



November-December 2008 [www.iffp.net](http://www.iffp.net) P.O. Box 5413, Takoma Park, MD 20913 (301) 270-6337

## REVEREND JULIA'S REFLECTION

In honor of Thanksgiving I wanted to share a poem that I've been sharing everywhere because it's sense of joy, gratitude and quirkiness makes me smile all over. Enjoy!

### **As If to Demonstrate an Eclipse**

*by Billy Collins*

I pick an orange from a wicker basket  
and place it on the table  
to represent the sun.  
Then down at the other end  
a blue and white marble  
becomes the earth  
and nearby I lay the little moon of an aspirin.

I get a glass from a cabinet,  
open a bottle of wine,  
then I sit in a ladder-back chair,  
a benevolent god presiding  
over a miniature creation myth,

and I begin to sing  
a homemade canticle of thanks  
for this perfect little arrangement,  
for not making the earth too hot or cold  
not making it spin too fast or slow

so that the grove of orange trees  
and the owl become possible,  
not to mention the rolling wave,  
the play of clouds, geese in flight  
and the Z of lightning on a dark lake.

Then I fill my glass again  
and give thanks for the trout,  
the oak, and the yellow feather,

singing the room full of shadows,  
as sun and earth and moon  
circle one another in their impeccable orbits  
and I get more and more cockeyed with gratitude.

May this season be filled with singing, rejoicing and connection. I look forward to doing it all with you at IFFP!

My warmest and kindest regards,  
Julia



## FROM THE BOARD

Dear IFFP Families,

As brisk Autumn winds of change blow outdoors, I am delighted to write about the exciting changes discussed at our full day Board Retreat on September 20th. Before the retreat we made the decision to join the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations, which offers services to help nonprofits serve their communities more effectively. The Board has already decided this is the best money we've ever spent (other than on personnel, of course!). The retreat was a half-day of "Board Excellence Training," followed by a moderated discussion on how and where the Board would like to steer the future of IFFP. It culminated in our big decision to try to hire a full-time Director of Religious Education (DRE) and part-time Executive Director.

The first half of the retreat was spent on Board training. MD Nonprofits provides valuable information about how to structure meetings, orientations for new board members, policies, and how to professionalize Boards. We reviewed what a Board should focus on (strategic planning) and what our Executive Committee should cover (daily operations). I am happy to report that at our subsequent Board meeting on October 20th, we incorporated our training and considered two new policies on confidentiality and conflicts of interest.

The second half of the retreat was spent on strategic planning. Many of you recall the strategic process began two years ago with the help of member **Ellyn McKay**. Last year the Board proposed a Center for Interfaith Family Life. We were lucky to have board members integral to that proposal attend the retreat: **Ian Spatz** and **Rebecca Weiss**. Our overriding strategic goals remain the same: to achieve financial stability for IFFP, retain fulfilled staff, and maintain a thriving, engaged membership. This year we decided to create the "Center" as a program within IFFP -- a sort of extension service with a clearinghouse of specific products to reach people outside and inside the membership in order to raise money for the organization. On its website we can build awareness by advertising lectures and products and by selling our curriculum. We will use the Center as a vehicle to accomplish IFFP goals, and the Center will act as a fundraising mechanism to help us sustain ourselves.

In recent years we have been spending beyond our means in terms of staff and volunteer hours, and our organization in its current form is not sustainable. Since we do not want to cut back on programs, we need to take the next steps to move the organization forward. We believe we can achieve this by hiring a full-time DRE to handle our formidable Sunday School and an Executive Director to coordinate existing programs and the Center – and we devised a plan to do so. We agreed on a goal: Fundraise \$100,000 every year in order to continue our current organizational model and to add a part-time Executive Director and a full-time DRE. The Board brainstormed four categories for raising the \$100,000:

- Outside fundraising (foundations and grants)
- Fee for service (such as a lecture series, and we are looking for members ideas of speakers)
- Expertise (our fabulous curriculum)
- Individual donors.

We have also created a new committee: the IFFP Council of Chairs, composed of former Board Chairs of IFFP. We are thrilled they have all agreed to continue to serve IFFP, and they will begin working on one targeted individual donor aspect. The Board will be working on individual donor aspects like estate planning, gifts of appreciated stock (we shared a wry laugh at that!) and our annual drive. We will attempt to achieve 100% member contribution to greatly help as we apply for grants.

Change is in the air. We have a specific goal, a new committee, and a program for reaching even more interfaith families. All brought to you by a more professionalized Board! We are excited to serve our community, and I welcome all feedback as we progress.

Enjoy the Fall!

**Jennifer Liebreich**, Board Chair

## IFFP CALENDAR: NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

### NOVEMBER

#### **November 9 – Gathering: Shabbat**

Sunday School – Session 6  
Adult Group: Track #1 Interfaith 101 Part 2  
Yoga

#### **November 16 – Gathering**

*Pillar of Our Faith: Growing & Building Community*  
**New Member Welcoming Ceremony & Brunch**  
Sunday School – Session 7  
Adult Group  
Yoga

#### **November 23 – Gathering: Thanksgiving**

Sunday School – Session 8  
Adult Group: Track #1 Interfaith 101 Part 3  
Yoga

### DECEMBER

#### **December 7 – Gathering: Advent, Lessons & Carols**

Sunday School – Session 9  
Adult Group: Track #1 *“The Joys & Challenges of Celebrating Hanukkah & Christmas in One Family”*  
Yoga

#### **December 14 – Gathering: Hanukkah**

Sunday School – Session 10  
Adult Group  
Yoga

#### **December 21 – Gathering: Christmas**

**Holiday Party & Potluck Brunch**  
**Caroling at Springvale Terrace**  
(no Sunday school)

## IFFP EVENTS: NOVEMBER & DECEMBER

### WELCOMING CEREMONY & NEW MEMBER BRUNCH – NOVEMBER 16

On Sunday, November 16, IFFP will officially welcome our new members in a special Gathering ceremony. The ceremony includes members who have joined us this past spring and fall. This will be followed by a New Member Welcome Brunch from 11:00am-12:00 p.m., to be held in the cafeteria with Rabbi White, Rev. Julia, the New Member Committee and members of the staff and board.

All new families are cordially invited to attend. Childcare will be available in the nursery. For further information, please contact New Member committee chair, **Tova Sanders**.

### CHRISTMAS GATHERING & HOLIDAY POTLUCK – DECEMBER 21

**This year we will have a brand new venue for a special new Christmas Gathering!**

The IFFP choir will lead the festivities December 21 with wonderful holiday music and lots of holiday sing-along songs! Following the Gathering, we will have a festive Holiday Potluck Brunch/Party. We'll also have a chance to do some holiday community service by helping to put together the toiletries baskets for Springvale Terrace Assisted Living. Then we can extend our party to Springvale!

Any families interested in going from Einstein to Springvale in Silver Spring to distribute the baskets and sing carols and holiday songs, please contact Jen Liebreich, or Diane Katz.

This is a new format we're trying this year for the holiday party and is in lieu of our usual evening holiday party in early December. More details will be forthcoming but please save the date. If you would like to help with the party, please contact Susan Ryder, [iffp@verizon.net](mailto:iffp@verizon.net) or Jessica Vistnes.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE & SOCIAL ACTIONS EVENTS

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## **FAMILIES NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE SSIHC'S MINI-WALK FOR THE HOMELESS, NOV. 9**

As many of you know, IFFP is a member of the SSIHC- SS Interfaith Housing Coalition. This organization owns several homes and apartment buildings that they use to help formerly homeless people get back on their feet, learn how to budget, and eventually get into their own homes. In the past, IFFP members have helped to keep up the landscaping at IFFP properties, and we've helped to raise funds through their mini-walks and bagging groceries at Whole Foods.

We would like to encourage IFFP children, teens, and families to join the **SSIHC Mini-Walk for the Homeless on Sunday afternoon, 11/9 from 2:00-3:30**. This is a short walk on Sligo Creek Parkway and a great after-party (complete with food, a DJ, and party games) to support a worthy cause. Over the past couple of years we've had about 3-6 IFFP families involved BUT WE CAN DO MUCH BETTER THAN THAT!!

The walk starts in the park at Dennis and Sligo Creek Parkway and goes just a few blocks up to University and back. Registration (including a T-shirt) is just \$15 for kids/teens and \$25 for adults. For busy families—you can really do the whole thing in an hour or so--- 2:00-3:00 for registration, learning about how we can help the homeless, the walk, refreshments, and some partying! We will have flyers and registration materials available at IFFP on 10/26, and 11/9. Please join us on the Mini-Walk and make IFFP's membership in the SSIHC really count. Questions can be directed to **Carol Muskin**.

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## **THANKSGIVING MEAL FOR MOMS, NOV. 20**

IFFP has supported the MOMS program of the Montgomery County Health Association for the past several years. The MOMS program, which stands for Mothers Offering Maternal Support, offers young at-risk mothers and pregnant teens help and support in learning to care for their babies and small children through direct services and activities such as mentoring, support groups and educational services.

This year, IFFP will again sponsor a **Thanksgiving meal** for about 50 of the MOMS clients and their children on **Thursday, November 20, at Rockville United Church**. This event has been a wonderful success in the past thanks to the many IFFP members who have cooked scrumptious food and volunteered to serve dinner. This event is also great for older school-age children, who have enjoyed helping with the meal. **Antoinette Eates** is coordinating the event. Please watch the list-serve for more details.

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## **HOLIDAY GIFT COLLECTION, LATE NOVEMBER THRU DECEMBER**

IFFP will be repeating its successful **Holiday Gift Collection** to benefit the MOMS group starting in late November and in December. The young mothers have holiday gift requests for themselves and their children that include items such as children's books, clothing, educational toys, winter coats, stuffed animals and blankets. Also welcomed are toiletries, small appliances and gift certificates.

IFFP members will be able to select from the 60 or so gift requests that we will receive this year. In the past, IFFP members have enjoyed involving their kids in choosing gifts for the mothers and children. The gifts from IFFP have truly made the holiday season special for the MOMS clients. Promise Ahlstrom is coordinating the event. Details on the holiday gift collection will also be coming via the list serve.

## **ADULT GROUPS**

GRIEVING GROUP IS NOW DELAYED UNTIL IFFP HIRES A NEW DRE. STAY TUNED.

## Interfaith 101 Series

**Ian Spatz**, former board chair & our favorite facilitator, will continue the 4 week Interfaith 101 Series that culminates December 7 with our Christmas/Hanukkah discussion. The first week focused on "Our Interfaith Story", and gave people a chance to speak about their own journey so that we can see how, while we have a lot in common, each of us has something different to bring to the table that can help each other in working through the issues.

In the second and third sessions, November 9 & 23, we will address the "hot button" topics such as respecting and honoring our partner's traditions, dealing with extended family, how to raise the children, and other issues that are brought up in the first or subsequent sessions. On December 7 we will discuss the Joys & Challenges of Celebrating Hanukkah & Christmas in the same family. This session always offers couples an opportunity to express some surprising feelings and also to offer some great ideas for celebrating the holidays.

## GREAT NEW FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITY - IFFP IS ELIGIBLE CHARITY!

IFFP is now an eligible charity in the Federal Government's Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). The CFC is a program in which the Federal Government encourages its employees to donate money to one or more pre-approved charities.

For those who are Federal employees, please remember IFFP as you make your CFC contribution decisions this year. Also, please let all your friends and family members who are Federal employees know about IFFP's participation in this program. This is a great opportunity for IFFP fundraising, so let's get the word out! IFFP's CFC number is 27138.

## NEW IFFP COMMEMORATION TRADITION!

Inspired by our Gatherings that celebrate joys and honor concerns and various religious traditions, some members have asked how they can make donations to IFFP to mark certain life events. What better way to honor the memory of a loved one or mark a special occasion than by contributing to the financial well being of IFFP?

In the Jewish tradition of Tzedakah (charity), contributions to IFFP are accepted to honor life cycle events. IFFP is thrilled to accept donations to mark any events, such as weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, COA ceremonies and baby namings, or in honor or memory of a friend or family member. We've also had members indicate that they would like to recognize **Rabbi White's** 40 years as Jewish Chaplain at Georgetown University (which will be celebrated at Georgetown) with a \$40 donation to IFFP.

So how do we do this? It's a pretty simple process. Either drop off a check made out to IFFP, and a note indicating the joy, concern or person you are honoring, in the IFFP donation box or mail it to Susan Ryder at the IFFP office, P.O. Box 5413, Takoma Park, MD 20913. If you wish, and give Susan the appropriate information, the person honored with the donation, or their family, will be sent a letter informing them of the donation in that person's name.

### IFFP gratefully acknowledges the following contributions:

- In memory of **Pearl Chalofsky**, by **Susan Mathis & Lisa Henderson**
- In memory of her grandparents, by **Jen & Rob Liebreich**
- In honor of **Hannah Ellner's** first birthday, by **Maureen & Mike Ellner**

- \$40 for 40 years, in honor of the Rabbi, by **David & Angela Quigley**.
- \$40 for 40 years, in honor of the Rabbi, by **Peter Gray & Adria Zeldin**.

## SANCTUARY COMMITTEE

Some of you have signed up for the Sanctuary Committee. Here's what it means:

I need folks to help me think of ways we can make our cafeteria space more sacred in the ordinary and extraordinary times. Our first opportunity will be starting this December 7th, which will be the second Sunday of Advent. I'd like to have fresh (or not) greens and some battery candles to create some specialness in our cafeteria. If interested in helping me do this, please email or call me at [iffp@verizon.net](mailto:iffp@verizon.net).

## SPRING WOMEN'S RETREAT, FEB 27 – MAR 1

This year our fabulous Spring Women's Retreat actually is really an "End to Winter Retreat", February 27 – March 1! The date has been moved up so that it doesn't conflict with the COA Ceremony or Mother's Day.

Since it is so early this year, we need to start planning NOW and choosing a great place for our retreat. Also, since it may still be in ski season, we have the opportunity to go to the mountains where we can have great hikes, skiing, snug, cozy times of discussion and getting to know each other.

For those of you who may never have attended this cherished, yearly ritual, we urge you to do so. We usually have between 15 to 25 women who spend a relaxed, lovely weekend together at a variety of sites in the mountains or at the beach. We have a chosen focus for the weekend and a facilitator to help us with that through guided discussions and exercises. There's yoga, great food that we prepare together, incredible bonding and sharing.

**Geneva Collins** and **Carol Muskin** have volunteered to help coordinate and plan the retreat. They need one or two more women to help with all the planning. You will help in choosing and booking a place, working with Rev. Julia to find a topic and facilitator, coordinate carpools, meal captains and crews, etc.

If you would like to help with this or want to attend, please contact Geneva or Carol.

# Sunday School & Teens

## NOTES FROM THE DRE ASSISTANT – KAREN JACKLER

As I write this, we just had our fourth Sunday School session and things are going great! Many classes had children visiting from prospective families and we had many new families join IFFP and enroll in Sunday School. So, welcome to all of our new students! As can be expected at the beginning of the school year, there were a few bumps along the way, but Julia, the teachers, and I worked together and came up with successful solutions and everyone is settled in.

Most of the flurry of enrollment has settled down, but I am still chasing down the About My Child, Emergency Contact, and Field Trip Permission forms from a handful of parents. I will be contacting those families and will keep contacting them until I get those forms! Now that I have been through enrollment once, I'm exploring ways to make the process a little easier.

The classes are also in the midst of their picnics. This is a great opportunity to meet other parents and kids in your child's class as well as a time to talk to the Sunday School teacher. What a wonderful time of year for a picnic -- please plan to attend! Julia Jarvis is the acting Director of Religious Education, and we talk and meet often to check in, plan, and address any issues that arise.

You can start looking forward to seeing the different classes participate in the Gathering. Check with your child(ren)'s teacher for when they are scheduled to participate and be sure to bring your camera or video camera. Also, our community service events will start gearing up soon with the holidays. The teachers coordinate the community service events through **Carol Muskin**. The teachers will let you know the dates for the events.

A thank you to all the Hall Helpers that help escort the kids in the younger grades to and from the bathroom. This is a great help to our teachers. If you are interested in being a Hall Helper one weekend, let me know!

Lastly, I have been compiling a list of people who would be willing to substitute for a teacher. Without a doubt, our teachers are very dedicated, but sometimes teachers get sick or have weekend plans that take them away from IFFP. It would give the teachers peace of mind to know that there is group of people willing to substitute not just for their child's own class, but for any class. If you have ever thought about teaching a Sunday School class, this is great way to get your feet wet. And, more than likely, you will be working with one of the regular teachers (remember, each class has two teachers!) so you won't be working alone.

As always, please feel free to call me with any questions or concerns about Sunday School!

**Karen Jackler**

Assistant to the Director of Religious Education

## TEEN GROUP

The Teen Group is off to a great start this year. So far, we have done laser tag, as well as planned and put on a beautiful IFFP Yom Kippur service. The teens did everything from readings, reflections, and singing and playing the music. In the next month, we are trying to get a group together to go to see the play Altar Boyz. For community service, we will be participating in a mini Walk for the Homeless on November 9 as well as the DC Walk for the Homeless on November 22.

As always, we are open to any ideas and suggestions for events and programs. The Teen Group is always welcoming new members, so feel free to join in on one, a few, or all of our events this year, even if you haven't been involved in the past. If you are interested, please email **Jessica Stevens**.

## TRIP FOR TEENS/ADULTS TO NEW ORLEANS SPRING BREAK--2009

We have an opportunity to join WES (Washington Ethical Society) in going to New Orleans Spring Break to help with rebuilding New Orleans with the St. Bernard Project. You must be 16 and older to go. Please contact Julia if interested!

## RESOURCES FOR TEEN PARENTS:

I was just referred to a book written by Jody Picoult called "Nineteen Minutes" as a book that might be helpful to parents who are trying to understand what teens go through every day in high school. It comes highly recommended. If you know of other resources to support parents of teens please let me know. Thank you! Julia

## SUKKOT AND GLEANING

Thanks to the 50+ IFFPers of all ages who came out to Miller's Farm in Clinton, MD to harvest kale and collard greens for the hungry. It was interesting that this field is right next door to the Miller Family homestead. This field had suffered some damage due to bugs early in the season and the family is now donating all of the crops to the hungry via the MAGNET gleaners. We worked alongside teens from Temple Beth Ami to harvest over 100 bags of greens that are

on their way to food pantries around the region. We celebrated Sukkot, enjoyed the beautiful day, and brought home gorgeous produce and mums from the Miller's Farm Stand and Store. Great work IFFP!

## GREAT HOLIDAY CELEBRATION IDEAS FROM IFFP MEMBERS

### Hanukkah

- Buy one gift per child and hide it in the house. The kids have great fun hunting for their present and it makes the activity what they treasure and remember
- Choose organizations to donate to, one local and one national
- **Create a theme for each night of a non-materialistic Hanukkah:**
  1. Make and eat latkes, perhaps sharing with another family; play dreidel
  2. Have a music night (Bare Naked Ladies, a Canadian group actually has some nice holiday music)
  3. Charity day-take children to choose a gift to deliver to one of the pediatric wards of a hospital
  4. Scavenger hunt for Hanukkah gelt in the house (can be in a flower pot painted gold)
  5. Have a book night and read some of the wonderful Hanukkah stories and interfaith Hanukkah stories. You can also put on costumes and act these out.
  6. Friday night special Shabbat dinner
  7. Give "love" coupons for what each family member will do for another
  8. Arts & crafts night to make dreidels and menorahs from clay, dough, etc.
- Have a Tzedakah (charity) Jar-child puts in part of allowance each week and then chooses an organization to donate it to
- Focus on the miracle of light at Hanukkah

### Christmas

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- Tell history of St. Nicholas as origin of Santa Claus. Santa Claus represents giving, kindness, a warm spirit (can be presented as Santa lives in the realm of the mind-even young children seem to understand this)
- "Unplug" the materialistic Christmas tree. Sacredness of the holiday has been taken away. Focus on non-materialistic meaning of the holiday. Holy Day rather than holiday.
- One family emphasizes the importance of this child that was born in the most humble of circumstances and that it shows the potential of every child
- Celebrate the music of Christmas
- Separate the two stories of Christmas: one of Jesus and the other Santa & the tree. Discuss the origins of Christmas traditions and symbols
- Use Christmas to take kids to church. One reason for having IFFP is for the kids to feel comfortable in both churches and synagogues.
- Turn the lights off in the house and just look at the Christmas lights in the house and find the meaning of the holiday.
- Adopt a family to help and gift during the holidays.
- Have children sort through their toys before Christmas and choose some to give to charity before receiving more
- Again, coupons to do things with each other and for each other
- Bake cookies to give to friends and relatives or take to a local soup kitchen or shelter or assisted living home.
- Give alternative gifts: the Smile Train (surgery for cleft palate); buy bunnies and other animals for families in third world countries. Attend alternative gift shows.

**IFFP Board Chair:** Jen Liebreich

**IFFP Board Vice Chair:** Stephani Abramson

**IFFP Coordinators:** Adult Group: Larry Bostian • Celebrations: Jessica Vistnes, • Membership: Mary Beth Cisneros • Website: Mark Shellenberger, • Newsletter: Brian Kotler

**IFFP Staff:** Spiritual Director: Rev. Julia Jarvis, 301-270-6337 (office) • DRE Assistant: Karen Jackler, • Spiritual Advisor: Rabbi Harold White • Program Coordinator: Susan Ryder, [ifp@verizon.net](mailto:ifp@verizon.net) • Bookkeeper: Susan Priester