

AIAMF Organizational Biographies

Reverend Greg McDonell- Chair



Reverend McDonell has served as Pastor of Central Presbyterian Church in Austin, Texas since January of 1997. He graduated from the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas with a BA in Psychology and the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary in May of 1981 with a Masters in Divinity. Prior to moving to Austin, he served a small suburban church in Houston, Texas for 16 years. As a former President of the Board of Austin Area Interreligious Ministries, he has become a renowned advocate for events that promote a deeper understanding of the various faith traditions that practice in our area. His passion for bringing together people of diverse faiths and ethnicities around the transforming beauty of religious art inspired him to found and establish the Austin Interfaith Arts and Music Festival in 2004. He remains the organization's President to this day, directing all activities regarding the annual event.

In addition, Reverend McDonell serves on the Roman Catholic Diocesan Fine Arts Council, the Downtown Cluster of Churches and Social Service Agencies, and facilitates a spirituality Book Club that has been meeting at Book People since August of 2002. As Pastor of Central Presbyterian Church, he also serves as a member of its Care Team in concert with the Care Communities of Austin.



Mary K. Shanahan- Vice-Chair & Music Director

Mary has served as the Music Director for the festival since 2005. She is also a past two term President of the Austin Songwriters Group. During her tenure, she directed seven Austin Songwriters Conferences and established nationally recognized educational programs in the craft and business of songwriting, including the Texas School of Songwriting which was held each year with The Recording Academy®. She also secured major sponsorships with SESAC, ASCAP and BMI, and established the Austin Songwriters Group's Songwriters in the Round

in 1997, a monthly event, which still showcases hit songwriters from Austin and throughout the country.

Additionally, Shanahan is a past Corporate Secretary and Founding Trustee of Southwest Austin Catholic Schools, Inc., an independent, (then) \$13 million educational organization, which built and opened St. Gabriel's Catholic School in 1999.

An inspirational singer-songwriter, Mary's first radio release from her debut CD *Child of the Chain*™ charted into the top 20 nationally on independent Christian Radio. Three subsequent releases garnered national airplay, as well as international play on EWTN Worldwide Catholic Radio and Sirius Radio. Mary was subsequently interviewed and featured on Thom Price's Artist Spotlight on EWTN, and was one of only two Catholic artists worldwide quoted by EWTN on the death of Pope John Paul II, along with Lech Walesa, former President George W. Bush, Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexy II, Rabbi Marvin Hier and the Dali Lama, among others. Her 2006 release *Jesus Wept* aired internationally for the first time on 9/11 on EWTN and remained the #1 download on www.catholicmusicnetwork.com for two months.

Christine McManus - Secretary

Christine McManus is a native born Texan. She grew up in Dallas and later attended the University of Texas at Austin. In 2001, Christine graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture from the University and is now a licensed Architect in the State of Texas. She has been practicing in Austin since her graduation. She is currently a Project Architect for Furman + Keil Architects and designs small commercial and residential projects.

Christine has been the Secretary of the Interfaith Arts and Music Festival since its founding in 2004. She is a member of Central Presbyterian Church where she has recently finished a term as Deacon. As a supporter of The Presbyterian Children's Home, she has been involved in recent fundraising activities for the organization. Christine is also a passionate horse-owner and is a member of the Capital Area Quarter Horse Association. She also plays soccer in the Austin Women's Soccer League and is a member of Delta Delta Delta.

Reverend Mikail Davenport- Treasurer



Reverend Davenport is a native Texan who contracted polio at age two. In 2000, at the age of 52, Mikail started competing in 5K, 10K, and marathon wheelchair / handcycyle racing events. In 2002, Mikail conquered another health challenge: lung cancer. Less than one year after doctors removed 1/3 of his left lung, Mikail successfully completed the daunting 237-mile Sadler's Ultra Challenge Race through Alaska, followed by the 2003 Motorola Marathon, using his handcycle. In 2004, he founded "Disabled, Not Unable", an educational organization that assists persons with disabilities to fully develop their physical, mental, and spiritual conditioning to the utmost of their ability. He supports the organization through his website/print/graphic design and consulting business: www.disabled-not-unable.org

In 2005, he completed the 350-mile Capitol Ride '05 to raise awareness of the capability of people with disabilities and cancer survivors. In 2007, he handcycled alone across Texas from El Paso to Beaumont for the same reasons. On that cross-state effort, he was filmed by a documentary team from Vermilion Pictures; the polio eradication documentary, *The Final inch*, was nominated for an Academy Award in 2009. He works passionately as a Chaplain Volunteer within the Texas Criminal Justice System, serving offenders to find their real selves and form deep spiritual lives.

He was ordained in 1990 as an interfaith minister through the Sufi Order International and recently retired as President of the Alliance for Better Living, a non-profit organization assisting non-violent offenders, both in facility and in aftercare, to take control of their lives. He choreographs and teaches sacred dance in Austin and is a Representative/Guide in the Sufi Order International, as well as its former Executive Director.

Cantor Marie Betcher - Child and Family Director



Cantor Marie Betcher is Certified, Invested and Commissioned from Hebrew Union College in New York. She earned her Bachelor and Master Degrees in Vocal Performance from Indiana University School of Music and Florida State University, respectively. Among her operatic performances are concerts in Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, tours in England and Italy, performances at the Piccolo Spoleto Music Festival in Charleston and a special event with Senator John McCain. She currently serves as Spiritual Leader and Director of Education for Congregation Shir Ami in Cedar Park. She is involved in all of the growth, development and fundraising aspects of the congregation and created the Religious School curriculum. She also serves Greene Family Camp (the Reform movement southwest division camp) as a faculty member in the summers.

Cantor Betcher has also served Temple Beth Israel in Austin, TX, and from 2000 until 2003 served as the Education Director for King David School of Austin where she directed the Bar/Bat Mitzvah program and tutored private B'nei Mitzvah students. She taught all grades of Hebrew, Jewish History and Ethics, Torah and Haftarah cantillation and formed and led the King David choir.

Many other congregations and Jewish centers across the country have been the recipient of Cantor Betcher's service including Temple Beth El in San Antonio (one of the largest Reform Congregations in the country) where she organized and formed an Intergenerational Choir and Officiated at Services. She has also been the Judaica Specialist for 180 children in an Early Childhood Program, and freelances across the country serving congregations for Life Cycle events, Cantor in Residence weekends, and concerts. She is a Life Member of both Hadassah and Jewish Women International, a member of the American Conference of Cantors (for which she is also the Chair of the Caring Committee) and The Guild of Temple Musicians and the Austin Jewish Clergy Association. She has extensive fundraising experience organizing benefit concerts, silent auctions, soliciting donations and promoting and publicizing charitable events.

William Parker - Development Director

William is a native Texan and a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin. Shortly after graduating from Architecture school, he relocated to New York City where he practiced architecture and interior design as well as trained intensely in all disciplines of the performing arts. He is a registered architect in Texas and New York as well as a registered interior designer in Texas.

Prior to returning to Austin in 1990, William spent a year in Paris, France working on a hotel project adjacent to EuroDisneyland.

Performance background includes off-Broadway, a season of musical theatre with the Banff Festival in Canada, and a season with the Sarasota Opera in Florida. He sings locally for benefits and private parties and is a member of Actor's Equity Association. William is an interior designer with his own local practice: www.parkerinteriors.com.

William is a member of St. David's Episcopal Church in Austin.

Harish N. Kotecha- Hospitality Director

Harish retired early from IBM after an impressive career in technology and hardware development at IBM, where his contributions included over 20 US Patents.

After retirement, he became heavily involved in community activities and was instrumental in the development and construction of two Hindu temples -Austin Hindu Temple, where he is Vice President of Community Relations and has served as Treasurer, and Shirdi Sai Baba Temple of Austin. He also supports and contributes time and leadership skills to other Temples in a variety of activities through interaction with churches and various communities and with the media.

Harish is active with India Community Center as a Board Member and as President. He is also a member of Gujarati Samaj of Greater Austin, a non-profit organization that serves the Gujarati community in and around Austin. He additionally supports and volunteers with organizations such as SAHELI (Austin Safe Place), the Network of American Asian Organizations, the Indian American Coalition and others, as needed. Harish is a graduate of the University of London, U.K., having earned a B.S. in Electrical Engineering.

Mary Carole Sitzes- Artist Relations Director

Mary has been with the Interfaith Art & Music Festival since its inception. Her involvement is the realization of a desire to bring about mutual understanding and respect for one another's personal spiritual pathways, through art. She is currently the Artist Relations Director and is responsible for soliciting entries for the juried event and facilitating all aspects of artist's needs during the two-day festival.

Mary grew up as a creative spirit and studied art throughout her education. She majored in fine art/studio art during her college years at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi and San Antonio College. Her education continues through her own form of creative exploration and various classes taken at Laguna Gloria Art School including paper-making, mural painting, stained glass, pottery, basket weaving and jewelry making. She has also taken classes on the Spirituality of Art and the creative process

Under the name "Merry Murals," Mary painted murals and did faux-finishes for businesses and private residences from 1992-1997. She has also taught after-school art/crafts programs at the Episcopal Church's outreach Mission El Buen Samaritano and at St. Michael's Academy here in Austin.

Mary displays and sells her art through fine art shows and galleries. Last year, she was honored to have three of her woven vessels chosen to be in an exhibit that was open to artists all over Texas. The Texas Museum of Fiber Arts selected her work, along with 54 other artists, in a juried event with over 200 entries.

Kim Johnson- Logistics Director

Kim Johnson has over 20 years experience in management operations. His background includes positions with Time Warner Cable in system operations and business development where he was involved in operations of both rural and urban systems. Following Time Warner Cable, Kim was one of the initial management team that started PRIMESTAR Partners, a national organization that provided direct-to-home satellite services through cable operators. In this capacity, Kim led the establishment of a distribution network that deployed 2.8 Million digital set top receivers and managed a supply chain valued at \$40 million per month.

Kim also has experience in CLEC and Internet operations and served as Senior Vice President of Engineering and Operations for WNet a provider of digital video for rural cable and MDU operators. In addition, He has provided strategic consulting services to companies in the telecommunications and interactive video industries. Kim received a BA and an MBA from the University of Chicago.