**World Interfaith Harmony Week Clergy / Faith Leader Breakfast**

The MultiFaith Council of Northwest Ohio held its fourth annual Clergy / Faith Leader Breakfast in observance of World Interfaith Harmony Week. This year’s event was held February 1, at St. Timothy’s Episcopal Church in Perrysburg, Ohio.

Attendance and interest was high, with over 80 leaders participating. Members of the church prepared a sumptuous hot breakfast buffet to greet attendees. The Rev. Jeffry L. Bunke gave a welcome. Chair of the MultiFaith Council, Judy Lee Trautman, and administrative assistant Crystal Taylor presented a PowerPoint about the MultiFaith Council’s mission and activities.

Faith leaders then arranged themselves in diverse table groupings in order to discuss the topic of the morning, “How can faith communities be in solidarity to targeted and / or marginalized groups”? The topic had particular resonance for the Toledo area, due to vandalism to a Muslim family’s garage the previous week and a bomb scare at the Jewish Community Center on the previous day. The response to the vandalism was to gather about 200 people on short notice in front of the house to sign the door with messages of love and to sing together in a chorus of support. The door was then replaced free of charge by a local garage door company. Efforts are underway to preserve the love messages on the old door. Letters of support were sent to Joel Marcovitch, Jewish Federation of Greater Toledo chief executive officer.

The MultiFaith Council has published on social media and in the local newspaper, *The Blade*, statements of support to the vandalized family and to all diverse faith groups.

Greater Toledo is an exceptionally diverse community with many diverse faith orientations. Immigrants from many nations have long been a part of the fabric of the community. Toledo has received national recognition for its current warm welcome to refugees. < <http://www.npr.org/2017/01/04/508220451/in-toledo-syrian-refugees-are-welcomed-amid-a-difficult-immigration-climate>>. Toledo is an official Compassionate Community in support of the Charter of Compassion. Both the Lucas County Commissioners and the Toledo City Council have passed resolutions in support of all its citizens, especially those most vulnerable. While not declaring as an official sanctuary city, both government bodies pledged to continue to be a “welcoming and compassionate community”.

Because of the recent attacks on the Islamic and Jewish communities, discussion at the tables of our breakfast event was both lively and passionate. Report outs allowed us to compile a list of practical suggestions. Among these, it was suggested that the MultiFaith Council, in addition to continuing its mission of fellowship, education and service, create a rapid response team to meet challenges quickly.

Several events to counter Islamophobia were announced. These also took place during World Interfaith Harmony Week. They included a rally in support of Muslims at 1 p.m. Friday at the Masjid Saad Foundation, a public “prayer of peace, love and serenity” at 2 p.m. Sunday at The Islamic Center of Greater Toledo, and a unity rally in support of Muslims at 5 p.m. Monday in the parking lot of the Grape Leaf restaurant hosted by the Interdenominational Minister’s Alliance of Toledo.

At the conclusion of the breakfast, Chair Judy Trautman urged all attendees to heed the charge of her husband and co-founder of the MultiFaith Council, who died in August at the age of 96. When asked what message he had for the community, Mr. Trautman said, “Push On!”

--Judy Lee Trautman