

United Religious Community
501 N. Main Street
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If you wish to be removed from the TORCH mailing list, please call 574-282-2397 or email urc@urcsjc.org

Everyone is Invited to our Open House!

Sunday, October 25th, from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

501 N. Main Street, South Bend (corner of Main & Marion)

Please stop in to see our new building, enjoy some refreshments and meet the URC staff members.

We would like a chance to meet you!



United Religious Community of St. Joseph County

URC TORCH

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OCTOBER 2009

The Winter of Our Discontent

The statement above is a reference to the line "Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this son [or sun] of York," from William Shakespeare's play, *Richard III*. The phrase is also the title of John Steinbeck's last novel, published in 1961. The novel's story revolves around New Englander Ethan Allen Hawley, who works as a clerk in a grocery store he used to own. His wife and children resent their lowly social and economic position, and don't put any value in the high levels of honesty and integrity that Ethan struggles to maintain in a corrupt society. Under this constant pressure, Hawley will eventually manage to get back the store by renouncing his morals, but the new-found wealth will not bring happiness.

There is much to ponder from that story for us today. The upcoming winter will be a harsh one for many—regardless of the weather conditions. Many are losing jobs, homes, and hope! The struggle in the midst of these trying times is to stay true to our values. At the URC we seek to be both a beacon and a witness. Our aim is to connect people with God and with one another. Our ultimate value is that we all are God's children. We need each other and we can help each other through this "season." Thanks to those of you who supported the CROP Walk to make a difference. Thanks for the privilege of your trust in us. Thanks for upholding the values that bind us together.

Rev. Dr. William J. Wassner
Executive Director,
United Religious Community of St. Joseph County, Inc.

STAFF

Rev. Dr. William J. Wassner,
Executive Director

Marchell Wesaw,
Director of Victim Services
Director of Advocacy Centers

Joyce Williams,
Administrative Assistant

**2009-2010
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ADVOCACY CENTERS NEWS

The Advocacy Centers of the United Religious Community continue to provide vital assistance to the less fortunate members of our community.

During 2008, nearly 6,000 individuals were served in South Bend and Mishawaka! The Centers have provided over \$73,000 in cash assistance and case management to 3,652 individuals in 1,536 households in the first eight months of 2009! The support provided to these families helped with rent and mortgage payments, utilities, vital medical and prescription expenses, and identification documents.



On behalf of those we serve, the URC and the Advocacy Centers would like to thank all the individuals, organizations and congregations who support our mission and services! In these uncertain times, your donations are vital to those less fortunate.

Marchell Wesaw

Church Directory • The Directory is Finished!

UPDATE

Complimentary copies of the **Directory of Faith Communities** have been sent to all contributing churches and organizations and are now for sale at the URC office. The cost is \$10 and anyone who wants to purchase one can mail a check or pick one up in person. Our address is 501 N. Main Street, South Bend, 46601. Office hours are Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. If you have corrections or changes please notify the URC office.

Want to receive TORCH by e-mail?

If you are receiving a printed copy of this newsletter and would like it sent by e-mail please call the URC office at 574-282-2397 and give us your current e-mail address.

URC BOARD MEMBER TO BE HONORED

GlendaRae Hernandez, URC Board Member and community activist will be one of four honorees at the 11th annual St. Joseph Valley Project's Jobs and Justice Banquet. GlendaRae has been a member of the URC board of directors for many years and is a member of Iglesia Manos de Cristo. Others honored this year will be Robin Forsythe, Labor Activist; Rev. Nancy Nichols, Faith Activist; and Gladys Muhammad, Grassroots Organizing.

The banquet will be held on **October 29th** at the FOP lodge on 12th Street in Mishawaka. The featured speaker will be Jerome Ringo, a dedicated champion of environmental justice and vocal advocate of clean energy who appeared in the Oscar-winning documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*. For ticket information contact the St. Joseph Valley Project at 574-287-3834.



**Jewish
Federation
Welcomes
Yossi Cohen**



The Jewish Federation is pleased to welcome Israeli Shaliach (emissary) Yossi Cohen to the community. Yossi's primary job will be programming for youth and young adult singles.

Yossi is 24 years old and has been working as city youth coordinator for Or-Yehuda overseeing educational programs, managing guides and serving as a counselor for at risk youth.

Yossi is available to speak to local faith communities and youth groups about life in Israel. He can be reached at the Jewish Federation, 574-233-1164.

**Widowed Women and Men Social
Support Group planning Holiday Party!**

Mark your calendars now for the annual Christmas Party to be held on **Tuesday, December 8th at 11:30 a.m.** at the Skillet Restaurant. A Polish Buffet will be served and the cost is \$14.00 per person. There will be an ornament exchange and door prizes! Guests are welcome. Call the URC office at 282-2397 for more information.

Why We Eat What We Eat

**Second Annual School of Public
and Social Services Conference**

**Friday, October 30, 2009
8:30 a.m. to 12:00 Noon**

**Ivy Tech—South Bend CyberCafe
220 Dean Johnson Blvd., South Bend**

**RSVP: Jennifer Bloom, 574-289-7001, ext. 1143
jbloom5@ivytech.edu**



NORTH CENTRAL INDIANA
SOUTH BEND | ELKHART | WARSAW



ANNOUNCEMENTS



CROP WALK 2009

The sunny weather was perfect as 400 walkers took to the streets of downtown South Bend on **Sunday, September 27th** for the Annual CROP Hunger Walk. Walkers were inspired by music from the Westminster Praise Band and had a choice of walking the short half-mile or the three and one half mile route. Both walks began and ended in South Bend's Howard Park.

CROP, which stands for Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty, doles out money to hunger relief services around the world, but 25% of the money raised remains in St. Joseph County and gets divided among the food bank several food pantries.

Last year 41 churches and organizations raised about \$47,000. The goals this year are 50 churches and organizations and \$50,000. The preliminary numbers look good and Walk Coordinator, Marchell Wesaw, is confident the goals will be met.

If you would like make a donation to CROP please make out a check to Church World Service and mail it to the URC at 501 N. Main St., South Bend, 46601.

Widowed Women & Men Social Support

The Widow/Widower support program meets on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at Sunnyside Presbyterian Church. If you know of someone who needs support through recent loss or just friendship, let them know. We invite you and your support to keep this group strong and vital! The next meeting is October 13th.

United Way Kicks Off Team Taxwise 2010

United Way has kicked off the St. Joseph County "TEAM TAXWISE 2020" Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Campaign. Training for volunteers began in September and will continue through mid-December. Once certified these volunteers will be available to serve the South Bend area with tax filing assistance. For more information contact Dawn Chapla at United Way of St. Joseph County, 574-232-8201, ext. 228.

Community Gathering to Heal Domestic Violence

Everyone is invited to join Madison Center for a Community Gathering to Heal Domestic Violence on **Saturday, October 10, 2009 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.**

S-O-S of Madison Center is planning a multi-faith healing ceremony that reflects the common threads found in Michiana's rich diversity of faith traditions. The ceremony will be interwoven with divine petitions, song and dance in an interactive event.

For further information, contact S-O-S at 574-283-1308.

RECENT GIFTS RECEIVED

Christ the King Lutheran Church
Karen Dwyer
Homeward Bound Walk Proceeds
IN-KY Conference of United Church of Christ
Indiana Partners/Christian Unity in Mission
Iglesia Manos De Cristo
Memorial Presbyterian Church
Sarah Nerenberg
Osceola United Methodist Church
Pine Creek Church of the Brethren
Sinai Synagogue
South Bend Christian Reformed Church
St. Andrew's United Church of Christ
St. Peter's United Church of Christ
Willow Creek United Methodist Church
Zion United Church of Christ

NOTE: Although there have never been any member fees to belong to the URC, we are now suggesting an annual contribution of at least \$300 per faith community due to the increasing costs of operation and the growing needs of the less fortunate in our neighborhoods.

**THANKS FOR YOUR UNDERSTANDING
AND SUPPORT!**



URC WINS NATIONAL AWARD

The United Religious Community has been selected for the 2009 Best of South Bend Award in the Religious Organizations category by the U.S. Commerce Association. Each year, the USCA identifies companies that they believe have achieved exceptional marketing success in their local community and business category. These companies enhance the positive image of small business through service to their clients and community.



SOME DATES TO REMEMBER

October 10th, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Community Gathering to Heal
Domestic Violence at Madison Center

October 11th, 2:00 p.m.
Worship Service in Ravina Park

October 13th, at 6:30 p.m.
Widowed Women and Men at Sunnyside

October 22nd, at 6:00 p.m.
Red Cross Disaster Preparedness Meeting
at URC Office, 501 N. Main Street

October 25th, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Open House at URC Office
501 N. Main Street

November 5th, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.
Michiana Military Support Network
location to be announced

Free Computers Available for Needy Families

Free Geek Michiana helps the needy get nerdy. FGM refurbishes or recycles donated computers. The refurbished computer systems are distributed to families in Title I public elementary schools in South Bend in conjunction with the Family and Community Specialists program and each school's PTO. FGM also works with St. Casimer/St. Adalbert parish. Please support FGM with your old computer system. FGM is planning a fundraising drive for 2010 to be announced. For more information contact Tom Brown, Free Geek Michiana Director at 574-298-2706.



FAITH COMMUNITIES NEEDED TO HELP RED CROSS

There had always been days during the Fall that were cold and stormy, but today was different. The wind was swirling around for hours, but within the last five minutes it seemed to just stop. A distant roar partnered with an all-too-familiar siren told members of the community that it was time to seek shelter—and quickly.

When the siren had stopped and the roar died down, some community members emerged to find their houses destroyed,

with little or nothing to salvage. They need assistance but where do they turn?

Hello, my name is Gregory Vallejos, and I am an AmeriCorps member working with the Red Cross on disaster preparedness, more specifically on a new initiative intended to improve Red Cross partnerships with faith-based institutions. While the story above is entirely fictional, it serves as a necessary reminder that disasters are unpredictable and have the power to devastate hundreds and even thousands of lives within minutes.

Places of worship are often a symbol of comfort and peace to those affected by a disaster and for this reason we believe that faith-based institutions should be our partners in disaster response. The Red Cross will hold a meeting in partnership with the United Religious Community on **October 22nd., 2009 at 6:00 p.m.** to discuss ways in which faith-based institutions can partner with Red Cross in disaster response. The meeting will be held at the URC office, 501 N. Main Street, South Bend, 46601.

More information is available at the St. Joseph County American Red Cross website at www.stjoe-redcross.org or you may e-mail me at vallejos@stjoe-redcross.org with any questions. Hopefully you will join us in our mission!

Sincerely,
Gregory S. Vallejos



Faith and Military Engagement Workshop

On **September 1st, 2009**, the United Religious Community and the Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University collaborated to provide the workshop "Faith and Military Engagement." The event was supported by several organizations and received media coverage from three sources. The participants were members of the following organizations: Army One Source, Military and Family Life Consultants, St. Joseph County Memorial Day Society, Marine Reserves, Indiana National Guard, Michiana Military Support Network, Military One Source, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, faith leaders, lay ministers, family readiness groups, the University of Notre Dame, American Red Cross and other interested community members.

The workshop consisted of a keynote presentation, a panel discussion, breakout sessions and then a wrap up session. The National Council on Family Relations offered CEUs to the participants at no cost. The event has a dedicated Wet Paint site for on-line collaboration and information sharing to provide a space for breakout session notes, resources and further information on programs faith communities can provide to support military families. If you are interested in joining the on-line site or for more information please contact either the URC at 574-282-2397 or Sheri Dunn-Ramsay with the Military Family Research Institute at 765-496-6045 or sheridr@purdue.edu. The Michiana Military Support Network will hold their next meeting on **November 5th** from noon to 2:00 p.m. at a local restaurant to be determined.



Worship with LAMP in Ravina Park



On **July 18th** members and pastors from five local churches and residents in the Ravina Park area met to clean up and restore the park and Bowman Creek. They weeded, spread mulch, repainted playground equipment and hauled away trash. The result was a beautiful and renewed park.

Now, in celebration of the beauty of God's creation and thankfulness for the Spirit's work among us, an interdenominational worship service will be held at 2:00 p.m. on **Sunday, October 11, 2009** in Ravina Park.

All are welcome!