



AKRON AREA  
INTERFAITH  
COUNCIL  
NEWSLETTER  
FEBRUARY 2022



# A PRAYER FOR THE AKRON AREA INTERFAITH COUNCIL TO REMEMBER THAT:

“IT STARTS WITH ME”

## -PRAYER BY DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

God grant that right here in America and all over this world, we will choose the high way; a way in which men will live together as brothers. A way in which the nations of the world will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. A way in which every man will respect the dignity and worth of all human persons. A way in which every nation will allow justice to run down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream. A way in which men will do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. A way in which men will be able to stand up, and in the midst of oppression, in the midst of darkness and agony, they will be able to stand there and love their enemies, bless those persons who curse them, pray for those individuals that spitefully use them. And this is the way they will bring us once more into that society which we think of as the brotherhood of man. This will be the day when white people, colored people, whether they are brown or whether they are yellow or whether they are black, will join together and stretch out their arms and be able to cry out: “Free at last. Free at last. Great God almighty, we are free at last.”



*(From Martin Luther King's speech, "Some things we must do" delivered at the Second Annual Nonviolence and Social Change Conference at Holt Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama December 5, 1957)*

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You are invited to an online learning opportunity:  
**“WHY DO UNITED METHODISTS OPPOSE  
THE DEATH PENALTY?”**

Featuring  
Bishop Tracy S. Malone,  
resident Bishop to the East Ohio Conference  
and

Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan,  
Executive Director of the Ohio Council of Churches  
Participants will learn about the official United Methodist position,  
the theological reasons behind our belief, and ways that we can  
advocate together to abolish the death penalty in Ohio.

**February 24**

6:30 pm – 7:30 pm EST on Zoom

Register at: [https://eocumc\\_oppose\\_deathpenalty.eventbrite.com](https://eocumc_oppose_deathpenalty.eventbrite.com)



## TAKE ACTION

S.B. 103, the strongly bipartisan bill that would end Ohio’s death penalty, has not had a committee hearing since June 2021. The last hearing was proponent testimony and we still need to have opponent and interested party testimony before it can be voted out of committee.

### Here’s how you can help:

Please call the sponsors and cosponsors of S.B. 103, and ask them to help us move the bill forward in committee. Volume matters! So, please share this information with your networks.

- Steve Huffman (R)- (614) 466-6247
- Nickie Antonio (D)- (614) 466-5123
- Niraj Antani (R)- (614) 466-4538
- Hearcel Craig (D)- (614) 466-513
- Tina Maharath (D)- (614) 466-8064
- Kristina Roegner (R)- (614) 466-4823
- Michael A. Rulli (R)- (614) 466-8285
- Vernon Sykes (D)- (614) 466-7041
- Cecil Thomas (D)- (614) 466-5980
- Sandra R. Williams (D)- (614) 466-4857
- Kenny Yuko (D)- (614) 466-4583



You can say: *Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am calling to urge more hearings on Senate Bill 103, the strongly bipartisan bill to repeal Ohio's death penalty. Ohio is better than a broken, expensive system that harms the families of murder victims and convicts innocent people. Thank you for taking the time to listen to my call!*

Thank you for helping us keep the ball moving forward! Stay tuned for more ways to take action soon.

Hannah Kubbins, Executive Director  
[Ohioans to Stop Executions](#)



## REMEMBERING VOICES OF WISDOM

*An excerpt written by Congressman John Lewis, shortly before he passed away on July 17, 2020. He was severely beaten at a civil rights demonstration on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in 1965.*

“Like so many young people today, I was searching for a way out, or some might say a way in, and then I heard the voice of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on an old radio. He was talking about the philosophy and discipline of nonviolence. He said we are all complicit when we tolerate injustice. He said it is not enough to say it will get better by and by. He said each of us has a moral obligation to stand up, speak up and speak out. When you see something that is not right, you must say something. You must do something. Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build what we called **the Beloved Community**, a nation and world society at peace with itself and each other.

Ordinary people with extraordinary vision can redeem the soul of America by getting in what I call good trouble, necessary trouble. Voting and participating in the democratic process are key. The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it.

...Though I may not be here with you, I urge you to answer the highest calling of your heart and stand up for what you truly believe. In my life I have done all I can to demonstrate that the way of peace, the way of love and nonviolence is the more excellent way. Now it is your turn to let freedom ring.”



### GET INVOLVED

The Akron Interfaith Social Justice Group Action Team Invites you to their Zoom meetings,

**Prayer, Presence,  
Partnership to Support  
Black Lives**

Meetings are planned for  
February 14 & March 14  
5:30 – 7:00 pm

And

**Summit County Sheriff's  
Oversight Committee**

Tuesday, March 1  
9:00 – 10:00 am

For more information or  
Zoom link,

contact: Joyce Penfield,

[jpenfield2016@gmail.com](mailto:jpenfield2016@gmail.com)

Join Cardinal Wilton Gregory, Archbishop of Washington, and Sister Helen Prejean, as they discuss the death penalty in the United States in a webinar presented by [RENEW International](#) and [The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington](#).

In addition to sharing their own views of capital punishment, Cardinal Gregory and Sister Helen will talk about how Catholics can participate in civil discourse on this polarizing topic and how Catholics can take part in the movement to abolish the death penalty.

The webinar is moderated by Gregory Tobin, president and publisher of RENEW International, and Ms. Genevieve Mougey, MDiv, director of the Office for Social Concerns in The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington.



## 2022 SOUPER BOWL OF CARING



We're excited to kick off the annual Souper Bowl of Caring food and funds drive! On or near Super Bowl Sunday, February 13, 2022, we invite churches, schools and organizations to collect monetary donations and shelf-stable food items to support individuals and families in our community struggling with hunger. The project is simple: collect monetary donations after or during a service, often in soup kettles, to raise funds for people in our community who are hungry. Civic groups, local businesses and schools collect food and funds before or after meetings/events.

By using this weekend as a time to help our hungry neighbors, young people will learn about the reality of hunger in their own neighborhoods as they turn one of the nation's universal days of celebration into an opportunity to care for individuals in need.

Make checks payable to the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank. Food items and monetary donations can be delivered or mailed to either Foodbank location:

Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank  
Souper Bowl of Caring  
350 Opportunity Parkway  
Akron, OH 44307

Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank  
Souper Bowl of Caring  
1365 Cherry Ave. NE  
Canton, OH 44714

Questions? Please contact Faith Barbato at [fbarbato@acrfb.org](mailto:fbarbato@acrfb.org) or 330.436.3182.

## SAVE THE DATE MONTGOMERY TO SELMA TOUR:

**Leave early on June 13 and return on June 17, 2022.**

**To board the bus you must be vaccinated and wear a mask.**

**The trip is being organized by  
National Association of Black Social Workers: Akron-Canton Chapter.**

**Get your seats now! You must pay in advance.**

**More details coming soon. To register or more information,**

**contact: Lillie Jackson, [lillietisd@gmail.com](mailto:lillietisd@gmail.com)**

**or Joyce Penfield [jpenfield2016@gmail.com](mailto:jpenfield2016@gmail.com)**



**We are a safe, welcoming interfaith space inviting our  
local and global communities to engage in dialogue, education and service.**

**Help us build bridges and plant seeds!**

## **WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK**



**The Official UN Observance in the 1<sup>st</sup> Week of February**

The World Interfaith Harmony Week was first proposed at the UN General Assembly on September 23, 2010 by H.M. King Abdullah II of Jordan. Just under a month later, on October 20, 2010, it was unanimously adopted by the UN and henceforth the first week of February will be observed as a World Interfaith Harmony Week.

The World Interfaith Harmony Week is based on the pioneering work of The Common Word initiative. This initiative, which started in 2007, called for Muslim and Christian leaders to engage in a dialogue based on two common fundamental religious Commandments; Love of God, and Love of the Neighbour, without nevertheless compromising any of their own religious tenets. The Two commandments are at the heart of the three Monotheistic religions and therefore provide the most solid theological ground possible.

The World Interfaith Harmony Week extends the Two Commandments by adding 'Love of the Good, and Love of the Neighbour'. This formula includes all people of goodwill. It includes those of other faiths, and those with no faith.

The World Interfaith Harmony Week provides a platform—one week in a year—when all interfaith groups and other groups of goodwill can show the world what a powerful movement they are. The thousands of events organized by these groups often go unnoticed not only by the general public, but also by other groups themselves. This week will allow for these groups to become aware of each other and strengthen the movement by building ties and avoiding duplicating each others' efforts.

It is hoped that this initiative will provide a focal point from which all people of goodwill can recognize that the common values they hold far outweigh the differences they have, and thus provide a strong dosage of peace and harmony to their communities.

*(World continued on page 7)*

## World Interfaith Harmony Week Resolution UNGA A/65/PV.34

The General Assembly, Recalling its resolutions 53/243 of 13 September 1999 on the declaration and programme of action relating to a culture of peace, 57/6 of 4 November 2002 concerning the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, 58/128 of 19 December 2003 on the promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation, 60/4 of 20 October 2005 on a global agenda for dialogue among civilizations, 64/14 of 10 November 2009 on the Alliance of Civilizations, 64/81 of 7 December 2009 on the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace and 64/164 of 18 December 2009 on the elimination of all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief,

Recognizing the imperative need for dialogue among different faiths and religions in enhancing mutual understanding, harmony and cooperation among people,

Recalling with appreciation various global, regional and subregional initiatives on mutual understanding and interfaith harmony including the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, and the initiative “A Common Word”,

Recognizing that the moral imperatives of all religions, convictions and beliefs call for peace, tolerance and mutual understanding,

Reaffirms that mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace;

Proclaims the first week of February of every year the World Interfaith Harmony Week between all religions, faiths and beliefs;

Encourages all States to support, on a voluntary basis, the spread of the message of interfaith harmony and goodwill in the world’s churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other places of worship during that week, based on love of God and love of one’s neighbour or on love of the good and love of one’s neighbour, each according to their own religious traditions or convictions;

Requests the Secretary-General to keep the General Assembly informed of the implementation of the present resolution.

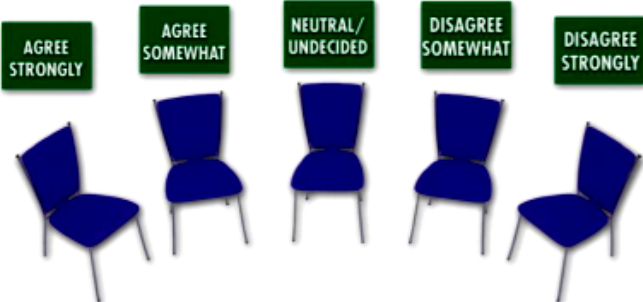
*The UN General Assembly unanimously passed the resolution to recognize the World Interfaith Harmony Week annually during the first week of February.*

# "We The People" - Dinner and a Fight

Dialogue

Educate and Inspire. Supported by:

Several Interfaith Leaders + Your org \_\_\_\_\_ + This org \_\_\_\_\_ + That org \_\_\_\_\_



**Join In:** To experience civil dialogue about a tough topic. Volunteer to be an on-stage-participant. Or join just to observe. We will use the 5-Chair Civil Dialogue(R) method developed over the last 18-years at Arizona State University: Hot Topics - Cool Heads

**Hot Topic:** TBD, vaccine, immigration, voting repairs?

**Purpose:** A recent survey concluded that 77% of Americans are exhausted by politics! Is it because our political environment often asks us to vilify our neighbor!? Are you ready to get back to "We The People"?

**Location:** St George Social Hall, 3204 Ridgewood Rd, Fairlawn

**When:** Wednesday, March 9, 2022, 6pm to 8:20pm (please arrive early to get situated)

**Format:** Round tables of 5 for dining & visiting. 5-Chair Method (the "fight") for all to observe and question.

## Why bother?

- \*Maybe you have friends, or even family members, that you don't visit any more.
- \*Maybe you had a meal, a holiday, a party stained by a blow-up.
- \*Maybe you are angry at leaders who foment division, or media spewing half truths.
- \*Maybe you ache for a path to cross-the-aisle.

**Maybe it is time to re-member United-We-Stand?**

## Sign up:

Marshall Ariza  
mtariza@live.com 330-414-3620

**Fee:** \$20 dinner + Freewill Donation



[www.Fighting-To-Understand.us](http://www.Fighting-To-Understand.us) is a local non-profit 501c3 organized for civic education.  
Ted Wetzel 330-607-6829 cell

(Dinner continued on page 9)

## UPDATE

In June 2020, Summit County Council passed a Resolution declaring *Racism as a Public Health Crisis*. Since then, they have been doing some amazing work which constructively finds ways to make systemic change in our County and show love by making justice public. To read their findings, their recommendations, and press release of Feb. 1, 2022, go to: [www.council.summitoh.net](http://www.council.summitoh.net) and click on About Council and Public Information tabs.



**Objectives for a typical Dinner and a Fight event (for democracy rooted in disagreement):**

- 1- Many people are in pain due to broken relationships (of late, due to politics). Additionally, many people are uncertain how to help the country they love. Dinner and a Fight is a place to encounter that pain.
- 2- As citizens/civic leaders, we work towards opportunities for understanding (including disagreement), and avoid divisiveness. From Dinner and a Fight, citizens can grow conflict skills and bring them to our organizations and to the greater society.
- 3- For the everyday people, Dinner and a Fight demonstrates that we CAN have civil dialogue about difficult topics, and that there ARE many other Americans who would like to build understanding rather than division. There is reason to be hopeful.
- 4- To see in just a 2.5-hour event, that we can take a step toward collaborative understanding.
- 5- To promote cross-pollination, perhaps many local civic organizations would offer sponsored dinner seats to a few members each month. A step toward sustainability. Additionally, there is no shortage of complex topics to understand.
- 6- As if a disagreement-gymnasium, experiencing the event multiple times can exercise new disagreement-muscles, even to the point of being confident to introduce the method during work and personal conflict situations. Thus spreading the benefit of this simply structured dialogue. Forming a learning community, with a clear shift toward exploring differences.
- 7- Leaders may want to use this tool within their civic organization. Thus, there will be train-the-facilitator opportunities with direct ties to the originators at Arizona State University.

**After experiencing Dinner and a Fight first hand:**

- What potential do you see for other people or organizations to have this experience?
- Would you like to collaborate with us to make it more effective?
- Would you sponsor dinner seats, or otherwise promote this [monthly?] event.
- Might you want to be part of a short term Deep-Dive-Team, exploring the topic (a topic) further?

**Approximate event timeline 6:00pm to 8:20pm**

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 5:45 | Doors open. Check in, find a table, make a new friend. Dinner served once 4 or 5 are at your table.  |
| 6:00 | Discussion prompts to explore an inviting topics at your table for ice-breaking :-)  |
| 6:30 | Shift from dinner tables to audience setting.<br>Introduction of Fight Topic (for 5-chair civil dialogue)<br>Volunteers to fill the 5-chairs<br>Facilitated Dialogue<br>Audience observes the 5 in dialogue chairs<br>Audience participates with the 5<br>Closing remarks by the 5 + facilitator |
| 7:25 | Return to original dinner tables for "dessert" and to harvest: (a) what do we kinda agree on, (b) what seems to be the crux of what we disagree about, (c) do we have ideas for fruitful next steps?   |
| 7:45 | From the dessert conversation, transition to whole group harvesting:<br>What might emerge as a strong Dinner and a Fight next topic? A clear step away from division and toward healthy disagreement.  |
| 8:00 | Feedback loops. Respectful closing.  |
| 8:20 | Adjourn  |



## MISSION

The Akron Area Interfaith Council (AAIC) exists to initiate, coordinate and enable effective interfaith responses to the social, moral, ethical and cultural issues of our community and to promote freedom of religion, equality and understanding.

## VISION

We envision a strong network of faith communities that collaborate to make our city a haven for all.

## GUIDEPOSTS

- Diversity is a blessing and enriches us all; the diversities of all peoples, languages, cultures, and colors must be cherished and celebrated.
- We are responsible for each other's welfare.
- Because of the importance of individual's faith traditions in developing underlying values, faith communities can contribute to the development of a more just, humane, and ecologically responsible society. [We refer here to "faith traditions" vs. "religion" as AAIC is interested in reaching not only congregations but also those who are searching and may not have a specific faith affiliation (such as the NONES).]
- Members of AAIC oppose any and all forms of discrimination, especially those based on faith, gender, race, heritage, nationality and sexuality
- Advocacy and Social Justice: AAIC has consistently put issues of social justice at the forefront. Our past history shows a deep concern for inclusiveness. The group has been focused on the issues faced by the immigrant populations in Akron, ongoing issues of racism in the community, hunger, as well as xenophobia.

## TO JOIN AAIC

Please visit our website for information on yearly dues:

Individual membership— \$30.00/yr., Institutional— \$50.00/yr.

Send your check or donation to:

**Akron Area Interfaith Council**

**3300 Morewood Rd.**

**Akron, Ohio 44333**

or send a membership fee via the following link: <https://donate.fundhero.io/aaic/aaicmembership>

Website: <http://www.Akroninterfaith.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AkronInterfaith>

Phone: 234-206-0088