

**HEAR CONGRESSMAN WILLIAM LACY CLAY SPEAK AT CRC
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13; 7:30 PM**

You would have been so proud of the way in which our CRC young people hosted the SLIID (St. Louis, Illinois, Iowa) regional youth conclave. With love, integrity and their own creative touches they introduced CRC *minhag* (customs) to over 100 of their peers. Their services were filled with music, meditation, and references to *tikkun olam*; they studied the true cultural and racial diversity that exists in Judaism beyond the apparent dominance here in the States of the Ashkanazim; they had social programs that were inclusive and welcoming. Most significantly, they demonstrated the truth of Jacob's words in that week's Torah portion, 'God was in this place, and I did not know it.' By 'crossing Delmar' on Shabbat, and spending the day at Cote Brilliante Elementary School and throughout North St. Louis, they exposed each other to the promise, beauty, humanity and community that exists in a place, if known to them at all, was previously perceived as dangerous, frightening and foreign. I watched surprised and gracious faces as an elderly African-American woman on our 'meals on wheels' route told a group of youth groupers that they looked to her like a "bouquet of beautiful flowers."

Flowers seem to be to be an apt metaphor. To many, the conclave weekend was a time of blossoming; of truly understanding the meaning of the line from Pirke Avot which was the theme of the entire weekend—"If I am only for myself, what am I?" When we leave that which is comfortable and familiar and venture into the territory of 'others' only to find a unity of emotion, need and purpose, we have begun the journey towards the spirituality of transcending borders and distinctions-remembering the very definition of the word *ivri* (Hebrew) is 'boundary-crosser.

A friend and ally who has crossed boundaries with us is Representative William Lacy Clay Jr. I distinctly recall Representative Clay sitting next to me at the Chase on that beautiful Shabbat morning that we celebrated the beginning of the Sukkat Shalom. He beamed during the whole program, and embraced me when it was all over. Just last month, at the public meeting of Metropolitan Congregations United (of which CRC is a proud member), he declared his enthusiasm for the multi-denominational and inter-racial gathering of caring and committed people of faith.

Thanks to the efforts of our Social Responsibility Circle and our member Steve Engelhardt, Representative Clay will be addressing our congregation during December's Social Responsibility Shabbat Service. He will talk about current issues that face Missourians and address how concerned citizens of faith can best advance the cause of social justice. I hope that you'll all be able to attend and express your appreciation and commitment to the Congressman.

B' Ahavah,
Rabbi Randy

