

Interfaith Peace Walk for Jewish-Muslim Reconciliation Minutes of Meeting No. 9

Location	Philadelphia, PA	Issue Date	October 29, 2004
Type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Phone Call	Date Held	October 13, 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:
Rashedah Abdul-Khabeer Ronald Abrams Dr. Mohammad Almashhadani Allison Carter Edd Conboy Vic Compher Patricia Coyne Peter Handler Adab Ibrahim Ken Johnson Susan Johnson Marwan Kriedie Lance Laver Rachel Lawton Jim McGovern George Mordecai Rabbi Arthur Waskow	Attendees Interfaith Peace Walk E-Mail List

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9.01	Purpose: Interfaith Peace Walk for Jewish-Muslim Reconciliation Third Post-Walk Planning Meeting		
9.02	Introductions: All participants introduced themselves and the groups with which they are affiliated.		
9.03	<p>PCHR appreciation: R. Lawton, Acting Executive Director of the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, spoke in recognition of the collaborative interfaith/religious Peace Walk effort that, she said, has shown the larger community what respect for others' faiths can do for tolerance. She noted that the chairperson of PCHR, Rev. James S. Allen, Sr., had personally picked this group (as represented by V. Compher, A. Ibrahim and L. Laver) for his Chairman's Award at the forthcoming 2004 Human Rights Awards Luncheon.</p> <p><i>(Post-meeting note: The awards luncheon, held on 10/21/04, was attended by about 25 people from the Peace Walk planning committee. In presenting the award, Ms. Lawton acknowledged the entire planning group, and prior to the lunch, all stood together for a group photo in recognition of the collaborative</i></p>		

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	<i>effort. The honorees again wish to thank PCHR for the recognition, which will help spread the message of peace and reconciliation in the community.)</i>		
9.04	Al-Aqsa façade project: A. Ibrahim spoke about the nearly completed Al-Aqsa façade project, sponsored by the Mural Arts Program and Arts & Spirituality Center, which has included significant community/area participation and has helped to revitalize the neighborhood. She noted that there will be a dedication/ribbon cutting ceremony on Sunday, November 14 at 3:00 PM that all are invited to attend.		
9.05	Documentary film project on the Peace Walk: 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.	V. Compher	
9.06	<p>Compassionate Listening discussion:</p> <p>The group discussed the benefits of learning about the model for <i>Compassionate Listening (CL)</i> to increase our ability to be aware the other's point of view with an open heart and mind. E. Conboy described the two-day, experiential CL training he had with Leah Green in a group of 24-28 people that focused on learning to "look at what's in the way of listening and not taking positions." He said in 30-odd years of various trainings, CL was one of the one or two best. He said he is in lots of situations of diversity and is "comfortable with diversity I like." But, he added, CL is valuable "in the presence of people I find despicable...to pay attention, to listen to their hopes, fears and aspirations...it takes a lot of discipline. I make choices to avoid those situations," he added, "but this training is extremely valuable otherwise."</p> <p>V. Compher noted that the intention of the training to is help bring together people with very different points of view. He will contact Sherry Hauser, a CL facilitator, about coming to a future Peace Walk meeting to explain the training (after which we will decide if we want to pursue the training as a group, possibly with Leah Green). A sub-committee of E. Conboy, V. Compher, R. Abrams and J. McGovern will pursue this possibility.</p>		
9.07	<p>Hands-on projects:</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). 		

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	<p>questioning - "Is it time to break fast yet?" - and my growling stomach. And no one made a break for food as fast as I did when the sun had set. Poutine never looked so good.</p> <p>Fasting in Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is generally taught with ritual precision: abstaining from food, drink and intimate relations from dawn to dusk. Ironically, Ramadan is best known, whether by Muslims or others the world over for its exotic culinary delicacies.</p> <p>Ramadan, however, has nothing to do with feasting. The spirit and intent of Ramadan lies in a human transformation, with hunger and thirst being merely the first stage, the external dimension, in a month-long inner journey of struggle and discovery.</p> <p>For starters, fasting is not solely about hunger and thirst. The prophet Mohammed taught that God has no need for the hunger and thirst of someone who hurts others, violates their dignity or usurps their rights. The fasting of the stomach must be matched by the fasting of the limbs. The eyes, ears, tongue, hands and feet all have their respective fasts to undergo. The tongue's temptations, for example - lies, backbiting, slander, vulgarity and senseless argumentation - must be challenged and curbed to maintain the integrity of the fast.</p> <p>Consciousness of behaviour and vigilance over action are meant to lead to the most profound dimension of fasting: the fasting of the heart in focus on, and attachment to, the divine. It is then that Ramadan really becomes a source of peace and solace.</p> <p>Fasting is meant to impart a sense of what it means to be truly human...</p> <p>A. Ibrahim has provided the following guidelines for the group: <u>Do's and Dont's for Fasting</u></p> <p>This is just some simple advice to help you fast, and gain true meaning of the fasting ritual.</p> <p>First read the story above, which gives an overview about the fast. I can give you some guidelines, and the rest is up to each of you to follow the best of your ability!</p> <p>Start off by making your intention to fast to God. For the Islamic fast, no drinking, eating or smoking is allowed. Fasting starts right before sunrise, which will be 4:51 a.m. The fast continues and ends at sunset which will be at 4:56 p.m. There is a small meal which we eat called 'sahur', which is a light breakfast usually eaten ½-1 hour before sunrise. (If you need to have your caffeine, take it then!)</p>		

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	<p>It is customary to 'break' our fast with dates, or water. Breaking the fast should be done precisely at the time of sunset. Eating the meal comes secondary to breaking the fast and could be postponed if necessary.</p> <p><u>Dietary Restrictions</u> We understand that no pork or pork by-products are allowed. Nothing cooked with wine or alcohol. No wine or alcoholic beverages. We agreed to bring vegan and fish dishes. As far as Islamic law, we are allowed to eat the food from People of the Book, meaning Jews and Christians. Some Muslims have conveyed the idea of bringing dishes with meat and poultry to share with those who would like to eat from it. I think that's it!</p> <p>Additional note: Please carefully mark/label the ingredients in the dish(es) that you bring, especially if the dish contains meat—so that vegetarians and others with meat-related dietary restrictions can make appropriate distinctions (e.g., vegetable and dairy foods are OK for people keeping kosher.) All are welcome to participate!</p>		
9.09	<p>Interfaith Religious Festivals' Observance – 2005: 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. <p>During the weekend, everyone present could observe the dawn-to-dusk fast of Ramadan. All present could also join in the Sukkah, the "hut with a leafy, leaky roof" that symbolizes both earth-connection and connection to other peoples. (The festival of Sukkot traditionally celebrates and welcomes the "70 nations of the world.") Christians could teach about and celebrate St Francis.</p> <p>Each tradition could follow its own practice of prayer, while the retreat as a whole sets aside three particular</p>	A. Waskow, Peace Walk group + others	Ongoing

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	<p>prayer times during the weekend for each of them to hold a service that invites everyone present to take part.</p> <p>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.</p> <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> <p>3. Another possibility is that various mosques, synagogues, and churches join to undertake some public project of healing the 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>		
9.10	<p>Human rights initiative by RHR: A. Waskow reported the following human rights initiative currently under way:</p> <p>Rabbis for Human Rights/North America has decided to take on violations of human rights of Muslims by the US government -- US citizens, immigrants or other foreigners, and prisoners held overseas by the US military or other authorities -- as an issue for its own action.</p> <p>Since this area is entirely new for RHR/North America, there will be a period for familiarization with the question before the Board decides on action. Any advice or information that members of the Philadelphia-area network can give in this regard would be a great help. Please write Rabbi Arthur Waskow at Awaskow@aol.com.</p>	A. Waskow & Rabbis for Human Rights	Ongoing

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	(RHR/ NA is a sister and support organization for Rabbis for Human Rights in Israel, which has defended Palestinians against home demolitions, olive -tree uprootings, destruction of their olive harvests, and similar attacks, and has defended Israelis against denial of economic rights as defined by Torah and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.)		
9.11	Next meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The next planning meeting will be on Wednesday, November 17, 2004 at Al-Aqsa at 7:00 PM. 		
9.12	Summary of announcements: Following is a summary of forthcoming programs/notices (in chronological order) of significance to the Peace Walk group—both mentioned above and others. All events are free unless noted otherwise. Additional information and detail to follow in subsequent e-mails:		

DATE/TIME	EVENT / ITEM	PLACE	CONTACT
January 2-15, 2005	Fellowship of Reconciliation delegation to Israel and Palestine (led by Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb) NOTE: STATED APPLICATION DEADLINE IS 10/29/04 (apologies for late notice)	 jan 2005 flyer (email version).doc	FOR Interfaith Peace-Builders, 4545 42 nd St. NW, Suite 209, Washington, DC 20016
Tuesday, 11/2/04: 7:00 PM	Concert for Peace – Kulna Sawa Band  Concert for Peace (134 KB).msg	Central Philadelphia Friends Meetinghouse, Friends Center, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia	Amanda – 215/214-7228 Tickets available at the door: \$15/\$10—students
Thursday, 11/4/04: 5:30 PM	Ramadan Iftar ‘break fast’ for Peace Walk participants and friends	Putnam Building, 1627 N. 2 nd Street, Philadelphia	See description in Meeting Minutes above
Monday, 11/8/04: 12:00 PM	Philadelphia Area Interfaith Peace Network meeting	Friends Center Meeting House, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia	
Sunday, 11/14/04: 3:30 PM	Al-Aqsa façade project dedication/ribbon cutting ceremony	Al-Aqsa Islamic Society, 1501 Germantown Avenue (at 3 rd & Jefferson Streets), Phila.	
Wednesday, 12/1/04: 7:30 PM	Middle East Peace Network meeting	Friends Center Meeting House, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia	Ken Johnson – kwj1@psu.edu

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May 15-22, 2005	Philadelphia Palestine Film Festival (including films, speakers, exhibits and performances)	TBD. Sponsors include Phila. Jewish Peace Network, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, AFSC, Scribe Video Center and Wooden Shoe Bookstore.	Coordinated by Philadelphia SUSTAIN. The organizing committee is seeking added co-sponsors to lend support and funding (\$100-150). For more information and to co-sponsor, contact mica@riseup.net
	Palestinian and Jewish Recipes for Peace—A cookbook First Edition, Winter 2004, 100 pages, illustrated, 71 recipes, 25 stories, 18 special features, well-indexed, including special recipes passed from generation to generation in Jewish and Palestinian families	Celebrating 12 years of sustained relationship building and community outreach by the Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group of San Mateo County, California. Including personal stories and photos of Palestinians and Jews in the Dialogue.	Request books at http://traubman.igc.org/recipes.htm (Note: No price identified.)
Sunday, 11/1/04: evening	International Election Eve Vigil	Friends' Center, 15 th & Cherry Streets, Phila.	American Friends Service Committee – 215/241-7123
Sunday, 11/1/04: 7:00 – 8:00 PM	Election Eve Candlelight Vigil for Peace, Justice & Democracy To hold our nation in the light. To show that democracy matters. To call for clean elections. To remember the things we all care about: peace, justice, security.	Rittenhouse Square, 18 th & Walnut Streets, Philadelphia	Endorsing organizations include: National Council of Churches, United for Peace & Justice; Brandywine Peace Community; The Shalom Center; The Other Side Magazine + others
Sunday, 5/15/05	Second Interfaith Peace Walk for Jewish-Muslim Reconciliation	Philadelphia: details to follow.	