



Planning a Fair Housing Awareness Religious Service

APRIL IS NATIONAL FAIR HOUSING MONTH. Fair housing means that individuals and families can rent or purchase homes regardless of race, religion, disability, sex, presence of children, national origin, and other classes as protected by Federal, State, and Cook County law. Fair housing became the law of the land in 1968.

Unfortunately, in the northern suburbs of Chicago, discrimination remains an everyday reality for a large number of home seekers — more than half. Fair housing also means integrating our communities — also unfinished business. This is a social justice issue.

Pick a date. Ask your appropriate congregation committee or religious leaders for approval of a Fair Housing Sabbath/Service date.

Get help. Depending on the size of your congregation, you may want or need help in planning the Fair Housing Sabbath/Service. Social action, mission, or justice committees can help you plan a successful, educative sermon or event. *Open Communities*, of which you are a member and supporter in carrying out *your* fair housing mission, is always available to you (847-501-5760 or www.open-communities.org).

Ask for volunteers. Try to involve as many people as possible. Make sure religious education leaders are aware of the Fair Housing Sabbath and encourage them to explore the topic in their classes.

Announce your upcoming Fair Housing Awareness Sabbath or Service.

Add fair housing information to your materials or newsletter. You can call Open Communities for such information. Other sources of information on fair housing include the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which has an extensive Internet site (www.hud.gov) and an information clearinghouse, the Illinois Department of Human Rights, and the Cook County Commission on Human Rights.

Responsive
Reading: World
Peace Prayer

RESPONSE: Lead us from death to life,
From falsehood to truth,
From despair to hope, from fear to trust,
Lead us from hate to love,
From war to peace,
Let peace fill our hearts,
Let peace fill our world,
Let peace fill our
universe.

Reader: Still all the angry cries, still all the angry
guns, Still now your people die,
Earth's sons and daughters.
Let justice roll, let mercy pour down,
Come and teach us your way of
compassion.

Congregation: Response

Reader: So many lonely hearts, so many broken
lives, Longing for love to break into their
darkness. Come, teach us love, come, teach
us peace, Come and teach us your way of
compassion.

Congregation: Response

Reader: Let justice roll, let mercy fill the
earth, Let us begin to grow into your
people. We can be love, we can bring
peace,
We can still be your way of compassion.

Congregation: Response

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Housing Coalition, Washington, D.C., (202) 662-1530, x 242.

Scripture Readings: Reflections on Social Justice

Christian

Community

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

-- *Ephesians 2:13-22 [New International Version]*

Welcoming

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in...

“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

-- *Matthew 25:35 and 40 [New International Version]*

Parable of the Good Samaritan: Luke 10:25-37 [English Standard Version]

“Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?”

He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”

And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now, by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you what ever more you spend.’

Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”

He said, “The one who showed him mercy.”

Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Jewish

Community

The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe in the Nile, while her maidens walked along the Nile. She spied the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to fetch it. When she opened it, she saw that it was a child, a boy crying. She took pity on him and said, "This must be a Hebrew child." Then his nurse said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get ou a Hebrew nurse to nurse the child for you?" And Pharaoh's daughter answered, "yes." So the girl went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child and nurse him for me and I will pay your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who made him her son. She named him Moses (from the word "to draw out") saying, "I drew him out of the water."

Some time after that, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his kinsfolk and saw their sufferings.

-- *Exodus 2: 1-15*

Welcoming

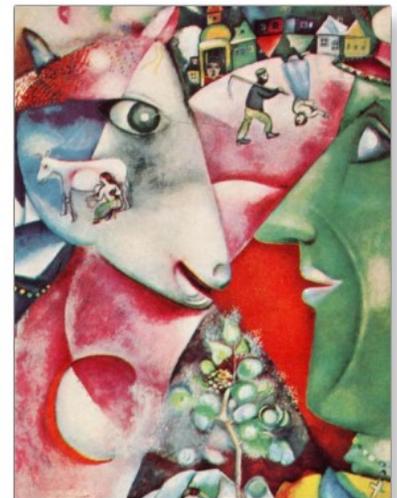
Each of us can only seize by the scruff whoever happens to be closest to us in the mire. This is the "neighbor" the Bible speaks of. And the miraculous thing is that, although each of us stands in the mire ourselves, we can each pull out our neighbor, or at least keep him from drowning. None of us has solid ground under our feet; each of us is only held up by the neighborly hands grasping us by the scruff, with the result that we are each held up by the next one, and often, indeed most of the time...hold each other up mutually. All this mutual upholding (a physical impossibility) becomes possible only because the great hand from above supports all these holding human hands by their wrists. It is this, and not some nonexistent "solid ground under one's feet" that enables all the human hands to hold and to help. There is no such thing as standing, there is only being held up.

-- *Franz Rosenzweig*

In nineteenth century Vilna, a wealthy man lost all he had. He was so greatly ashamed of being poor that he informed no one of his situation, and eventually died of malnutrition. Rabbi Israel Salanter (1810-1883) consoled the ashamed townspeople: "That man did not die of starvation, but of excessive pride. Had he been willing to ask others for help and admit to his situation, he would not have died of hunger."

My neighbor's material needs are my spiritual needs.

-- *Rabbi Israel Salanter*



Chagall, *I and the Village*

Islam

Community

Sayyid Jawad Ameli was about to sit down to dinner, when a messenger arrived from his teacher's house and told him to follow him. Sayyid Jawad immediately got up and followed the messenger to his teacher's house, where he saw his teacher sitting with a disapproving look on his face. "Sayyid Jawad!" the teacher said to him. "Have you no fear of Allah?!"

Sayyid Jawad was shocked. He tried hard to remember if he had done something recently to incur his teacher's displeasure. "It is now a week," said the teacher, "and your neighbor and his family are without any wheat or rice." "By God I had no knowledge of this," replied Sayyid Jawad. "That is even worse," his teacher said. "How can seven days pass by, and you know nothing of your neighbor's plight? Indeed, if you had known of this and purposely ignored it, you would not even be a Muslim!" Sayyid Jawad hung his head in shame, but his teacher continued, "Take this food here to your neighbor's house. Eat with him, so he does not feel shame. And place this sum of money under his pillow or carpet for his future expenses. Inform me when this task is done, for unless you do so, I refuse to eat myself!"

-- *The Qur'aan*

Welcoming

Ayesha, the Mother of the Believers, stated that she once asked the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), "O Messenger of Allah! I have two neighbors. To whom shall I send my gifts?" the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "To the one whose gate is nearer to you."

<http://www.ezsoftech.com/stories/mis40.asp>

Baha'i

Community

Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory.

-- No. 68, *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh*

Welcoming

No deed of man is greater before God than helping the poor.... Each one of you must have great consideration for the poor and render them assistance. Organize in an effort to help them and prevent increase in poverty. The greatest means for prevention is that whereby the laws of the community will be so framed and enacted that it will not be possible for a few to be millionaires and many destitute. One of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings is the adjustment of means of livelihood in human society. Under this adjustment there can be no extremes in human conditions as regards wealth and sustenance. For the community needs financier, farmer, merchant and laborer just as an army must be composed of commander, officers and privates. All cannot be commanders; all cannot be officers or privates. Each in his station in the social fabric must be competent; each in his function according to ability; but justness of opportunity for all.

-- 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 36

Buddhist

Community

The universe that we inhabit and our shared perception of it are the results of a common karma. Likewise, the places that we will experience in future rebirths will be the outcome of the karma that we share with the other beings living there. The actions of each of us, human or nonhuman, have contributed to the world in which we live. We all have a common responsibility for our world and are connected with everything in it.

-- *The 14th Dalai Lama*

Welcoming

Even offering three hundred bowls of food three times a day does not match the spiritual merit gained in one moment of love.

-- *Nagarjuna*

Hindu

Community

A passage from the Upanishads, the classical Hindu scriptures. The sage Uddalaka teaches his son about Brahman or Atman (God):

Father: "Bring me a fig."

Son: "Here it is, father."

Father: "Break it open. What do you see inside?"

Son: "Some rather tiny seeds, father."

Father: "Break one of them open. What do you see inside?"

Son: "Nothing at all, Father."

Father: "From the inside of this tiny seed, which seems to be nothing at all, this whole fig tree grows. That is the Real. That is Atman (the spirit). That art thou, my son."

"Now put some salt in this water and bring it to me in the morning."

The son stirs salt into the water. The next morning, he brings the water to Uddalaka.

Father: "Fetch me the salt that you put there yesterday."

Son: "I cannot, father. It is dissolved."

Father: "Then take a sip from the edge of it. What is there?"

Son: "Salt."

Father: "Take a sip from the middle. What is there?"

Son: "Salt."

Father: "Take a sip from the far edge. What is there?"

Son: "Salt. It is always the same."

Father: "That which you cannot grasp, but can taste in every drop, That is the Real. That is Brahman (the spirit). That art thou, my son.

– *Upanishad 6.12-13*

Welcoming

He who feeds a stranger and a tired traveler with joy attains infinite religious merit.

-- *Mahabharata XIII.7.7*

We may all be perfectly sure that it will go on beautifully well without us, and we need not bother our heads wishing to help it. Yet, we must do good; the desire to do good is the highest motive power we have, if we know all the time that it is a privilege to help others. Do not stand on a high pedestal, and take five cents in your hand and say, "Here, my poor man," but be grateful that the poor man is there, so that by making a gift to him you are able to help yourself. It is not the receiver that is blessed, but it is the giver. Be thankful that you are allowed to exercise your power of benevolence and mercy in the world and thus become pure and perfect....

No beggar whom we have helped has ever owed a single cent to us: we owe everything to him because he has allowed us to exercise our charity on him. It is entirely wrong to think that we have done, or can do, good to the world, to think that we have helped such and such people. It is a foolish thought, and all foolish thoughts bring misery. We think that we have helped some man and expect him to thank us, and because he does not, unhappiness comes to us. Why should we expect anything in return for what we do? Be grateful to the man you help, think of him as God. Is it not a great privilege to be allowed to worship God by helping our fellow men? If we were really unattached, we should escape all this vain expectation, and could cheerfully do good work in the world.

-- *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika*

Prayer of Peace

One God, so many people are in pain.

All Teach us the way to peace.

One When people around us don't agree and think differently,

All Teach us to listen and try to understand.

One When we see people getting hurt,

All Teach us to speak up.

One When we see people treated poorly because of their skin color, or language, or religious belief,

All Teach us to be an example of love and acceptance.

One When we see war and conflict,

All Teach us how to make a difference and seek peace.

One When we see pain,

All Teach us to bring healing.

One When we feel confused and afraid,

All Remind us to talk to our friends, our family and to you.

One In our lives, our neighborhoods and the world,

All Teach us to pray and teach us the way of peace.

Peace Prayers (All respond "AMEN" at the end of each prayer)

(from <http://www.masscouncilofchurches.org/docs/Lowell%20worship.htm>)