



Interweave

Guide to Wholistic Living

Inner & Outer

The City Council chamber was packed. Three-quarters of the clergy in town were there, as well as a number of prominent citizens, to urge the City's elected representatives to approve an affordable housing initiative. There were too many frowns on those Council faces for comfort.

As I sat there trying to second guess the votes, I wondered how someone like me, who spent so many years exploring and developing the inner life of soul and psyche, had ended up attending so many public meetings about so many outer issues—affordable housing in Summit, a middle school drop-in center in Maplewood, gang violence in Newark.



Inner and Outer, *continued from p. 1*

How did Interweave, which began with such a heavy focus on wellness and spiritual growth, end up combining that with “the common good?” The answer is quite simple: our inner life and outer life are inseparable. As I pondered my own history, I remembered a story that pioneer wholistic health advocate Lawrence LeShan told about a doctor who learned how to meditate. After six months of regular practice, the doctor came to LeShan with a problem: meditation was increasing his sensitivity to the feelings of his patients. He had started meditating for relaxation and a sense of peace, and now it was dissolving his carefully cultivated insulation against the fears, sorrows, pain and uncertainty of those he treated. When reminded that an ability to be more fully present in the moment was one of the desired outcomes of stilling the busyness of the mind, he gave up on meditation and retreated to the safety of his shielding.

Real inner transformation leads to seeing the world in new ways, and to actions that respond to new things seen. That’s why people at mid-life who come to Interweave to clarify their values sometimes decide on a new career direction, or find themselves in a new form of community. Pastors who learn how sink deep into contemplative prayer find themselves better able to see the spiritual needs of their people. People who have never learned about another religion find themselves changed after meeting a real Muslim, or learning how much Christianity owes to Judaism, or how much alike Buddhist meditation and Christian contemplative prayer are.

Of course, Interweave’s emphasis has never been entirely inward. Even at the outset in 1980, we were already sponsoring programs on the environmental crisis and interfaith understanding,

for example. But “common good” didn’t actually make it onto the masthead with “wellness and spirituality” until some years later. The addition came because Interweave people began to report how their work on their own souls had led them to new involvements in the world: work with troubled kids, prisoners, the homeless, hospital patients, environmental activism. They had changed, and now were working to make some part of the world better.

In fact, the outer problems in society reflect the inner life of the people who make it up—all the actions that make for injustice, crime, hard-heartedness, irresponsibility, disregard for others’ welfare, and heedless exploitation of nature. They

come from the inner cravings and fears that strengthen egotism—cravings and fears that honest inner exploration unmask and healthy spiritual and psychological practices can make less powerful, opening space for the “better angels of our nature” to breathe and expand.



I ponder frowns on the faces of the three or four Council members. Which one of those cravings and fears do they come from, or are they just being responsible leaders? In the end, the housing initiative’s first phase is approved. Maybe some fireman, or teacher, or shop clerk who works in town and can’t afford a home here will end up in the new affordable housing complex. But before that’s a possibility, we’ve got to raise a significant share of the money for it. And, in this economy, so much will depend on the inner life of the people we’ll ask to contribute.

You just can’t separate them, inner and outer. Don’t even try. Just invest deeply in both. Your life will send its roots down deep in rich soil, and your branches will stretch wider into the world. ■

—*Robert Corin Morris*

Warp & Weft

news of the organization

Special Event: For The Bible Tells Me So

On Sunday, Feb. 1, Interweave hosted a screening of this moving documentary film that chronicles the struggles of five Christian couples--including former House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and his wife and the parents of Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson--to accept and embrace their gay or lesbian children. Producer and director **Dan Karlake** offered powerful and compassionate commentary about the genesis and making of the film, and answered questions from the enthusiastic audience at St. George's Church in Maplewood. The afternoon provided an enlightening, uplifting and healing look at the relationship between Scripture and sexual identity. ■

*The greatest wisdom is listening
to the guidance of the heart.*

—Kabir Helminski in *The Knowing Heart*

Keeper of the Dream Award

At Summit's 11th annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service in January, two members of the Interweave family received the **Keeper of the Dream Award** in a ceremony at St. John's Lutheran Church. **Robert C. Morris** and **Ernestine C. Harrield** were honored for living out the values of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Summit community in relation to issues of racial harmony and economic justice. Mayor Jordan Glatt was among the award recipients this year. Past honorees include Geoff and Ginger Worden, founders of **Bridges** Outreach Inc., Ted Stanik, retired principal of Lawton C. Johnson Summit Middle School, Capitola Dickerson, long-time piano teacher, Bill and Ann Houpt, for their work with Home First, and Mayor Walter Long, for founding the Mayor's Diversity Forum. Congratulations, Bob and Ernestine! ■

Director's Itinerary

Interweave's work extends into the region and nation through the work of the Director and other instructors who speak at highly varied places on a wide range of topics. ■ Robert Corin Morris spoke at the **Metaphysical Center of NJ** in Pompton Lakes in early February on Meditation and Your Multi-Leveled Mind. ■ A 3-day Spiritual Formation Weekend took him to the **First United Methodist Church of Hendersonville, NC** in February. ■ During Sundays in March, Bob will be lecturing on Science and Spirituality at the **First Presbyterian Church in Basking Ridge, NJ** before going to Trinity Church, Southport, Connecticut for a March 28 in-parish Retreat day on **Finding Holiness in the Ordinary**. ■ In May, he will lead an interfaith retreat for the clergy of **Montclair, NJ**. ■ Each of these events includes a witness to Interweave's wholistic vision of body-mind unity and intercultural/interfaith dialogue and cooperation. ■

La Convivencia: Our Annual Gala Benefit

Saturday, June 6 will be our Annual Benefit at Christ Church in Short Hills. We'll evoke the spirit of the medieval Moorish civilization in Spain that celebrated amicable "living together" among people of different faiths and cultures. Musical entertainment, decor and food will create a special surround to our fundraising auctions. Mark your calendars and invite your friends! ■

Interweave

*a community learning center
teaching skills for
wholistic living that
strengthen wellness,
deepen spirituality, and
promote the common good.*

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Abraham's Table Luncheon

"All of our traditions contain both seeds of division, conflict and violence, and seeds of understanding and peace." —The Rev. Lisa Green



On Feb. 10, Penny Vigilante and I were part of a gathering of about 40 people who came to Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, Short Hills for lunch and a panel discussion on "Stereotypes of My Religion I'd Rather You Didn't Have." A variety of congregations and faiths were represented, united by a desire to find understanding, justice and common ground through interfaith dialogue. The group enjoyed delicious Turkish food and a lively discussion with panelists Rabbi Matthew Gewirtz, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, the Rev. Lisa Green, Christ Church, Short Hills, and Ferhan Tunagur, Rutgers University. They each shared Jewish, Christian and Muslim perspectives on stereotypes of their religions, which ranged from relatively harmless caricatures to more serious, sometimes dangerous, misconceptions. Questions and conversation followed, as participants voiced their frustrations and hopes for moving beyond stereotypes toward true interfaith understanding. Lisa Green summed it up well: "Gatherings like this give us the chance to water the good seeds and work together for a more just and sustainable world." The event was co-sponsored by the Interfaith Dialogue Center, Christ Church, Short Hills, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, Short Hills and Interweave's Abrahamic Kinship Initiative. ■

—Sarah Sangree

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