

creation of WISDOM — their meeting at an interfaith event, the documentary premier of “Reuniting the Children of Abraham” at Kirk in the Hills Presbyterian Church in Bloomfield Hills, and how WISDOM has developed into a dynamic women’s interfaith dialogue organization hosting many successful educational and social-service programs.

Many stories will feel like you’re witnessing events unfolding in your back yard — stories about overcoming tough problems with relationships at school — or finding solutions when families suddenly encounter friction over interreligious marriages.

Other stories take you to times and places around the world — two girls in Iran risking the wrath of religious authorities with their interfaith friendship; a Jewish woman, a child of Holocaust survivors, who finds an unexpected friendship when a German couple moves in next door; a Muslim-Hindu marriage that raises cross-country anxiety in India; and a rare true story about an innocent Japanese girl who bravely faced hatred in an internment camp here and also in Japan during World War II.

You will read the heartfelt stories of personal struggles. One Muslim woman shares her story of how challenging it was for her to start wearing a head scarf after 9-11 and another about how she ended an abusive marriage, stopped wearing her head scarf and started helping other Arab woman in all their relationships. Some stories, like mine, show how a lunch with an Imam led to creating an interfaith project “Reuniting the Children of Abraham” that has crossed race, faith, cultural barriers and international boundaries. □

Brenda Rosenberg is a member of Temple Beth El in Bloomfield Township.

Contact us online at the WISDOM Web site, www.interfaithwisdom.org and look for our stories at www.FriendshipAndFaith.com as well as www.ReadtheSpirit.com. We would love to come to your congregation or organization and present our program “5 Women 5 Journeys,” an insightful exchange about our faiths, beliefs and challenges as women. If you are interested in organizing a congregational read of this book, contact Gail Katz at gailkatz@comcast.net.

FRIENDSHIP and FAITH; the WISDOM of women creating alliances for peace was unveiled at a meeting of the Interfaith Leadership Council (IFLC) held April 14 at Christ Church Cranbrook, Bloomfield Hills. The group is the brainchild of former Detroit Free Press religion writer David Crumm and local interfaith advocates. The IFLC is trying to be a resource and learning point for area religion writers as well as intensify interfaith activity in Metropolitan Detroit. The book is available via amazon.com.

‘A Holy Moment’ Rabbi earns special preacher honors

Rabbi Daniel Syme, known for his interreligious work as spiritual leader of Temple Beth El in Bloomfield Township, has been inducted into the Martin Luther King Jr. Board of Preachers of Morehouse College in Atlanta.



Rabbi Syme

The ceremony was held April 1 in the Martin Luther King Jr. International Chapel as part of the 24th annual College of Ministers and Laity Program, which promotes Dr. King’s ethical traditions of nonviolence through clergy, scholars and laity.

“It was an astounding experience,” Syme told the *JN* last week. “This is holy ground.”

On a tour of the campus, inductees visited a gallery of honor featuring painted portraits of great civil rights leaders, including Ghandi, Rabin and Heschel.

Also portrayed is Rev. Charles G. Adams, pastor of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church in Detroit and a good friend of Syme’s. Adams, one of the deans

of American preachers and an honorary dean of Morehouse College, was among the MLK Board of Preachers members who supported Syme’s induction.

“It was an incredible moment seeing his portrait,” Syme said.

More than 800 people have been inducted since 1986. Selection is based on the recommendation of current members of the MLK Board of Preachers as well as evidence that the proposed inductee is committed to Dr. King’s principles and practices.

Syme was told he is the first rabbinic inductee. He called the induction “a transcendent moment in my life.”

Recalling his successful bout with cancer when he was 20, which influenced him to become a rabbi, Syme said about his Atlanta visit: “The experience just leaves me with a feeling that there is something more I am supposed to do.”

He added, “Each of us has a responsibility to do whatever we can for world peace and for interreligious understanding. The people represented at Morehouse College gave everything during their lifetimes so we could have a better world to live in now.

“I am truly humbled.” □

I grew up with Holocaust stories and I knew that my mother was alive only because my grandfather had the foresight to get his family out of Poland in the 1920s. My parents made their children keenly aware of our calling as Jews to *tikkun olam* [repair of the world]. There were Russian refuseniks at our Passover seders, and we championed the civil rights of African-Americans.

Because of my family background, I was drawn toward a career of teaching English to immigrant students in the Berkley School District. These students felt ostracized because of their struggle with the English language and their different cultures and religions. I formed a diversity club called STARS (Students Taking a Right Stand) to help deal with

these problems. We addressed all of our differences, celebrated our diversity and learned how to stand up and speak out against bullying.

Teaching the foreign students sparked my interest in different faith traditions and I soon became the coordinator of a program entitled the Religious Diversity Journeys for Seventh Graders. This program for Oakland County schools promotes greater awareness and understanding of the many religions prevalent in Metro Detroit and prepares students for life in our increasingly diverse society.

I also chair the annual World Sabbath for Religious Reconciliation, which began at Christ Church Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills and in 2011 will be held

at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield. The World Sabbath has become an interfaith happening: focusing on youth of various faith traditions leading prayers for peace, entertaining us with dance, music and creating peace banners that are woven into a “Children of Peace Quilt”!!

In March of 2006, I met my spiritual soul mates Trish Harris and Shahina Begg at Brenda Rosenberg’s “Reuniting the Children of Abraham” program. The three of us — a Christian, a Muslim and a Jew — realized our common passion for making the world a better place and WISDOM (Women’s Interfaith Solutions for Dialogue and Outreach in Metro Detroit) was born. It is a nonprofit organization where women of many faith traditions and their families learn,

encounter, dialogue, respect and champion the other.

What’s most remarkable about my journey is that it has strengthened and deepened my Judaism. Because of my interfaith interaction, I have reconnected with my own childhood yearning.

I have come full circle — from the days of feeling “left out” as a youngster, to conquering that feeling by enrolling in Torah and Talmud classes and planning for my adult bat mitzvah. I am awed by this turn in my long quest — taking me home even as it has carried me so far from my home. My journey continues — outward and inward! □

Gail Katz is a member of Temple Israel, West Bloomfield.