



UNION COUNTY INTERFAITH COORDINATING COUNCIL

WINTER 2023 NEWSLETTER

Funded by the Union County
Board of County Commissioners

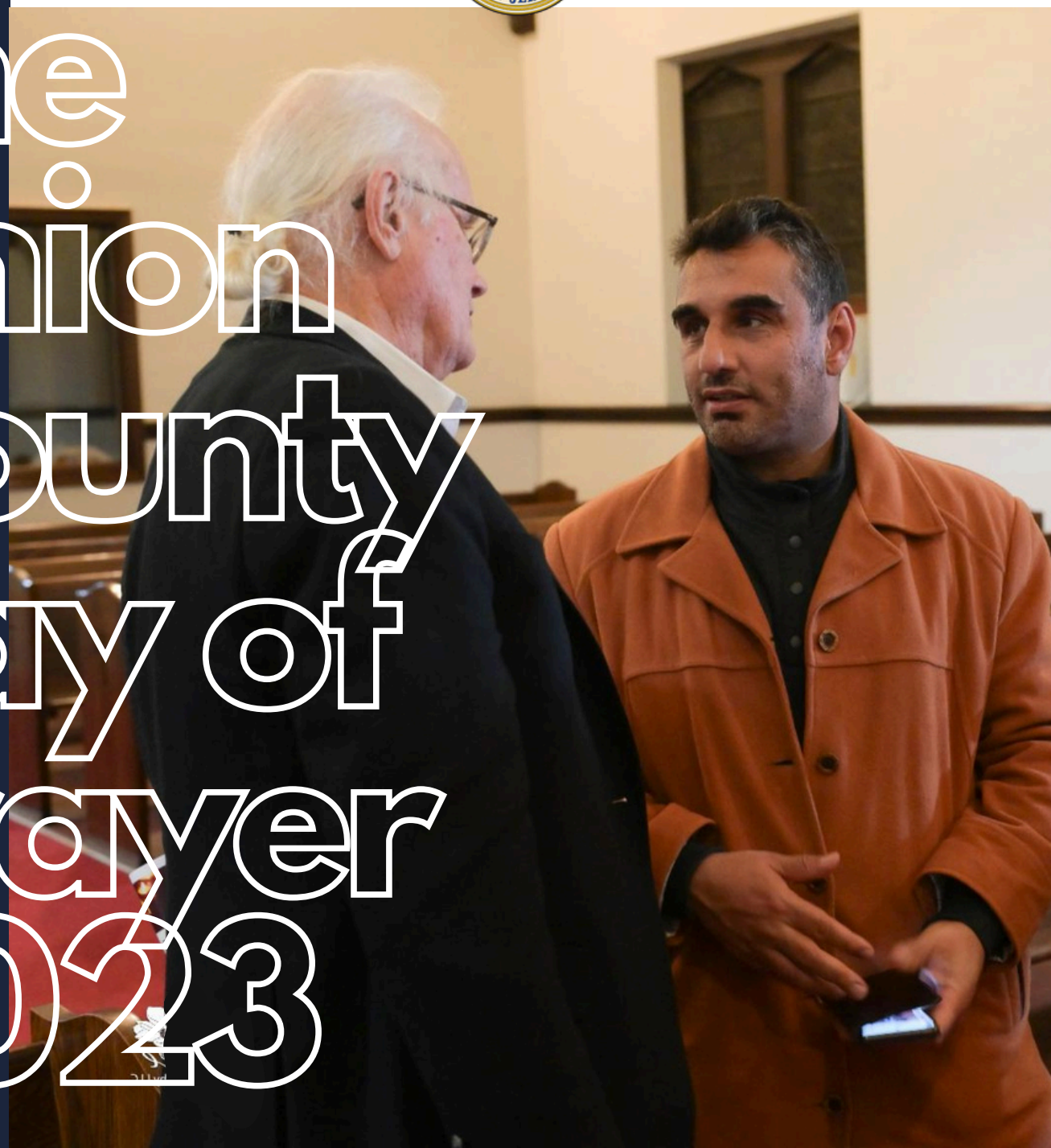


UNION COUNTY
We're Connected to You!

www.ucnj.org



The Union County Day of Prayer 2023





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 in the Interfaith Coordinating Council, including those of Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Islamic, and other faiths.
- To be engaged in:
 - Community Building within faith-based organizations and the general Union County population.
 - The advancement of Social Justice
 - The intentional inclusion of others regardless of gender, faith, or 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 & their congregations.
- Strengthen the Union County religious congregations through involvement, action, & education in self-help.
- Build working relationships between Union County religious organizations and Community Access Unlimited that create opportunities for youth & people with disabilities & support their staff.

Advantages to Joining the Interfaith Community

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

UCICC STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Deacon Tim Williams
Chair

FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH- KENILWORTH

Rabbi Joel N. Abraham
TEMPLE SHALOM
SCTCH PLAINS

Ayaz Aslam

MUSLIM COMMUNITY
CENTER OF UC

Rev. Howard Bryant
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Pastor Carmine Pernini
ZION EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH-RAHWAY

Reverend Barry Wise
GREATER MT MORIAH
BAPTIST CHURCH-LINDEN

Roderick Spearman
UNION COUNTY
FATHERHOOD
INITIATIVE COALITION

Rev. Ronald C. Thomas
FOUNTAIN BAPTIST
CHURCH - SUMMIT

CAU SUPPORT STAFF FOR UCICC

CARMINE PERNINI
ERIN JEROME
BILL WEBB
SANDRA BENEDICT
LINNETTE CARRENO
MARISOL APONTE



The Union County Day of Prayer 2023

REV. CARMINE PERNINI, ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH, RAHWAY & COORDINATOR FOR UCICC

For the past nine years, the Union County Interfaith Coordinating Council (UCICC) and Community Access Unlimited (CAU) have hosted the Union County Day of Prayer. The event is a “celebration” of diverse faiths and traditions located throughout Union County, NJ. Hosted at a new site each year, the range of faith traditions includes but is not limited to Judaism, Islam, Christianity and more. This year’s Day of Prayer was hosted by Santa Isabel Lutheran Church, 908 E. Jersey St., Elizabeth on Thursday, Nov. 9th at 6pm.

This year’s Union County Day of Prayer was special. As a result of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, hostility has affected congregations across the United States, and even in the state of New Jersey. There is both a large population of Palestinian immigrants and refugees in the state as well as persons who are Jewish. The events “over there” spill over as domestic issues “over here.” Representatives from Muslim and Jewish congregations attended the event and spoke passionately about their laments, fears, and concerns. One individual who is Muslim and from Palestine spoke through his tears about the loss of his mother to bombs which occurred the week before. In the same breath, he offered prayers for Israel and Jewish individuals, calling for peace.

A rabbi spoke about the complexity and interconnectedness of his faith tradition in which he views self-interest and care for others as core tenants of his Jewish faith; he discussed how these concepts are inextricably bound and deplete from action when in isolation from one another. Quoting Hillel, he said, “If I am not for myself, who is for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I?” The paradox of caring for Palestinians while also showing compassion towards the safety of Israel and its hostages was laid bare for all to experience.





The concepts of war, hostages, and civilian death tolls loomed large in the minds of all who attended the Day of Prayer as well as those who did not. Many participants and attendees declined to attend the Day of Prayer because they feared a lack of safety at the event on account of persons who are Jewish and Muslim speaking in the same room together—this tension was palpable and the concern could be felt in the air. Yet, the tension seemed to wash away when the vocalist and soloist for the event, Sabrina Dias sang Pink's "What About Us" and was joined by the congregation.

This powerful song was amplified by the music teacher in Newark, NJ, who recently showcased her talents on NBC's *The Voice*. She sang pointedly with an interfaith audience at unease with each other, "What about us? What about all the broken happy ever afters? ... What about all the plans that ended in disaster? What about us? ... We are problems that want to be solved, we are children that need to be loved..." The power of Sabrina's performance was matched by the poignancy of the moment—Israel and Palestine lost children to either hostage-taking or civilian casualties which is the occasion for "sighs too deep for words," and yet, we sang together lamenting the atrocities of war and the entanglements that history foisted us all into.

Before war in the Holy Land, the clergy at the Union County Day of Prayer were all colleagues and friends. Individuals met every year and prayed for peace, and hope, and everything that makes life worth living and preserving. A key component of the Day of Prayer was remembering that we still care for one another deeply. And, despite the differences we have always had: differences of faith traditions, names for God, worship styles- we have been colleagues and friends who share a mutual concern for a world that sorely needs us standing together side by side despite the reasons for not doing so. For many, interfaith relationships are part of a deep fulfillment of their own faith tradition. In my Christian parlance, it can be called communion. For others we share the image of God. And still, for others, taking a single life represents taking all lives.

This year's Day of Prayer was different and the same. The world has changed, as it always will, the context has changed as it tends to do, but the Day of Prayer, as different as it was, was also the same. It was an event filled with brave souls who showed up when there were plenty of reasons not to, but were present and lamented with tears at the world around us and, perhaps while still sobbing, prayed for one another.

As a friend of mine said to me before the Day of Prayer, interfaith relationships are built not necessarily for the easy times, but for the hard times; it is during the hard times that each another becomes essential. This year, at the Day of Prayer, speakers and attendees felt safe enough to speak and name what is impossible and largely indescribable about what has been witnessed and then, demonstrate care for one another even though our lives look different. We all



night and I pray that somehow our world can experience a little bit of what happened in Santa Isabel Lutheran Church on that brisk night in November. Thank you Reverend Ramon Collazo and Santa Isabel Lutheran Church, Elizabeth for graciously hosting the event. A special thanks to Sandra Benedict, Development Director, Bernadette Griswold, Executive Director, Erin Jerome and William Webb of CAU for all of their efforts to make this event a success. Thanks to Rev. Dr. L.L. DuBreuil who called everyone to worship much as she has done for the past 9 years and 9 Days of Prayer. Thank you to Rabbi Joel Abraham from Temple Sholom, Scotch Plains for speaking so eloquently and personally about the challenges of our day. And, Dr. Wail Rasheed from the Muslim Community Center of Union County who trusted the room enough to share from his heart. Rev. Barry Wise from Greater Mt. Moriah Baptist Church, Linden blessed the room with a beautiful extemporaneous prayer which called for recognizing the dignity of all people. Thank you to Dina Bandhu Das of ISKON of Central New Jersey Sri Sri Radha Krishna Temple & Cultural Center for blessing the assembly with your



kind and heartfelt words and presence. And, many thanks to Khaled Zayed of the Muslim Center of Middlesex County for taking the time to meet before the event as well as at the Day of Prayer to speak with passion about his people, the Palestinians. Thank you Reverend Dr. Robin Tanner of Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Summit for blessing the congregation with a powerful reading of Amanda Gorman's "The Hill We Climb." Finally, thank you Sabrina Dias for sharing your wonderful and powerful gift of singing and music to the event.



COMMUNITY ACCESS UNLIMITED

A CLOSER LOOK



WHAT WE DO



Assistive Technology, Behavioral Management, Community Based Supports, Support Coordination, Respite, Speech Therapy



Housing, Food Shopping, Menu Prep, Cooking, Personal Care, Budgeting, Personal Travel



Pre-vocational & Career Planning
Individual & Small Group
Supported Employment,
Internship Program



Community integration events, theater program, and supervised getaways



Day Program and Academy of Continuing Education offer options for education, socialization, activities with highly trained staff



Legislative updates, accessibility & voting campaigns. "Helping Hands" is CAU's oldest & strongest advocacy group in NJ

HOW WE DO IT

SUPPORTS FOR ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES (21 & OVER)
Trained staff are assigned to meet the specific needs of an individual

SUPPORTS FOR YOUTH
Trained staff care for youth with developmental disabilities, youth transitioning into adulthood, and youth at risk who will age out of the foster care system

COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAM (CSP)
A fee-for-service program that offers in-home supports to any individual in the community in need of support services. Plans are designed to meet the specific needs of each CSP member

SUPPORT COORDINATION
We are DDD-approved to coordinate and monitor support service plans. We work with members and families reach goals and find the best services available in their communities



An independent, not-for-profit accrediting body, awarded selected programs at Community Access Unlimited three-year accreditation, the highest accreditation possible. CARF accredited programs include: CAU's Supervised Apartment Program, Supportive Living Apartment Program, Vocational Training, Case Management & Employment Program, Supported Employment, & Transitional Opportunities Program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Community Access Unlimited
80 West Grand Street Elizabeth, NJ 07202
(908) 354-3040 | info@caunj.org | www.cauj.org



COMMUNITY ACCESS
UNLIMITED

80 WEST GRAND STREET
ELIZABETH, NJ 07202
PHONE: 908-354-3040
WWW.CAUNJ.ORG

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

Find us on 
UNION COUNTY INTERFAITH
COORDINATING COUNCIL - UCICC

JOIN OUR EMAIL
LIST! EMAIL
EJEROME@CAUNJ.ORG
WITH "UCICC NEWSLETTER
SIGNUP" IN THE SUBJECT
LINE TO JOIN!

Funded by the Union County
Board of County Commissioners



UNION COUNTY
We're Connected to You!

www.ucnj.org
 