



**The Interfaith Alliance**  
**LONG ISLAND CHAPTER**  
<http://www.interfaith-alliance-li.org>

**Minutes – Meeting of 8/27/2008**

**Attendance:** Marty Melkonian, Chair; Hank Around; Ronnie Around; Paul Auerbach; Norma Cohen; Joyce Gorycki; Jacqueline Jill Rito; Ruth Reeves; Deborah Swartz; Ruth Swartz; Dolores Tibbets; Richard Tibbets; Betty Tilton; John Tilton.

Marty Melkonian called the meeting to order at 7:45.

**Minutes:** The members waived reading of the minutes from the 8/27/08 meeting and approved them as written.

**Treasurer's Report:** Dolores reported that our current balance is \$2,370.81. This includes contributions of \$90 and expenses of \$105 since her previous report of July 17<sup>th</sup>.

**Announcements:**

Norma reported that Fr. Henry Benack remains at the Maria Regina Residence in Brentwood. We all miss the strength and encouragement he brought to our meetings in the past and wish him well. Those interested in sending greetings may write him at:

Rev. Henry Benack  
Maria Regina Residence  
1725 Brentwood Rd, Room 131  
Brentwood, NY 11717

**Iraq War / North Hempstead Town Council:** Norma advised that the North Hempstead Town Council will discuss a resolution regarding ending the war in Iraq. TIA Members are encouraged to attend this meeting.

*Date/Time:* September 9<sup>th</sup>, 8pm

*Location:* Town Hall, 220 Plandome Road, Manhasset, NY 11030 (516) 869-6311

**Presidential Debate at Hofstra:** Marty stated that the Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives and other groups are planning to present the Peoples Agenda to presidential candidates or their aides when the candidates hold their final debate at Hofstra University on October 15. Groups are currently in discussion with Nassau County Police to determine where supporters will be able to congregate for this presentation. For further information, go to <http://longislandpeace.org/> and search for *The People's Agenda 2008* in the blue column at the right side of webpage.

**Ghosts of Abu Ghraib:** Paul reported that he is reaching out to campus contacts in order to arrange showings at local colleges of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture's DVD, *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*. Paul is hoping to raise awareness among young people of this important issue and will give a progress report at our next meeting.

**TIA-LI Meeting Location:** We had a brief discussion about meeting location. Rich noted that when we meet at new locations, we see members who generally do not travel to our normal meeting place at UUCSR. We will be contacting leaders of other congregations to determine where we can hold some future meetings in an effort to attract new meeting attendees.

Dolores suggested that we consider having a speaker at meetings in order to attract additional attendees.

**TIA National:** Norma advised that TIA National is experiencing financial stress. Two suggestions were offered. Firstly, those who are not currently TIA-National members were encouraged to join the national Interfaith Alliance organization in order to provide financial support, while current national members were encouraged to send in a special one-time donation. Secondly, Dolores suggested that our TIA-LI Chapter send a donation to the National office. A motion was subsequently made and seconded, and members voted to donate \$500 to National.

You may join the National organization at the website [www.interfaithalliance.org](http://www.interfaithalliance.org)

Or, if you prefer, you may mail a membership check to:

Interfaith Alliance

1212 New York Ave. NW, 7<sup>th</sup> floor

Washington, DC 20005

Membership is \$25 per year.

(Amounts above that minimum are always deeply appreciated!)

**Please note:** Gifts made to the **Interfaith Alliance**, a 501(c)(4) organization, are not tax-deductible by law. But gifts made to the **Interfaith Alliance Foundation**, a 501(c)(3) organization, are tax-deductible.

**Gun Violence:** Joyce advised us that current Federal Law prohibits felons and disqualified persons from possessing or transferring firearms. However, there is no current requirement that federally licensed gun dealers perform criminal background checks on employees to determine whether they are persons prohibited from possessing guns. Therefore, Rep. Carolyn McCarthy of Garden City has introduced H.R. 6676 to close this loophole. For further information, visit Rep. McCarthy's website at <http://carolynmccarthy.house.gov/>

**Interreligious Conference in Madrid:** At our July meeting, Faroque Khan had spoken about the Interfaith Meeting hosted by King Abdullah and held in Madrid in late July. Unfortunately, there was little coverage of this in the regular press.

Last month's minutes highlighted the media attention about that event. The press clippings at the end of this month's minutes include a fine article from the *Christian Science Monitor*. If you did not receive last month's minutes, you may find them at the TIA-LI website, [www.interfaithalliance-li.org](http://www.interfaithalliance-li.org)

## NEXT INTERFAITH ALLIANCE MEETING

The next TIA meeting will be

**Thursday, September 25<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm**

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Richard Tibbets

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Veterans for Peace** will hold their fund raiser on September 9th, 7:00PM, at the Cinema Art Center, Huntington.

**North Hempstead Town Council** will debate a resolution on the **Iraq War** at their next meeting:

*Date/Time:* September 9<sup>th</sup>, 8pm

*Location:* Town Hall, 220 Plandome Road, Manhasset, NY 11030 (516) 869-6311

**Body of War** - the moving story of one veteran dealing with the aftermath of war

Date: Wednesday, September 10th, 7:30pm

Location: Hofstra University, Hempstead

**Amy Goodman of Democracy Now (on Air America)**

Date: Thursday, 9/18, 7:30pm

Location: Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock

**Presidential Debate (final debate)** the Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives and other groups are planning to present the Peoples Agenda to presidential candidates or their aides when the candidates hold their final debate

Date: Wednesday, October 15,

Location: Hofstra University

*“Media Roundup” on next two pages*

## **From the Interfaith Alliance - National Office "Media Roundup"**

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

### **Saudis Host a Global Interfaith Conference in Madrid: a 'First Step'** 7/16-18

Christian Science Monitor, 07-18-08

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0718/p04s07-woeu.html>

More than 500 years after Spain's golden age of tolerance among Jews, Christians, and Muslims came to a definitive end, leaders of those faiths - as well as of Buddhism, Taoism, and Hinduism - are meeting at a royal palace on Madrid's outskirts in a bid to boost interreligious understanding. In his opening remarks Wednesday at the three-day conference, host Saudi King Abdullah reminded his audience - nearly 300 religious, political, and cultural leaders from 50 different countries - of their shared purpose. "If we want this historic encounter to succeed, we must look to the things that unite us: our profound faith in God, the noble principles and elevated ethics that represent the foundation of religions," he said. He linked societal woes like terrorism, racism, crime, drug abuse, and the breakdown of the family to losing touch with religion: "All this is the consequence of the spiritual void that people suffer once they distance themselves from God." Because the conference is being hosted by Saudi Arabia, a country where religious pluralism is not tolerated, enthusiasm for the interfaith venture is tempered with a fair dose of caution. With sessions dedicated to broad themes like "Dialogue and Its Importance within Human Society," few attendees expect concrete gains or proposals to emerge from the gathering. Rather, many stress that the meeting's importance lies with the mere fact that Saudi Arabia is hosting a conference on interfaith dialogue - and, for the first time, has invited Jews to such a meeting.

### **Obama, McCain, and Rick Warren** Sat, 8/16

Boston Globe - 8/17/08

[www.boston.com/news/local/articles\\_of\\_faith/2008/08/rick\\_warren.html](http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles_of_faith/2008/08/rick_warren.html)

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If anyone had any doubt about the influence of Rick Warren, last night provided a remarkable demonstration of his pull -- Barack Obama and John McCain both agreed to submit, one after the other, to televised questions from the evangelical pastor at his church in Orange County, California. There's lots of coverage of the Saddleback event in today's papers. But there is also some critical comment now emerging about Warren's role in the campaign. **Rev. C. Welton Gaddy**, president of Interfaith Alliance and a frequent critic of the role of faith in politics today, praised Warren, but said: "Some of the questions Pastor Warren posed crossed the line and promoted the fiction that the American people are electing a pastor-in-chief, rather than a commander-in-chief. Questions like 'What does it mean to trust in Christ?' create a religious test for public office and should have no place in the political discourse for a secular office. America is the most religiously diverse country in the world, and Christianity is only one of those faith traditions. Millions of voters who tuned in tonight will feel disenfranchised by some of the questions posed in this forum. And both the candidates deserve criticism for engaging in a competition to be 'holier than thou.' The American people want real solutions for real issues. Discussing the personal theology of the candidates does little to elucidate those solutions."

**Report: Religion rivaled race, gender coverage during primaries**

Religion News Service, 08-05-08

<http://www.pewforum.org/news/display.php?NewsID=16206>

Religion rivaled race and gender combined during media coverage of this year's primary campaign season, according to a recent study by the Pew Research Center. Excluding "horse-race" coverage of campaign tactics and strategy, religion accounted for 10 percent of nonpolitical-process coverage, barely trailing race and gender at a combined 11 percent, the report concludes. The spring campaigns featured extraordinary coverage of Sen. Barack Obama's controversial former pastor, Jeremiah Wright, Sen. John McCain's struggle to win over evangelical voters and former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney's Mormon faith. The study, by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life and the Project for Excellence in Journalism, examined more than 13,000 news stories from nearly 50 mainstream news outlets including print, online, network TV, cable and radio covering a 16-month period from January 2007 through April 2008. Religion trailed foreign policy issues (14 percent) and domestic policy issues (26 percent) in non-horse race campaign topics, yet it outpaced race and gender in a year when the Democratic contest was led by a woman, Hillary Clinton, and Obama, a black man. "Indeed, religion could be at least as important in the 2008 presidential campaign as it was in 2000 and 2004," the study states.

**How Long, O Lord, How Long?** 7/27 shooting at UU Congregation, Tennessee

Progressive Revival blogpost by **Rev. Welton Gaddy** - 7/31/08

<http://blog.beliefnet.com/progressiverevival/2008/07/shootings.html>

O God, here we go again, I thought as news wires began to sketch the tragedy played out in Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church last week. My reaction would have been the same had the needless loss of lives occurred in a university, a business office, a government building or elsewhere. The basic ingredients are the same in whatever place the shootings take place--hatred, a gun, grief, and countless questions of why. As a religious leader, I hear most often the question "Why?"--Why did God allow this to happen? Why can we not stop such senseless tragedies? Well, I am not an ombudsman for God dedicated to defending the Almighty's ways. However, I would hope that both religious and non-religious people understand that what happened in that church sanctuary in Tennessee was not about God but about the destructive power of human hatred, the danger of a readily available gun, and irrational actions of prejudice and intolerance spinning out of control. Is there anything we can do to help? Yes, by all means. First, we can grieve with those who are grieving. I do, and my guess is that you do as well. Second, if we pray, we can embrace with our compassionate thoughts and prayers members of that congregation, members of the families of the victims of the shooting, and the family and friends of the man who repeatedly pulled the trigger. Third, we can respond to yet another shooting of innocent people by building public support for legislation that thoughtfully regulates guns and seeks to stop hate crimes. The problem involved in this tragedy as in so many others we have seen lately is not the absence of God but the silence of advocates for laws that can accomplish what will never be the result of good intentions and fond hopes alone.