



**GATHERING FOR PRAYER —** Murray Feldman of Congregation Ahavath Beth Israel in Boise, blows the shofar, or traditional ram's horn, announcing the time for gathering, Nov. 25 at St. John Cathedral, Boise, for the 27th Annual Thanksgiving Ecumenical and Interfaith Service. (ICR photo)

## Lesson of trust offered at ecumenical service

By Michael Brown  
Editor

BOISE — On Thanksgiving eve in St. John Cathedral, Dr. Said Ahmed-Zaid of the local Islamic community offered his understanding of the story of the patriarch Abraham leaving all the sides of his tent open.

Some see it as a way to ensure no enemies could sneak up on him, Ahmed-Zaid said; however, he sees it as a sign of welcome, so that no one should feel left out or unwanted.

"I am putting my trust in God and I am not living my life in mistrust of my neighbor," he said at the end of his reflection, highlighting the 27th Annual Thanksgiving Ecumenical and Interfaith Service on Nov. 25.

Ahmed-Zaid quoted from the Koran, the New Testament and Torah, to reflect the three largest world religions, during his comments. Christianity, Judaism and Islam all trace historical roots back to Abraham, he noted.

Each tradition has the mandate "to bring hope to the world," he said, "a hope that we can have a conversation about our differences instead of using them" as a reason for separation.

Moments like the interfaith service also remind members of religious communities of their obligation to reach out to the poor. "In the Bible, the love of neighbor is second only to the love of God," he said.

Ahmed-Zaid read a passage from the Koran telling people to give thanks for what God has given them. "Clearly, God wants us to have a good time and enjoy the good things he has provided to us. All he asks is that we are grateful to him."

He said that "it is a crime to eat too much," adding that Idaho was among the top states in the U.S. in the number of households at risk for food insufficiency. "All people of faith have to come together. We should be feeding them and sheltering them."

The program began and concluded with the blowing of the shofar, a ram's horn used in Judaism to announce the beginning of holy days. The service also included an ecumenical choir featuring more than 100 members of local religious communities, under the direction of Raphael Morvant, choirmaster

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of St. John's.

Non-perishable food items and donations were collected and presented to representatives from the Idaho Food Bank and the Terry Reilly Health Centers.

Bishop Michael P. Driscoll hosted and welcomed those attending and performing at the event.

A reception, sponsored by the Women of St. John's and Boise Stake, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, followed the prayer service.

## Stealth Advent? No, just a Conspiracy

By Michael Brown  
Editor

BOISE — Most parish leaders know that the weeks leading up to Christmas can be very interesting. This year, in at least two Boise parishes, it's an outright Conspiracy.

Advent Conspiracy is a Christian grassroots movement that began in 2006 among leaders in the Portland, Ore., area and this year will include more than 1,000 churches from 17 countries. Several Protestant churches in Boise, as well as Sacred Heart and St. John Catholic parishes, are primary conspirators in the Treasure Valley.

The conspiracy involves four basic goals: to worship fully, to spend less, to give more and to love all. Worshiping fully could mean attending Mass or receiving the sacraments during Advent, but includes praying the rosary, participating in



Women's and Children's Alliance, which supports victims of domestic violence.

Loving all involves spending time with family and friends as a sign of relational giving. In a circular from St. John's, among the suggestions were babysitting for a worn-out relative with small children, doing yard work for senior neighbors or changing the oil in a friend's car. "One

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adoration before the Blessed Sacrament and attending seasonal concerts.

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Giving more involves supporting special needs at home and abroad. At Sacred Heart, some suggestions include donating funds to help provide clean water, medicine, vitamins and other supplies to a mission in Honduras. There's also an opportunity for supporting a halfway house for women released from prison, providing tutoring lessons for immigrants who recently arrived in the Boise area, or donating new or slightly used coats and other clothing to the

less gift. More time. More love. One unbelievable present in the name of Christ," another circular said.

Within each of the two parishes, the opportunities to become involved varied widely. For instance, St. John's will offer "A Night in Bethlehem," sponsored by the parish's Children's and Family Ministry on Dec. 11 at 7 p.m., in which participants will answer questions from a Roman census taker, experience arts and crafts and finally end up at a live nativity scene. The parish is also sponsoring an Alternative Gift Shop on Dec. 6.

Sacred Heart is providing gift cards that a donor to a special cause can send to a friend or family member, informing them about the donation made in their honor. It has also integrated students and families from Sacred Heart Catholic School into the program.

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