

## **Faiths Cooperate to Feed the Needy**

**Friday, June 30, 2006**

The news media imply they are implacable enemies: Jews and Muslims. We read about and see suicide bombings and retaliation assassinations and feel there is no hope of peace among them.

But most Muslims and Jews (like most members of any of the great religious faiths) really want to love and serve God and neighbor while living in peace. A good example of this observation occurred in Gilroy on Sunday.

Some 30 members of Congregation Emeth, the local Reform Judaism group, and South Valley Islamic Center, the local Muslim group, spent a hot afternoon in the kitchen of St. Mary (Catholic) School.

They were able to prepare and feed a delicious meal to low-income and homeless people in the area. The menu was more elaborate than what the Lord's Table is usually able to provide. The volunteers arrived at 1:30pm to begin slow-roasting beef brisket. Also featured were mashed potatoes, broccoli, carrots, zucchini, bread, strawberry shortcake, watermelon and pastries.

Nob Hill gave loaves of bread; the fresh produce was generously provided by Morgan Hill's Chiala Farms and Hollister's Foster Farm; the pastries were donated by St. Mary Parish; and the two congregations contributed money to buy all the other ingredients.

Sue Moon, supervisor of The Lord's Table, looked at the number of people working in the steamy kitchen and slicing strawberries at a table under an umbrella in the school's patio and marveled at the "incredible number of volunteers doing a fine job. The meal will be absolutely delicious."

For several years Congregation Emeth has prepared and served meals at The Lord's Table twice a year, including Christmas, which allows Christians to have that holiday off. Members of Emeth and SVIC had cooperated in producing an excellent program at Gavilan College last year, "The Piece Process," dealing with religious tolerance and understanding. Michael Heil of Congregation Emeth says they thought "It would be fun to work together again, this time to serve the needy in our community."

Aziz Baameur of South Valley Islamic Community says this project was "exciting, an opportunity for people of faith to interact in a positive way for the community."

Just before the gate opened to let the first of 80 to 90 hungry people in to be served, Moon thanked the volunteers for their hard work and said, "Welcome our guests with a smile; it is as though they have come to your house for Sunday dinner."

The Lord's Table, a service of St. Joseph's Family Center, is one of the oldest charities in South County, currently in its third decade of service. Nutritionally balanced meals are served at 5:30pm on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays in the St. Mary Parish facilities. Meals are usually served on a rotating basis by members of five local congregations: South Valley Community Church, St. Mary Parish, Seventh Day Adventist Church, in Gilroy, Advent Lutheran Church, in Morgan Hill, and San Martin Presbyterian Church.

Volunteers arrive in the early afternoon to prepare and leave after cleaning up, usually about 7pm. There is always a need for more volunteers, who need not belong to any organized group. For more information call Moon at 842-6662.