

Interfaith Walk for Peace and Reconciliation Minutes of Meeting No. 13

Location	Philadelphia, PA	Issue Date	March 30, 2005
Type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Phone Call <input type="checkbox"/>	Date Held	March 2, 2005
Subject	Interfaith Walk for Peace and Reconciliation—Planning Meeting	Place Held	Al-Aqsa Society, Philadelphia, PA
		Recorded By	L. Laver

Participants:	Distribution:
Ron Abrams Mohammad Almashhadani Mohammad Aziz Allison Carter Edd Conboy Vic Compher Sr. Sheila Flynn Peter Handler Iftekhar Hussain Adab Ibrahim Sr. Veena Jacob Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer Lance Laver Herb Levine Sophia Memon Steve Newman Renate Woessner Aisha Yasin	Attendees Interfaith Peace Walk E-Mail List

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13.01	Purpose: Interfaith Walk for Peace and Reconciliation Planning Meeting		
13.02	<p>Opening: After individual introductions, facilitator R. Woessner asked each person to find a partner of a different faith and each talk for a few minutes to the other about what the speaker's tradition offers toward peacemaking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Muslim and Jewish pair spoke about the tension in each one's scriptural base for peacemaking and geo-political reality. • Another person spoke about the way that the Hindu tradition seeks to bridge gaps among all religions. • A Muslim noted that the Koran says that "God created people in tribes that they may get to know each other," and that although it is hard for tribes to interact, "we will meet again." <p>We agreed that this talking/listening to each other helped in our understanding of the other's faith base for this work.</p>		

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13.03	<p>Billboard issue: Prior to the meeting, some members of the planning committee discussed via e-mail a troubling billboard on highway I-95, depicting a presumably Muslim man's face wrapped in a <i>kafiyah</i> next to a headline reading <i>The face of terror</i> that advertised a program called <i>Confessions of a PLO Terrorist</i>, organized by AISH (a right-leaning Jewish organization). The billboard also carried insignias of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia and some other presumably sponsoring Jewish organizations. At the meeting, S. Memon noted that this alarming image has caused much concern in the local Arab-American community, as it implies that anyone wearing a headdress (including by extension a <i>hajib</i> for a woman) could be considered a "terrorist," and be subject to a measure of the civil rights abuses that have plagued the Arab-American community in this country post-9/11. Rather than publicize this concern, however, S. Memon noted that some local Arab-American groups were contacting the Jewish Community Relations Council—with whom they have had good relations, and out of respect for past work together—to see if a meeting could result in the billboard being removed.</p> <p>Jewish and Christian members in the Peace Walk group expressed their concern and solidarity with the Arab-American community regarding the billboard; and the group decided unanimously that, if necessary (i.e., if the meeting did not have a favorable result), we would draft a letter expressing our outrage at the billboard and full support of those requesting that it be removed. (V. Compher, I. Ibrahim and L. Laver would act as a sub-committee, in this case, to act on the group's behalf.)</p> <p>N. Kreimer noted that such a letter should be mindful of the American right of free speech, so that we understand that this is not a legal issue; rather, it is one imploring a moral stance, as the image is detrimental to the peace and reconciliation efforts that many others in each religious community seek—reason enough for the image to be (voluntarily) removed. The billboard is a failure to see the impact on real people's lives at a time when the Arab-American community here is vulnerable and at risk—something it is important for the Jewish community to understand. She also noted that "Federation" provides financial support to scores of Jewish groups in the city and does not have control over every poster, advertisement or image that each group puts out; however, it is a requirement for any constituent organization to place the "Federation" logo on its advertisements. She felt that many members of Federation (and AISH) would also be appalled by this image and its implied message. She volunteered to speak with a teaching colleague and fellow rabbi—who is a member of AISH—to act as a go-between, if necessary. Others also offered support and possible contacts in the Jewish community.</p> <p>S. Memon (and others) thanked the group for its support and concluded by saying that the billboard unfortunately is a step back, creating disunity—at a time when others are seeking to find</p>		

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	<p>ways of connecting with each other. The planning committee will await word on any necessary group action.</p> <p>V. Compher added that it is an honor that the Muslim community has brought this disturbing and counter-productive issue to our group, and we stand ready to assist, if called upon.</p> <p><i>(Post-meeting note: A. Ibrahim reported that the billboard has not yet been removed, but the "Constitution Center" reference has been taken off. In addition, the program organizers promised not to use the image in any other state; and people from the JCRC will ensure that there isn't any hate speech at the event.)</i></p>		
13.04	<p>Group workday:</p> <p>There will be a workday on Sunday, 3/13/05 from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM to clean up the grounds on lots near Al-Aqsa and possibly to install planters at the Al-Aqsa property. All are invited to participate.</p> <p><i>(Post-meeting note: The workday was a great success. Approximately 25 people participated during the workday and cleaned up three separate lots across from the mosque and also along Jefferson Street. The City of Philadelphia provided gloves, bags and tools for the workday (per the efforts of Pat Coyne).</i></p> <p>We will plan another workday in a few months (after the Peace Walk), as working together with our hands provides an excellent way of learning about each other and providing service to the community.</p>		
13.05	<p>Peace Walk 2005: The theme for the May 22, 2005 Peace Walk will continue the message of the first Peace Walk: to build community and interfaith dialogue and promote peace and understanding among all people. We discussed some possible actions around the Peace Walk, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways to reach out to various and different faith communities. • Walking to various neighborhood places representing grass roots healing in the community (e.g., at a church exemplifying the work of "Mothers in Charge," a group dedicated to stopping random gun violence in the streets, which last year conducted a march of 10,000 through city streets); or • Walking to places acknowledging the spiritual/emotional/ physical toll and healing needed from the Iraq War—as exemplified by the 857 pairs of surrogate boots of slain soldiers displayed at Independence Mall last year as part of the AFSC <i>Eyes Wide Open</i> exhibit...which is now over 1,300. • Specific hands-on projects that the group can do together prior to the Peace Walk. (11.03) <p>Continuing the discussion about the May 22, 2005 Peace Walk, M. Almashhadani said that the Walk is important in showing that a Muslim can pray together with a Jew and Christian [and vice-versa], to show doubters that we can work and walk together and to show authorities that the problem lies with them, not us. The group then made the following decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name: Because the focus of the group is now truly ecumenical, involving peace, justice and reconciliation among Jews, Muslim and Christians (the "children of Abraham")—and having involved other religious and peace groups as well in last year's Walk, the group decided to call this years Peace Walk: Interfaith Walk for Peace and Reconciliation. • Time: This year's Peace Walk will begin at 1:00 PM. • Program/route: The group decided once again to have stops and prayers at 		

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	<p>a mosque, synagogue and church—as well as possibly at locations where we have participated in volunteer community outreach programs.</p> <p><i>(Post-meeting note: The final Walk route is as follows:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Peace Walk will start at United Muslim Masjid (15th & Christian Sts.) with a gathering at 12:30 PM and ritual program start at 1:00 PM. (Program organizer/contact: Rashidah Abdul-Khabeer/Kenneth Gamble.) • The group then will walk to Congregation Rodeph Shalom (Broad and Green Sts.), approximately 1.8 miles from UMM. There will be a short ritual here. (Nancy Kreimer/Rabbi Michael Holzman) • The next stop will be St. Malachy's Church (11th & Master Sts.), approximately 1.0 miles from Rodeph Shalom, which will also have a short ritual. (Jim McGovern/Sister Ceil) • The last stop will be Al-Aqsa Mosque (3rd & Jefferson Sts.), approximately 0.7 miles from St. Malachy's, which will have fellowship and refreshments. (We will also consider having musical entertainment and an offering call.) (Adab Ibrahim) <p><i>The total Walk distance, therefore, is approximately 3.5 miles—or about 10% longer than last year's Walk.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach: • Contact list: We will use the Peace Walk e-mail list (~190) for outreach, as well as contacting the same religious, peace and community groups as in 2004, and others (to put out the word on their mailing lists). These include the following (with people making contact): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shalom Center: A. Waskow will put out information on the Shalom Center e-mail list (~2,000). • Interfaith Center: V. Compher. • Reconstructionist Rabbinical College: N. Kreimer. • Bawa Fellowship: A. Weinberg. • AFSC/Friends Meetings: R. Woessner. • CAIR: M. Almashhadani. • Tikkun community: S. Newman. • Catholic agencies and archdiocese: J. McGovern. • Brit Tzedek/Progressive Zionist Alliance: L. Laver. • Metropolitan Christian Council: TBD. • Germantown Jewish Center: H. Levine. • P'nai Or: S. Newman. • Northwest Interfaith Movement: S. Newman. • American Muslim Society: I. Hussain. • Islamic Society of Greater Valley Forge (ISGVF): M. Aziz. • Foundation for Islamic Education: I. Hussain. • Arts & Spirituality Center: V. Compher. • BZBI: A. Carter. • Hadassah: A. Carter. • Interfaith Community Building Group: L. Laver. • Mishkan Shalom: L. Laver. • First United Methodist Church of Germantown: H. Levine. 		

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tabernacle United Church: V. Compher. • Temple University: S. Newman. • Catholic Peace Fellowship: J. McGovern. • Jesu Caritas: J. McGovern. • St. Vincent’s Church: L. Laver. • Cabrini College: L. Laver. • Metropolitan Christian Council: V. Compher. • St. Francis: Sr. S. Flynn. • Sisters of the Assumption: Sr. S. Flynn. • Glenside Ministerium: I. Hussain. • Others: Put out a request for others to be point persons for their faith communities. • Note: The Lutheran Seminary’s graduation is 5/22/05, so folks from that institution will not be able to participate in this year’s Walk. • Sponsors: We did not have an official list of sponsors last year. A sponsors list may assist in garnering media access; and groups such as JRF (Jewish Reconstructionist Federation) and UAHC (Union of American Hebrew Congregations) are strong in this area and have many constituent organizations; however, we did not have a list of sponsors last year—and that did not adversely affect the Walk or its publicity. TBD for this year. • Banners: We did not have political or group-designated banners last year, and it was OK. Possibly we could have banners at Al-Aqsa only (the last stop). To be discussed at the next meeting. • Media contacts: H. Levine, P. Coyne and E. Conboy. M. Kreidie and V. Pearson will be asked (in absentia) to join this committee. • Filming: All agreed that we were fortunate to have Usame Tunagur film last year’s Peace Walk (as part of a graduate school program). The film will be shown at Al-Aqsa in May as part of the Palestine Film Festival. If we can find a filmmaker for this year’s Walk, P. Coyne noted that it would be good to document the planning process as well. S. Newman will check into a possible Temple University filmmaker. • Permit: P. Coyne will look into permits (with M. Kreidie). • Aerial photograph: P. Coyne will investigate an aerial photograph of the city for use with the flyer and/or event-day material. • Walk Route, Program & Instructions: L. Laver will develop a data sheet for the march with this information, following confirmation of the Walk route and transport. • Funds: We have \$742 in our account to use for this year’s Peace Walk. 		
13.06	<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> <p>Copies of the Peace Walk film are now available in VHS and DVD formats for \$7.00 each. Contact V. Compher for copies.</p>		

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13.07	<p>Supporting the Sudan/Darfur Coalition: R. Woessner described a recent meeting of this group, which would like our support in its effort to stopping the violence in Sudan. See calendar listing for this group's upcoming program—and its call for a moment of silence (on 3/17 or 4/6) to mark the 10th anniversary of the start of the Rwandan genocide.</p>		
13.08	<p>Compassionate Listening Workshop: This workshop, led by Martin Dronsfield, Director of Interfaith Programs for 'Opening of the Heart' will be held at the Philadelphia Interfaith Center, Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral on Sunday, April 17 from 1:00 to 9:00 PM. Call 215-222-1012 for more information.</p>		
13.09	<p>Tent of Abraham – October 2005: A. Waskow described a “new initiative of Muslims, Christians and Jews...part of an upsurge in multi-religious prophetic concern for peace, justice and the earth.” The <i>Tent of Abraham Statement</i> reads:</p> <p>Gathering in response to the Spirit's call— To make peace, not war; To make justice, not oppression; To build bridges, not erect barriers; To heal the earth, not despoil it; and To renew and expand our democracy—</p> <p>We members of the families of Abraham—Jews, Christians, Muslims—invite you, and all people of good will, to join us in creating circles that celebrate the prophetic vision of our traditions, both in attitudes and actions.</p> <p>According to tradition, the Tent of Abraham, Hagar and Sarah was open in all four directions, the more easily to share food and water with travelers from anywhere. In that spirit, we welcome all those who thirst and hunger for justice, peace and dignity to join in celebrating the Tent of Abraham, Hagar and Sarah—</p> <p>By gathering in a way that nurtures the spirit --through circles of personal sharing about our spiritual journeys --breaking bread together --respectfully shared worship the creation of new, common ceremonies and occasions of celebration --the linking of festival times --our rich traditions of singling, dancing and the arts --discerning ways the Spirit is calling us to action</p> <p>by supporting each other in strategies that --create local and regional occasions for similar sharing and action --link regional and national celebrations to the festivals and holy days of each other's traditions --serve the young, especially those alienated from or indoctrinated by our traditions --seek human rights for all --challenge the forces that undermine democracy and support oppression</p> <p>The group is planning a series of events in October 2005 around <i>A Convergence of Ramadan, Tishre and St. Francis Day</i>, where the confluence of special days “provides an opportunity for many kinds of local, national and international activities. See www.tentofabrham.org for updates and resources to use to create your own rituals. (MM.11)</p>		
13.10	<p>Next Peace Walk planning meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday, March 30, 2005 at Al-Aqsa, 7:00 PM. <p>Date for 2005 Peace Walk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunday, May 22, 2005. 		