



**The Interfaith Center
of Greater Philadelphia**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2012-2013**

Dare to understand.

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**INTERFAITH CENTER
OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA**

A Message from our Executive Director

Dear Friends of the Interfaith Center:

In 2012, when President Obama made his first presidential trip to Jerusalem, he said: "Peace begins not just in the plans of leaders, but in the hearts of people; in the daily connections, where the sense of empathy takes place among those who live together."

The work of interfaith understanding also begins in the hearts of people. And even though we live in the greatest democracy, in the birthplace of religious liberty, we too need help achieving our ideals.



So the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia set out in 2004 to bring people of all faiths into relationship. Our bold vision is to create communities of hope and reconciliation in workplaces, schools and neighborhoods, to advance trust and understanding in a region blessed with a richness of cultural and religious diversity.

Nine years later, we have developed several major initiatives that enable people from grassroots to leadership, youth and adults to be trained in dialogue, facilitation, effective communication skills and strategies for conflict resolution. Many of our programs add a component of direct service or advocacy on issues such as poverty, hunger, the environment, disability rights, and violence prevention.

The work of interfaith understanding cannot be left to chance.

We are proud to reflect in this Annual Report how our initiatives such as ***Walking the Walk, the Religious Leaders Council and Religious Diversity in the Workplace*** create "daily connections" that deepen relationships and promote the way we want to live together.

What is unique about all of our initiatives is that they produce long-term, enduring impact. We do this by working with constituents as partners to offer expanded opportunities to learn together, serve together, and dialogue together. We strive to equip neighboring congregations, religious leaders, young people, and professionals in local corporations with the skills they need to build their own cultures of understanding.

President Obama, during that Middle East trip, challenged us: "Sometimes the greatest miracle is just recognizing that the world can change. Your voices must be louder than those who would drown them out. Your hopes must light the way forward."

We at the interfaith Center believe, and are demonstrating, that the world can change. We are deeply grateful for the generous support of Foundations, individuals and diverse community partners who also believe in this work. Please join hands with our extraordinary staff team and visionary Board members and community partners. Consider ways that you can get involved.

Thank you!

Abby Stamelman Hocky

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Executive Director

3rd Annual Dare to Understand Spring Concert



S. A. Ibrahim, CEO of Radian, Inc., and Michael Pasek, Alumnus of the Center's *Walking the Walk* program, were recognized for their leadership in advancing the cause of interfaith understanding. The April event, held at the National Museum of American Jewish History, included a concert featuring a musical presentation from *Intercultural Journeys* led by cellist Udi Bar-David, and raised over \$172,000 to support the Center's ongoing work.



"...we are going to turn faith into a positive force that brings us together to heal the world, to devote our limited time in this world trying to make it better, and to become committed to leave to those who follow us, a world with less hate and more understanding."

--S.A. Ibrahim, 2013 *Dare to Understand* Honoree



"Imagine that a pastor in Florida chose to attend a service at a mosque rather than threaten to burn the Qur'an; he would dare to understand. Imagine that Israelis and Palestinians sat down together and recognized the validity of each other's narratives; they would dare to understand. That we acknowledged the difference between de jure and de facto equality, and that we granted ourselves the agency to secure both.

This is what makes the Interfaith Center's vision so powerful. Because when we dare to understand the diversity of perspectives and experiences, we can work to harmonize world views that otherwise clash."

--Mikey Pasek, 2013 *Dare to Understand* Honoree



Our Programs

Our Philosophy

Dare to Understand...

Our motto, *Dare to Understand*, reflects the foundation of all of our programs—relationship building. We know that the work of interfaith understanding begins in the hearts of people and in our everyday connections. It is only by meeting the ‘other’ that barriers begin to fall.

Our programs enable people of all ages and community roles to be trained in dialogue, facilitation, effective communication skills, and strategies for defusing tensions. Many of our programs, such as *Walking the Walk* and *Interfaith Encounters* for college students, add a component of direct service or advocacy to further strengthen relationships and insights.

We know that learning to embrace the ‘other’ does not happen overnight. Our programs are not one-time, occasional or episodic. We work to create long term, enduring impact, and do this by working in “real time and real place” – and with constituents as partners.

Walking the Walk

Walking the Walk (WTW) is one of the initiatives for which we are best known, both locally and nationally. A year-long **service** and **dialogue** program for **high school youth**, WTW is rooted in congregations and schools. It begins with our teenagers, but also engages the broader community—mentors, clergy, families, and social service organizations.

Field tested in urban and suburban settings with schools and congregations of many faiths, WTW features an innovative curriculum designed by a multi-faith professional team with expertise in youth development and service-learning. Participants meet bi-weekly for dialogue, interactive experiential workshops, community service, visits to each other’s sacred spaces, and much more.

Participants are challenged to confront any preconceived notions they may have of “other,” and learn what it means to honor those of all faith traditions—or none. Student participants often go on to become WTW student leaders, or join our growing alumni WTW program.

*In 8 years,
Walking the Walk
has impacted
almost 500
students!*



Community service is an important, and rewarding, aspect of many of our outreach programs.

“Walking the Walk is the most sophisticated youth program I have seen across the country.” Dr. Eboo Patel, Founder of the Interfaith Youth Core.

Our Programs

Alternative Spring Break: Interfaith Encounters

The Center's alternative spring break program, *Interfaith Encounters*, was adapted for college students from our *Walking the Walk* curriculum. We are one of the few organizations to offer a week-long interfaith intensive and service-learning program that draws students from throughout the country.

Students who participate in this program experience personal growth by confronting their preconceived notions of "the other". Their experiences lead to a deeper respect for diversity and difference, which goes beyond mere tolerance.



"I came to realize throughout the week that the only thing that separates different faiths is fear: fear of being judged, and fear of the unknown....That is why programs like the Interfaith Center's Alternative Spring Break Program are so important. If we, the youth of today, the leaders of tomorrow, can learn to stop being fearful and judgmental now, we won't be influenced by that later. We won't pass those traits on to our children. We can stop interfaith hatred now, in our generation..." -V., Temple University

Gateway to Religious Communities

Gateway to Religious Communities offers members of the public the opportunity to cross the threshold and experience a wide range of faith communities in our region. Participants receive a tour of each congregation, attend a worship service, and engage in dialogue with clergy and members of the religious community.

"We welcomed almost twenty visitors from six different congregations to our synagogue, and it was lovely to share our traditions, prayers and community with them. Everyone was so respectful and interested. What we didn't expect was how uplifted we felt by the visit. It was wonderful for our members to see themselves reflected so beautifully in our visitors' eyes." -Rabbi Linda Potemken

Our Programs

Religious Diversity in the Workplace

Corporations, cultural institutions, universities and public health settings are requesting programs and coaching services to help with religiously diverse workforces and clients.

The Center promotes and educates about interfaith understanding, cooperation, and positive relationships in the workforce by offering a flexible mix of:

- Customized workshops;
- Training programs; and
- Consultations



As a companion to this work, the Interfaith Center convenes a Business Leaders Roundtable, ‘thought partners’ for critical conversations, on the impact of religious diversity on the economic climate, business relationships and the workforce.

S.A. Ibrahim, the CEO of Radian, Inc. and the Center’s 2013 “Dare to Understand” Award recipient, serves as convener of the Business Leaders’ Roundtable.

“Religious Diversity may be the next competitive advantage in the workforce.”



“[The program was] very insightful. I know that conversations regarding religion are usually frowned upon at work but today’s panel participants really helped open our eyes to see our similarities and differences...” -PECO employee



The Religious Leaders Council

For the first time in the Philadelphia area thirty leaders of faith communities meet regularly around a common table and have come to know one another by first name. Since 2006, The Council has addressed the scourge of violence in our region – speaking out on illegal possession of guns, issuing a compelling pledge for peace—and establishing the grassroots, *Zones of Peace* initiative. Council members have called upon one another to work together on issues, to offer support in moments of celebration, pain and loss, and to meet privately when public tensions have placed a divide between their communities.

Zones of Peace

Zones of Peace is a region-wide interfaith movement of churches, synagogues, mosques, other houses of worship, schools, and community-based organizations working to address the root causes of violence and make us safer in the communities in which we live, work, and play. *Zones of Peace* recognizes organizations that are pioneering creative responses to violence and elevates their leadership.

Zones of Peace has 28 member congregations and organizations serving as models for positive change in our region.

“Receiving the Zones of Peace designation was huge. As a group, we are trying to bring some joy and safety into a very difficult, chaotic neighborhood. This type of work often goes unrecognized. When people do notice the good that you are doing, it means a lot.”

-Rev. Adan Mairena, West Kensington Ministry



2012-2013 Interfaith Center Impact

Walking the Walk

Each *Walking the Walk* group is comprised of approximately **20** students from several congregations/schools, a trained group leader, and a mentor from each participating community. This year, WTW consisted of **4** networks, with **82** youth participants.

CENTRAL PHILADELPHIA NETWORK

Service Learning Partners: Anti Hunger Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, SHARE Food Program, Earth's Keepers

Partner Congregations: Congregation Adath Jeshurun, Beth Shalom Congregation, Arch Street United Methodist Church, Quba Institute for Arabic & Islamic Studies, Congregation Rodeph Shalom, Second Baptist Church of Germantown, White Rock Baptist Church

NORTHERN DAY SCHOOL NETWORK

Service Learning Partner: SHARE Food Program

Partner Congregations: Al Aqsa Islamic Society School, Mount Saint Joseph Academy, Germantown Jewish Centre

SUBURBAN WEST NETWORK

Service Learning Partner: Inglis House

Partner Congregations: Academy of Notre Dame de Namur, Corpus Christi Church, Barrack Hebrew Academy, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Mosque & Fellowship , Bryn Mawr

Presbyterian Church, Congregation Beth Am Israe l, Adath Israel, Main Line Reform Temple – Beth Elohim, St. Luke United Methodist Church of Bryn Mawr

WISSAHICKON NETWORK

Service Learning Partner: Pennypack Farm & Education Center

Partner Congregations: Bethlehem Baptist Church, Congregation Beth Or, Or Hadash Synagogue , St. Mary's and St. Mercurius Coptic Orthodox Church, North Penn Mosque

Alternative Spring Break

In 2012-13, over **80** students participated in the Center's *Interfaith Encounters* program. Participating schools included, University of Wisconsin Eau Claire, Blair Academy, Messiah College, Bryn Mawr College, and Haverford College.

Zones of Peace

This year, *Zones of Peace* recognized **6** new congregations and communities including: Reformed Church of the Ascension (UCC), Rhawnhurst & Redemption Turning Point, Anti-Defamation League: No Place for Hate, West Kensington Ministry at Norris Square, First African Presbyterian Church, and the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations.

In February, 2012, Zones of Peace hosted its first skill-building workshop entitled, "Becoming Media Savvy". Experts in the field of PR, marketing, and social media shared resources and tools with *Zones of Peace* leaders on how to broadcast their message of anti-violence.

Religious Diversity in the Workplace

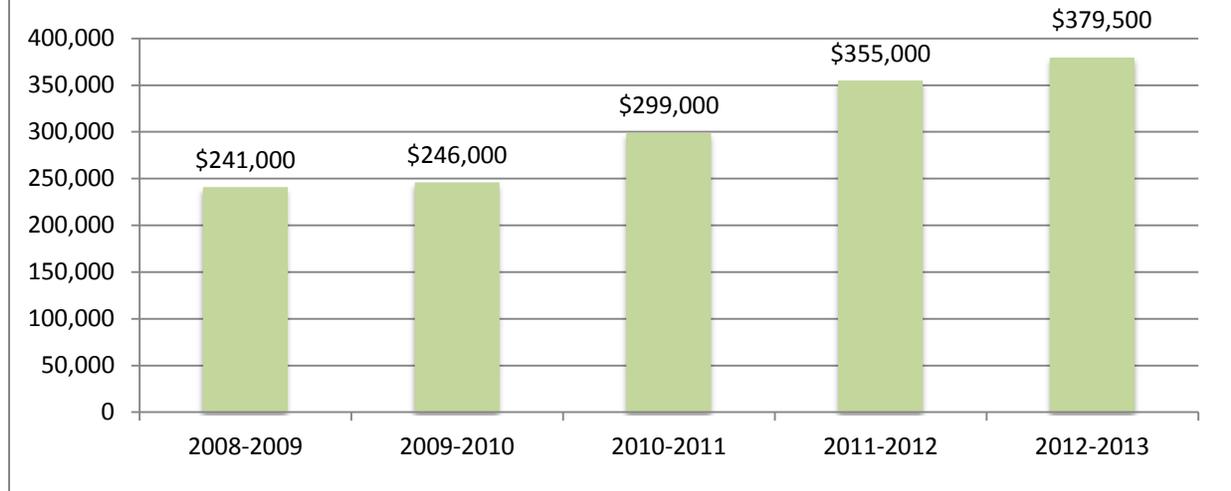
The Center developed and facilitated Workplace Diversity programming for Comcast, PECO and Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, reaching over **300** people.

Other Program Highlights

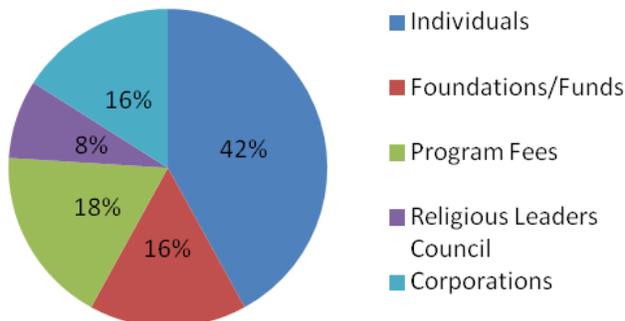
- "Evening at the Museum – Dead Sea Scrolls: Life & Faith in Ancient Times", welcomed over **110** people for an exhibition tour and presentation by community experts.
- Equipped **20** community leaders to lead interfaith dialogue through our *Encountering Other Faiths Facilitator Training Initiative*.
- Held our **10th** Annual Women in Religious Leadership Retreat for **41** participants.

Financial Report

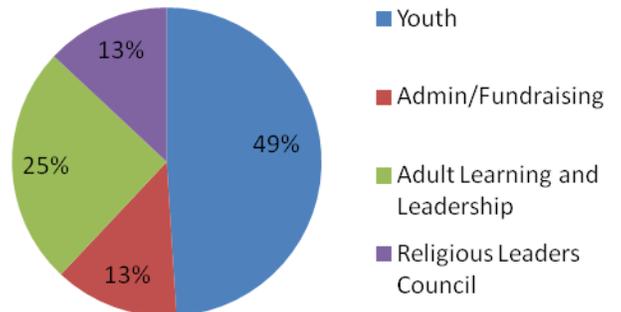
Organizational Growth Revenue 2008-2013



Sources of Revenue



Expenses by Program Area



Income		Expense	
Individuals	\$162,657	Personnel	\$277,839
Foundations/Funds	\$59,460	Program Expense	\$78,665
Program Fees	\$67,668	Administrative Expense	\$22,987
Religious Leaders Council	\$30,583	Total Expense	\$379,491
Corporations	59,300		
Total Income	\$379,668	Net Income	\$177

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Dare to understand.

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