



**The Interfaith Center of  
Greater Philadelphia**  
**Annual Report 2008-2009**



Dear Friends,

June 2009

The Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia celebrated its Fifth Anniversary in this year of an historic Presidential election. There seems to be a readiness in our country to truly live into our ideals. There is a force for good that propels our faith communities as we strive for oneness and for wholeness. The Interfaith Center is proud to be one of the new organizations arising to meet the needs of our times.

Our strategic direction has resulted in the following major accomplishments:

- **Serving as a “lab” for launching innovative models of interfaith and cross-cultural work for youth, adults and religious leaders**, based on best practices and multi-disciplinary systems, service learning, youth development, adult learning, community organizing and diversity.
- **Engaging over 55 youth from 18 congregations** in over 1,000 hours of community service to clean parks, send books to prisoners and build bridges of understanding.
- **Uniting religious leaders from 28 faith communities**, representing more than 2.5 million citizens from our region to collaborate on efforts to heal the wounds of violence.
- **Reaching nearly 1,000 adults in diverse communities** who participated in interactive, in-depth learning and dialogue experiences.
- **Strengthening collaborative leadership models** by developing flexible ways to engage the diverse talents of staff and board members, and to address priority issues and concerns.
- **Developing expertise in how to replicate our signature programs** by consulting with outside volunteers in marketing, communications and business planning.
- **Increasing visibility on the local and national scene** through publications in interfaith journals, a *New York Times* feature article on our youth program and a quarterly newsletter, *Sacred Seasons*.

The dynamism of the Interfaith Center is a tribute to the gifts and dedication of our Board, staff, interns and community partners. We look forward to continued strength and vibrancy as we carry out our vision of contributing to the richness and welfare of this great city and region.

In deep gratitude,

Abby Stamelman Hocky  
Executive Director



## Mission & Vision

*The mission of the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia is to advance mutual trust, understanding and cooperation among faith communities in order to work together for the common good of the region. We hope to enable people of all faiths to share their deepest convictions, shape solutions to common problems, and live out their highest values and aspirations, through transformation, action, learning, and leadership.*



## Our Programs

*The Center has developed several signature initiatives that have been field-tested and evaluated, with demonstrated impact in promoting interfaith understanding and action at the grassroots and leadership levels.*

**Youth Development, Service and Leadership** including **Walking the Walk**, a year-long service-learning program for high school students seeking interaction with peers from different religious traditions. Dr. Eboo Patel, public radio commentator and founder of the Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago, has called Walking the Walk “the most sophisticated interfaith youth program in the country.” **Alternative Spring Break** programs offer college and high school students a week-long interfaith service-learning immersion experience. The **Youth Leadership Program** provides ‘alumni’ with the opportunity to build upon their experiences and take on leadership roles in service projects, interfaith dialogue endeavors and the **National Day of Youth Service**, in which youth from across Philadelphia unite in direct service to their community.

**Interfaith Education, Dialogue and Leadership** including **Encountering Other Faiths**, a workshop series designed to break down stereotypes and explore challenging interfaith issues based upon Sr. Maria Hornung’s book, ‘Encountering Other Faiths’ (Paulist Press, 2007). The Interfaith **Women in Religious Leadership Initiative** engages a rich diversity of women serving congregations and communities in order to strengthen spiritual connections, enhance understanding, share resources, and affirm their distinctive calls to action. **Leadership and Diversity Training** is tailored to the needs of different constituencies. **Quest**, an interfaith book group, meets monthly.

**The Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia** was founded in 2006 and is coordinated by the Interfaith Center. The Council’s purpose is to build relationships of mutual support among the judicatory heads of major faith communities in the region, offer a moral and spiritual voice and take action on critical issues of concern. This Council, the first of its kind in Philadelphia, is convened by Cardinal Justin Rigali (Archdiocese of Philadelphia), Imam Anwar Muhaimin (International Muslim Brotherhood, Inc.), Rabbi David Straus (VAAD: Board of Rabbis), and Bishop Claire Burkat (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).



## Transformation

*"One day at school, I was walking through the cafeteria with my friend Emily. She spotted a penny and picked it up - it was 'heads' up.... 'Jew!' a voice called out. I looked up and my smile faded. I flashed back to the*

*"Ordinary? No, extraordinary. This is rare and beautiful—the sharing of values, understanding and service."*

*Walking the Walk meeting the weekend before. I*

*remembered my Jewish friend from Main Line Reform Temple explaining how much it hurt her when her school went through a stage where anti-Semitic comments and many jokes about Jews were going around.*

*I suddenly thought back to when*

*Reverend Nicole, our Group Leader, read excerpts from Eboo Patel's book on pluralism. The last thing my new friends needed was for people like me to ignore these anti-Semitic remarks. Eboo Patel, the founder of the interfaith youth movement, had a similar experience when he was in high school. Eboo's words of regret for not 'speaking up' flooded me like a wave, and I felt obliged to not let the occasion pass without a response. I approached the boy's table. He looked surprised as he realized I was serious. As I looked him in the eyes, my only response was, 'Not funny.' He cringed as with guilt and remorse. At least I felt glad that he was forced to rethink his actions. Since that day, I feel that it is a matter of honor to defend myself and my friends' religious identity. For now and in the future, I will never be daunted by such situations; in fact, I look at them as potential opportunities to transform the dialogue."*

*— Leena, 9<sup>th</sup> Grade, Walking the Walk Participant*

*"I learned as much about my own faith as I did about others'."*



Walking the Walkers gather with Alternative Spring Break participants and share stories

## Action



Volunteers at the Day of Service dig in

*The volunteers poured in, the sun was shining, and everyone who participated in the day of service felt the energy. The 95 volunteers were composed of members from all types of communities and religious affiliations. They began the day by participating in a service project of their choice- the options ranged from clearing trash from a stream to planting a tree to removing invasive plants from the ground. No matter what each person did, there was a contagious feeling of celebration in the air! Run by the Interfaith Center's Green Team- a group of religiously diverse teen leaders- the day offered many opportunities to get involved. Besides physically tilling the earth, each volunteer was granted the reward of reflecting upon their day during a myriad of workshops,*

*which included everything from hip hop poetry to creating a collage. The willingness of all who attended to see the common threads between different religions, ages, economic statuses, races and genders was simply phenomenal. This sense of cooperation and acceptance allowed for a*

*day of true beauty and understanding. And as an added bonus, the day was a great opportunity to make new friends!*

## Learning

On April 29, 2009 the Center proudly partnered with PECO/Exelon Corporation in offering a program, "Understanding Religious Diversity in the Workplace". The program was organized by PECO's Diversity Committee and Employee Networking Groups and was attended by 300 employees - people from all departments and positions. The



panel was not intended to promote any particular religion but to share experiences, address stereotypes, and educate about religious practices in our increasingly diverse community to further PECO's Diversity Committee's vision: "Exelon strives to create an employee culture of inclusion, respect and understanding. This forum is intended to contribute to that culture by educating employees about the fundamental aspects of some major world religions and their intersection in the workplace."

Panelists share a moment of commonality during PECO's "Understanding Religious Diversity in the Workplace"

## Leadership



Cardinal Rigali and Imam Shehata at a meeting of the Religious Leaders Council

What happens when religious leaders including Cardinal Rigali and Imam Shehata, Rev. Washington and Imam Miller join hands? They stand united in praying and working fervently for an end to violence in our region. They call on all religious leaders to work for peace as they lead their constituencies into the ways of peace, allying themselves with all who work to eliminate today's culture of violence, its causes, incidents and tragic consequences. Together, they pledge to be instruments of God's peace: to make their homes and neighborhoods zones of peace, free from fear, filled with respect and marked by deeds of kindness. (Adapted from the Religious Leaders Council Peace Pledge.) The Religious Leaders Council is creating a **'Zones of Peace' Initiative** which is inspiring congregations throughout the region to bring this pledge to life. In the coming year, local houses of traditions will become **'Zones of Peace'** – identified by a common symbol and linked in common action to address the causes of violence and promote peace. Collective, inspired, hope-filled action! That's what happens when religious leaders join hands.



Reverend Washington and Imam Miller discuss Zones of Peace

## Financial Report: Investing in the Vision

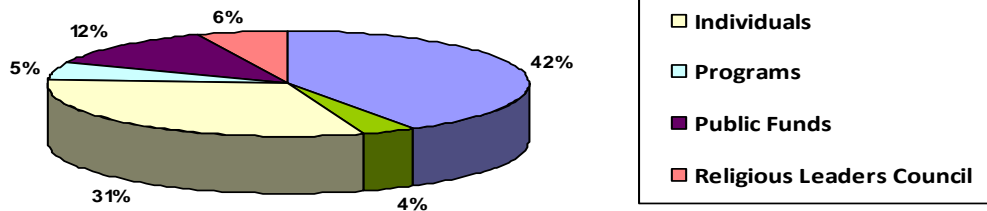
The Interfaith Center has grown its program, staff and budget each year since its founding in 2004. This has been accomplished through the generosity and vision of many substantial community partnerships and internships, low overhead and careful stewardship of resources.

The Interfaith Center uses a four-part strategy to achieve sustainable funding from: a growing multi-faith individual donor base, foundations and corporations,

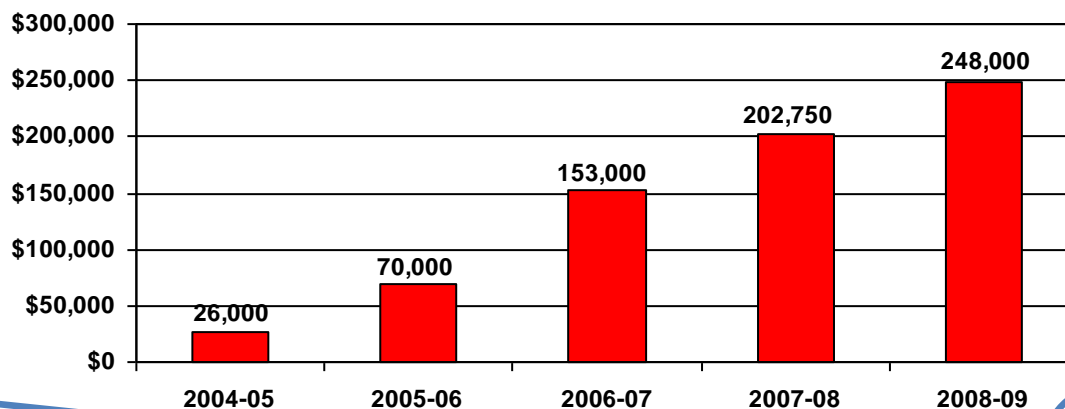
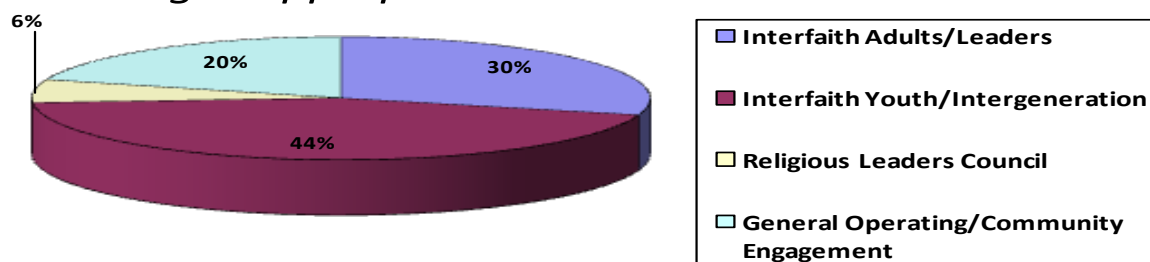
religious organizations and congregations, and program income.

The Center's core programs are poised to be replicated throughout our region and beyond on a new fee-for-service basis. Shared funding partnerships from our diverse constituencies will help to stabilize and grow our work in the region.

### Sources of Revenue



### Budget Appropriation





## Funders and Partners

*Our work is made possible thanks to the generosity of many individuals, foundations, congregations and organizations.*

### Funders

Alavi Foundation

Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church  
Outreach Council

Captain Planet Foundation

Chace Granting Group, Philadelphia  
Yearly Meeting of Friends

Connelly Foundation

Corporation for National and  
Community Service: Learn and  
Serve America: *Inspired to Serve*, a  
project of Search Institute and the  
Interfaith Youth Core

Dorothy Monteverde Memorial  
Fund

Medical Mission Sisters

SHCJ Provincial Ministry Fund

The Philadelphia Foundation

The Samuel S. Fels Fund

### Individual Donors

We express gratitude to the nearly  
300 individual donors to the  
Interfaith Center.

### Supporting Congregations & Communities

59<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church

Al Aqsa Islamic Society

Baha'i Communities of the  
Delaware Valley

Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Mosque

Beth Am Israel

Bethlehem Baptist Church

Blair Academy

Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church

Daughters of Abraham

Episcopal Church of the Redeemer

Foundation for Islamic Education

Grace Trinity UCC

Interfaith Peace Walk

JEVS

Lutheran Theological  
Seminary

Main Line Reform  
Temple, Beth Elohim

New Jerusalem Now

North Carolina State University

Our Lady of Hope Parish and Cluster  
19, Archdiocese of Philadelphia

PECO/Exelon

Penn State University

Philadelphia Baha'i Center

Quba Institute of Arabic and Islamic  
Studies

Reconstructionist Rabbinical  
College

Reform Congregation Keneseth  
Israel

Religious Leaders Council, 28  
member communities of Greater  
Philadelphia

Rodeph Shalom

Saint Isaac Jogues Parish and  
cluster 53, Archdiocese of  
Philadelphia

Society Hill Synagogue

Sr. Mary's Episcopal Church of  
Ardmore

Tabernacle United Church

Temple University

Villanova

White Rock Baptist Church

### Partners

Arts & Spirituality  
Center

Books through Bars

Cobbs Creek  
Community Environmental  
Education Center

Council for a Parliament of the  
World's Religions

Interfaith Youth Core

Lower Merion Conservancy

Mayor's Office on Faith Based  
Initiatives

Medical Missions Sisters

Philadelphia Cathedral

Religions for Peace (USA)

Search Institute

*"We've proven  
that peace and  
acceptance among  
possible."*

## Our Leadership



### Executive Committee

\*Imam Muhammad Abdur-Razzaq Miller, Chair

\*Lawrence M. Silverman, Esq., Treasurer

Zeina El-Halabi, Secretary

\*Sister Gloria Coleman, S.H.C.J.

\*Gity Etemad, M.D.

\*Reverend Sherri Hausser

\*Rabbi Carol Harris-Shapiro, Ph.D.

\*Reverend Susan Teegen-Case

### Board of Directors

\*Ashvinder Kaur Mehta

\*Chukri Khorchid

\*Imam Anwar Muhaimin

\*Jane West Walsh, Ed.D.

\*Kenny Gamble

\*Rabbi David Straus

\*Rabbi Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer

\*Rabbi Reena Spicehandler

\*Reverend Carolyn V. Jordan

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Reverend Jesse B. Garner

Reverend Judith Sullivan

Reverend Marilyn Turner

Ruth S. Laibson

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Thomas S. Stewart

Wanda E. Flowers, Esq.

### Other Founding Board Members

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Marwan Kreidie

Michael H. Gaier

Reverend Henry Galganowicz

Reverend John Rice

Sister Josephine Kase, S.H.C.J.

Vic Compher, M.S.W.

\*Indicates Founding Board Members

### Staff Team

**Abby Stamelman Hocky**  
Executive Director

**Marjorie N. Scharf**  
Project Director, Service Learning

**Maria Hornung**  
MMS, Coordinator, Interfaith Education

**Reverend Nicole D. Diroff**  
Program Associate

**Rebecca Rivera**  
Office Manager

### Interns & Volunteers

**Rachel Weiss**, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College Intern

**Sarah Clausen**, Lutheran Theological Seminary Intern

**Debra Cesario**, University of Pennsylvania School of Policy & Practice Intern

**Anna Kreiger**, Event Coordinator, Alternative Spring Break Intern

**Brenda Nangasha Demers**  
Volunteer

**Jessica Baer**, J.E.V.S. Ash Intern

**Gabi Wachs**, Friends' Central School Intern

**Jenna Stern**, Penn State University Intern

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