

Spiritual leaders plan some pulpit swapping

Look for some pulpit swapping in the next month or two as Mecklenburg Ministries and Crossroads Charlotte roll out their citywide "Sermon Exchange."

The plan calls for participating clergy to go before each others' congregations and deliver messages on how we can bridge our differences.

The initiative is tied to **Martin Luther King Jr.'s** birthday this month and Black History Month in February. So the hope is that many of the guest sermons will focus on acknowledging and alleviating racial divisions.

The crossing of religious boundaries is also being encouraged: So, for example, some Christians may look up from their pews and hear a rabbi or an imam.

"In the spirit of Dr. King, the main objective is to foster connections and

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conversations across lines of difference, including race and religion," says **Maria Hanlin**, who heads Mecklenburg Ministries, an interfaith group of more than 100 houses of wor-

ship.

Since some faiths, such as Quakers, don't do sermons, participating congregations can also turn it into a Program Exchange.

"We want to be as flexible as possible," says **Patricia Zoder**, executive director of Crossroads Charlotte, which is part of the Foundation for the Carolinas.

The partnership kicking off the project, pairing a synagogue and a historic black college, is a creative blend of sanctuary and classroom.

At 7 p.m. Jan. 15, Johnson C. Smith University President **Ron Carter** will give Temple Beth El's Martin Luther

King Shabbat Sermon.

Then, **Rabbi Judy Schindler** of Temple Beth El will be among those teaching a new course - "African American-Jewish Relations" - debuting during the spring semester at Johnson C. Smith.

So far, Hanlin says, about 30 clergy have signed up for the exchange - Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Baha'i, Quaker, Unitarian Universalist, Spiritual Living Center. They'll soon decide who goes where.

After the sermons start, you can catch some of them - via podcasts and transcripts - by visiting www.crossroadscharlotte.org.

There are still a few days left for clergy and congregations to sign up to be part of the exchange.

If you're interested, notify Hanlin (maria.hanlin@meckmin.org; 704-565-5455) or Zoder (pzoder@fftc.org; 704-973-4567) by Wednesday.

Jewish women show solidarity

At a recent prayer and song service in Charlotte, 12 Jewish women showed up wearing tallitot (prayer shawls) and kippot (skullcaps).

Their garb was meant to show solidarity with **Nofrat Frenkel**, a 28-year-