

### ***A Shabbat Meal as the centerpiece of intercultural engagement***

For one of our meals while in Des Moines Iowa, we had the extraordinary experience of enjoying together a Shabbat Meal as the centerpiece of our intercultural engagement. One of our Circle members was Jewish. Through our sharing of our intercultural narratives, Judy had come to appreciate more deeply her cultural origins and the readiness of her circle friends to learn more about Jewish cultural traditions. So, she selected for our Friday menu dishes that her family would traditionally serve for a Shabbat Meal and she asked Adele, our music teacher to help her in sharing the traditional music song during such a meal.

For many of us around the table this was the first time we had engaged in such a traditional Jewish meal. We experienced together how Shabbat is ushered in by lighting candles and reciting a blessing. The evening meal typically begins with a blessing over wine and another one recited over a loaf of challah (egg bread). There is also another blessing about the gratefulness of life. Judy had prepared copies of these three blessings in Hebrew and English so that everyone could join in. She had worked together to prepare a menu that consisted of roast chicken, asparagus, a noodle kugel, a salad and dessert.

This meal was a multi-faith, intergenerational, intercultural event. As we experienced the Shabbat together we were honoring traditions near and dear to a circle friend and we were extending beyond ourselves to learn new things. But that evening, we were also extending beyond our circle to bring others into the fold. We were joined by Adele's aunt who happened to live in Des Moines, is Jewish and was a vibrant addition to the table. We were also joined by Christina who had been a member of the local Des Moines circle, had converted to Islam when she married a muslim man, and was raising her children in this tradition. Others around the table were Lutheran, Quaker and Unitarian Universalist. We ushered in the Sabbath, lifted our voices in song and were blessed by rich connectivity as our new friends shared their stories.