

NOVEMBER 2007



# Understanding



Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding of Muhlenberg College  
www.ijcu.org Founding Director: Dr. Franklin Sherman

## BECAUSE OF YOU

*A Message to IJCU Partners and Supporters*

Harold S. Weiss, Institute Board Chair

First of all, Because of You, we actually *have* this nearly unique program: the Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding of Muhlenberg College. After 18 years, we tend to take it for granted—part of the landscape—and neglect to appreciate the treasure we have here at Muhlenberg and in our community. I hardly need tell you regular supporters the long-term growth in mutual understanding we have experienced. But let me count (several) of the ways.

Because of You, the Institute's **Youth and Prejudice** program has had immense impact on thousands of Middle and High School students *and their teachers* who have come to the campus for Youth and Prejudice workshops...1,600 in '06-07, and more than 20,000 over the past 15 years!

Because of You, **Star-Crossed Students** engage each other and the campus community in dialogue and consciousness-raising programs/events: "How can we better understand each other—our differences as well as our common commitment to justice and moral suasion?"

Because of You, members of the community—Christians and Jews—participate in long-term **Living Room Dialogue** groups. This past year, newly organized groups have gotten started in Allentown, Bethlehem, and Reading.

Because of You, monthly noontime **First Friday** sessions dealing with critical current topics or faith/life issues always attract 50, or 75 (or 100!) campus and community participants.

Because of You, the Institute is in a position to respond quickly to **urgent societal or global events or disruptions**, as when Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ* was released; or when the "Divestment" controversy gets raised in church groups; and in 2006-07 when the IJCU's "Echoes from the Fog" series addressed the Lebanon-Israeli conflict in the context of on-going tensions

between Israel and Palestine as well as among Arab nations of the region.

Because of You... **Wallenberg Lecture and Tribute**, the **Day of Dialogue**, the annual **Mini-Course**, the **Pre-Lent Workshop** for Christian clergy and educators, **Kristallnacht** on campus, periodic **Theater and Arts** events, and the list goes on!

And Because of You, we have here **Dr. Peter Pettit**, our IJCU Director, a most valuable asset. His background and knowledge, his many connections with peer groups and leaders, his aptitude in directing us in focusing on important issues, and numerous other attributes continue to provide the leadership which makes the Institute thrive.

An impressive list. Surely you agree. All of it Because of You whose names appear on the following pages. On behalf of the IJCU Board of Directors, THANK YOU.

Harold S. Weiss, Chair, IJCU Board of Directors

P.S. **We're not finished, there's more!** Our work is on-going. The board's Strategic Plan envisions enhancing and strengthening what we do. Our budget has grown, and we ask for, we need, your continued and increased support. The Annual Appeal letter will follow in a week or two, but right here I'm bold enough to ask each of you earnestly to consider two thoughts:

One: Who among you are sufficiently committed (and who has the means) to join others of us as *Wallenberg Circle* supporters or as *Benefactors*? Surely those lists could double in number!

Two: Our "basic" member level has been \$30.00 for 18 years! The board prefers to keep it at that amount in order to have the broadest possible participation. However, may I ask "basic" members to consider an increase....perhaps to double it or to move to the *Associate* level.

And to the many in the "in-between" categories, what increase might you consider?

Again, our thanks to all who support the IJCU.

## YOUTH & PREJUDICE MOVING FORWARD

Anne Frank wrote, “I don’t believe the war is simply the work of politicians and capitalists. Oh no, the average person is in every way as guilty, otherwise, people and nations would have rebelled long ago!” So many say they never understood what was happening. How likely could that have been? What rewards are there in society for collaborating with prejudice? What are the costs for trying to rescue?



Performers in the play, *The Library* have a talk back with students participating in the conference.

The Middle School Youth and Prejudice conference – Lessons of the Holocaust occurred on April 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. More than 800 students, over the two days, from local middle schools attended the program, now in its fifteenth year, to discuss the above-stated issues. The Conference focused upon the role of the bystander then and now. The age-old question how to inspire young students to break the cycle of intolerance and prejudice was the focus of the day. What can each student do differently in their lives from now on because of what they experienced during the conference?

The Youth and Prejudice Conference has influenced the lives of thousands of students during its fifteen-year tenure by presenting students with the opportunity to discuss issues such as prejudice, discrimination and racism. One student from William Allen High School in Allentown wrote in her evaluation:

I can take several actions to affect change in my school and community. In school, simply standing up for the victim of

bullying can make a difference. Just spreading knowledge about issues such as prejudice will raise awareness about these problems and hopefully make a difference in the lives of numerous people.

The 2007 High School Youth and Prejudice Conference will be held on November 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. This year, the conference will present the debut performance of *The Jewish Wife* by Bertolt Brecht. The short one-act play will be performed by professional actors, Holly Cate and Troy Dwyer, and directed by Dr. James Peck; all are Muhlenberg College faculty. The play explores what it is like to be made to feel different, shunned by society and to live with fear. The talk-back with the actors will focus upon the role of the bystander in witnessing prejudice and discrimination. Continuing with the theme of the role of the bystander, there will be showing of a video with footage of Anne Frank, her school friends and her attempted rescuers. This will be followed by interactive breakout sessions highlighting the testimony of a Holocaust survivor or second-generation survivor, providing the students with the opportunity to touch and to interact with living history. Jeanette Eichenwald will provide the keynote address, bringing the day to a powerful conclusion.

Adding a new development this year will be the students of Dr. Michael London’s Organizational Behavior class, who will develop an interactive student component. The students, as a service learning component of their college class, will be challenged to develop and implement a forty-five minute exercise to explore in an interactive way the dynamics of prejudice reduction and the fostering of tolerance.

We look forward to welcoming 800 high school students to the Muhlenberg College campus for the 2007 High School Youth and Prejudice Conference on November 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>.

- Jeanette Eichenwald

People reaching out to people – the seed of understanding and the fruit of understanding. We are grateful to those whose gifts were in honor or in memory of those who have touched their lives. And we celebrate and recognize the volunteers who reached out to support the Youth & Prejudice conference in this program year. In future issues, we will acknowledge the many volunteers who sustain other arenas of the Institute’s life and work.

**GIFTS WITH A PERSONAL TOUCH**

*In memory of W. Eamon Carroll*

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All IJCU donors are listed below reflecting their combined gifts for the year, including basic membership support, Wallenberg gifts, gifts in honor and in memory of others, program sponsorships, etc. As we have in past years, we will again in the future acknowledge these various avenues of giving separately. Thank you for your understanding.

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 our endowment, while still drawing the benefits of  
 your gift throughout your lifetime.  
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**FIRST FRIDAYS  
2007-2008**

**November 2, 2007**

*“Founding Father of Jewish-Christian Relations:  
Rev. James Parks”*

Dr. Alice Eckardt

IJCU Board Member & Prof. Emerita, Lehigh University

**December 7, 2007**

*“Developing a Legal System in Afghanistan”*

Atty. Platte Moring

Partner, Litigation Dept, White and Williams LLP

**January 4, 2008**

*“Globalization of the Religion Curriculum”*

Dr. Susan Schwartz

Associate Professor & Dept Chair of Religion Studies

Muhlenberg College

**February 1, 2008**

*“The Jews of Wittenberg, Germany,  
in the Third Reich”*

Dr. Cornelia Dömer

Director, The Luther Centre, Wittenberg

**Hold the Date/Watch the Web**

**Jan 26**

Roundtable discussion of the ELCA Middle East Strategy

**Feb 1-3**

Opening of Exhibition: The Jews of Wittenberg, Germany, in the Third Reich, in the Galleria of Baker Center for the Arts (sponsored by the Philip and Muriel Berman Foundation)

**April 6**

Wallenberg Tribute Presentation and Dinner

For details on all programs, watch the website:

**www.ijcu.org**

**Muhlenberg College**

**Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding**

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## THE DIRECT LINE



A summer spent in care of the medical system has been very fruitful for reflection. Foremost, I owe an enormous “thank you” to the many people who sent cards and notes, provided reading material and crossword puzzles, supported Lynn in her selfless support of my unpredictable journey, and offered prayers and good wishes. The personal encouragement of so many angels contributes invaluable to endurance and healing!

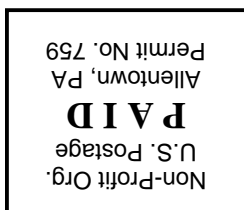
I had ample opportunity to observe the medical care system and realized how vital the teamwork is. When it is present and meshing smoothly, the results are remarkable. When it breaks down, serious consequences can follow. (To the credit of my doctors and the staff of Lankenau Hospital, I saw few breakdowns and enjoyed excellent care.)

So, too, with the work we do in interfaith understanding, not just within the IJCU but particularly in a broader sense of building understanding in our communities.

Rabbis and cantors and pastors and parish educators, regional overseers and agency personnel, lay people in various roles, and the IJCU with its varied resources – we all have our place in nurturing understanding, day by day. The Institute’s leaders will continue to do self-evaluation and strategic planning regarding our role, and I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on your own role, so that the whole team is working toward our shared goals and the dream of a world without religious conflict.



Peter A. Pettit, Director



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