



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

CONVENING, COMMUNICATING, AND ADVOCACY

The San Francisco Interfaith Council's work centers on civil rights, homelessness, housing affordability, and disaster preparedness. The SFIC convenes and amplifies the voice of our city's faith-based community on these important issues.

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 historical trend by "*Celebrating our diverse faiths and spiritual traditions, bringing people together to build understanding and serving our community.*"

WHO WE SERVE

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

OUR WORK

During this time of social change in San Francisco, civic leaders and the public view the SFIC as the "go-to" organization for mobilizing our City's religious communities. Congregations and faith-based agencies turn to us for resources, referral and representation. Our robust relationships and communications network of over 4,000 e-subscribers allow the SFIC to bring together and mobilize San Francisco's faith-based community to create an effective, combined force for service and issues of public policy, so that we may accomplish together what no single congregation can alone.

ONGOING PROGRAMS

Monthly Breakfast

For over 15 years the SFIC has hosted a free public interfaith breakfast on the second Thursday of each month 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." To appreciate the substantive presentations made we would invite you to visit the following link: <https://goo.gl/eovyKD>

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.

The overwhelming success of this pilot has had significant outcomes. Appreciating the inter-disciplinary collaboration inherent in the design of the Navigation Center model, more specifically the streamlining of services to clients, Mayor Lee subsequently established the new Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. Additionally, the Navigation Center concept quickly became a model for the nation and was so embraced by city government that it catalyzed its replication in numerous neighborhoods.

San Francisco Interfaith Winter Shelter

Entering our 29th year, 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, 50 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.

At the request of the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing the Interfaith Winter Shelter was able to remain open through the end of March 2017. Extending this year's shelter was made possible, in large part, thanks to our partners at Episcopal Community Services and congregations who volunteered to prepare and serve meals.

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

For seven 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 attendees.

The theme highlighted at this year's Interfaith Prayer Service was "Today's Youth ... Tomorrow's Leaders." Young people of diverse religious, ethnic and racial backgrounds were selected to be chief participants in the service. In addition, special recognition was paid to Carletta Jackson-Lane, J.D., Executive Director of Sojourner Truth Foster Family Service Agency, Mattie Scott, Founder and Executive Director of Healing 4 Our Families & Our Nation, and Elizabeth Torres, Administrative Advisor for Healing 4 Our Families & Our Nation. Program may be viewed at: <https://goo.gl/ezieRw>

Implicit Bias for Congregation Leaders

On November 4, 2016 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

In May 2016 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. Program may be viewed at: <https://goo.gl/DokvNp>

Plans are underway for the 7th Biennial Disaster Preparedness Workshop for Congregations to be held in the Spring of 2018.

SFIC Executive Director Michael Pappas was invited to make a presentation on the significance and role of communities of faith in the midst of disaster at the Epicenter 2017 Summit, an interactive and experiential learning environment with a unique focus on real world scenarios. He also presented at the San Francisco Joint Counter Terrorism Awareness Workshop in July 2016, a nationwide initiative designed to improve the ability of local jurisdictions to prepare for, protect against, and respond to terrorist attacks.

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. Last year’s Walk was scheduled for October 30, 2016 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.

It was decided by both the Planning Committee in concert with the SFIC Board of Directors that the next WinterFaith Shelter Walk should be scheduled for the Spring of 2018.

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. Once again, 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 27 – June 4, 2017. It was an enormous success with 28 congregations participating and included the “3rd 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 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. Program may be viewed at: <https://goo.gl/8kt2ic>

At the milestone 20th Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Prayer Breakfast on November 21, 2017 the theme will focus on “*Communities of Faith Sowing the Seeds of Education in our City*,” at which we will honor philanthropist Clint Reilly for his efforts in pioneering the “Bay Scholars” program that enables promising low-income students to have access to and flourish in our City’s faith-based high schools. We will also be recognizing and honoring the significant role communities of faith continue to play in offering educational opportunities to our City’s young people.

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. The 12th Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Day Service on Thursday, November 24, 2016 was hosted by the San Francisco Swedenborgian Church. The offering collected at this service is used to offset the costs of the Interfaith Winter Shelter. Program may be viewed at: <https://goo.gl/WoPNzP>

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 Our Hope Is*,” was held on Sunday, December 4, 2016 at Congregation Sha’ar Zahav and was organized by Calvary Presbyterian Church, Old First Presbyterian Church, St. Mark’s Lutheran Church and the SFIC. Program may be viewed at: <https://goo.gl/ECdUFR>

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 took place on Wednesday evening, December 21, 2016 at the Civic Center Plaza. Program may be viewed at: <https://goo.gl/7Csgg1>

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 eight years, the SFIC has regularly convened the leaders of the 15 major faith-based agencies to provide a forum to address issues of common concern. The SFIC promotes the agencies’ collective impact and advocates on their behalf to increase the visibility of the economic challenges faced by non-profits and their clients. Since 2009 the CEO Roundtable has responded with a significant unified voice to issues ranging from dramatic budget cuts and their impact on programs and staff, to San Francisco’s affordability crisis that prompted the displacement of numerous constituent agencies. Currently, focus is being placed on the attraction and retention of staff in light of shrinking availability and soaring housing costs. As well, the Roundtable is developing a strategic response to the significant shift in federal policy priorities and the threat of funding cuts. None of this work could be accomplished by any single agency. Its continued impact has established the CEO Roundtable as a major stakeholder at policy-making tables. For a list of the faith-based agencies please visit: <http://www.sfinterfaithcouncil.org/social-service-agencies>

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 chronological order from the most current, the SFIC has issued the following statements. Access to the complete texts is available by visiting: <http://www.sfinterfaithcouncil.org/social-justice-statements>

Bay Area Muslims Condemn Attacks on Coptic Christians SF Chronicle Op Ed (4/17/2017)
SF Religious Leaders Denounce Massacre of Coptic Christians (4/11/2017)
A Message from SFIC Founder and Former Chair Rita R. Semel (2/27/2017)
SFIC Joins Interfaith Partners Nationwide in Support of Our Muslim Neighbors (1/27/2017)
SFIC Denounces Bomb Threats at Bay Area Jewish Schools (1/19/2017)
SF Bay Area Faith Leaders Denounce Incidents of Hate Targeting Religion (12/1/2016)
SFIC Statement of Support for Pacifica Institute (10/13/2016)
All Lives Are Precious and Irreplaceable (7/8/2016)
SF Communities of Faith Mourn Victims of Istanbul Terrorist Attack (6/30/2016)
Communities of Faith Issue Statements in the Aftermath of the 6/12/2016 Orlando Massacre (6/22/2016)
SF Communities of Faith Share in Grief of Orlando Massacre (6/13/2016)
SF Faith Leaders Denounce Anti-Muslim Hate Speech (12/11/2015)
Church Desecration Denounced by Coalition of SF Faith Groups (9/2/2015)
SF Faith Leaders Respond to Racist Acts of Violence and Destruction (7/2/2015)
SFIC Issues Social Justice Statement (3/12/2015)
SFIC Condemns Vicious Anti-Muslim Bus Ads (10/16/2014)
SFIC and Religious Leaders Speak Out Against ISIS Religious Persecution (9/17/2014)

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

Interfaith Blessing: Topping Off Celebration of Salesforce Tower (April 6, 2017)

Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff extended the invitation to the SFIC to offer an interfaith blessing on the occasion of the "Topping Off" of the new Salesforce Tower, currently under construction. This edifice will be the second tallest structure west of the Mississippi River. Six prominent faith leaders offered prayers from their respective traditions. Together, a final blessing for all who undertook this monumental effort as well as for those who will labor and visit the structure was prayed in unison by those clergy. An account of this event and the role played by the SFIC's director and constituent leaders may be found in this article published that afternoon by the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Please visit: <https://goo.gl/jkJuex>

Special Briefing for SF Lay and Congregation Leaders by SFPD Chief William "Bill" Scott

In recognition of the important role communities of faith play in fostering healthy and constructive neighborhood relationships, the newly appointed Chief of the San Francisco Police Department, William "Bill" Scott, accepted the SFIC's invitation to address and answer questions of our City's faith leaders. This exchange, which took place on May 5, 2017 at Congregation Emanu-El, was an opportunity for Chief Scott to outline his priorities for SFPD engagement with the community as well as to report on measures the force is taking in response to the currently issued Department of Justice report. For SFIC invitation to this briefing please visit: <https://goo.gl/oZCjCm>

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 three 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 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.

Most currently, the real estate consulting team collaborating with the Task Force is both preparing feasibility and financial analyses on the properties under consideration as well as developing realistic funding strategies and options that will make these sites viable prospects for streamlined development.

Immigration Defense Fund

With a dramatic departure from existing immigration policy at the federal level, congregations and religious based non-profits and academic institutions have emerged as leaders in the effort to provide support and services to vulnerable immigrants whose residency status in our nation has been threatened.

On March 2, 2017 Mayor Edwin M. Lee announced that the City and County of San Francisco in partnership with the SFIC would launch a new funding program that would provide resources and support to non-profit community-based organizations serving immigrant communities. The SFIC identified as key priorities for the distribution of funds, those institutions whose missions and activities include: 1) protective and legal services; 2) workshops and trainings; and 3) support for those young people registered in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The full text of this communiqué may be found by visiting: <https://goo.gl/p2ny5p>

Additionally, the SFIC partnered with key non-profits in co-sponsoring the following panels and forums:

- Free Citizenship Workshop (12/3/2016) <https://goo.gl/GbS3AJ>
- Immigration Now Workshop at Grace Cathedral (4/20/2017) <https://goo.gl/c7jjoR>
- Free Citizenship Workshop (4/22/2017) <https://goo.gl/jsghZn>
- New Sanctuary Panel at St. Agnes Parish (5/25/2017) <https://goo.gl/eKSuhB>

Commonwealth Club of California

The SFIC's Executive Director has moderated several panels for the Commonwealth Club's Middle East Forum. In February 2016, Michael Pappas moderated a presentation by human rights activist and author, Rebecca Tinsley, who talked about a project, "*Waging Peace: Why Genocide Keeps Happening*," which started after visiting a Darfur refugee camp at the height of the killing there (Podcast: <https://goo.gl/DrrQp3>). In August 2016 Pappas moderated a panel of representatives of the Abrahamic faiths as they discussed their views on protecting the earth, caring for the environment, and combatting climate change (Podcast: <https://goo.gl/rhU7BK>).

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.