

# Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council



MARCH 2018

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## MAKING A BELOVED COMMUNITY “UPLIFTING WOMEN OF FAITH WHILE IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES FACED DAILY”

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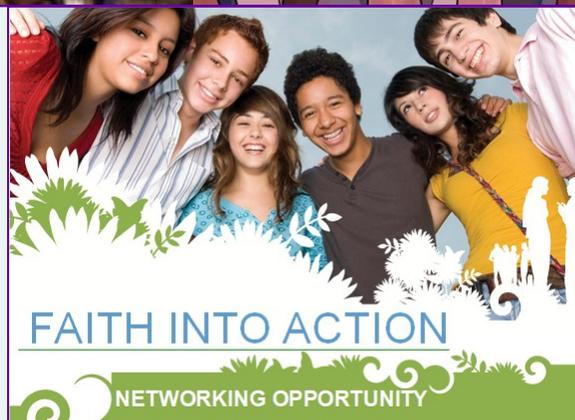
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UCICC EVENT: March 8, 2018

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## About the Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council

### Our Mission

The Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council works to facilitate regular interfaith meetings in order to make way for the building of bonds within the interfaith community.

We respect and encourage the inclusion and welcoming of others regardless of faith, race or disability. We strive to be proactive on social issues.

### Our Goals

- To grow the network of faith-based organizations in Union County.
- To encourage representatives from all faiths to join the Interfaith Coordinated Council including those of Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Islamic, and other faiths.
- To be engaged in:
  1. **Community Building** within faith-based organizations and the general Union County population.
  2. The advancement of **Social Justice**.
  3. The intentional **inclusion** of others regardless of gender, faith, race.
- To be active in activities that are inclusive and community building.

### Our Objectives

- Sponsor regular engagement opportunities that facilitate the building of bonds within the Union County interfaith community and their congregations.
- Strengthen the Union County religious congregations through involvement, action and education in self-help.
- Build working relationships between Union County religious organizations and Community Access Unlimited that create opportunities for youth and people with disabilities and their support staff.

### Potential Advantages to Joining the Interfaith Community

- Develop interfaith solidarity.
- Avail yourself of increased visibility within the interfaith community and build opportunities to share educational and community events with the group.
- Build religious membership.
- Gain exposure for you and fellow congregation members to educational opportunities regarding entitlements, housing, and other services, including but not limited to: programs for seniors, youth, people with physical and developmental disabilities, etc..
- Create full and part time employment opportunities for congregation members with CAU.

### UNION COUNTY INTERFAITH COORDINATING COUNCIL Steering Committee Members

**Deacon Tim Williams—Chair**  
First Baptist Church  
Kenilworth

**Pastor E. Crawford—Chair Emeritus**  
Ebenezer AME  
Rahway

**Sidney Blanchard**  
Executive Director of CAU

**Rabbi Joel N. Abraham**  
Temple Shalom  
Scotch Plains

**Ayaz Aslam**  
Muslim Community Center of UC  
Elizabeth

**Pastor H. Bryant**  
Honorably Retired

**Denise Fernandes**  
Latino Outreach

**Erich Han William Kussman, Jr**  
Holy Cross Lutheran Church  
Springfield

**Pastor Mertz**  
First United Methodist Church  
Westfield

**Michelle Mobley**  
Director of Youth Service  
Residential

**Pastor Carmine Pernini**  
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Rahway

**Father Michael Saporito**  
The Parish Community of St. Helen  
Westfield

**Roderick Spearman**  
CAU Consultant

**Reverend Ronald C. Thomas**  
Fountain Baptist Church  
Summit

**Elder Arthur “Skip” Winter**  
Cranford Presbyterian Church  
Cranford

message

## from the Chairperson Emeritus

*“There is no force more powerful than a woman determined to rise.”*

In March we celebrate the value, gifts, and grace of women. Mothers, Sisters, Daughters, Aunts, Friends, Neighbors, Teachers, Activist, Community Leaders, Clergy and Godly servants.



Women of every hue, every social class, every level of education, every demographic, every culture and every faith. Women as much alike as they are different because of their heart for God.

This month, we celebrate women who reflect the quality's and characteristics of God, settings themselves apart by:

- 1) Seeking to please God like Mother Theresa.
- 2) Moving with boldness like Ilhan Omar.
- 3) Standing in assurance like Irisha Hilliard.
- 4) Pursuing purpose like Hannah Senesh.
- 5) Exhibiting strength like Ghazala Khan.

Almighty Creator, God of our past and our future, let us seek you with our whole heart, moving bolding in every situation and circumstance, standing firm and assured that you have called us to this purpose and give us the strength to overcome every adversity, that life sends our way. Today we celebrate who we are in you. Unapologetically women, undeniably your daughters and unashamedly sisters in faith. Amen!

*Rev. Dr. Erika D. Crawford*



# Know Your Neighbor

**By: Bishop Tracie Bartholomew**  
New Jersey Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America (ELCA).

## A Glimpse at Being a Woman in Leadership



I was asked to write this 1-page article on “anything I

want related to being a woman in leadership”. At first, that instruction seems obvious to me – I am a woman and I am in a position of leadership. I am always those two things at once (and several other things as well – spouse, parent, sibling, friend, co-worker, and most importantly, baptized child of God). I don’t usually think about them as two separate identities – woman and Lutheran bishop.

But then I look around and realize that for some, these two parts of my identity are indeed incongruent. Some see my gender as an impediment to my role serving the church. Some see my gender as a non-issue in serving the church. Some want to make a big deal out of the fact that I am the first female elected to serve as bishop in the New Jersey Synod of the ELCA. Some want to downplay that reality.

Almost every Sunday when I am visiting a congregation a comment is made that reminds me others never forget my gender. It can be a very supportive comment like, “I am so glad my daughters get to meet you, a woman bishop” or “I never thought in my lifetime that I would meet a woman bishop”. It can be a negative comment like, “I don’t agree women should be bishop” or “I voted for the other candidate, because I just couldn’t imagine a woman in your position”. And sometimes it is a comment that leaves me wondering what is meant, “I don’t know what to call you since we’ve never met a woman bishop” (Bishop Bartholomew would be the response).

Notice that all these comments include a qualifier – woman bishop. After hearing that again and again, I began to realize that my self-understanding of serving as a bishop who happens to be a woman is not the same way others look at me. I hope one day soon I will be asked about being a leader. Period. I hope people will look at me, and other women in leadership, and remark about our skills and gifts for leading rather than how our gender affects or plays into our roles. I hope we will affirm and welcome the leadership of qualified people in all areas of life regardless of their gender identification.

Welcome to “Know Your Neighbor”, a section intended to give the Interfaith Community a Glimpse into the many facets of religion. Each faith has many facets that bring with it different experiences, practices, and beliefs even though we may find Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, or Judaism at the core. We are all diverse and to Make a Beloved Community we must build a foundation of understanding our rich diversity as far as religious practices and daily experiences for those walking in faith. It is our hope that you will submit informative articles or firsthand experiences to help us all to Know Our Neighbor’s and Make a Beloved Community. Forward your submissions to [UCInterfaith@caunj.org](mailto:UCInterfaith@caunj.org).

# Member Spotlight

**Rev. Dr. Odessa McNeil**  
**Agape Family Worship Center**  
501 E Hazelwood Ave, Rahway, NJ 07065

*Proverb 31:25 “Strength and honor are her clothing and she shall rejoice in time to come.”*



## Strong and Honorable Women

The “Me Too” movement is growing in America and indeed in other countries as women speak out about being subjected to inappropriate behavior and sexual misconduct from men who overstep their bounds and treat them as “less than” or as “property.”

God created woman because “it was not good for man to be alone”, however, a woman is special and a vessel to be treasured, not abused.

We are in the throes of the twenty-first century but according to Women’s Rights Watch news in a recent article, “despite the strides made by international women’s rights movement over many years, women and girls around the world are still married as children or trafficked into forced labor and sex slavery. They are refused access to education and political participation, and some are trapped in conflicts where rape is perpetrated as a weapon of war. Around the world, deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth are needlessly high, and women are prevented from making deeply personal choices in their private lives.”

Women and girls bring a plethora of gifts, talents, skill, insight, sensitivity, and significance to their families, communities, workplaces, religious arenas and indeed to the world. We are God’s designer originals with a purpose. Therefore, we must continue to fight for freedom, equal rights, equal pay, no limitations on education, and fight against cultural, religious and moral entrapments and abuses.

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I am proud of women throughout history who have left deep impressions in the sands of time, i.e., Esther and Ruth of the Bible, women who refused to be controlled by the customs and culture of the day. Esther went before the King, not knowing whether she would live or die, but her testimony was “if I perish, I perish.” Ruth refused to return to Moab, but rather followed Naomi, her mother-in-law back to Jerusalem and God blessed her with Boaz, a kinsman redeemer.

I thank God for and respect Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Lucretia Mott, Victoria Woodhull, Alice Paul, Elizabeth Caddy Stanton, Betty Shabazz, Miriam Anderson, Mahalia Jackson, Rosa Parks, Dorothy Height, Maya Angelou, Coretta Scott King, and Michelle Obama, to name a few; women, who made lasting contributions to society. Strong and Honorable sisters.

**Women everywhere are God’s gift to the world. Stand up sisters, you matter !!!!!!!**

# March Spotlight on Faith



## *Rev. Robin Tanner*

Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
4 Waldron Ave.  
Summit, NJ 07901

Each year in our congregation at the Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Summit, I preach a sermon about human sexuality. Sexual ethics matter a great deal to UUs. In 1999, the Unitarian Universalist Association and the United Church of Christ partnered to create Our Whole Lives, a comprehensive sexual education grounded in values of self-worth, sexual health, responsibility, justice and inclusivity.

This year took on new meaning as the testimonies of #MeToo circulated throughout social media. Over a decade ago, Tarana Burke began the Me Too movement as a way for women to talk about sexual abuse and assault. In the past year, this movement became a social media phenomenon. As the stories unfolded, I heard a host of reactions ripple out within my own congregation and far beyond our walls: anger, fear, traumatic response, and sadness.

Enter into this space, the life of a faith community and all of the dynamics of being in community together.

So, this year I decided to talk about the power of touch. In all of the conversation about the legality of consent and the boundaries of harassment, I think something is being lost about being in right relationship or covenant. One way covenant shows up on Sundays in my community is touch. It's a visible sign of relationship, power and covenant. Consider how political figures or TV personalities utilize touch to convey relationship or transfer of power.

Consent is one standard of behavior, a legal standard, which is important but insufficient in faith communities. We are called to dig deeper and explore responsibility, justice and inclusivity. Put another way, you can have a legally allowed sexual relationship that still lacks the love and justice we espouse in our faith.

I am aware many Sundays that some of our folks come to the congregation and receive the only hug or handshake that they will receive all week. Others yet come with painful histories around sexuality or cultural expectations that would make a hug intrusive, unwelcome and, even, violating. So, in this diverse dynamic of expectation and need, what are we to do?

I believe in our communities we need to learn how to talk about sexuality including touch. We need to go beyond the golden rule into the platinum rule. It is not enough to give others what you would want, but rather we need to learn how to treat others as they would hope to be treated.

As the parent of young children, I recently learned the importance of giving children agency around touch. I no longer tell my children they must hug someone when we go to church. I learned this from OWL. If someone wants to hug them, then they have to ask and wait for an answer. I refuse to shame them or coerce them to hug anyone. This is a simple, but powerful early primer on how to be in right relationship. My twin three year-olds get it. I believe we all can get to higher moral ground together, if we are willing to open the conversation including #MeToo.



# Jewish Family Service of Central New Jersey

is offering



## SPECIAL NEEDS CAREGIVER'S & SIBLING'S SUPPORT GROUPS

### Caregiver's Group

- ❖ Network opportunity with other parents/guardians
  - ❖ Receive support and guidance
- ❖ Learn about community opportunities and advocacy

### Sibling's Group

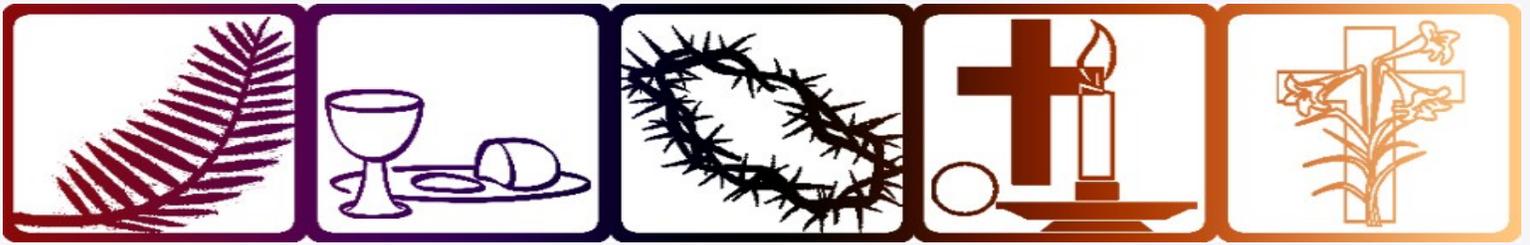
- ❖ Opportunity for typical siblings to express feelings
  - ❖ Fun activities and pizza
  - ❖ Networking with others

	Caregiver's Group	Sibling's Group (Ages 9 to 13+)
<b>DATES:</b> 2018	Feb. 28, March 28, April 25, May 30, June 27, July 25, Aug. 29	March 21, April 18, May 16, June 20 <small>* Sibling's Group will not meet in July 2017</small>
<b>TIME:</b>	7:30 pm – 9:00 pm	6:00 pm – 7:15 pm
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>Jewish Community Center of Central NJ</b> 1391 Martine Avenue Federation Conference Room, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Scotch Plains, NJ 07076	<b>Jewish Family Service of Central NJ</b> 655 Westfield Avenue Board Room, 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor Elizabeth, NJ 07208
<b>HELD BY:</b>	Dr. Laura S. Weitzman, Ed. D.	Ms. Vangie Vargas, LCSW.

For more information or to register, please contact  
Laura Weitzman at (908) 352-8375 or email [lweitzman@jfscentralnj.org](mailto:lweitzman@jfscentralnj.org)



Women are often the primary caregivers of loved ones with Developmental Disabilities. Taking on this role is not only rewarding but like many aspects of life challenges are presented. It is important for Caregiver's to be able to rely on each other for support and guidance. Jewish Family Service Central New Jersey is an organization open to all faiths and genders that leads a Caregiver's Group as well as Sibling's Group. See details above.



# Holy Week

*Sister Marlene Milasus, OSB*

Saint Walburga Monastery  
851 North Broad Street  
Elizabeth, NJ 07208



For many years I taught liturgy and worship classes to Catholic seminarians who were preparing for the priesthood. One day I brought a Slinky toy to class and asked them why it was a good symbol for the liturgical year, also known as the Church year, the annual cycle of seasons and feasts that is celebrated by the Catholic Church and other liturgical traditions as well.

Since the Slinky toy happened to be green, the students were distracted by the color and guessed that, since green is the ritual color for 34 weeks of the Catholic Church year, that might be the connection.

No, I assured them. The real connection is that the year of seasons and feasts is a spiral, just like the Slinky. We go around an annual circle of celebrations, but it's a circle that's not closed in on itself. Rather, like a spiral it *goes somewhere* and *it's moving us somewhere...* to Christ, not just as our destination, but as our identity.

Who we are, how we live, how we respond to the Gospel's call to a change of heart and a commitment to love all people, is expressed and nourished in the cycle of feasts that culminates in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, and in the giving of the Holy Spirit. For Catholics, this is seen in a very dramatic way in Holy Week.

- ◆ We recall Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday but also his painful passion and death.
- ◆ We celebrate the Mass of the Lord's Supper on the evening of Holy Thursday, re-enacting the Washing of the Feet and recalling that Supper as the first celebration of Eucharist. This liturgy becomes a call to service and a grateful celebration of the gift of Eucharist.
- ◆ Good Friday brings the reading of John's Passion, heartfelt intercessions for the needs of all the world, the veneration of the Cross by all present, and a service of Communion.
- ◆ Holy Saturday night is the "Mother of All Vigils", the Easter Vigil, the celebration that gives meaning to everything we celebrate throughout the year. We listen to a spectrum of Scripture readings, welcome back the first "Alleluia", which hasn't been sung since Shrove Tuesday, listen to the Gospel of the Resurrection, welcome and initiate new members into the Church, and renew our own baptismal commitment. Capping off this celebration is the Eucharist itself, as we make present Jesus' saving death and resurrection.
- ◆ The joy continues at the Masses of Easter Sunday -- and in fact we celebrate Easter for 50 days, culminating in the Solemnity of Pentecost when we celebrate the coming -- and continued presence, of the Holy Spirit.



To conclude with that Slinky -- every year we circle around, farther out into the spiral, closer to the Reality of the Risen Christ. And ***this is not just a Catholic thing.*** The Holy One calls us each, whatever our religious tradition may be, to live the rhythm of life, death, and rebirth on a daily basis, as we circle forward to "the new heavens and the new earth". We are charged, each in our own tradition, with the glorious responsibility and privilege to serve others and to move our world forward to unity and peace. May the beauty of new life in the coming Spring remind us each of this challenge!

# Women and Passover

*Rabbi Renee Edelman*

Temple Sha'arey Shalom  
78 South Springfield Avenue.  
Springfield, NJ 07081



Pesach or Passover is a holiday in which we commemorate the Jewish slaves, led by Moses, Miriam and Aaron, crossing the sea to freedom. The first two nights are marked by a Seder, meaning Order, in which we tell the Biblical story of the Exodus, tie the themes of freedom and slavery to our modern lives, and eat foods, which symbolize different aspects of the story. There are over 1000 different Haggadot, which tell the tale in different ways, including games and bibliodrama to make the Seder interesting.

At the center of our table sits the Seder Plate with bowls of different foods. We dip vegetables into salt water to remember the tears of our ancestors. Maror, bitter herbs, usually in the form of horseradish, recalls our days embittered by slavery. A zroa, shankbone is a reminder of the Passover sacrifice and the animal blood, which marked and protected ancient Israelites homes from the plagues. Recalling the cycle of life and birth is the roasted hard-boiled egg, called the Beitz. The mortar that our ancestors used to build the pyramids is echoed in the Charoset, a delicious mixture of wine, fruits, nuts and spices. Many Seder plates also hold an orange, which is not commanded by the Talmud, our books of laws and discussions. A common story about the orange is that it emerged from a heckler listening to a Jewish feminist. In his outrage, he cried that a woman belongs on the pulpit as a Rabbi like an orange belongs on the Seder plate. The orange was introduced to the Seder as a response to the inclusion of women in Judaism; yet, I believe that it stands for the myriad rebel women, who rescued Moses, who raised Moses and who supported Moses, as he became the leader of the ancient Israelite people.

In Exodus, God has many partners, first among them, five brave women. There is Yocheved, Moses' mother, and Shifra and Puah, the famous midwives. Each defies Pharaoh's decree to kill the Israelite baby boys. And there is Miriam, Moses' sister, about whom the following Midrash is taught: [When Miriam's only brother was Aaron] she prophesied... "My mother is destined to bear a son who will save Israel." When [Moses] was born the whole house... filled with light [.] When Moses is placed in a basket in the water, Miriam follows to help determine his destiny. Finally, there is Pharaoh's daughter Batya, who defies her own father and plucks baby Moses out of the Nile. The story goes that when Pharaoh's daughter's handmaidens saw that she intended to rescue Moses, they attempted to dissuade her, and persuade her to heed her father. In the Midrash, the text that fills in the holes of Torah, they said to her: "Our mistress, it is the way of the world that when a king issues a decree, it is not heeded by

the entire world, but his children and the members of his household do observe it, and you wish to transgress your father's decree?" But transgress she did. These women had a vision leading out of the darkness shrouding their world. They were women of action; prepared to defy authority to make their vision a reality bathed in the light of the day. Retelling the heroic stories of Yocheved, Shifra, Puah, Miriam and Batya reminds our daughters that with vision and the courage to act, they can carry forward the tradition those intrepid women launched. While there is much light in today's world, there remains in our universe disheartening darkness, inhumanity spawned by ignorance and hate. We see horrific examples in the entirety of the world. The Passover story recalls to all of us—women and men—that with vision and action we can join

hands with others of like mind, kindling lights along paths leading out of the terrifying darkness.

# Faith In Action!



## Continuum of Caring Think Tank

### Visitation Follow-up Idea

*“When that mother, that grandmother, that caretaker comes back... how can clergy process that with her? If there were any challenges in that visit, was there any stumbling blocks in the visit, any hills to climb in the visit, how can they process that? ... If clergy doesn't have the skills set to meet the need of the significant other/ the caretaker connect them to therapy so that trauma informed care can be addressed in that family. “*

## Continuum of Caring Think Tank

### Participant Quote

*“The same baggage that got us there keeps us coming back. We have trauma, PTSD. We need people that genuinely care. “*

## Morning Star Community Christian Center

### Future Event

Many previously incarcerated individuals do not realize in the state of New Jersey they have the right to vote if they complete the process of re-registering and meet the required criteria. As such be on the look for a voter registration and education session to be held at Morning Star Community Christian Center in Linden NJ! We hope to see you there in April!

## Resources for Trauma Informed Care & Grief in Regards to the Criminal Justice System

<https://mentalhealth.gov/talk/faith-community-leaders>

<https://www.samhsa.gov>



**imagine**  
A CENTER FOR COPING WITH LOSS

908-264-3100

**UCICC hosted, A Continuum of Caring Think Tank on 2/22/18 at Community Access Unlimited.**

# Faith In Action!



## Clean Dreamers Act Demanded

### Sit-in held at Congressman Leonard Lance's office

On 2/5/18 some members of UCICC, Make the Road NJ, SEIU 32BJ, and Faith in NJ staged a sit-in requesting that revisions to what Rep. Lance has signed with the "Problem Solvers Caucus," as it has too many caveats for it to be effective. There were 5 clergy members and 1 activist arrested during the protest.. Participants are currently seeking a meeting with Rep. Lance to discuss the creation of a Clean Dream Act.



# Why we need a Clean Dream Act/ Stand Alone Legislation.

Those of us who are leaders of faith-based organizations know that there is a difference between what the local, state, or national laws require and what is required of us as people of faith. Most of us do what we need to do to follow the law when it comes to matters of how we pay our employees, how we compose, amend and follow our Bylaws, how we engage with those from whom we buy supplies, etc. Yet, as I often say to congregational boards with whom I work, what we are called to do within and between our communities of faith, is often more and of a different quality than what is required by the laws of government. (And, yes, sometimes, what the law requires and what we are called to do, comes into conflict, and then we have to struggle with to whom or to what do we answer.)

When I am speaking with members in my faith tradition, I emphasize that TRUST and right relations is what ought to govern our behavior with each other, in fact with all others. The law might require a certain minimum threshold, yet maintaining relationships of trust with others asks for so much more. I often remind myself and others in my faith community that we are to ask; “What does LOVE require of us?”.

It is clear to me, that the Dreamers, trusted America’s promise. When they filled out their original paperwork they gave the government information about themselves and about their parents that they trusted would be used appropriately. They relied on an American “promise” that was codified in laws, yet the promise they most relied on goes beyond the law. The promise our forbearers made so imperfectly, that so many Americans continue to try to improve, to make more perfect was a promise of freedom, and of a better life, captured perhaps best in the inscription found at the base of the Statue of Liberty. “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!” ...lines from "The New Colossus" a sonnet that American poet Emma Lazarus (1849–1887) written in 1883.

*By: Rev. Ann Marie Alderman  
First Unitarian Society of Plainfield  
724 Park Ave, Plainfield, NJ 07060*

Like the Declaration of Independence, these lines are part of the lexicon of what I think of as the American moral promise. In that sense, these lines and many others are our national “scripture”.

In my view, to not continue to do what is necessary to align our laws with the moral promises we have been called to fulfill is to turn our backs on what America meant and still means to so many across this world who yearn to breathe free.

## **SOLIDARIOS**

*An Ecumenical Love Justice Interfaith Worshipping Community Service*

*Please plan to join us on Sunday, March 25, at 2:30 PM, Palm Sunday at Holy Trinity Catholic Church 315 First St. Westfield 07090 for the first monthly Solidarios Interfaith Worshipping Community Service. The seed for this service was planted during the Nicaragua Mission Trip. Each month, a different “Saint” will be the focus of discussion, along with poems, readings and songs. Oscar Romero, who was assassinated on March 24, 1980 while he was serving as the Bishop of San Salvador in El Salvador, will be the first “saint” presented. Others will include Nelson Mandela, Dorothy Day, Sister Maura Clarke and Martin Luther King, Jr. There will be an opportunity for prayers and sharing of workshops and resources. Kelli Bruno will be joining us to share her musical talents on March 25. Refreshments will be served at the conclusion of the service.*

*For further information, contact Skip Winter [ahwinterjr@aol.com](mailto:ahwinterjr@aol.com) or Rev. Brooks Smith [smithjbrooks25@gmail.com](mailto:smithjbrooks25@gmail.com).*



# Caged

By the New Jersey  
Prison Cooperative

May 3 – 20

2017-2018 SEASON, MAINSTAGE

## CAGED

by the New Jersey Prison Cooperative

May 3 - May 20, 2018

Tickets \$13 - \$38. Student, senior, and group discounts available.

Caged by the New Jersey Prison Cooperative, directed by Jerrell Henderson, will be performed from May 3 to May 20 at The Passage Theater in Trenton, New Jersey. The play was written by students in the New Jersey prison system taught by the Rev. Chris Hedges. Rev. Hedges, along with the Rev. Michael Granzen, runs the prison ministry at Second Presbyterian Church in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

The play revolves around one African-American family in Newark and their struggle to hold at bay the economic and social forces that seek to destroy them. It tells the story of the cages, visible and invisible, that keep poor people of color in bondage inside and outside of prison. It chronicles the struggle to resist this radical evil. It lifts up the voices of those we rarely hear in the wider society to celebrate the dignity and spiritual strength of the oppressed that is at the core of the Christian Gospel.

Since the play was written in 2013 inside the New Jersey prison system it has undergone several revisions. Public readings have been held. It has been workshopped by three times by professional actors in New York City. Rev. Hedges has worked closely during the last four years with several of his students, especially Boris Franklin, who have been released to refine and focus the play for the stage. Writers, the formerly incarcerated, academics, actors and directors, including the theater directors Jeff Wise, C. Ryanne Domingues and June Ballinger, the film director Marty Brest, actor Eunice Wong, the theologian James Cone and former Black Liberation Army member Ojore Lutalo, who spent 22 years in isolation in Trenton, have attended workshops and critiqued the play to give shape to its current form.

Caged is a passionate, moving and unequivocal cry for justice. It rips open the barbarity of our penal system. It makes us feel the human cost. It is a searing indictment of our society by men and women who the state has demonized, discarded and attempted to silence.

**For more information on purchasing tickets hurry over to <http://passagetheatre.org/caged/>**



# Women's Voices – Where are They Today?

**By: Janice C. Lilien**  
**YWCA Union County | Chief Executive Officer**

The month of March has been known as “Women’s History Month” since 1987, and it celebrates women’s accomplishments in and contributions to history, culture, and society. Thirty-one years later, it is important to reflect on the changes that have happened to women since then, and also those things that have not changed.

On the positive side, political representation of women has certainly increased, and advances by women in fields previously considered male dominated, such as STEM, certainly continue. Most of us know women physicians, attorneys, corporate and nonprofit leaders, scientists, pastors or rabbis, and others in professions that, when I was growing up, were only held by men. On the surface at least, gender seems to have equalized and the barriers to women’s accomplishments have dropped. Women’s voices are heard throughout the land, and in many cases are taking the lead on important social justice issues.

Yet when we dig deeper, we need to ask - are the voices of women – all women – heard equally, and do they count equally? Has the historic oppression of women –exemplified in laws ranging from wife-beating, property, voting, and the continued debate about women’s bodily autonomy – come to an end, or do we need to do more?

This question comes as the #MeToo movement has gained steam, women’s voices about sexual harassment and assault are being heard, and action is being taken in many quarters to hold men accountable. Action Coalitions, hearings, and more are at long last changing the dialogue from the traditional victim-blaming to victim support, from disbelieving women to finally hearing their voices. Yet still, we cannot ignore that at the very top level of our government, we see the opposite, that a self-proclaimed womanizer is able to still claim that multiple women’s stories of sexual liaisons, harassment, and rape are not true – and there is no accountability. Ultimately, power still prevails.

As a leader in the YWCA movement, and working on issues related to women’s empowerment and specifically domestic violence, I believe that the voices of those women have not yet been heard. For some reason it’s easier to say that a woman “did not invite” sexual harassment by her choice of clothing or her remaining in a private space alone with a man, than it still is to say that “she must have done something to provoke it” when a man strikes her. If a domestic violence victim remains in a relationship due to lack of resources or a real fear of repercussions if she flees – she is still questioned as to “why she didn’t leave.” There is not yet a #MeToo movement for domestic violence – sadly, victim-blaming and victim-questioning is still the order of the day. The power of the abuser is manifest across our society, and visible again at the top level of government, where a domestic abuser was allowed to gain security clearance and defended by that same womanizer president.

What is the intersection between #MeToo, domestic violence, and women’s history? Sadly, sexual assault, domestic violence, and the use of systemic power and control have been a part of history since ancient times. As our world has evolved, women’s voices on these issues and others are being heard more and more. Having been part of the 2017 and 2018 Women’s Marches, I saw and heard the strength of voices from women across this country and this state, and felt the swelling of hope that we could begin to effect true change. However, I believe that not all voices are being heard, and not all are being heard equally. The voices of women of color, low income women, LGBTQ women and others are still disproportionately silenced. All our voices and our truths need to come into the light and be heard by everyone in the rooms, not just other women.

It will take all of us in our community to work together to open our ears and our hearts, and truly hear the voices of women. Faith communities can play an important role in this by holding listening sessions, by removing judgment from what women express, and by using the power of our beliefs and faith to let justice and truth prevail. Faith communities can lead the way, starting us on the path to a world where all are heard and all matter. Faith communities can help us become a society where our collective voices make a joyful sound and that music is heard throughout the land.



Join us for  
**Know Your  
Neighbor;  
Share Your Story!**

**Rahway Family Success Center**  
**796 E. Hazelwood Ave Rahway, NJ 07065**  
**Parking available onsite & at the Church across the street**

**Wednesday, April 18, 2018**  
**5:30 Registration**  
**6:00 – 8:00 PM Workshop**

Come join us for a cup of tea and share your story. How did you become our neighbor? Do you have any cultural traditions around tea that you'd like to share? Union County has such a beautiful tapestry of people so let's share. Help us to Make a Beloved Community by getting to know each other. We all may not look alike but we all have beautiful traditions and stories to share.

**For Further Information,  
Contact**

**Seham Abdala**  
**(732) 416-7464**

**Rod Spearman**  
**908-354-3040 ext. 4324**



**NJ-ING**

**REGISTER ONLINE AT:**

Find us on <https://www.eventbrite.com>

Or enter page address below:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/know-your-neighbor-share-your-story-tickets-43754817838?aff=es2>



# Religious Services at CAU

There has been some exciting things taking place at CAU!  
We have started a new initiative for the members of the CAU community to experience religious worship.

This ministry is geared towards the DD community and also to the TOPS youth program. There has been approximately 40-50 members that attend, and it has been a blessing to be able to serve this beloved community.

I would like to extend an invitation for you to speak at our religious services. These services are held on Saturdays at 11:00am and at 1:00pm and are an hour long. This an interfaith endeavor is open to all faith traditions and houses of worship. If you can provide worship, a positive inspirational message, and most of all, and a heart to serve.

## Our objectives are:

1. To provide a safe space for our members to worship God
2. To foster spiritual growth through the diverse understandings of God
3. To build up the community in faith, hope, and love

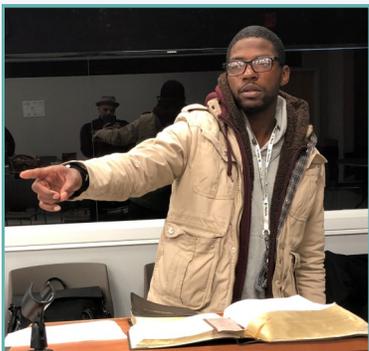
If you would like to volunteer in this amazing ministerial opportunity or find out more, please contact

Chaplain Erich Kussman at [EKussman@caunj.org](mailto:EKussman@caunj.org).



## About Chaplain Erich Kussman

Chaplain Erich Kussman is a graduate of Pillar College and received a Bachelor's Degree in Biblical Studies. He is pursuing a Masters in Divinity at Princeton Theological Seminary and is seeking candidacy in the ELCA. He is on the Steering committee of the UCICC. He is an author, activist, and public speaker. He grew up in Plainfield, New Jersey. He has articles published in magazines such as "First Things" and "Conspire!" He has years of experience in prison ministry. He desires to be the change he wishes to see in the world by doing God's will.





# Help Us Rebuild Help Victims of Roselle Fire

*We're currently seeking donations of the following to assist 14 CAU members to settle into their new homes after the fire in Roselle on Feb 3, 2018*

**\$1000**

Furnish A Bedroom

**\$750**

Build Up A Wardrobe for the Next Year

**\$500**

Replace Medical Equipment & Electronics

**\$250**

Provide comforting towels & bedding

**\$100**

Personalize new living space

*Other items that would be helpful are gift cards to local activities and restaurants to provide an opportunity for members to keep their mind off of their current situation.*

***Please send donations to:  
Community Access Unlimited  
c/o Cara Clair, Fundraising Director  
80 West Grand St. Elizabeth, NJ 07202***

Donate on our GoFundMe Page:  
**[https://www.gofundme.com/  
CAURoselleFireRecovery](https://www.gofundme.com/CAURoselleFireRecovery)**



### **Who Are We**

Pneuma Life School of Ministry (PLSM) is an affiliate of Agape Family Worship Center and in partnership with Oral Roberts University's School of Lifelong Learning Education. It is dedicated to the preparation of men and women for the manifold ministries of Christ and His Church.

### **What Do We Offer**

PLSM offers courses to help students achieve a 33-credit Diploma of Theological Studies. Students can receive a short-term specialized 19-credit certificate in one of the following areas: Christian Workers Certificate, Christian Education Certificate, Biblical Studies Certificate, Christian Missions Certificate, General Theological Studies Certificate and our newly offered Christian Care Giving Certificate.

### **What Are the Costs**

Application Fee	\$ 50.00
Registration Fee	\$ 25.00
Tuition	\$125.00 per credit/\$375.00 per 3-credit course
Non-Matriculation Tuition	\$ 62.50 per credit/\$187.50 per 3-credit course
Book/Supplies	Cost vary and are not included in Tuition

### **Where to Get More Information**

Applications are currently available by contacting us via e-mail at [omcneill@agapecenter.org](mailto:omcneill@agapecenter.org) or [pneumalifeschool@yahoo.com](mailto:pneumalifeschool@yahoo.com).

### **Administrative Staff**

Dr. Odessa McNeill, Academic Dean  
Janice D. Williams, Registrar

We are located at: Agape Family Worship Center  
501 E. Hazelwood Avenue  
Rahway, NJ07065  
732-680-9800- Ext. 105

# UCICC –CAU COMMUNITY HELP LINE

**DO YOU NEED HELP WITH FOOD? HOME HEALTH OR PERSONAL CARE  
HOME AND PROPERTY CARE  
DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO DOES?**

Call CAU's Information and Referral Office at  
**908-354-3040 [X 4272]** for answers and resources.

CAU's community service mission includes providing direct services to people in need as well as information on how to locate services provided by other agencies.

This month we highlight **three CAU services available to qualified recipients** in our Union County communities.

1] **Free home delivered meals** [6 week program; one meal per person per day] for Union County residents who are US citizens and their families who need food and who are:

\*Age 59 or younger [head of household];

\*Living in low income households;

\* Unable to access adequate food for themselves and their families.

\* Documents and interview are required to qualify.

**Contact Gene Tavera X 4272.**

2] **Homemaker-home health aide personal care assistance** in home for persons who require help to live independently at home. Services are provided at \$20/hour but may be free for those who are low income and age 60 or over, or any age with a disability. Services include light housekeeping, meal preparation, errands and personal care assistance.

**Contact Bill Webb X 4206.**

3] **Home and property care services** are offered at reasonable fees to assist home bound residents with yard and lawn care, leaf and snow removal, deep cleaning and clutter removal, home maintenance, handyman repairs and home improvements. There are no age or income requirements for these services and costs are based on which services and projects are selected. **Contact Bill Webb X 4206.**



# FAITH INTO ACTION

## NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY

**Are you a Union County citizen searching for a faith community within which to worship?**

**Perhaps we have what you are looking for!**

This is an opportunity for you to meet representatives from a variety of houses of worship within Union county, and learn what they are all about!

Please join us as clergy and congregation members from all different faiths meet and welcome members of the community.

The **Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council** invites you to an interfaith reception on:

Thursday, March 8, 2018  
5:00 pm - 8:00 pm  
Suburban Golf Club  
1730 Morris Avenue, Union, NJ



**Will you Join us?  
Please contact us at:**

Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council  
c/o Community Access Unlimited  
80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202  
Phone: (908) 354-3040 x4371-Email: UCInterfaith@caunj.org



*Open your heart  
and your home*



All that is missing is **YOU!**  
**Become a foster or adoptive parent**  
Be part of the ride.



For more information contact:

(877) NJ FOSTER, [www.njfoster.org](http://www.njfoster.org), (800) 99 ADOPT, [www.njadopt.org](http://www.njadopt.org)



# JOIN OUR TEAM!

Community Access Unlimited welcomes those with a big heart! Due to our continuing expansion, there are a number of **full time** and **part time** openings for those interested in guiding people with disabilities and youth at risk who are on the road to independence.

For those looking for part-time positions, CAU offers available house on the weekends and overnights! Minimum requirements are:

- Valid driver's license
- Access to vehicle daily to use for work purpose
- Original High School Diploma/GED/College Degree

Experience working with individuals with developmental disabilities and/or youth at risk are a plus! Of course compassion for the work and a flexible schedule is also required when providing support to our members.

Working at CAU is not just a job but a career! We offer promotional opportunities for employees, competitive salaries and a comprehensive benefits package to full time employees!

Please take the time to visit our agency website [www.caunj.org](http://www.caunj.org) for more information and current openings. Community Access Unlimited is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

## CAU Hosts a weekly Open House Mondays from 4 PM -6 PM

80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202  
Don't forget your resume and come prepared to fill out an application

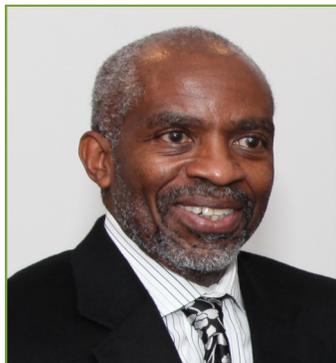
To make an appointment, please call an HR representative at (908) 354-3040 ext 4203. If you are unable to attend the open house, please fax resume to (908) 354-0283 or email to [rwright@caunj.org](mailto:rwright@caunj.org).



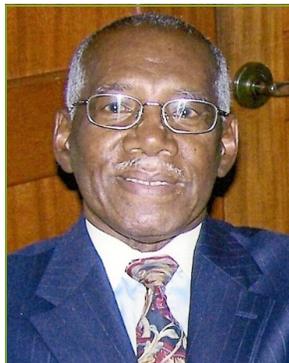
# UCICC Outreach Coordinating Team



*Sidney Blanchard,  
Executive Director  
Community Access Unlimited  
sblanchard@caunj.org*



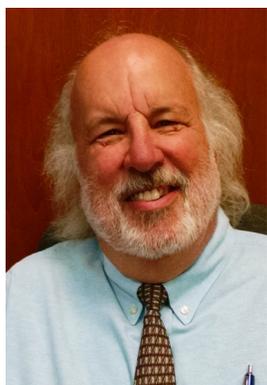
*Roderick (Rod) Spearman  
UCICC Interfaith Coordinator  
rspearman@caunj.org*



*Pastor Howard A. Bryant,  
UCICC Interfaith Coordinator  
hbryant@caunj.org*



*Pastor Carmine Pernini  
UCICC Interfaith Coordinator  
cpernini@caunj.org*



*AH 'Skip' Winter  
UCICC Steering  
Committee Member*



*Michelle Mobley  
CAU Director of Youth  
Service Residential  
mmobley@caunj.org*



*Charlene Walker  
UCICC Administrative Assistant  
cwalker@caunj.org*

## Join & Be Active Today!

- Attend monthly meetings.
- Invite other community leaders to attend our meetings and events.
- Support or host fundraising programs to support the Record Expungement Grant Program.
- Sign up for our mailing list.
- Share useful information about your organization.

Contact Rod Spearman at 908

### Advertise in the UCICC Newsletter!

Have an exciting event or program happening?

Reach out and build bonds with members of the interfaith community in Union County by advertising in this newsletter!

Please send all print-ready ads to Rod Spearman at [rspearman@caunj.org](mailto:rspearman@caunj.org) by the **13th** of every month to save a space!



Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council c/o Community Access Unlimited  
80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202  
Phone: (908) 354-3040 x4324 • Email: [UCInterfaith@caunj.org](mailto:UCInterfaith@caunj.org)

[www.facebook.com/UnionCountyInterfaithCoordinatingCouncil](http://www.facebook.com/UnionCountyInterfaithCoordinatingCouncil)



NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
**U.S. POSTAGE**  
**PAID**  
PERMIT 225  
Elizabeth, NJ

80 West Grand Street  
Elizabeth, NJ 07202  
Phone: 908-354-3040 TTY/TTD: 908-354-4629  
Fax: 908-354-2665 www.caunj.org

**Community Access Unlimited's Mission:** *To provide community access through effective and comprehensive support services for people with disabilities and at-risk youth, giving them the opportunity to live independently and to lead normal and productive lives in the community.*

## UCICC & STEERING COMMITTEE UPCOMING EVENTS

### **UCICC Steering Committee**

February 1, 2018 at 10:00am  
80 W Grand St  
Elizabeth NJ 07202

See Right side

### **UCICC Steering Committee**

March 1, 2018 at 10:00am  
80 W. Grand Street  
Elizabeth, NJ 07202

See Right side

### **UCICC Steering Committee**

April 5, 2018 at 10:00am  
80 W Grand St  
Elizabeth NJ 07202

### **Full UCICC Event**

**Prisoner Re-Entry  
A Continuum of Caring Think Tank**  
February 22, 2018 at 6 pm  
80 West Grand Street Elizabeth NJ 07202

### **Full UCICC Event**

**Faith in Action**  
Date: March 8, 2018 at 5 pm  
Suburban Golf Club  
1730 Morris Ave.  
Union, NJ 07083

### **Full UCICC Event**

**Know Your Neighbor; Know My Story**  
Date: April 18 2018 at 6pm  
Location: Rahway Family Success Center  
796 E. Hazelwood Ave Rahway, NJ 07065



Rod Spearman  
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