

**MINUTES of April 16, 2015**

**Members present (15):** Rodney Bluml, Erin Broich, Ashok Chawla, Charles Crawley, Brian Daugherty, Allen Fisher, Alan Fletcher, Susan Liddell, Cedric Lofdahl, Brenda Mitchell, Hassan Selim, Joan Thaler, Todd Thalblum, Nathan Williams, and Jen Yukl

**Guests (2):** Martha Rogers (Interfaith Alliance of Iowa/Just Courts) and Terry Boyden (co-producer of EPON)

President Todd Thalblum called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Allen Fisher suggested The Interfaith Prayer Book, compiled by Ted Brownstein (second edition, © 2014). The first edition (© 2001) contained selections of prayers from six religious traditions: Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, and Bahá'í. The new expanded edition adds another eight traditions: Native African, Native American, Zoroastrian, Taoist, Confucian, Shinto, Jain, and Sikh. Its aim is to enrich our devotional practice, to share a taste of our planet's diverse spiritual heritage, and to deepen our sense of interfaith connectedness.

**INSPIRATION**

Nathan Williams shared a couple of metaphors to illustrate the continuous action, or flow, of love.

**Breathing Divine Love**

In the Gospel of John, Jesus appears to his disciples in the evening of Easter, after his resurrection. He says, “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you,” and breathes the Holy Spirit into them (John 20:19-23). That is, the presence of God, which had dwelt in him throughout his ministry, now dwells in the human church. The divine mission of reconciliation now belongs to a very human group of people.

I find hope in remembering that God's presence is described as a Spirit, a Breath. We're not expected to somehow become large enough to contain all of God's love. We're not even expected to contain all the love we will ever need. If we try to hold all the breath we will ever need at one time, we'll pass out. That's just not how breath works. Breathing is not about keeping the breath inside, it's about allowing the breath to flow in and out of you.

Sharing divine love with the world is not primarily about holding love inside us. Instead, it's about allowing love to flow through us. To shift metaphors, we're not meant to be the drinking glass that contains the water. We're invited to be the straw through which people can drink the love they need. The best thing about a straw is that when you remove something from it at one end, you're also filling it up at the other. Sharing love with others is like that.

As we meet this evening, as we gather with our faith communities, and as we serve those around us, my prayer for this group is that we might find divine Love flowing through us, breathing in us, and guiding all that we do. Peace be with you all.

**MINUTES of March 19, 2015**

Motion by Nathan Williams to approve as submitted – Second by Erin Broich – Carried

**JUST Courts** [<http://www.justcourts.org/>]

Guest: Martha Rogers – Project Coordinator (Eastern Iowa), Just Courts / Interfaith Alliance of Iowa

JUST Courts is a project designed to ensure the strength of Iowa's judicial system. JUST Courts works in collaboration with Justice Not Politics [<http://justicenotpolitics.org/>], the state's leading coalition working specifically to protect courts in Iowa. JUST Courts is also working to engage and empower progressive people of faith to use their voices in support of Iowa's courts.

## JUST Courts continued...

Money and politics wreak havoc on a fair and impartial justice. Justices and judges must be free from outside influences and assured that their position as a legal decision-maker is not threatened if they make an “unpopular” decision. The job of our judiciary is to make decisions based on our state’s Constitution, facts, and the law as it is applicable. Read more about the influence of money and special interest groups on Iowa’s judicial retention elections at [www.justcourts.org](http://www.justcourts.org), under “Why It Matters.” Martha encouraged us to take actions on this matter. These are listed on the handout provided and the JUST Courts website.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### **FINANCE COMMITTEE – Alan Fletcher, Treasurer/Chair**

1. **Financial Report:** Itemized Receipts & Disbursements – 3/19/15 thru 4/16/15 – reviewed. Cash balance as of 4/16/15: \$16,012.06 [Checking = \$1,008.34 / Money Market = \$15,003.72] Motion made by Charles Crawley to approve financial report – Second by Allen Fisher – Carried.
2. **Monthly vote to approve new delegates/members:** Alan listed new delegates thus far in 2015 – ten individuals and two faith communities. Motion by Allen Fisher to approve the twelve new delegates – Second by Nathan Williams – Carried.

### **COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE – Brian Daugherty, Chair**

1. **Children of Abraham:** Brian reviewed the events noted below.
  - Among the Traditions: Sundays (2 to 4 pm) at Coe College, Keslar Auditorium in Hickok Hall
    - April 26 – Prophecy, Revelation, and the Scriptures
    - August 23 – Marriage in the Modern Era
    - November 8 – Kingdom of God
  - Between the Traditions: This event may not happen this summer. Brian will be out of town on the date that Chris Seeman will be here.
2. **Ethical Perspectives on the News:** Cedric reported the following.
  - EPON just had its 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The first episode was aired on April 11, 1999.
  - A new program schedule will be available after the planning meeting on Tuesday, April 21.
  - 60-plus programs are available on YouTube.

### **EVENT COMMITTEE – Charles Crawley and Allen Fisher, Co-chairs**

1. **Armenian Genocide of 1915 Commemoration – Thursday, April 30 (6:30 to 8:05 pm)**  
Cedar Rapids Public Library, Beems “A” Auditorium  
The PBS documentary, *The Armenian Genocide*, will be shown, with discussion following.  
Charles reported that all is set for this event and hopes that many of us will be able to attend. He asked that we bring homemade snacks. Todd volunteered to provide drinks and will also bring pitchers. Charles will purchase cups, plates, and napkins.
2. **Holocaust Remembrance – April 12-14, 2015 – Speaker: Renata Laxova**  
Todd thanked all those who participated in the service held at Mount Mercy University Chapel. This service was well attended – as were Renata’s other speaking events at Coe, Cornell, and Kirkwood. Joan Thaler was thanked for establishing the Thaler Holocaust Memorial Fund in 1995, with her husband David. This fund provides support for education about the Holocaust to residents and students at the local colleges in Linn County. [<http://holocausteducate.org>]

### **COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE – Brenda Mitchell and Jen Yukl, Co-chairs**

1. **Newsletter:** We would like to get the next newsletter in the mail before our next meeting and are working on getting articles written. Brenda provided a list of the holy days occurring in May, June, July, and August. She asked for confirmation of the days we should include.
2. **Website:** nothing new to report

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

1. **Vigil concerning Gun Violence – update:** Todd Thalblum reported that a committee planning meeting will occur on either April 21 or 28. Dan Baldwin, a pastoral intern at First Lutheran, sent us an email recently about this. Dan requested representatives from several faith traditions in order to make this vigil an inter-religious event. He is waiting to hear which date would work best for the planning meeting. Let Todd know a.s.a.p. if you can be on this committee.  
  
Allen Fisher reminded us of actions that we can take to help reduce gun violence. He noted SF427, a heavily amended gun rights bill that would legalize firearms suppressors and allow children of any age to possess handguns under parental supervision. This bill recently passed in the Iowa House and will be now go back to the Iowa Senate.
2. **Resolution concerning Racial Tension – update:** Todd sent the latest draft of our proposal to Chad Simmons (Diversity Focus) for input. He also invited Chad to speak to us next month.
3. **Note about finance report for next month:** Alan Fletcher will not be at May’s meeting. Brenda Mitchell will give the finance report in his absence.
4. **Inspiration for next meeting:** Hassan Selim volunteered.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS of events, sponsored by other organizations, in the Cedar Rapids area**

1. **Intersections – next civil dialogue & luncheon – Friday, May 13 (11:45 am to 1:00 pm)**  
**“Faith in a Changing Climate”**  
– Rev. Susan Guy: Executive Director, Iowa Interfaith Power & Light  
Has served in Disciples of Christ and United Methodist congregations  
Location: First Presbyterian Church, 310 Fifth St. SE Cost: \$10 per person (payable at the door)  
Registration required: See <http://interfaithallianceiowa.org/events/intersections/> for more details.

### **Next Board Meeting: Thursday, May 21 (7:00 pm) at the Ecumenical Community Center**

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Motion to adjourn was made by Allen Fisher – Second by Brenda Mitchell – Carried.

Respectfully submitted by Jennifer Yukl, Secretary