

whole world. We spent long hours of those summer days underwater, save for two brief periods each afternoon when the lifeguards would blow their whistles and call out: "Adult Swim!" For the next fifteen minutes, chaos subsided as the grown-ups swam laps and we perched on the concrete edges... dangling our legs in the water, bouncing impatiently, ignoring the warning looks from the lifeguard chairs towering above us as we waited what seemed like an eternity for the moment we could hit the water again.

The Talmud tells us that "a father is obligated to circumcise his son, to redeem him, to teach him Torah, to find him a wife and to teach him a trade. Some say that he must also teach him to swim." Keeping our children connected to Jewish ritual, educating and helping them navigate the practicalities of life... these seem fairly basic in their importance. But what is the significance of including that a parent should teach a child to swim in the context of religious instruction?

In a midrash, the Rabbis hold that the waters of the Red Sea only parted once Israelites stepped into it. With those

conversations between me and Pastor Jim Burgquist at the Peet's in Orinda, grew into *The God Experiment*, an interfaith event that will weave together music, storytelling and a sprinkling of spirit, with the hope of infusing holiness and unity into a secular space. The experiment is both the transformation of a mundane space into a holy one, and the merging of interfaith folks in an unusual environment. Can sanctity be created by people who don't normally pray together, in a space that is usually reserved for entertainment? Can we, with intention, cultivate the belief that we are indeed more united than we are divided?

We are in a time that is often marked by intolerance, isolationism, and religious bigotry. People cling to their own beliefs, unwilling to listen to - or incorporate - the ways that others experience life and being.

Many people are willing to self-identify as "spiritual," but have a difficult time associating with any religious entity. We believe that there is a need for a new kind of community and experience, one that breaks down some of these walls and