

Interfaith Peace Walk for Jewish-Muslim Reconciliation Minutes of Meeting No. 10

Location	Philadelphia, PA	Issue Date	December 14, 2004
Type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Phone Call	Date Held	November 17, 2004
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Place Held	Al-Aqsa Society, Philadelphia, PA
Subject	Interfaith Peace Walk for Jewish-Muslim Reconciliation— Planning Meeting	Recorded By	L. Laver

Participants:	Distribution:
Ron Abrams Dr. Mohammad Almashhadani Edd Conboy Vic Compher Adab Ibrahim Ken Johnson Susan Johnson (facilitator) Lance Laver Jim McGovern George Mordecai Victoria Pearson Rabbi Arthur Waskow Renate Woessner	Attendees Interfaith Peace Walk E-Mail List

No.	Item	Action By	Due Date
10.01	Purpose: Interfaith Peace Walk for Jewish-Muslim Reconciliation Planning Meeting		
10.02	Opening prayer: S. Johnson opened the meeting with a moment of silence for each person to open to hearing what each other has to say and to moving forward together in the best possible way.		
10.03	Ramadan <i>Iftar</i> break fast report: M. Almashhadani reported that the Ramadan <i>Iftar</i> break-fast was a successful gathering, attended by some 30 people, even with a heavy rain outside. There was a variety of food with an international flavor, and people gathered in small groups for discussions about the spirituality of fasting together, current events and regular socializing.		
10.04	Al-Aqsa façade project dedication: A. Ibrahim noted the incredible turnout for the Al-Aqsa Islamic Society façade project (<i>Doorways to Peace Mural</i>) dedication on November 14. The project was sponsored by the Mural Arts Program and Arts & Spirituality Center. She said that most workers were acknowledged in the ceremony, which was also an end-of-Ramadan celebration on the mosque's grounds for many families. Guests included city dignitaries and Jane Golden of the Mural Arts Project. There was a great sense of accomplishment, joy and thanks to all who participated in this wonderfully-shared experience. Photos of the event are at the following website,		

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	<p>thanks to Edd Conboy: http://www.pbase.com/eddconboy/mural_and_facade_dedication. E. Conboy added that this photography is part of the <i>Faith & the Avenue Project</i>, which he is working on with Katie Day. For full documentation of the Al-Aqsa project, see the following website: www.pbase.com/eddconboy/al_aqsa.</p>		
10.05	<p>Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations awards banquet: V. Compher reported that the annual human rights awards luncheon was a very festive and uplifting event with many groups honored. Having the Interfaith Peace Walk group recognized, he said, will afford us a good publicity and opportunities for continue hope in creating and participating in interfaith activities. He mentioned that Kenny Gamble, the main honoree, expressed a willingness to him to help in promoting the next Peace Walk and thought that a Walk with 4,000-5,000 people was not out of the question. Dr. Almashhadani noted that he had worked with K. Gamble in the past on an event at the Civic Center that included over 8,000 people. V. Compher, G. Mordecai, M. Almashhadani and V. Pearson will form a sub-committee to plan a meeting with K. Gamble (probably sometime in January 2005) to pursue this generous offer. This contact will also provide a link to the black Muslim community in Philadelphia to participate in future events.</p>	V. Compher, G. Mordecai, M. Almashhadani, V. Pearson	January 2005
10.06	<p>Compassionate Listening: In continued the discussion about possibly setting up a <i>Compassionate Listening (CL)</i> program for the Peace Walk group, V. Compher noted the "Possible Goals for Interfaith Groups" from the CL literature, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to the beliefs and practices of other faiths without having to give up any of one's own and without feeling threatened. • Being a witness to or sharing in the worship of other faiths, while nurturing one's own faith. • Getting under the pieces that cause conflict. • Practicing effective peacemaking. • Listening with regard to facts, feelings and values. • Listening to and conversing with our so-called "enemies" or with "extremists" of our own faith tradition or of other faiths. • Understanding and addressing situations or language that "triggers" reactions. • Practicing asking questions to make deeper connections with others. <p>M. Almashhadani expressed that it is more important to "stay local" and build a strong movement here first, rather than involving out-of-town people, however worthwhile, to conduct a one-time seminar; instead, perhaps, consider an extended seminar program with local resources, where more Philadelphians could participate. Other suggestions included small workshops to train people to listen more effectively (using local resources, such as AFSC, which does listening projects); expanding the local base (of people who "walked" but are no longer actively</p>		

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	<p>engaged); re-evaluation counseling; and engaging in the Alternative-to-Violence program (no charge). E. Conboy noted that Leah Green's CL work in the most difficult places in the world [including the Middle East] for 18 years is extraordinary—and he made a distinction between “community organizing” and “listening.” He added that it is important to find common ground to start a dialogue. On abortion, for example, if one person says, “Abortion is killing,” and the other doesn't believe that, they cannot talk together. If, however, they both agree that “abortion is a bad thing,” then they can talk—with a “content neutral” beginning.</p> <p>Conclusion: Though people generally felt that the CL and other suggestions were not mutually exclusive, the majority felt that it is important to engage local resources and participants to help build a base for continuing and expanding our local interfaith work—which could include some local listening training, such as “5 on 5” sessions with people from different faiths/points of view listening to each other with some facilitation.</p>		
10.07	<p>Documentary film project on the Peace Walk: Ref. 9.06: V. Compher reported that he has today (10/13/04) received the final 17-minute version of the documentary film of the Peace Walk made by Usame Tunagur as part of an Ohio University graduate film school project. VHS copies will be available to Peace Walk participants for \$7.00 each, and DVD copies also may be available.</p>	V. Compher	
10.08	<p>Hands-on projects: Ref. 9.07:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a follow-up to the last meeting's discussion about possible group hands-on projects, we again discussed re-starting Maimonah (“prosperity”)—a North African (Moroccan) custom where Jews brought the first meal to Muslims at the end of Ramadan and Muslims brought the first bread to Jews at the end of Passover. People/communities in the group have held the event twice. Sharing food during (or after) a holy day led to a decision to have a communal Iftar break fast during Ramadan (see section 9.08 below). • V. Compher reminded the group about the “Struggle / Work / Play / Intellect” model discussed at the last meeting and Iftekhar Hussain's comments about building trust through physical, hands-on projects. A. Ibrahim, L. Laver and P. Handler reinforced this approach through examples of similar work with community building groups (see Minutes of Meeting No. 8 for details). • V. Compher also noted the Peace Garden that people created at 20th and W. Norris Streets as another example of a successful community project. • P. Coyne mentioned the possibility of working with the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank (at Second and Berks Sts.), where groups can earn 10 lbs. of food credits for an hour worked—and the organization can designate where the food should go. Bagging food is an activity that children and adults can participate in. She will follow up with information about this option and other possible community/building activities that the group might pursue together in a spring 2005 project. She also suggested a possible tour of St. Peter's Church at 4th & Girard Sts. • M. Almashhadani will pursue options for sharing ideas together in periodic group discussions, presentations and study sessions. • S. Johnson discussed the benefits of workshops with inmates at Graterford Prison and how active listening resulted in building trust and “concentric circles” among the participants. 	M. Almashhadani	11/17/04

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	<p>The group discussed possibly making the May 2005 Peace Walk a series of pilgrimage points relating to interfaith collaborations (e.g., the Al-Aqsa façade project)—or even “building” together instead of “walking” together (e.g., a mural project where each person puts up a tile in a common wall). This might be a way to “break the frame” and “reframe” the walk rather than “institutionalizing the same rituals each year.” We will discuss additional options at the next (December) meeting.</p>		
10.09	<p>Interfaith Religious Festivals’ Observance – 2005: Ref. 9.09</p> <p>Rabbi A. Waskow introduced an idea for Jews, Muslims and Christians to participate in each other’s religious observances next year, as follows:</p> <p>One year from now, Ramadan and Tishrei (the Jewish month when Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and several other major holidays are celebrated) will both begin on the New Moon of October 3-4, 2005, and the Saint’s Day of St. Francis is October 4.</p> <p>The Shalom Center is interested in the possibility of encouraging Jews, Christians, and Muslims to share in the observance of this month.</p> <p>Several possibilities that occur to us:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People from the Abrahamic traditions in a given city or region could join for a retreat in a nearby tranquil space that would encourage reflection and sharing, from Friday evening through late Sunday afternoon, Oct 21-23. This is the weekend in which Ramadan overlaps with the Jewish harvest festival, Sukkot. 2. In the city, Muslims might choose one or more days (besides of course Yom Kippur) to invite Jews and Christians to fast in resonance with the Ramadan fast, and perhaps to join with Muslims to break the fast after sundown. Jews might invite Muslims and Christians to a Jewish venue to join in the final prayers of Yom Kippur and the Jewish break-fast of that evening. 3. Another possibility is that various mosques, synagogues, and churches join to undertake some public project of healing the <p>Jews might invite Muslims and Christians to speak in various synagogues during Rosh Hashanah (when the Jewish understanding of the story of Isaac and Ishmael is read). Such Muslim visitors might present the Muslim understanding of that story, and the congregants might discuss how to live with two different family stories about the family of Abraham.</p> <p>Muslims might invite Jews and Christians to speak in mosques on the Friday Jum’a prayer during Ramadan, etc.</p>	A. Waskow, Peace Walk group + others	Ongoing

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	<p>world -- e.g. acting on behalf of Muslim citizens, immigrants, and overseas prisoners now under pressure from the US government? Working together on issues of protecting the earth?</p> <p>Some communities, congregations, and individuals, of course, could choose to take part in one or more of these activities without joining in them all.</p> <p>The Shalom Center sponsored a "Tent of Abraham" retreat in a Hudson River retreat center the long weekend of this past September 9-12 that gathered a dozen Jews, Christians, and Muslims from Scotland, Colorado, and various places in between. The retreat was both internally and externally powerful and productive. Some of these ideas emerged from that retreat.</p> <p>The group thought this idea well worth pursuing and will follow up further discussions at subsequent meetings.</p> <p>A. Waskow noted that he and Herb Levine, Executive Director of Fellowship Farm, had discussed a possible week-end retreat there during Ramadan; however, the cost would be prohibitive (~\$65-70/person). Another option is a single-day (Sunday) retreat there with fasting, learning, prayer and dinner (~\$35/person). Or—a similar event at Chamounix Mansion in Fairmount Park (about \$5/person). More to follow.</p>		
10.10	<p>January 2005 Interfaith Program: A. Waskow stated that the newly-formed Philadelphia Interfaith Peace Network is planning an event around Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday and the Muslim community observing of Eid al-Adha, the memorial for Abraham's near sacrifice of his son (Ishmael in Muslim tradition). The plan is to gather in one place—in a mosque on the weekend of January 22-23, making clear "that the medium is the message. Rather than war between the US and Islam, we choose peace between and among Judaism, Christianity & Islam," as he wrote in a subsequent e-mail. Further discussion to occur at the December meeting.</p>	A. Waskow and Phila. Interfaith Peace Network	
10.11	<p>Rabbis for Human Rights: A. Waskow noted that Rabbi Arik Ascherman, who is in the midst of standing trial in Israel for trying to stop the demolition of a Palestinian home by Caterpillar bulldozers (part of an ongoing campaign by Rabbis for Human Rights) will be speaking at a rabbi's home in Mt. Airy in November and encouraged anyone interested in attending this RHR fund raiser to speak with him. He also noted again that RHS is considering a U.S. campaign that may involve what to do to protect Muslim human rights in this country; and he asked for any comments/options to this end.</p>		
10.12	<p>Next Peace Walk planning meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday, December 15, 2004 at Al-Aqsa at 7:00 PM. <p>Revised date for 2005 Peace Walk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday, May 22, 2005. 		