

Interfaith Families Project

Jan./Feb. 2007 www.iffp.net

P.O. Box 5413, Takoma Park, MD 20913

iffp@verizon.net

301-270-6337

GRATITUDES FOR THE YEAR



“Love wholeheartedly, be surprised, give thanks and praise--then you will discover the fullness of your life.” -Brother David Steindl-Rast

As I think back over the past nine months I have been with IFFP, I am filled with gratitude for so much, and want to share that with you during this season of thankfulness.

First, I want to express my gratitude to the IFFP Staff. **Susan Ryder** is IFFP’s “stage manager.” Most of what she does is behind the scenes, thinking and planning IFFP events, making sure that these events are properly executed, leaving no detail behind. More than that, Susan brings commitment and love to her job, love for IFFP and every family. I am so grateful for her upbeat spirit, strong organizational skills, and passion.

Ellen Jennings guides and molds our Sunday School. Almost every Sunday, over 110 children attend an exciting, dynamic and well-balanced Jewish/Christian school. Rabbi White always talks about how impressed he is with our school and its director. Ellen carefully plans and reexamines lesson plans for classes. She cares deeply that the children be engaged and touched both spiritually and intellectually. IFFP teachers (aka parents) feel strongly supported and are given tools and training. Ellen too loves this community deeply and speaks about it with such high regard and passion. I am personally grateful for the support she always gives me and the intelligence she has about many life issues, which she freely shares when we ask her.

Rabbi Harold White has been a joy to know. He loves our community and is excited about where we are going and all the many interfaith couples/families we can reach. He has joined us for some of our board meetings and retreats as we discussed where we want IFFP to be in five years. His knowledge about institutions, people, religion and life are invaluable to us.

The commitment of the IFFP Board Executive Committee, **Danny Weiss, Rebecca Weiss, Jen Liebreich,** and **Mike Ellner,** is deep and passionate. I am extremely grateful for all the many hours they put into IFFP. It is inspiring and keeps me going. Danny Weiss, our chair, deserves a special thanks for his flexibility, leadership skills, and passion.

I feel grateful to **Maureen** and **Mike Ellner,** our new bookkeeper and treasurer, and appreciate their willingness to take on these very crucial tasks. Let me also thank **Richard Harris** for his efforts on behalf of the IFFP community, maintaining our records and getting us compliant with all of our financial responsibilities.

To all the other board members, **Mark Cohen, Phil Jakobsberg, Erica Burman, Ian Spatz** and **Colette Matzzie,** thank you for doing so much for IFFP: Mark for being our secretary, Colette for the great work you do organizing the Adult Groups, Phil, for the continued work you have done on our IFFP website, Erica for organizing the welcome table and being there every week, and Ian for taking on the very important fundraising work and for always being the best Interfaith 101 leader! All your time and wisdom has been appreciated.

I feel grateful for the work of IFFP's many committees. The Worship Committee – **Marci Shegogue, Larry Bostian, Dan Griffin, Jen Liebreich, Pete Flynn, Andy** and **Josh Herman, Eric Burman, Rich Swanson, Jodi Kanter** and **Robby Jones** – is responsible for our weekly gatherings. Committee members are my biggest supporters and backers. I'll never pastor a community that doesn't include a worship committee! Special thanks go to Marci, who makes the IFFP music happen, along with Pete and Dan. Their work/skills touch all of us!

The Community Service/Justice Committee, **Antoinette Eates, Carol Muskin, Promise Ahlstrom** remind us of our duty as human beings on earth, to care for the marginalized in our communities. They have guided our outreach to the Silver Spring Interfaith Housing Coalition (SSIHC), Springvale Terrace Assisted Living and MOMs. I am grateful for their cheerfulness, their compassion and organizational skills.

IFFP's Comfort Committee, **Carol Muskin, Cheryl Dembo, Geneva Collins, Anne Stewart** and **Cindy Pohoryles**, have provided delicious meals, empathy cards, supportive phone calls and much more to our IFFP members who are in need of some comfort. Thank you all for the love you provide.

The New Members Committee deserves a big hug and .thanks. **Melinda Frederick, Tova Olsen, Cheryl Leanza, Diane Eves** and **Stephani Abramson** have worked tirelessly to make our new members feel welcome and connected. This committee is so important to our continued survival and growth.

Our Celebrations Committee, which **Jessica Vistnes** is leading for the fifth year, coordinates all our celebrations. Jessica does this important work with great calmness and skill. Thanks, Jessica, for making our celebrations exactly what they need to be!

We're very grateful to finally have a very involved, capable Public Relations Committee! **Nina Mrose, Julie Stewart, Mary Melrod, Steve Stern** and **Rob Liebreich** have joined forces to create a PR strategy, a press kit (thanks Nina for endless hours), press releases (thanks Rob), and ways to get the word out about our wonderful group!

Peter Gray has taken over the job of coordinating the IFFP newsletter from **Holly Cooper**, who did a supreme job. Thanks, Holly, for your years of detailed and passionate service. Peter is now looking at ways we can include more people in the newsletter and add more graphics/pictures. Peter, we are indebted to you for taking this big task on communicating what is happening with our members.

There are so many others to thank. Our new ushers, **Alex Feiden, Nicholas Corrales** and **Cheney Ravitz**, have been a great asset to our Gathering. **Robin Allen** works with them weekly to help them do their job well. Thanks also go to Robin for her beautiful Gathering signs and the interfaith collage, which graces our welcome table!

Robin and **Chris Thieme** provide our sound system with assistance from Barr Weisman & Linda Goldman. Robin also has helped with our bookkeeping and the computer in the IFFP office. **Ellyn McKay** has spent many hours helping the executive committee and IFFP Board with visioning and strategic planning.

Many parents are helping me with the teen group. **Maggi Cowlan, Cindy Allen, Promise Ahlstrom** and **Rob Liebreich** (who as a few years to go before his son is a teen!) have all been there to plan and support the growing IFFP teen community. I could not have done it without all of you!

Several IFFPers make our Sunday mornings, with coffee/tea and delicious breakfast foods. **Marika Partridge** and **Larry Ravitz** make sure we always have great coffee from the interfaith Ugandan coop. **Lisa Beaudet, Lori Walker Roth**, and others make sure we have great bagels and fruit to serve to hungry families!

To **Kent Dirckx** and **Phil Jakobsberg**, much gratitude for the endless hours spent on updating our website; thanks to **Jeff Kenton** for digging us out of our list serve troubles.

Thanks also go to **Eileen Kraus-Jakobsberg** for all the work she's putting into the planning of our annual Women's Retreat. As great as Eileen is, she can't do this alone, so we need some of the great IFFP women to help out!

Also a big thank you to two of our founding moms, **Stacey Katz** and **Mary Joel Holin** for taking on all the work involved in helping others begin affiliate groups. They're perfect for the job!

Finally, I am grateful to all of **you** for your commitment to IFFP and participation in this wondrous community. It takes a village to raise and keep us all going at IFFP. Our village is growing in strength, spirit and numbers. Let us keep our hearts light with gratitude and joy!

— **Rev. Julia Jarvis**, Spiritual Director

CALENDAR: JAN – FEB 2007

January 7 – Gathering
Sunday School Session 11
Two Track Adult Groups
Choir Rehearsal

January 21 – Gathering
Sunday School Session 12
Two Track Adult Groups

January 28 –Gathering
Sunday School Session 13
Two Track Adult Groups
Choir Rehearsal

February 4 – Gathering
Special Family Event, no Sunday School
(see the Weekly Bulletin for more details)

February – 9 (Fri) Shabbat Potluck Dinner

February 11 – Morning with the Rabbi, 9:30
Gathering - Rabbi White
Sunday School, Session 14
Adult Group

February 25 –Gathering
Sunday School Session 15
Adult Group
Grieving Group
Choir Rehearsal

CALENDAR DETAIL

Attend or Host a Shabbat Potluck Dinner, Friday, February 9th

Shabbat potluck dinners are a great way to get to know other members in a small, relaxed environment. Our next Shabbat potluck dinners are scheduled for Friday evening, February 9th. Usually three or four families gather at a house to enjoy an evening of food and conversation. This is an especially good opportunity for newer and older members to get to know each other. Families with young children have found this a lovely way to get together, as would couples with teenagers, to compare notes and get some support! If you are interested in hosting a potluck dinner at your home or being a guest please contact **Susan**. Include where you live and the ages of your children (if any) so we can match up families. Please specify if you'd like to meet with families whose children are in a different stage of life than yours.

— **Susan Ryder**, Program Coordinator

ADULT GROUP

IFFP ADULT GROUP TOPICS -- JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2007

We have an exciting line up for Adult Group in the upcoming winter months. Please join us and share your ideas for discussion topics, guest speakers and other ways we can liven up Adult Group discussions and make opportunities available for sharing within our community. Feel free to contact Board Member and Adult Group Coordinator **Colette Matzzie** if you would like to help plan Adult Groups or contribute.

In January we will have two tracks running for Adult Group. You can choose where you would prefer to participate.

In the Media Center:

January 7, 21 & 28: ***Peaceful Home***, led by Mitchell Ratner, an ordained Buddhist teacher. This series provides the tools to create a peaceful home such as meditation techniques with children, suggestions for celebrations and festivals, parenting practices, etc. The sessions include discussions concerning family dynamics, respectful communication and conflict resolution. Attend all three or drop in on one.

In the Sligo Cafeteria:

On January 7, long-time IFFP member **Terry Fischer** will lead a discussion on the “Phenomenon of Inter-marriage.” Reading materials will be available in advance to consider the sociological question of whether interfaith marriages “just happen” or whether there are particular choices and social currents that lead us to make the choices we have made for our families.

On January 21, IFFP member **Ron Weich** will host a guest speaker Melody Barnes, Executive Vice President for Policy at the Center for American Progress, on a discussion on “The Role of Religion in Public Life.”

Additional January and February sessions include a discussion on “What is Faith and Why Have Faith?”, which IFFP member **Jimmy Mrose** will lead. Readings and discussion materials will be circulated in advance as much as possible.

We also hope to have Ann Kline visit with IFFP, to lead a Gathering and an Adult Group. Ms. Kline, a Jewish spiritual director, has been affiliated with the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Bethesda, addressing group spiritual direction and spiritual guidance programs. She is a contributing author to *The Lived Experience of Group Spiritual Direction* published by Paulist Press in October 2003.

Rabbi Harold White will be back in February to lead Adult Group, on a topic to be announced.

In the spring, we will also offer a three-session series: **Judaism 101** and will continue our Interfaith 101 series.

Thanks to **Susan Mathis** we have recordings of several Fall Adult Group discussions. Limited copies are available for home viewing. Please contact Colette or Susan directly to arrange for a copy of a recorded Adult Group.

— **Colette Matzzie**, Adult Group Coordinator

FUTURE PLANNING

Start Planning your Purim Costumes Now! Our Purim Festival is Sunday, March 4th!

Purim is early this year, the first Sunday in March! It's a fun-filled, joyous holiday when we can dress up with our kids and enjoy the spirit of the holiday. Help them choose who they want to be: the beautiful, brave Queen Esther, the wicked Haman, the brave hero Mordechai, or King Ahasuerus. Please **bring groggers and lots of hamantaschen to share**. This is a day all the family will enjoy.

We'll start with a short Gathering and retell the Story of Esther, the Megillah, as you shake those groggers (noisemakers) to drown out the name of the evil Haman. Then the Sunday School classes and COA will provide lots of fun with games, Purim mask making, pie throwing, face painting, and more! Run under the parachute, dance the hora, march in the costume parade, and enjoy visiting with other IFFP members.

Invite friends and family, and join us for a festive day. We ask everyone to please pitch in to help resurrect the cafeteria after our festival. We look forward to seeing everyone and having fun—please remember to bring your hamantaschen, costumes, and groggers.

— **Susan Ryder**, Program Coordinator

Women's Mothers' Day Spring Retreat, May 11-13, 2007 (Friday-Sunday)

This year we have the special opportunity of making our wonderful Women's Retreat into a real gift to all those who are moms as well as those that aren't. It's a special time to leave your daily cares behind for a weekend of sisterhood, reflection, conversation, great food, laughter, relaxation and getting to know each other better. Each retreat has its own quality—some are more reflective, others more social, but each one is a great and unique experience.

At this point, approximately a dozen of the amazing women in IFFP have expressed their interest and intent to attend! The sign up sheet will be passed around again January 7th. **Eileen Kraus-Jakobsberg** has volunteered to help coordinate this weekend but she needs at least one or two other women to divide up the duties of finding a location, facilitator, topics of discussion, food, etc.

If you haven't already done so, mark your calendars and plan to attend May 11-13 or at least Friday and Saturday. We will try to find a location that makes it easy for those who want to be home Mothers' Day morning.

If you have any suggestions or want to help in the event planning, please contact Eileen.

— **Eileen Kraus-Jakobsberg**, Retreat Co-Coordinator

FROM THE BOARD



Please indulge me while I share with you my personal excitement about the winter holidays as they draw to a close. I always enjoy this season, but this year I have particularly enjoyed our interfaith celebrations at home and feel more satisfied than ever as an interfaith family.

The day finally arrived to set up our Christmas tree, find the lights and ornaments, and collect all the pieces to our ceramic Mexican crèche and Playmobil crèche. As my daughter **Maria** took a break from that excitement to clean the old wax out of the Menorah, I looked up and thought out loud that we really are a lucky family to be able to celebrate two religious and family traditions. But then I was torn – which music should I

play while we were working away? And I had to be honest with myself. Frank Sinatra's Christmas CD trumped our collection of Hanukkah music at that moment. And I was perfectly comfortable with that choice. For the rest of Hanukkah we found our own way to make connections between the two holidays, and notice the differences too, like when my other daughter, **Catherine**, asked if people ever decorated their houses with lights for Hanukkah! It was a fun and meaningful holiday season, thanks to **Anne** and the girls and what we have each learned through IFFP.

Now, as for the Board: We have kept our focus over the last few months on **short-term and long-term strategic planning** for IFFP and on our budget for 2006 and 2007. We continue to benefit from working with IFFP member **Ellyn McKay** on identifying our vision of what IFFP could or should look like in five years. We had a wonderful Adult Group activity on this topic in December that helped broaden this discussion. We are working with your ideas and with Ellyn's suggestions for the next steps we should take in our effort to strengthen our organization with a clear vision as we go forward.

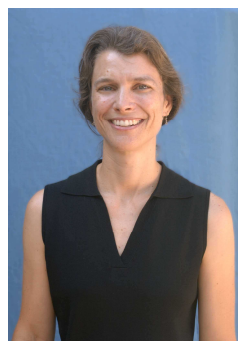
Our budget is in good shape but is not without need for care and feeding. We will be asking all of our members, as we do each year, to respond in late winter or early spring to our fundraising drive to allow us to meet all of our costs for staff, rent, and programs. The **Ellners, Michael**, our treasurer, and **Maureen**, our bookkeeper and accountant, are doing great work in their new jobs for IFFP. If you know a family who might want to join IFFP, please continue to act as ambassadors and encourage them to visit.

We will have our **annual member meeting** in the spring. The Board hopes that all IFFP members will use that morning to contribute your thoughts and ideas about IFFP today and IFFP in the future. We also approve our annual budget and next year's Board members at that meeting. And please remember that IFFP needs three new Board members each year. Contact me if you are interested in serving at some point.

I hope your holiday season has been fun and meaningful and that you find peace and excitement in the New Year..

— **Danny Weiss**, Board Chairman

NOTES FROM THE DRE



Happy New Year!

I hope everyone had a happy and safe holiday. I was personally delighted that, in a mixed faith group of non-IFFP friends, my boys were the only ones who were able to tell the stories of both Hanukkah and Christmas (sans Santa or the Hanukkah fairy!). So, I think we may be getting somewhere....

Preschool Changes: The IFFP preschool teachers and I have decided to split our very large class into two groups, one for 3-year-olds and one for 4-year-olds. We have two new teachers, **Ruth Moss** and **Michelle Motta**, for the 3s class. **Anne Dee** and **Tim Conway** and **Kathy Flitter** will continue to teach the 4s class. **Grace Lerner**, our wonderful teen assistant, will help out with the 3s. If parents have any questions, please contact me.

Field Trip Comments: Many of our classes have gone on field trips this fall. Recently, the sixth grade and mixed grade classes together visited St. Gabriel's Catholic Church. The kids in the mixed grade class had, well, "mixed" responses to their experiences. Here are some of their thoughts: **Nick, Cheney** and **Alex** all thought it was "interesting but boring." Cheney commented that he didn't like it because it was "strange." He said that "IFFP is normal, and the church service is unusual!" Alex didn't like how you had to sit and stand all the time and just listen. He thinks IFFP is "more engaging, because it is interactive." Nick said that he thought it was too easy to fall asleep! **Lisa** is the only one who liked it, though she thought there was too much sitting down and standing up. IFFP Worship Committee: take note!

Community Service: Our kids have been pretty active this fall and will become even more active this winter/spring. Our COA Prep class visited the seniors at Springvale Terrace in December. Our 4th grade class held a bake sale and earned almost \$150, which they personally donated to the Washington Animal Rescue League. And many of our kids went “trick or treating for UNICEF” and collected money for needy children around the world. **Carol Muskin**, our Sunday School Community Service liaison, has a lot more ideas for classes who want to do community service in the new year. If you want to help, please contact Carol.

With community service in mind, I leave you with the following passage from the prophet, Micah: *What does the Lord require of us? To do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.*

May we all work toward a more just, loving and kind world in this new year of life!

With love and blessings,

— **Ellen Jennings**, Director of Religious Education

COMMUNITY SERVICE

In the past months, community service at IFFP has taken on a new meaning based on the inspiring commitment of so many of our members. Community service at IFFP is evolving from occasional, discrete activities to becoming an integral part of our mission.

Activities in the past months have included:

- planting bulbs at Springvale Terrace to brighten the garden of elderly residents;
- participating in the homeless walkathon to benefit Silver Spring Interfaith Housing Coalition;
- preparing and serving Thanksgiving dinner for clients of the MOMS program of the Montgomery County Mental Health Association;
- collecting gift items and making holiday gift bags for the residents of Springvale Terrace (huge thanks to **Diane Katz** and **Carol Muskin**); and,
- providing MOMS clients and their children with over 150 holiday gifts.

Crucial to these activities has been the willingness of IFFP members to coordinate events, contribute time and effort, and respond quickly to all requests for assistance. The efforts of IFFP members – children and adults -- have been truly impressive. In particular, coordinators Carol, Diane and **Promise Ahlstrom** took on the huge task of organizing gift drives and coordinating with the Sunday School classes on community service activities. Their efforts are just the beginning; IFFP members have repeatedly stepped up to answer the call for help.

Collecting for UNICEF

IFFP's First Annual UNICEF drive brought in over \$600! Thanks to the **Bregstone** family, **Roberta**, **Philip**, **Jonah** and **Julia**, for organizing a new IFFP tradition.

Fourth Grade Bake Sale

Kudos to the 4th grade, whose bake sale raised \$140 for the Washington Animal Rescue League. Thanks particularly go to teachers **Lisa Gabriel** and **Cathy Kristiansen**, and the many parents who contributed wonderful desserts.

In the coming year, we hope to continue our community service activities with Silver Spring Interfaith Housing Coalition and Springvale Terrace and begin to explore issues of social justice, both local and

international. The Community Service workgroup welcomes your ideas for activities in 2007. Please contact me if you would like to help!

— **Antoinette Eates**, IFFP Community Service Coordinator

MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS

In the October newsletter, we introduced four of fourteen new families who have joined IFFP this year. Below we introduce five more new families to our community. Please extend a welcome to them.

Linda Goldman and Barr Weissman

Barr Weissman grew up in the Washington, DC area, and attended Temple Sinai, a Reform synagogue. His wife, **Linda Goldman**, grew up in an interfaith Jewish and Southern Baptist family, but was raised mostly Christian.

Linda was born in Charlottesville, Virginia, and later moved to Missouri, where she attended the University of Missouri, focusing on radio, television and filmmaking. She came to Washington, DC on an internship with the National Geographic, where she and **Barr** met. The couple are both filmmakers.

Linda and Barr have three children, twin girls, **Grace** and **Sylvie**, who are in 2nd grade, and **Abby**, a 6th grader. They looked around as a family for a few years at different religious institutions, including the Ethical Culture society, where they were married, and a Reconstructionist congregation in Laurel. They decided on IFFP, where they knew several members, including the **Skolnik/McKay** family, **Sandy Moore**, **Marika Partridge** and **Julia Jarvis**, who takes yoga with Linda.

Barr said that they were attracted to the values of IFFP, its non-dogmatic approach to spirituality and Adult Group sessions they've attended with **Rabbi White**.

Jodi Kanter and Robby Jones

Robby was born in Georgia and reared in Mississippi as a Southern Baptist and obtained a seminary degree. **Jodi** grew up in Chicago, where her family belonged to a Reconstructionist synagogue. They met at Missouri State University, where both were professors, **Robby** in Religious Studies and Ethics, and **Jodi** in Theatre and Performance Studies. They relocated to the DC area about 18 months ago. They have bought a home in Takoma Park. Robby currently works with People for the American Way Foundation, but will be joining the Center for American Values and Public Life, focusing on religion and ethics. **Jodi** recently had her first book published and will be joining the communications department of Bread for the World in January.

Robby's daughter from a previous marriage, **Riley**, age 6, loves her IFFP kindergarten class taught by **Rich Shegogue** and **Laura Dunne**. The family learned about IFFP through Google and Jodi's cousin, a rabbi, who knows Rabbi White. All three are delighted to have found IFFP.

Joyce and Richie Lynch

Joyce and **Richie** are native Marylanders: Joyce grew up in Potomac and Richie in Bethesda. Joyce was raised in a Jewish home that emphasized ethnic identity and cultural traditions more than religious observances. Richie grew up Catholic and attended Catholic school from grades 1-9 and feels closer ties to his religion than Joyce. They met as students at University of Maryland-Baltimore County, where Richie studied imaging and digital arts and Joyce studied social work. They have been married 10 years and have triplets in kindergarten -- **Brendan** and his two sisters, **Hailey** and **Nicole**. They now make their home in Gaithersburg. Joyce is a full-time mom and Richie is art director at a non-profit arts organization. They learned about IFFP through Google when they got married and decided to join now that the kids are of school age. They

chose IFFP because they wanted a place where they could embrace both of their religious heritages as a family, and provide spiritual foundation and a sense of belonging to draw on when “life throws you curveballs.”

Ailyn and Bob Schwartz

Ailyn was born in the Philippines and immigrated to the United States with her family when she was eight years old. Raised Catholic, Ailyn grew up in College Park and attended the university there, earning a bachelor’s and master’s degree in Education. She is currently on leave from her position as a kindergarten teacher at Rosemary Hills Elementary School in Silver Spring. **Bob** grew up in Delaware and his family attended a Conservative Synagogue. He graduated from the University of Delaware with a degree in Communications and now works as a video producer for NOAA. The couple met 12 years ago at a rest stop on the New Jersey Turnpike over Thanksgiving weekend. Five years later, they were married. Ailyn and Bob and their two children also live in Gaithersburg. **Julia**, 3, participates in IFFP’s pre-school class and **Elena** is eight months old. They learned about IFFP from Bob’s aunt and joined briefly in 2002, before the children were born. They rejoined this fall. When they first joined, Ailyn recognized founding mother, **Stacey Katz**, whose daughter, **Hannah**, was one of Ailyn’s pre-school students. Hannah now attends college. Ailyn and Bob feel very welcome at IFFP and look forward to raising the girls in a dual-faith community.

Jimmy and Nina Mrose

Nina, who grew up in New Jersey, is Jewish, and **Jimmy**, who grew up in the Boston area, is Catholic and continues to attend Mass each Sunday. Nina works at the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Jimmy, a former partner at a patent law firm, is now a stay-at-home dad. Their three-year-old son **Jacob** was adopted from Korea, and they will soon be returning to Korea to adopt another baby boy. Jimmy and Nina believe families should practice prayer in daily life, as individuals, together as a family, and as part of a larger community. Accordingly, Jimmy and Nina seek, in IFFP, a community of Jewish and Christian prayer to God, based on the traditional values and practices common to both religions.

If you would like to welcome and support new members, please contact **Tova Sanders** or **Melinda Frederick**.

— **Melinda Frederick**, New Member Coordinator

MEN’S NIGHT OUT – MARCH 16 (HELP NEEDED!)

Last year’s Men’s Night will go down in the history of IFFP as a great success that came close to the superb quality of our Women’s Retreats! We would like that to be an incentive to continue this new tradition. At present, only new member **Nat Mund** is on the organizing committee (**Andy Katz** has a conflict that will not allow him to plan or attend.) If you have ideas for Men’s Night and/or would like to be part of the planning process, please contact Nat. It would be extremely helpful to Nat to have members who have actually attended on or two of these events. The planning doesn’t have to be very time consuming and it’s a great way to express your creativity.

— **Susan Ryder**, Program Coordinator

IFFP TEEN GROUP

This year’s teen group has been going great! With a very energetic **Julia Jarvis** as our leader, we have done so many things. We cleaned up a house for the homeless, gone and played laser tag at Shadowlands Adventure in Gaithersburg, gone on a retreat to Am Kolel, and we have so much more in store. A couple of weeks ago, we said goodbye to our leader **Sam Seligman**, who is leaving for a semester in Jerusalem. He was a great

part of the group and was very enthusiastic and cool because he would rather hang out with us than with college kids!

— **Julia Lewis**, Teen Group Member

The Teen Advisory Committee met last week to plan more fun and interesting activities for the next year, including a weekend retreat at the Pearlstone Conference & Retreat Center in north Baltimore March 2-4, the annual weekend at Cape May restoring a historic hotel, ice skating on the Mall, cooking for Shepherd's Table and more community service events. Thank you to the advisory committee: **Julia Lewis, Zoe Cohen, Grace Lerner, Cindy Allen** and **Promise Ahlstrom**.

— **Julia Jarvis & Susan Ryder**

IFFP Nursery

This year, the IFFP Nursery is the best its ever been. We have a lot of energetic teens, from COA prep to Teen Group, helping out. We also have a new adult supervisor, **Diane Jentilet**, who is a pleasure to work with and is very enthusiastic and encouraging. We have had a lot of children in the nursery this year, and are hoping for even more after the holiday.

We have all new toys and entertainment for the kids, which they really seem to be enjoying. Diane brings a boom box every Sunday, playing music that the children like to listen to, plus great toys and books donated from generous IFFP members.

I speak for everyone participating in the nursery when I say that it has been a pleasure getting to know your children and for those of you who have not tried the nursery that we hope to be getting to know your children soon as well.

— **Julia Lewis**, IFFP Nursery Helper

MORE OF IFFP'S WONDERFUL VOLUNTEERS

Since our last newsletter, we've added some of our new members to our committees:

Comfort: Jodi Kanter

Community Service: Robby Jones

Worship: Jodi Kanter & Robby Jones

Choir: Bob Schwartz

GET YOURSELF LISTED AND LIST SERVED!!

Join the IFFP List Serve

It is vitally important that all members sign up to be on the list serve to receive weekly Thursday bulletins, as well as other announcements and updates. This is not something that can be done by the office. Each member is asked to send a blank email from his/her email address to: iffplistserve-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

If you change your email address, please send a blank email from your old address to: iffplistserve-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com, then send another blank email from your new address to: iffplistserve-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

If you wish to post a message on the list serve, send it to: iffplistserve@yahoogroups.com. If it is not pertinent to IFFP programs and activities, but is informative to the community, please preface the subject with "OFF TOPIC".

Get a Name Tag

We're starting a calendar new year and would like all members to have name tags in good condition. If you know that your name tag is lost, incorrect, or broken and you need a new one, please e-mail **Susan**.

Directory

Our 2006-07 Directory is out. They are available at the Greeting Table. Please take only the one with your family's name/s. If you haven't been listed or need to correct a listing, please email Susan and Peter Gray (who will provide the corrected information in the newsletter).

— Susan Ryder, Program Coordinator

JOYS!

*Congratulations to **Tova, Gideon** and **Makeda Sanders!** Their second baby is due July 3 and Makeda will be a big sister

WHY WE BELONG . . .



I came to IFFP as part of an interfaith couple: I'm Jewish, he's atheist, Central American, not particularly English-speaking, and vehemently distrustful of organized religion. I could see, as our daughter, Miranda, grew, I was going to need some help in the Bible stories department.

To be honest, it was the Jewish part more than the "interfaith" that I was hoping to share with Miranda. The family I grew up in was largely non-practicing, but my sense of Jewish identity was strong. Part of it was culture and family; I deeply love my New York-centric, Ellis Island-descended, lox-and-bagels-chewing, reading-and-achieving, loudly argumentative, warm, judgmental roots. But it was also the knowledge of us as a people with a long, proud and significant history: a people who invented one of the most powerful moral codes ever devised; who wrote The Book; who survived the Holocaust. And in my parents' lifetime and my own, the identity extended into the social struggles of the day, with Jews (and our family) being proudly over-represented in the trade union movement, the civil rights movement, the peace movement. My family, the people of the Book(s), an emphasis on ethics and justice -- this, I knew, was too valuable to lose.

That may not be what Miranda gets from IFFP. I rather doubt she is picking up on Judaism as I experienced it; the identity of IFFP is, by definition, as Christian as it is Jewish, so the culture and tone are different. And the sharp edge of ethical teachings that lay at the heart of my family's Judaism seems not so central to this group. Yet what has pleased me is the richness of IFFP's other offerings. I have enjoyed learning about my own faith and about Christianity; I have found Adult Group thought-provoking, the Gatherings moving, the people lively. So my relationship to IFFP seems to be shifting. We came, originally, so Miranda could attend Sunday School. We seem to be staying so that Mom can learn and grow.

— **Barbara Gottlieb**

MONTGOMERY COUNTY WEATHER CANCELLATION POLICY: IFFP follows Montgomery County Public Schools for closure due to weather. In case of icy conditions, snow, or storms, call 240-777-2706 or check the website <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us>. WE WILL SEND OUT A LIST SERV ANNOUNCEMENT IF THE WEATHER SUNDAY MORNING IS QUESTIONABLE. PLEASE CHECK THE LIST SERV BEFORE LEAVING HOME.

IFFP Board: *Chair:* Danny Weiss • *Vice Chair:* Rebecca Weiss • **IFFP Coordinators:** *Adult Group:* Colette Matzzie • *Celebrations:* Jessica Vistnes • *Community Comfort/Support Group Contacts:* Anne Stewart and Carol Muskin • *Community Service Workgroup:* Antoinette Eates • *New Members:* Melinda Frederick, • *Newsletter:* Peter Gray, • *Website:* Mark Shellenberger • *Worship:* Larry Bostian, • *Young Couples:* Kerri Mullins-Levine

IFFP Staff: *Spiritual Director:* Rev. Julia Jarvis, 301-270-6337 (office) • *Director of Religious Education:* Ellen Jennings • *Spiritual Advisor:* Rabbi Harold White • *Program Coordinator:* Susan Ryder