



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



Minutes – Meeting of 3/18/2010

Attendance: Mark Lukens, Chair; Hank Arond, Ronnie Arond, Joyce Gorycki, Jay Grosmark, Ethel Hurvitz, Annette McLinden, Marty Melkonian, Elaine Peters, Jim Peters, Dolores Tibbets, Richard Tibbets, Christina Vaccarino.

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

Minutes: Members accepted the February 18th minutes.

Treasurer's Report: For the period February 18th to March 18th, we had no income and incurred expenses of \$137.87, leaving us with a balance of \$1,003.25. Expenses were for maintenance of the TIA-LI website and for name badges for TIA-LI members who attended the February 24th event at UUCSR featuring Interfaith Alliance President Welton Gaddy and others discussing the current status of the separation of church and state.

Dolores also reported that we would be soon mailing our annual dues notices. The dues notice will include a brief questionnaire designed to gain a better understanding of the religious diversity of our membership

TIA-LI Mourns Loss of Norma Cohen: Several members spoke about our dear Norma Cohen, who died on Friday, February 19th. Norma was a dynamo and will be sorely missed. Mark posted a moving remembrance, "Saying Goodbye to an Authentic Hero," on his blog at www.interfaithalliance-li.blogspot.com/

You may also read the condolences posted by Interfaith Alliance's national president Rev. Welton Gaddy at <http://www.interfaithalliance.org/>

Jay Grosmark suggested that TIA-LI create an annual award in Norma's memory to be given to an individual who helps to promote the causes for which Norma so valiantly worked.

Interfaith Alliance – National Office

The National Office sent email to let locals know that they are working with the Department of Justice through the Hate Crimes Coalition to improve the reporting and training on Hate Crimes prevention. They also gave us links to the relevant Training and Reporting Manuals.

Interfaith Alliance continues to be concerned about the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Our National Office was one of many signers of a letter from the *Coalition Against Religious Discrimination* to President Obama calling on him to prohibit religious discrimination in hiring by religious organizations which receive federal funds and to establish additional policies to assure that this Office complies with constitutional restrictions on religious freedom. You can see the full text of this letter at www.interfaithalliance.org Then

click *The News* button near top of page, then select *Press Releases*. Scroll down and click on the *item* “*Coalition Against Religious Discrimination Letter to President Obama.*”

Mark pointed out that a test case involving the Salvation Army is currently working its way through the federal court system. The Newsweek / Washington Post blog reports that the NYCLU claimed Salvation Army was using tax money to impose religion on the children it served. The judge wrote, “Government aid to religious organizations may not be diverted to religious purposes,…” You can read the full story at:

http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/undergod/2010/02/when_government_enlists_the_salvation_army.html

Religious Leaders Against the War: Some TIA members will join with L.I. Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives, Pax Christi, and others in a press conference at the County Center in Mineola to call for an end to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Mark Lukens will make a statement to the press, as will Margaret Melkonian, Sr. Jeanne Clark, Habeeb Ahmed, and Greg Maney. The conference will be held on Friday, March 19th.

Future of TIA-LI: We had an extended discussion regarding future plans for TIA-LI. A key concern is the need to focus the public’s attention on such issues as Church-State relations, hate crimes, and infringement upon civil liberties. We also discussed having speakers from TIA-LI address local groups such as universities and colleges, houses of worship, seminaries, as well as libraries.

A sub-committee was formed to put together a plan to implement some of the suggestions from today’s meeting.

Media Update: We had a brief discussion about conservative commentator Glenn Beck, who, the *New York Times* reported, “called on Christians to leave their churches if they hear preaching about social or economic justice, saying they were code words for Communism and Nazism.” Beck’s remarks were widely criticized by numerous religious leaders since caring for people in need is a central focus of most religions. Mark noted that Beck’s words have even embarrassed many of his supporters among conservative religious organizations.

Rich asked TIA-LI members to keep him posted on news reports about issues of concern to our group, especially state/church issues, interfaith issues, hate crimes against racial, religious, or sexual orientation minorities. Please let him know the source of any such reports. You can contact Rich at richard.tibbets@verizon.net

Member News: Joyce Gorycki told us that she has been honored by Senator Craig Johnson with the “Women of Distinction” award for those who have made contributions to the 7th Senatorial District as well as to the Long Island community at large. Joyce was recognized for her efforts to strengthen gun control in New York State.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Tibbets

NEXT INTERFAITH ALLIANCE MEETING

The next TIA meeting will be:

Thursday, April 22, 2010 at 7:30 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

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

EVENT:	Community Forum on Budget Choices: Impact of Cuts and Deficits on Long Island
DATE:	Wednesday, April 14 th , 2:00 to 4:00 PM
LOCATION:	Leo A. Guthart Theater, Axinn Library Hofstra University
	Introduction by Margaret Melkonian, Director, LI Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives
Panelists:	Jo Comerford, Executive Director, National Priorities Project Jean Kelly, Executive Director, Interfaith Nutrition Network Rev. Mark Lukens, Chair, Interfaith Alliance, Long Island Chapter
RSVP required	516-463-5595 – Hofstra Economics, or 516-741-4360 or longislandpeace@gmail.com

EVENT:	Grassroots and Religious Outreach Training Presented by Rev. Barry Lynn, Executive Director
DATE:	Saturday, April 17 th , 12:00 noon – 5:30pm To be followed by a Reception from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm.
LOCATION:	Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock (UUCSR) 48 Shelter Rock Road, Manhasset
RSVP required	Please RSVP to Claire Deroche at 516-627-6560, ext. 177 if you wish to attend this training.

This event is free and open to the public.

Rev. Lynn will also speak at UUCSR 7:00 pm on the same date, (Saturday, April 17th).
His topic will be: “*The State of Church-State Separation in America.*”