



**South Coast Interfaith Council (SCIC) 7<sup>1st</sup> Annual Assembly**  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Torrance  
April 18, 2024

**Gathering:** Dinner & Registration Beginning at 6:00p.m.

**Dinner:** 6:00 – 7:00p.m.  
Catered by Sacred Occasions

**Business Meeting will start at 6:45 p.m.**

**Merrietta:** at 6:30, please make announcement that “we will start the meeting in 15 minutes. Please wrap up eating.”

**Business Meeting Agenda**

**Call to Order: 3 mins**                      **Seema Ali & Merrietta Fong**, Co-Presidents, Presiding  
*Islamic Education Center of Orange County, Interfaith Task Force &  
Rolling Hills United Methodist Church*

**at 7pm.:** “Good evening everyone!! My name is Merrietta Fong, current co-president of the South Coast Interfaith Council. I will be serving as your MC tonight for this Business Meeting & Awards Dinner!

<insert your comments >

“Now, I want to invite SCIC Board Member Tom Rosenberg to the podium to offer the opening prayer.”

Welcome/Opening Prayer: **2 mins**

Tom Rosenberg, President Elect  
*Temple Beth El - San Pedro*

**MERRIETTA** - Thank you Tom! I, Merrietta Fong, Presiding Co-President of the South Coast Interfaith Council, now call this meeting to order.

Now, on behalf of the South Coast Interfaith Council's board and staff, I welcome you ~ our members, delegates and guests ~ to this SCIC's 71st Annual Assembly. We are honored to have with us tonight members from the wider community. In particular, we are joined by a number of interfaith friends from the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Jain, Unitarian Universalists, Baha'i and Sikh faith communities present here tonight with us.

We want to express our gratitude to this church for hosting us tonight. We also want to extend our welcome to the clergy and faith leaders who are new to this area as well as to the faith communities who are attending this SCIC Assembly for the first time this evening.

Now, I would like to invite the Executive Director of the South Coast Interfaith Council ~ Milia Islam-Majeed ~ to share a few reflections. So please help me welcome Milia to the podium.”

SCIC Year in Review: **5 mins**

Milia Islam-Majeed, Executive Director

**MERRIETTA:** “Thank you Milia! We would now like to introduce those who have been nominated to be a part of the SCIC Board of Directors and SCIC Executive Committee.”

Would the following individuals please come to the front? Larry Grasinger, Perry Roshan-Zamir, Gurpreet Singh, Bandana Singh and Marla Shwarts. I know that not everyone was able to attend tonight, but those of you who are here, we would love for you to join me up front.

**2024 Nominations - 15 mins**

Larry Grasinger - *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Palos Verdes Stake*

Perry Roshan-Zamir - *Baha'i Community of Manhattan Beach*

Gurpreet Singh - *Sikh Community of Southern California*

Bandana Singh - *Sikh Community of Southern California*

Marla Shwarts - *Temple Beth El, San Pedro*

**Consent Motion, Approval of:**

2023-2024 Annual Report

2024 Budget

2024 Board of Directors Nominations

2024 Assembly Minutes to be approved by SCIC's Board of Directors

**Installation of Board of Directors**

Richard Brehove, *Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque Catholic Church*

~\*~All SCIC Directors & Staff please come to stage for Renewing of Commitment ~\*~

**AFTER THEY COME TO THE FRONT:**

“Now, are there any other nominations from the floor? If not, is there a motion to close the nominations?”

- **Someone should make the motion to close the nomination process. Then someone will second it. Then all will vote.**

**MERRIETTA:** All in favor say “I”. Any opposed?

The “I’s” have it. All of you please continue to stay up here for a few more minutes.”

**MERRIETTA:** Now moving on to our Consent Motions, it has been moved and seconded by the Board of Directors to accept the following:

- 2023- 2024 Annual Report
- 2024 Board of Directors Nominations
- and that the Minutes of this Assembly be approved by the Board of Directors.

“All in favor of this consent motion, please raise your hands.”

“All those opposed?”

“Motion Approved”

“Would all the current SCIC Board of Directors, Staff, Program Managers and Past President Richard Brehove please come to the front for the Installation of the Board of Directors please?”

RICHARD BREHOVE does Installation process.

RICHARD: After the installation process, please go to the podium and say:

RICHARD: “Now, I would like to ask Merrietta Fong & Seema Ali 2023 co-presidents - to come by the podium and invite the rest of the board to return to your seats please.”

“To represent the transition of leadership, Merrietta will now give Seema the official SCIC gavel to conduct their business as the new President of the South Coast Interfaith Council.

Please join me in giving them both all a round of applause for their commitment to leading the interfaith council!

MERRIETTA: Thank you Richard! Before we have the honor of hearing our keynote speaker, I want to welcome Dan Paquin who will share with us a few musical selections.

Music Selections: 8 mins (with centerpiece raffle)

Dan Paquin

MERRIETTA: Thank you Dan!! Before I introduce Dr. Soboh, I want to draw your attention to the beautiful floral

centerpiece on your table. We would love for you to take these home with you. So, to that end, there is an envelope on each table for those wanting an opportunity to take home their table's centerpiece. To participate in the raffle, put a \$20 donation in the envelope and take out one of the eight colored cards inside. You may take another card for each additional \$20 donation placed in the envelope. Note, you can also make the \$20 donation using the QR code that's in your program if you don't have cash or a check.

We will draw a card from this bag later in our program, and the person holding the matching color at your table wins and gets to take home the beautiful centerpiece to enjoy. If no one at your table has chosen the matching card, we will draw additional cards until there is a winner at each table. Have fun and choose wisely!

Now for our esteemed keynote speaker - Dr. Soboh currently serves as the religious director of the Islamic Center of Yorba Linda. He served as the chairman of the Islamic shura council of southern California until 2020 and served on the board of the shura council several times since 2008, under the leadership of Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi and Dr. Maher Hathout. He is the co-founder, trustee, and religious adviser at the Chino Valley Islamic Center.

Dr. Soboh has served on the boards of several Islamic organizations including CAIR LA, Minaret Academy Islamic school, and Olive Foundation. He is also a guest speaker and youth adviser at several Islamic Centers nationwide.

Dr. Soboh is active in interfaith work and served on the interfaith committee for peace in the Middle East. He is a graduate of the Islamic scientific college in Amman, Jordan, and the dental school at the University of Jordan. He also holds an executive MBA from Pepperdine University in Malibu, California.

Keynote Address: **15 mins**

**Dr. Ahmed Soboh**

*Islamic Center of Yorba Linda, Religious Director  
Islamic Shura Council of Southern California*

**Supporting the SCIC: 3 mins**

*Carol Wynder, SCIC Past President*

**CAROL:** Thank you so much Dr. Soboh. We are so grateful to have you as a part of our interfaith family!

We would love to have you as members of the South Coast Interfaith Council for a donation of only \$10 a month. To do so, please take an envelope from the basket, fill out the membership information, put it back in the basket and we'll collect it after the program. Page 12 of your annual report gives more information about the levels of membership that are available.

We would also greatly appreciate those who are in a financial position to do so, to make a donation, large or small, to SCIC tonight by cash, check, or with the QR code on your table. If each person here donates \$10 it would add up to about \$1000. If each person here this evening donates \$20 it would total about \$2000, and if everyone were able to donate \$50, it would add up to almost \$5000! We are incredibly grateful for your support and generosity in any amount you can give. Donations are tax deductible.

100 attendees

\$10 each = \$100    \$20 each = \$2000    \$50 each = \$5000

~\*~ Please make checks out to "SCIC" or use the QR Code below ~\*~



**MERRIETTA:** "It's the time we have been waiting for ~ the Spotlight Awards! Please note that their full bios are available in the Annual Report. I want to invite Seema to the podium to introduce our esteemed honorees!

**SEEMA:** Our first honoree of the evening is Joan Behrens. Joan spent a wonderful childhood in Erie, Pennsylvania, graduated from Northwestern University with a double major in business administration and history. Palos Verdes has been her home for most of her adult life. She is active in the Palos Verdes Peninsula Rotary Club, The Circle of the Palos Verdes Art Center, and serves as



Director of Church Communications in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for the San Pedro/Palos Verdes/Torrance areas. Joan has been involved in interfaith work for many years, organizing monthly Brown Bag lunches where local clergy meet, discuss and learn together, helping plan the annual South Bay Interfaith Thanksgiving Service with other faith groups, and as a member of the Steering Committee for the National Day of Prayer breakfast held yearly in Torrance. Joan enjoys her four daughters and extended family, researching and publishing her family's genealogy, reading biographies and histories, traveling abroad, and following professional golf and college football! Please help me welcome Joan.

- Dr. Reinhard Krauss is Executive Director of the Academy for Judaic, Christian, and Islamic Studies in Los Angeles. Since 2008 he has taught Inter-religious Studies as a Lecturer at the Center for the Study of Religion at UCLA. In addition, he is a member of the faculty of the New Theological Seminary of the West. A native of Germany, Dr. Krauss studied at the universities of Tübingen and Bonn and received his Ph.D. in Theology from the University of St Andrews in Scotland. Dr. Krauss is a recipient of the 'Interfaith Courage Award' by the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the United States Congress, as well as the 'Interfaith

Unity Award' by the South Coast Interfaith Council. Reinhard's leadership guided the then South Coast Ecumenical Council to change to the South Coast Interfaith Council - an act that the interfaith community is truly indebted to him for! No doubt, it is due to a vision that he shared with some of our other honorees tonight that has allowed us to be here tonight celebrating interfaith unity! He is currently in Berlin, but asked to share his remarks with everyone here.

- Rabbi Howard O. Laibson has devoted his life and career as a community leader to Jewish diversity, interfaith communication, intergroup relations and religious education. Rabbi Laibson has served congregations in Texas, New Mexico, Long Beach and Lakewood, using his unique blend of counseling, teaching and musical skills to guide him. He retired and became Congregation Shir Chadash's Rabbi Emeritus in June, 2015. Rabbi Laibson has served on numerous Boards, including Jewish Long Beach (formerly known as The Jewish Federation) from 2007-2017, the Pacific Association of Reform Rabbis, and the South Coast Interfaith Council, where he became the first non-Christian president in 2006. The South Coast Interfaith Council will always remember with gratitude his years of leadership, beginning with his year as the

first non-Christian President in 2006. Howard has moved to be closed to his granddaughter but has also wanted to share a message with everyone here.

- Dr. Nitin Shah is Professor of Anesthesiology and Critical Care at Loma Linda University, as well as Interim Deputy Chief of Anesthesiology and Critical Care at the VA Medical Hospital in Long Beach, California. A devout Jain, he also has been active in the Jain Center of Southern California (JCSC), where he served as the president from 2002 to 2003. People have come to regard Nitin as the guru of free community health fairs in Southern California, having arranged over 300. He has traveled to 16 countries for medical missions and has arranged over 750 missions to help hundreds of thousands of people around the globe in 24 countries. He provided countless services during Covid in the USA, Canada, and India. He is a firm believer in staying focused, working with compassion and maintaining positivity as it gives you the strength to face any situation. We honor his today for this service to humanity.
- Rt. Rev. Alexei Smith is no stranger to the interfaith community here. A Greek Catholic priest, has served as Ecumenical and Interreligious Officer of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of

Los Angeles since November 2000. Locally, Father Alexei served for many years as President of the Interreligious Council of Southern California and is the recipient of numerous commendations and awards. He is currently a member of the Liturgical Commission of the Archdiocese, and has been invested as a Knight Commander of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, and recently was named to the Board of the Academy of Judaic, Christian, and Islamic Studies. He is currently teaching Ecclesia Certification Courses at Mount Saint Mary's entitled "Ecumenism and Interreligious Relations: A Catholic Ministry," as well as co-teaching an Interfaith course at Loyola Marymount University entitled "Literature and Faith in the Holy Land," offered by the Jewish Studies Program at LMU. He currently also serves on the Board of Directors of the SCIC and was instrumental in the success of the transition of this council from ecumenical to interfaith!

- Dottie Wine is a semi-retired Human Resources professional, having worked for both non-profit agencies and corporations. At First Congregational Church she has served on membership, diaconate, stewardship and finance boards, as a council member at large, and on the personnel and welcoming committees. In addition she was honored to be the recipient of

the Marion Morgan Peace and Justice award given annually to someone active in peace and social justice causes. Dottie has been an active leader in Los Angeles in the Gay and Lesbian community and helped found what is now the South Bay Lesbian, Gay, Bi and Transgender Community Center, located in Torrance. At the South Coast Ecumenical, then later the South Coast Interfaith Council, Dottie served two terms on the board, from 2000 ~ 2006. Her leadership and service on the Council were, again, groundbreaking. During her presidency, the Council undertook the momentous process and decision to open the doors to faith communities of all kinds. As she recounts in her memory of that auspicious journey, she struck the gavel to announce the new name and substance of the Council – the South Coast Interfaith Council.

**Spotlight Awards: 35 mins**

Joan Behrens: *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

Rev. Dr. Reinhard Krauss: *Academy for Judaic, Christian, & Islamic Studies*

Rabbi Howard Laibson: *Congregation Shir Chadash, Rabbi Emeritus*

Dr. Nitin Shah: *Jain Community of Southern CA*

Father Alexei Smith: *Ecumenical & Interreligious Affairs of the Archdiocese of LA*

Dottie Wine: *First Congregational Church of LB, UCC & The Garden Church, San Pedro*

**Closing Thoughts: 2 mins**

Thank yous/ raffle/ clean up

**Milia Islam-Majeed**, SCIC Executive Director

**Closing Prayer: 2 mins**

**Father Alexei Smith**  
*Catholic Archdioceses of Los Angeles*

**Adjournment: 2 mins**

**Seema Ali**, SCIC President