



18th Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast

Hotel Kabuki

Tuesday, November 24, 2015

Remarks by Michael G. Pappas, Executive Director

Good morning everybody and welcome! My name is Michael Pappas and for over eight years I have had the privilege of serving as the Executive Director of the San Francisco Interfaith Council.

Before I say another word, may I ask you to put your hands together and through your applause say a special thank you to our friends at the Hotel Kabuki, Rick, Juan and the incredible wait staff of local 2!!!

Headlines and social media posts remind us that so many of the world's conflicts are rooted in religious strife. Here in San Francisco we are seeking to defy logic and do locally what is seemingly impossible to do on the global stage. We are all about the business of peace building and fostering good, healthy and strong relationships among faiths.

With our constituency of over 800 congregations, their respective judicatories, religiously founded educational and healthcare institutions, as well as the faith-based social service agencies that provide the social safety net for our most vulnerable residents, the San Francisco Interfaith Council has emerged as that “go-to” organization that has proven its ability to mobilize the religious communities of our City, provide resources, referral and representation and far exceed the meaningful contributions we initially made and continue to make in our core missions of responding to homelessness and disasters. Most importantly, we bring the religious community together to address areas of need and observance in ways no individual religious tradition can do on its own.

With over a quarter of a century of cultivated and trusted relationships the Council has earned the ear and respect of those in decision-making authority and has been engaged as a significant stakeholder as important social policies are deliberated and incubated.

This year has been no exception. In addition to undertaking our many regular programs, with the confidence of our Mayor, we received a \$3 million dollar donation and played an integral role in funding a new and innovative approach to responding to homelessness called the Navigation Center. As partners in the City’s effort to address the housing affordability, we are not only mobilizing faith leaders

and social service agency heads to identify properties owned by religious institutions that could potentially be developed for rental units for low paid workers that provide essential services, but also endorsed and tirelessly advocated for the passage of Prop A, the \$310 million dollar Housing Affordability General Obligation Bond. Working closely with Director Anne Kronenberg and her team at the Department of Emergency Management, we've briefed our social service agencies, the San Francisco Food Bank and congregation leaders on the projected impact and important role they will play in providing respite for those on our streets when the anticipated El Nino storms hit.

All of this we've accomplished with a bare bones budget, humble office space, only two full-time staff, an indefatigable 94 year-old founder, an incredibly supportive and hard-working Board of Directors and generous contributors, many of whom surround these tables, at this sacred, albeit very early hour. By virtue of your presence here this morning, we count each and every one of you as partners in our important work and invite you to join us at our monthly breakfasts, seasonal events and add your names to our 4,000 e-subscribers, thus allowing us to keep you apprised of how you can more meaningfully benefit from and contribute to edifying our City's rich interfaith fabric.

It is our sincere hope that each of you will be inspired and spiritually moved by what you experience at this morning's gathering and consider yourselves part of our interfaith family. In that spirit, the San Francisco Interfaith Council humbly asks for your continued collective prayers, from your many and rich traditions, for the advancement our mission of "*Celebrating our diverse faiths and spiritual traditions, bringing people together to build understanding and serving our community.*"

THANK YOU!