



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

**Minutes – Meeting of 10/23/2008**

**Attendance:** Mark Lukens, Chair; Hank Around; Paul Auerbach; Ahsan Khan; Marty Melkonian; Jeff Schull; Mumtaz Shafaadt; Deborah Swartz; Ruth Swartz; Dolores Tibbets; Richard Tibbets; Latifa Woodhouse; Kausar Zaman.

Mark Lukens called the meeting to order at 7:45.

**Minutes:** The members waived reading of the minutes from the 9/25/08 meeting and approved them as written.

**Treasurer's Report:** Dolores reported that our current balance is \$1,883.96. This includes new contributions of \$125. Following the Treasurer's report, members voted to authorize a \$500 expenditure for Rev. Mark Lukens, TIA-LI Chairman, to attend the national Interfaith Alliance's annual Cronkite Dinner. Mark will go as our local clergy representative.

**Presidential Debate at Hofstra:** Marty Melkonian reported that activists from numerous progressive organizations came to Hofstra on October 15<sup>th</sup> to listen to speakers supporting the People's Agenda, which called for ending the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, restoring Constitutional rights, and reordering budget priorities to meet human needs.. There were about 600 to 800 activists at its peak, including many members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW).

Unfortunately, as the uniformed veterans staged a peaceful civil disobedience, they were confronted by mounted police, trampling some protestors who were then sent to the hospital. Several groups, including the ACLU and Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives, have called for a meeting with local police to discuss this incident.

For more information about this event:

1. Visit the website [www.longislandpeace.org](http://www.longislandpeace.org), which is the homepage of the Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives
2. Visit the TIA-LI website at [www.interfaithalliance-li.org](http://www.interfaithalliance-li.org) Click on "Presidential Debate at Hofstra" on the TIA-LI homepage

Following his report on the Hofstra rally, Marty noted that Andrew Bacevich had spoken at Hofstra the day before. Bacevich is a former Colonel and a West Point graduate who has written *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism*. As the *Democracy Now!* website states:

*Bacevich argues that although many in this country are paying a heavy price for US domestic and foreign policy decisions, millions of Americans simply continue to shop, spend and satisfy their appetite for cheap oil, credit and the promise of freedom at home.*

Marty also reminded us that the Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives will hold its annual Kairos Dinner on Saturday December 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM. See the Alliance's website at [www.longislandpeace.org](http://www.longislandpeace.org) for details.

**U.S. Attitudes Towards Islam:** TIA members commented on the importance of Colin Powell's reaction to Republican attacks which have claimed that Obama was a Muslim. Powell affirmed the Muslim faith, saying "The really right answer is 'what if he is?'"

Mark noted that we must confront the notion that a Muslim can't be good American. He also said that we should work to develop speaking engagements with various community groups to affirm the fundamental right to religious freedom.

Mumtaz Shafaadt noted that, in addition to differences, there are numerous similarities among Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For example, all three religions share a common history and a common set of prophets. Mumtaz also pointed out that while many people equate Muslims and Arabs, Islam is a global religion. In fact, only a small percentage of Muslims live in the Middle East.

**LaOnf: Iraqi Peace Group:** Following a brief discussion on the three Abrahamic religions, we then watched the DVD *Mesalla: Activists in Iraq*. This film tells the story of LaOnf, which is a network of Iraqi activists building a nonviolence movement to resist occupation, terrorism and corruption in Iraq.

We admired the local activists who are working under such dangerous conditions to bring peace and reconciliation to the various ethnic and religious groups facing stress and violence in their native land.

The Mesalla DVD was about one hour in length. If you would like to learn more about LaOnf, you may view a ten minute YouTube video as follows:

- 1) Go to the website [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)
- 2) Then type LAONF in the Search box and click the  button.
- 3) Then click on the listing "Peaceful Tomorrows Presentation on LaOnf"

Following the DVD, we took photos of the group holding a message of support for LaOnf. You may view the photos at the TIA-LI website, [www.interfaithalliance-li.org](http://www.interfaithalliance-li.org) For more information go to the LaOnf website at [www.laonf.net](http://www.laonf.net) or to the Sept 11<sup>th</sup> Families for Peaceful Tomorrows website at [www.peacefultomorrows.org](http://www.peacefultomorrows.org)

Those interested in viewing the LaOnf DVD can contact Rich Tibbets at 718-343-6823.

### **NEXT INTERFAITH ALLIANCE MEETING**

The next TIA meeting will be

**Thursday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 pm**

at the **Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock (UUCSR)**

48 Shelter Rock Road, Manhasset.

Call (516) 627-6560 for directions to UUCSR, or visit the website [www.uucsr.org](http://www.uucsr.org)

Respectfully submitted,  
Richard Tibbets

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 PM The Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives' 20<sup>th</sup> Annual **Kairos Awards Dinner** at Hofstra University. \$60 per person, \$65 at the door. Visit the L.I. Alliance website at [www.longislandpeace.org](http://www.longislandpeace.org) or call them at 516-741-4360 for details.

Saturday, December 6th. **Stone Soup/The Gospel of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fish:** Join Pax Christi Metro New York and The New Sanctuary Movement for a light supper and some inspiring and informative sharing on the topic of immigration. While still in production, the plan is to incorporate a reading of the classic children's folktale, Stone Soup, and the Gospel of Matthew with a simple meal of soup and bread, a discussion of the issue of immigration as a living example of Stone Soup, and an opportunity for participants to contribute to a symbolic Stone Soup with their contributions of non-perishable food for a soup kitchen.

**Location:** Victoria Congregational Church (UCC),  
144-64 87th Avenue, Jamaica, Queens. (*Time and cost to be announced.*)

For further details, Contact Pax Christi Metro New York:  
[www.nypaxchristi.org](http://www.nypaxchristi.org) (212) 420-0250

Thursday, Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>, 7:30pm. The Shelter Rock Forum presents **Bill Schulz, Executive Director of Amnesty International USA from 1994-2006**

**Location:** The Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock  
48 Shelter Rock Road, Manhasset, NY 11030  
(516) 627-6560 [www.uucsr.org](http://www.uucsr.org)

During his twelve years at Amnesty, Dr. Schulz led missions to Liberia, Tunisia, Northern Ireland, and Sudan and visited other places as diverse as Cuba and Mongolia.

*"William Schulz... has done more than anyone in the American human rights movement to make human rights issues known in the United States." (New York Review of Books, 2002)*

## Religion and Politics in the Media

On its website, the national **Interfaith Alliance** describes itself in part as follows:

*The Interfaith Alliance is equally committed to protecting the integrity of both religion and democracy in America. We champion religious freedom by respecting individual rights, promoting policies that protect both religion and democracy and uniting diverse voices to challenge extremism and build common ground.*

The Interfaith Alliance promotes this cause via its website at [www.interfaithalliance.org](http://www.interfaithalliance.org) as well as through its radio program, **State of Belief**, which you can listen to online at [www.stateofbelief.com](http://www.stateofbelief.com)

You may also listen to the live broadcast of **State of Belief** on WWRL-AM 1600 Sundays 7-8pm (New York City)