

An Invitation to Join Zones of Peace



The Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia has committed the resources of its congregations, members, and rich religious traditions to imagining our region as a zone of peace, free of fear, filled with respect, and marked by deeds of kindness. Join us!

"The Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia prays fervently for an end to violence in our region. It calls upon all people of faith and good will to be proactive in creating 'Zones of Peace.' Together, we will honor the dignity of all, work together toward freedom from fear, and create greater safety within our region."

-'A Call from People of Faith to Stop Violence' Religious Leaders Council, Adopted October 21, 2007



Founded in the spring of 2006, the Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia is dedicated to building relationships of mutual support, serving as a moral and spiritual voice in the region, and identifying issues of critical concern for dialogue and action. With the formation of the Religious Leaders Council, Philadelphia has joined an international movement that brings together leaders from diverse religious traditions for dialogue and cooperation.



'Zones of Peace' helps communities commit themselves to activities that curb violence and promote peace. It is a region-wide interfaith movement of churches, mosques, synagogues, other houses of worship, schools, and social agencies. Each participating community will publicly display their commitment to peace and engage in collective action to address the root causes of violence in its neighborhood.

What's Involved...

As a member of the 'Zones of Peace' initiative, your congregation, school or organization will be encouraged to:

- Engage in a project that does one or more of the following:
 - Brings together people from diverse backgrounds for a cooperative service project, artistic creation, or peace-education event;
 - Addresses a root cause of violence;
 - Empowers and educates your members ;
 - Calls individuals to take responsibility for their choices and actions;
 - Creates greater public awareness of your commitment to peace in the community.
- Creatively utilize 'A Call from People of Faith to Stop Violence' in your community.
- Publicly display the 'Zones of Peace' symbol.
- Send a representative from your community to meetings of an interfaith task force to work with other 'Zones of Peace' communities in your area.

The Pledge: A Call from People of Faith to Stop Violence

"I pledge as an individual: to promote peace in my home and community.



I pledge to work with others to eliminate the causes of hatred, to honor dignity of all people, to lay down our weapons, and to find non-violent solutions when tempted to hurt another.

I pledge to be an instrument of God's peace: to make my home and neighborhood zones of peace, free of fear, filled with respect, and marked by deeds of kindness."



Co-Conveners

Bishop Claire Schenot Burkat—*Southeastern PA Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America*
 Imam Anwar Muhaimin—*Quba Masjid Philadelphia*
 Cardinal Justin Rigali—*Archdiocese of Philadelphia*
 Rabbi David Straus—*Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia*

Members

Bishop Charles Bennison—*Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania*
 Bishop Audrey Bronson—*Black Clergy of Philadelphia & Vicinity*
 Reverend Luis A. Cortés, Jr.—*Hispanic Clergy of Philadelphia & Vicinity*
 Elder Al DerMovsesian—*Presbytery of Philadelphia, Presbyterian Church (USA)*
 Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell—*Delaware Valley Association of Reform Rabbis*
 Bijan Etemad, M.D.—*Philadelphia Baha'i Community*
 Reverend Dr. W. Wilson Goode, Sr.—*Philadelphia Leadership Foundation*
 Rabbi Richard Hirsch—*Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association*
 Bishop Peter Hwang—*Council of Korean Churches of Greater Philadelphia*
 Rabbi Alan Iser—*Rabbinical Assembly, Philadelphia Region*
 Bishop Peggy Johnson—*Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, The United Methodist Church*
 Arthur Larrabee—*Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Religious Society of Friends*
 Reverend Steven B. Lawrence—*Metropolitan Christian Council of Philadelphia*
 Reverend Dr. Charles H. Lett Sr.—*African Methodist Episcopal Church*
 Imam Muhammad Abdur-Razzaq Miller—*Mosque of Shaikh M.R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen*
 Reverend Dr. F. Russell Mitman—*PA Southeast Conference, United Church of Christ*
 Father Emmanuel Pratsinakis—*Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey*
 Imam Asim Abdul Rashid—*Majlis Ash-Shura of Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley*
 Imam Mohamed Shehata—*Al Aqsa Islamic Society*
 Elder Robert B. Smith—*The Church of Jesus Christ Latter-Day Saints*
 Archbishop Stefan Soroka—*Archeparchy of Philadelphia*
 Rabbi Jay Stein—*VAAD: Board of Rabbis*

'Zones of Peace' History

October, 2007: Religious Leaders Council of Greater Philadelphia adopted a 'A Call from People of Faith to Stop Violence.' This Pledge was translated into Spanish and Arabic and used by local congregations in a variety of ways.

November, 2008: Members of the Religious Leaders Council imagined ways of bringing to life the Pledge not just with words, but with collaborative actions at the grassroots level.

April, 2009: Members of the Religious Leaders Council nominated sites to participate in the 'Zones of Peace' pilot program.

May, 2009: Leaders from pilot sites began meeting regularly to establish criteria for designating a community as a 'Zone of



Peace,' build partnerships with other community groups holding similar goals, and implement projects that address the root causes violence in their neighborhoods.

November, 2009: Youth and adults from pilot congregations attended a workshop to design a unifying symbol for the 'Zones of Peace' initiative held at St. Francis De Sales School. This symbol will be displayed on every participating 'Zones of Peace' congregation or school, connecting each individual faith community in an inter-religious effort to promote peace.

February, 2010:

Pilot congregations engaged with 'Zones of Peace' in a wide variety of ways. The initiative served as encouragement for communities to take another step with programs / partnerships they were already committed to, as inspiration to do something they've been meaning to do for a while, and as reason to celebrate previous successes and raise awareness in their communities.

"To bring peace to Philadelphia will require both the grace of God and the active efforts of every person of good will. The commitment is there, but there needs to be a smarter and more intense act of ending violence on the part of political and religious leaders and family. Every effort that is made builds on every other effort; it's a network of commitment in relationships." -Rev. John Hougan
The Bulletin March 20, 2009

The need is great.....

- 179 people aged 7-24 were killed in Philadelphia in 2009. Of those, 94% were killed with firearms.
- In 2009, reported violent crimes in Philadelphia included 330 murders, 1001 rapes, 9,757 robberies and 9,814 assaults.
- One in every four women in Pennsylvania will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. One in 33 men have experienced an attempted or completed rape.
- In 2008, 12.1% of Pennsylvanians were living below the poverty level, while 23.8% of Philadelphians were living in poverty.

....but the possibilities are far greater!

- Our region is home to more than 2.6 million religious adherents representing 21 diverse communities of faith.
- As the birthplace of religious liberty, Philadelphia provides fertile soil for a wealth of collaborative and transformative projects.
- The Religious Leaders Council offers a model for people to build relationships of mutual support and engage in collective action across lines of difference.

The Religious Leaders Council is coordinated by the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia
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