

## NEIGHBORING FAITHS – Christianity

Our Neighboring Faiths program for Christianity was put on hold when the pandemic began in earnest in March. Since then our congregation has been creating new ways to be together, to experience Sunday services and make a difference in the world. We have all become ‘acclimated’ to meeting virtually. This acclimation creates an opportunity to continue our exploration of various faith traditions – even during the normally quiet summertime!

### **Our Christianity Segment Returns: Friday, July 10<sup>th</sup>**

In July we will be re-visiting (resurrecting?) the segment on Christianity. We will follow the outline established in March: an introductory session at 7pm on Friday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, a virtual retreat the following Friday evening and Saturday until 2pm (July 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>), and a discussion and reflection session the following week.

Our goal with this program, as with all of our Neighboring Faith segments, is to create an experience of that tradition, rather than just an exposition of its tenets or theology. To that end, our virtual retreat will invite us into ‘The Franciscan Journey and Wisdom Way of Peace’, as lived by Francis and Clare of Assisi – and continued in the work of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Franciscan activists such as Richard Rohr and Ilia Delio.

### **Join us also on Retreat via Zoom: Friday, July 17<sup>th</sup> (7pm-9pm) and Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> (9am - 2pm)**

Our retreat will be led by the Rev. Br. Mark D’Alessio, a Franciscan friar, priest, spiritual director and chaplain. Currently, Br. Mark lives on Long Island and serves as a crisis counselor and program coordinator at a shelter for men and women who are homeless and as a chaplain at a residential treatment center and school for children with learning and emotional disabilities.

Through group conversation and spiritual practices (including inner-journeying, guided meditation, art, contemplative silence, poetry, and prayer) we will participate in the living Franciscan tradition — that is, a spiritual awareness of reality and a sacred response to life that’s deeply rooted in the transformative power of the wisdom way of peace.

That’s because, at its core, the Franciscan Journey is an alternative orthodoxy to historically mainstream Christianity. It’s steeped in a kind of letting go – where we move beyond ideas of God into an experience of God. Where we invite the heart of God to pulse within our own hearts. The fruit of this practice is life itself: fully awake, fully active, fully aware that it is alive. It is spiritual wonder.

Francis and Clare believed (and, practiced) that our outer world and its full inner significance must come together for there to be any wholeness, holiness, and peace in the world. Not apart from the world, but rather being **a part** of the world. They practiced a different consciousness of what really matters, emphasizing loving practice over speculative theory, orthopraxy (right action) over orthodoxy (right belief). During the retreat we will be encouraged to create an energy of ‘contemplation’ in our own homes — even when we are not meeting.

### **You’re invited! Contact Ravi Sankar or Tom Hearne**

We hope you will be able to join us for this segment of Neighboring Faiths and the Franciscan Journey. There will be a fee of \$50 per person for the retreat. If you are interested or have questions, please contact Ravi Sankar (203-241-5400, ravisankar100@yahoo.com) or Tom Hearne (203-531-6226, thearne3@gmail.com).

**See you then!**