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# Interfaith Families Project

June-July 2005 [www.iffp.net](http://www.iffp.net) P.O. Box 5413, Takoma Park, MD 20913 [iffp@verizon.net](mailto:iffp@verizon.net) 301-270-6337



Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July! Have a good summer!

## FROM THE BOARD

As the new chairman of IFFP's Board, I am sending a warm summer greeting to all of you and hope that you and your family are enjoying the change of pace that this season brings.

In my five years at IFFP I have noticed how different each year is, both in what is offered to our community and in how I am connected to it. I look forward to the upcoming year, both to those things that will be new and different and those that are constant and rewarding.

We wish **Rev. Heather** well in her new pursuit. We will miss her and appreciate what she has contributed to our organization for the past two years. And we look forward to her continuing to teach the upcoming COA class.

With Rev. Heather's departure, we will see change yet again. But change at IFFP, while it can be hard and sometimes disappointing, also offers us the opportunity to grow and stretch and find new directions. The community is challenged and we always rise to the challenge.

The Board is actively engaged in planning for Rev. Heather's replacement. We met in June and will meet again in July. The Worship Committee, **Ellen Jennings**, and the Board, with the assistance of **Rabbi Harold** and special guests, will work together to create a fall program that will meet the needs and expectations of the community. We have not yet begun a formal search for a replacement for Rev. Heather but will do so in the fall. Some of you may recall how IFFP members have done a great job at helping to fill in the gaps when we have been in transition before and we are confident that, as a group, we will be no less capable of doing so again.

I hope that you will not hesitate to contact me or other Board members to ask questions, express concerns, or offer suggestions about any aspect of IFFP, including Rev. Heather's departure and replacement. There are many ways for members to be involved in our activities and we need our members to volunteer. Contact **Susan Ryder** or me to learn more about those activities. Also, later this month you will receive your 2005-2006 registration packets and we ask that you return those to the IFFP office as soon as possible.

Finally, I would like to say on behalf of the Board how grateful we are to **Steve Jackson** for his dedication and attention to IFFP over the past two years as Board Chair. Steve has worked incredibly hard to manage

and grow IFFP and we owe him our thanks. He will of course not be leaving IFFP and therefore we expect to continue to benefit from his future contributions. The current Board remains fully committed to the sound stewardship of IFFP's budget and programs.

While IFFP is recessed for the summer, I hope that you can each in your own way take time to appreciate how much we all have in our lives, to laugh out loud, to listen to the sounds of nature, and to think about what you want to get out of your connection to IFFP in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Danny Weiss, Board Chair

**SUMMER 2005 CALENDAR**

<b>July 10 (Sun.)</b>	<b>Possible hike &amp; picnic</b> <i>Sugarloaf Mountain</i> 11 a.m. – open to all ages More info on page 3	<b>July 23 (Sat.)</b>	<b>Movie &amp; dinner night for adults</b> Details to be arranged. More info on page 4
<b>July 24 (Sun.)</b>	<b>Hike &amp; picnic</b> <i>Billy Goat Trail or Sugarloaf Mountain</i> 10 a.m. – open to all ages More info on page 3	<b>Aug. 21 (Sun.)</b>	<b>Pool party &amp; cook out</b> <i>Daleview Pool</i> More info on page 4
<b>Aug. 28 (Sun.)</b>	<b>Possible rain date:</b> <b>Pool party &amp; cook out</b> <i>Daleview Pool</i> More info on page 4	<b>Sept. 11 (Sun.)</b>	<b>First Gathering of the school year</b> Welcome back!

**SUMMER ACTIVITIES**

**IMPORTANT NOTE FOR ALL SUMMER EVENTS: IF WEATHER CONDITIONS ARE QUESTIONABLE, PLEASE CHECK YOUR E-MAIL FOR CANCELLATION OF AN OUTDOOR EVENT.**

We have several wonderful events planned for this summer to bridge the gap of the summer months and give us all more opportunities to meet families we see but don't know and to visit with those that we do. We also may have some prospective member families who want to get better acquainted with the IFFP community before they decide whether to join in the fall. We understand that everyone is very busy during the summer months, but we hope that most families will be able to enjoy at least one of our summer activities.

**Possible hikes: July 10<sup>th</sup> and /or July 24<sup>th</sup>**

We would like to offer two dates, Sunday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, and Sunday, July 24<sup>th</sup>, for hikes and picnics this summer in case folks can't make one date or the other, or the first one is rained out. We don't at present have anyone to lead a hike on July 10<sup>th</sup>, so if you're willing, let **Susan Ryder** know. **Eileen Kraus-Jakobsberg** will lead a hike on the 24<sup>th</sup>. We can do both if there is enough interest for the 10<sup>th</sup> and we can find a member to lead the hike. If not, we'll just do the 24<sup>th</sup>. Look for updates in the bulletin and list serv.

DETAILS ON POSSIBLE HIKE & PICNIC, SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN, Dickerson, MD  
Sunday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 11:00 a.m.

If we have a leader, we will meet at the West View Parking Area at 11:00. Hikers should bring their cell phones if they have them, to help us all find each other and start hiking together. We'll leave our picnic lunches in our cars (might want to bring them in an ice chest), go for a hike, and then have a picnic lunch, followed by more hiking for those who wish to stay for the day. The West View Parking area has picnic areas, porta johns and, sometimes, a "snack shack". We will chose a trail based on the number of small children and their hiking abilities (or parent's carrying stamina). We hope that someone who is an experienced Sugarloaf hiker will act as our guide to trails and picnic sites. *Please RSVP to **Susan** at [iffp@verizon.net](mailto:iffp@verizon.net) by July 5<sup>th</sup>. Please include your cell phone number if you will be bringing your phone.*

Sugarloaf Mountain, located west of Germantown, is a privately owned mountain (the Strong family trust), free and open to the public, with beautiful views and scenic trails. It is striking, not for its size, but because it stands in the midst of flat Maryland farmland.

**Directions:** From the intersection of 495 & 270, take 270 to the west. Drive 22 miles to Route 109, Poolesville, head south 5 miles to State Road 95 (Comus Road-Comus Inn on the corner). Turn right onto State Road 95 and drive 4.2 miles to the Stronghold entrance "plaza." The route to the mountain is clearly marked by signs on the Interstate & local roads. [http://www.patc.net/hiking/destinations/sug\\_loaf.html](http://www.patc.net/hiking/destinations/sug_loaf.html)

DETAILS ON HIKE & PICNIC, BILLY GOAT TRAIL or SUGARLOAF MOUNTAIN,  
Sunday, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 a.m.

**Eileen Kraus-Jakobsberg** will be happy to lead a hike at Billy Goat Trail, Great Falls, overlooking the Potomac, on Sunday, July 24<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00 or to be the contact if folks prefer Sugarloaf. She suggests that everyone meet in the parking area across from the Old Angler's Inn, 10801 MacArthur Blvd., Potomac, MD. There are different hiking routes: one is more wooded and flat, whereas the other is more rock climbing (interesting and fun for kids), less shady, and a bit longer. We could take a vote from those that want to go and see which is more appealing. We could have lunch afterward down by the river. Bring snacks and water for mid-way and cell phones (if you have one) to help us connect. *Please RSVP to **Susan** at [iffp@verizon.net](mailto:iffp@verizon.net) by July 18<sup>th</sup>, indicate your preference for Billy Goat Trail or Sugarloaf, and provide your cell phone number.*

The Billy Goat Trail is a picturesque 5-mile circuit hike along the banks of the Potomac River just south of the Great Falls waterfalls. The Great Falls are located about 10 miles north of Washington, D.C., and about 4 miles north of the northern portion of the Beltway. The Billy Goat Trail consists of three segments, lettered A through C, ranging from toughest to easiest, respectively. You can print out two maps found at <http://www.nps.gov/choh/pphtml/maps.html/>

The trail is in the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Park, maintained by the U.S. National Park Service. The park's main attractions include the C & O canal and its wooden locks, but the most prominent is the Great Falls of the Potomac River itself. The park is actually named for the Great Falls Tavern, which canal travelers used for drink and lodging. For information: Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Park (<http://www.nps.gov/choh/>), Great Falls Visitor Center, 11710 MacArthur Blvd, Potomac, MD 20854, (301) 299-3613.

**Directions:** From the I-495 Beltway heading toward the American Legion bridge, take Exit 41 (River Road Carderock/Glen Echo). Head toward Carderock. Drive 1.7 miles. Turn left onto MacArthur Blvd. Drive 2.1 miles to the end of the boulevard. You'll see a sign for the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Park. Meet at the northern parking lot at 10 a.m.

- Susan Ryder, Program Coordinator

### **Dinner & a movie, Saturday evening, July 23<sup>rd</sup>**

**Adria Zeldin** is coordinating this new IFFP “*ADULTS ONLY*” summer social event! It will be a wonderful chance for the “grown-ups” to have an evening out together. Everyone will attend a movie then dine together at a restaurant. We will decide on the movie and restaurant closer to the date of the event. *Please RSVP to Adria by July 13<sup>th</sup>.*

### **Pool party and cook out, Daleview Pool August 21<sup>st</sup>, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. (possible rain date: August 28<sup>th</sup>, 4-7 p.m.)**

This year's IFFP summer pool party will be on August 21<sup>st</sup> at the Daleview Pool (901 Daleview Drive, Silver Spring). If we have to cancel it due to inclement weather, we plan to have the party on the following Sunday, August 28<sup>th</sup>.

Bring your kids, bathing suits, towels, and side dishes, desserts, or drinks for a fun early evening at the Daleview Pool. IFFP will supply hamburgers, franks, and veggie burgers/dogs for grilling at the pool. Daleview is located in a secluded, quiet area. It has a regular pool, kiddie pool, pool tables, trees and shade, picnic tables, and grills.

*Please RSVP by August 5<sup>th</sup> to Susan at [iffp@verizon.net](mailto:iffp@verizon.net).* Indicate the number of adults and children who will be coming, and whether you are members of the Daleview Pool. There will be a \$5.00 fee per person for those who are not pool members.

**Important note:** We will use your RSVP's to plan how much food to purchase, who will bring side dishes, desserts, and drinks, and whether we'll need an additional life guard. I will be out of town after the 8<sup>th</sup>, so I need your RSVP's early -- definitely by August 5<sup>th</sup>.

Daleview Pool is located near the intersection of Piney Branch Road and University Blvd. East. If you are going north on University from Piney Branch, turn right onto Buckingham, right onto Linton Street, and left onto Daleview ([www.daleview.org](http://www.daleview.org)).

- Susan Ryder, Program Coordinator

### **Nationals game**

Many of you have expressed an interest in attending a Nationals game at RFK Stadium. Tickets can be purchased at the stadium for \$7-\$40. Most of the available weekend dates are in conflict with our other events, so these dates are suggested:

Wednesday, July 6, 7:05, NY Mets  
Monday, July 18, 7:05, Colorado Rockies  
Sunday, August 7, 1:05, San Diego Padres

*Please contact Susan at [iffp@verizon.net](mailto:iffp@verizon.net) if you are interested in going.*

- Susan Ryder, Program Coordinator

## PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

### IFFP registration for 2005-2006

Registration packets for members for 2005-2006 will be mailed the week of July 11<sup>th</sup>. The deadline for return is September 1<sup>st</sup>, but we would appreciate receiving them as soon as possible in order to formulate accurate class lists as well as information for an early directory.

The packets will include a cover letter from our new board chair, **Danny Weiss**, the 2005-2006 Calendar, registration and volunteer forms, a 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration announcement, a listing of our Sunday School teachers, and flyers for our Open House on September 18<sup>th</sup>. The description of all the Sunday School classes, COA, COA Prep, and Teen Group programs, Adult Group, etc. can be found on our web site, [www.iffp.net](http://www.iffp.net).

Please post the flyers for our Open House and let me know if you are willing to take them to libraries, Jewish Community Centers, etc. I'll be happy to mail you as many as you can distribute. There are many families who would benefit from knowing about IFFP. With our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary approaching, it's clear that IFFP has come a long way from the early days, becoming the largest and best (of course) interfaith community in the country!

- Susan Ryder, Program Coordinator

### Volunteer and Board positions

We thank all the members who have already volunteered to chair or participate on committees and on our Board for the 2005-2006 year. The following are committee chairs: Adult Group, **Sam Lawson**; Celebrations, **Jessica Vistnes** and **Geneva Collins**; Community Service, **Antoinette Eates**; Worship, **Larry Bostian**; New & Prospective Members: **Cheryl Leanza**, with Co-Chair still needed; Coffee Mavens: **Marika Partridge** and **Larry Ravitz** (would appreciate an alternate family); Sound System Maven, **Robin Thieme** (would also appreciate a back up person). Please be sure to sign up for one of our volunteer positions.

We welcome three new Board members, **Rebecca Weiss**, **Phil Jakobsberg**, and **Mark Cohen** (Secretary), as well as our new Board Chair, **Danny Weiss**, and Vice Chair, **Betsy Keeler**. They join returning board members **Sam Lawson**, **Erica Burman**, and **Richard Harris** (Treasurer).

- Susan Ryder, Program Coordinator

### 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

Time flies! IFFP will be celebrating its 10th Anniversary on Saturday evening, September 17<sup>th</sup>, at Positano Ristorante Italiano in Bethesda, Maryland. There will be activities for kids, wonderful food, music and more. September is fast approaching, and the planning committee could use a few more volunteers to help plan this historic event. Please contact **Adria Zeldin** or **Mary Joel Holin** if you can help out over the summer and early fall. Also, if you have not already indicated your interest in attending this event, please let **Susan** know at [iffp@verizon.net](mailto:iffp@verizon.net).

## DIRECTORY UPDATE

David Habenstreit has a new e-mail address.

## JOYS AND CONCERNS

**Rob and Jen Liebreich** are overjoyed to announce the June 24<sup>th</sup> arrival of Joseph Benjamin Liebreich! Mother, father, and baby all are doing well.

Special thanks to **Susan Ryder** for all of her work organizing our upcoming summer events!

## SUMMER GREETINGS FROM THE DRE

“Summertime, and the livin' is easy....” Hmm. Is that so? I think that, for many of us, summer can mean a disruption of our regular schedules, a mad scramble to piece together adequate childcare coverage, and a feeling that we *should* be relaxing more, but we just can't seem to figure out how, when, and where that can possibly happen!

Well, I have a book for you. Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in Our Busy Lives, by Wayne Muller. It's a wonderful collection of chapters that focus on such topics as, “Rest for the Weary,” “Fear of Rest,” “Seize the Day,” “Why Time is Not Money,” “The Tyranny of Choice,” and “Be Still and Know.” I first read this book five years ago and valued it so much that I bought a couple of copies to give friends. I just ran across it on my bookshelf again last week and thought, “there's a reason this has reemerged—it must be time to read it again.” And, I thought I might spread the word again as well. Enjoy!

As for Sunday School, we're almost all set for teaching teams this coming year. I'm still looking for one more COA Prep teacher, so please pass along all suggestions—it would be great to have a young, Jewish man who has experience working with middle schoolers. The teaching teams are all meeting this summer, and we'll gather together for a full day of training on September 10<sup>th</sup>, a week before Sunday School classes begin on September 18<sup>th</sup>. Please remember to register your children as early as possible -- it's really important that we know which kids will be in which class before the school year begins.

I'm very excited about the coming year. I'm sad to lose **Rev. Heather**, but am very grateful that she will continue as COA teacher. She's in the process of creating a fantastic curriculum for that class, and all future COAers will benefit greatly from her work. My plans for the year include a major curriculum review (this will probably be a two year process), developing a teacher mentoring program (a process for recruiting and training future Sunday School teachers), and working on Sunday School-Home connections and resources. I'm very open to your input and welcome any suggestions you have for other areas that need attention.

I really do urge you to take some Sabbath moments for yourself throughout this summer. Somehow, after the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, time seems to fly until August 29<sup>th</sup>, when many of our children go back to school. Savor some of this time. Just stop once in awhile and do nothing. Absolutely nothing. Even if it's just for a moment. Such Sabbath moments can relax us, revive us, and remind us of who we really want to be and what we really want to be doing. They can bring us back—both to ourselves and to our loved ones.

May your livin' be easy this summer.

Peace,  
Ellen Jennings, Director of Religious Education

## THOUGHTS FROM OUR RETIRING BOARD CHAIR

Prefatory Note: I drafted this as I prepared to lead the final Adult Group of the year in a discussion of future visions for IFFP. I presented much of this article then, although not necessarily in this precise form. At the time, I had no reason to believe that **Rev. Heather** might be leaving IFFP so soon. While her departure saddens me, and will be somewhat disruptive of IFFP's efforts, I think it makes our collective thinking about a future vision for IFFP more important, not less so.

### Imagining the Future

I have two major character weaknesses. Actually, I have many more than two, but there are two which I would like to share with you here. First, I spend a good deal of time imagining the future, thinking of different ways in which IFFP might appear and function in the future. Second, I suffer from that hubris which allows me to think that, working with others, we can nudge, bend, and push the present to shape what we get in the future.

Now, let me be clear: I know that many people (on the Board and in the membership) wish that I would act more like Robert Maynard Hutchins. Hutchins was the President of the University of Chicago from 1929 until 1951, introducing the Great Books Program as the core of the Chicago curriculum. But, that is not the way in which people wish I would be more like Hutchins. In 1939, the University of Chicago football team, playing in the Big 10, suffered through a terrible season both on the field and off. Shortly after the end of that season, Hutchins announced that the university would no longer participate in inter-collegiate athletics. As he explained, "Football has the same relation to education as bullfighting has to agriculture." Some reports suggest that the following week, he went to a protest meeting which included the players and staff of the football team who were none too happy with him. During the Q&A time at that meeting, one of the players asked, "Prof. Hutchins: don't you ever get the urge to exercise?" To which he responded. "Whenever the urge to exercise comes upon me, I lie down for a while and it passes."

Well, instead of lying down until my visions pass, I want to share a little bit with you and encourage you to begin discussing your own visions of IFFP's future.

A couple of quick caveats before we begin. First, I am not talking about what should happen next year. I am thinking of where we want to be three, five, or ten years from now. Second, I am speaking only for myself – not for the Board. Indeed, during the time I have been Chair I have tried to limit myself to comments that were somewhat constrained by the range of discussion occurring on the Board. As I now am retiring from the Board, I want to share my own thoughts --- knowing that I may well be a community of one in holding these particular thoughts.

Let me sketch two visions and invite you to add your own.

The first vision, let's call it the "status quo" model, takes what we have and solidifies it. This will involve increasing the membership a little bit – from its current 100 to about 125. That would allow our financing easily to support our current staffing levels with a bit of expansion of hours. What we do and where we do it would remain largely unchanged.

Let me turn to my second vision, what I think of as the "community center" model. Before I talk about a few specifics, let me say a word about why I would want to see IFFP change from what it is now -- much as I admire what we have become and love being a part of this community.

I have at least 4 reasons why I think change would be good for IFFP:

1) I would like to see us do the things we do better. I'd like to see the Sunday School develop a curriculum that makes sense, fully incorporating our shared vision of why we send our kids. I'd like to see the Gatherings include elements every week which are clearly identifiable to all, adults and children alike, as derived from Jewish and Christian traditions. I'd also like to see the Gatherings in a setting that allows those who so desire to enjoy spiritual moments in a supportive community. As one of my daughters observed not too long ago, "Dad, kids know what a school cafeteria is for!" I would like to see our Adult Groups develop a sense of continuity, where there is a kind of curriculum which organizes the discrete activities going on from session to session, even year to year.

2) I would like to see us do some things which we do not now do – including bringing our ideas and approaches to the broader community, for the benefit of interfaith families who do not belong to IFFP whether they belong to churches, temples, or are unaffiliated.

3) I would like to see us do a much better job of building community for the diverse group we have already begun. This requires developing many more "affinity activities" in which people get together to do things they enjoy doing with relatively small groups of other members. I would like to see us do this taking into account the increasing geographic dispersion of the group. I believe in building community not only for itself, but because it will make all of the other things we do work better. I have seen the difference this can make in the educational program that I help run for Cornell University. The fact that students live and study together in one building creates a sense of community which makes classes come alive in a way which is difficult, if not impossible, when strangers are thrown together to learn.

4) I would like to see us continue to grow. I do not believe bigger is better. And, as I have just suggested, I think we need to pay more attention to breaking our activities down into smaller groups sometimes. At the same time, as we pursue our mission of providing a safe place in which families can explore ways of incorporating both Judaism and Christianity into their lives and that of their children, my view is that I have benefited most from those people who are most different from me, and who are doing the most different things from us. I would like to continue to meet and hear from and learn from an ever-expanding circle of potential teachers. I feel like we have a special gift here – imperfect as it may be – and I want to share that gift. I want more people from more places, backgrounds, and spiritual perspectives to come together, joined not by dogma or doctrine, but rather, joined by the desire to explore ways in which their two religious traditions can be a resource for them and for their kids.

What does this lead me to think about differently in the IFFP of the future?

In my image, by the year 2010 – just to pick an arbitrary future point in time – I imagine us having 300 member families. I have estimated that there are over 10,000 interfaith families in the greater DC metro area who might be interested in IFFP. This excludes families who choose to raise their kids as Jewish, or as Christian. This number also excludes those families who really have no interest in connecting their kids to their parents' religious traditions. I believe there are 10,000 interfaith families interested in finding a way to celebrate both traditions.

I imagine us having a building of our own. This would be designed to create a Gathering Space distinctively suited to our desires and needs. It would have lots of classrooms, and perhaps a small performance space. Office, meeting rooms, ... I also imagine that there would be a Child Care Center using the classrooms during the week.



I imagine us having an expanded staff along the lines we already have:

*Spiritual Life*: Guided by a Senior Pastor and a Senior Rabbi, both working for IFFP full-time.

*Religious Education*, both for children and adults: Guided by a Minister of Religious Education, working three-quarters time for IFFP, with a half-time assistant

*Community Life*: Coordinated by a full-time Center Coordinator with a full-time administrative assistant. The division of Community Life would be responsible for initiating, coordinating, and supporting three areas of community interaction:

\*\*Member Activities: films, picnics, potluck dinners, arts festivals -- the sky is the limit.

\*\*Member Services: bookstore, life cycle events planning, yoga classes...

\*\*Public Programming: outreach activities including festivals, symposia, publications....

These are some of the essential elements of the “community center” model, in which we not only do what we do now – even better – but we also offer a range of community services and activities which we do not presently offer. And we do so for a larger community in a building of our own.

While I do not really want to focus on the financing of this vision, I would like to say that in my vision we do all this without a substantial increase in the fees paid by member families. The key to this lies in fundraising which allows us to buy the building with relatively little borrowing, and fundraising which allows us to endow some or all of our key staff positions along the academic model of “endowed chairs.” In this way, we could go forward with this much broader and deeper community institution without increasing our expenses so much that it would make it difficult for people to join and to remain members.

Well, this is a beginning, and probably much more than you wanted to know of what I think. I believe that my thinking on this is relatively unimportant – except to the extent that it encourages other members to think about the future of IFFP, and how they would like it to be. As that process occurs more and more widely, and fora are created in which to share our thoughts, I trust in the extraordinary ability of IFFP to find its way.

To that task, let us now turn.

- Steve Jackson, retiring Board Chair

## REFLECTION

It's hard to say goodbye in person, but it's worse to do it by e-mail.

As most of you have heard by now, I have decided to leave my position as Spiritual Director of the Interfaith Families Project to become the Minister of the Kittamaqundi Community, a non-traditional church in Columbia, Maryland. This decision was not an easy one to make—I have found my work with IFFP to be profoundly rewarding and challenging. But the position at the Kittamaqundi Community is a very unique opportunity, and it comes at a time when I feel ready for full-time employment.

While my work at “KC” (as everyone there calls the church) doesn't begin until September 1<sup>st</sup>, my contract with IFFP expires on June 30<sup>th</sup>. So while I hope to continue to be in contact with IFFP and to help with a transition in leadership anyway I can, my tenure in my position will end before I have an opportunity to say goodbye and thank you in person. I find this profoundly unsatisfying, but sadly, I realize there is little I can do about it given the timing of KC's search process and the dispersal of the IFFP community over the summer. I hope to find some time in the fall when I can visit an IFFP Gathering and say thank you in a more personal—and more heart-felt—manner than I can possibly do in writing.

I had hoped to include in this last newsletter article a summary of some of what IFFP has taught me over the past two years. Despite many attempts, I haven't yet found a way to put much into words. I guess more has

been opened up for me than resolved, and I will leave IFFP still musing about a number of questions, most of which preoccupied me even before coming to IFFP: How do people grow spiritually? How can someone aid another person's spiritual growth? What role does *belief* play in shaping a moral life (and what role should it play)? How does *identity* shape belief, and how does it shape behavior? How should people who believe in God relate to those who identify as atheists? What, in the end, can I do as a religious leader that will help the world? How should our religious life intersect with our public lives?

These questions have been profoundly shaped by my experience of working in a community that is addressing religious questions in a setting that looks a whole lot more like the public sphere than any other religious community I've ever been a part of. For me, the best part of IFFP is this—*it looks like the world*. It's a lot harder to figure out what you believe, what it means to be Christian or Jewish, how to engage in religious ritual, and how to make moral judgments in such a community. But if we can figure these things out in a setting like IFFP, our beliefs, our religious identity, or sense of ourselves as moral agents will have a much greater chance of holding up in our crazy, mixed-up world than if we discerned these things in homogenous groups.

So, even though I will soon no longer be an employee of IFFP, I remain a fan. I hope to continue to support the organization by teaching the Coming of Age class on Sunday evenings again next year and in any other way that the leadership deems appropriate. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for welcoming me and my family into your community.

Yours sincerely,  
Heather Kirk-Davidoff, Spiritual Director