For One Great Peace
An Interfaith Study Guide

An Exploration of the Resources Within the Abrahamic Tradition for Peacemaking

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A project of the Abrahamic Faiths Peacemaking Initiative
Acknowledgements

This curriculum is a project of the Abrahamic Faiths Peacemaking Initiative (AFPI), an interfaith collaborative based in Los Angeles, California. This collaborative has been meeting for over 10 years to discuss, pray, support, mourn, march, and now, publish. Made up of religious leaders from the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities, AFPI has commissioned this work from three learned practitioners of their own religious traditions. Special thanks go to All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena, the California-Pacific Annual Conference Peace with Justice Committee of the United Methodist Church, and New Vision Partners for their efforts in funding this project. This work could not have come to fruition without the coordination and work of Dr. Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook of the Claremont School of Theology, Rev. Paige Eaves of the United Methodist Church, Franci-Levine Grater, Rabbi Neil Comess-Daniels of Temple Beth Shir Shalom, and Dr. Steve Wiebe of New Vision Partners.

To a more peaceful future!

Prepared for publication by Lorynne Young
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As an introduction to the Abrahamic Faiths Peacemaking Initiative and these study materials, participants are invited to go to the AFPI website to hear the stories of members of the organization as they share their commitment to interfaith dialogue and peacemaking, http://abrahamicfaithspeacemaking.com.

We live in a world where examples of religious pluralism abound in local communities everywhere. Porous world boundaries due to globalizing, immigration, technology, and transportation have produced a climate where religious understanding-and misunderstanding-lies at the heart of local, national, and global issues. Increasingly, we find ourselves having to learn about the differences among religious traditions in order to articulate the nature of current events. Few remain unaware of the realities of individual and communal religious violence in our society. Discussions about the current American religious landscape often ignore one salient fact: that the Abrahamic religions and cultures have been deeply intertwined and intricately related from their inception. After the 1965 Immigration Act, other religions, such as those with origins in Asia, have been steadily growing in their number of adherents in the United States. Places of worship for Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist and other religious traditions are part of the religious landscape of nearly all communities across the United States. Los Angeles is considered the most diverse Buddhist city in the world. In states like California, there is no majority race, ethnicity, or religion. Similar demographic shifts, while uneven across the United States, will occur often in the next fifty years, and are no longer confined to the coastal cities more often associated with religious diversity.

Although the materials in this study guide are geared toward members of Abrahamic faith communities, it is the hope of AFPI that others will read them and make a commitment to interfaith dialogue and peacemaking. The members of AFPI that have contributed to this resource have participated in long standing interfaith relationships, experiencing deep satisfaction, as well as fears and failures along the way. We share a vision of the human community free of religious oppression and we pray for peace. Consider this study guide an invitation to explore the interfaith relationships of your own religious experience and faith community. These curriculum materials help participants:

- Reflect on what it means to be faithful to a religious tradition, to affirm the dignity of all people, and to promote peace in human relationships.
- Develop an understanding of the relationship between peacemaking and the Abrahamic faith traditions.
- Acquire basic skills in interfaith dialogue and for building bridges across religious and cultural differences to create a deeper sense of community.
- Understand that people of all religious traditions can make a difference and contribute to peacemaking in their home communities and beyond.
- To act for peace and justice and to develop specific and attainable action plans for faith communities.

Leader Guidelines

The success of these curriculum materials depends on the skills of the leaders. Skilled and experienced leaders and co-leaders who have knowledge of group process and have facilitated discussions based in sensitive materials from a religious perspective are ideal. As is the case with most interfaith encounters, leaders comfortable and knowledgeable of their own religious identity add to the effectiveness of the process. When available, co-leadership provides significant benefits for leaders and participants. Co-leaders can provide participants with more diverse perspectives and leadership styles, as well as share the workload. While there is no recipe for the success of any curriculum, those leaders with skills in creating respectful and supportive environments, and who are willing to examine their own attitudes and judgments contribute to a positive ethos. Although program designs...
Introduction

The stories of the Abrahamic Faiths Peacemaking Initiative (AFPI) are based in hope. As imperfect as the relationships between faith communities may be at times, we are confident that we have the capacity to grow together and to make deeper interfaith relationships possible. Lasting peace is possible only when all of God’s people are able to live in peace. The point has been made that building interfaith understanding will contribute to our local communities and our world. A point should also be made that encounters with other faiths give us a better appreciation of what life is like for members of other religious and cultural groups, as well as transferable skills that are applicable to a wide variety of situations and social contexts. The ability to listen and work and share compassionately with people who hold different views than ourselves is a valuable skill gained through interfaith dialogue that are also helpful when working through theological differences in intra-religious dialogue with members of our own faith traditions. Interfaith peacemaking cannot be limited to a religious “program.” Rather, it is integral to the well-being of all humankind. This vision encompasses both ethical practice as well as public policy-making in our local communities. It challenges faith communities to develop spiritual grounding for people that enables them to hold their own religious truths, while at the same time respecting the religious truths of their neighbors. Indeed, many faith communities already have more religious diversity in their midst than they recognize or celebrate. Through interfaith families, and through networks related to work and school, many people are already involved in interfaith dialogue on a daily basis.

The Curriculum

Overall, the curriculum is comprised of this introduction, two introductory lessons on sharing stories and basic models of interfaith encounter, three lessons on each of three Abrahamic traditions and peacemaking, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and a closing lesson. Sessions are designed to be one to three hours in length, depending on local custom. Lessons may be used individually or together and offer a choice of activities. Each lesson is designed to be self-contained and leaders have a choice to utilize the whole curriculum or sections thereof. Although the materials are written with adult education audiences in mind, sections may be adapted for older youth when appropriate.

Vary according to context, some helpful guidelines for leaders include:

- Provide appropriate and comfortable meeting space for the group.
- Arrange space to allow for democratic participation; be aware of an access needs and dietary restrictions of group members.
- Arrive in advance of participants so hospitality is ready and available when participants begin to arrive.
- Have sufficient supplies and copies of materials available for participants in advance.
- Allow adequate time for introductions and use nametags until members are known to the leaders and each other.
- Commit to beginning and ending sessions on time.
- Build the community. Include opening and closing exercises that help participants get to know the other members of the group.
- Create a climate that supports prayer and reflection. Use the prayers and rituals of your tradition to support learning. Allow time and space for silence as well as speaking.
- Remind participants that dialogue is as much (perhaps more) about listening as it is about speaking. Practice listening skills with the group if necessary. Insist that put-downs of people or their feelings are unacceptable.
- Plan for a diversity of learning styles using a variety of media, print, visuals, discussion, etc.
- Seek a balance in participation. What for individuals or groups who dominate, as well as those who are silent. Encourage all, but also give all the right to pass in any discussion.
- Make it clear that no members of the group will be forced to share more than they feel comfortable to reveal.
- Enlist the whole group in taking responsibility for making the experience work.

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Part 2. Sharing Stories
Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook

Introduction

Integral to building interfaith understanding is both the learning and unlearning of our stories of religious pluralism, our “histories” and the histories of our faith communities. What does the historical record have to say about the relationships between our own religious tradition and other religious groups? What are the resources within religious traditions to work for peace with justice? How have we participated in the persecution of persons of other religious groups, and when have we acted in solidarity with those who are oppressed? What events in our shared histories have helped shape our vision of religious pluralism? How is God speaking to our faith communities now, and how has God formed us, challenged us, nurtured us, and facilitated change through us over time?

One of the first steps in building interfaith relationships is the telling of stories, which unmask the various levels of history within families and faith communities, and show how religious experiences differ when told from varying perspectives. Austrian-born Jewish philosopher Martin Buber believed that the telling of stories has the capacity to bring healing, and is in itself sacred action. Buber tells a story about a grandfather who was once the student of a holy rabbi, Baal Shem 'Tov. The good rabbi used to jump and dance as he prayed. The story of the rabbi at prayer was so powerful that the act of telling it brought healing to the grandfather. “My grandfather stood up while he was telling the story and the story carried him away so much that he had to jump and dance to show he [holy Baal Shem 'Tov] had done it. From that moment, [my grandfather] was healed. This is how stories ought to be told.”

The poet Maya Angelou writes, “History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.” Stories have the ability to be transformative to both the storyteller and listener. Each person is the authority of their own personal story of religious pluralism. Some persons may have formal religious training, while others have not studied the Torah, Bible or Qur’an. Yet each person owns their own unique religious experience, as well as what they learned from that experience. Efforts to build relationships across religious differences are empowered by storytelling because they convey lived religious experiences. Rather than beginning interfaith dialogue with doctrinal debates, storytelling enables people to first appreciate the human experience of another. Our personal experience is at the root of how we experience religious differences, as well as how we experience God. Stories are a means to enable people with different religious identities to engage each other on a human level. “Once we have heard another’s story, once we know them as a person, it becomes much more difficult to objectify them or to consider them evil,” says Najeeb Syeed-Miller, a Muslim interfaith educator. “The process of hearing another’s story and telling them own is one of the first steps toward greater understanding between people of different religious groups.”

The Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), an organization founded in 1998 by Eboo Patel, organizes young people and their allies to promote religious pluralism and to peacefully create understanding and collaboration. One of the foundations of the group’s interfaith organizing strategy is the belief that being a good storyteller and a good listener are essential skills to being a good interfaith leader. According to the IFYC, telling a story helps us frame our thoughts, empowers ourselves and others, and shapes our social identities. The IFYC advises young people - advice applicable to members of faith communities everywhere - that to be a religious pluralist is an identity that we must actively choose, not in place of our own religious identities, but alongside them. “A personal story of religious pluralism is a story from your own experience that illustrates why you care about religious pluralism,” states IFYC. “You may have many different moments - even disparate moments, or moments when you failed to act for religious pluralism - that inform why you are an interfaith leader today.”

Christian ethicist Stanley Hauerwas writes that,
“Stories are not substitute explanations we can someday hope to supplant with more straightforward accounts. Precisely to the contrary, narratives are necessary to our understanding of those aspects of our experience which admit no further explanation.” Hence our stories not only help us to connect to our past, but also help us to inform our current actions and envision the future.

Conducting the Lesson
My Story of Religious Pluralism

The purpose of this lesson is to allow participants to hear the stories of other members of the group, to share their own story, and to make connections between our personal stories of religious pluralism and the larger movement for interfaith peacemaking. This lesson may be used with other lessons in the curriculum as a way to begin the program. This activity in this session can be adjusted to fit a 1-3 hour time block. Planners are encouraged to utilize the other lessons and activities in this curriculum, including the stories of the members of the AFPI on the website, as well as the additional resources offered there.

Materials Needed:
Chairs arranged in a circle. Depending on the time allotted, groups larger than 10-12 participants may choose to divide into smaller groups. In the case of multiple groups, it is important to allow adequate space for sharing without groups hearing each other. If you choose to do the optional activity, you will also need markers, newsprint, or a board to write on.

I. Opening Exercise - Getting Acquainted
Leaders welcome everyone, introduce themselves, and share logistical information with the group. Give a brief overview of the program. Invite participants to introduce themselves by sharing their names, what motivated them to join the program, and what they hope to gain from the experience. Members of some religious traditions may choose to begin the lesson with a prayer or song or opt to light a candle during periods of sharing.

Optional Activity:
As a means of introduction, ask participants to share the “story of their name.” First, ask members of the group to write their full name, as they wish to share it, in the language it was given, on the board or a sheet of newsprint. Then ask participants to share how their names evolved over the course of their lives. Why were they given particular names at birth? Did they receive their names from birthparents? What is the cultural origin of their names? What names did they add or change during the course of their lives? Did they gain names or nicknames? Did they change any of their names? Lastly, what do they want to be called now? As each participant tells the story of their name, ask them to write and post it for the group to see. Ask for reflections on the process.

II. My Story of Religious Pluralism
The leader explains the connections between interfaith dialogue and sharing our stories of religious pluralism. Tied into this story is the belief that dialogue is about listening and speaking. In listening to and taking in the story of another we are participating in an act of compassion. Remind participants of the following guidelines for compassionate listening:

Compassionate Listening: Some Assumptions

A First Step Toward Interfaith Dialogue
1. Compassionate Listening assumes that before authentic dialogue can occur, conflicting parties must first listen to each other. We cannot assume that we really know how it is to be another.
2. Compassionate Listening does not seek to change the other, but to love them. The more a person is loved, the more they are free to respond to inner truth.
3. Compassionate Listening assumes that to build peace we need to acknowledge the humanity and the suffering of the other. That misunderstanding, conflicts, and violence are the result of unhealed wounds.
4. Compassionate Listening trusts that when people truly feel heard, they will be more open to hearing the stories of those with whom they disagree.
5. Compassionate Listening as a practice of reconciliation, and is thus based in the belief that mutual understanding and respect are the foundations for building communities across the borders of difference.

After reviewing the guidelines for compassionate listening, ask participants to take a few moments for reflection, and then share their own story of religious pluralism. It is often helpful
for a leader to model this exercise by telling their own story first, briefly, yet with depth and clarity. Groups may ask a co-leader or a member of the group to act as a gentle time keeper, allowing up to ten minutes per person for their story. Participants may be helped by offering them the following questions as a way to guide their stories, though no participant need answer every question in order:

Reflect on your own “story” or religious pluralism:

1. What is your religious heritage? What is the most beautiful aspect of that heritage?
2. When and how did you first learn that there were people of religious backgrounds other than your own?
3. Growing up, what contact did you have with people from other religious traditions? What guidance or models did you have for relationships with those people?
4. How did the important adults in your life help you to understand religious differences?
5. What is the cruelest thing someone from a different religion did to you? Today, what is your greatest fear about interfaith relationships?
6. How do you feel about religious pluralism in your own community? What are your primary interfaith relationships today?

After all have shared their story, the leader invites volunteer responses to the following evaluative questions: How was that exercise for you? Did you learn or hear anything new? What was the most difficult question for you to answer? Was there anything surprising? How do you think sharing stories contributes to interfaith dialogue?

Optional Activity:
Reflect on your faith community a group compile share your experience of that story. What are the significant interfaith events and experiences of your faith community? What have you learned from that history? How would you characterize the interfaith relationships of your faith community? Where do you see opportunities for growth? How might your faith community promote peace with justice?

III. Closure
With the group gathered, ask participants to share their hopes for future sessions. Leaders may also choose to end in prayer or song.

\[^1\] Martin Buber, Werke III (Munick: Kosel, 1973), 71. This story is also told in the Interfaith Youth Core, Interfaith Leaders Toolkit (Chicago: Interfaith Youth Core, 2009), 14–15.


\[^3\] Najeeba Syeed-Miller, Claremont School of Theology, March 14, 2011. iv IFYC, Interfaith Leaders Toolkit, 14–19


Part 3. Interfaith Hospitality
Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook

Introduction
Daily encounters between people from different religious traditions have reshaped American religion. In looking at the lives of religiously committed people in faith communities, interfaith dialogue is both an opportunity and a challenge. The gifts of religious diversity and the evidence of religious pluralism in local communities suggest that the time has come to move interfaith dialogue beyond the scholarly worlds and into our houses of worship, families, schools, and workplaces. Through interfaith dialogue, we encounter our neighbors from other religions, spiritual growth occurs and we gain a deeper understanding of our own faith. Interfaith dialogue also enlarges our hearts, opening new circles of friendship and bringing new depth to our relationships. Through interfaith dialogue we participate in building more compassionate human communities. In this way, S. Asif Razvi of the Islamic Center of Boston affirms the value of interfaith encounters: “Islam is a continuation of the other two Abrahamic faiths and it is every practicing Muslim’s obligation to inform others about our faith,” he says. “We find dialogue to be the best approach to inform non-Muslims and to correct the widespread misconceptions about Islam.”

Interfaith hospitality, as a spiritual practice, is required of followers of the Abrahamic traditions, as well as other religions. Through interfaith dialogue we provide hospitality and care to our neighbors. Interestingly, the words both “hostility” and “hospitality” share the same root, yet different meanings. Hostility thrives on turning intra- and intergroup differences into conflicts, while hospitality is about remaining open to persons and ideas different from our own. One meaning focuses on seeing outsiders as potential enemies, while the other stresses the willingness to take risks and offer welcome. In interfaith dialogue the practice of hospitality is about making space within our lives and in our communities by extending care to others as members of our own family, and to attend openly and respectfully to the stories and experiences of those from other religious traditions.

Interfaith hospitality means going out of our way, and often feeling discomfort, at entering our neighbor’s synagogue, church, or mosque. It means offering hospitality and inviting others into our midst. Interfaith hospitality includes providing appropriate food and drink to our guests, a very basic challenge for faith communities. Interfaith hospitality in the spiritual sense means even more. Not only is the stranger to be genuinely welcomed, but we are to listen to their stories along the way. Characteristic of interfaith hospitality is the type of welcome that integrates respect with care, as well as the refusal to pre-judge those within our midst. Getting to know each other and building trust across religious traditions takes more than one conversation. It takes many conversations over time to develop a shared vision for the common good. Sometimes, interfaith hospitality will mean rejection and criticism from members of our own religious traditions. At other times, we will be tempted to pull back and focus inward. To offer genuine interfaith hospitality to our neighbors is both rewarding and costly.

“Don’t neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Hebrews 13:2)

Christian theologian Miroslav Volf uses the image of the “mutual embrace” as a way to envision hospitality. In the act of reaching beyond ourselves to connect with another, in waiting at the border to see if they are open to us, in holding them close to ourselves, and in finally, in letting go, both are transformed. Mahatma Gahndi’s sense of the importance of the practice of hospitality was evident in his ashram family, which included woman and men, young and old, Christians, Muslims, Jews, untouchables and Brahmans. He believed that the spiritual practice of hospitality was a suitable model for Indian society, and lived out the vision of a house where all windows and doors were open to people of good will.

How might opening our lives to interfaith dialogue help us to embrace those of other religious traditions? As members of the Abrahamic traditions, we are called to practice interfaith dialogue in the spirit of compassion and mutuality, to transform and to reconcile. This mandate is not limited to us, but part of a larger interconnected humanity.
As interest has grown in interfaith dialogue since the 1960s, various authors and practitioners have articulated slightly different ways of looking at the models available. For interfaith dialogue in faith communities, the four models of interfaith dialogue articulated through the work of scholar and interfaith advocate Leonard Swidler are helpful because they follow the patterns of human relationships in general, and because they are accessible to most religiously committed people. Not limited to the relationships within houses of worship or other religious organizations, the following patterns of dialogue indicate how persons of different religious groups can be about the business of interfaith dialogue throughout their daily lives, no matter where they live, and no matter what their occupation:vi

Conducting the Lesson
Models of Interreligious Dialogue

The purpose of this lesson is to acquaint participants with different models of interfaith dialogue, and to help them envision the ways their own faith community could build interfaith relationships that and contribute to the wider community. This lesson may be used with other lessons in the curriculum or on its own as a way to start a discussion on interfaith dialogue. This activity in this session can be adjusted to fit a 1-3 hour time block. Planners are encouraged to utilize the other lessons and activities in this curriculum, including the stories of the members of the AFPI on the website, as well as the additional resources offered there.

Materials Needed: A board to write on, or newsprint, markers and masking tape. Leaders may also choose to distribute sections of the lesson, such as “Dialogue versus Debate” or the definitions of the four models of interfaith dialogue.

I. Opening Exercise - Getting Acquainted

Leaders welcome everyone, introduce themselves, and share logistical information with the group. Give a brief overview of the program. Invite participants to introduce themselves by sharing their names, what motivated them to join the program, and what they hope to gain from the experience. Members of some religious traditions may choose to begin the lesson with a prayer or song or opt to light a candle during periods of sharing.

II. Dialogue verses Debate

The purpose of this section is to acquaint participants of the differences between dialogue, communication aimed at mutual understanding, verses debate, or communication that stresses the need to voice one’s ideas or over those of another, or to win an argument.

Draw a line down a sheet of newsprint or on a board. Label one column “Dialogue” and the other “Debate.” Ask participants to name the contrasts between the two forms of discourse. When the group has exhausted its ideas, share the list on the following page and compare it to the list generated by the participants. Are there further additions to the list?
Dialogue

Dialogue is the understanding of myself and others.

I listen openly and compassionately with the view that I want to understand.

I listen for strengths, so I can affirm and learn, and to hear other viewpoints.

I speak for myself using my own experiences and understanding, and examine my own assumptions.

I ask questions to increase understanding, and am willing to temporarily suspend my beliefs.

I allow others to complete their communications.

I concentrate on others’ words, feelings, body language, and other modes of communication.

I respect others’ experiences as true and valid for them, and want to work with others to come to new understandings.

I respect the expression of feelings in myself and others.

I honor silence.

I look for ways to keep the conversation going, even in conflict.

Debate

Debate is the successful argument of my position over that of an opponent.

I listen in order to counter what I hear, and am closed to new ideas.

I listen for weakness, so I can discount and de-value what I hear.

I speak based on my own assumptions about others experiences and motives, in an effort to prove that I am right.

I ask questions in order to control the conversation, or to confuse; I look for ways to affirm my own beliefs or “win.”

I interrupt or change the subject.

I focus on the point I want to make next.

I critique others’ experiences as distorted or invalid or wrong.

I distrust the expression of feelings as manipulative or less than legitimate.

I am anxious in silence or use it to gain advantage.

I look for ways to end the conversation, when I am uncomfortable.
III. Models of Interreligious Dialogue

As the models are shared, ask participants to take note of examples from their own experience, or from the life of their faith community.

❖ The Dialogue of Life.

This pattern of interfaith dialogue is found through interactions with our neighbors, and in our families, schools, and workplaces. The dialogue of life depends upon cultivating an awareness of persons from other religious groups, and a commitment to welcome the presence of others into our daily lives. The most basic level of interfaith dialogue, the dialogue of life, is also often overlooked in favor of more structured programs. Yet the capacity to form friendships across religious difference is integral to building interfaith communities. It is not possible to say on the one hand that we are committed to interfaith dialogue, and on the other hand, to have no examples of friends, family members, or colleagues from different religions among our neighbors. Just as interfaith programs for youth and children strive to make patterns of interfaith relationships part of the dialogue of life for young people, so too is it possible for adults to create an interfaith dialogue through their own lives.

Examples:

1. Form a “supper club” by combining members of two or three faith communities in a neighborhood into small groups. The small groups then have a meal and conversation once a month in one another’s home and build friendships.
2. Sponsor an “open house” in your house of worship on your own, or with other faith communities in your neighborhood. Offer visitors hospitality and an opportunity to tour your house of worship and meet members.
3. Offer to host visiting youth groups from other faith communities for an evening program or social event.

❖ The Dialogue of Action.

This pattern of dialogue is common among faith communities and focuses on collaborations between persons of different religious traditions in order to address social issues in a local community. In the dialogue of action relationships are built on several levels. Relationships are formed between those who dialogue about a particular problem, and as they decide ways to address the problem. Relationships are also formed between individuals and faith communities or other organizations as they actually do the work of addressing the issue. By extension, the dialogue can be brought to those in faith communities who are not directly involved in the program or project, but who learn about it or support it in other ways. Lastly, those on the receiving end of the project, either through gaining some kind of assistance or action, or those who work for the government or agency approached for service, can also become part of the dialogue as they learn more about the issues involved from other perspectives and as they form relationships across religious differences. Hopefully, the dialogue of action also relates to a greater self-understanding among all those involved in the process.

This form of dialogue is attractive to many faith communities because it yields practical results, and because it directly benefits the local community. For instance, local hunger or housing task forces are common ways that faith communities are engaged in interfaith hospitality and dialogue. This pattern of interfaith dialogue can be enhanced, however, if those engaged in common action also take the time to form relationships across religious differences. For instance, are volunteers at a local food pantry consciously recruited from all religious groups, and scheduled to work together, or are they segregated on different days and times? If your faith community co-sponsors a community-wide project to work on immigrant issues, have you taken the time to learn about their culture, religion, and places of origin? Have you gotten to know the leadership and the names, faces, and stories of the people? Have they had the opportunity to learn about you?

Examples:

1. Offer to work with an interfaith community organization to address critical issues in your community; share the meeting space and other resources of your faith community as you share in these efforts. Ensure that members of your faith community work for justice alongside those of other religious traditions.
2. Form an interfaith clergy group or take a leading role in an existing one.
3. Work with interfaith community organizations to support local schools in an anti-
bullying campaign, building play areas, or securing technology resources for children in the community.

The Dialogue of Spiritual Experience.

This form of interfaith dialogue is best illustrated through shared rituals, worship, prayer, silence, and retreat experiences. Experiences of corporate prayer and ritual tap into the depth of who we are and are integral to our religious experience, at times beyond the level of the spoken word. Interfaith spiritual experiences have the potential to yield a deep connection between people of different faiths, and at the same time offer the opportunity for us to share in images, insights, and rituals that might be quite different from our own. Authentic interfaith prayer and worship takes careful preparation and is best achieved through the direct and on-going relationships between individuals or faith communities of different religious backgrounds. It is not appropriate for one religious group to enact a spiritual practice of another religious group the lens of their own tradition and in the absence of interfaith relationships. Rather, the dialogue of spiritual experience is about shared prayer with members of other religious traditions, at the same time learning about how others understand the spiritual practices of their own tradition. When there is reciprocity in the spiritual experience, there is an opportunity for authentic interfaith dialogue.

Examples:

1. Join with another faith community to sponsor an interfaith retreat, meditation group, or pilgrimage on a shared theme.
2. Coordinate an interfaith festival focused on the arts and offered to the wider community.
3. Offer to share worship space with another faith community in need after a catastrophic event, or to better utilize an existing facility.

The Dialogue of Understanding.

The final pattern of interfaith dialogue relates to exchanging our beliefs, sacred texts, and religious history. Common in academic, monastic, and formal interfaith parliamentary settings, this pattern of dialogue contributes to shared knowledge of other religious traditions and builds mutual respect across religious differences. The dialogue of understanding presents several challenges for faith communities; serious enough that some avoid this pattern of dialogue entirely. The first common challenge is the fear on the part of many believers that they don’t know enough about their own religion to really dialogue on the level of belief, or doctrine, or theology. Within some religious cultures, religious belief is considered a private matter, and not a matter of public conversations. Others fear potential criticism or retribution as a result of sharing their religious beliefs. A related fear is the tension for some between wanting to honestly hear and affirm dialogue partners, and at the same time wanting to uphold their own version of religious truth. Some believe that open discussions of religious truths may cause some to change their religious affiliations. Yet, most people do not change their religious affiliation based solely on interfaith dialogue. Such conversions are normally the result of long period of reflection, rather than one specific encounter.

Faith communities can best enable the dialogue of understanding by supporting members in expressing their religious beliefs and experiences. Interestingly, monastic interfaith dialogues are careful to begin the dialogue within their own religious communities first, in preparation for extending the circle to interfaith conversations. While faith communities may not be equipped to give people this kind of intensive experience to help them articulate their religious values and beliefs, effective religious education can provide skills which enable the dialogue of understanding. The dialogue of understanding should not be limited to erudite or abstract topics. Religious questions which pervade all of human life are critical to the dialogue of understanding: What happens after death? How would you describe the presence of sin or evil in the world? What sustains you in the face of suffering or tragedy? Interfaith families engage in the dialogue of religious understanding all the time, in regard to discussions about rites of passage, arrangements for sickness or death, even in terms of what holidays or religious rituals become family practice.

One common method for the dialogue of understanding is the shared study of sacred texts between members of different religious groups. Bilateral Jewish-Christian or trilateral Christian-Jewish-Muslim dialogues based in the study of sacred texts are a powerful method of sharing in the dialogue of understanding. Given the shared Abrahamic heritage, both commonalities and differences emerge during the course of inten-
sive shared textual study. Texts studied solely from one religious perspective can have added meaning when interpreted by another religious group.

**Examples:**

1. Begin an interfaith book group between members of two or more faith communities; each community in turn chooses the selection.
2. Coordinate an interfaith study group with another faith community, and offer it as the adult education offering for both groups.
3. Recruit leaders from the Abrahamic faith traditions in your own community and develop a study group on peacemaking use this curriculum.

These four models of interfaith dialogue do not work in isolation, nor do they need to be programmed sequentially into the common life of a faith community. Gaining an understanding and learning to appreciate other religious traditions in an on-going process, not a one-time event, or something to be raced through. Each of the four models provides opportunities for deep interfaith dialogue. After participants have shared their reactions to the models, divide them into small groups of 4-6 and ask each group to reflect on the following questions:

1. As you reflect on the four models of interfaith dialogue, which are already present in your life, and which are new to you? Which models are most compelling to you, and why?
2. Where are the opportunities for interfaith dialogue that are already present in your faith community?
3. Where might you find future interfaith dialogue partners? Name at least three opportunities for interfaith dialogue that you are willing to work on in the future. Post those ideas on the board or on newsprint and the review with the whole group.

**IV. Closure**

With the group gathered, ask participants to share their hopes for future sessions. Leaders may also choose to end in prayer or song.

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i Interview Dr. S Asif Razvi, Islamic Center of Boston, April 7, 2010.


iii *The Inclusive Bible* translation, p. 779.


v Diana Eck, “Gandhian Guidelines,” 88


vii Adapted from Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, *Seeing the Face of God in Each Other* (New York: Episcopal Church Center, 2003), 54.
Part 4 - Judaism and Peacemaking
Lesson I - The Noahide Laws

Rabbi Olga Bluman

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the learners to the notion that faith communities establish norms for their parishioners as well as for people outside the faith community. In Judaism, this occurred through the Noahide laws. The texts included in this lesson will focus on the development of the Noahide Laws and the implications of creating standards for those “outside” the community.

It is hoped that the learners will recognize that even though an individual may be of another faith, he or she can still be respected as a human being, because he or she may have in common some of the universal values that are shared by the Abrahamic faiths.

Background Information for Text 2

The Rabbis of the Talmud (compilation of teachings of Rabbis and Jewish scholars, codified around 600 C.E.), present a number of ways that they derived the Noahide Laws from the Genesis narrative. One possible explanation of which laws the Rabbis included in the Noahide Laws is their assumption of the kind of behavior that the generation of the flood was engaged in, that merited their destruction. The Rabbis of the Talmud concluded that since Noah was described as righteous in the text (Gen. 6:9), he did not engage in the seven behaviors prohibited by the Noahide Laws. Although the Genesis text describes Noah as righteous, the majority of the Rabbis of the Talmud and later Rabbinic commentaries on Genesis, saw Noah as relatively righteous, meaning that he was righteous compared to the wicked people around him. In a more respectable age, he would have been average. (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 108a). It will be natural for the learners of this curriculum to focus on Noah’s righteousness and perhaps entertain the topic of what makes a person righteous in their generation. This would be a holy tangent but is not part of the scope of this lesson.

Materials Needed: Paper, Pens, Poster board, Markers, Copies of Text Study sheets, Post-it notes

Conducting the Lesson

I. Opening

- Participants will divide into small groups of 4-5 people.
  - Each group should receive poster board, markers, paper and pens.
- Participants will imagine that they are developing a charter for a new community. As a group, they should develop 7 laws that everyone in the new community will have to abide by.
- After about 15 minutes, small groups will come together and present the laws they came up with to the larger group. Participants should also share what factors they used in determining the laws and the challenges they encountered.
- A few minutes should be taken to analyze how the “charters” from the various groups are similar and different and what might account for the variances.
- Transition to the topic of the lesson: the Noahide Laws.
  - In Genesis 6, the Torah describes the civilization as very wicked and corrupt. As a result, God decides to destroy the world through a flood, except for a righteous individual, Noah and his family.
  - After the flood, God makes a covenant with Noah and his descendants (Genesis 9:1-17). According to the Jewish tradition, the descendants of Noah - universal humanity, are obligated by the seven commandments described in this covenant. They are known as “The Noahide Laws.”
  - Today’s lesson will focus on looking at the Noahide Laws and the implications of creating standards for those “outside” the community.
II. Text Study

- Depending on the size of the group of learners, can be done in small groups or as a large group. Distribute the Noahide Laws Handout.

III. Activity - Post-It Note Exercise - Creating “Working Rules”

- Each learner should receive a set of post-it notes and a pen.
- On each separate post-it note, learners will write down one “rule” or “value” that should be part of the ground rules of how the group will continue in their learning, throughout the rest of the curriculum. Examples may include:
  - Study in a non-judgmental pluralistic environment
  - Feedback is given in a productive way
  - Group learning begins with a prayer
  - Group members will take turns bringing snack
  - Each group member will help with clean up
- The “working rules” may also include how to handle conflict and a situation in which a member of the group’s behaviour may be contrary to the established “working rules.”
- Once everyone has had a chance to write their own post-it notes, they will affix the post-it notes to the wall.
- All of the learners will read through the post-it notes and will move the notes into order to sort/categorize them. This will go on until the majority of the group feels the sorting/categorizing is finished.
- After the sorting/categorizing is complete, small groups will each take a set of the post-it notes categories and attempt to write one or two “working rules” from the post-it notes.
- Once all of the “working rules” have been written, they will be transferred onto a piece of poster board (either during this session or in between this session and the next), so that the group will be mindful of the ground rules they generated as a group.

IV. Closing

- Participants will reflect on the learning of the day. Possible reflection questions:
  - What surprised you during the text study today?
  - What questions linger for you?
  - What are your hopes for the continuation of the learning?
  - What are your fears for the continuation of the learning?
**Text 1 - Genesis 9:1-11**

9 1 God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, “Be fertile and increase, and fill the earth. 2The fear and the dread of you shall be upon all the beasts of the earth and upon all the birds of the sky - everything with which the earth is astir - and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hand. 3Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these. 4You must not, however, eat flesh with its life-blood in it. 5But for your own lifeblood I will require a reckoning: I will require it of every beast; of man, too, will I require a reckoning for human life, of every man for that of his fellow man!

6 Whoever sheds the blood of man, By man shall his blood be shed; For in God’s image Did God make man.

7 Be fertile, then, and increase; abound on the earth and increase on it.” 8And God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 9 “I now establish My covenant with you and your offspring to come, 10and with every living thing that is with you - birds, cattle, and every wild beast as well - all that have come out of the ark, every living thing on earth. 11I will maintain My covenant with you: never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.

**Discussion Questions:**

- How does the covenant made between God and Noah’s descendants represent a partnership between God and people?
- Do you think these are fair conditions for such a relationship? Why or why not?

**Text 2 - Babylonian Talmud², Sanhedrin 56a**

The descendants of Noah were commanded with seven commandments: to establish laws and the prohibitions of cursing God, idolatry, illicit sexuality, bloodshed, theft and eating the blood of a living animal.

**Discussion Questions:**

- Of the Seven Commandments included in the Noahide Laws, which were you most surprised to see included and why?
- What others would you expect to be included?

**Text 3 - Maimonides³, The Law of Kings 8:11**

Anyone who accepts upon himself the fulfillment of these Seven Commandments and is precise in their observance is considered one of the pious of the nations of the world and will merit a share in the World to Come.

[The World to Come usually refers to one of three things: the way the world will be in the End of Days when the righteous are resurrected; a world of immortal souls that will follow the age of resurrection; or a heavenly world enjoyed by righteous souls immediately after death (i.e. prior to the End of Days).]

**Discussion Questions:**

- What are the implications of the Noahide Laws for Jews viewing other religions?
- What are the implications for Christians and Muslims who become aware that Jews have “expectations” and definitions for other people’s righteousness?
- What are the implications for Jews and Muslims who know that some within the Christian community will only confer “righteousness” upon those who accept Jesus?
- What are the implications for Christians and Jews who become aware that there are Muslim “expectations” for people of other faiths?

**Text 4 - Understanding the Noahide Laws by Jeffrey Spitzer⁵**

**The Details**

The prohibition against idolatry refers specifically to idolatrous worship, and not to beliefs. In later generations, Jews had to determine whether the prevailing religious cultures in which they lived were idolatrous. Since Islam is strictly monotheistic, Muslims have always been considered Noahides. Since the later Middle Ages, Jews have acknowledged that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity was not the same as idolatry,
and they were also recognized as Noahides. The prohibition against theft includes kidnapping, cheating an employee or an employer, and a variety of similar acts. The prohibition against illicit sexuality includes six particular prohibitions, derived from a single verse prohibiting sexual relations with one’s mother, with one’s father’s wife, with another man's wife, with his sister from the same mother, in a male homosexual union, and with an animal as it says, 'Therefore shall a man leave his father and cling to his wife and become one flesh' (Genesis 2:24).

Eating flesh from a living animal is how the rabbis understood "But flesh with its life, which is its blood, you shall not eat" (Genesis 9:4).

The Obligation to Create a System of Laws

According to the medieval philosopher and codifier Maimonides, the legal system which Noahides are required to set up is specifically to establish punishments for infractions of the other six Noahide laws (Laws of Kings 9:14). Nahmanides, a medieval Bible commentator, understands the obligation more broadly:

"In my opinion, the laws which the Noahides were to establish according to their seven commandments is not only to establish courts in each town, but that they were also commanded concerning theft, abuse, usury, labor relations, damages, loans, business, and the like, just as Israel was commanded to set up laws in these matters (Nahmanides, Commentary to Genesis 34:13)."

Natural Law

The Noahide laws bear a striking resemblance to a separate rabbinic tradition that describes the commandments that would have been derived logically even if God had not included them in the Torah:

"'You must keep my rulings' (Lev. 18:4): These are the items which are written in the Torah which, had they not been written should logically have been written, such as the [prohibitions against] robbery, illicit sexuality, idolatry, cursing God, and bloodshed" (Sifra, Ahare Mot, section 140).

The overlap here of five of the seven laws enumerated for Noahides indicates that they may have been understood as a sort of universal, natural morality. This is the way some modern philosophers, such as Hermann Cohen, understood them. Indeed, based on the Talmudic discussion, Maimonides states:

"Six items were commanded to Adam: concerning idolatry, blasphemy, bloodshed, illicit sexuality, theft, and laws...God added to Noah, the law of not eating from the flesh of a live animal" (Maimonides, Laws of Kings 9:1).

The association of these laws with Adam implies that they were established as part of the creation of the natural world.

Conclusion

That Jews perceive non-Jews as bound by a set of laws—even if they are not bound by the full range of Torah law—is a significant statement. The expectation that non-Jews will set up their own system of justice became the basis for peaceful interactions between Jews and non-Jews. The Noahide laws separated humanity after the flood from the lawless violence which brought God to the point of destroying the world. The Noahide laws stand as a testament to the Jewish belief in the need for the rule of law to protect all peoples.

Discussion Questions:

- How did Jewish tradition interpret and apply the details of the Noahide commandments? Do you think their interpretations made them easier or more difficult to follow?
- Do you agree that the Noahide Commandments are a part of “universal, natural morality”? Why or why not?
- Can “universal, natural morality” be derived from a Jewish source? Why or why not?
- While for most of history Jews did not have the authority to enforce the Noahide Laws, Jewish scholars throughout the ages have debated the theoretical dilemma of whether these rules should be required of people of other faiths living under Jewish rule. Based on the previous discussions of the Noahide Laws, do you think they should be enforced? Why or why not?
What does your faith community require of people who are not part of your faith community? How is that criteria determined? Is there a process of enforcing those requirements? If not, do you believe that there should be? Why or why not?

1 Adapted from the curriculum, Children of Abraham, Jews and Muslims in Conversation, prepared by the Union for Reform Judaism in partnership with the Islamic Society of North America. http://urj.org/

2 Compilation of teachings of Rabbis and Jewish scholars, codified around 600 C.E.

3 Jewish philosopher, scholar and physician, 1135–1204, born in Spain but lived most of his life in Egypt.

4 http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Theology/Afterlife and Messiah/Life After Death/World to Come.shtml

Lesson II - War and Peace
Rabbi Olga Bluman

Introduction
We live in an age where conflict and war pervade society, causing devastation and destruction to many. While some think that acts of war are justified in certain situations, others feel that violence will only lead to more violence and should never be used. What does the Jewish tradition say about war? Is it acceptable to use war as a means to an end, and if so, when? The Hebrew word for peace, shalom, signifies more than just the absence of war. The root of the word also denotes completion or perfection. In Judaism, shalom includes well-being, prosperity, and an ideal state of affairs.

The focus of this lesson is to explore the learners’ assumptions of what Judaism teaches about war and peace, as well as exploring Jewish texts on the subject. As mentioned above, Judaism teaches the importance and value of shalom, peace, completion, perfection. However, at times, as situations warranted the need for war, Jewish texts responded by provided wisdom for that necessity.

Materials: Pens, Prayer Books (that contain a prayer for peace)

Conducting the Lesson

I. Opening

- As a way to present the lesson’s topic, participants will be asked to answer the following questions:
  - What are your views on war?
  - Are acts of war justified in certain situations? Which ones?
  - What are the challenges of war?
  - What do you think the Jewish tradition says about war?

II. Text Study

- Participants will break up into learning pairs (2-3 people). Distribute the war & Peacemaking Handout.

III. Group Activity - Prayer for Peace

Distribute the Jewish Prayers of Peace Handout.

- Even though the texts studied in this lesson suggest that sometimes war is necessary, the ideal situation is one in which people strive for peace with their neighbors. As a group, learners will study the prayer for peace that exists in their communities’ prayer book. The learners will draft their own group’s prayer for peace.

- A selection of Jewish prayers for peace are included, for reference or if the community does not have their own.

IV. Closing

- Participants will reflect on the learning of the day. Possible reflection questions:
  - Based on the text study today, how would you summarize Judaism’s views on war and peace?
  - What surprised you during the text study today?
  - What questions linger for you?

V. For Further Reading

- To Do the Right and the Good: A Jewish Approach to Modern Social Ethics, by Elliot N. Dorff, (Jewish Publication Society, 2002).
• Chapter 3: "A People Apart": A Jewish Theology of Jewish Relations to Other Peoples
• Chapter 7: "A Time for War and a Time for Peace": The Ethics of War and International Intervention
• Chapter 8: Communal Forgiveness
Text 1 - Deuteronomy 20:1-8

1When you take the field against your enemies, and see horses and chariots - forces larger than yours - have no fear of them, for the LORD your God, who brought you from the land of Egypt, is with you. 2Before you join battle, the priest shall come forward and address the troops. 3He shall say to them, “Hear, O Israel! You are about to join battle with your enemy. Let not your courage falter. Do not be in fear, or in panic, or in dread of them. 4For it is the LORD your God who marches with you to do battle for you against your enemy, to bring you victory.” 5Then the officials shall address the troops, as follows: “Is there anyone who has built a new house but has not dedicated it? Let him go back to his home, lest he die in battle and another dedicate it. 6Is there anyone who has planted a vineyard but has never harvested it? Let him go back to his home, lest he die in battle and another harvest it. 7Is there anyone who has paid the bride-price for a wife, but who has not yet married her? Let him go back to his home, lest he die in battle and another marry her.” 8The officials shall go on addressing the troops and say, “Is there anyone afraid and disheartened? Let him go back to his home, lest the courage of his comrades flag like his.”

Discussion Questions:

❖ What kind of battle does this text seem to address?
❖ Why would some of the troops be exempt from fighting in battle?
❖ What values seem to be in conflict?
❖ What is this text’s attitude toward war?

Text 2 - Joshua 8:3, 7-8, 18-27

3So Joshua and all the fighting troops prepared for the march on Ai. Joshua chose thirty thousand men, valiant warriors, and sent them ahead by night...7 you will dash out from your ambush and seize the city, and the LORD your God will deliver it into your hands. 8And when you take the city set it on fire. Do as the LORD your God has commanded. Mind, I have given you your orders.” 18 The LORD then said to Joshua, “Hold out the javelin in your hand toward Ai, for I will deliver it into your hands.” So Joshua held out the javelin in his hand toward the city. 19As soon as he held out his hand, the ambush came rushing out of their station. They entered the city and captured it; and they swiftly set fire to the city. 20The men of Ai looked back and saw the smoke of the city rising to the sky; they had no room for flight in any direction. The people who had been fleeing to the wilderness now became the pursuers. 21For when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had captured the city, and that smoke was rising from the city, they turned around and attacked the men of Ai. 22Now the other [Israelites] were coming out of the city against them, so that they were between two bodies of Israelites, one on each side of them. They were slaughtered, so that no one escaped or got away. 23The king of Ai was taken alive and brought to Joshua. 24When Israel had killed all the inhabitants of Ai who had pursued them into the open wilderness, and all of them, to the last man, had fallen by the sword, all the Israelites turned back to Ai and put it to the sword. 25The total of those who fell that day, men and women, the entire population of Ai, came to twelve thousand. 26Joshua did not draw back the hand with which he held out his javelin until all the inhabitants of Ai had been exterminated. 27However, the Israelites took the cattle and the spoil of the city as their booty, in accordance with the instructions that the LORD had given to Joshua.

Discussion Questions:

❖ What kind of battle does this text describe?
❖ What seems to be this text’s attitude towards war?
❖ How can it be reconciled with Text 1?

Text 3 - 1 Chronicles 22:7-8

7David said to Solomon, “My son, I wanted to build a House for the name of the LORD my God. 8 But the word of the LORD came to me saying, “You have shed much blood and fought great battles; you shall not build a House for My name, for you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight.

Discussion Questions:

❖ This text seems to condemn war, as King David is not allowed to build the Temple. If David’s actions were morally wrong, does this “punishment” seem appropriate?
❖ What does this text imply about war?
Text 4 - Isaiah 2:4/Micah 4:3

“Thus He will judge among the nations and arbitrate for the many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not take up sword against nation; they shall never again know war.

Discussion Questions:

- What does this text imply about war and violence?
- How would you reconcile this text with the previous texts?


Rabbinic guidelines for waging war:

The rabbinic sages’ attitude toward war was mixed. They found war distasteful, even shameful; yet they accepted the idea that there are times when it is necessary. Using Biblical accounts of battles fought by the Israelites, they divided wars into two broad categories: mandatory and optional. Mandatory wars are wars of self-defense or of clear-cut moral necessity. Optional wars are wars fought for expansion, or preventively, to stop an enemy who is preparing for attack. Said the scholars, “The wars waged by Joshua to conquer Canaan were mandatory in the opinion of all [because commanded by God]; the wars waged by the House of David for territorial expansion were optional in the opinion of all.” Most wars, the felt, were optional, and they ruled that such wars could not be declared by a king without the approval of the Sanhedrin (Jewish high court). These wars, also, were subject to many restrictions.

Text 6 - Abraham Joshua Heschel, The Meaning of This War?” Liberal Judaism. The following passage by Abraham Joshua Heschel, one of the most significant Jewish theologians of the 20th century, was first published in February 1944.

There have never been so much guilt and distress, agony and terror. At no time has the earth been so soaked with blood. Fellow men turned out to be evil ghosts, monstrous and weird. Ashamed and dismayed, we ask: Who is responsible?...

We have failed to fight for right, for justice, for goodness; as a result we must fight against wrong, against injustice, against evil. We have failed to offer sacrifices on the altar of peace; now we must offer sacrifices on the altar of war. A tale is told of a band of inexperienced mountain climbers. Without guides, they struck recklessly into the wilderness. Suddenly a rocky ledge gave way beneath their feet and they were tumbled headlong into a dismal pit. In the darkness of the pit they recovered from their shock, only to find themselves set upon by a swarm of angry snakes. Every crevice became alive with fanged, hissing things. For each snake the desperate men slew, ten more seemed to lash out in its place. Strangely enough, one man seemed to stand aside from the fight. When the indignant voices of his struggling companions reproached him for not fighting, he called back: If we remain here, we shall be dead before the snakes. I am searching for a way of escape from the pit for all of us...

Tanks and planes cannot redeem humanity. A man with a gun is like a beast without a gun. The killing of snakes will save us for the moment but not forever. The war will outlast the victory of arms if we fail to conquer the infamy of the soul: the indifference to crime, when committed against others. For evil is indivisible. It is the same in thought and in speech, in private and in social life. The greatest task of our time is to take the souls of men out of the pit. The world has experienced that God is involved. Let us forever remember that the sense for the sacred is as vital to us as the light of the sun... God will return to us when we are willing to let Him into our banks and factories, into our Congress and clubs, into our homes and theaters...

Only in His presence shall we learn that the glory of man is not in his will to power but in his power of compassion. Man reflects either the image of His presence or that of a beast...

There is a divine dream which the prophets and rabbis have cherished and which fills our prayers and permeates
the acts of Jewish piety. It is the dream of a world, rid of evil by the efforts of man, by his will to serve what goes beyond his own interests. God is waiting for us to redeem the world.

**Discussion Questions:**

- What is the danger of war and violence that Heschel warns us against?
- What alternative does Heschel advocate for?
- What is the role of God in peacemaking? Do you agree/disagree with Heschel’s view? Why or why not?
- What “wars” are happening in your community? What strategies might your community employ in bringing peace to the community?
Grant peace, goodness and blessing, grace, kindness, and mercy, to us and to all Your people Israel. Bless us our Creator, all of us together, through the light of Your Presence. Truly through the light of Your Presence, Adonai our God, You gave us a Torah of life the love of kindness, justice and blessing, mercy, life, and peace. May You see fit to bless Your people Israel, at all times, at every hour, with Your peace. Praised are You Adonai, who blesses Your people Israel with peace.

WE OUGHTN’T pray for what we’ve never known, and humanity has never known: unbroken peace, unmixed blessing.

No.

Better to pray for pity,
for indignation,
discontent,
the will to see and touch,
the power to do good and make new.

Praised are You Adonai, who blesses Your people Israel with peace.

GRANT US PEACE, Your most precious gift,
O Eternal Source of peace.
And give us the will to proclaim its message
to all the peoples of the earth.
Bless our country as a safeguard of peace,
it’s advocate among the nations.
May contentment reign within our borders,
health and happiness within our homes.
Strengthen the bonds of friendship and fellowship
among all the inhabitants of our world.
Plant virtue in every soul,
and may the love of Your Name hallow every home and every heart.

Praised are You, Adonai, who blesses Your people with peace.

Yehuda Amichai, *Open Closed Open*

I, May I Rest in Peace

I, May I rest in peace - I, who am still living, say,
May I have peace in the rest of my life.
I want peace right now while I’m still alive.
I don’t want to wait ike that pious man who wished for one leg
of the golden chair of Paradise, I want a four-legged chair
right here, a plain wooden chair. I want the rest of my peace now.
I have lived out my life in wars of every kind: battles without
and within, close combat, face-to-face, the faces always
my own, my lover-face, my enemy-face.
Wars with the old weapons - sticks and stones, blunt axe, words,
dull ripping knife, love and hate,
and wars with newfangled weapons - machine gun, missile,
words, land mines exploding, love and hate.
I don’t want to fulfill my parents’ prophecy that life is war.
I want peace with all my body and all my soul.
Rest me in peace.
Leviticus Rabbah 9:9
Great is peace, since all blessings are in it.
Great is peace, since even in a time of war one should begin with peace.
Great is peace, since the Holy One is called Peace.

From Siddur Sim Shalom
A prayer for peace
May we see the day when war and bloodshed cease,
when a great peace will embrace the whole world.

Then nation will not threaten nation,
and mankind will not again know war.

For all who live on earth shall realize
we have not come into being to hate or to destroy
We have come into being to praise, to labor, and to love.

Compassionate God, bless the leaders of all nations
with the power of compassion.

Fulfill the promise conveyed in Scripture:
I will bring peace to the land,
and you shall lie down and no one shall terrify you.

I will rid the land of vicious beasts
and it shall not be ravaged by war.

Let love and justice flow like a mighty stream.
Let peace fill the earth as the waters fill the sea.
And let us say: Amen.

1Adapted from the Open Doors Open Minds II Curriculum prepared by the Union for Reform Judaism.
http://interreligious.rj.org/Open%20Doors%20Open%20Minds%20II.pdf
Lesson III - Kindness
Rabbi Olga Bluman

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to explore how boundaries within a Jewish community were brought down, in an informal way, even though the Jewish tradition formally forbade it. Studying this narrative, will hopefully inspire the learners to explore the boundaries that their community may have put up to keep “foreigners”/“outsiders” out and how kindness and/or other values can help to bring those boundaries down.

Background Information

Text 1 - Deuteronomy 23: 4-7

This text prohibits the Israelites from allowing Ammonites and Moabites from entering their community. As a result, Israelites could not marry Ammonites or Moabites; Ammonites and Moabites were not allowed to enter the Temple in Jerusalem either. The reason for this prohibition is that these people did not aid the Israelites when they were on their journey to the Promised Land, Israel, and because they wanted to curse the Israelite people, through the prophet Balaam.

This lesson begins with this text, because of the prohibition of marrying Moabites. The rest of the lesson will explore the book of Ruth. Ruth, a Moabite, is able to enter the Israelite community. The way she is able to break down the walls of the community and the way the community chooses to disregard the law in order to bring about justice, can serve as an example of peacemaking between peoples.

Text 2 - The Book of Ruth

The Book of Ruth is a wonderful story of how a foreigner is able to join a community, and helps it break down its walls. Ruth, a Moabite, decided to make a covenant with Naomi, an Israelite, when she did not need to. When her husband died, Ruth could have returned to her home to find another husband and start her own family. Instead, she decided to follow her mother-in-law, to a foreign land and ensure that her husband’s family is perpetuated. In the story, Ruth is accepted in the community because of the hesed, kindness, she shows her mother-in-law and Boaz. First, Naomi recognizes the kindness that Ruth has shown her. Then, Boaz recognizes the kindness Ruth has shown to Naomi, as well as to him. Ruth could have chosen a younger husband for herself, but she chooses Boaz, an older man instead, so that her husband’s family’s property can stay in the family. Ruth knows kindness and is able to pull it out of everyone she encounters and makes kindness active in the community. As a result, the community disregards the prohibition of not allowing a Moabite to enter the community and they bless her. Ruth, through her kindness, brings divine favor to Naomi’s household and is regarded as the great-grandmother of King David. This story is about a breach in the communities’ norms, brought about justice and redeemed a family.

It should be noted that the Book of Ruth touches upon other topics such as conversion, proselytizing, intermarriage, levirate marriage and others. It will be tempting for the learners to focus on so many of these tangential topics. Therefore, it is important for the discussion leader to set the agenda for the study of this text to analyzing the way that Ruth transforms Naomi and Boaz’s community through kindness. If the discussion leader is concerned about the learners deviating from this agenda, the learners could read the first two chapters of the book as a class and the group leader can summarize the rest of the narrative. However, it is strongly encouraged for the learners to read the whole Book of Ruth, so that the full power of the narrative will be sensed.

Materials Needed: Pens.

Conducting the Lesson

I. Opening

Reflective exercise for each participant to think about privately and then share with the group.

♦ Think of a time when you felt as a foreigner or outsider.

❖ What separated you from the community? What made you feel foreign?

❖ What prevented you from feeling like you belonged in the group?

❖ Were there specific policies in place? Was this more of an informal exclusion you felt? Perhaps people’s attitudes, assumptions, beliefs?
Could your feeling of exclusion have been “self-imposed,” i.e. perhaps you assumed prejudicial feelings on the part of others?

Did an “insider” reach out to you? If so, how did they make a connection with you? If not, what would have made you feel more comfortable in the group?

Did you manage to become an “insider?” How did that transformation come about?

Think of a time when you, intentionally or inadvertently, made someone feel like a foreigner or an outsider

What did you do to cause this person to feel separate from the community? If you did this purposefully, what made you feel that this person was “other”?

Did you realize you were doing this to the “other”? If yes, did you try to make the person feel more included? Why or why not? Did anyone else realize this was happening? Did anyone else reach out to the person? Why or why not?

If there was outreach, did it work? Did the person truly become part of the group?

Could your feeling of exclusion have been “self-imposed,” i.e. perhaps you assumed prejudicial feelings on the part of others?

What are the reasons for these individuals/groups to be seen/feel as outsiders?

What are possible assumptions/feelings about these people?

What might make these individuals/groups feel more part of the larger group?

What steps can be taken to engage the parts of the community that feel they do not belong? What assumptions/beliefs/attitudes need to be changed?

IV. Closing
Participants will reflect on the learning of the day. Possible reflection questions:

What insights did you glean from today’s learning?

As a community, what work remains for us, in building bridges and/or making peace with those in and outside our community?

V. For Further Reading
The Jps Bible Commentary: Ruth, by Tamara Eskenazi and Tikva Frymer-Kensky (Jewish Publication Society, 2011)

Transition to the lesson - Today’s lesson will focus on how a community welcomed foreigner into its midst, even though legally, their tradition prohibited it. This act transformed the community and brought about peace.

II. Text Study (Texts 1-2)
Participants will break up into learning pairs. Distribute The Power of Kindness Handout

III. Activity
As a whole group, participants will brainstorm who is a “foreigner” or “outsider” in their faith community. Then either as a whole group or in small groups, participants will develop strategies to reach out to those outsiders and help bring them into the community. Elements to consider:

Which individuals or groups of people are seen/or feel as outsiders to the majority group?
The Power of Kindness - Handout

Discussion Questions:

- What does this passage prohibit?
- What is the reasoning behind the prohibition?
- Does your tradition have texts with similar prohibitions or indirect statements meant to keep some out of your group?

Text 2 - Ruth

1 In the days when the chieftains ruled, there was a famine in the land; and a man of Bethlehem in Judah, with his wife and two sons, went to reside in the country of Moab. 2The Man’s name was Elimelech, his wife’s name was Naomi, and his two sons were named Mahlon and Chilion--Ephrathites of Bethlehem in Judah. They came to the country of Moab and remained there.

3 Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. 4They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth, and they lived there about ten years.

5Then those two--Mahlon and Chilion--also died; so the woman was left without her two sons and without her husband.

6She started out with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab; for in the country of Moab she had heard that the LORD had taken note of His people and given them food.

7Accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, she left the place where she had been living; and they set out on the road back to the land of Judah.

8But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Turn back, each of you to her mother’s house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me! 9May the LORD grant that each of you find security in the house of a husband!” And she kissed them farewell. They broke into weeping and said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.”

10But Naomi replied, “Turn back, my daughters! Why should you go with me? Have I any more sons in my body who might be husbands for you? 11Turn back, my daughters, for I am too old to be married. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I were married tonight and I also bore sons, 12should you wait for them to grow up? Should you on their account debar yourselves from marriage? Oh no, my daughters! My lot is far more bitter than yours, for the hand of the LORD has struck out against me.”

13They broke into weeping again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law farewell. But Ruth clung to her. 14So she said, “See, your sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods. Go follow your sister-in-law.” 15But Ruth replied, “Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

16When [Naomi] saw how determined she was to go with her, she ceased to argue with her; 17and the two went on until they reached Bethlehem.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole city buzzed with excitement over them. Thewomen said, “Can this be Naomi?” 18 “Do not call me Naomi,” she replied. “Call me Mara**, for Shaddai*** has made my lot very bitter.

19When [Naomi] saw how determined she was to go with her, she ceased to argue with her; 19and the two went on until they reached Bethlehem.

20“Can this be Naomi?” 20 “Do not call me Naomi*,” she replied. “Call me Mara**, for Shaddai*** has made my lot very bitter. 21I went away full, and the LORD has brought me back empty. How can you call me Naomi, when the LORD has dealt harshly with me, when Shaddai has brought misfortune upon me!”

22Thus Naomi returned from the country of Moab; she returned with her daughter-in-law Ruth the Moabite. They arrived in Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

2. Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband’s
side, a man of substance, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz.

3 Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, “I would like to go to the fields and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone who may show me kindness.” “Yes, daughter,” she replied. And off she went. She came and gleaned in a field, behind the reapers; and, as luck would have it, it was the piece of land belonging to Boaz, who was of Elimelech’s family.

4 Presently Boaz arrived from Bethlehem. He greeted the reapers, “The LORD be with you!” And they responded, “The LORD bless you!”

5 Boaz said to the servant who was in charge of the reapers, “Whose girl is that?” The servant in charge of the reapers replied, “She is a Moabite girl who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. She said, ‘Please let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.’ She has been on her feet ever since she came this morning. She has rested but little in the hut.”

8 Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen to me, daughter. Don’t go to another field. Don’t go elsewhere, but stay here close to my girls. Keep your eyes on the field they are reaping, and follow them. I have ordered the men not to molest you. And when you are thirsty, go to the jars and drink some of [the water] that the men have drawn.”

9 She prostrated herself with her face to the ground, and said to him, “Why are you so kind as to single me out, when I am a foreigner?”

11 Boaz said in reply, “I have been told of all that you did for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband, how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth and came to a people you had not known before. May the LORD reward your deeds. May you have a full recompense from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have sought refuge!”

12 She answered, “You are the kindest, my lord, to comfort me and to speak gently to your maidservant—though I am not so much as one of your maidservants.”

14 At mealtime, Boaz said to her, “Come over here and partake of the meal, and dip your morsel in the vinegar.” So she sat down beside the reapers. He handed her roasted grain, and she ate her fill and had some left over.

15 When she got up again to glean, Boaz gave orders to his workers, “You are not only to let her glean among the sheaves, without interference, but you must also pull some [stalks] out of the heaps and leave them for her to glean, and not scold her.”

17 She gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned—it was about an ephah of barley—and carried it back with her to the town. When her mother-in-law saw what she had gleaned, and when she also took out and gave her what she had left over after eating her fill, her mother-in-law asked her, “Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed be he who took such generous notice of you!” So she told her mother-on-law whom she had worked with, saying, “The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz.”

20 Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not failed in His kindness to the living or to the dead! For” Naomi explained to her daughter-in-law, “the man is related to us; he is one of our redeeming kinsmen."

21 Ruth the Moabitess said, “He even told me, ‘Stay close by my workers until all my harvest is finished.’”

22 And Naomi answered her daughter-in-law, “It is best, daughter, that you go out with his girls, and not be annoyed in some other field.”

23 So she stayed close to the maidservants of Boaz, and gleaned until the barley harvest and the wheat harvest were finished. Then she stayed at home with her mother-in-law.

3 Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, “Daughter, I must seek a home for you, where you may be happy. Now there is our kinsman Boaz, whose girls you were close to. He will be winnowing barley on the threshing floor tonight. So bath, anoint yourself, dress up, and go down to the threshing floor. But do not disclose yourself to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, note the place where he lies down, and go over and uncover his feet and lie down. He will tell you what you are to do.” She replied, “I will do everything you tell me.”

6 She went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her.

7 Boaz ate and drank, and in a cheerful mood went to lie down beside the grainpile. Then she went over stealthily and uncovered his feet and lay down. In the middle of the night, the man gave a start and pulled back—there was a woman lying at his feet!

9 “Who are you?” he asked. And she replied, “I am your handmaid Ruth. Spread your robe over
The Power of Kindness - Handout

acquire Ruth the Moabite, the wife of the deceased, so as to perpetuate the name of the deceased upon his estate.” The redeemer replied, “Then I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own estate. You take over my right of redemption, for I am unable to exercise it.”

7Now this was formerly done in Israel in cases of redemption or exchange: to validate any transaction, one man would take off his sandal and hand it to the other. Such was the practice in Israel. 8So when the redeemer said to Boaz, “Acquire for yourself,” he drew off his sandal. 9And Boaz said to the elders and to the rest of the people, “You are witnesses today that I am acquiring from Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. 10I am also acquiring Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, as my wife, so as to perpetuate the name of the deceased upon his estate, that the name of the deceased may not disappear from among his kinsmen and from the gate of his home town. You are witnesses today.”

11All the people at the gate and the elders answered, “We are. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built up the House of Israel! Prosper in Ephrathah and perpetuate your name in Bethlehem! 12And may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah - through the offspring which the LORD will give you by this young woman.”

13So Boaz married Ruth; she became his wife, and he cohabited with her. The LORD let her conceive, and she bore a son. 14And the women said, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not withheld a redeemer from you today! May his name be perpetuated in Israel! 15He will renew your life and sustain your old age; for he is born of your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons.”

16Naomi took the child and held it to her bosom. She became his foster mother, 17and the women neighbors gave him a name, saying, “A son is born to Naomi!” They named him Obed; he was the father of Jesse, father of David.

4 Meanwhile, Boaz had gone to the gate and sat down there. And now the redeemer whom Boaz had mentioned passed by. He called, “Come over and sit down here, So-and-so!” And he came over and sat down. 2Then [Boaz] took ten elders of the town and said, “Be seated her;” and they sat down.

3He said to the redeemer, “Naomi, now returned from the country of Moab, must sell the piece of land which belonged to our kinsman Elimelech. 4I thought I should disclose the matter to you and say: Acquire it in the presence of those seated here and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you are willing to redeem it, redeem! But if you will not redeem, tell me, that I may know. For there is no one to redeem but you and I come after you.” “I am willing to redeem it,” he replied. 5Boaz continued, “When you acquire the property from Naomi, you must also acquire Ruth the Moabite, the wife of the deceased, so as to perpetuate the name of the deceased upon his estate.” The redeemer replied, “Then I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I impair my own estate. You take over my right of redemption, for I am unable to exercise it.”

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11All the people at the gate and the elders answered, “We are. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built up the House of Israel! Prosper in Ephrathah and perpetuate your name in Bethlehem! 12And may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah - through the offspring which the LORD will give you by this young woman.”

13So Boaz married Ruth; she became his wife, and he cohabited with her. The LORD let her conceive, and she bore a son. 14And the women said, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not withheld a redeemer from you today! May his name be perpetuated in Israel! 15He will renew your life and sustain your old age; for he is born of your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons.”

16Naomi took the child and held it to her bosom. She became his foster mother, 17and the women neighbors gave him a name, saying, “A son is born to Naomi!” They named him Obed; he was the father of Jesse, father of David.
Discussion Questions:

In 1:8, Naomi invokes the attribute of kindness (hesed in Hebrew). What examples of kindness were demonstrated by the characters in this story?

- Review the exchange between Ruth and Naomi in 1:11-17. What is Ruth saying to Naomi here? Is this a typical exchange between a woman and her mother-in-law? How did you respond to Ruth’s allegiance to Naomi?
- The Book of Ruth opens with the theme of death but ends with the theme of life. How is Ruth able to bring about this transformation?
- When in your life, have you encountered a situation, where kindness helped to build bridges between people?
- Does your faith tradition have any specific mandates about outreaching, in kindness, to others?
- In addition to kindness, what other characteristics and values are necessary to build bridges between people and make peace?

*i.e., “Pleasantness.”
*i.e., “Bitterness.”
*Divine epithet.
*A formal act of espousal, compare Ezekiel 16:8.
*Another name for Bethlehem.
Part 5 - Christianity and Peacemaking
Lesson I - Insights from the New Testament
Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to give participants an opportunity to begin to understand each other better and to explore the topic of peacemaking from the perspective of the New Testament. The activities in this session can be adjusted to fit a 1-3 hour time block. Planners are encouraged to utilize the other lessons and activities in this curriculum, as well as the additional resources offered on the AFPI website.

Materials Needed: markers, newsprint or a board, masking tape, copies of the “Peacemaking in the Christian Tradition - Overview,” and the Bible Study Method, index cards or slips of paper and a basket to hold them.

Conducting the Lesson

I. Opening Prayer or Meditation

Prayer should follow the custom of the faith community, or if it is an interfaith group, leaders should plan any shared prayer with the communities involved. Prayers related to peacemaking and reconciliation are available from a variety of sources, including those options listed in the resource section and in the additional materials on the AFPI website. Because prayer takes many forms, leaders are encouraged to plan opening and closing prayers from a variety of forms, including formal prayers, texts, song, and silence.

II. Hopes and Fears

This exercise is an opportunity to have participants voice their assumptions and expectations about the program.

Say to participants: “Everyone who comes to any new experience brings with them their hopes and their fears (concerns) about what may or may not happen. We are going to give you an opportunity to voice some of them now.”

Distribute 3x5 cards, one for each person. Ask participants the following: Write the word “hopes” on one side and the word “fears” (or concerns) on the other side. Then take a few minutes for participants to reflect and fill out the cards.

Further instructions:

- Write legibly because someone else will read your card.
- Do not sign the card.
- Hold onto your card and place it in the basket when it comes around.
- After all cards are collected, pass the basket again, asking participants to select a card. (Not their own.)
- Have the participants take turns reading the hopes and fears (and introduce themselves if they have not already done so).

After all the cards are read, ask: “Are there any additional reflections - hopes and fears?”

If there is limited time, you can say the following after the first few hopes/concerns are read “If anyone has anything different on their card, please read it.”

In closing, ask the participants to commit to hearing the hopes and fears of other participants as the study progresses.


Divide participants into groups of 3-5. Assign each group one of the texts on the New Testament Scriptures Handout, or, if you choose, ask the groups to reflect on the same text. Some suggested texts are:

- Matthew 5:1-12, Blessed are the peacemakers
- Matthew 26:47-56, All who take the sword will perish by the sword
- John 14:25-30, Peace I leave with you
- Romans, 12:14-21, Overcome evil with good
- Galatians 5:22-6:5, The fruit of the Spirit
- Ephesians 2:13-22, Christ is our peace
- Ephesians 4:1-6, There is one body and one Spirit
Philippians 4:4-9, The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding
Colossians 3:12-17, God’s chosen ones

Bible Study Method:
1. Read the passage aloud. (first reader)
2. Discuss what the passage tells us about God?
3. Read passage aloud a second time. (second reader)
4. Discuss what the passage tells us about human beings and the relationship between people.
5. Read passage aloud a third time. (third reader)
6. According to this passage, what is peace? How is peace related to faith? How might people living in different circumstances or in different cultures perceive the passage’s message about the relationship between God and human beings? How does the passage call us (individually and corporately) to change?
7. Leave a moment of silence, and then close the group with prayer.

After the groups have concluded, have each small group report their discoveries and their questions to the whole group. End this portion of the lesson with the question, “What have you learned about peacemaking in the Christian tradition?” If helpful to the group, write the responses on newsprint or a board for further consideration.

IV. Peacemaking in the Christian Tradition - Overview
Distribute copies of the “Peacemaking in the Christian Tradition - Overview Handout.” Here the leader may choose either to summarize the contents for discussion, and/or give the hardcopy to participants to read as homework. If the group is historically minded, the leader may ask for further examples of each of the four historic Christian approaches. If done as a homework exercise, make sure that time is allotted during the next session for feedback and questions.

V. Closing Prayer

Optional Film Activity
There are a number of film resources that relate to historic Christian peacemaking. For this first lesson the film suggestions focus on the response of Christians to war and violence. Planners may choose to show a film in its entirety, or a film clip, or to make the resource available for individual viewing. Suggested films are available online.

Film Suggestions:
Bonhoeffer: Agent of Grace. 90 minutes. The moral struggle of a Lutheran minister in Nazis Germany.
The Diary of Immaculee. 38 minutes. The spiritual journey of a survivor of the Rwandan genocide.
In Spite of Darkness. A Spiritual Encounter with Auschwitz. 74 minutes. A documentary about an annual interfaith retreat at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps in Poland. The film tells the story of five retreatants.
Of Gods and Men. 120 minutes. A story based on the real experiences of French monks who live in peace with the local Muslim community until the situation deteriorates due to external forces.
Matthew 5:1-12

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying: 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. 8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 26:47-56

47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. 48 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him." 49 At once he came up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. 50 Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you are here to do." Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. 51 Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. 52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. 53 Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?" 55 At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. 56 But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

John 14:25-30

25 "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. 28 You heard me say to you, "I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe. 30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me;

Romans 12:14-21

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.
**Galatians 5:22-6:5**

22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

1 My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. 4 All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. 5 For all must carry their own loads.

**Ephesians 2:13-22**

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. 15 He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, 16 and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. 17 So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; 18 for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, 20 built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

**Ephesians 4:1-6**

1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

**Philippians 4:4-9**

1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

**Colossians 3:12-17**

12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
Peacemaking in the Christian Tradition - Overview

Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook

Historic Christian Responses to War and Violence

Throughout the history of Christianity, the followers of Jesus thought seriously about what it means to become peacemakers. The rich concept of “Shalom,” deeply embedded in Judaism, means living according to God’s commandments and loving one’s neighbor as oneself. Jesus, an observant Jew, practiced nonviolence and preached the need for his followers to love their enemies. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) Jesus emphasized, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God,” and “if anyone strikes you on the right cheek turn the other also.” Further, Jesus preached that anyone “who takes the sword shall perish by the sword.” (Matthew 26:51-52). Paul addressed the kind of peace that comes with confidence in God’s love and compassion, “and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7) Paul also frequently addressed the need for peace and reconciliation within fragmented and divided communities. “Now I appeal to you brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose,” he wrote to the community at Corinth. (I Corinthians 1:10) Within the Christian biblical tradition, peacemakers are deemed “children of God,” because they participate in God’s plan for the reconciliation of humanity and all creation. Indeed, as Christian ethicist Glen Stassen has suggested, thirty seven times Jesus confronted the ruling authorities of his day for their unjust treatment of the poor, the exclusion of outcasts, and the violence perpetrated against victims. The Christian’s call to peacemaking encompasses all of life, personal, familial, interpersonal, communal, national, and global. In whatever form, the Christian is called to oppose violence, and at the same time seek a just peace.

Four Historic Christian Approaches to War and Violence

The first response to war and violence for those Christians who lived closest to the time of Jesus and his disciples was pacifism. The earliest theologians believed that peacemaking was a mandate for Christians. The Christian Church of the first three centuries was largely pacifist. Early Christians rigorously defended pacifism, refused to serve in the Roman army, and resisted the Roman Empire in nonviolent ways. While we know that by the third century some Christians served in the legions, meaning that all were not as pacifist in practice as were the early theologians, it is also probable that the majority of these soldiers served as police. We also know that some Christians left the army entirely after conversion. After Constantine converted in the fourth century, making Christianity the state religion, the commitment to pacifism as the mainstream response of the church was altered. However, committed pacifists remain within many Christian traditions today, and that Mennonites, Amish, Quakers, and the Church of the Brethren continue in the tradition of pacifism.

Beginning in the 1950s, ecumenical peace conferences made passionate appeals for peace, and religious leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. advocated non-violence, influenced by their Christian faith as well as the witness of Mahatma Gandhi. The pacifist movement is also present in the Christian Church today through the witness of conscientious objectors.

There have been times in Christian history when massive force was used to accomplish what was believed to be a holy cause. The second Christian response to war and violence, the crusade or “holy war,” is about 1000 years old. In the year 1095 Pope Urban II proclaimed a holy war to remove Muslims from the Holy Land and to reclaim it for the Christian faith. Within this response is the belief that the enemy is so totally evil that there can be no compromise and that war and violence are justified. Within the Christian tradition over the centuries, the enemies of crusaders have been Muslims, other Christians, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike, sectarian groups, as well as nation states. Today, there are extremists throughout the world who use distorted versions of the Christian faith to force conversions and to condone violence.

The third Christian response to war and violence, what became known as “just war” theory, was first developed by Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century as the Roman Empire was disintegrating and under attack. Just war theory ar-
gues that force should only be used as a last resort, and that it is always immoral to start a war. However, the theory argues, there are times when evil is so pernicious that the use of force is necessary to restore wholeness and peace. This theory was further developed over the course of centuries by Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin and other Christian theologians, who set forth conditions under which violence is justified. Whether or not a Christian could participate in armed conflict was an urgent moral issue for sixteenth-century religious leaders in an era where civil authorities were combative, and where the church could easily be compromised by the aims of the state. While Luther, Calvin and Zwingli all stressed God’s sovereignty over creation as supported by scripture, they also supported state-sanctioned conflicts. Zwingli in fact was killed in a battle against Roman Catholic cantons in 1531; his memorial in Zurich features him standing with a Bible in one hand and a sword in the other. At the same time, both Protestants and Roman Catholics persecuted the pacifist Anabaptists and Quakers, who also cited the Bible as the basis for their beliefs. The major differences about the ways Christian groups viewed war and peace continued unabated until the twentieth century.

In the first half of the twentieth century, two world wars brought unprecedented destruction and loss of life; concentration camps, the Holocaust, and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are tragic examples of struggles among Christians to live as peacemakers. In the later twentieth century, believers in just war theory were further challenged by the realities of modern nuclear weapons which have a potential to end all life on the planet. As a result of the nuclear arms race, many Protestant churches, as well as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, called upon Christians to recognize the destructive capabilities of modern weapons.

The fourth and most recent response by Christians to war and violence is the “Just Peace” movement, developed at the end of the twentieth century. Based in the belief that there can be no peace without justice, the theology of the Just Peace movement suggests that all three traditional Christian responses to war and violence; pacifism, just war, and the crusade, are outdated. Instead, we need to work to eliminate the social and political root causes of war and violence. Peace exists where power is shared, the powerless are empowered, and people of faith work together to address poverty. Further, people from all religious groups and nationalities can practice mediation and conflict transformation. One example of this response is a Peacemaking Resolution from the United Methodist Church (2008); “United Methodist children, your and adults as devoted disciples of Jesus Christ to become peacemakers wherever they are at home, school, work, in the local community and the wider world - and to show the love, compassion, and concern for justice that Jesus taught and lived.”

**What Can Christians Do to Build Peace?**

We live in a world today where many view the reality of violence as a way of life. In addition to the violence experienced daily throughout the world and in our local communities, for many of the people in our midst, violence is also a daily reality through abuse, economic injustice, racism and other forms of oppression, and environmental hazards. It has been said that peacemaking is a mandate for Christians. How then can our churches, schools, colleges and universities, and religious organizations become places where people build and maintain constructive relationships across differences, and work together with neighbors of other faiths to build more just communities? How can Christians work to facilitate the pluralistic vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other great religious leaders, of “the beloved community?” How might Christians better practice a spirituality based in hope and reconciliation that sustains when our efforts at peacemaking are unpopular or fail?

The teachings of the Christian tradition remind us that people of faith have an obligation to support peacemaking practices, and to work for conditions that will foster peace. In a similar way, the traditions of the other religions of the world, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, to name a few, all stress the importance of building a peaceful world. In order to do this work effectively, a transnational network of grassroots groups, including local churches and faith groups, working to practice peacemaking in families, neighborhoods, and across religious communities, is integral to the kind of peace that brings with it sustenance, security, justice and mercy. Not only are such peacemaking groups able to transcend narrow national and ideological perspectives, they serve as a voice for the
voiceless and support the long-term commitment needed to make peaceful communities a reality.

Overview: Questions for Reflection:
1. Discuss the historic Christian responses to war and violence. Can you identify the responses from your own experience, or within your faith community? What materials or organizations on peacemaking are available from your denomination or faith community?
2. What are the major sources of conflict within your communities—family, church, work, local neighborhood? How are these conflicts resolved? How might mediation and conflict transformation skills enhance your community?
3. What types of violence impact your own life most frequently? The life of your church or wider community? How does the impact of violence differ among groups in your community?
4. What does it mean from the perspective of your faith to be a peacemaker?
5. Who are the partners from other religious traditions in your own community who want to work with you to form a Just Peace?

Resources for further study:

Resources from the Abrahamic Faiths Peace Initiative (AFPI)
From its inception, the Abrahamic Faiths Peace Initiative (AFPI) was a group of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim activists in Southern California united in the belief that peacemaking is an essential and defining mandate of the three faith traditions. The group grew out of the relationships and trust built by religious leaders active in the peace movement over several decades in Los Angeles through rallies protesting the Vietnam War, anti-nuclear campaigns, and the first Gulf War. As committed Jews, Christians, and Muslims, an important focus of the group’s work is for participants to wrestle with their own faith traditions, and actively support theological justifications for peace in each tradition. Activist as well as educational in nature, the AFPI supports justice and peace efforts in the region and the wider world. Participants in AFPI also bring the dialogue into their own congregations and organizations as part of a continuing interfaith dialogue on peacemaking in local communities.

Concerned that religion is often used as a means to justify violence and warfare, AFPI has made available for download an extensive list of educational resources grounded in scripture and the traditions of the Abrahamic faiths in relationship to peacemaking. These materials are an invitation to people in Christian churches and beyond who are interested in furthering peacemaking in their home communities. The resources address a range of congregational situations, such as preaching, worship, and religious education for young people and adults. Please take time to study and reflect on the ways your church might work for peace in your own congregation, and in your local community and the wider world.

Individuals and faith communities interested in further study on Peacemaking in the Christian Tradition are invited to utilize all or part of the three lesson plans focused on that topic included in this curriculum, as well as the additional study materials on the AFPI website.
Lesson II - Peacemaking in Community
Sheryl A. Kuja-Holbrook

Introduction
The purpose of this lesson is to give participants an opportunity to examine the various dimensions of peacemaking within ourselves, families, relationships, and in communities from a Christian perspective. The previous lesson focused on exploring texts; this second lesson is designed to include different learning styles. The activities in this session can be adjusted to fit a 1-3 hour time block. Planners are encouraged to utilize the other lessons and activities in this curriculum, as well as the additional resources offered on the AFPI website.

Materials Needed: markers, newsprint or a board, masking tape, scissors, construction paper or poster board, appropriate magazines for the collage exercise or prints photos from downloadable image sites, including photos of nature, objects, people, etc.

Conducting the Lesson

I. Opening Prayer or Meditation
Prayer should follow the custom of the faith community, or if it is an interfaith group, leaders should plan any shared prayer with the communities involved. Prayers related to peacemaking and reconciliation are available from a variety of sources, including those options listed in the resource section and in the additional materials on the AFPI website. Because prayer takes many forms, leaders are encouraged to plan opening and closing prayers from a variety of forms, including formal prayers, texts, song, and silence.

II. Peacemaking is Connected to all of Life
This exercise illustrates how peacemaking influences human relationships on many levels. Clear a portion of the room large enough to place eight large circles on the floor with masking tape. Place a number inside of each circle which represents one of the following areas where peacemaking can be done. For clarity sake, and so participants don’t have their eyes focused on the floor, it is helpful to also post the areas in order on newsprint or on the board:
1. within myself
2. in families and with friends
3. at work and school
4. in churches
5. with other religious groups
6. in our community
7. among nations
8. with the earth
Ask whether there are any questions concerning the categories above. Then ask participants to move inside the appropriate circle in response to the following statements, at the same time being mindful of what is going on inside of them and in the group as a whole when the questions are asked. If participants have more than one answer, they should choose the circle they feel most strongly about. If none of the circles answers the question for them, they should stand to the side and be asked to offer their response to the group:
1. This is what I thought peacemaking is all about.
2. I never thought of this before as part of peacemaking.
3. I would like to be more involved in this area of peacemaking.
4. This is an area of peacemaking that concerns me personally.
5. I have questions about this area of peacemaking.
6. This is the most difficult area of peacemaking for me.
7. This area of peacemaking has a strong mandate in my religious tradition.
8. Our faith community needs to address this area of peacemaking.
9. I don’t think faith communities should be involved in this area of peacemaking.
10. I would like to learn more about this area of peacemaking.
To process the exercise, leaders may ask the following questions:

How did that exercise feel for you? What did you notice about yourself? The group? What surprised you? Challenged you? What did this exercise tell us about peacemaking?

III. “Pictio Divina” - Sharing Stories of Peacemaking

Pictio Divina is like lectio divina, but “reading” images rather than words. Giving participants an opportunity to utilize images in sharing their stories of peacemaking helps those with learning styles that privilege visual images rather than print or words.

To begin, scatter magazines and/or evocative images around the room. Ask participants to take a moment to breathe and get centered. Ask them to reflect on their own story of peacemaking. Participants are then asked to look for images (in silence or with soft background music) that resonate with their own experience of peacemaking, and respond to the prompt, “Peace is...”

Ask participants to look for images meditatively as they reflect on their own personal story of peacemaking. How has peacemaking been a part of your life? Which images stand out to you or “grab” you? What images reflect what is going on in your life, relationships, world, etc.? How does peacemaking relate to your faith? How might God be calling you to respond?

Once participants locate the images that reflect their experience, ask them to sit down and take a moment to prayerfully take them in.

Optional Step. Repeat the same process, asking participants to select images that respond to their experiences of the absence of peace, or the prompt, “Peace is not...” Here it is interesting for participants to note the differences between the images in what is pictured, as well as feelings, mood, etc. Which is the easier response, peace or the absence of peace?

When participants have completed the process, gather and invite each to share what they see and hear each story of peacemaking.

IV. Closing Prayer

Here leaders may want to build from the previous exercise and ask participants to pray silently or aloud for the concerns of the group and the wider community.

Homework Assignment

In preparation for Lesson III ask participants to bring in examples that speak to peace, or the absence of peace, between members of different religious traditions in their community. Newspapers and magazines are one good source of such material, as are other media, photographs, small objects, etc. These artifacts will contribute to the discussion in Lesson III.

Optional Film Activity

There are a number of film resources that relate to interfaith peacemaking. For this lesson the film suggestions focus on stories of peacemaking among people in their everyday lives and in home communities. Planners may choose to show a film in its entirety, or a film clip, or to make the resource available for individual viewing. Suggested films are available online.

Amereeka. 96 minutes. American life as seen through the experiences of Palestinian immigrants and a first generation teenager in Illinois.

Elie Wiesel. First Person Singular. 60 minutes. Wiesel reflects on his experiences as a Holocaust survivor and human rights activist, and his concerns for the future of humanity.

Freemont USA. 57 minutes. Stories about the realities and challenges in the relationships between neighbors of different traditions in a religiously diverse California city.

The Imam & the Pastor. 40 minutes. The story of grassroots peacemaking efforts between Christian and Muslim men in Nigeria.

New Muslim Cool. 83 minutes. The spiritual journey of a Puerto Rican Muslim man as he makes connections with people in the many communities that are part of his life.


What Do You Believe? 49 Minutes. The spiritual journeys of teenagers from different religious traditions as they struggle with issues of human community.
Introduction
Religiously motivated hatred, intolerance, and bigotry have been the direct causes of many wars as well as contributing factors to other violent conflicts at home and abroad. The purpose of this lesson is to allow participants to make connections between interfaith dialogue and reconciliation from a Christian perspective. The activities in this session can be adjusted to fit a 1-3 hour time block. Planners are encouraged to utilize the other lessons and activities in this curriculum, as well as the additional resources offered on the AFPI website.

Materials Needed: A blank wall suitable for posting or a portable board and masking tape. A small table.

Conducting the Lesson

I. Opening Exercise
As participants enter the room, ask them to post the articles, photos, etc. they were asked to bring as part of their homework from Lesson II. Mark one side of the display area “Reconciliation and Peacemaking” and the other side “Division and the Absence of Peace,” and ask participants to post their finds in the appropriate area to build a wall. For those who brought in objects have a small table nearby. Encourage participants to read and reflect on the wall as it grows. Prepared leaders will have brought in an ample supply of articles, photos, etc. gleaned from local sources to start the wall.

II. Opening Meditation - Reconciliation Between Peoples from a New Testament Perspective.
Ask participants to sit in circles of 4-6 and ask each one in turn to read a verse of the selected text. After the entire text is read, ask, “What words or images stand out for you when you hear this text?”

III. Reflections on the Wall
Ask students to look carefully at the wall assembled by the group. Give time for participants to read the individual postings as well as look at the wall on the whole. When this step is completed, discuss the stories of reconciliation and division among people of faith in your community by asking the following questions:
1. How do you feel when you reflect on the wall as a representation of your community?
2. What are the themes and images that most resonate with you?
3. Where are the walls or divisions between people in our community?
4. Where are the examples for reconciliation?
5. Where are opportunities for you (or your faith community) to participate in interfaith reconciliation?

IV. The Power of Forgiveness
The Power of Forgiveness is an award-winning film that documents the impact of reconciliation among divided people throughout the world. Many of the efforts
Christianity and Peacemaking

are linked to faith communities. Leaders may choose to show the entire film or excerpts. The film is available online for a minimal fee and an accompanying book is available through online bookstores. The complete film is 72 minutes, www.firstrunfeatures.com.

Before viewing the film, ask participants to consider the following questions as they watch it:

1. Which stories in the film most resonated with your own experience? Which were the most compelling for you?
2. Which stories were the most challenging? The most surprising?
3. What does the film have to say about interfaith reconciliation?
4. What does our faith compel us to do as peacemakers?

Optional Activity
Share or review the models of interfaith dialogue in Part II of this curriculum, “Hospitality and Interfaith Dialogue.” What are some examples of interfaith dialogue that you and your congregation already experience? What might be other opportunities for dialogue? Of the suggested activities, select one in each category of dialogue to work on.

V. Closure

Invite all present to say one act they will do during the next month to promote interfaith reconciliation and peacemaking. In faith communities where commissioning rituals are part of spiritual practice, such a ritual is appropriate at this time. In interfaith groups, allowing time for shared reflections from the whole group may be appropriate.

Optional Film Activity

There are a number of film resources that relate to interfaith reconciliation and peacemaking. For this lesson the film suggestions focus on peacemaking through interfaith communities locally, nationally and globally. Planners may choose to show a film in its entirety, or a film clip, or to make the resource available for individual viewing. Suggested films are available online

*Beyond Our Differences*, 72 minutes. A tapestry of voices share ways religious-inspired movements have resulted in positive change.

*In God’s Name. Wisdom from the world’s great spiritual leaders*, 92 minutes. Explores world issues through the thoughts and beliefs of twelve influential spiritual leaders.
**Galatians 5:13-26**

13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. 14 For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. 16 Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

**II Corinthians 5:16-21**

16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. 17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. 20 So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**Matthew 22:34-40**

34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, 35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" 37 He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." 38 This is the greatest and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**Acts 2:1-12**

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. 5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in their own native language. 7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." 12 All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"
Part 6 - Islam and Peacemaking
Lesson I Respecting The Divine Will of God
Aziza Hasan

Introduction
Appreciating diversity can be challenging when superiority is emphasized over respect and humility. The goal of this session is to help start a frank discussion around God’s plan for diversity and how it does or does not impact or view people who are different than ourselves.

Materials Needed:
8x11 print outs (of each verse below) for opening exercise. The font should be large enough for the verse to fill the page— and can be read from a distance. If possible print each verse on a different colored piece of paper.
Tape to put up verses from opening exercise.
Session schedule written up on large sheet of paper or on a board (objective is to allow participants to feel more in control when they know what to expect.

Conducting the Lesson

I. Opening Exercise: Relationship Builder (30 minutes)

- Welcome people into the space and ask them to divide up into groups of 4-5 people. If possible, these should be interfaith groups of individuals who either do not know each other or do not work with each other regularly.
- Explain that each group will be getting an Islamic teaching that they must represent in a non-verbal play. Each group will have 10 minutes to choreograph their performance. Their goal is to get across the message from their assigned text.

Group 1: The Golden Rule
“None of you has faith until you love for your brother what you love for yourself” (Sahih Al-Bukhari, al-Iman, Hadith no. 13).

Group 2: Commit to Peace
“O you who have attained to faith! Enter the peace, all of you, through submitting your whole selves to God, and follow not the footsteps of Satan; he is to you an evident enemy.” (Fathi Osman Translation, Quran 2:208)

Group 3: Path to Peace
“No now there has come to you from God a light and a clear divine writ, through which God guides all who seek His goodly acceptance to paths of peace, and by His grace leads them out of the depths of darkness into the light, and guides them to a straight way.” (Fathi Osman Translation, Quran 5:15-16)

Group 4: If Your Enemy Requests Peace, Honor Their Request
“And if they incline to peace, do incline to is as well, and place your trust in God; He alone is the All-hearing, the All-knowing. Should they desire but to deceive you [by a false show of peace], be sure that God is sufficient [support] for you; it is He who has strengthened you with His support and through the believers.” (Fathi Osman Translation, Quran 8:61-62)

Group 5: No Compulsion in Religion
“Let there be no coercion in matters of faith.” (Fathi Osman Translation, Quran 2:256)

- After the 10 minutes are up, have the first group present their non-verbal play. The other groups should be instructed to watch and guess the message aloud.
- Once the other groups are finished guessing, have someone from the group presenting read the full text.
- Then tape the verse onto the wall.
- Repeat this process with the remaining groups.

II. Welcome (5-10 minutes)

- Cover any logistics and announcements (like when prayer breaks will be taken and where the bathrooms are located).
- It is very important to look up Muslim prayer times before each session to plan your schedule around the prayer times so that Muslim participants feel included and so that prayer does not interrupt your
schedule. You can find prayer times by date and zipcode at: http://www.islamicfinder.org

Note that many Muslims do not pray Maghrib late (4th prayer of the day). Thus it is very important to schedule a break at the time of maghrib, less you lose your audience.

III. Small Study Groups (45 Minutes)

- Have participants self-divide into small groups of 3 (when possible, these groups should include one Muslim, one Jew and one Christian).
- Pass out the Diversity & Divine Will Handout.
- Explain that this exercise is intended for participants to study text together and offer greater insight than reading the text alone.
- One person will read one verse out loud while the other two group members follow along silently. Discuss each verse after it is read. Find discussion questions listed after each verse. Alternate members reading the text aloud until all the verses have been read aloud at least once.
- After 45 minutes bring the small groups to a larger group discussion

IV. Break (10 minutes)

V. Larger Group Discussion (50 minutes)

- Bring the larger group together.
- Ask individuals to share some of what they discussed. Here are some questions to prompt the larger group discussion:
  - What surprised you?
  - What stood out?
  - How did studying/reflecting together affect your understanding of the text?
  - Did you learn anything new?
  - How has the text we studied together impacted our perspective on differences in creation?
Diversity & Divine Will Handout

Text #1:
“O people! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware.” (Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 49:13)

Discussion Questions
- This verse seems to imply we all sprung forth from common ancestors and by God's Will, nations and tribes arose. What do you make of that?
- From what you gather from this passage, does this mean we are divided or united?
- What divides us...and what unites us?
- What does it mean to "...come to know one another."

Text #2:
“For, verily, those who have attained to faith [in this divine writ], as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Sabians, and the Christians - all who believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds - no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.” (Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 5:69)

Discussion Questions
- What is this verse saying about Jews, Christians and Sabians (people who believe in God)?
- Does this verse challenge any earlier thoughts you had regarding Islam?
- What is the verse saying about faith and action?
- Does the verse surprise you in any way?

Text #3:
“And unto thee [O Prophet] have We vouchsafed this divine writ, setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein. Judge, then, between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed upon thee. Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto, you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ.”
(Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 5:48)

Discussion Questions
- What does this passage mean by “test”?
- What does the last line from this quoted verse mean to you?
- Based upon this passage, are we always in the right just by the virtue of being a specific faith?

Text #4:
“As for such [of the unbelievers] as do not fight against you on account of [your] faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for, verily, God loves those who act equitably.”
(Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 60:8)

Discussion Questions
- What does this verse say about how Muslims are expected to deal with people of other faiths?
- The verse clearly spells out that God loves those who are just and kind towards people outside the Islamic faith.
- What does this mean?
- How do you see this playing out in society today?

References for Further Reading:
Lesson II - Peacemaking in Practice

Aziza Hasan

Introduction

The Quran is practical in its approach to peacemaking. Wisdom of how to implement communal harmony is woven throughout the text through both examples of past prophets as well as simple commands to people of faith. The goal of this lesson is to help participants explore those lessons in small discussion groups so that they can gain a deeper understanding of the text and how it may apply to their lives today.

Materials Needed:

- Printed copies of handout for each participant
- Pen for each participant to take notes
- Light refreshments (helps people think)
- Clean sheet or rug for Muslim participants to perform their ritual daily prayers. Make sure space is appropriate for prayer [no images of people, there are no animals walking around, noise level is low or non existent]. When possible, have the prayer rug set up before the session starts to minimize transition times.

Conducting the Lesson

I. Opening Exercise: Relationship Builder (15-20 minutes)

- You will need some open space for people to walk around
- Ask participants to put all their things down so that their hands are free
- Instruct everyone to walk around the room in different directions until you tell them to stop.
- After approximately 10 seconds tell people to stop and pair up with the person closest to them.
- Ask them to “share one thing that happened today that you are leaving behind so that you can be fully present in the group.”
- After 2 minutes, make an announcement for the pairs to wrap up the first speakers comments and switch to the second speaker. After 2 minutes, ask people to start walking around the room once again in different random directions.

II. Welcome (5-10 minutes)

- Cover any logistics and announcements (like when prayer breaks will be taken and where the bathrooms are located).
- It is very important to look up Muslim prayer times before each session to plan your schedule around the prayer times so that Muslim participants feel included and so that prayer does not interrupt your schedule. You can find prayer times by date and zipcode at: http://www.islamicfinder.org
- Note that many Muslims do not pray Maghrib late (4th prayer of the day). Thus it is very important to schedule a break at the time of maghrib, less you lose your audience.

III. Small Study Groups (30-45 Minutes)

- Have participants self-divide into small groups of 3 (when possible, these groups should include one Muslim, one Jew and one Christian).
Pass out the Peacemaking in Practice Handout.

Explain that this exercise is intended so that participants study text together and offer greater insight than reading the text alone.

One person will read one verse out loud while the other two group members follow along silently. Alternate members reading the text aloud until all the verses have been read aloud at least once. Then reflect on and discuss the text. Write the questions below on a board of large sheet of paper so that all groups can read the questions from where they are sitting. As part of your explanation of this exercise, read the questions aloud.

- What stood out for you?
- Go through each verse and reflect on what it means for you in your life today.
- Have moments existed in your life when you wish you had followed the wisdom in these verses? When and what might that have looked like?
- After 45 minutes bring the small groups to a larger group discussion

IV. Break (10 Minutes)

IV. Larger Group Discussion (50 minutes)

- Ask the group for the answers they shared in their small groups.
- Other discussion questions:
  - What surprised you?
  - What resonated with you?
  - Do you see any overlap between any of the text you read and any other religious traditions?

V. Closing (20 minutes)

- Ask everyone to put everything down and stand in a circle.
- Have participants share their commitment to peace-building and how they will apply it to their own life.

Further Reading:

Small Study Groups

Divide into small groups (preferably triads composed of one Muslim, one Christian and one Jew). One person will read one verse out loud while the other two group members follow along silently. Alternate members reading the text aloud until all the verses have been read aloud at least once. Then reflect on and discuss the text. Here are some questions to help guide your discussion:

- What stood out for you?
- Go through each verse and reflect on what it means for you in your life today.
- Have moments existed in your life when you wish you had responded to a situation differently? When and what might that have looked like in relation to these verses?
- How can social empowerment and justice contribute to peace making?
In the Name of God, The Dispenser of Grace, The Merciful!

“True piety does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west - but truly pious is he who believes in God, and the Last Day; and the angels, and revelation, and the prophets; and spends his substance - however much he himself may cherish - it - upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and the beggars, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage; and is constant in prayer, and renders the purifying dues; and [truly pious are] they who keep their promises whenever they promise, and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril: it is they that have proved themselves true, and it is they, who they who are conscious of God.” (Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 2:177)

Those “who spend [in His way] in time of plenty and in time of hardship, and hold in check their anger, and pardon their fellow-men because God loves the doers of good.” (Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 3:134)

“And it was by God's grace that thou [O Prophet] didst deal gently with thy followers: for if thou hadst been harsh and hard of heart, they would indeed have broken away from thee. Pardon them, then, and pray that they be forgiven. And take counsel with them in all matters of public concern; then, when thou hast decided upon a course of action, place thy trust in God: for, verily, God loves those who place their trust in Him.” (Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 3:159)

“BEHOLD, God bids you to deliver all that you have been entrusted with unto those who are entitled thereto, and whenever you judge between people, to judge with justice. Verily, most excellent is what God exhorts you to do: verily, God is all-hearing, all-seeing.” (Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 4:58)

“O YOU who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God's claim takes precedence over [the claims of] either of them. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice: for if you distort [the truth], behold, God is indeed aware of all that you do! (Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 4:135)

“O YOU who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just: this is closest to being God-conscious. And remain conscious of God: verily, God is aware of all that you do.” (Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 5:8)

“ART THOU NOT aware how God sets forth the parable of a good word? [It is] like a good tree, firmly rooted, [reaching out] with its branches towards the sky, yielding its fruit at all times by its Sustainer's leave. And [thus it is that] God propounds parables unto men,' so that they might bethink themselves [of the truth].” (Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 14:24-25)

“BEHOLD, God enjoins justice, and the doing of good, and generosity towards [one's] fellow-men; and He forbids all that is shameful and all that runs counter to reason, as well as envy; [and] He exhorts you [repeatedly] so that you might bear [all this] in mind.” (Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 16:90)

“And what could make thee conceive what it is, that steep uphill road? [It is] the freeing of one's neck [from the burden of sin], or the feeding, upon a day of [one's own] hunger, of an orphan near of kin, or of a needy [stranger] lying in the dust and being, withal, of those who have attained to faith, and who enjoin upon one another patience in adversity, and enjoin upon one another compassion.” (Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 90:12-17)

God Speaks the Truth

1 Whenever Muslims read verses from the Quran, they begin by reciting this line.
2 Muslims end all recitation of verses in the Quran with this phrase.
Lesson III - Conflict Resolution
Aziza Hasan

Introduction
It is easier to walk away than it is to stay at the table. Honest conversations are essential in relationship and peace building. Yet many of us avoid confrontation because we don’t want to risk the relationship or we don’t want to deal with the issue. Emerson once said, “it’s better to be a thorn in the side of your friend than his echo.” If you care about the relationship, be honest.

The goal of this session is to explore what Islam advocates in dealing with difficult people and resolving conflict. It is also designed for self-reflection and individual commitment to relationships and resolving conflicts as part of peacemaking.

Materials Needed:
- Whiteboard/ Large Sheet of paper to write up schedule and prompts (these should be written up in large lettering prior to the lesson using markers)
- Markers
- Printed copies of handout for each participant
- Pen for each participant to take notes
- Light refreshments (helps people think)
- Clean sheet or rug for Muslim participants to perform their ritual daily prayers. Make sure space is appropriate for prayer [no images of people, there are no animals walking around, noise level is low or non existent]. When possible, have the prayer rug set up before the session starts to minimize transition times.
- 3 x 5 notecards (one for each participant)
- Basket

Conducting the Lesson
I. Opening Exercise: Relationship Builder (25 minutes)
- Before you begin this exercise, give each attendee a 3 x 5 note card and ask them to write their name on one side.1
  - Then collect all the notecards in a basket. Go back around the room asking people to draw one notecard (they cannot take back their own name).
- Tell them to keep the note card during the remainder of the session and write down a moment they appreciate about the person whose name is written on the card they possess (this must be something they observe during the lesson).
- They will be asked to share this with the person verbally at the end of the session.
- Tell people to pair up with someone they haven’t had a chance to get to know very well. Preferably someone from another faith persuasion.
- Ask each pair to share a conflict they were in and how it was resolved. Each person will get 5 minutes to tell their story to their partner. Make sure to interrupt the pairs after 5 minutes and prompt them to have the first person wrap up their story and switch to their partner. Write the following questions up on a board or large sheet of paper as prompts to guide the conversations:
  - Describe the conflict. What happened? What was the perspective from each side?
  - How was the conflict resolved?
  - Was it easy to resolve the conflict?
- After 10 minutes of sharing in paris, convene the group and ask those who feel comfortable to share with the larger group. Especially covering the answers to the prompts. This larger group discussion should take 15 minutes as not everyone will be sharing.
II. Welcome (5-10 minutes)
- Cover any logistics and announcements (like when prayer breaks will be taken and where the bathrooms are located).
- It is very important to look up Muslim prayer times before each session to plan your schedule around the prayer times so that Muslim participants feel included and so that prayer does not interrupt your
schedule. You can find prayer times by date and zipcode at: http://www.islamicfinder.org

- Note that many Muslims do not pray Maghrib late (4th prayer of the day). Thus it is very important to schedule a break at the time of maghrib, less you lose your audience.

III. Small Study Groups (30-45 Minutes)

- Have participants self-divide into small groups of 3 (when possible, these groups should include one Muslim, one Jew and one Christian). They must choose people they have not worked with in the past.
- Pass out the Conflict Resolution Handout.
- Explain that this exercise is intended so that participants study text together and offer greater insight than reading the text alone.

- One person will read one verse out loud while the other two group members follow along silently. Alternate members reading the text aloud until all the verses have been read aloud at least once. Then reflect on and discuss the text. Write the questions below on a board of large sheet of paper so that all groups can read the questions from where they are sitting. As part of your explanation of this exercise, read the questions aloud.
  - What stood out for you?
  - Go through each verse and reflect on what it means for you in your life today.
  - Have moments existed in your life when you wish you had followed the wisdom in these verses? When and what might that have looked like?

- After 30-45 minutes bring the small groups to a larger group discussion

IV. Break (10 Minutes)

IV. Larger Group Discussion (50 minutes)

- Ask the group for the answers they shared in their small groups.
- Other discussion questions:
  - What surprised you?
  - What resonated with you?
  - Do you see any overlap between any of the text you read and any other religious traditions?

V. Closing (20 minutes)

- Ask each person to stand and put everything in their hands down except the 3 x 5 notecard with the name of their colleague and their positive appreciation of them.
- Ask for one volunteer to start the appreciation circle. That person should call the name of the person they are appreciating and take one step into the circle.
  - The person whose name is called must be instructed to take one step into the circle.
  - Both parties must make eye contact during this appreciation exercise.
  - Once the feedback is given, the person being appreciated will call the name of the individual in their hand, and ask him/her to step forward.
  - The process should continue until all the participants have been appreciated by their peers.

Small Study Groups

Divide into small groups of people you don’t usually talk to (preferably triads composed of one Muslim, one Christian and one Jew). One person will read one verse out loud while the other two group members follow along silently. Alternate members reading the text aloud until all the verses have been read aloud at least once. Then reflect on and discuss the text. Here are some questions to help guide your discussion:

- What stood out for you?
- Go through each verse and reflect on what it means for you in your life today.
- Have moments existed in your life when you wish you had responded to a situation differently? When and what might that have looked like in relation to these verses?
In the Name of God, The Dispenser of Grace,  
The Merciful

Dealing with Difficult People:

Text #1

“MAKE due allowance for man's nature, and en-
join the doing of what is right; and leave alone
all those who choose to remain ignorant.”
(Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 7:199)

Text #2

“For, [true] servants of the Most Gracious are
[only] they who walk gently on earth, and who,
whenever the foolish address them, reply with
[words of] peace.” (Muhammad Assad Transla-
tion, Quran 25:63)

Text #3

“And, whenever they heard frivolous talk, hav-
ing turned away from it and said: “Unto us shall
be accounted Our deeds, and unto you, your
deeds. Peace be upon you - [but] we do not seek
out such as are ignorant [of the meaning of right
and wrong].” (Muhammad Assad Translation,
Quran 28:55)

Additional Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean to make allowance for
  human nature?
- If the text instructs believers to “leave
  alone all those who choose to remain igno-
  rant” what does that mean?
- How might we walk gently on the earth?
- How easy would it be to respond those
  who try to provoke you unjustly with a re-
  sponse of peace?
- Letting go of “frivolous talk” that may
  concern you, can be challenging, is this
  something that you can commit to?

Dealing with Conflict:

Text #4

When God commands the prophet Moses to con-
front the most ruthless man of his time, the
pharaoh, God commands Moses to “But speak
unto him in a mild manner, so that he might be-
think himself or [at least] be filled with appre-
hension.”
(Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 20:44)

Text #5

But [since] good and evil cannot be equal, repel
thou [evil] with something that is better and lo!
he between whom and thyself was enmity [may
then become] as though he had [always] been
close [unto thee], a true friend! And no one will
be granted such goodness except those who ex-
ercise patience and self-restraint, - none but per-
sons of the greatest good fortune.” (Muhammad
Assad Translation, Quran 41:34-35)

Text #6

“In them, indeed, you have a good example for
everyone who looks forward [with hope and
awe ] to God and the Last Day. And if any turns
away, [let him know that] God is truly self-suffi-
cient, the One to whom all praise is due. [But] it
may well be that God will bring about [mutual]
affection between you [O believers] and some of
those whom you [now] face as enemies: for,
God is all-powerful - and God is much-forgiv-
ing, a dispenser of grace.” (Muhammad
Assad Translation, Quran 60:6-7)

Text #7

“BEHOLD, We have bestowed upon thee from
on high this divine writ, setting forth the truth,
so that thou may judge between people in accor-
dance with what God has taught thee. Hence, do
not contend with those who are false to their
trust, but pray God to forgive [them]: behold,
God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of
grace. Yet do not argue in behalf of those who
are false to their own selves: verily, God does
not love those who betray their trust and persist
in sinful ways. They would conceal their doings
from men; but from God they cannot conceal
them - for He is with them whenever they de-
vote, in the dark of night, all manner of beliefs
which He does not approve. And God indeed en-
compasses [with His knowledge] whatever they
do. Oh, you might well argue in their behalf in
the life of this world: but who will argue in their
behalf with God on the Day of Resurrection, or
who will be their defender? Yet he who does
evil or [otherwise] sins against himself, and
thereafter prays God to forgive him, shall find
God much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace: for
he who commits a sin, commits it only to his
own hurt; and God is indeed all-knowing, wise.
But he who commits a fault or a sin and then throws the blame therefore on an innocent person, burdens himself with the guilt of calumny and [yet another] flagrant sin. And but for God's favour upon thee and His grace, some of those [who are false to themselves] would indeed endeavour to lead thee astray; yet none but themselves do they lead astray. Nor can they harm thee in any way, since God has bestowed upon thee from on high this divine writ and [given thee] wisdom, and has imparted unto thee the knowledge of what thou didst not know. And God's favour upon thee is tremendous indeed. NO GOOD comes, as a rule, out of secret confabulations - saving such as are devoted to enjoining charity, or equitable dealings, or setting things to rights between people; and unto him who does this out of a longing for God's goodly acceptance We shall in time grant a mighty reward.” (Muhammad Assad Translation, Quran 4: 105-114)

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Usually when one thinks of speaking truth to power, an image of strong language and high volume are conjured up. What type of model is the Quran advocating in describing God’s advice to Moses to address the tyrannical pharaoh in a mild manner?

- Turning the other cheek is something that one does when they have power, not because they are weak. We become stronger when we win our enemies into being our friends. How does the Quran advocate this? How easy do you think this will be to implement in your life?

- What would it take for us/you to pray for God to forgive people you distrust? Does one forgive for God’s sake or for one’s own sake?

- What are all the attributes/action the aforementioned verses advocate people of faith adopt? What is one thing you can implement in your own life and what might it look like?
Introduction

Once members of a faith community have begun to form a vision for interfaith peacemaking, the group needs to determine concrete steps to form relationships with other communities. The most effective interfaith action plans in faith communities are those with clarity of purpose, and with enough flexibility to allow for needed changes and the surprises that occur in the course of all human relationships. As faith communities discern their needs and capacities for interfaith reconciliation and peacemaking, and learn more about what has worked for others in similar situations, strategies emerge from the specific context. Without ongoing evaluation that includes strategic planning, any partnership will eventually lose its energy and purpose. Given that interfaith reconciliation and peacemaking is a long-term commitment, planning, monitoring, and evaluation supports faith communities in deepening interfaith relationships. As discussed throughout this curriculum, planning processes that begin with bringing all parties together for joint projects is optimal for building interfaith relationships, as is openness to learning and the ability to adapt as opportunities emerge and needs change. Team-building skills, including clear communication and a spirit of mutual respect are critical for cooperative interfaith action. Groups should also learn more about interfaith organizations already working in their community and seek to build alliances with existing relationships.

Creating an Action Plan

The purpose of this lesson is to help participants analyze the interfaith landscape of their home communities and to create an action plan for further interfaith peacemaking and collaborative action. This lesson may be used with other lessons in the curriculum or on its own as a way to start a discussion on interfaith cooperative action. This session can be adjusted to fit a 1-3 hour time block. Planners are encouraged to utilize the other lessons and activities in this curriculum, including the stories of the members of the AFPI on the website, as well as the additional resources offered there.

NOTE: Two of the three activities listed in this lesson, “Community Case Study” and “Mapping the Religious Landscape of Your Community,” involve advance preparation for leaders and participants. Instructions for these activities need to be conveyed to group members during a previous session.

Materials Needed: A board to write on, or newsprint, markers and masking tape. Pens or pencils and writing paper might also be helpful.

Conducting the Lesson

I. Opening Exercise

Leaders welcome everyone, introduce themselves, and share logistical information with the group. Give a brief overview of the program. Invite participants to introduce themselves by sharing their names and what they hope to gain from the experience. Members of some religious traditions may choose to begin the lesson with a text, prayer or song or opt to light a candle during periods of sharing. With an interfaith group, leaders need to take care to plan shared prayer in a way that is inclusive of the traditions represented. A brief period of silence for meditation is also an option.

II. Community Case Study

Ask participants to watch local television, or listen to local radio, or read the local newspaper to find issues with interfaith impact. For instance, stories that report faith communities that have difficulty purchasing or constructing buildings in local neighborhoods are often reported throughout the media. Instances of violence or harassment perpetrated on members of particular religious traditions, or vandalism of houses of worship are other examples, as are stories about the prejudice experienced by members of religious traditions in schools or hospitals. Request that participants bring these stories to the next meeting where the group will review all the news, and select one or two to create their own community case study. Divide the larger group into small groups of 4-6 and ask them to develop an action plan to address the issues involved in the case study. A key question is, “How might our faith community work for interfaith peace-
making and collaborative action in our wider community?” Compare the actions plans of the small groups and work from them to share a coordinated plan for your faith community to act on a local interfaith issue.

III. Mapping the Religious Landscape of Your Community

Ask participants to spend at least a week gathering all the information they can about the religious pluralism of your home community. They are welcome to use standard Chamber of Commerce or internet sources, but keep in mind that it is not uncommon for communities to be relatively unaware of the religious diversity in their midst. Often there is more religious pluralism in a location than what is acknowledged or recognized. Encourage participants to actually drive through sections of the community to document houses of worship and religious organizations that may not be listed locally. Offer the follow questions as guidance, and encourage participants to be as creative as possible in mapping their religious landscape:

1. What are the largest religious groups statistically in your community? Where are they located?
2. What houses of worship, religious schools, or other religious organizations are in your community? Where are they located?
3. Are there any interfaith organizations listed in your community? Are you able to locate the key leaders? Ask the key leaders about important ongoing interfaith events or projects. Which religious groups participate and which do not? What do they do?
4. Does any civic organization have a list of religious groups in your community? Who is included on the list and who is excluded? When was the list last updated?
5. Do the local media cover religion, and if so, what types of stories do they tend to feature?
6. What are the immigration patterns of your community, and what are the religious traditions of the most recent groups?
7. Is there an interfaith clergy association and who is active in it?
8. What religious groups in your community have experienced personal harm or vandalism?
9. Has your community ever sponsored any interfaith dialogues? Who coordinated them and what was the follow up?
10. Do any religious groups hold open houses or invite other religious communities for social occasions? Which faith communities are looking for partnership?

After participants present their findings, reflect on the following questions:

- What surprised or challenged you?
- Who are potential allies for interfaith peacemaking?
- What opportunities for collaborative action exist in our community now?

IV. Ten Things We Can Do

Ask participants to brainstorm things they can do to foster interfaith and collaborative action. Share the handout: “Ten Things We Can Do to Support Interfaith Peacemaking and Collaborative Action.” After discussing the possibilities, ask the group to commit to one activity personally or with a community. Then ask group members to work in pairs to develop their action plans. Share completed plans with the full group, and/or post them for reflection and to share with the wider faith community.

V. Closure

Ask participants to share their hopes for future work on interfaith reconciliation and peacemaking. Leaders may also choose to end in prayer or song or ritual.
Ten Things You Can Do to Support Interfaith Peacemaking and Collaborative Action

1. Investigate the “religious landscape” of your home community and develop a list of contacts interested in building interfaith relationships. Form a dialogue group that meets regularly and responds to issues in the community.

2. Reflect on the religious pluralism within your congregation. Are there any interfaith families? Do you have staff members or volunteers from other religious groups? How might your congregation better serve those from other religious groups in your midst?

3. Ask people from other religious traditions to tell you about their communities, as regards religious education, worship, etc. If your congregation already has formed some interfaith relationships, are there ways they might be deepened or expanded?

4. Visit another religious group in your community when they hold an open day or offer a community program. Hold a visiting day at your own congregation and invite the wider community for hospitality. Support interfaith pastoral care at a local hospital.

5. Find ways, when working on common issues such as poverty, homelessness, education, etc., to work with other religious groups in your local community.

6. Study. In your own congregation or with another religious group, design an educational experience or share in a book group.

7. In order to build relationships, do business intentionally with firms run by members of other religious groups.

8. Support efforts combating religious hate crimes and religious discrimination in your community.

9. Support local, national, and global interfaith organizations with your time, your ideas, and material resources.

10. Pray that God may empower you to build interfaith community through your congregation.
Appendix

Transforming Religious Conflicts

Compiled by Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook

Religious conflict occurs when differences surface that make it difficult to proceed harmoniously. There is no one approach that will address all types of religious conflicts in local communities; conflict is a cultural act that takes on different forms of existence in different contexts. Although specialists in the field of conflict transformation may each describe such processes slightly differently, most agree on the following factors:

1. **Focus on relationships.** We need to be mindful that sustaining and nurturing relationships between people is at the heart of religious conflict transformation. When relationships are damaged by injustice and violence it is difficult to form trust and connection. It is through experiencing common humanity, rather than enmity, where communities may begin to support each other.

2. **Intentional Preparation.** Careful preparation, including the anticipation of a range of possible scenarios, is integral to religious conflict transformation to better engage the opportunities and obstacles ahead. Preparation includes creating an atmosphere for positive engagement. Physical spaces need to be neutral, logistically and symbolically. Attention to hospitality, scheduling, and aesthetics is equally important, as are commonly held norms for participation. Some situations also benefit from the skills of a mutually-selected trained facilitator or mediator.

3. **Analyze Conflict Dynamics.** Most specialists emphasize the need to carefully assess the conflict dynamics, identifying who needs to be involved, and developing the process. How do people experience what is happening? What cultural and/or religious differences are influencing the situation? How are those involved dealing with their differences? Every different culture, including religious cultures, has their own ways of dealing with conflict, and these can vary greatly. Key is developing an approach that is agreeable to all the parties involved, at least to the extent that they are willing to try. As relationships develop more choices and approaches are revealed.

4. **Mutual Discovery and Exploration.** At the heart of religious conflict transformation is a mutual discovery process whereby we learn more about the other, about ourselves, and ways we can strengthen our relationship. Such work involves looking at the past and present relationships of the communities involved in the conflict. What are the dynamics of relationship overtime? How are people and groups affected? Ideally, mutual discovery fosters understanding and builds empathy. Methods often used in mutual discovery are home visits, shared meals, storytelling, and ritual.

5. **Shared Action.** After individuals or groups have explored their past and present, they are better equipped to turn their collaboration into reality. The transition into shared action is not automatic; many stop short of actual implementation of an action plan. It may be beneficial to ease into planning and implementation gradually with small tasks and projects.

**The Need for Dynamic Engagement**

Michelle LeBaron, professor of conflict analysis and resolution at George Mason University, writes extensively about how to bridge and transform differences. LeBaron’s work stresses the need to address conflict through a fluid process of “dynamic engagement” that looks different in different cultures, yet works to bring relationships into focus. Dynamic engagement involves attending to instances of religious con-
lict, dialoguing with involved parties, and designing processes that address the culture and context. She argues that analysis and logic alone cannot guide us through difficult conflicts. Instead we must work relationally with those involved to find new ways of connection, and to build a new foundation of trust. In her book, Bridging Cultural Conflicts, LeBaron identified the following “toughstones” of dynamic engagement (pp. 137-164):

**Attend and Assess** - With a spirit of inquiry, the mindful person enlarges the scope and understanding of the conflict before action is taken. LeBaron argues that unless physical safety is an issue, it is useful to first take stock of the situation by bringing the context, history, and identities into focus. Urgent action in absence of imminent danger may escalate conflicts. Is this conflict centered on the material, communicative, or symbolic dimensions of relationships? Is it part of a pattern? Is the matter urgent or is there space for reflection?

**Suspend Judgment** - Often in the face of a difficult conflict the last thing we want to do is suspend our judgment; we want to dwell in our negative opinions. It also may feel like we are losing our principles by agreeing to expand our perspectives. LeBaron notes that suspending judgment does not mean we agree with the other. Rather, we are setting our judgments to the side in an effort to see what else we can let in, and to create the possibility that we can receive the other side.

**Receive the Other Side** - Rather than reacting, LeBaron urges parties involved in conflicts to practice listening with a spirit of witness that allows for the experience of others. During difficult conflicts it is important to recognize what our sisters and brothers are saying, even in anger, without denying or deflecting them. LeBaron reminds that at this stage it is not about adopting another position, but making a space for the other in our hearts and minds and receiving what is said.

**Create a Shared Circle** - At this point in the process, we draw a circle around ourselves and those we are in conflict with to determine next steps by considering the perspectives of each side. In some cases the parties may choose to meet around a round table and share views. In other situations, indirect communication or conciliations are more appropriate. LeBaron notes that when a positive spirit of engagement is created a more constructive climate is created.

**Shifts and Turning Points** - LeBaron observes that shifts and turning points occur when people constructively engage with each other. Sometimes they are the result of a shared meeting, or may be precipitated by an outside intervention. The result is a little more openness where trust may grow.

**Design a Way Through That Reflects Cultural Common Sense** - Once a relationship between those involved in a conflict is built, then face-to-face involvement may allow for deepening relationship and common generative work.

**Reflect** - LeBaron reminds those involved in difficult conflicts that building bridges takes time. She offers the notion of a spirit of perspective that builds reflective practice into the process.

**Integrate** - As relationships are maintained, parties in conflict share responsibility that lessons learned become part of the foundations of a new common life. Integration may be marked with shared rituals to mark accomplishments and closure.

**Quest** - For LeBaron the quest is born when parties involved in conflicts emerge from them and continue to work together, once again animated by a spirit of inquiry. As we engage with others constructively, honoring their experience and our own, we create communities of respect and shared values.

**Further Resources:**
Books for Personal and Group Study


Eck Diana & The Pluralism Project. On Common Ground: World Religions in America. 3RD Edition. Cambridge: Harvard University, 2008. This CD-ROM provides the history, beliefs, and current practices of 15 religious traditions. Includes an anthology of documents for further study, as well as a geographic protract of the American religious landscape.


Hedges, Paul. Controversies in Interreligious Dialogue and the Theology of Religions. London: SCM Press, 2010. This book is useful in that it provides a synthesis of the theoretical and theological bases of interfaith dialogue. It is a good text for those who want to do some study on the topic but cannot read a dozen different titles.


Ipgrave, Michael. Scriptures in Dialogue. Christians and Muslims Studying the Bible and the Qu’ran Together. London: Church House Publishing, 2004. This series of articles is the result of a conference with 25 Muslim and Christian scholars who engaged in extensive text study together. The collection is most useful to readers who have a background in the Bible and Qu’ran.


Lonsdale, Akasha. Do I Kneel or Do I Bow? London: Kuperard, 2010. Ideal for those who visit houses of worship or travelers, this book is a guide to interfaith etiquette that gives concise information on values, customs, and beliefs, as well as the cultural practices of various religious traditions.

MacKenzie, Don, Ted Falcon, and Jamal Rahman. Getting to the Heart of Interfaith. Woodstock: Skylight Paths, 2009. From the perspective of their own faith commitment, a pastor, a rabbi, and a sheikh, explore their differences and interfaith cooperation.

McCarthy, Kate. *Interfaith Encounters in America.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007. The chapters in this book explore the many ways people in the United States experience interfaith encounter, through faith communities, families, community groups, online discussions, etc.


Prothero, Stephen. *A Nation of Religions.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006. A collection of essays that address how Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs have changed the public values, rites and institutions of the nation, and how they have been changed in the process.


Sacks, Jonathan. *The Dignity of Difference. How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations.* London: Continuum, 2002. Now a classic, this book is one of the first major statements by a Jewish leader on the ethics of globalization. A bold statement for supporting the need to make a space for difference, even—and especially—at the heart of the monotheistic imagination.


Torry, Malcolm & Sarah Thorley. *Together & Different: Christians Engaging with people of Other Faiths.* Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008. This book features a series of case studies on a wide variety of interfaith projects in the United Kingdom, most of which are directly applicable to other contexts.

Volf, Miroslav, Ghazi bin Muhammad, and Melissa Yarrington, *A Common Word. Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010. A collaborative effort between Muslims and Christians from all over the world, this book addresses critical and frequently asked questions, and is considered by some a major step toward reconciliation between the two faiths.

**Film**

Faith Communities interested in showing films for educational purposes need to check out the licensing requirements in advance. Special rules and pricing may apply. Your faith community may already be part of a licensing agreement through conferences, jurisdictions, dioceses, affiliated organizations, or some other organizational structure.

**Additional Resources**


*Fremont U.S.A.* Produced and directed by Rachel Antell and Elinor Pierce. Narrated by Diana L. Eck. The Pluralism Project, 2002. 57 minutes. This film documents civic engagement and interfaith action in the city of Fremont, California; a city where the religious landscape was transformed through immigration.

*The Imam & the Pastor*. Directed by Alan Channer. FLTfilms, 2006. 40 minutes. The moving story of the peace-building efforts between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria, this film depicts the commitment of religious men to end killing and bring healing to their communities, village by village.

*Jerusalem: Center of the World*. Directed by Andrew Goldberg. PBS, 2009. 120 minutes. Covers over 4,000 years of history from the perspective of the city’s Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities.

*The Jewish People: A Story of Survival*. Directed by Andrew Goldberg. Two Cats Productions, 2008. 60 minutes. The story of the survival of the Jewish people from slavery to the loss of their homeland; from exile to anti-Semitism.

*The Jews: A People’s History*. A Film by Nina Koshofer and Sabine Klause. Kultur, n.d. 265 Minutes. A five part documentary that explores 4,000 years of Jewish history, starting with the origins of the Jewish people through to the present day.


*New Muslim Cool*. A Film by Jennifer Maytorena Taylor. Specific Pictures, 2009. 83 minutes. A film centered around the life of Puerto-Rican American Muslim hip-hop star Hamza Perez, as he reaches for a deeper understanding of his faith and confronts the realities of the post 9/11 world. His spiritual journey unfolds as he builds a family, works as a prison chaplain, and finds way to serve his community.

*The Power of Forgiveness*. A Film by Martin Doblmeier. Journey Films, 2007. 78 minutes. A documentary on the process of forgiveness and reconciliation featuring Elie Wiesel, Thich Nhat Hahn, Thomas Moore, Desmond Tutu, and other religious leaders from a variety of traditions. The film follows people who testify to the personal and spiritual transformation (and the challenges) that accompany true forgiveness at Ground Zero, Northern Island, the Amish countryside, and in other contexts.

*Renewal. Stories from America’s Religious-Environmental Movement*. Produced by Marty Ostell and Terry Kay Rockefeller, Fine Cut Productions, for the Renewal Project, 2007. 110 Minutes. A film featuring 9 different stories about religious environmental action and stewardship. It is possible to show one, several or all of the stories. The film is designed to engage people of faith in dialogue about environmental action and break down the barriers between secular activists and people of faith. Available from the Renewal Project, www.renewalproject.net.

*A Son’s Sacrifice*. A film by Yoni Brook and Musa Syeed. Foment Films, 2006.26 minutes. The story of a young American Muslim who struggles to take over his father’s slaughterhouse in New York City. The young man must confront his mixed heritage and his father’s traditional community.

*Stand Up: Muslim American Comics Come of Age. America At A Crossroads*. Produced by Jeff Biber and Dalton Delan. WETA Washington, 2007. 1 hour. The film explores the emergence of Muslim American and Arab American comedians and how they use humor to take on stereotypes about religion and politics.

**Three Faiths, One God. Judaism, Christianity, Islam.** A documentary by Gerald Krell & Meyer Odze. Auteur Productions, LTD, 2005. 120 minutes. A poignant documentary that discusses the differences and similarities of the Abrahamic faith traditions. Scenes include different voices from each faith group, as well as settings. Includes a study guide.

**Ties That Bind.** Ann E. Feldman, creator and executive producer. Artistic Circles, 2006. 59 minutes. This documentary and outreach curriculum features seven women spiritual leaders from the Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions who reach across the boundaries of faith, race and nationality. The film also addresses the emerging role of women in interfaith dialogue. The package includes a detailed study guide for use with local groups. Contact artisticcircles@aol.com.

**Websites**

There are many websites related to interfaith dialogue. Those listed here are a few of those most commonly cited. Websites listed here were active at press time.

9/11 Unity Walk, www.911UnityWalk.org
Adherents, www.adherents.com
Alliance for Spiritual Community, www.asc.spiritualcommunity.org
American Jewish Committee, Engaging America Project, www.engagingamerica.org
Arts and Spirituality Center, www.artsandspirituality.org
Auburn Theological Seminary, www.auburnsem.org
Beliefnet, www.beliefnet.com
Beyond Tolerance, www.BeyondTolerance.org
BuddhaNet, www.buddhanet.net
Camp If & Interfaith Youth Leadership Program, Anti-Defamation League, http://regions.adl.org
Center for Interfaith Inquiry, www.memnosyne.org
Center for Interfaith Relations, www.interfaith.org
The Center for Progressive Christianity (Pluralism Sunday), www.tcp.org
Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations, www.merrimack.edu/JCM
Center for World Thanksgiving, www.thanksgiving.org
Claremont School of Theology, www.cst.edu
The Coexistence Initiative, www.coexistence.net
Common Tables, www.commontables.org
The Dialogue Project, www.thedialogueproject.org
Duncan Black MacDonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, http://macdonald.hartsem.edu
Facing History, www.facinghistory.org
Faith House, www.faithhousemanhattan.org
Family Promise (formerly the Interfaith Hospitality Network), www.familypromise.org
Fellowship of Reconciliation, www.forusa.org
The Guibord Center, www.theguibordcenter.org
Hartford Institution for Religion Research, www.hirr.hartsem.edu
The Interfaith Alliance, www.interfaithalliance.org
The Interfaith Alliance at the Presidio, www.interfaith-presidio.org
Interfaith Center of New York, www.interfaithcenter.org
Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, www.ifcmw.org

**Additional Resources**
Interfaith Marketplace,
www.interfaithmarketplace.com
Inter-Faith Ministries, Wichita, Kansas,
www.ifmnet.org
Interfaith Voices for Peace and Justice, www.interspirit.net/ifv.cfm
Interfaith Youth Core, www.ifyc.org
International Council of Christians and Jews,
www.iccj.org.
International Interfaith Centre, Oxford, United Kingdom, www.interfaith-centre.org
The Interreligious Center on Public Life,
www.interreligiouscenter.org
Islam.com, www.islam.com
The Islamic Center of North America,
www.isna.net.
Judaism 101, www.jewfaq.org
Kaleidoscope Institute,
www.kscopeinstitute.org
Multifaith Action Society,
www.multifaithaction.org
Multifaith Calendar,
www.multifaithcalendar.org
Museum of World Religions, Taiwan,
www.mwr.org.tw
National Association of Church Facility Managers, www.nacfm.org
National Association of InterChurch & Interfaith Families, www.NAIIF.org
National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, www.thataway.org
National Conference of Churches,
www.nccusa.prg
North American Interfaith Network,
www.nain.org
PBS Religion & Ethics Newsweekly,
www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics
Pluralism Project, www.pluralism.org
Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, http://cmcu.georgetown.edu
Public Conversations Project,
www.publicconversations.org
Religions for Peace,
www.religionsforpeace.org
Religions for Peace - USA, www.rfpusa.org
Sacred Space International,
www.sacredspaceinternational.org
Sacred Spaces, www.interfaithdesign.org
Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, www.tanenbaum.org
Teaching Tolerance, www.tolerance.org
Temple of Understanding,
www.templeofunderstanding.org
United Communities of Spirit, www.origin.org
United Religions Initiative, www.uri.org
United States Institute of Peace, www.usip.org
Virtual Religion Network,
www.virtualreligion.net
World Council of Churches, Geneva,
www.wcc.org
World Congress of Faiths, www.worldfaiths.org
About the Authors

Compiled by Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook

Rabbi Olga Bluman, MAJE

Rabbi Bluman was born in Moscow, Russia and was raised in Michigan from the age of 8. She graduated from the University of Michigan with a B.A. in Judaic Studies. During her undergraduate studies, she travelled to Israel to study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Following college, Rabbi Bluman continued her studies at the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles, receiving a Master’s Degree in Hebrew Letters and Jewish Education and Rabbinic Ordination. While at HUC-JIR, Rabbi Bluman worked with youth and adults in a variety of educational settings including Temple Isaiah, Congregation Beth HaTikvah, NFTY-in-Israel, Temple Judea and Temple Ahavat Shalom. Since ordination in 2009, Rabbi Bluman has taught Torah Study, Intro to Judaism classes, provides curriculum consultation, serves as the Jewish Chaplain at City of Hope in Duarte and teaches for the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School at Stephen S. Wise Temple and at the Conejo/West Valley school. Rabbi Olga Bluman is married to Rabbi David Bluman, School Rabbi and Judaics teacher at Kadima Day School in West Hills.

Aziza Hasan

Aziza has spoken to audiences across the country on women’s rights in Islam, introductions to Islam, forgiveness and peace in Islamic tradition, and conflict resolution in Muslim communities. She is a founding facilitator of NewGround: A Muslim-Jewish Partnership for Change. An experienced mediator and conflict resolution practitioner she has co-facilitated multiple fellowship cohorts. A successful model of genuine engagement, NewGround has been featured on Public Radio’s "Speaking of Faith" with Krista Tippett, the Unites States Institute for Peace, Arabic Radio and Television, the LA Times, the Jewish Journal and InFocus.

Aziza helped develop the “Standing Together” curriculum of the Christian-Muslim Consultative Group. The seven session study program brings together Muslims and Christians to break down stereo types and learn from one another. She also authored the More Alike than Different Project, a joint effort by Wichita, Kansas organizations such as the local Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) Chapter, Inter Faith Ministries, and the National Conference for Community Justice. Aziza was most recently the Government Relations Coordinator for the Muslim Public Action Council.

The Rev. Dr. Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, Ed.D, Ph.D

Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, is a priest of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, an educator, historian of religion, and practical theologian. She is currently professor of practical theology and religious education at Claremont School of Theology and Claremont Lincoln University, and professor of Anglican Studies at Bloy House, the Episcopal Theological School at Claremont. In addition to her 30 years of experience as a teacher, trainer, spiritual director, chaplain, and workshop, conference and retreat leader, she is the author of a dozen books and numerous articles and reviews, including, God Beyond Borders: Congregations Building Interreligious Community (2012), and A House of Prayer for All Peoples: Congregations Building Multiracial Community (2002). Before her academic career, Kujawa-Holbrook worked worldwide for the Episcopal Church in education and ministries with young people. She is on the boards of the Journal of Interreligious Dialogue (JIRD), the Kaleidoscope Institute (KI), and Religious Freedom USA, and the book review editor of Anglican and Episcopal History. In 2010-2011 Kujawa-Holbrook was a fellow in the Christian Leadership Initiative sponsored by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem, Israel.