

## **Press Release for Iftar Dinner**

The sound of the Muslim call to prayer echoed in the sanctuary of Peninsula Temple Beth El (PTBE) in San Mateo as more than 200 members from 26 Faith Houses gathered together to celebrate the Muslim Iftar Service on Sunday June 28<sup>th</sup>. Director Fatih Ates of the Pacifica Institute introduced the theme of “building hospitality as a way of life ” with the sacred ark of Judaism behind him. The Interfaith Committee of PTBE and Pacifica jointly hosted this second annual multi-faith event.

Rabbi Reuven Firestone, Regenstein Professor in Medieval Judaism and Islam at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion gave the keynote address. He spoke of the shared tradition of hospitality as a cultural norm within Judaism and Islam. Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism also include hospitality and welcoming the stranger in their sacred texts and traditions. It was a special honor for Rabbi Callie Schulman of Peninsula Temple Beth El to introduce Dr. Firestone since he had been her teacher when she attended Hebrew Union College.

The Reverend Kristi Denham, one of the founders and Co-Chairs of the Peninsula Multi-faith Coalition (PMC) was recognized by PMC and the Pacifica Institute for her many years of leadership in the Inter-faith community. Rev Kristi, with the Congregational Church of Belmont, have spearheaded the promotion of interfaith education on the North Peninsula.

After sunset, representatives from 26 faith houses on the North Peninsula feasted on the vegetarian dinner lovingly prepared by a team of chefs from Pacifica. Sarma

(stuffed grape leaves), Fella K ftesi (bulgur balls with spices and yogurt) and Baklava (from Daddy's Baklava in Concord) were among the delicacies served.

Ramadan is a holy month for Muslim people during which they maintain a daily fast, help those less fortunate and share Iftar with family, friends, and strangers. Having the Ramadan *Iftar* (a break in the fast) as a shared dinner with family and new people from different backgrounds is a meaningful way to promote dialogue and increase understandings of each other.



(from l to r) Fatih Ates of the Pacifica Institute, Rabbi Reuven Firestone, Regenstein Professor in Medieval Judaism and Islam at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and Rabbi Callie Schulman Associate Rabbi of Peninsula Temple Beth El.

(Photo Courtesy of Matthew Schulman)



Director Fatih Ates of Pacifica Institute doing the Muslim call to prayer with the sacred ark behind him, at the Peninsula Temple Beth El in San Mateo.

(Photo Courtesy of Matthew Schulman)