

October 1, 2008

Dear Clergy,

We are getting in touch with you for the purpose of seeking your Church's involvement in Gadsden Reads 2009. Gadsden Reads is a program sponsored by the Mary G. Hardin Center for Cultural Arts, Gadsden State Community College and the Gadsden Public Library. The mission of Gadsden Reads is to encourage literacy in Etowah County and provide opportunities for community discussion and growth.

This year Gadsden Reads is partnering with the NEA Big Read to present *The Shawl* by Cynthia Ozick. *The Shawl* is a set of short stories exploring the effects of the Holocaust on one family both during the Holocaust and long after the end of World War II. It is a remarkable feat of fiction, which starts in darkest despair and brings us, without simplification or condescension, to a glimmer of redemption.

We hope that you will find ways to incorporate this program into your church. Exploring The Holocaust and the importance of promoting diversity, respect and tolerance are subjects that certainly complement each other whose value will be invaluable to the community. The committee charged with the task of creating, and presenting, a creative, stimulating and thought-provoking venue for this initiative has been hard at work.

Though activities would usually take place February through April 2009 we feel that it would be poignant to introduce this Gadsden Reads project to the community on November 9, 2008 – the anniversary of *Kristalnacht*. The Jewish community commemorates this anniversary by placing candles in the windows of their homes.

This year November 9th falls on a Sunday. We would be willing to address your congregation during Sunday worship on November 9th and to distribute candle votives to those congregants that would like to commemorate *Kristalnacht* that evening. This could be a wonderful opportunity to use the light of the candles as they symbolize Christianity, Judaism, and this night which began the Holocaust.

As you are considering the possibility of working with us, we invite you or your education director to attend a teacher training on October 9 at 6PM at the Center for Cultural Arts. Please respond to Bobby Welch, bobwelch@culturalarts.org or 543-2787 ext 26. Gadsden Reads looks forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Bobby Welch, Secretary
Gadsden Reads 2009 Committee
www.gadsdenreads.com