Dear Friends:

The Board and Staff of Interfaith Philadelphia are architects of change, designers of the possible. Together with our wide circle of partners, investors, and participants in interfaith work, we pave the way of social construction. Like bridge and roadway construction workers, you are all with us on the growing edge, taking risks that generations before you—and some still among us—won’t take.

We are the behind the scenes laborers who work for months, years, and even decades to forge access and weld enduring connections. At our best, we co-construct beloved communities in workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods. Thousands of you have joined us to expand your tool kits. In the last two years, over 600 people from all walks of life have learned to facilitate civil and difficult conversations. Since its inception, nearly 800 high school students from close to 50 congregations and schools have devoted a year or more in our Walking the Walk initiative, gaining experiences and skills that have widened their horizons and propelled their fluency in one another’s world views, becoming more capable bridge builders. And for years, the heads of 33 of our region’s faith communities and dozen seminaries have slowly labored to put their differences on the table—and stay at the table—because they see that their common vision for society is a necessary joint construction project.

Interfaith Philadelphia is here to make sure that the strong foundation of our religiously plural democracy is here to stay. By expanding our construction force, you help to forge the connections and build the bridges that can heal the most vulnerable cracks in the fabric of our society. It is work that is created by each of us in the everyday and that collectively defies those who have the illusion that “The Good Society,” as Rabbi Jonathan Sacks terms it, can be created overnight.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, we were reminded anew that religious communities provide critical and essential services. Throughout the pandemic, government, public health officials, and business leaders have leaned into our expertise and partner networks to connect to, and better understand the needs of, our region’s vast religious sector. Our dedicated Staff and Board members have been remarkably nimble, venturing onto virtual platforms to conduct ongoing programming and offer new workshops and experiences that meet the evolving needs of the region.

It is unquestionable that the pandemic has demonstrated how integrally we are connected as one human family. In the words of the late Vincent Harding, “When it comes to creating a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious democracy, we are still a developing nation.” We re-dedicate ourselves to bringing our unique work to this pivotal moment, including work that addresses long-delayed attention to deep-seated racial inequities. We reach inward and outward to be a force for good, toiling in this critical and complicated new terrain.

With gratitude for your partnership,

Abby Stamelman Hocky
Executive Director

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**OUR VISION**

Since our founding in 2004, Interfaith Philadelphia has challenged the region’s residents to dare to understand one another. Our bold vision is to have our region reflect the vibrancy of a religiously diverse democracy, one in which all people are valued, distinctive traditions are welcomed, and people of diverse backgrounds collaborate to shape a just and compassionate society.

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**OUR MISSION**

In order to promote social harmony and inter-religious understanding, Interfaith Philadelphia equips individuals and communities for interfaith engagement, builds collaborative relationships, and stands in solidarity with our diverse neighbors.
"I have been engaged in interfaith activism, in one form or another, most of my adult life. My participation in Interfaith Philadelphia has exposed me to new perspectives on how to go about this work and has sharpened my facilitator skills."

- Peer Learning Network Participant

3,000+ PEOPLE IMPACTED IN THE PHILADELPHIA REGION AND BEYOND

370+ PEOPLE TRAINED IN CIVIL DIALOGUE AND INTERFAITH FACILITATION

OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS WHO RESPONDED TO A SURVEY SAID THEY WOULD TAKE GREATER INTENTIONAL ACTION TO INCREASE INTERFAITH UNDERSTANDING AMONG THOSE THEY TEACH, LEAD, AND PREACH

85% OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS WHO RESPONDED TO AN END-OF-YEAR SURVEY SAID THEY WERE MORE AWARE OF THE BIASES OR LIMITATIONS IN THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER RELIGIONS

INNOVATION

Based on feedback from survey data and evaluation, Interfaith Philadelphia:
- Expanded Trainings and Workshops on Civil Dialogue and Interfaith Engagement Skills
- Created New Adaptive Online Programming

100% OF YOUTH RESPONDENTS STATED THEY NOW HAVE MORE SKILLS TO ENGAGE WITH INDIVIDUALS FROM OTHER RELIGIONS
Over 150 individuals and 25+ organizational partners in South Philadelphia co-created a community cookbook filled with recipes, photos from around the neighborhood, and conversation prompts and best practices for interfaith hospitality.

**COMMUNITY COOKBOOK**

Over 150 individuals and 25+ organizational partners in South Philadelphia co-created a community cookbook filled with recipes, photos from around the neighborhood, and conversation prompts and best practices for interfaith hospitality.

**VIRTUAL STORYTIME SERIES**

In Spring 2020, Interfaith Philadelphia offered a virtual story series for children and families, featuring a different holiday each week, including Ramadan, Easter, Passover, Ridván, and Buddha’s Birthday, culminating in a child-led story hour. Children’s book authors Linda Grant, Najmun Riyaz, and Hena Khan, and illustrator Anna Myers were among the honored guest speakers.

**HOSTING ACROSS DIFFERENCE WORKSHOP**

This workshop offered a deep dive into a key practice of the Passport to Understanding: Welcome In. Participants explored resources, questions, and practices for engaging in meaningful hospitality across religious and cultural differences.
Through thought-provoking prompts and questions, the Passport to Understanding guides you in five essential practices of an interfaith traveler: Be Curious, Venture Out, Welcome In, Stand Tall, and Stand With. This year, Interfaith Philadelphia piloted two programs using this tool - one designed especially for community leaders and one designed for individuals seeking to deepen their personal interfaith skillset.

**INTERFAITH PEER LEARNING NETWORK**

A cohort of 25 participants converged for a two-day launch event in January, beginning a six-month journey where they would explore the five Passport practices, invite each other into reflection and creative idea generation, and create implementation plans for their own professional and volunteer settings.

“It was great to be with a group of people who had a positive outlook, cared about humanity, and are working to make our planet and its inhabitants a better place.”

- Peer Learning Network Participant

**PASSPORT TO UNDERSTANDING ONLINE**

For six weeks in the spring, 18 curious individuals gathered each week to engage in an online workshop series centered around the five Passport practices. Together, they practiced skills for building stronger relationships with neighbors, friends, colleagues, and family members of different faiths and spiritual orientations.

100% of Passport Online participants said they felt more connected to people from other religions.
INTERFAITH ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK

This year, 50+ students from colleges and universities around the county came to Philadelphia to visit with local faith communities, engage in service projects, and participate in workshops designed to build skills for interfaith dialogue.

“It was fantastic having all of these religious experiences I likely never would have had otherwise. The openness and acceptance between faiths was amazing.”
- Alternative Spring Break Participant

CHESTER COUNTY YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

In January and February, high school students in Chester County gathered for a pilot three-part leadership summit. The weekend included visits to local Muslim, Christian, and Jewish faith communities, a service-learning project focused on food justice, and workshops on how to be an interfaith ally and a guest in an unfamiliar religious space.

WALKING THE WALK® YOUTH INITIATIVE

This nationally-recognized initiative engages young people in an immersive cohort experience lasting the full academic year, providing high school-age youth with the experiences, skills, and resources necessary to live in a diverse world. This year, 17 Walking the Walk students met with peers and religious leaders at the Islamic Society of Chester County, White Rock Baptist Church, Germantown Friends Meeting, the Baha’i Center of Greater Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Sikh Society, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
In the 2019-2020 program year, Interfaith Philadelphia trained hundreds of people to engage in civil dialogue in their congregations, workplaces, and communities, using a model inspired by *On Being* and *The Civil Conversations Project*.

- The *Civil Conversations Facilitator Training for Educators* focused specifically on tools for educators and youth development professionals interested in leading civil conversations with high school and middle school students.
- The *Difficult Conversations* program built on the ideas and skills introduced in the original training and seeks to equip individuals with skills for dialogue in their personal lives when engaging with family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues.

**CIVIL CONVERSATIONS TRAINING**

- **OVER 370 PEOPLE TRAINED THIS YEAR TO FACILITATE BRIDGE-BUILDING WORK IN OUR REGION AND BEYOND**

*Encountering Other Faiths* is a one-day workshop for those seeking to feel more equipped to lead interfaith dialogue in their own settings. This year, 20 participants from a wide range of religious traditions and professional sectors spent the day skill-building, sharing best practices, and discussing common joys and challenges with their fellow interfaith facilitators.

- **ENCOUNTERING OTHER FAITHS**

“It was a new experience for me to be in a group of people committed to talking about faith who were not of the same tradition. I was able to meet people who didn’t meet my expectations of what a person from their faith tradition was like, and I was able to meet people from faith traditions I didn’t even know about, which is exactly what I was hoping for.”

- *Encountering Other Faiths Attendee*
The Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia was founded in April 2006 in order to build relationships of mutual support, offer a moral and spiritual voice in the region, and identify issues of local concern for dialogue and action. Co-convened by Archbishop Nelsen Pérez, Rabbi David Straus, Imam Anwar Muhaimin, and Bishop Daniel Gutiérrez, the Council is the first of its kind in the city, with 34 member communities, representing more than two million people of diverse faith traditions from across the greater Philadelphia region.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2019-2020 INCLUDED:

- Focused Efforts on the Opioid Crisis and Addiction in Philadelphia
- Provided Peer Support for Faith Leaders Responding to COVID-19
- Released of a Statement on the Death of George Floyd, Signed by Leaders of the Council and Interfaith Philadelphia, Condemning Police Violence Against African-Americans

REPRESENTED COMMUNITIES 2019-2020

African Methodist Episcopal Church
AI-Aqsa Islamic Society
American Sikh Council
Archdiocese of Philadelphia
Black Clergy of Philadelphia & Vicinity
Board of Rabbis of Greater Philadelphia
Congregation Mikveh Israel
Council of Korean Churches of Greater Philadelphia
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Hispanic Clergy of Philadelphia & Vicinity
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia
Majlis Ash-Shura of Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley
Metropolitan Christian Council of Philadelphia
Mosaic Mennonite Conference
Mosque of Shaikh M.R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen
Pennsylvania Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ
Philadelphia Gospel Movement
Philadelphia Leadership Foundation
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
Prebytery of Philadelphia
Quba Masjid
Rabbinical Assembly, Philadelphia Region
Reconstructing Judaism
Saint Mary Coptic Orthodox Church in Delaware
Salvation Army of Eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware
Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of Philadelphia
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Philadelphia
Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the United States
Unitarian Universalist Association, Central Eastern Region
Won Institute of Graduate Studies
The Inter-seminary Initiative connects seminary students, administrators, faculty, and staff to collectively deepen interfaith relationships and connections among the religious leaders of the future. Participants from seminaries around the region, including members of Catholic, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, and Protestant faith traditions, gathered for dinners, open houses, and a virtual retreat.

The vision of the Religious Leaders Council is to make the region “a zone of peace, free of fear, filled with respect, and marked by deeds of kindness.” In that spirit, the Council began the Zones of Peace initiative in 2015 to honor houses of worship, schools, and community-based organizations creatively addressing the root causes of violence. The Zones of Peace Steering Committee recognized five new organizations this year, bringing the total to 88.
VISIONARY WOMEN

Visionary Women is an intergenerational program engaging issues at the intersection of religion, gender, and social justice. This year, alumni of the program returned as small group facilitators and participants in a new Leadership track. Participants on this track received special support from Interfaith Philadelphia staff on designing and implementing experiential interfaith programs in their own communities.

OVER 90% OF VISIONARY WOMEN PARTICIPANTS SAID THEY FELT MORE CONNECTED TO PEOPLE FROM OTHER RELIGIONS AFTER EXPERIENCING THE PROGRAM

ART OF INTERFAITH UNDERSTANDING

Offered in partnership with the Philadelphia Museum of Art’s Division for Community Engagement, the Art of Interfaith Understanding explores the intersection of artistic expression and religious identity. This year, Dr. John Hougen led nine tours for the public and for community partners covering a wide range of topics, including commandments against images of the divine, prayerful attention to art, and how stories from sacred texts are represented in art at the PMA.

GATEWAY TO RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Gateway to Religious Communities is a series where local congregations open their doors to the public to share their faith traditions with curious visitors. Participants have the chance to visit area congregations for worship services, meet members from a variety of faith communities, and engage in dialogue with community leaders and members. In 2020, local congregational partners hosted eight Gateway visits, including two virtual experiences.
Throughout the spring and summer of 2020, faith communities and organizations across the region emerged with resources of all kinds, including online worship, information about direct assistance and advocacy, workshops and classes, mental health resources, resources on anti-racism, and more. Based on submissions from community partners, Interfaith Philadelphia compiled an Interfaith Resource Guide to connect people to opportunities both locally and nationally.

**COVID-19 INTERFAITH RESOURCE GUIDE**

Interfaith Philadelphia partnered with the City of Philadelphia’s Office of Faith-based and Interfaith Affairs to host a vigil on *Bearing Witness: A Space to Mourn and Hope*, an evening of lament, reflection, hope, and solidarity after the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. The agency went on to support the Metropolitan Christian Council in their seven-week *Greater Philadelphia Multifaith Pray and Act Initiative*. This program gathered clergy from different neighborhoods across Philadelphia and the Main Line, offering residents and community members the opportunity to share their frustrations, concerns, and hopes in the wake of the nationwide movement against police violence and towards racial equity.

**PARTNERSHIPS IN ANTI-RACIST WORK**

Interfaith Movie Night Series

Free and open to the public, the *Interfaith Movie Night* series gave friends of all ages the opportunity to gather as a virtual community, watch short films on interfaith topics, and engage in discussion around the themes and questions brought up in the film. Over 50 people attended virtual movie nights this spring.
Interfaith Philadelphia is proud to honor Milan Kunz, on behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the Philadelphia Area, and Rev. Steven Lawrence, on behalf of NewCORE (New Conversations on Race and Ethnicity), with its 2020 Dare to Understand Award. These honorees and their communities are champions of interfaith work. They are committed to fostering understanding and building relationships across lines of religious and cultural difference.

Inspired by, and in collaboration with, area tennis coach and former professional tennis player, Fazal Syed, Love ALL offered an afternoon of youth and adult tennis clinics led by tennis professionals and coaches, along with a pro tennis exhibition. All funds raised benefited Interfaith Philadelphia programming designed to promote meaningful relationship building and dialogue in the region.
Charles Kahn, Jr.’s breadth of engagement in the business, health care, educational, and civic life of our region stems from his deeply embedded Jewish values. When asked why interracial and interreligious work has been a key part of his legacy of service, Charlie reflected on the importance of building relationships of integrity and how treasured relationships with people of all backgrounds have enriched his life.

When asked this year why Interfaith Philadelphia has been the beneficiary of his generous philanthropic support, Charlie said:

“I respect the organization’s work and leadership, and what you have done to bring people together — especially young people.”

We are deeply grateful to Charles and Barbara Kahn for their selfless service to our community and for their investment in the work and vision of Interfaith Philadelphia.
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