

## TIKKUN OLAM AS EDUCATION FOR SERVICE

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INAUGURAL RECIPIENT:  
JERRY ISRAEL INTERFAITH SERVICE AWARD 2005

*Tikkun olam*—“to fix the world.” This is the ancient Jewish concept that comes to mind when I think of my journey of service to the University and my extended community. *Tikkun olam* is our “golden rule.” It is also one’s immortality. It is G-d’s command to make this place a better world than it was when you were born, to

make an attempt to repair the world as it is still in an imperfect condition. It is the hope that when you die, you will have made a contribution. It does not have to be as dramatic as curing cancer or bringing peace to the world; it can be successfully parenting your children or helping your neighbor paint his house.

Growing up in an orthodox Jewish family in suburban Boston, there was never a doubt as to my personal Jewish identity. My family kept a *kosher* home, observed the holy days and the weekly *Shabbat* (although less and less as time went on), but there was one element missing for me: my parents did not think it was necessary for a girl to have a religious education. Therefore, I missed out on a lot, including the historical- and *Torah*-based reasons of the concepts of service associated with *tikkun olam* or *tzedakah* (charitable giving). Although my family was as generous as it could be with donations to charities, both Jewish and otherwise, the concept was not really explained. Nor were others explained, such as why we kept kosher, did not have a Christmas tree, etc. You just did these things because you were Jewish.

It was not until I was an adult that I sought answers as to why we did or not do the same things as our non-Jewish neighbors did or did not do. Several events occurred that conspired to make me truly understand what G-d expects from Jews and more importantly why.

Having been denied a Jewish religious education as a young person, I began to seek one myself. I read the *Torah*, the first five books of the Bible (in English or course!), as well as many other books on Judaism. At this time, my husband and I were living in Veedersburg, Indiana, in West Central Indiana. The closest Jewish congregation was located in Danville, Illinois. We joined this small group, and my first and lasting impression was how incredibly giving and caring these people were. They were involved in the civic and social arenas of Danville, supporting every cause you can imagine. They also supported the congregation and the greater Jewish community, nationally and internationally. I became active in the women’s sisterhood group and the Hadassah group, serving as officers. I learned what it meant to give and why (*tikkun olam*). And it made me feel good! I knew that I wanted to perform *mitzvot* (good works based on God’s commandments) as well.

We shortly moved to the Indianapolis area and joined the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation (IHC). There I also became active in the sisterhood, eventually serving as a vice-president. More importantly, however, I discovered that IHC had an adult *B’nai Mitzvah* program for persons such as I who had never had the opportunity to have a religious education or become a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* (the ceremony by which a 13-year-old becomes a Jewish adult, literally “Son or Daughter of the Commandments”). During this yearlong preparation and study period, the class not only studied Hebrew, liturgy, and customs, we studied the history of Judaism, biblical as well as modern. We learned why Jews ate certain foods and deigned others, why we celebrated our holidays, why Jews did not embrace Christ, and more. However, IHC being a Reform Jewish congregation, the Rabbi and other lecturers also stressed the concept of community service, a mainstay of Reform Judaism. We learned of the contributions to the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, and the immigration settlement programs for all people. We learned that the

ancient Rabbis said that one should give enough to the poor person in the community so that he will have enough to give to the person who is even poorer than he is.

And so it began—the service to my community. As stated before, I was active in the Sisterhood that raised money for the religious school, the temple, the congregation, and the larger Jewish Community. I also participated in whatever other special events the congregation was supporting such as housing the homeless, serving meals at various missions downtown, and collecting for the food pantry at the Concord Center on the southside of Indianapolis (the site of the early Indianapolis Jewish Community) and at Gleaners Food Bank.

My husband and I also became very active in our local community of Center Grove/White River Township near Greenwood, Indiana. Having young children, our efforts generally centered around youth organizations, including Little League, soccer, bantam football, Center Grove High School Choir Parents, cross country, drama, athletic boosters, and Football Parents. You get the picture. Plus, we found time to be on other community organizations as needed, work at the polls, etc. I was even a Democratic precinct woman for several years.

At the same time, I began to work part time as an adjunct member of the English Department at the University of Indianapolis. After a few years, I became an academic advisor at the University. “Education for Service”—*Tikkun olam*. What a match! Now I absorbed the additional motto and incorporated it into my activities. I believe that over the years at the University, the idea that one can contribute charitably through time and monetary giving became second nature to me since it is such a part of the University’s psyche. And what was even more enlightening, I embraced the idea that it is okay to enjoy it, have fun while performing it, and to feel good about it. And it was also good to actively seek opportunities to perform service.

So while at the University, I served on the Ecumenical & Interfaith Council, served as the erstwhile advisor to the fledgling Jewish Student Union, and served on the steering committee of *The Crossings Project*. I especially enjoyed being able to participate, however marginally, in the design of the Table of Gathering in the University of Chapel. It was also our pleasure to extend home hospitality to the few out-of-town Jewish students to come to our home for the Passover Seder. Indeed, one year I also led a *seder* for the University of Indianapolis community. In the School of Nursing where I was the advisor for many years, I tried to help students in various classes understand Jewish traditions as they would relate to Jewish patients.

While on a trip to Israel led by professor Perry Kea, I visited Mars Elias in the Galilean village of Ibillin. This was before it was a University of Indianapolis campus. I was then—and am now—still impressed and hopeful that this inter-religious effort will be an example to the region on the benefits of mutual cooperation and respect through education. I served on an exploratory committee exploring the possibilities at Mars



and also have been able to meet some of the Mar Elias faculty and spouses socially while they have been in Indianapolis. I would love the opportunity to teach a class on that campus!

I must also relate to you that my concept of service changed dramatically on January 31, 1993, when our then 14-year-old daughter, Rachael, was killed in a tragic automobile accident. I will spare the reader the grief journey that I have been on since that time, but in the context of service, I also feel responsible for my daughter’s efforts for *tikkun olam*. To that end, I am conscious that each good deed that I do is in her name. Indeed, after her death, we established a scholarship in her name, the Rachael Hope Valentine Scholarship Fund, within the Center Grove Scholarship Foundation (CGSF). The community and our extended family have contributed many thousands of dollars to Rachael’s fund, and we have given out many scholarships in her name over the years to deserving Center Grove seniors, several of whom have attended the University of Indianapolis. Early on, I was invited to be on the CGSF Board of Directors, and I have served as president for about 6 years now. Since Rachael’s death, I have also served on other community committees as well, including the scholarship committee of the Greater Johnson Country Community Foundation. All for Rachael. All for *tikkun olam*. All for “Education for Service.”

I am now retired from the University as of June 30, 2005, after 23 years. But no rest for me! I still serve on the above two committees. And I still get calls to work on various temple and community projects. When I have time and am home, I am a substitute teacher at Center Grove High School. I love the high school students and generally leave at the end of the day tired, but chuckling at their antics.

Besides Rachael, who would be 27 now, we have a daughter, Staci, who graduated from Center Grove High School, Miami (Ohio) University, and Indiana University-Bloomington Law School. She is part of the in-house counsel team in a technology firm outside of Washington, DC. She married her husband, Vijay, in 2004, and in 2005, we became grandparents to a beautiful baby boy, Jatin, now 8-months-

old. He is the best thing to come along in years, and we adore him. I travel to Arlington, Virginia, to help care for him when I am asked and to spoil him as much as possible!

Our son, Michael, graduated from Center Grove High School and DePauw University. He is a leadership consultant with the international headquarters of his fraternity, Delta Upsilon, located in Indianapolis. Mike also works for professional baseball in the summers when possible. This past summer was spent in Nashville, Tennessee, with the Milwaukee Brewers AAA team, the Nashville Sounds. We spent two long weekends there this past summer, watching baseball games and visiting historical sites. Before the Nashville Sounds, Mike worked for the Indianapolis Indians for several years while in high school and college.

My husband, Brad, retired from a career in educational administration on June 30, 2005. He is also a retired major in the Indiana Army National Guard. He is now a volunteer with the Indiana Guard Reserve and the Employer Support

for the Guard and Reserve. In this capacity he helps to process soldiers in and out at Camp Atterbury. For several months of the year, Brad also works part time at a golf course and, like me, wants to see his grandson as much as possible.

We have done some traveling and will do more over the next few years, health and finances permitting. Since retiring, we have visited the Denver area, visited friends and family in Michigan, Ohio, Massachusetts, Virginia (grandson!), and Florida. Immediate plans include trips to Florida, Arizona, Massachusetts, Virginia, Minnesota, and points in between.

Simple pleasures! Now that I no longer work at the University, I have more choices about how I invest my time, but I still remember with great fondness the UIndy tradition of “Education for Service,” and I continue to express it in my own way—as a citizen and as part of the company of other sons and daughters of the *mitzvot*—committed to doing my part to fix what is broken in our world.

## GLOSSARY OF JEWISH TERMS

*Bar Mitzvah*—the rite of passage for Jewish boys when they affirm the covenant of God with Abraham and become adult participants in a Jewish congregation or synagogue.

*Bat Mitzvah*—the rite of passage for Jewish girls when they affirm the covenant of God with Abraham and become adult participants in a Jewish congregation or synagogue. This ritual was developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to give Jewish girls and women the opportunity to participate more in the full range of Jewish life.

*B'nai Mitzvah*—plural of Bar or Bat Mitzvah. B'nai translates as Children.

*G-d*—In the Jewish tradition, when alluding to the creator in writing in a medium which will not be destroyed respectfully by fire, observant English speaking Jews have always used the dash for the “O” since there is no guarantee of how the document will be treated and eventually discarded. More generally, in Judaism, the divine name is regarded as holy and therefore worthy of great respect. For example, instead of pronouncing the Hebrew word YHWH as “Yahweh,” Jews have traditionally spoken a different word “*Adonai*” or “Lord.”

*Kosher*—This Hebrew word refers to the dietary laws and practices of Judaism that prescribe what foods can and cannot be eaten at what times and how those foods must be prepared in order to be in accord with Jewish law.

*Mitzvot*—laws or divine commands and instructions. According to traditions of the rabbis, there are 613 *mitzvot* in the Torah given by God to be performed as part of the covenantal responsibility of Jewish people.

*Orthodox Jews*—one of the four primary Jewish denominations in American Judaism, orthodox Jews adhere to ancient traditions. By contrast, the denomination of “Reform Judaism” has self-consciously made adjustments to their practices to take into account modern concepts and experiences of the Jewish community in Western countries.

*Seder*—the meal that takes place during the festival of Passover, when Jews recall the events that transpired during the exodus from Egypt as described in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy.

*Shabbat*—the Hebrew word for “Sabbath” or day of rest. The Jewish Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and concludes Saturday evening. In the Jewish tradition, Sabbath practice involves paying close attention to those things that you do (because of what the Sabbath is for) and those things that you don’t do because they interfere with the purpose of the Sabbath.

*Tikkun olam*—Hebrew phrase meaning “to heal or repair the world.” This is one of the strong ethical imperatives of the Jewish tradition.

*Torah*—the word that in Jewish tradition is used to describe the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy in the canon of the Hebrew Bible.

*Tzedakah*—charitable giving or righteous actions performed by a Jewish man or woman.

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## CITATION FOR THE INAUGURAL AWARD OF THE JERRY ISRAEL INTERFAITH SERVICE AWARD

Awarded on May 10, 2005  
Flora Valentine: 2005 Recipient

Today I am happy to announce that we are conferring the *inaugural* Jerry Israel Interfaith Service Award on our colleague Flora Valentine on the occasion of her retirement from the University. Each recipient of this new award will be given the Jerry Israel medallion and will be honored for a particular way in which he or she has displayed excellence in service. In this case, we recognize Flora Valentine for the clarity that she brought to our endeavors through her participation in a variety of conversations, committees, and councils on this campus. I want to take this opportunity to remind all of you of just a few of the many things that Flora has done over the years in the context of her work at UIndy.

- For many years, Flora was an active participant in the “Faith in the Academy” gatherings organized by Max Case and others. Later she would serve as the convener of that group, and in recent years, she has also participated in several book discussion groups through the Lantz Center.
- Flora was part of the effort that led to the creation of the Ecumenical & Interfaith Code of Ethics here at UIndy, and she has served voluntarily as a member of the Ecumenical & Interfaith Council since that group’s creation in 1999-2000.
- For the past few years, she has served as the advisor to the Jewish Student Union group on this campus. She has given leadership to the *Yom HaShoah* Remembrance in the University Chapel, and as some of you may recall, in the fall of 2004, this group put up a Sukkah hut on the Smith Mall for the first time.
- Not everyone knows it, but Flora Valentine has also served as an advocate for students from the Christian tradition. Several years ago when we were hiring interim staff for the chaplains, Flora served on the search committee. Without Flora’s advocacy for the needs of evangelical Christian students on this campus, we probably would not have figured out how we could hire Mr. Michael Williams for the 2002–2003 academic year.
- Finally, from 2002–2005, Flora served on the steering committee of *The Crossings Project*, the University’s Lilly Endowment funded project that cultivates theological exploration of vocation in the context of the University’s commitment to “Education for Service.” In this particular role, Flora has offered forthright counsel and helped in a variety of ways, including serving on the selection committee for mini-grants and advising the executive director about possible ways to proceed in the area of mentoring.

In addition to these involvements in the campus at large, Flora has also made contributions within the School of Nursing. It may not be possible to narrate all of her contributions in a comprehensive way, but no doubt her colleagues in the School of Nursing are aware of the many good things that she has done for others as well as her contributions in committee service associated with her work as the key advisor in the School of Nursing. And, as Cheryl Larson can testify, Flora has helped bring greater understanding of the Jewish tradition in the context of the Parish Nursing Program. In addition to advising Cheryl about ways to adapt the training materials to take into account Jewish nurses who enrolled in the program, from time to time Flora has addressed some of the Parish Nursing classes and has helped Cheryl to register interfaith dimensions of parish nursing. And when Carolyn Sue Ellis was dying, it was Flora who made the appeal to the University at the fall 2004 Faculty-Staff Institute for contributions to support the work of St. Thomas Clinic in Whiteland as a way of honoring her colleague.

Because of Flora’s persistent efforts to help our University community to achieve honest disagreements in the way we go about dealing with one another’s religious convictions, we have been able to take some significant steps toward becoming the kind of interfaith community in which religious differences are not simply tolerated. Rather, we dare to take on the challenge of giving and receiving hospitality because we believe that everyone has a place at the Table of Gathering.

Those of us who stand outside the Jewish tradition do not claim to know how to be able to narrate Flora’s intentions and convictions in a fulsome way without saying too much or too little. *We do know*, however, that she is a person who is committed to doing *mitzvot*—good works in response to the commandments of God. And many of us strongly suspect that Flora espouses in her own way the mandate of *tikkun olam*—“to heal the world”—that runs deep within Jewish identity and tradition.

We do not pretend to be able to state the significance of Flora’s contributions to this campus community in ways that register all of her own thoughts or feelings, but as her colleagues, we are proud to be able to honor her as the inaugural recipient of the Jerry Israel Interfaith Service Award. We do so in recognition of the clarity that she has helped to bring to our campus in matters interfaith and for modeling the kind of collegiality that dares to disagree so that *all* may thrive. —*Michael G. Cartwright*

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### *Flora Valentine*

A (p. 62) Flora Valentine (2005). Personal photograph provided by Ms. Flora Valentine with permission to reprint.

B (p. 63) Flora Valentine with her husband, Brad, on the occasion of receiving the inaugural Jerry Israel Interfaith Service Award (May 2005).  
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