



### **Minutes – Meeting of 1/3/2008**

**Attendance:** Rev. Mark Lukens, Chairman; Hank Arond, Ronnie Around, Paul Auerbach, Ben Bortin, Norma Cohen, Claire Deroche, Jean Judd, Robert Kasindorf, Marty Melkonian, Elaine Peters, Jim Peters, Barbara Schneider, Jeff Schull, Lilyan Strassman, Deborah Swartz, Ruth Swartz, Betty Thompson, Richard Tibbets, John Tilton

Mark Lukens called the meeting to order at 2:15pm.

**Minutes:** The members waived reading of the minutes from the 10/24/07 meeting and approved them as written.

**Treasurer's Report:** The current balance is \$2,119.12. Outgoing treasurer Betty Thompson closed the current TIA-LI bank account at Roslyn Bank and gave incoming treasurer Dolores Tibbets a check in that amount. Dolores will open a new bank TIA-LI bank account shortly, and Betty Tilton has agreed to be back-up signer on the account.

We are all grateful for the many years of service which both Betty and Chet Thompson have provided as TIA Treasurer as well as in many other capacities.

**Action Alerts:** Norma alerted us to several issues which TIA National is working on.

- In November, TIA led a hate crimes coalition effort to obtain more than 35 national religious groups to support hate crimes legislation. TIA also helped to secure Hindu, Buddhist, and Muslim signatories which were previously absent from the letter.
- A bill reauthorizing the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) contains “charitable choice” provisions that would allow for religious discrimination with federal dollars. TIA is lobbying the Senate to eliminate this proposal and is hoping for the same success we had with Head Start earlier this Congress. Norma asked members to contact Sen. Clinton’s office and urge her to oppose any bill allowing charities to practice religious discrimination in the provision of services for any program receiving federal funds.
- A bill addressing racial and religious profiling called the End Racial Profiling Act (ERPA) is expected to be introduced shortly. TIA is lobbying for original co-sponsors and is sending an action alert to TIA members. For further information, visit the website [www.interfaithalliance.org](http://www.interfaithalliance.org) Click on the “In Congress” button directly below the Interfaith Alliance banner, then select “Racial and Religious Profiling.” That webpage will allow you to send an email to your Congressperson as well as the two NYS Senators on this issue.

- TIA communications staff worked aggressively to insert Welton Gaddy, President of TIA National, into the coverage about Mitt Romney's speech on faith in America. Welton has been quoted extensively in news stories including Reuters, Foxnews.com, the Chicago Tribune, Religion and Ethics News Weekly and the Deseret Morning News.

In addition, Mark had information concerning Darfur and Pakistan

- Mark noted that the government of Sudan has refused to arrest two men who stand accused of carrying out war crimes in Darfur. It is critical that the U.N. Security Council demand the immediate arrest and transfer to the International Criminal Court of these suspects. Visit the website [www.savedarfur.org](http://www.savedarfur.org) for other information about the crisis in Darfur.
- On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, Newsday published a Letter-to-the-Editor from Mark regarding the assassination of Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan. In his letter, Mark called the assassination "...a tragedy not only for the people of Pakistan but for all of those people everywhere who support democracy, religious and civil liberty, and peace."

**Hate Crimes:** Norma reported that "The Mathew Shepherd Hate Crimes Prevention Act" was stripped from the Department of Defense Authorization Bill. The Religious Right is firmly opposed to such legislation. They claim it would outlaw speaking out against homosexuality. However, supporters note that the bill would only criminalize anti-gay actions, such as hate inspired violence, and not free speech.

Norma noted that in the same week, FBI statistics show that hate crimes against religious victims are at a 30 year high. Muslims and Jews are the principal victims of hate crimes.

**War in Iraq:** Marty led a discussion on the war in Iraq. He noted that to date, 3,903 U.S. service members have been killed. However, the news seldom mentions that fact that over 100,000 Iraqis have been killed and four million have become refugees as a result of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. Marty noted that the year 2007 saw the highest U.S. military casualties in Iraq, although there were fewer deaths in the second half of the year than the first. The Administration claims that the reduction of deaths in the second half proves that the surge is working, but Marty says that deaths have been reduced because of a cutback on U.S. patrols. The troops are secure in their "enduring bases." Unfortunately, these bases seem to be preparing the way for a long-term commitment of U.S. forces in Iraq.

Of the presidential candidates, only Dennis Kucinich, Mike Gravel, Ron Paul and John Edwards have called for an early exit from Iraq. Edwards made that call only a few days before our January 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting. The rest of the candidates refuse to make any commitment, even one to withdraw all U.S. troops by the year 2013.

On a more positive note, all Long Island Democrats in the House of Representatives voted against war funding in the last vote.

Following Marty's analysis, there was an extended discussion about the war and the plight of U.S. service members who have been sent to Iraq.

**Guantanamo Bay:** ACLU and United for Peace and Justice have endorsed the call for a Jan. 11<sup>th</sup> “International Day of Action to Shut Down Guantanamo.” Demonstrations will be held on that day in Washington, DC, Chicago, Miami, London and Paris. Supporters are encouraged to wear orange on that day as a show of solidarity. In addition, Code Pink and the New York Metro Religious Coalition Against Torture are having a demonstration in lower Manhattan’s Foley Square on that day.

**New Brochure for TIA-LI:** Norma distributed copies of the new TIA-LI brochure listing the new officers. As reported previously, the officers include:

- Rev. Mark Lukens, Board Chairman
- Marty Melkonian, President
- Rev. Henry Benack, Vice President
- Loren Unger, Corresponding Secretary
- Richard Tibbets, Recording Secretary
- Dolores Tibbets, Treasurer

**PERSONAL NOTES:**

Norma was glad to report that “our very learned, warm activist Rev. Henry Benack is recuperating well from heart surgery and will soon be back in the St. Pat’s Rectory.)

We are sad to report that Bert Napear, long time peace activist, died in early November. A memorial service was held for Bert on Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup> at UUCSR. TIA-LI, as well as the entire peace and justice community of Long Island, will miss Bert dearly.

Norma also mentioned that Ken Morganstern, another long time TIA-LI member, had died. Ken was a long time member, as well as one of the founding members of TIA-LI.

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**Shelter Rock Forum:** *(Details to follow)*

<b>Thursday, Feb.21:</b> Ann Wright
<b>Tuesday, March 11:</b> Jonathan Schell, author of “Fate of the Earth and “Seventh Generation.
<b>Tuesday, April 1:</b> Paul Krugman, New York Times op-ed columnist

**Other Upcoming Events:**

<p><b>Wednesday, January 16, 6:30 pm:</b> The Museum of Jewish Heritage will present an interfaith panel of religious leaders to <b>pay tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King</b>. Leaders from Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, and Muslim communities will discuss the lessons of justice and equality that inspire their own activism. The panel will be moderated by Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy, President of The Interfaith Alliance Foundation.</p> <p>For further information, visit the museum’s website at <a href="http://www.mjhnyc.org">www.mjhnyc.org</a> then click on “Upcoming Events,” then locate “The Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.” and click on the date January 16, which contains a link to the webpage with further details.</p>
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**Sunday, January 20, 2pm:**

**Stop The Hate Vigil: Living Martin Luther King's Dream Together**

Sunday, January 20, 2pm

Cultural Center Auditorium, Axinn Library,  
Hofstra University, Hempstead NY

The program is dedicated to the memory of Bert Napear, Peace and Social Justice  
Activist and Chair of The Shelter Rock Forum

For details, visit the Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives website at  
[www.longislandpeace.org](http://www.longislandpeace.org)

**Wednesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 7:00 – 10:00 pm:** Bob Morris Irish Band performances  
between 7 at Nag's Head Ale House in Huntington village (396 New York Avenue, near  
W. Carver St.) will help **Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal (OLMM)** parish in  
Wyandanch rebuild its recently fire-devastated food pantry, outreach center, and rectory.  
OLMM is the poorest parish on Long Island, and its pastor, Fr. Bill Brisotti, has been a  
faithful peace activist for many years.

For details on OLMM and the fire, visit the website

[www.olmmwyandanch.org/home.html](http://www.olmmwyandanch.org/home.html)

For details about the benefit, contact Nag's Head Ale House, 631-673-6247

**NEXT INTERFAITH ALLIANCE MEETING:**

**➔ Note: This is an afternoon meeting at UU Shelter Rock ◀**

The next TIA meeting will be **Thursday, February 7<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm**  
at the **Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock**

48 Shelter Rock Road, Manhasset (516) 627-6560

[www.uucsr.org](http://www.uucsr.org)

Respectfully submitted,  
Richard Tibbets