



# Building a Framework for Interfaith Work



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Our congregation has a rich and varied relationship with other faith groups in our city, including those who worship at mosques, synagogues and temples as well as churches and chapels.



For us, it all started with a literal building project. In 2006, we talked to Greater Indy Habitat for Humanity about the idea of an interfaith build. We called it the House of Abraham, and it involved Muslim, Jewish and Christian neighbors coming together around the mutual commitment of all three faiths to provide housing to those in need.

Local Habitat leaders embraced the idea, and Habitat for Humanity has

an interfaith curriculum to facilitate this type of project. The interfaith build reflected Habitat founder Millard Fuller's "theology of the hammer," the idea that we live our faith by building and sweating together while engaging in dialogue.

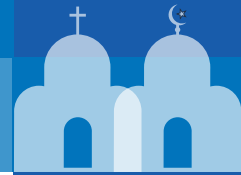
Many other Houses of Abraham followed, including one in Amman, Jordan, in 2008. Ten Muslim, Jewish and Christian individuals traveled together to work on the home. In Indianapolis, the interfaith build is on the annual Habitat calendar. The 2016 build included representatives from 50 local congregations.



**Each interfaith build has incorporated the shared values of our Abrahamic faiths:**

1. Care for others, by helping to provide housing
2. Care of creation, by focusing on energy-efficient solutions
3. Response to poverty, including a recent focus on care for immigrant refugees
4. Peace/shalom/salaam.

As we have worked side by side to help a family in our city, we have gotten to know each other. We sweated together, talked together and constructed a home together. In the process, we became friends. We joined in conversation around issues of justice, not doctrine.



Then, when opportunities for collaboration came up, we could call on these friends. It was easy to call Michael at the mosque or George at the synagogue to discuss ideas. We became regular visitors to each other's religious centers. We spoke about the holidays of our separate faiths, the opportunities for service and ideas we had in common.

The nucleus of people who worked on the first House of Abraham went on to shape interfaith conversation and collaboration among our congregations and throughout our city. One man formed a nonprofit named Center for Interfaith Cooperation, which presents an annual Festival of Faiths and encourages ongoing dialogue among people of faith. Another organization, Interfaith Hunger Initiative, focused on addressing food security issues. Congregation leaders joined together to create Global Interfaith Partnership to respond to the needs of orphaned children in a rural community of western Kenya. An outgrowth of this ministry is a youth program, bringing together middle and high school students of various faiths to support their Kenyan peers. Many others continued to serve their individual congregations, often taking the initiative to bring together people of differing faiths for conversation. We sat at the table together and spoke at each other's places of worship.

Our familiarity has led us to join together in ways that affirm our connectedness. Second hosted a Ramadan Iftar dinner for members of the Islamic Society of North America, which is based in our city. Friends from a nearby Jewish congregation presented a Seder dinner for our families during Passover. We have presented concerts and lectures with our interfaith neighbors and have hosted workshops about issues of justice, such as the refugee and immigrant crisis.

When we were sweating and talking on that construction site a decade ago, we couldn't have known that we were also building the foundation for an interwoven life of service and sharing, focusing on the aspects of our individual faiths that bind us together. By leading with service, we found common ground as we joined hands and hearts in peace.



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