



San Francisco Interfaith Council

*Celebrating our diverse faiths & spiritual traditions
Bringing people together to build understanding
Serving our community*

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Accomplishments and Plans of the San Francisco Interfaith Council

2016 – 2017

OUR MISSION

History teaches us that many of the world's conflicts are rooted in religious strife. Founded in 1988, the San Francisco Interfaith Council (SFIC) seeks to counter this history and promote interfaith harmony by "*Celebrating our diverse faiths and spiritual traditions, bringing people together to build understanding and serving our community.*"

WHOM WE SERVE

We count as our constituents the 800 congregations in San Francisco, their respective judicatories, sectarian educational and healthcare institutions, as well as the faith-based social service agencies that provide the social safety net for our most vulnerable residents.

OUR WORK

Since the late 1980s, the SFIC has worked to combat homelessness and help prepare the City for disasters. While these efforts continue, we also address social justice issues, such as religious tolerance, housing affordability, immigration, and racial/ethnic equity. Strong relationships allow us to mobilize the faith community for united community service and advocacy, achieving together what no single congregation could achieve by itself. In addition, government and civic leaders view us as the "go to" agency when seeking input or action from the faith community.

ONGOING PROGRAMS

Monthly Breakfast

Each month on the second Thursday, the SFIC hosts a free public interfaith breakfast at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in San Francisco where 100 congregational and lay leaders network and share a meal. Speakers from a variety of City departments, civic agencies, NGOs and philanthropic programs discuss their important work, ask faith communities to help spread the word, and offer volunteer opportunities for congregants. An individual gives a "meditation" from his or her religious tradition, and another presents a personal "faith journey."

Navigation Center

The SFIC facilitated a gift of \$3 million to set up and operate the new Navigation Center at 1950 Mission Street, a pioneering approach to combating homelessness. The Center is unique among homeless shelters in the City in allowing homeless adults to maintain existing relationships. The Center accommodates couples, friends, even entire homeless encampments at once, permitting people to stay with their community, keep their pets, and bring along their belongings. This approach recognizes the important role that social and emotional connections play in recovery.

The Navigation Center provides comprehensive services. It provides beds, showers and meals at one location where staff are on hand 24/7 to assess the clients' needs for health care, substance abuse and mental health treatment; help them access benefits; and move them expeditiously into stable housing and rehabilitation programs, or reunite them with their families through the successful Homeward Bound program. One million is set aside for leasing Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units, where clients will move from the Navigation Center and continue to receive support services. The Navigation Center shelters up to 75 clients who stay three to ten days before moving to housing or residential treatment.

Many agencies contribute to the Center's operation. Episcopal Community Services is the lead on-site service provider, assisted by the newly formed Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing, Department of Public Health, Project Homeless Connect and others. The Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing takes the lead on SRO master leasing. Other key partners are the Mayor's Office, the Mayor's Office of Housing, the Planning Department, the Department of Building Inspection, the Department of Animal Care and Control, Recreation and Parks Department, and Adult Probation.

The Navigation Center is a pilot program designed to operate for 18 months or less. The City plans to develop affordable housing on the site, supporting Mayor Lee's goal of building or rehabilitating 30,000 homes over six years, with half for low and middle-income San Francisco residents.

In addition to the SFIC's fiduciary reporting responsibility to the donor and its coordinated effort to enlist congregations to prepare and serve "Sunday Suppers" at the facility, the Mayor's Office continues to engage the SFIC in an advisory capacity as well as a resource to help identify sites for additional future Navigation Centers.

San Francisco Interfaith Winter Shelter

For 28 years, the SFIC has sponsored and coordinated an Interfaith Winter Shelter for the homeless. This shelter provides a hot, nutritious dinner, breakfast and a safe, warm overnight rest for some 100 homeless men every night from the Sunday before Thanksgiving through the end of February. The SFIC coordinates four host-site congregations, 40 meal-providing congregations, shelter staff from Episcopal Community Services and the San Francisco Night Ministry, with input from the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing.

Last year, the shelter was extended into April due to the El Nino storms and the need to shelter homeless residents displaced from encampments on Division Street. The City has recently asked the SFIC to continue this year's shelter through the end of April 2017.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Observance and Interfaith Service

For six years the SFIC has organized the City's annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day observance, including a popular march and interfaith service. The march proceeds from the CalTrain terminal over the Lefty O'Doul Bridge to Yerba Buena Gardens (YBG), bringing together "freedom riders" from the South Bay and others from the wider Bay Area. This march pays tribute to the 1965 crossing made by Dr. King over the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. Once at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial at YBG, a large crowd participates in the outdoor interfaith service organized by the SFIC to celebrate Dr. King's legacy. Key religious and civic leaders address the crowd.

With a mini-grant from the FAITHS Program of The San Francisco Foundation, the SFIC and the University of San Francisco convened a half-day symposium to complement the 2016 MLK Day Observance. At the symposium, scholars, activists and faith leaders examined the role of faith communities in the Civil Rights Movement and explored ways for faith communities to re-engage with current issues of racial injustice.

Implicit Bias for Congregation Leaders

In early November congregation leaders attended a highly interactive course exploring emerging research in neuroscience, leadership and decision-making. Brain imaging studies were used to explain how we lead in faith communities and build relationships across boundaries. The course pinpointed the areas where behaviors, attitudes, and practices can be affected by unconscious processes and subtleties. The course reviewed how unconscious decision-making can affect assessments of character, morality, warmth, authenticity, intelligence, threat, and competence. Participants learned how empathizing with those from other communities, collaborating with congregants, and implementing new practices can all be helped or hurt by conditioned dispositions. The course identified ways to increase fairness guided by science.

Biennial Disaster Preparedness Workshop for Congregations

Last May at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption, the SFIC hosted the 6th Biennial Disaster Preparedness Workshop for Congregations entitled "*Crisis to Resilience: Congregations Understanding and Responding to Climate Change Impacts.*" Our partners in this event were the American Red Cross Bay Area Chapter, Archdiocese of San Francisco, California Interfaith Power & Light, Neighborhood

Empowerment Network, SF CARD (Community Agencies Responding to Disaster), SF Department of Emergency Management, SF Department of Public Health, SF Human Services Agency, The Salvation Army, and The San Francisco Foundation.

San Francisco is one of a hundred "Resilient Cities" around the nation. As a key partner in disaster preparedness, response and recovery, the SFIC works with San Francisco's Chief Resiliency Officer, Patrick Otellini, and other stakeholders to develop a resiliency plan for San Francisco. The SFIC also works on a pilot project with the City encouraging Mission District congregations to operate as emergency shelters during disasters.

WinterFaith Shelter Walk

Each year the SFIC hosts a "walk against hunger" around Lake Merced. Proceeds from the walk are used to defray the cost of operating the Interfaith Winter Shelter. This year's Walk was scheduled for October 30 but was cancelled due to inclement weather and safety concerns for our walkers. Nonetheless, sponsorships and pledges raised over \$18,000 for the shelter. The inclement weather was a powerful reminder of conditions faced by the homeless on our streets, and our duty to shelter and feed them.

Annual "Bike to Worship" Week

The SFIC partners with the SF Bicycle Coalition to promote "*Bike to Worship*," an opportunity that encourages congregants to pedal to their worship services. Employing its large communications network, the SFIC helps to spread the word, share the free "BIKE TO WORSHIP Toolkit," and enlist registrants. This year the SF Bicycle Coalition and Walk San Francisco (an organization whose focus is pedestrian safety) joined forces for "*Walk & Bike to Worship*" Week from May 21 - May 29, 2016. It was an enormous success with 25 congregations participating and included the "2nd Annual Interfaith Ride."

Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast

Our major event of the year is the SFIC Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast, attended by 400 people on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. Each year we shine the spotlight on a significant contribution made by the faith community to San Francisco. At the 18th Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast on November 24, 2015 our theme was "*Faith and Sanctuary: There Are No Strangers*." We honored congregations who helped San Francisco become a Sanctuary City, recognized those who continue the tradition, and highlighted young people for whom the City's commitment has provided hope and safety. Featured at the Prayer Breakfast was a brief documentary entitled, "*Sanctuary Movement: A Short History*," produced by documentary filmmaker, Theo Rigby. The SFIC now serves as fiscal sponsor for Mr. Rigby's full-length documentary.

At the 19th Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast on November 22, 2016 our theme was "*The Soul of the City: Faith and Social Justice in San Francisco*." We honored Kat Taylor and Tom Steyer for their faith-based leadership in social justice and San Francisco congregations for their tireless work in realizing a more just society.

Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Day Service

Each year, the SFIC sponsors San Francisco's only Interfaith Thanksgiving Day Service which brings together people of diverse faiths for prayer and thanksgiving. Last year the Interfaith Thanksgiving Day Service was hosted by the historic Baha'i Community of San Francisco in the Mission District.

The 12th Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Day Service on Thursday, November 24, 2016 will be hosted by the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church. The offering collected at this service is used to offset the costs of the Interfaith Winter Shelter.

Annual Interfaith World AIDS Day Service

For the past several years, the SFIC has collaborated with St. Mark's Lutheran Church in co-hosting the City's only Interfaith World AIDS Day Service.

This year's service, "*Where Is Our Hope,*" is scheduled for Sunday, December 4, 2016 at Congregation Sha'ar Zahav and will be organized by Calvary Presbyterian Church, Old First Presbyterian Church, St. Mark's Lutheran Church and the SFIC.

Annual Interfaith Memorial for the Homeless Dead

Every December, collaborating with the SF Night Ministry, the SFIC hosts the "*Interfaith Memorial for the Homeless Dead*" at the Civic Center. Religious leaders of different faiths offer prayers for the homeless who have died during the past year, and their names are read. This year's memorial service will take place on Wednesday evening, December 21, 2016 at the Civic Center Plaza.

Annual Interfaith Calendar

Interfaith harmony begins with mutual understanding and respect among faiths. Each year the SFIC produces and distributes widely a calendar of religious holidays of the major world religions. This resource has helped sensitize the San Francisco Unified School District, schools of the SF Archdiocese, various agencies of City government, and the Consular Corps to important religious observances and has helped avoid scheduling conflicts.

Convener of Faith-Based Social Service Agencies ("CEO Roundtable")

For the past seven years, the SFIC has regularly convened the leaders of the 12 major faith-based agencies, providing a forum for exchanging ideas and addressing issues directly affecting agency clients. Seven years ago, San Francisco was in a very different economic place. Deep cuts in the City's budget forced these agencies to cut staff and programs, and the CEO Roundtable convened for the first time to coordinate an effective response to the City. When the tech boom created prosperity for the City, these agency budgets were never fully restored. Again, the CEO Roundtable was able to speak with a unified voice, reminding the City of the vital role the agencies play in protecting our most vulnerable residents. This coalition also alerted the City to the effect of the boom's "affordability crisis" not only on clients but also on nonprofits and their staff who lost office space and housing. Further, the work of the CEO Roundtable and the City's religious leaders was critical for passage of the \$310 million Housing Affordability General Obligation Bond ballot measure. None of this work could have been done by any single agency and today, the CEO Roundtable is an established stakeholder at policy-making tables.

Crisis Response Communications

It has been the ongoing practice of the SFIC to issue statements, either on behalf of the SFIC Board of Directors or in collaboration with key faith leaders, on occasions when extremists act violently in the name of religion. In the past 27 months the following statements were issued:

SFIC and Religious Leaders Speak Out Against ISIS Religious Persecution (9/17/2014)
SFIC Condemns Vicious Anti-Muslim Bus Ads (10/16/2014)
SFIC Issues Social Justice Statement (3/12/2015)
SF Faith Leaders Respond to Racist Acts of Violence and Destruction (7/2/2015)
Church Desecration Denounced by Coalition of SF Faith Groups (9/2/2015)
SF Faith Leaders Denounce Anti-Muslim Hate Speech (12/11/2015)
SF Communities of Faith Share in Grief of Orlando Massacre (6/13/2016)
Communities of Faith Issue Statements in the Aftermath of the 6/12/2016 Orlando Massacre (6/22/2016)
SF Communities of Faith Mourn Victims of Istanbul Terrorist Attack (6/30/2016)
All Lives Are Precious and Irreplaceable (7/8/2016)
SFIC Statement of Support for Pacifica Institute (10/13/2016)

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks at the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine and anti-semitic killings in Paris, the SFIC, Jewish Community Relations Council, and Islamic Networks Group (ING) sent an interfaith delegation to the Consul General of France in San Francisco, to express concern and offer support from San Francisco's diverse faith communities.

Following the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015, the SFIC leadership participated in a moving interfaith service for peace at Calvary Presbyterian Church.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

El Nino Planning and Outreach

Last year, the City engaged the SFIC in the early stages of planning its response to the anticipated El Nino storms. SFIC Executive Director Michael Pappas participated in all stakeholder sessions hosted by the SF Department of Emergency Management, and facilitated sessions with City department heads and the Faith-Based Social Service Agency CEO Roundtable. The SFIC held a "Monthly Breakfast" devoted to storm precautions for congregations, diligently worked with City officials to identify emergency shelter sites, and utilized our broad-reaching communications network to provide alerts and updated information to congregations. In addition, the SFIC extended the Interfaith Winter Shelter by an additional five weeks, as requested by the City.

Collaboration with the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA)

As San Francisco braces itself for a significant increase in residential and corporate building, the impact new structures and increased inhabitants will have on our City's transit system is a growing concern. Over the past two years the SFMTA, in collaboration with the SFIC, has engaged congregations along the Dolores/Guerrero Streets corridor to help address issues related to median parking in that neighborhood. As a result of those efforts, the SFMTA Board of Directors recently voted to institute a pilot study along that corridor. Recognizing the SFIC's role as advocate for its constituent congregations,

the Director of the SFMTA has initiated a regular, bi-monthly “check-in” with the SFIC Executive Director regarding the impact of SFMTA policies on faith communities throughout the City.

Convener of the “SF Interfaith Essential Housing Task Force”

With the growing scarcity of housing and skyrocketing rents, low paid/middle income workers who provide essential services for the City are leaving San Francisco. By developing religious institutions’ underutilized parcels for affordable rental housing, our faith communities will help stop the outmigration of our essential services workers.

The SFIC convened the City’s key religious leaders and the CEOs of the major faith-based social service agencies on September 11, 2014, for the purpose of developing a response to income inequality and the housing affordability crisis. At that meeting, the group decided to form the "SF Interfaith Essential Housing Task Force." The Task Force agreed to work with the City to identify parcels of property owned by religious institutions that could be developed for rental housing, using private funding, for low paid workers who provide essential services to the City. These employees work in the fields of health care, social services, education and the arts, and public safety.

SF Mayor Ed Lee directed staff in the Mayor's Office of Housing and the SF Office of Economic and Workforce Development to advise the Task Force on its mapping efforts, site recommendations, and funding strategies and to make introductions to prospective developers. A select number of parcels have been identified and are currently under serious consideration for development.

In addition, during the 2015 election cycle, the City asked the SF Interfaith Essential Housing Task Force to endorse and advocate for passage of a \$310 million Housing Affordability General Obligation Bond. Due in part to the Task Force’s diligent efforts, the measure was approved.

San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship

After the 2010 Census, San Francisco learned that approximately 100,000 people living in the City were legal permanent residents who were eligible for citizenship. In 2012, the City’s Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA), and several foundations including The San Francisco Foundation, formed the San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship ("SF Pathways"). SF Pathways is a "one stop shop" designed to encourage citizenship-eligible residents to naturalize. Numerous eligible residents do not apply for citizenship because of costly applications, lack of legal services, communication barriers, and fear. SF Pathways responds to these obstacles by offering innovative, cost-efficient, large group processing workshops for residents.

A grant received from The San Francisco Foundation engaged the SFIC to bolster the work of SF Pathways through its longstanding relationships with faith communities. The SFIC was called upon to effectively educate congregations and their citizenship-eligible congregants about SF Pathways, and readily recruit congregational volunteers and highly skilled legal experts to help at the workshops. This entailed tapping into the SFIC’s broad network of contacts to promote SF Pathways, devoting an “SFIC Monthly Breakfast” to educating about the workshops and most importantly engaging in focused recruitment at the University of San Francisco Law School and other academic entities to identify and secure legal experts for participation in the program.

Commonwealth Club of California

The SFIC's Executive Director has moderated several panels for the Commonwealth Club's Middle East Forum. Last February Michael Pappas moderated a presentation by human rights activist and author, Rebecca Tinsley, who talked about a project, *Waging for Peace*, which she started after visiting a Darfur refugee camp at the height of the killing there. In August Pappas moderated a panel of representatives of the Abrahamic faiths as they discussed their views on protecting the earth, caring for the environment, and combating climate change.

Broad Civic Engagement

Because of the important stakeholder role the SFIC plays in many arenas, the SFIC has been invited to take a place at many tables. Executive Director Michael Pappas currently serves on the SF Human Rights Commission, the SF Disaster Council, and The San Francisco Foundation FAITHS Leadership Council.

The accomplishments listed above are the work of two full-time staff (Executive Director, Michael Pappas and Program/Administrative Associate, Cynthia Zamboukos), an active Board of Directors, the tireless volunteer efforts of our Past Chair, Rita R. Semel, and other dedicated volunteers. We gratefully acknowledge the funding provided by congregations, judicatories, agencies, individuals, and foundations which makes these achievements and others not listed here possible.