fellow IFFPers. We stayed at the [Christian Church Conference Center](#) in the heart of Bethany Beach, which offered an atmosphere conducive to a real retreat. **Rev. Julia Jarvis** and **Ellen Jennings** guided the weekend with their warmth, wisdom and wit.

Our activities included cooking, eating, and more scrumptious eating; time for introspection, sharing, guided meditation, and yoga; planned sessions about mindfulness and passion in our lives; and, of course, down time and wonderful unplanned conversations. The planned sessions that **Rev. Julia** and **Ellen** facilitated provided a great way to get to know each other, and ourselves, better. For some of us, activities like yoga and meditation were quite familiar, for others they were new and challenging. **Rev. Julia** persevered, giving everyone who wanted it the chance to participate, regardless of our level of experience or degree of flexibility. For all, the mandala proved to be a huge challenge! However, it's likely that everyone treasured the free time to walk, read, bike, talk, or shop! Many – maybe all – of us walked away feeling refreshed, recharged, and perhaps redirected.

Many thanks go to **Tova Sanders** and **Linda Sapin** for planning the retreat – we missed you! We are truly grateful to **Ellen Jennings** and **Julia Jarvis** for facilitating the sessions. Much appreciation also to **Carol Muskin**, **Ellen Jennings**, **Rebecca Weiss**, and **Eileen Kraus-Jakobsberg** for being meal captains (yum!); to **Felise Shellenberger**, **Rebecca Weiss**, **Meghan McCormick**, **Elizabeth Gelfeld**, and **Stephani Abramson** for driving; and to everyone for making delicious meals and sharing their weekends with the rest of us!

- [Stephani Abramson](#) and [Eileen Kraus-Jakobsberg](#)

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Joys

Carolyn Dobek had successful surgery earlier this spring. She and her family are doing well.

Ilisa Michelle Halpern and **Scott Norman Paul** are getting married on May 28th at Woodend Sanctuary - Audubon Naturalist Society in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Officiants will be **Rabbi Harold White** and Pastor Lowell (Lou) Shuetze of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Alexandria, VA. All our best wishes!

All the 19 COAers and their successful 3 hour COA ceremony!

The 8 IFFP Teens who are graduating from local high schools.

The 16 new IFFP members this past year.

Concerns

For **Gideon and Tova Sanders** as they struggle with Gideon's back pain.

For Martha Katz (**Sue Katz Miller's** mom) still struggling with back pain.

For **Steve Jackson**, **Cynthia Wayne**, and family, recovering from the death of Steve's mom.

For those suffering in the Iraq war.

DIRECTORY UPDATES

Diane Jentilet: new email: dianediane@verizon.net

REV. JULIA'S LETTER

“Singing Shalom??”

In the last several months I have been with IFFP, I have led the community in singing “Shalom” as a prayer after we’ve shared our concerns. It has stirred up a lot of mixed feedback of discomfort and struggle for folks who don’t know the ritual and have a hard time connecting it with any Jewish or Christian traditions. Others have loved it and felt it worked for them.

In order for you to understand what exactly the ritual means to me, I felt it was important to share why the practice has been powerful as a prayer for myself, others, and the world.

What does shalom mean? Rabbi Bernard Fox defines shalom the following way: “One of the most common Jewish practices is prayer. ... One term that recurs in our prayers is shalom. In the blessings preceding the recitation of the Shema, we praise Hashem as the king who fashions light and creates darkness, makes shalom and creates all that exists.” Fox goes on to describe shalom as something beyond peace: “shalom, is ... derived from the term, shalem ... [which] means complete or perfect. Shalom is a completion or perfection that emerges from the harmony between the components within some enterprise," like the description of a very healthy marriage.

Another beautiful definition of shalom comes from an organization called Mustard Seed Associates. “Shalom is the Biblical vision of wholeness. It embraces G_d’s desire to restore every part of creation and all aspects of life to the wholeness and harmony of relationship that was disrupted ... [S]halom symbolizes a loving community in which all members are channels of G_d’s love and compassion bringing about reconciliation not only to G_d but also to each other" and to the earth.

One of my favorite Christian theologians, Walter Brueggemann, writes, “If there is to be well-being, it will not be just for isolated, insulated individuals; it is rather security and prosperity granted to a whole community ... Always we are all in it together, together we stand before G_d’s blessings ... Shalom comes only to the inclusive, embracing community that excludes none.”

[Rabbi Ted Falcon](#) from Bet Alef Congregation is the one who taught me to sing shalom as a prayer and a chant, which I have been doing for many years, and I was excited to bring this experience into IFFP. What I appreciate about it when I sing it is that it is the most complete way I can pray for someone to have complete connection with their Creator and the world.

So, now you know a little bit more and I apologize not sharing this with you earlier.

Where to go from here?

Maybe we need to try it again, singing shalom with one voice on one note and see how that works?

Maybe we can try lots of different things, such as silence or “holding people/world situations in the light”?

I'd love to hear from you what you like and we will continue on this path of enlightenment towards understanding each other more deeply as we grow in our experience of shalom with each other.

A most blessed shalom to all of us,

[Julia](#)

Resources for this reflection are from two websites:

www.msainfo.org (specifically <http://www.msainfo.org/clopcont.asp?id=101&subject=45>)
www.mesora.org

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