

TOGETHER IN FAITH AND FRIENDSHIP

No. 17

**OFFICE OF ECUMENICAL & INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS
DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON**

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CHRISTIAN UNITY EVENTS HIGHLIGHTED AS 2026 BEGINS



For the second consecutive year, Holy Family Chapel at the Pastoral Center hosted an afternoon of prayer for Christian Unity on January 22, with United Methodist, Lutheran, and Reformed Episcopal clergy joining monks from Mepkin Abbey and taking active roles in the prayer service. Monsignor D. Anthony Droze, Vicar for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, preached. St John the Beloved in Summerville joins churches from the area in celebrating every day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, rotating from one site to another. The denominations are all involved in Summerville Food Bank. This year Deacon Joe Dennis presided. The week's theme this year was Ephesians 4:4, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling."





On January 25, the last day of Christian Unity Week, lay associates of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius, with Deacon Ed Villalobos, gathered with Anglican friends at St. Andrew Hall, Bluffton, to offer the unity prayer service. (Photo, left.) Much later, a celebration of Christian Unity originally scheduled for January 24 in Columbia was held on Saturday, March 7, at Bishop’s Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church in Columbia. United Methodist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Baptist, African Methodist Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Apostolic (non-denominational) clergy and faith leaders offered the readings and prayers of intercession. (Photo, right.) Rev. Dr. Regina Moore, Executive Minister of the South Carolina Christian Action Council, preached on the call to unity and the call to hope in the face of current turmoil and war. Our diocesan office prepared the service used in Charleston, Bluffton, and Columbia, adapted for local use from the one prepared for 2026 by the World Council of Churches and released by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

INTERFAITH HARMONY AND CHRISTIAN UNITY AT ST. JOSEPH’S, COLUMBIA

For nearly 20 years, St. Joseph Catholic School in Columbia has hosted the pastors and faith leaders of children attending their school. The event always involves morning prayer, preaching, and a gathering for hospitality with the clergy. Their event occurs in the context of Interfaith Harmony Month, celebrated in January in South Carolina, and Catholic Schools Week.



Monsignor Harris, top left, is shown with this year’s clergy group.

INTERFAITH HARMONY MONTH AND A THANKSGIVING PREVIEW

The Interfaith Partners of Aiken, long under the leadership of Bill Collins, parishioner at St. Mary Help of Christians (shown in photo, bottom, left), always come up with new ways to work cooperatively across faith traditions. Along with Interfaith Harmony Month activities in January, they have also taken up Thanksgiving gatherings. This year's celebration was held on Sunday, November 16, at Aiken First Baptist Fellowship Hall. The theme, "An Evening of Music, Verse, and Prayer about Peace," drew people from many faith traditions.



The Charleston Interreligious Council, like Interfaith Partners of South Carolina, had a calendar of events through the month of January. Interfaith Harmony Month always begins with a proclamation by the governor and a press conference at the state capitol on or around December 30. A number of city's majors also join in at their city halls.

WE ARE STRONG TOGETHER. WE ARE STRONG TOGETHER. WE ARE STRONG TOGETHER. WE ARE STRONG.

INTERFAITH HARMONY MONTH

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JAN. 4	PEACE IN ACTION: TAKE THE PLEDGE BE PART OF A SPECIAL GATHERING AS WE LAUNCH INTERFAITH HARMONY MONTH WITH A SENSE OF UNITY, CONNECTION, AND HOPE. 9PM. BIRTH OF CHRISTIANITY.
JAN. 18	SACRED SPACE TOUR TOUR HOLY ASCENSION ORTHODOX CHURCH AND LEARN ABOUT THE BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY.
JAN. 19	MILK PARADE JOIN THE ICE AS WE WALK THE PARADE ROUTE IN CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF ST. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. LUNCH AT SAINT BARNABAS SCHOOL.
JAN. 25	HEALING POLARIZATION: AN INTERFAITH APPROACH A WORKSHOP LEE BY THE SOJOURN DIVAN INTERFAITH INITIATIVE TO FOSTER UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECT FOR POLARIZATION. 9PM. WINDY PLEASANT.
JAN. 27	CLERGY LUNCHEON LUNCH BY INVITE. CLERGY ARE INVITED TO JOIN AN INTERFAITH LUNCHEON IN HONOR OF BISHOP DOMENICO MULLER. 12:00PM. CENTRAL WINDY PLEASANT.
JAN. 27	INTERFAITH HARMONY MONTH CLOSING EVENT WATCH AND DISCUSS THE DOCUMENTARY "I WILL BUILD THIS WORLD FROM LOVE" WITH BISHOP DOMENICO MULLER. 8PM. KATHY KADISH BETH ELIZAVETH.

WWW.CICOUNCIL.ORG

PONDERING RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

For the second consecutive year, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sponsored an all-day Religious Liberty Conference in Columbia. This year's focused significantly on the history of freedom of religion, particularly in South Carolina, and a number of concerning issues, including parental rights when it comes to their children's education. Once again, Father Jay Scott Newman, chancellor, was an invited speaker. A number of us from various religious traditions also were on an afternoon panel. Lieutenant Governor Pamela Evette was the keynote speaker. Over the lunch hour, legislators joined the group, as speakers and listeners.



Before his time to speak, Father Newman, above left, listens as the sessions open. Holli Emore, current chair of the Interfaith Partners of South Carolina, is shown at the forefront in the photo on the right, preparing for the panel.

The statehouse provided an elegant setting for this year's conference. The lobby area provided space for Lieutenant Governor Evette to meet with one of the conference attendees and stakeholders.



FOCUSING ON CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS

As noted in the last issue of this newsletter, we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the promulgation of “Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” this fall. In that document, the fathers of the Second Vatican Council spoke about our bond with our Jewish forebears, our shared “spiritual patrimony,” and urged us “to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as fraternal dialogues.” The past few months have provided ample opportunities.

First of all, Interfaith Partners of South Carolina invited Dr. Jonathan Leader and Sister Pam Smith to launch their online series entitled “Zoom into Interfaith,” now a monthly feature, with a discussion of the basics of our respective faiths and also to respond to frequent misunderstandings. That dialogue took place on Tuesday evening, November 18.

In December, Rabbi Brad Bloom of Hilton Head invited us to attend an outdoor Hanukkah celebration in Bluffton and to address the gathered crowd briefly. We note that two of our regular musicians at St. Gregory the Great assist with the music at Beth Yam Synagogue Sabbath services and other celebrations.



On January 20, the University of South Carolina, at its Rice School of Law, presented Rabbi Meir Soloveichik, who spoke about correspondence between George Washington and a Jewish friend who urged a strong commitment to religious freedom in the creation of the U.S. Constitution. The sponsoring group was the new Center for American Civic Leadership and Public Discourse at U.S.C. Rabbi Soloveichik offered scholarly and solidly historical information and also some moments of humor to the expansive evening audience.



Dr. Leader and Sister Pam teamed again in Myrtle Beach at the 45th annual Cross Cultural Conference. All of these events were most certainly fraternal—and deeply friendly—and served to educate others about our roots and commonalities amid escalating turmoil in the Mideast.

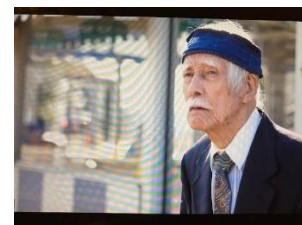
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. EVENTS DRAW ECUMENICAL AND INTERFAITH GROUPS

The presence of youth at Martin Luther King Day observances continues to be strong. Many of the events around the state are planned by a combination of church and civic groups. In Bluffton, youth choirs, high school bands, ROTC, and children from elementary schools offer artwork, poems, recitations, and songs at these events. Catholics for the Common Good, based at St. Gregory the Great, joined Baptist and Missionary Baptist Church organizers once again to participate in the program and the march. Before marches begin, groups assemble to sing hymns, offer prayer, listen to preaching, and also to see the young people perform.



BANDING TOGETHER FOR HUMAN LIFE, HUMAN DIGNITY, AND CIVIC ISSUES

Among many endeavors of groups which cross denominational lines, faith traditions, and political opinions, we find common ground on issues like protecting the unborn, ending predatory lending, finding alternatives to the death penalty, working for restorative justice and fair treatment of immigrants, serving victims and ending domestic violence. The South Carolina Christian Action Council shows up and keeps alerts on its website (www.scchristianactioncouncil.org) and Facebook page. So do the South Carolinians for Alternatives for the Death Penalty (www.scadp.org), which also host a bi-monthly book discussion. South Carolina Citizens for Life are clear on their commitments to protect the unborn, the elderly, and all vulnerable persons (www.sclife.org). And, of course, our South Carolina Catholic Conference (www.sccatholicconference.org) posts its regular legislative alerts. Shown below: woman pondering a sign at Pro-Life rally; image of the man known as Frankie San, a prison chaplain who converted many death-row inmates in South Carolina.



UPCOMING EVENTS

- March 17, online (www.interfaithpartnersofsc.org): Zoom into Interfaith
- March 26, 7:00 PM, Virtual Book Club: *By Hands Not Known: Jim Crow's Legal Executioners*, by Margaret A. Burnham (www.scadp.org)
- April: Earth Month, with special Earth Day celebrations on or around April 22 (www.catholicclimatecovenant.org)
- May 7: National Day of Prayer
- May 24: Pentecost Sunday, an occasion for ecumenical services
- May 28, 7:00 PM, Virtual Book Club: *Last Chance: Life or Death Row*, by Helena Haywoode Henry (www.scadp.org)
- July 23, 6:00 PM, Live at Nickelodeon Theatre, Columbia: Movie Night and Panel Discussion about the ministry of Frankie San
- July 30 International Friendship Day, celebrated with potluck meals, ethnic costumes, etc.—on or around this date at various locations (for example, July 25, 11:00-2:30, St. Gregory the Great, Bluffton)
- August Date TBA: Training on how to de-escalate potentially violent situations, sponsored by South Carolina Christian Action Council
- Also watch for prayer vigils related to immigration, pending executions, etc., as these are announced.



WE CATHOLICS CAN CELEBRATE THE MONTH OF MAY NOT ONLY BY OBSERVING PENTECOST BUT ALSO BY RECALLING THAT OUR BLESSED MOTHER IS MOTHER OF ALL.

IN JUNE, WE HONOR OUR LORD, IN HIS SACRED HEART. LET US PRAY THAT A SPIRIT OF CHARITY WILL FILL US AND ILLUMINE US AND LIGHT UP THE WORLD.