



**“Peace Sunday” with Mayor Edwin Lee
and the Rev. Jesse Jackson**

Sunday, December 9, 2012

Remarks by Michael G. Pappas, Executive Director

Mayor Lee, Rev. Jackson, colleagues and fellow San Francisco, the theme of today’s gathering, “Peace,” is a prospect that we all pray for; but to get there will require the collective participation, efforts, resources and resolve of all in our City.

By engaging faith leaders to join him in a broader effort to end violence in San Francisco, Mayor Lee recognizes a precious resource that could be the effective key to realize our success on this issue. At the same time, he challenges us to respond to a moral obligation that is at the core of our mission as communities of faith.

He also reminds us of our history. For there has been no civil rights or human rights movement in which the faith communities and its leaders have not been at the forefront.

At the heart of the Civil Rights movement, in the years 1963-1964, before there was a San Francisco Interfaith Council, there was the SF Conference on Religion, Race and Social Concerns, which for 25 years was the prophetic voice of social justice in this place. It was that movement that gave birth to the San Francisco Interfaith Council, whose mission it is to bring people of different faiths together, celebrate our diverse spiritual and religious traditions, build understanding and serve our City. It was a previous mayor that challenged the interfaith community to step up to the plate and respond to its moral responsibility to care for the homeless, at a time of crisis spun out of control, and we did. For almost a quarter of a century we’ve opened our congregation doors, fed and provided a warm and safe place for homeless men to sleep during the coldest and rainiest nights of the year. It has been this mayor and his predecessors who looked at what happened at Hurricane Katrina, saw the key role congregation leaders, facilities and congregants can play in the time of disaster and called upon us to be key

stakeholders in the City's disaster preparedness equation. Friends, history proves that we possess the capacity to respond to crises and we have.

Today Mayor Lee invites us to the table, both to pray as well as to roll up our sleeves and do our part to help solve a systemic crisis that impacts us all. In the Christian tradition, from which I come, we hear, "When one member of the body suffers, all suffer."

In order to meet this daunting challenge we will need to build upon the work already begun and engage the wisdom and support of so many more prophetic voices, those who have much to contribute. The tent is large and must be filled. With our collective resources we will also need to seriously address the root causes of violence. And what are those root causes? Education – and here I am speaking of after school services, adult education, skills development, GED services and parent education; another being Employment, and here I am speaking of jobs, job training and job readiness; and finally, Family Services, and here I am speaking of intervention, at risk services, family counseling, re-entry services and victim services. Unless these root causes are made priorities and supported with the resources needed, our prayers will not be realized nor will our success be attained.

Common to all of our faith traditions is the belief that the greatness of a civilization will ultimately be judged on how it cares for those who are most vulnerable. By each of us seriously doing our part to end violence in our City, I believe that we can show by our works the best of San Francisco values. Thank you.