



Minutes – Meeting of 3/6/2008

Attendance: Marty Melkonian, chair; Bob Adams; Hank Around; Ronnie Around; Paul Auerbach; Norma Cohen; Pam Gawley; Joyce Gorycki; Jay Grosmark; Jacqueline Jill-Rito; Christel McNally; Margaret Melkonian; Jeff Schull; Lilyan Strassman; Dolores Tibbets; Richard Tibbets; Betty Tilton; John Tilton; Loren Unger; Latifa Woodhouse

Marty Melkonian called the meeting to order.

Minutes: The members waived reading of the minutes from the 2/7/08 meeting and approved them as written.

Treasurer's Report: We started the month with a balance of \$2,139.12. We spent \$500 on honoraria related to the January 20th “Stop the Hate” vigil and \$29.35 for bank start-up fees, leaving us with a balance of \$1,609.77. Norma announced that we would mail membership renewal notices to members to replenish the treasury. Hopefully the response will be generous.

Dialogue Project: There was a brief discussion of The Dialogue Project, a group dedicated to promoting healing among Christians, Jews, and Muslims in New York City neighborhoods and elsewhere. As their mission statement reads in part:

“The Dialogue Project’s mission is to build trust, compassion, and partnerships among people who experience bias, hostility, and tension relating to the conflict in the Middle East... Our ultimate goal is to move from personal empowerment to community empowerment, by enabling people to use dialogue skills to address areas of intergroup conflict.”

While members agreed that this is a most worthwhile project, the schedule of presentations for the spring is full. We might invite this group to speak at some future date. Individual members who wish to become involved with The Dialogue Project may visit their website at www.thedialogueproject.org or contact them at 718-768-2175.

Next Meeting / Ghosts of Abu Ghraib: Our April 17th meeting will feature a showing of the DVD *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*, followed by a discussion of the film. The film was created by Rory Kennedy and is being distributed by the National Religious Coalition Against Torture. This film features the familiar and very disturbing pictures of torture at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison and raises many questions:

- How did torture become an accepted practice at Abu Ghraib?
- Did U.S. government policies make it possible?
- How much damage has the aftermath of Abu Ghraib had on America's credibility as a defender of freedom and human rights around the world?

Multi-Faith Luncheon: Norma spoke about plans to once again host a multi-faith clergy / member luncheon. TIA-LI has hosted this annual affair for many years but was unable to do so last year. We are most anxious to resume this vital get-together. Loren, Lilyan, and Bob volunteered to assist Norma with this effort.

War in Iraq & Afghanistan: Marty reminded us that on March 19th there will be a vigil at Old Country Road and Glen Cove Road, opposite the entrance to Roosevelt Field, to mark the fifth anniversary of war in Iraq. In addition,

- Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) will be holding its “Winter Soldier” hearings in Silver Springs, Maryland (on the outskirts of Washington, DC) March 13th through March 16th. These hearing will be broadcast on Pacifica Radio (WBLI in NYC), as well as streamed by United for Peace and Justice.
- Video clips of the hearings will be shown at Hofstra University on March 28th.
- Marty urges us all to contact our Congress members during the week of March 19th to urge them to advocate for an end to the war. Marty noted that all four Long Island Congressional Democrats voted against the most recent war funding legislation. We must keep pressure on them to continue their opposition.
- There have been some counter protesters at recent anti-war demonstrations on Long Island. Margaret reminded us that we should remain peaceful and respectful if we meet counter protesters. She noted that the Quakers’ *Peacework* Magazine provides suggestions on how to respond to such confrontations.

Israel / Palestine: There was a brief discussion of the Israeli / Palestinian conflict. We all agreed that this is a most sensitive issue. There are many atrocities on both sides, and such divided opinions in this country and elsewhere. Dialogue surrounding this issue is challenging, which makes efforts such as those by The Dialogue Project (mentioned above) vital.

LI Clergy And Religious For Peace: A Call To End The War: Margaret Melkonian reported that 93 clergy and religious have signed thus far (NOTE: the goal of 100 signatures was reached and exceeded a few days after the TIA meeting). A press conference will be held soon to bring attention to this petition.

For further information, visit the website of the Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives at www.longislandpeace.org

NYAGV: Joyce reported that New Yorkers Against Gun Violence will be holding a rally in Albany on Monday, April 14, 10AM to 4PM at the Legislative Office Building. If you wish to attend, please contact NYAGV at (212) 679-2345. You may also visit their website at www.nyagv.org

TIA-LI Vice President: Since one of TIA-LI’s two Vice-President positions is vacant, Norma recommended Paul Auerbach to fill this position. A motion was made and seconded and the membership unanimously approved Paul to join Father Henry Benack as Vice President. Paul graciously agreed to serve. Congratulations Paul!

Rockefeller Drug Laws: Rich spoke about the Forum on the Rockefeller Drug Laws scheduled to be held on March 8th in Hempstead. This gathering of community and religious leaders is working to repeal the racist and repressive drug laws passed when Nelson Rockefeller was governor.

(NOTE: Rich subsequently attended the March 8th meeting and is pleased to report that the leaders of the Forum held a moment of prayer for our own Bert Napear, who was instrumental in getting this group together. Rich was also glad to obtain five signatures during the Forum for the petition "100 Clergy and Religious For Peace: A Call To End The War.")

The "Drop the Rock" Campaign will be sponsoring buses from Nassau and NYC to travel to Albany on Thursday, March 27th to lobby for repeal of the Rockefeller Drug Laws. For further information, visit the website www.droptherock.org or call the Correctional Association at 212-254-5700.

STRONG Youth (Struggling to Reunite Our New Generation): STRONG Youth will hold a Community Empowerment March Saturday, June 14th to bring attention to the devastation that violence causes to minority neighborhoods in Nassau County. The focus of the March will be a broad look at issues that are negatively affecting the community, including violence, drugs and apathy, but most importantly what the community itself can do to build safer and healthier communities. Those members who attended the TIA-LI sponsored "Stop The Hate" vigil at Hofstra in January will remember the moving talk by STRONG's Executive Director Sergio Argueta.

For further information, contact STRONG Youth, Inc. at 516-408-3798 (or visit the TIA-LI website at www.interfaithalliance-li.org)

UPCOMING EVENTS
<p>Events to Commemorate the 5th anniversary of war in Iraq</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday, March 19th, 5-6PM: Peace Vigil at corner of Old Country and Glen Cove Roads (opposite entrance to Roosevelt Field Mall). • Saturday, March 22nd, 11:30AM to 3:30PM: River to River: Stand Up for Peace: Manhattan
<p>Thursday, March 27th: Bus trip to Albany for "Day of Advocacy" The "Drop the Rock" campaign is sponsoring a "Day of Advocacy" to press for repeal of the draconian Rockefeller Drug Laws. Buses will be leaving from Hempstead, Brooklyn and Manhattan for the ride to Albany early that morning.</p> <p>For further information about the "Day of Advocacy," contact: Caitlin Dunklee, Correctional Association of New York (212) 254-5700 ext. 339, or email cdunklee@correctionalassociation.org website: www.droptherock.org</p>
<p>Tuesday, April 1st, at 7:30pm: The Shelter Rock Forum presents author and <i>New York Times</i> columnist Paul Krugman for a discussion titled "The War, The Budget and the Economy" on at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock.</p>
<p>Monday, April 14: New Yorkers Against Gun Violence rally in Albany to stop gun violence (details above).</p>

Saturday, June 14th at 12:30 PM: Community Empowerment March, Freeport, Roosevelt, Uniondale, and Hempstead (further details above).

TIA-LI Website: The TIA – Long Island website, which is updated on a regular basis throughout the month, contains information of interest to our members. You may visit this site at www.interfaithalliance-li.org

NEXT INTERFAITH ALLIANCE MEETING:

The next TIA meeting will be

Thursday, April 17th, 7:30 PM

at the **Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock**

48 Shelter Rock Road, Manhasset.

Call (516) 627-6560 for directions, or visit the website www.uucsr.org

The meeting will include a viewing and discussion of DVD *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*

This film features the familiar and very disturbing pictures of torture at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison and raises many questions. (See above for further information).

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Tibbets