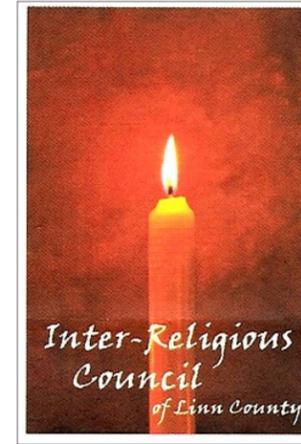
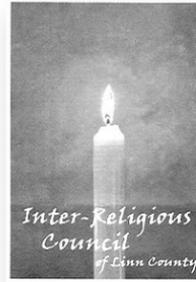


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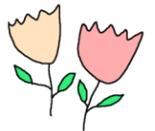
### Inter-Religious Council of Linn County

**Our mission:** to provide means for people of all faiths to promote understanding and respect – and to work with the community for the spiritual, moral, social, and civic welfare of Linn County.

**Our vision:** to provide inspiration and programming in order to foster a caring community in which honesty, respect, and responsibility are celebrated.

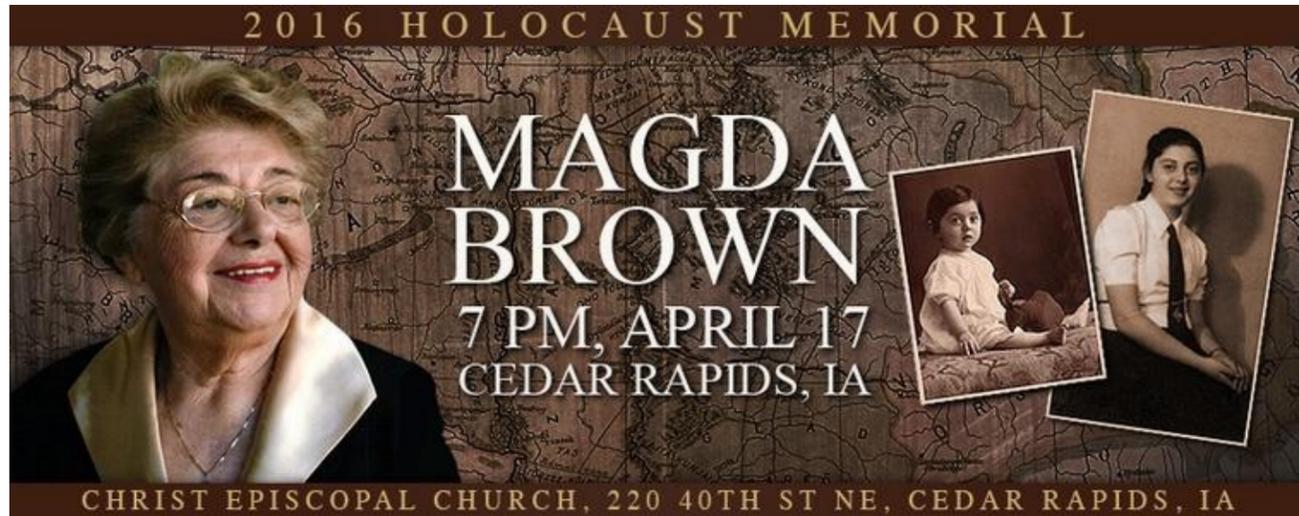
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SPRING 2016



# LEST WE FORGET

2016 HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL



ORGANIZED BY THE THALER HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL FUND  
AND THE INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF LINN COUNTY

MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT [WWW.HOLOCAUSTEDUCATE.ORG](http://WWW.HOLOCAUSTEDUCATE.ORG) OR AT [WWW.IRCLC.ORG](http://WWW.IRCLC.ORG)

## INTRODUCING SECULAR HUMANISM

*The Humanists of Linn County are now represented on the IRCLC board. Board member Alan Diehl offers the following introduction to Secular Humanism:*

I consider myself a Secular Humanist or just a Humanist (capital H) which according to Wikipedia has become synonymous with Secular Humanism. In any case, what in the world is a Secular Humanist? Well, I guess it depends on whom you listen to or the books you read. Like most labels (ie. Republican, Vegan, Muslim), people have a stereotypical idea in their heads and, usually, it is difficult if not impossible to change. Secular Humanism is no exception.

So where to begin for those that are not familiar with Secular Humanism or may not have their mind made up yet? According to [secularhumanism.org](http://secularhumanism.org), "Secular humanism is a comprehensive, *nonreligious life-stance* incorporating a *naturalistic* philosophy, a *cosmic* outlook rooted in science, and a *consequentialist* ethical system". A few words may jump out at you when reading this...

The first probably is *non-religious*. We are not convinced that gods, angels, demons, heaven, hell, or the supernatural exist. We simply do not see good evidence to support the claims. For the Secular Humanist, death is final. As we were before life, so we will be after life.

The second phrase that may puzzle you is *life-stance*. This simply means that Secular Humanism empowers individuals to take control of their own lives and not be subjected to the traditional authority of the church, state, or family.

*A naturalistic* philosophy: Secular Humanists are not convinced that the supernatural has ever been shown to exist and has no basis in reality; therefore, we operate under the assumption that the natural world is all there is. To take this further, the supernatural is a rather self-defeating concept, in that, if it were shown to exist (ie. be able to be measured) then it would by definition become part of the natural world.

*A cosmic* outlook rooted in science: We see ourselves and interpret our lives in the larger context of the universe and the natural unguided forces that have worked to bring about our existence. And, through science,

we have the ability to more clearly understand the true nature of ourselves and the universe without relying on assertions and/or belief systems.

And, most importantly of all, a *consequentialist* ethical system: Simply put, Secular Humanists believe the morality of an action is best determined by the results of that particular action and not on whether someone told you it is right or wrong. In addition, science provides the mechanism to determine the results of a particular action which is necessary in order to make an informed decision. For instance, when given the choice between receiving medical care and not receiving medical care, science captures, studies, and explains the information needed to make a rational decision--a rational decision being one that reduces harm.

In summary, Secular Humanism is the philosophical view that the responsibility for living the good life, being a good person, and understanding the universe rests entirely on the shoulders of human beings.

I realize this is just a thumbnail sketch, but hopefully, this gives you an idea of what it means to be a Secular Humanist. For a more in-depth look at Secular Humanism, I would encourage you to read the book, *Good without God*, by Greg Epstein, the Humanist chaplain at Harvard University. The purpose of the book is to show what Humanists DO believe rather than focus on what they do not believe, which too often dominates conversations.

Why did I join the Inter-Religious Council of Linn County, being a non-religious Secular Humanist? As the name implies, the Council is made up of various religious groups that often have very divergent views on morality, God, life, purpose, politics, etc. What they do share in common, however, is the idea that we can put aside our differences and work together for the betterment of our local community. For many, this is a foreign concept. I know this all too well! I grew up as a Fundamentalist Christian, went to a Fundamentalist Christian school, graduated from a Fundamentalist Christian college, and was a Fundamentalist Baptist pastor for five years. We did not associate with other churches outside our denomination. To do so, was to compromise one's beliefs and allow the devil to get a "foothold" in your life. We were very wary of other religions and resisted the temptation to fellowship with them. Those who grew up in this type of religious community probably understand where I am coming from. What happened to me? What changed? At 27 years old, with four young children and a wife, I left my religion. This was a traumatic and difficult time for me for many reasons that are beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say, I did NOT have the endorsement of family or friends. The last eight years have been a journey away from Fundamentalism, Evangelicalism, organized religion, and ultimately theism of any kind. About three or four years ago, after spending hundreds of hours consuming numerous videos, books, and articles (anything to help me better understand what it means to live in a world with or without a god), I finally realized that atheism is where my feet had landed. To my surprise, I discovered that a person can live a very meaningful, purposeful, happy, ethical, and contented life without the concept of a deity. Around two years ago, I became involved with a local Atheist/Secular Humanist group. I found the people to be smart, friendly, accepting, and definitely misunderstood, which brings me back to my original point of why I joined the Inter-Religious Council.

I quickly began to see how misunderstood Atheists and Secular Humanists were in our society and often how difficult it is for a person who has not grown up in religion to relate with someone who has and vice versa. I wanted to help build that bridge of mutual understanding and, hopefully, cooperation. In other words, I want us to focus and work together on those areas in which we agree and respectfully discuss those areas in which we disagree. When the opportunity was presented to represent the Humanists of Linn County on the board of the Inter-Religious Council, I felt that this was the opportunity I had been waiting for and would provide the perfect venue to build trust between the religious and non-religious communities. Ultimately, my goal is to show others that the non-religious (ie. Atheists, Agnostics, Free-thinkers, Secular Humanists) people in this world can be "good without a god" and live lives with as much passion, purpose, and meaning as their religious counter-parts! If I can accomplish this, then I feel I will have made the world a better place, as we continue our existence on this speck of dust we call Earth!

Alan Diehl - Humanists of Linn County



**Airs on Sunday mornings at 11:00 a.m. on KCRG-TV, Channel 9**

Sponsored by The Inter-Religious Council of Linn County.

Features a panel of local experts who explore ethical considerations on current issues.

Broadcasts are also available on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/IRCofLC>.

March 6	What does TPP mean for Iowa?	April 3	Voter Responsibilities
March 13	The Suburban Heroin Epidemic	April 10	Water Quality in Iowa
March 20	The Effects of Poverty on Children in the USA	April 17	Tapping the iPhone
March 27	The Outsourcing of Medicaid	April 24	Closing Gitmo



**AMONG THE TRADITIONS**

**Sunday, March 27 - 2:00 to 4:00 pm**

**Topic: "THE BAHAI RELATIONSHIP TO ABRAHAM"**

Location: Coe College, Kesler Auditorium in Hickok Hall

Presenter: Nina Scott, Baha'i faith representative

**AMONG THE TRADITIONS**

**Sunday, June 5 - 2:00 to 4:00 pm**

**Topic: "REPAIRING/HEALING THE WORLD"**

Location: Coe College, Kesler Auditorium in Hickok Hall

Presenters: Father Fred Shaheen, Imam Taha Tawil, & Rabbi Todd Thalblum

**AMONG THE TRADITIONS**

**September 25, 2016 - 2:00 to 4:00 pm**

**Topic: "POLITICS AND RELIGION"**

Location: TBA

Presenters: Father Fred Shaheen, Imam Taha Tawil, & Rabbi Todd Thalblum



**Saturday, May 7 - Noelridge Park**

Join the movement. Transform lives. When you get Movin' for McAuley you offer hope and opportunity to the students and residents who come to the Catherine McAuley Center for the skills that help them achieve self-sufficiency and stability.

Visit [www.cmc-cr.org](http://www.cmc-cr.org)

## Interfaith Community Programs

**Faith Explorers Study Group - 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays of each month (9:30 to 11:00 a.m.)**

People's Church (Unitarian Universalist) in the Ely Room, 4980 Gordon Ave. NW

NEXT BOOK STUDY BEGINS MARCH 12: *The Courage to Be* by Paul Tillich

Questions: Carolyn Cleveland at [carolynmcleveland@gmail.com](mailto:carolynmcleveland@gmail.com) or (319) 360-4421

**Women in Interfaith Dialogue - Saturday, April 30 (10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.)**

Theme: "COMPASSION"

Location: Prairiewoods Cost: \$15 (includes lunch)

What are the best elements in our various faith traditions that encourage or allow the ideas and change we need now? We have presentations on Mother Earth traditions, Baha'i, Islam, and Christianity; plus, all women are encouraged to reflect upon their own particular religious tradition.

REGISTER by April 26: Call Prairiewoods at (319) 395-6700 or Barbara Schlachter at (319) 351-4380

**Intersections - March 4<sup>th</sup> dialogue & luncheon (11:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.) - Cost: \$10**

Topic: "McCoy, You're Going Straight to Hell" - Presenter: Senator Matt McCoy

Location: First Presbyterian Church, 310 Fifth St. SE / Sponsored by the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa  
Reservations are required: please call (319) 364-6148 or e-mail [crintersections@interfaithallianceiowa.org](mailto:crintersections@interfaithallianceiowa.org).