

Love Thy Neighbor

News from the Connecticut Council for Interreligious Understanding

Hundreds Turn Out for CCIU's 3rd Annual Love Thy Neighbor Dinner

Over 250 of CCIU's supporters and friends heard fifteen state leaders explain how they have loved their neighbors, or been loved by their neighbors, at this year's fundraising dinner.

Speakers talked about efforts they have made to love their neighbors. "I have loved my neighbor through serving on the Student Court at my high school where we seek to create Justice Circles," said Joanesly Marquez-Santana, a Hartford High School senior, who shared the importance of understanding the difficulties some of her peers face in their everyday lives.

Citing the importance of loving his neighbors, no matter their differences in religion, State Senator Dr. Saud Anwar, a Muslim, recounted the time that he took a Jewish friend's prayer to leave at the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

Given the antagonisms so evident in today's culture, though, it was not surprising that many of the speakers focused on the difficulty, and importance, of loving the people who are hard to love.

Joe Brennan, the CEO of the CT Business and Industry Association suggested that "hatred and violence seem to take a lot more work than love and acceptance."



And State Parole Board officer Patricia Camp noted that "It is our challenge to learn to love the people who are hard to love, or even are unlovable."

Because people just like you came out for this event, the dinner raised funds that are critical to keep CCIU's work going in the coming year. It also provided a chance for participants to share stories at their tables during the moments between groups of speakers. Participants also left with tasks, notably to put up new "Love your neighbor" lawn signs created especially for this event.



Ultimately, the evening was about CCIU's supporters like you deciding to do things to increase respect and understanding wherever possible. Summing up her company's perspective on its work, but also suggesting the work that we can all do in ways that add up to significant impacts, Incord CEO Meredith Ritz Shay spoke for everyone in attendance, saying, "We are committed to building a safer world." Next year's dinner has tentatively been scheduled for Monday, October 19, 2020

Mark your calendars now!

Upcoming CCIU Event: To Love Your Neighbor, Know Your Neighbor Panel

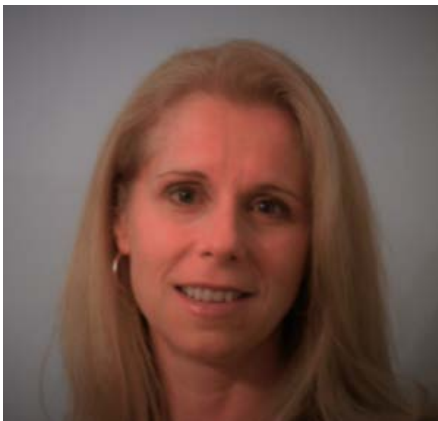
Sunday, January 12, 4pm at
Gilead (UCC) United Church of Christ 672
Gilead Street Hebron, CT
Featuring: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism



Our first "To Love your Neighbor, Know your Neighbor" forum was held at First Church of Christ (UCC) in West Hartford in September. It featured Rev. Dr. Alvan Johnson (Christianity), Dr. Reza Mansoor (Islam), and Rabbi Michael Pincus (Judaism) as the panelists. They provided a spirited set of answers to the questions raised by the many attendees.

Our second forum, at Unitarian Universalist Society, East, in Manchester, featured quite different religious traditions — Hindus and Sikhs — and was graced by two couples (Drs. Sankar and Lakshmi Nirajan, and Sukhdeep and Gurmeet Cheema) answering the questions of the audience.

New Executive Director Named by CCIU



Debra Pittorie Forand is CCIU's new Executive Director. She was selected by a unanimous vote of the Board of Directors at the October Board meeting. "We are thrilled to have such an accomplished and knowledgeable leader ready and eager to move our organization to the next level of effectiveness," noted Board Co-Chair Barbara Lederer in introducing Debra to the Board. "In the face of today's ignorance and hatred, our mission continues to be critical. We feel Debra is more than capable of helping CCIU develop all the resources necessary to carry it out."

Debra comes to CCIU after years of leadership work with other nonprofit organizations, including United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut, The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, Hartford Stage Company, and Riverfront Recapture, where she oversaw fund development, marketing, communications, and government relations. She has run her own consulting firm for nonprofit organizations since 2012.

"I am excited to join CCIU at this time when its work is absolutely vital to our region. I know that CCIU is blessed with great board members, and an incredible track record. I expect to use that foundation to help build CCIU's capacity to do more work in more communities in our state. I can't wait to get as many 'To Love your Neighbor, Know your Neighbor' events scheduled as I can."

A graduate of Colgate University and Columbia University Business School's Senior Leaders Program for Nonprofit Professionals, Debra is also a BoardSource Certified Governance Trainer. She will take over for retiring Executive Director Terry Schmitt in January.

Event Calendar

To Love your Neighbor, Know your Neighbor:

-Sunday, January 12
Gilead United Church of Christ, Hebron, CT. 4 p.m

-Wednesday, February 5
Berlin Interfaith Committee, Berlin, CT, 7 p.m

-Wednesday, March 4
St. John's Episcopal Church, Essex, CT. 7 p.m

Honest Conversations with Muslim Neighbors:

-January (TBD)
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, Simsbury, CT.

You can do more!

One: Host a CCIU forum

You can make it possible for CCIU to increase understanding and respect by asking your religious community, library, or organization to host one of our forums. Talk

with your leaders to let them know what CCIU can do. Have them call our office **(860) 566-9556** or email us **interfaith@ccfiu.org**.

We will follow up promptly!

Two: Become a sustaining member

Go to our website, **www.ccfiu.org** and *click* on the "**Donate**" button. It will take you to a Paypal secure donation page. Put in an amount that you can afford monthly, and right under that, click on the box labeled "Make this a monthly donation."

By donating this way, you sustain our work throughout the year. You stand on the side of truth in the struggle for respect and acceptance in our world. And you will inspire our deepest gratitude! So, go to www.ccfiu.org, and become a sustaining member!

Stay Social with Connecticut Council for Interreligious Understanding!

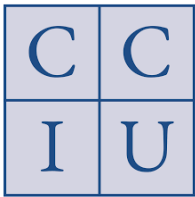
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A Heartfelt Farewell from Retiring Director Terry Schmitt

People hear about hatred, antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism, xenophobia, and they are frustrated and even paralyzed in its face. "I'm not like that. I didn't raise my children that way. What is going on with our world, anyway?" Well, the truth is that human beings are always vulnerable to their fears, and their fears can be manipulated in the face of ignorance. That is why the work you do through CCIU isn't going to disappear any time soon.

You have allowed me to help you stand up and act for something better than ignorance and fear. The support you provide through donations, attendance at events, and responses to our communications, has made my time at CCIU possible and deeply meaningful.

It has also made it profoundly rewarding. I know that I stand with thousands of caring people like you who are committed to respect and understanding, instead of fear and hatred.

I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for your goodwill, your kind words, your eager participation, and most of all, for your generosity in helping do this unique work that CCIU does. Thank you for letting me be your representative and activist in this vital cause.

I do know, because of your support, that you really are "not like that"—filled with fear and ignorance. You are much, much better. So I look forward to seeing you at future CCIU forums.



*One last reflection
on what you do
through CCIU...*