

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Life is filled with cycles and my latest one has been among the most rewarding of my life. Serving as the Montgomery County Interfaith Community Liaison has made it possible to serve on a peer level with dedicated county officials and amazing faith leaders. Our mission of creating a compassionate, inclusive and equitable community has been empowered by identifying 767 faith communities and developing a data base of 5,174 supporters and friends.

The Executive Committee of the Faith Community Advisory Council consists of highly credentialed and respected leaders of faith traditions ranging from Anglican to Zoroastrian co-chairing working groups and committees:

- The Religious Land Use Working Group shepherds faith communities through the rigorous regulative process of buying land, building and renovating, as well as understanding their rights.
- The Hunger Relief Committee formed a coalition of private and public hunger related programs leading to the 5 Year Strategy for making Montgomery County Hunger Free. Today faith communities are providing valuable sites, volunteers and funds for food delivery, COVID-19 testing, community gardens and service hubs.
- The Faith Community Working Group has successfully led "Multicultural Dialogues on Facing Our Racism: Seeing the Divine in the Other" for four years followed by small book discussion groups called "Candid Conversations on Race", which continue today.
- A close partnership with all security related departments and offices includes the Emotional, Spiritual, Care Volunteers trained and certified to be first responders for emergencies; and the Interfaith Mobilization Team has the ability to notify all faith leaders within their respective traditions for responding to acts of hate and violence swiftly.
- The Montgomery County Model for creating social cohesion and public safety has been featured at two national summits of Police Chiefs and presented at the first international conference of the Strong Cities Network (SCN) at the State Department, and subsequently at two SCN global summits. We have hosted international delegations from 67 countries for learning the valuable role faith leaders play in linking public officials with grassroots communities.
- The Education Committee has produced Guidelines for Respecting Different Faith Traditions in partnership with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), provides annotated interfaith calendars and serves as a bridge between faith communities and MCPS as illustrated by the recent Town Hall on "Coming Together for Education," which addressed critical concerns of parents relating to virtual instruction and access to resources and services.

What I appreciate most is being with faith leaders developing holy envy for the spiritual practices, poetic wisdom of sacred texts and seeing the other as sister and brother. That transforms lives and makes us better unifiers, organizers, reconcilers and celebrants of our divine diversity. It has empowered the formation of several interfaith networks cultivating interfaith relations and providing valuable community service in partnership with nonprofits.

I will never be able to adequately thank those of you who have made this cycle of my life so rich and full. Special thanks are due County Executives Leggett and Elrich for their commitment to our good work and to my colleagues in county government especially my teammates in the Office of Community Partnerships.

I will leave by the end of December and am committed to supporting as smooth a transition as possible. County officials are currently working with our Executive Committee on a pending FY'21 grant and planning for the future.

Meanwhile, I look forward to spending more time with my family, kayaking, reading, writing and discerning the leading of the spirit. My call to create a more beloved community, where every basic human need is met and every human right respected, remains clear and unchanged. I'm confident the next cycle will also be rewarding as we work together bending the arc of the universe toward justice.

Thank you,
Kasey