



Church Women United in Madison, Wisconsin

www.churchwomenunited-madison.net

C.W.U. Newsletter January, 2015 No. 5

February Forum

Friday, February 6, 2015

Christian-Muslim Dialogue from an Islamic Perspective

Seljuk Altuntas

Executive Director, Niagara Foundation

9:00 am Gathering and Coffee

9:30 am Welcome and announcements

10:00 am Program

First Baptist Church

518 North Franklin Avenue

February Forum

On Friday morning, February 6, we will gather at First Baptist Church, 518 North Franklin Avenue, for fellowship and our program Christian-Muslim Dialogue from an Islamic Perspective. Our speaker, Seljuk Altuntas, is Executive Director of Niagara Foundation, Madison. He was born in Turkey and educated at Aegean University in Izmir. His second master's degree is in Inter-Religious Dialogue, with a concentration in Christian-Muslim Dialogue at Catholic Theological Union. He is working on a PhD in Languages and Cultures of Asia at UW-Madison. Some of his interests include Islamic theology, Christian-Muslim dialogue, the history of Christian-Muslim relations, and global religions.

Niagara Foundation's mission is social cohesion by fostering civic conversations and sustained relationships between people of different cultures and faiths. It was founded in 2004 by a group of Turkish-American businessmen and educators, to realize the vision of its founder Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish Muslim scholar. Today the Niagara Foundation is active in 9 Midwestern states with 22 branches. The organization is named after Niagara Falls, where two great lakes become more magnificent together than they could be separately.

January Celebration

Some 30 people braved the frigid weather to attend the Saturday morning celebration of Human Rights at Trinity United Methodist Church. The women of Trinity welcomed us with a bountiful array of tasty treats, including a hot breakfast casserole most welcome. After we moved up to the sanctuary, Pastor Breanna Dahl welcomed us with a quick history of Trinity. The church was built in 1903 as Truesdale Methodist. They merged with another Madison church in 1968 to become Trinity. They proudly describe themselves as having 4 of everybody. Whatever category you name, they have at least 4 members: teenagers, college students, different countries, different professions, different races. It's a fun, vibrant place.

We had a good number of attendees new to CWU, and Ann Sowaske gave a quick overview of CWU in Madison. National CWU was born in 1941, but Madison's ecumenical women's meetings started decades before that. We are made up of individuals and groups, financed by Fair Share donations. As the program stated: "Since 1941, Church Women United has worked toward being an advocate and guide for those who have been deprived of their human rights. Through study, activism, and outreach, CWU units have become more knowledgeable of the persecution and fear that humans suffer around the world and at home. This knowledge has made CWU members more sensitive to the needs of the oppressed.

"Although we may seem powerless as individuals, the path to achieving human rights for everyone usually starts with the work of a single person. At Human Rights Celebrations held over the past decade, CWU units have recognized those who go the extra mile in defending the rights and freedoms of individuals. Let us celebrate these peacemakers who serve as examples to each of us."

As evidence of Madison's activities, our co-chairs of Ecumenical Action announced upcoming events. January is Human Trafficking Awareness month. Sunday (1/11/15) is Human Trafficking Awareness Day, with a film festival kickoff at the High Noon Saloon.

Once again, SlaveFree Madison has organized a number of events, including the 5th Annual Slave Free Madison Film Festival January 18 (Madison Public Library 2 pm) and 24 (Fitchburg Public Library at 1 pm and 3:30 pm). The two films on the 24th are Miss Representation, taking a look at how media consumption influences girls and Sex for Sale: American Escort. Discussion follows the films. This is a good opportunity to increase your awareness and understanding of issues related to human trafficking. All events are free and open to the public.

Invitations extended to CWU include attending the prayer breakfast of the women of St. Paul African American Methodist Church at 9 am Saturday, January 17; the Dane County UN meeting at 7 pm Tuesday, the 13th, at the Madison Public Library where Mike McCabe will talk about Mali; and joining the Martin Luther King Community Choir to sing for the Martin Luther King Celebration at the Capitol. Check with Mt. Zion re times.

Audrey Hinger relayed a thank-you from the ARC houses for our ARC Book Program. Women and children were delighted with the books, and Audrey will supply a report on numbers in a future newsletter. She is grateful to the librarians who helped select our gifts.

Human Rights Celebration. Susan Becker introduced our Human Rights Award Recipient, Cora E. White. Go back to last month's newsletter for her biography. It is impressive. Shirley Robbins presented the national Human Rights Award, complete with certificate and pin.

Two of her three biological children and one adopted child joined us as we honored this extraordinary woman. Cora White spoke about her life and work with and on behalf of foster children over the past 40 some years. She herself cared for some 200 children since moving to Madison from Chicago. Interestingly, her son was a boy scout who attended scout

meetings at Trinity. (Trinity still sponsors a boy scout troop.) Cora had a scouting background herself, and was a troop leader for girl scouts when her children were young. Deana Wright is one of her scouts. Another is an airline pilot. Cora has been a great asset for Madison and Wisconsin in raising children and providing training for foster parents in how to have successful outcomes with children who have faced a hard road in life.

Supporting 200 children in need of love and parenting sounds like a worthy life accomplishment, but her involvement went far beyond that. Training other people, organizing state-wide for effective foster parenting, also sounds like sufficient life's work, but she didn't stop there. Her work took her to India, where her organization built a home for 50 children and the staff who supported them. Building wasn't quite enough. After they built the home, the staff asked for a well so they could have fresh, clean water. Then they next asked for electricity. Granted. They also supplied plants and buffalo.

The need for this home involved trafficking. Girl babies were not valued at all in the India of that time. Girls were sent out to work in the streets at age 4, and couldn't go home without earning money. The International Foster Care Organization started by supporting 10 girls, which increased to the 50.

Cora is the only woman the Japanese government had ever invited to provide training. They needed her to show them how to close orphanages containing unwanted children. She has worked in over 40 different countries--Scandinavian countries, Poland, Trinidad. She spent a week in Poland, the first woman, first American, to serve there. She feels obligated to do something for others.

Opportunities include donations. \$25 once a month for Child India.

In Trinidad, her organization supports a girl's group at a former monastery that took them in. They are still there. By supplying them with sewing machines, the girls support themselves by sewing school uniforms for schools in Trinidad and Tobago. Their beautiful stitching improves the quality of their shirts, and Cora's organization ordered shirts for their members, and spreads the word to other organizations of this opportunity to support these girls.

Her organization has opened 7 medical centers. She has worked on Navaho reservations in the south-west. In 2014 they provided a water well for clean drinking water in Liberia.

In Madison, she is a director at the Badger Rock Neighborhood Center and is active in the None in the Gap program led by coach Joshua. The kids call her coach too. She has been the president of the International Foster Care Association for 14 years. She actively trains foster parents for the task they have undertaken, and her training has expanded to social workers and other professionals who need to understand the dynamics and difficulties of both foster parents and children. She is active in Partners in Foster Care. Cora became the only parent who could take in both boys and girls at the same time. When asked how she could manage this, she set down her simple rules. When she wrote them down, they took up 3 pages. Simple rules: No drugs, no alcohol, no cigarettes, no swearing, no sex. And if anyone gets pregnant, all their money goes into an account for the child.

This was an exciting and inspirational introduction to Cora E. White, our Human Rights Award recipient for 2015 and Madison's fostering asset.

Ecumenical Action

On Sunday, January 11, SlaveFree Madison kicked off a new campaign, End Demand Wisconsin. Demand fuels human trafficking. You can take the pledge to end demand in Wisconsin. Go to the website at www.slavefreemadison.com or see the pledge form for details. [SlaveFree Pledge sheet follows.] The more people who sign the pledge, the more media will notice. Human trafficking is an important issue for Church Women United. Signing the pledge is one way you can help end this terrible abuse and exploitation of vulnerable women, men and children. Gloria Carter, Ecumenical Action, carter53597@tds.net 608-849-7589 Remembering Kay Newton, 1918-2015.

Fair Share and Donor Contribution Form for Church Women United of Madison

Please Note: These contributions will be used for the general operating expenses of CWU of Madison, as well as for the Celebration materials, choir music, annual donations to selected community social services, and an annual contribution to Church Women United of Wisconsin. GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES include, in part, the office rent, insurance, bulk mail permit and the cost of producing and mailing the CWU newsletter, and miscellaneous supplies needed throughout the year.

Please send in the Fair Share contribution by November 30 of each year. Our financial year ends on December 31 of each year.

FROM:

Name of church/organization or individual donor.

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Please make your check(s) payable to: Church Women United of Madison and send to:

Marleen S. Lippert
Treasurer, CWU of Madison
6329 Scandia Lane
McFarland, WI 53558

Thank you for your financial assistance in carrying out the various projects of CWU. Your contributions are sincerely appreciated.