Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council



FEBRUARY 2020

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PEOPLE BENDING THE LONG ARC OF THE UNIVERSE TOWARDS JUSTICE

HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS ISSUE:



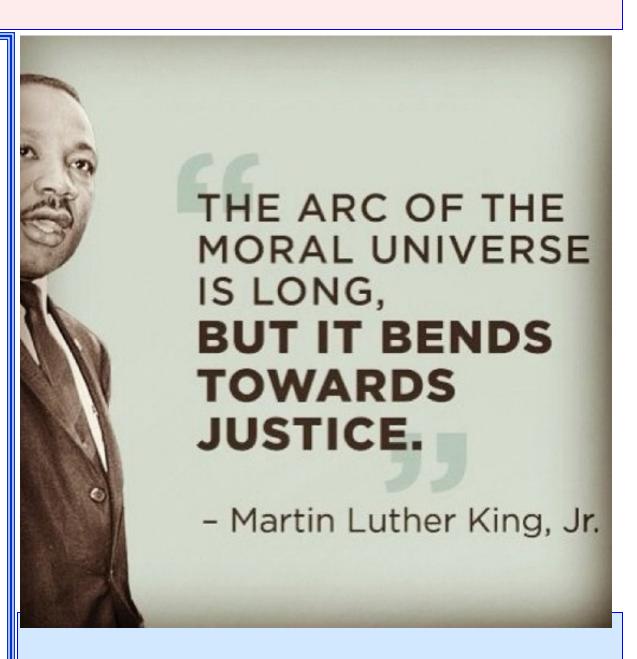
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UNION COUNTY INTERFAITH COORDINATING COUNCIL Steering Committee Members

Deacon Tim Williams-Chair

First Baptist Church Kenilworth

Rabbi Joel N. Abraham

Temple Sholom Scotch Plains

Ayaz Aslam

Muslim Community Center of UC Elizabeth

Sidney Blanchard

Associate Executive Director Community Relations

Pastor H. Bryant

Honorably Retired Presbyterian Church USA

Denise Fernandes

Latino Outreach

Rebecca Kasen

Director of Advocacy at CAU

Rev. Aleyah Lacey

CAU Religious Services

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

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.

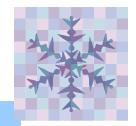
Our Objectives

- 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.





On Issues of War and Peace

By Rev. Chris Halverson

Upon hearing about the assassination of the Iranian General Soleimani and the talk of tit-for-tat reprisals from both our president and the leader of Iran, I went back and looked at the pastoral letter I wrote to you all when it looked like President Obama was about to invade Syria because they used chemical weapons. I hope and pray this letter is as unnecessary as that one turned out to be, that peace will eclipse all intentions toward war.

I started that letter with words that loom large in my heart today as well. *Kyrie Eleison*—Lord have mercy.

Kyrie Eleison... This is how we start our opening prayer to God in worship—the start of the prayer, in which we pray for peace from above and for our salvation—peace for the whole world.



And I would ask that you take a moment to pray this prayer from our Hymnal:

"Gracious God, grant peace among nations. Cleanse from our own hearts the seeds of strife: greed and envy, harsh misunderstandings and ill will, fear and desire for revenge. Make us quick to welcome ventures in cooperation among the peoples of the world, so that there may be woven the fabric of a common good too strong to be torn by the evil hands of war. In the time of opportunity, make us be diligent; and in the time of peril, let not our courage fail; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Now, I recognize the current moment we find ourselves in is different than the one we were in 6 years ago with Syria. In this case we killed a general who, during the second Iraq War, snuck rockets into Iraq that could pierce up-armored military vehicles, which killed hundreds of US soldiers. Consequently we are worried about blowback—that US soldiers in Iraq or Afghanistan will be targeted and that, if things swing out of control, we'll be re-invading Iraq to secure a place from which to invade Iran.

And our faith has something to say about such things. For two thousand years we Christians have been struggling with being faithful in the world as it is, in situations of persecution, famine, feast, might, and war. And those struggles have given us a rich tradition of thought and action, something much deeper than the knee-jerk reactions of TV pundits and political intellectuals.

In the early days of the Church, Christians were known for being pacifists. In fact, the Society of Friends (Quakers) and Mennonites still are pacifists, they see refusing to go to war as a witness to the world that the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, reigns. Other Christians, such as us Lutherans, follow a tradition that includes Just War Theory, "which requires certain conditions to be met before the use of military force is considered morally right.

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These principles are:

- 1. A just war can only be waged as a last resort. All non-violent options must be exhausted before the use of force can be justified.
- 2. A war is just only if it is waged by a legitimate authority. Even just causes cannot be served by actions taken by individuals or groups who do not constitute an authority sanctioned by whatever the society and outsiders to the society deem legitimate.
- 3. A just war can only be fought to redress a wrong suffered. For example, self-defense against an armed attack is always considered to be a just cause (although the justice of the cause is not sufficient-see point #4). Further, a just war can only be fought with "right" intentions: the only permissible objective of a just war is to redress the injury.
- 4. A war can only be just if it is fought with a reasonable chance of success. Deaths and injury incurred in a hopeless cause are not morally justifiable.
- 5. The ultimate goal of a just war is to re-establish peace. More specifically, the peace established after the war must be preferable to the peace that would have prevailed if the war had not been fought.
- 6. The violence used in the war must be proportional to the injury suffered. States are prohibited from using force not necessary to attain the limited objective of addressing the injury suffered.
- 7. The weapons used in war must discriminate between combatants and non-combatants. Civilians are never permissible targets of war, and every effort must be taken to avoid killing civilians. The deaths of civilians are justified only if they are unavoidable victims of a deliberate attack on a military target."

Additionally, this Church, the ELCA, in 1995, created a document <u>"For Peace in God's World"</u> which particularized our understanding of Just War Theory to the challenges of the 20th and 21st century. Here are a few stand out statements:

"Wars, both between and within states, represent a horrendous failure of politics. The evil of war is especially evident in the number of children and other noncombatants who suffer and die."

"Helping the neighbor in need may require protecting innocent people from injustice and aggression. While we support the use of nonviolent measures, there may be no other way to offer protection in some circumstances than by restraining forcibly those harming the innocent. We do not, then--for the sake of the neighbor--rule out possible support for the use of military force. We must determine in particular circumstances whether or not military action is the lesser evil."

"From the posture of the just/unjust war tradition, the aim of all politics is peace. Any political activity that involves coercion should be held accountable to just/unjust war principles. They are important for evaluating movements, sanctions, embargoes, boycotts, trade policies to reward or punish, and other coercive but nonviolent measures."

And finally, and most solemn, "Any decision for war must be a mournful one."

And so, I conclude this letter as I did the last one, *Kyrie Eleison*.

On Brokenness

Rev. Cameron Overbey Cranford United Methodist Church

My parents finally divorced when I was 16 years old. I say finally because the split really played out over the previous few years. I remember my parents sitting my brothers and I down and explaining that dad would be moving out for a time. I walked away from that talk with only one thing on my mind, "we are now a broken family." The next few years would serve to play out that conclusion in my mind, by the time my parents officially filed for divorce, it was almost a relief. One of the challenges for me was feeling as if this foundational institution of my life, family, was cracked and unsteady. What kind of life could I build on it?

For me, I was able to find deep meaning and support from participation in the life of our church. By the book, they were not in favor of divorce, but in practicality the community met us in the mess and surrounded us in love. By the time I was applying to college, I was able to process and



reflect on the dramatic reversal of my expectations about what it meant to be "broken." I cited many examples in my mom, dad, brothers, and myself about how the difficulties of divorce actually sparked a search in all of us that led us to faith and building new strong foundations. Even though we were "broken" there could still be healing and vibrant life.

Perhaps you've read the recent headlines about the denomination that I serve, The United Methodist Church. We, like many religions, are facing a split over theological differences (particularly over topics related to human sexuality). The church that loved me through my time of brokenness now faces its own deep fractures. I grieve that we are deeply divided on how we ought to love our neighbors. I don't desire to see another foundational piece of my identity be divorced. Still, I anticipate feeling a similar sense of quasi-relief when an "amicable separation" plan is agreed upon and enacted. The struggle has been exhausting and we have much other work to do. For many, there is a feeling that many of the foundations we've built our lives on are eroding. What hope is there in a world at the brink of war, in a country that is politically in disarray, in communities where we find that hatred-fueled violence hits too close to home. Even (perhaps especially) a "broken" community of faith can speak love and healing into the darkness.

Communities of faith have the potential to play a vital role in the healing and support of struggling families and individuals. There are more challenges to personal and communal thriving than ever. We have the opportunity to meet people in the mess to provide foundational principles of love and support for those who need them. Brokenness, both personal and corporate, happens; it's how we respond and live in the midst of it that develops our character as individuals and communities. So, to my sisters and brothers and others across denominations and religions, don't underestimate the importance of your mission to "do community" and to "do life" together...all of it. When everything is story-book, and when reality resembles more of a nightmare. My childhood house of worship changed my life by meeting me where I was in the midst of turmoil, and now I'm a pastor! Even when the institution isn't firing on all cylinders, the impact we have as local bodies who love and support one another are immeasurable. We stand together on the foundational cornerstone of love for all. Together, we build a future with hope.

Arthur "Skip" Winter Honored at Cranford's MLK Event



Skip is an Elder with the Cranford Presbyterian Church and a vital member of the UCICC team. Skip volunteers wherever and whenever he is needed. Congratulations Skip!

To hear an interview with Skip, please visit: https://cranfordradio.wordpress.com/2020/01/18/skip-winter-presented-with-martin-luther-king-award/





Why Your Faith Community Should Become a 2020 Census Official Partner

The 2020 Census is fast approaching, and faith leaders play a key role in this important effort. The U.S. Constitution requires a complete count of the nation's population every 10 years. Census data impact decisions at the national, state, tribal, and local levels—from congressional representation to the annual allocation of more than \$675 billion. These resources are essential to the well-being of all of our neighbors, supporting schools, hospitals, fire departments, and more.

The U.S. Census Bureau partners with the faith community to get the word out about the importance of the count. Faith leaders are trusted voices in their communities. You know how to reach your congregation and members; hard-to-count families, individuals and children; other national and local leaders; and key stakeholders. By being a 2020 Census partner, you can inspire your community to support a complete and accurate count.



What is a 2020 Census partner?

Your community of faith or faith-based organization would join a network of nonprofit, corporate, public sector, and community organizations working to educate the public about the 2020 Census and encourage households to fill out their census form. Together, we can develop solutions to reach everyone. Faith community partners—including religious denominations, faith communities, and national and regional faith-based organizations and institutions, governing bodies and councils, and local congregations and members—are important 2020 Census voices.

What does a partner do?

You can make a difference in the places we live, work, and worship. We ask you to Join us in ensuring we count everyone living in the United States once, only once, and in the right place, including helping us reach hard-to-count members of the community. The Census Bureau will provide resources that make it easy to help, including social media posts; handouts and posters; and e-mail, bulletin, and newsletter content.

CONTACT US TODAY! CENSUS.PARTNERS@CENSUS.GOV 2020CENSUS.GOV/PARTNERS

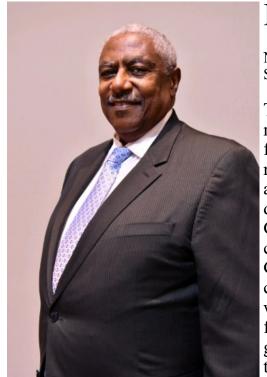
Here are some of the ways you can help:

Communicate to your members: Highlight the 2020 Census in e-mails, bulletins, newsletters, and mailings to increase awareness of why the census is important. Hang posters in common areas, like the cafeteria. Link to <2020Census.gov> on your Web site and include 2020 Census messages on social media and in faith-based media.

Add your voice: Write a blog, op-ed, or letter to the editor on why participating In the 2020 Census Is Important to those you serve. Mention the 2020 Census In speeches. Tape a public service announcement or testimonial and post it to your Web site or share it with faith-based media. Serve on or support a Complete Count Committee. or start one of your own. (Visit <2020census.gov/partners> and click on Complete Count Committees to learn more.)

Shape your future START HERE >

Census 2020



Family and Faith in the 21st Century

Norman K. Miles Sr., PhD Senior Pastor, Trinity Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church

The word "family" is familiar to all people, but its precise meaning varies depending on place, time, and circumstances. A family is most often defined as a group of people who are related by biology or adoption. Though families are considered a unit their living arrangements and function may be very different according to culture, place, and time. In the Judeo-Christian understanding of family the first family began at the creation of the first humans. Adam and Eve were ordered by God to procreate and multiply to populate the new world. In that context the family was composed of a father who was charged with the primary leadership role, a mother who supported the father and bore children, and the offspring would eventually grow up, marry, and create new families. This is the concept of the nuclear family, however, in many societies multiple generations of nuclear families lived together under the leader-

ship of the most senior father in a patriarchal system. This system was the basic system of the Old Testament patriarchs and was designed to provide protection and mutual benefit for the entire group in a hostile situation. There are still many places in the world where this type of family structure is still dominant.

The nuclear family of father, mother and dependent children has changed over the past fifty years in the United States due to many factors, but three have been significant in bringing about permanent changes in the family structure.

1. Immigration and migration have had a profound effect on the family structure as people have been torn from nuclear structures to form other structures that work. The extended family is a primary example. Most extended families consist of multiple generations of family members who have immigrated from other countries or migrated from other states. They bond together with other family members in no particular structure as a means of survival. Whoever has a large enough space becomes the host for other relatives until they find their own place. I grew up in such a home as my mother migrated from Louisiana to Ohio where she met my father and married. Eventually our home would house other relatives such as my maternal grandparents, an uncle and his wife, numerous cousins, and a few friends who weren't biological relatives but were considered family, would find shelter under our roof for a few weeks, months, and in a few cases, years. This is a common family arrangement for immigrant families as well.

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Save the Date! April 22, 2020

Faith in Action

This is a great opportunity to meet representatives from a variety of houses of worship within Union County and learn what they're all about.

Light Refreshments will be provided
5 pm to 8 pm
Suburban Golf Club
1730 Morris Ave.
Union, NJ 07083

Stay tuned for upcoming information about our featured guest speakers!



80 West Grand Street Elizabeth, NJ 07202 (908 354-3040 Please Reserve Now!

E-mail or phone your RSVP to: UCInterfaith@caunj.org (908) 354-3040 x4324

Religious Services at CAU

Did you know that the CAU community is exploring religion and having worship in a unique and innovative way?



UCICC member, Reverend Aleyah Lacey of Mount Teman A.M. E. Church on Saturdays gathers members of CAU's (Community Access Unlimited) DD Community and TOP youth to explore faith and worship. You are invited to share your faith and talents at these interfaith services. Services are held on Saturdays at 11am and Wednesdays at 5 pm. If you have a positive inspirational message, would like to provide worship, and have a willing heart to serve please consider being a blessing at these interfaith services.

Rev. Aleyah Lacey pictured left

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 Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council at UCInterfaith@caunj.org









Family and Faith in the 21st Century

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- 2. Divorce has increased exponentially over the past fifty years as well, creating much larger numbers of single-parent families. Television first indicated this cultural change with the creation of Julia in 1968. It was a groundbreaking show because it was the first network program to feature an African-American woman, Diahann Carroll, as a single-parent nurse. The show skirted the divorce issue and highlighted the war in Vietnam, by casting her as the widow of a pilot killed in Vietnam who was raising a young son alone. Another change in family structure was the blended family. Blended families were most often the result of parents who divorced and remarried bringing their children with them. The reality of this situation was broadcast on another popular television of the 1970's, The Brady Bunch. The storyline of the show was a widower with three sons who met and married a widow with three daughters. Airing in 1969 the show ran for five seasons, ending in March, 1974. The sitcom gave a positive spin to the blended family.
- 3. Same-Sex marriage has created a new family dynamic which is still in evolution. Until recently same sex marriage was illegal in the United States, and those couples who had dependent children living with them lived in constant fear that the children might be removed from their care if other family members objected to their custody. Over time that situation has changed drastically. Prior to the landmark ruling of the Supreme Court in 2015, 37 states and the District of Columbia and legalized Gay Marriage. The Supreme Court ruling effectively made same-sex marriage legal in the entire country, and Gay couples are free to raise their own children or adopt children anywhere without fear. There is still controversy regarding how children will fare growing up in a same-sex marriage situation, and it is still a hot button issue in many religious communities, but current studies show no adverse effects on the children of such marriages.

People of faith may differ on which family structure is most beneficial, but the critical issues that face families are the same. At their best families are places where members feel safe, loved and nurtured, encouraged, and fortified to face the challenges outside of the home. It is the first-place children can learn about love, forgiveness, compassion, companionship, and sharing. It is the place where people can feel accepted and loved regardless of their age and circumstances. It is the place where examples are set, and values are demonstrated. For people of faith, family is the first and best place where faith is taught and demonstrated. Regardless of its structure, family is the building block of society and we must do whatever we can to help families flourish because healthy families make healthy communities.

How Can Faith Communities Heal and Support Families? by Daniel A. Velez-Acevedo

Director of Children, Youth and Family First Presbyterian Church, Cranford NJ

As I reflect on this question, I think about "The Parable of the Good Samaritan" found in Luke 10:25-37 in the New Testament. The story is about a Jewish traveler who is heading home. On the road two thieves attack him. He is brutally assaulted, stripped of all his personal belongings and left half dead on the road. A while later, two people, in two separate occasions, pass him by and they do nothing. In fact, they see him, they pass him on the other side of the road and continue on their journey. Now, we do not know why they passed him by. Maybe they did not want to get involved, they could have been too busy or they could have been afraid of being in danger themselves. However, the story just says that they passed him by. Then a third person comes, a Samaritan. He stops and sees the need of this individual. The Samaritan witnesses the injuries, the tears... the hurt. Seeing this the Samaritan was moved to compassion. Compassion made this person stop, bandage the wounds, give the traveler a ride to an inn and pay for the traveler's room. Up to this point you might be thinking, "This is inspiring. This person has done all he can. Job well done!" However, the Good Samaritan surprises us one last time. He tells the inn keeper,



"Look after him, and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have." This is an amazing story. What is amazing about this parable is that when we think it is about to finish there is a "to be continued." The parable has a promise of continued compassion.

So the questions is "How can faith communities heal and support families?" We can heal and support families when we begin in a space of compassion. True compassion towards one another commands us to stop, to see and to respond in empathy. Empathetic compassion motivates us to go above and beyond norms. Compassion is an untamable fire that lights the hearts and minds of those around us. In its essence it is love for one another. However, do we see this in the news? Sadly, no. We see divisions by politics, class, race, and ideals. But above all we are divided by the fear of the other. Fear moves us to be selfish, to look away and to leave. However, when we see each other with compassion, empathy, and respect we surpass our divisions. Not only do we surpass our divisions but we make the promise that we will continue to be there for each other. Compassion moves us to empathy and it opens our eyes to the needs of families around us.

Lastly, what is special about this parable is that it also ends with an invitation to compassion. The Good Samaritan tells the inn keeper to "look after" the injured man and offers to cover the expenses needed to take care of the traveler. Likewise, Faith Communities should put in not only time but also resources to support the organizations that take care of a family's needs. Furthermore, our compassionate generosity motivates the community around us to love, to help, and to care for one another. In doing so, we demonstrate a love that goes beyond our traditions. A love that goes beyond our understanding. I invite you, as you read this short essay, to look around you with eyes of compassion and empathy. You will see families in need of food, clothes, healing, care and love. May you be moved to help those in need and may your actions impact those around to do the same.

Are you a member of the UCICC Steering Committee?



What is the UCICC Steering Committee?

The Steering Committee meets once a month to discuss resources, important interfaith topics and plan events. We bring in speakers from government and social service agencies. At our January 22nd meeting, our speakers explained:

- food assistance
- 211 and troubleshooting hotlines
- homeless resources
- the census

Why should you join the Steering Committee?

The Steering Committee is a great way to network on behalf of your house of worship. You will find the resources you need to assist your members. You will connect with other faith leaders. Together we will work towards a more just, fair and peaceful Union County.

To join, please email ucinterfaith@caunj.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 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

The Cafeteria at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202

Don't forget your resume and

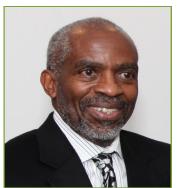
come prepared to fill out an application

To make an appointment, please call an HR representative at (908) 354-3040 ext 203. If you are unable to attend the open house, please fax resume to (908) 354-0283 or email to rwright@caunj.org.

UCICC Outreach Coordinating Team



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



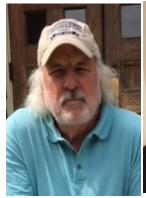
Roderick (Rod) Spearman UCICC Interfaith Coordinator rspearman@caunj.org



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



Rebecca Kasen Director of Advocacy Community Access Unlimited rkasen@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 -354-3040 x 324

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 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

www.facebook.com/UnionCountyInterfaithCoordinatingCouncil





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 6,2020 10:00am 80 W Grand St Elizabeth NJ 07202

UCICC Steering Committee

March 5, 2020 at 10:00am 80 W Grand St Elizabeth NJ 07202

UCICC Steering Committee

April 2, 2020 10:00am 80 W Grand St Elizabeth NJ 07202 CAU Easter and Passover Celebration April 7, 2020 at 6 pm 80 W. Grand St Elizabeth, NJ 07202

> Faith into Action April 22, 2020 at 5 pm Suburban Golf Club 1730 Morris Ave. Union, NJ 07083



Rod Spearman Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council c/o Community Access Unlimited 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202 Phone: (908) 354-3040 x4324

Email: rspearman@caunj.org or UCInterfaith@caunj.org