



The Interfaith Alliance
LONG ISLAND CHAPTER
www.interfaithalliance-li.org



Minutes – Meeting of 2/18/2010

Attendance: Mark Lukens, Chair; Paul Auerbach; Jay Grosmark; Margaret Melkonian; Marty Melkonian; Elaine Peters; Richard Tibbets.

Mark called the meeting to order at 2:20 pm.

Minutes: Members accepted the January 7th minutes.

Treasurer's Report: For the period January 7th to February 18th we had income of \$25.00, expenses of \$71.96, leaving us with a balance of \$1,141.12

Interfaith Alliance – National Office

- **Conference Call:** Rich reported that he participated in a conference call on January 20th with Interfaith Alliance President Rev. Welton Gaddy, Director of Outreach and Operations Jay Keller, and various local leaders from around the country.
 - Rev. Gaddy said that Interfaith Alliance had faced tough financial times but was able to stay in the black in 2009 while paying off a significant portion of its debt.
 - Priorities for this year,
 - Election year program.
 - Support for the *State of Belief* radio program.
 - Continuation of the LEADD program for high school students.
 - Monitoring of religious liberty issues in the military, including an increase in proselytizing on military bases.
 - Legislative priorities
 - “Employment Non-Discrimination Act”
 - “Workplace Religious Freedom Act.”
 - Monitoring implementation of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act which was signed into law last October.
 - Monitoring *White House Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships*’ distribution of funds to faith based organizations for compliance with separation of church and state requirements.
- Rev. Gaddy will participate in a panel discussion on Church – State issues with representatives of ACLU and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. The discussion will take place on Feb. 24th at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock.
- Rev. Gaddy, in concert with numerous other religious leaders, signed a letter to President Obama urging him to honor his campaign promise to modify the policy of the Bush White House *Faith Based* office by prohibiting religious

discrimination by organizations receiving federal funds. You can read this letter on the Interfaith Alliance website, www.interfaithalliance.org by click on “*The News*,” and then “*Press Releases*” at the top of the website and then clicking on the link “*Coalition Against Religious Discrimination Letter to President Obama*” on the next webpage. The press release was issued Feb. 4th.

Letter to Religious Leaders “End the War in Afghanistan”: Mark and Rich spoke about our efforts in coordination with Pax Christi, the Islamic Center of Long Island, and the Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives to get clergy to sign onto a statement opposing the war in Afghanistan. We have mailed a request for support to approximately 100 Long Island clergy asking them to sign this statement. In addition, we have emailed a request to approximately 75 members and supporters of our Long Island chapter.

You can view this call and the letter to L.I. Clergy at:

www.interfaithalliance-li.org/events/endafghanwar.htm

To show your support for this effort, please send email to:

longislandpeace@gmail.com

and ask them to add your name to this call.

You may also sign-on by contacting:

L.I. Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives
38 Old Country Road
Garden City, NY 11530
(516) 741-4360

Be sure to include your full address, plus phone and email contact info.

In addition, please urge your clergy and/or other religious leaders to do the same.

We are planning a press conference on Friday, March 19th, to publicize this “Call to End the Afghan War,” as well as stop-bys at the offices of our Congressional members to bring attention to this call. Your attendance at these events would be most helpful and appreciated. For details, call the L.I. Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives at 516-741-4360 or send email to longislandpeace@gmail.com

TIA-LI Plans / Goals for 2010: We discussed ways to bring TIA issues to a greater cross-section of the Long Island population. Mark mentioned that TIA-LI used to host panel discussions in the community about church/state issues and civil liberties and suggested that we could re-institute this function. He also suggested that we could incorporate a discussion of the interaction between the war and our nation’s current economic problems. One possibility would be to have the first discussion at a local university campus, then bring it to various houses of worship.

Annual Dues / Questionnaire: We will be sending annual dues notice to members shortly. The dues mailing will also include a questionnaire to obtain some basic information about our members to give us a better understanding of the diversity of our group.

Other TIA Locals: Rich distributed a news article reporting on TIA-Iowa's recent initiative on behalf of marriage equality. The Des Moines Register reported on February 16th that "More than 150 clergy from across Iowa have signed a letter of support for equal marriage rights for same-sex couples." The letter, delivered to lawmakers during a press conference at the Capitol, was signed by clergy from numerous religious traditions.

To read the news article online, go to www.desmoinesregister.com and then type "**Interfaith Alliance of Iowa**" into the search box.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell: Senator Kirsten Gillibrand sent email on February 9th in which she advocated repeal of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. In her message, she stated: "*I believe this discriminatory policy undermines the integrity of our brave men and women who are asked to live a lie.*" Gillibrand also cited Admiral Mike Mullen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's assertion that the policy undermines the integrity of the military.

(Editor's note: The Senate website subsequently reported on March 3rd that Sen. Gillibrand joined a coalition of Senators to introduce legislation, *The Military Readiness Enhancement Act of 2010*, which would repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

National Religious Campaign Against Torture: Paul told us about a new DVD issued by NRCAT and discussed how we might use it to bring attention to the military's use of torture.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Tibbets

NEXT INTERFAITH ALLIANCE MEETING

The next TIA meeting will be:

Thursday, March 18, 2010 at 2:00 PM

at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock (UUCSR)

48 Shelter Rock Road, Manhasset → in the Art Gallery

DIRECTIONS to UUCSR: (516) 627-6560 or visit the website www.uucsr.org

<see next page for other meeting notices>

UPCOMING EVENTS

EVENT: Press Conference and vigils at local Congressional offices to mark the 7th anniversary of Iraq War.
DATE: Friday, March 19th
LOCATION: Mineola Courthouse (TENTATIVE)
Contact L.I. Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives at (516) 741-4360 for time and location

EVENT: Chris Hedges, former *NY Times* foreign correspondent, to speak about his book *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*
DATE: Thursday, March 17, 7:30pm
LOCATION: Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock
48 Shelter Rock Rd, Manhasset.
DIRECTIONS to UUCSR: (516) 627-6560 or visit the website www.uucsr.org

EVENT: Drop the Rock Advocacy Day
DATE: Tuesday, March 16, 2010.
LOCATION: On this day hundreds of New Yorkers will unite in Albany to call for criminal justice reforms including prison closures, full repeal of the Rockefeller Drug Laws, and reinvestment in our communities.
For details, contact Caitlin Dunklee, Drop the Rock Coordinator at 212-254-5700 or send email to cdunklee@correctionalassociation.org