



# NAINews

Spring 2009  
[Extra]

The Newsletter of the North American Interfaith Network, Inc.

Building Bridges of Inter-religious Understanding, Cooperation and Service.

[www.nain.org](http://www.nain.org)

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### Article Submissions:

Article submissions on interfaith topics may be made at any time to [news\\_editor@nain.org](mailto:news_editor@nain.org).

**NAINConnect 2009**

Thursday Evening, 25 June – Sunday Afternoon, 28 June

## Connect 2009

*Experiencing the Spirit in Education:*

*the Challenge of Religious Pluralism*



## An Official Pre-Parliament Event!

[Click here for Parliament Website.](#)

### Workshop Themes:

*Interfaith education on campus / in community, Pluralism on campus / in community, Tools for greater understanding, Collaboration, Life issues, Youth*

[Click here for Workshop Checklist.](#)

### Worship Experiences

*Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Nez Perce, Paganism, Sikhism, Vedanta*

[Click here for Tentative Program Schedule](#) [Presenter Bios](#) [Workshop Descriptions](#)

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## **NAINConnect '09 Registration**

**To Register by phone, call 1-866-348-6489 (toll free) Option 1**

**After registering by phone, you will be transferred to the Hotel to make your room reservations.**

[Click here for complete registration information.](#)



*Driving? Coming Early? Staying on?*

### **Top 10 Things to do in Kansas City**

*[Well, ... BESIDES NAINConnect 2009!!]*

1. **Country Club Plaza** With amazing shops, great restaurants and those famed Kansas City fountains, the world famous Country Club Plaza was the US's first outdoor shopping, dining and entertainment.
2. **Nelson - Atkins Museum of Art** The world renowned Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art (4525 Oak) boasts more than 2,000 works of art. Admission is free, although to see most special exhibits, a small fee is charged.
3. **Kansas City Zoo / IMAX** The Kansas City Zoo and its adjoining IMAX Theater boasts over 200 acres with over 900 animals.
4. **Kansas City BBO** Barbeque is one thing we do better than everyone else. Kansas City truly is "The Home of Barbeque".
5. **Union Station/ Science City** The fully restored Union Station houses the fully interactive Science City, a famed Rail Exhibit, movies, planetarium shows, world famous exhibits and great restaurants.
6. **Harry S. Truman Presidential Library** Harry S. Truman, 33rd president of the United States, was an Independence, Missouri native. His library (500 West U.S. Highway 24, Independence, MO) is home to an amazing collection of over 30,000 presidential artifacts.
7. **Riverboat Casinos** Even if you are not a gambler, the Kansas City Riverboat Casinos are also great dining, shopping and entertainment destination.
8. **18th and Vine Jazz District** The historic 18th and Vine Jazz District is a fitting tribute to what put Kansas City on the map...our world famous Jazz and Negro Leagues Baseball.
9. **Powell Gardens** Located just east of Kansas City (1609 NW US HWY 50, Kingsville, MO, 64061-9000) Powell Gardens is an amazing 900+ acre botanical garden.
10. **Liberty Memorial and the National WW1 Museum** Liberty Memorial and the WWI museum is the United States official WWI Museum. The museum honors those who served in WWI. From the top of the Liberty Memorial, see some of the best 360° view of the city.  
<http://kansascity.about.com/od/entertainmentattractions/tp/KCTopAttraction.htm>

## **Note from the Chair**

*By Bettina Gray, Chair of the NAIN Board*

I have had the good fortune to have seen the growth of NAIN over several decades. And in each decade the reason why NAIN was important shifted slightly. This shifting kaleidoscope of community and cooperation I find tremendously encouraging because it demonstrates NAIN is strong, resilient and able to offer hope for the future.

Why NAIN?

Because decades ago, when popular thought attempted to proclaim "God is dead" many of us understood that we could witness to the reality of spirit even more effectively together than separated -- an interfaith witness

that the divine lives and works and moves among us all, in all our cultures and races. Our interfaith community offered witness to the realities of spirit -- together. We found we could represent to our communities a vivid portrait, a mosaic of the divine.

No matter what our differences of beliefs, we discovered there was spirit flowing in and through us, giving us meaning and direction. We learned that we could talk about our experiences and our differences, learn from each other and grow -- together.

When hate was trying to divide and fear conquer -- in each of its insidious manifestations -- in bombings, in hate crimes, in silent and not-so-silent slander of the "other", our long term friendships guided us. We KNEW each other and we knew we could trust and rely on each other, confess our fears, overcome our isolation, seek support. We knew that together we could affirm that religious pluralism could be made to work-- why? Because we'd lived it -- together.

And when religion as a whole was defamed and slandered as the cause of war and human misery we stood together, a contradiction to that falsehood. We created the evidence that our common commitments to compassion, our mandates to love one another, our reverence to life and service can be lived. We have given our hands and hearts to making our beliefs real. And in so doing we have not found disunity but community -- a unity of service, an inspiration of hope and love.

And today, facing scarcity, environmental tribulations and economic troubles, we know we exist because we are resourceful, we are made stronger by our cooperation, that it is the power of spirit that heals wounds, feeds those in need, gives hope to the downtrodden, opens doors, finds new paths, builds new options, and moves among us all.

I wish a warm invitation to all of you to our NAIN Connect and extend the hope that your experiences will offer the renewal and inspiration that so many of us have found over the years in our North American Interfaith Network community.

### **Note from a Young Adult NAINConnect 2008 Attendee**

*By Lisa Sikes, Social Work Practicum student, Interfaith Council of S. Nevada*

You're probably wondering what NAIN is and why it should matter to you. As I packed my bags for San Francisco and headed off for my first interfaith conference I wondered the same thing. Any trip to San Francisco is worth taking in my opinion, but little did I know of the profound people, projects, and initiatives that I would soon encounter.

NAIN (North American Interfaith Network) is an organization that brings together people involved in interfaith movements across the North American continent to share what they are doing in their local communities.

Some of the workshops focused on the fundamentals such as defining what interfaith work actually is. This was extremely helpful for me as [a] newcomer since I had never even heard the term "interfaith" used before I met Karen [Boyett].

Others had well developed programs that implemented the interfaith concept with profound and tangible results. This conference familiarized me with the scope, complexity, and most of all the importance of this movement. It also filled me with a lot of hope about our diverse world becoming an ever more peaceful one.

I would say that if you have never been to NAIN Connect, and are passionate about this work, you should definitely consider going to the 2009 NAIN Connect in [Kansas City].

### **Board News**

#### **Annual NAIN Board of Directors Meeting**

The NAIN Board of directors will hold their annual meeting all day Thursday, June 25<sup>th</sup>. They will also have a follow-up meeting just after the Annual General Meeting. The Program Committee plans to meet at 8:00 PM

on Wednesday, June 24 to discuss future Connects.



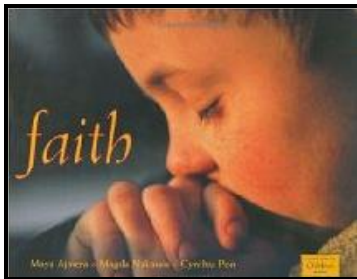
### Congratulations to Tracy Wells

Tracy Wells has recently sent her resignation from the NAIN Board of Directors. She has two very happy reasons. In August she will be married and also will start her Seminary training at The University of the South (in Sewanee, Tenn). Her training will be intensive and require fulltime concentration. We appreciate Tracy's contributions and wish her sincere congratulations regarding the upcoming blessings in her life.

### Media Briefs

By Judy Lee Trautman, NAIN Communications Chair

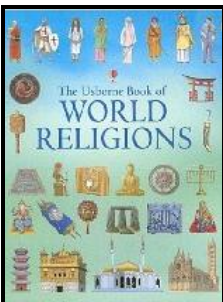
Time for summer reading! A new interfaith media list, including videos, on-line journals, and books for children and adults may be found on the Resources page of nain.org at <http://www.nain.org/medialist.htm>.



### Faith

*Faith* celebrates the diversity of religious expression around the world, with stunning photographs of children praying, singing, learning, and caring for one another and their communities. Intended for ages 4 through 10, *Faith* introduces young readers to religious tolerance by highlighting common threads that bring people together in reverence and joy.

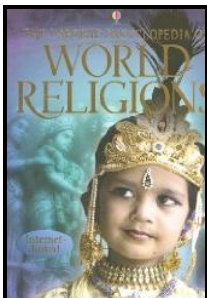
<http://www.globalfundforchildren.org/index.php/Our-Work/New-Book-Releases.html>



### Usborne Book of World Religions (World Cultures)

by Susan Meredith (Paperback - Jan 2006)

This well-written book ought to be required reading for young people (and adults) growing up in a very religiously diverse world. It is used as a text in some progressive schools. [We have used this book in our interfaith work in Toledo.]



### The Usborne Encyclopedia of World Religions: Internet-Linked

by Susan Meredith (Author), Clare Hickman (Author), Kirsteen Rogers (Author), Joanne Kirkby (Illustrator), Leonard Le Rolland (Illustrator), Verinder Bhachu (Illustrator)

This great book for young people covers a lot of different traditions, including some Indigenous traditions and African diasporic religions. The book describes concepts in a simplified form making it easy for young readers. It is used in school World Religions courses. The book has links to relevant Internet sites.

### News Briefs

By Judy Lee Trautman, NAIN Communications Chair

#### Honoring Professor Leonard Swidler

On Sunday, April 26, 2009, on the Temple University Main Campus in Philadelphia, a musical and Multi-Media Event, 'Bringing the World Together', honored this Philadelphian academic, a major world figure and one of the preeminent scholars, thinkers, and social activists in the field of interreligious dialogue.

Professor Leonard Swidler has been invited into countries, such as Macedonia, where genocide threatened. He

has also been called in to countries such as Indonesia after despots are vanquished. To consult on peace between Jordan and Israel, Swidler is again called in. His ideas on Deep Dialogue and Critical Thinking have become the standards for the rapidly expanding field of expertise in the 21<sup>st</sup> century called “Religious Diplomacy”— interreligious dialogue.

<http://institute.jesdialogue.org/>

### Interfaith Earth Day



(Marquette, Michigan) - Despite a major snowstorm a day earlier, bishops and leaders from northern Michigan's largest faith communities planted the first of 12,000 trees during an Earth Day ceremony on the shores of Lake Superior.

Standing on a hillside surrounded by huge pine trees two bishops and several other faith leaders blessed a three-foot native species white spruce tree and took turns putting shovels full of dirt into the hole.

With a cold wind blowing and icy waves of Lake Superior lapping in the background, the Earth Day 2009 late afternoon blessing of the trees ceremony was held on Presque Isle - that is surrounded on three sides by the largest freshwater lake on the planet.

EarthKeepers is an interfaith cooperation of ten faith traditions (Roman Catholic, Lutheran (ELCA), Presbyterian, Jewish, Baha'i, United Methodist, Unitarian Universalist, Society of Friends, Episcopal, and Buddhist) and two non-profit organizations, (Cedar Tree Institute and Superior Watershed Partnership). They work together to care for the Creation by implementing the EarthKeeper Covenant

[Click here for EarthKeeper Tree Info!](#)



### Interfaith Week of Prayer for Health Care for All

June 19 - 26, 2009

NOW is the time to act! The largest faith-inspired mobilization EVER for health care reform is underway. It will feature an Interfaith Service of Witness and Prayer on Wednesday, June 24, 4:00-8:00 pm, at Washington DC's Freedom Plaza, in view of our nation's Capitol.

A critical part of this mobilization will include "echo events" all across the country beginning Friday, June 19th. Prayer breakfasts, Health Care Sabbaths, bell-ringing, candlelight vigils, call-in days, postcards, media events and more will give people of faith the opportunity to make a public witness about the moral imperative of health care for all. <http://www.faithfulreform.org/>

### Interfaith Blood Drive

(Toledo, Ohio) The 22nd Annual Interfaith Blood Drive, an Erase the Hate event with additional support from the MultiFaith Council of Northwest Ohio, will be held from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm, on Saturday and Sunday, June 20 – 21., 2009, at Grace Lutheran Church. On Sunday, June 21, 7 PM, a Celebration of Life Interfaith Service will be held at St Michael's In The Hills Episcopal Church.

Jobs With Justice, another local non-profit in the Erase the Hate Coalition, is also planning to support the National Interfaith Week of Prayer for Health Care for All.

### Healing Our Health Care System

*Excerpt from an article by the Rev. Thomas Goodhue, Executive Director of The Long Island Council of Churches (LICC)*

Some years ago my wife and I were vacationing in Quebec City when Karen suddenly was stricken with excruciating pain in her abdomen. We rushed her to a nearby emergency room, where the hospital staff gave her outstanding care, even bringing in a translator for this tourist who did not speak the local language, without ever asking for her insurance information or any other proof of our ability to pay. As we were leaving someone

apologetically asked us for an extremely small sum of money, something like \$5.

[Click here to read more of this article.](#) Also, click here for [LICC's Health Care Policy Statement](#).

### **Milestones in Recent Catholic-Jewish Relations**

*Submitted by Paul McKenna, Scarborough Missions Interfaith Desk*

(Toronto, ON) Scarborough Missions is proud to announce the publication of this important document; this original piece of research will be of great value to anyone in the field of Christian-Jewish dialogue.

The document chronicles, on a year-by-year basis, the dramatic advances in Catholic-Jewish dialogue since the Second Vatican Council. This detailed profile of significant changes and developments in Catholic-Jewish relations will be very useful to teachers, students, researchers, historians, interfaith practitioners and others. This document can be downloaded free of charge.

Here is the link: [http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith\\_dialogue/catholic\\_jewish\\_relations.php](http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Interfaith_dialogue/catholic_jewish_relations.php)



### **World Spirit Youth Council**

The WSYC, founded by Nina Meyerhof, President of Children of the Earth, is an international movement that fosters, inspires and activates spirituality through initiating gatherings, training spaces and projects for and by youth. The work of the WSYC is centered on the principles of individual spirituality, unity in diversity, inter-faith collaboration and youth cooperation.

Kay Lindahl submitted their current newsletter which has a generous mention of the NAINConnect 2009. [Click here for the Newsletter](#)

<http://www.children-of-the-earth.org/wsyc.htm> See also their social networking site at <http://spirityouth.ning.com/>

### **International Day of Families, 15 May**

The Division for Social Policy and Development supports the worldwide observance of the **International Day of Families (15 May)** by preparing background information on the family for use by Governments, the UN system, including the regional commissions, and UN Information Centres and NGOs. An annual message of the Secretary-General is prepared for wide distribution.

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/IDF.html>

### **On The Threshold of Marking the International Day of Family**

*Article by Mohammad Ali Abtahi, President of Institute for Interreligious Dialogue, Iran , submitted by Bettina Gray, NAIN Chair*

On one part Family is the first core of society, its main unit and the most important basis of human societies and on the other part it is the most vulnerable one. For this reason, there should be endless efforts for its formation and solidity. Family environment is the umbrella of kindness and the center of tenderness, the forum for transferring values, cultures and civilizations to future generations and the source of right and wrong, determining human's destiny. But, having this unique position, during the history especially in the process of development of material civilization it has been treated unkindly and makes the social relations of some human societies atrocious.

It can strongly be said that the greatness of family in its small dimension, can itself pave the way for the respect and prosperity of society and an element of dignity of nations in its large dimensions and human world and all social organizations are obliged to take care of it in its path of perfection.

Drawing up and the passing of protective regulations, encouraging having respect and love toward family members, protecting the organization and the members thereof, healing social environments, determining and

guaranteeing the right borders and responsibility of members, upgrading security especially protecting harmed families are of the most important duties of the leader of societies.

Along with them, family members should, as per their historical customs and in a forum full of affection make efforts for its solidity upon respecting family foundation and observing fairness and justice. By doing so, a forum corresponding with the pure instinct of human is created for growth of the children, the blossoms of beautiful garden of life.

In all social schools and divine religion, respecting and protecting family forum is emphasized and it is said that the holy prophet showed a great affection to his family. The Prophet of Islam said God loves the ones who spend some times with their families more than the ones who sit in the mosque for three continuous day (E'tekafe) and Imam Ali considered doing good to one's parents as a duty. Parents are of the basis of the instructions of Holy Koran and Family is the place of tranquility.

On this day and for this occasion let's think of a tomorrow not being full of thousand of thousands of dark and sad worlds are beside us because of the necessities of material world and the cruelty of machinery world with which the Modern humans should tackle. Let's restore love, affection and hope in the name of divine religions and return warmness to small cottages of families.

[The Universal Peace Federation has a webpage devoted to the Day. It even includes some fun family activities.]

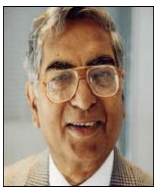
[http://upf.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1824&Itemid=401](http://upf.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1824&Itemid=401)

### One step closer to peace

By Josh Lichtenstein Published: 05.22.09, 15:45 / [Israel Jewish Scene](#)

During Pope Benedict XVI's recent visit to Israel the Elijah Interfaith Institute organized a joint prayer with the pontiff and Muslim, Druze, Christian, and Jewish religious leaders. 'The symbolic gesture takes us one serious step further in interfaith relations,' says organization's head.

[The Elijah Interfaith Institute](#) works to bring together the world's highest level leadership to engage in constructive dialog. The Dalai Lama recently described the organization as, "the deepest and most intimate group working in interfaith relations". The organization works to promote constructive exchange between leaders, scholars, and communities worldwide. [Read more.](#)



### Wisdom Corner

By Dr. Teja Singh

- "If you study Torah in order to learn and do God's will (...) the whole world is indebted to you. You will be cherished as a friend, a lover of God and people. (Torah study) clothes you with humility and reverence (and) you benefit humanity with counsel and knowledge, wisdom and strength. "

- *Talmud, quoted after: Novak Philip, The World's Wisdom, P.214*

- "O children of Israel! Remember my favours to you; fulfill your covenant with Me and I will fulfill My covenant with you. And you should fear none but Me. Believe in my revelation (the Qur'an), which is confirming your scriptures; do not be the first one to deny My revelation, and do not sell them for a petty price, fear Me and Me alone. Do not mix the Truth with falsehood, or knowingly conceal the truth."

- *Qur'an 2:40-42*