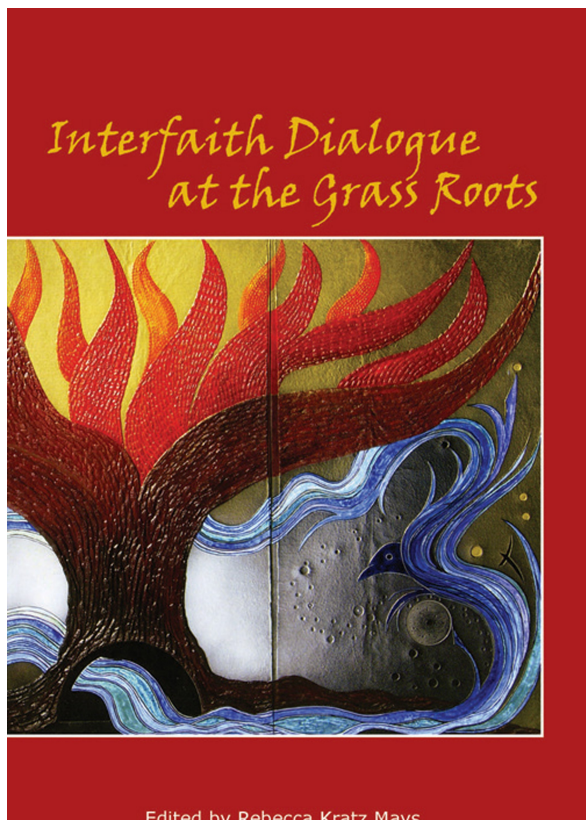


Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots

Edited by Rebecca Kratz Mays



A wonderful resource for religious leaders and faith communities, this volume offers down-to-earth guidance for interreligious dialogue in a variety of grassroots settings. Leading Jewish, Muslim, and Christian scholars and activists share their wisdom and stories, discussion questions and action suggestions. Great for use by individuals, study groups, classes and more.

Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots is published by Ecumenical Press of The Dialog Institute at Temple University. The Dialogue Institute conducts academic conferences, facilitates training, and sponsors projects in interreligious dialogue around the globe.

Editor:

Rebecca Kratz Mays is a Quaker teacher and editor with a B.A. from Earlham College and an M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania. For ten years, she taught "Approaching the Gospels Together" at the Quaker adult study center, Pendle Hill, near Philadelphia, PA, and for twenty years she edited and managed Pendle Hill books and pamphlets. Currently, she is on the staff of The Dialogue Institute at Temple University where she is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Religious Studies with an emphasis on interreligious dialogue.

Contributors:

S. Mark Heim, Maria Hornung, Edith Howe, Michael S. Kogan, April Kunze, Rebecca Kratz Mays, Khaleel Mohammed, Achmad Munjid, Eboo Patel, Marcia Prager, Noah Silverman, Leonard Swidler, Racelle Weiman, and Miriam Therese Winter.

"... **Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots** answers a common question in a concrete way: 'Is interfaith dialogue only for religious leaders and scholars?' The answer is, 'No – it's a movement that everyone can and should participate in.' The pieces in Mays' volume are examples of interfaith work in a variety of ways and in a range of contexts, from the United States to Macedonia to Indonesia. The pieces are well-written and introduced by one of the most important scholars in the field, Leonard Swidler."

— Eboo Patel, *In Faith*, Newsweek.WashingtonPost.com

Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots

Edited by Rebecca Kratz Mays

Ecumenical Press; The Dialogue Institute at Temple University

Price: \$15.00

ISBN 978-0-931214-11-0; 142 pp; 6" x 9"

To order call Temple University at 800-621-2736

For review copies (for media), exam copies (for potential classroom use) or to interview the editor or the contributors please e-mail Bob Todd at bt@bobtoddpublicity.com

What People Are Saying

The grassroots encounters guided by this book can have a global impact. With so many forces seeking to heighten inter- and intra-religious tension around the world, it is vital that we Americans use the precious opportunity of living in our unique democracy to enhance understanding instead. This requires addressing points of connection as well as points of division—a complex dance that this remarkable collection helps choreograph.

—**Zainab Al-Suwaij**, Executive Director, American Islamic Congress

••

Not only is it inspirational, but this book will be put to good use to enthuse and enable people of faith to engage with one another at the grassroots level—where it really counts.

—**Rabbi Reuven Firestone**, Professor of Judaism and Islam, Hebrew Union College and Co-Director of the Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement

••

A rich resource for those in or who want to be in Abrahamic dialogues. A “how to” conduct dialogues that at the same time reflects the collective wisdom of its contributors, challenging the reader with new insights and perspectives. Invaluable for clergy or laity.

—**Dr. Eugene J. Fisher**, Associate Director Emeritus, Secretariat for Ecumenical & Interreligious Affairs, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

••

In a world threatened by violence of the worst kind, violence carried out in the name of God, an amazing book has appeared that is at once instructive, inspiring, hopeful, and practical. It invites us all to see that life is fundamentally a dialogue, a conversation, and it illumines some of the ways in which that conversation can be made a blessing to everyone in our communities. Interfaith Dialogue at the Grass Roots is a “must read.”

—**The Rev. Dr. V. Bruce Rigdon**, President Emeritus, Ecumenical Theological Seminary

About The Dialogue Institute

The Dialogue Institute leads and sustains a movement of interreligious and intercultural dialogue within an academic setting, on a global scale. It draws its energy from intellectual inquiry, critical thinking and open exchange, enjoying its unique position on the urban campus of a secular public university. The Dialogue Institute works collaboratively with other universities, non-governmental organizations, and the business and public sectors and aims at creating an atmosphere of trust and fostering knowledge and mutual understanding in a global context.

Based at Temple University in Philadelphia, our work focuses in six primary areas:

- Interreligious dialogue training. The Dialogue Institute trains groups of scholars and professionals in the philosophy and methodologies of interreligious dialogue. Seminars of varying lengths afford participants hands-on learning and practice in dialogue, as well as the opportunity to experience the rich heritage of interreligious engagement present in the history and social fiber of Philadelphia.
- International networking and program development. Through the Dialogue Institutes Network, (DIN) the Dialogue Institute provides support, mentoring and access to Centers/Institutes committed to promoting interreligious dialogue in their diverse contexts, from Bangladesh to Romania to Myanmar and Indonesia. The Dialogue Institute is establishing an interreligious resource database to help connect and encourage struggling new academic centers worldwide.
- Muslim-Jewish-Christian dialogue seminars, projects and conferences. Since 1978, the Dialogue Institute has sponsored the International Scholars' Abrahamic Dialogue (ISAT). These conferences bring together leading scholars from each of the Abrahamic faiths in in-depth round tables in regions where interreligious understanding is crucial to promote stability and peace. These retreat and conference opportunities allow academics and leaders to pursue serious research and application for communities in crisis. The ISAT generates a process to acknowledge and reward excellence in this field and seeks role models and recognizable achievement in methodology and performance. The next Dialogue will be held in Amman, Jordan in May 2008 and will focus on interreligious cooperation in relation to socially responsible global business.
- Resource Development and Distribution. The Interreligious Literacy Project provides quality religious and interreligious resources to the libraries of seminaries, universities, faith communities, and interreligious institutes in the developing world. Linking sponsoring communities to committed participants, the Interreligious Literacy Project also promotes dialogue through establishing community-to-community relationships across national, cultural, and religious boundaries. This effort includes the development of trustworthy materials (audio-visuals, exhibits, educational projects) in interreligious dialogue, and also identifies, evaluates and promotes materials from other sources.
- Advancement of Interreligious Scholarship. In partnership with the Religion Department of Temple University, the Dialogue Institute offers graduate courses and opportunity for independent study in the area of Interreligious Dialogue. Graduate student Interns and Associates from many contexts contribute original research and produce new resources to further interreligious understanding and action. This includes outreach and interface with other academic disciplines in Business, Science, Medicine, Art, and Communications in the field of global ethics. This mentorship of graduate students is designed to create a cadre of new scholars in Interreligious Dialogue for this century.
- Promote awareness and action on behalf of religious freedom. Conscience Matters is a global initiative that will help clarify and describe international events where religions or religious individuals are threatened or in peril, and assist in their plight through various avenues, particularly in the realm of

dialogue, mediation and conflict resolution. The mobilization of action takes many forms, including the translation of texts and the creation and circulation of joint documents and laws regarding human dignity.

LEONARD SWIDLER is Founder and President of the Dialogue Institute, as well as Founding Editor of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*. He is Professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue in the Religion Department of Temple University, where he has taught since 1966.

At Temple, and as a visiting professor at universities around the world – including Graz, Austria; Tübingen, Germany; Fudan University, Shanghai; and the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur – Prof. Swidler has mentored a generation of U.S. and international scholars in the work of interreligious dialogue. Prof. Swidler has a Licentiate in Sacred Theology from the University of Tübingen, and received his Ph.D. in History from the University of Wisconsin; he also holds honorary doctorates from St. Norbert's College and LaSalle University.

Prof. Swidler has published more than 180 articles and 70 books, including: *Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialogue* (1978); *Religious Liberty and Human Rights* (1986); *After the Absolute: The Dialogical Future of Religious Reflection* (1990); *A Bridge to Buddhist-Christian Dialogue* (1990); *Muslims in Dialogue: The Evolution of a Dialogue over a Generation* (1992); *Jesus Was a Feminist* (2007).

The recipient of numerous international awards, he was most recently honored with the establishment of the endowed Leonard and Arlene Swidler Chair in Interreligious Dialogue at Temple University.

Contributors

S. Mark Heim is the Samuel Abbot Professor of Christian Theology at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, MA. He has been deeply involved in issues of religious pluralism and Christian ecumenism. An ordained minister in the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A, he represents that denomination on the Faith and Order Commissions of the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Heim served for ten years on the Muslim-Christian Relations Committee of the National Council of churches. He is the author of *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Orbis, 1995), *The Depth of The Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Eerdmans, 2001), and *Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross* (Eerdmans, 2006), among other books. Heim received his B.A. from Amherst College, his M.Div. from Andover Newton, and his Ph.D. in theology from the Boston College-Andover Newton Joint Graduate Program. He is a member of the American Theological Society, the Christian Scholars of Judaism Group, and other professional organizations. In addition to the theology of religions and ecumenical theology, his research interests include science and theology, Baptist history, and global Christianity.

Maria Hornung is Coordinator for Interfaith Education at the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia. She entered the Medical Mission Sisters in 1954, upon her graduation from Ursuline High School in New Orleans, LA. Following education as a pharmacist, she spent twenty-five years living in Africa in the countries of Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, and Ghana. In her professional work she served as a pharmacist, hospital administrator, educator, and community leader and collaborated with people of many different faith traditions. During her last years in Africa she served as Sector Coordinator for the Medical Mission Sisters' mission in the African continent and as a member of its international governing council. From 1987 to 2003 she worked with new MMS members in North America and served as Sector Coordinator in North America. She received her M.Ed. (1970) and her M.A. (1995) in Interreligious Studies from Temple University. Her book, *Encountering Other Faiths*, was published by Paulist Press in 2007.

Edith Howe practiced law for twenty years before finding herself called to work in the area of interfaith dialogue. In response to the events of September 11, 2001, she formed the "Daughters of Abraham," a book group designed to foster mutual understanding among Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women. This group has met for over five years, and ten such groups have since been formed in the Boston and Washington, DC, areas. Howe is currently pursuing a master's of theology degree at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, MA, which shares a campus with the Hebrew College rabbinical school. She is an active member of the leadership team of Journeys on the Hill, an interfaith group formed by students at both schools. Journeys on the Hill has organized a number of interfaith events each semester, created an interfaith dialogue and study group, and prompted the offering of interfaith courses at the two schools.

Michael S. Kogan is Professor of Religious Studies and Chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ, where he has taught since 1973. He holds a B.A. in philosophy and a Ph.D. in religious studies from Syracuse University, with post-graduate study at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and Columbia University. He serves on the Board of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, the South Carolina Jewish Historical Society, and the Jewish Studies Program of the College of Charleston. In the fall of 2008 he will become Chair of the Program of Jewish-American Studies at Montclair State University. He has served as President of the Mid-Atlantic Region of the American Academy of Religion and is Director of the Schnitzer Institute of Adult Jewish Studies. Kogan writes and speaks widely in the field of Jewish-Christian theological dialogue, and, along with numerous articles, he has written *Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity* (Oxford University Press, 2008), in which this essay first appeared.

April Kunze is the Vice-President of Programs at the Interfaith Youth Core, a Chicago based international nonprofit organization to build the interfaith youth movement. Her reflections on interfaith youth work have inspired young people across the world and have appeared in over a dozen publications, including *Review and Expositor*, *Interreligious Insight*, *Buzz Magazine*, *Sourcepoint*, and *Awakening the Spirit, Inspiring the Soul*. Her professional background is in youth leadership, grassroots community-building and organizational development. She is the founder and board chair of The Crib Collective, an organization focused on creating a culture of social entrepreneurship among Chicago youth. A graduate of Carleton College and Public Allies Chicago, Kunze was

recently named Public Allies Chicago's Changemaker of the Year.

Rebecca Kratz Mays is a Quaker teacher and editor with a B.A. from Earlham College and an M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania. For ten years, she taught "Approaching the Gospels Together" at the Quaker adult study center, Pendle Hill, near Philadelphia, PA, and for twenty years she edited and managed Pendle Hill books and pamphlets. She is clerk for Friends Association for Higher Education, a consortium of Quaker colleges, universities, and adult study centers. In her local congregation, Westtown Monthly Meeting, she is clerk for the worship and ministry committee. She currently teaches Quaker faith and practice, facilitates retreats, and co-leads Christian Quaker/Jewish interfaith dialogue workshops with Rabbi Marcia Prager. She is on the staff of The Dialogue Institute at Temple University, where she is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Religious Studies with an emphasis on interreligious dialogue.

Khaleel Mohammed is Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at San Diego (CA) State University. He received B.A.'s from Interamerican University (Religion and Psychology) and Imam Muhammad Bin Saud University (Islamic Law), an M.A. in History and Philosophy of Religion from Concordia University, and a Ph.D. in Islamic Law from McGill University. He was a Kraft-Hiatt Postdoctoral Fellow and Lecturer in Islamic Studies at Brandeis University's Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies (2001–03) and has served as visiting professor/lecturer in universities in Yemen, Syria, Canada, and the U.S. He has lectured and written extensively on Muslim-Jewish relations, with articles appearing in the *Middle East Quarterly*, *Islamic Studies*, *Social Science and Modern Society*, and the *Journal of Religion and Culture*.

Achmad Munjid was born to a traditional Muslim family in Central Java, Indonesia, where he was trained in Qur'an, Hadith, and Islamic Law in a *pesantren* (traditional Islamic boarding school). He holds a B.A. (1999) in English and an M.A. in Comparative Religion from Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia. He is now a doctoral candidate in the Religion Department at Temple University, where he is researching the key Indonesian thinkers of interreligious dialogue. He has presented papers in various conferences and seminars held by American Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), American Council for the Study of Islamic Societies (ACSIS), New Jersey Council for Humanities (NJCH), and Legacy International. He is now teaching as Adjunct Instructor in the Religion Department of Temple University as well as working as an Associate at The Dialogue Institute.

Eboo Patel is the founder and Executive Director of the Interfaith Youth Core in Chicago. He is the author of *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim—The Struggle for the Soul of a Generation*. Patel holds a doctorate in the sociology of religion from Oxford University, where he studied on a Rhodes scholarship. He writes "The Faith Divide," a featured blog on religion for *The Washington Post*, and has also written for *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Clinton Journal*, *The Harvard Divinity School Bulletin*, and National Public Radio. Patel serves on the Religious Advisory Committee of the Council on Foreign Relations, the National Committee of the Aga Khan Foundation USA, the Advisory Board of Duke University's Islamic Studies Center, and the Board of the Chicago History Museum. He has spoken at the Clinton Global Initiative, the Nobel Peace Prize Forum, and at universities around the world. Patel is an Ashoka Fellow, was named by *Islamica Magazine* as one of ten young Muslim visionaries shaping Islam in America, and has been profiled by PBS and several other media outlets.

Marcia Prager is a Jewish renewal rabbi, teacher, storyteller, and therapist. She is Director and Dean of Ordination Programs for ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal, and rabbi for the P'nai Or Jewish Renewal communities of Philadelphia, PA, and Princeton, NJ. Her book, *The Path of Blessing* (Bell Tower, 1998/Jewish Lights, 2003), is an exploration of the profound spiritual wisdom that lies in the Jewish practice of blessing. She is the creator of the unique P'nai Or Siddurim (prayerbooks) for Shabbat and other innovative approaches to prayer and liturgy. Her work as a teacher of Jewish spiritual practice includes developing and co-directing the Davvenen Leadership Training Institute at Elat Chayyim Jewish Spiritual Retreat Center in New York. She and her husband Hazzan Jack Kessler travel widely to teach in an array of Jewish and interfaith settings.

Noah Silverman serves as content coordinator within the Outreach Education and Training Team at the Interfaith Youth Core. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a B.A. in religious studies and international relations from Connecticut College, where he wrote his undergraduate thesis on interreligious peace-building in Israel/Palestine. He has worked for the World Conference of Religions for Peace at the United Nations, the Interfaith Encounter Association in Jerusalem, and the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago, including staffing the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona. A Chicago native, Silverman grew up attending K.A.M. Isaiah Israel congregation in the South Side neighborhood of Hyde Park.

Joseph Stoutzenberger is Professor of Religious Studies at Holy Family University in Philadelphia, PA. He earned his M.A. in Religious Education at Loyola University in Chicago, and received his Ph.D. in Religion from Temple University. He has written and revised numerous high school textbooks in religious studies, and his most recent publications are *You Are My Friends: Gospel Reflections for Your Spiritual Journey* and *The Human Quest for God: An Overview of World Religions*, both published by Twenty-Third Publications. He has been involved in interreligious dialogue for many years, especially in the Philadelphia area.

Leonard Swidler is Professor of Catholic Thought and Interreligious Dialogue in the Religion Department at Temple University, where he has taught since 1966. He is Founder and President of the Dialogue Institute (Interreligious, Intercultural, International), as well as founding editor, together with his wife Arlene, of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*. At Temple, and as a visiting professor at universities around the world—including Graz, Austria; Tübingen, Germany; Fudan University, Shanghai; and the University of Malaya, *Introduction 7* Kuala Lumpur—Swidler has mentored a generation of U.S. and international scholars in the work of interreligious dialogue. He holds degrees in history, philosophy, and theology from Marquette University (M.A.), Tübingen University (S.T.L.) and the University of Wisconsin (Ph.D.). Swidler has published more than 180 articles and 70 books, including: *Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialogue* (1978); *Religious Liberty and Human Rights* (1986); *After the Absolute: The Dialogical Future of Religious Reflection* (1990); *A Bridge to Buddhist-Christian Dialogue* (1990); *Muslims in Dialogue: The Evolution of a Dialogue over a Generation* (1992); and *Dialogue: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Dialogue* (co-edited with K. Durán and R. Firestone) (2007).

Racelle Weiman is Executive Director of the Dialogue Institute (Interreligious, Intercultural, International) at Temple University. She holds a B.A. in Jewish Studies from U.C.L.A. and an M.A. and Ph.D. from Temple University in the field of Interreligious Studies, specializing in the Holocaust and Interfaith Relations. She received accreditation in mediation at the Truman Peace Institute at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and pursued postdoctoral research on ethnic conflict-resolution and the religious elements of conflict at the Fletcher School of Diplomacy at Tufts University (1995) and the Program on Negotiation at Harvard University (1997). Prior to her current appointment, she served as founding Director of the Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, OH (2000–06). She has lectured at Haifa University (1986–2000), where she taught and developed projects relating to tolerance education, prejudice reduction, and Holocaust and genocide studies. She held a research fellowship on Professional Ethics at the S. Neaman Institute and served on the production team of television documentaries including the Emmy-nominated *Finding Family*. She has written numerous textbooks and co-authored curriculum and teacher-training materials.

Miriam Therese Winter is professor of liturgy, worship, spirituality, and feminist studies at Hartford Seminary in Connecticut, an international center for interfaith dialogue. An advocate of experiential learning as a gateway to interfaith relations, she has been active in ecumenical, interfaith, and cross-cultural contexts for many years. As a member of the international congregation of Medical Mission Sisters, she has taught throughout Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and Latin America. In the 1970s she spent three summers as a faculty member of an interfaith initiative in Jerusalem. Her Folk Mass was premiered at Carnegie Hall in the first ecumenical-interfaith concert in the history of the Hall. Her folk-style songs and contemporary hymns continue to be sung by communities of faith around the world. She has written a number of books on feminist ritual and spirituality and has been inducted into the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame. Winter has a Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary and several honorary doctorates from Roman Catholic universities.

Table of Contents

Preface

Leonard Swidler *ix*

Introduction

Rebecca Kratz Mays 1

1. Understanding Dialogue

Leonard Swidler 9

2. Doing Effective Dialogue—and Loving It

Miriam Therese Winter 25

3. Storytelling as a Key Methodology for

Interfaith Youth Work

Eboo Patel, April Kunze, and Noah Silverman 35

4. The Next Thing to Dialogue

Edith Howe and S. Mark Heim 47

5. Bringing the Dialogue Home

Michael S. Kogan 61

6. The Art of Heeding

Khaleel Mohammed 75

7. The Power of Hope

Racelle Weiman 87

8. Conclusion: Making Dialogue Real

Maria Hornung 97

Epilogue:

Building a Shared Home for Everyone—Interreligious

Dialogue at the Grass Roots in Indonesia

Achmad Munjid 109

Friendship Counts Most

Marcia Prager and Rebecca Kratz Mays 121

From the Introduction

Forty religious seekers filled the worship room in the converted barn at Pendle Hill, the Quaker study center in Pennsylvania near Philadelphia. Rabbi Marcia Prager and I sat attentive to each person present as we read a verse from the Genesis creation story, interpreting its meaning from our Jewish and Christian perspectives. “God said: Let us make humankind, in our image, according to our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). We paused to consider the plural pronouns in the passage; Marcia offered commentary from the rabbinical tradition. We then entered into silence for others to speak. A Christian Quaker pastor from Kenya rose slowly to his feet. With respect for the diverse faith perspectives in our group, he spoke with reverence for his tradition and experience. He identified Jesus, as God’s companion in creation, saying with God, “Let us make humankind in our image ...”

Encounters such as this one have become more and more commonplace in our pluralistic world. More than ever before, people now live and work with members of other religious traditions. With the click of a computer mouse, we are up close to “the other,” the person who is unfamiliar or the custom that we don’t understand.

Religious congregations are increasingly seeking to engage others in more formal ways. How do we sustain respect and create peace with “the other” without doing harm to the sincerity of a human’s striving to live a religious life? In the above instance and in many others, a respectful silence and mutual dialogue can help.

In the opening story at the moment we entered into silence, I could feel persons both soften and stiffen as the differing perspectives on a mutual sacred story hung in the air. The difference was so wide a gap that we chose to encounter the mystery of difference just by being quiet, suspending any further debate or pointed discussion for a time. A deep stillness and sense of peace filled the room as each person had space to ponder, not needing exact agreement or debate. After this time of quiet worship, we took up the next verse. After the class session, over lunch, many animated conversations arose from the quiet opportunity we had experienced.

When agreement seems impossible at worst or difficult at best, what assumptions and approaches can reconcile difference? All the stories in this collection presume a reconciling and unconditionally loving God at the heart of our encounter with “the other.” Based on this assumption, each author offers a contribution toward increasing patience, passion, and understanding in doing dialogue among persons of differing faith traditions. These authors come from long practice in facilitating such encounters and have come to use the word “dialogue” as does Leonard Swidler, religion professor at Temple University, in Philadelphia, whose pioneer work in the twentieth century has done much to promote interfaith activity. He defines dialogue as “a conversation on a common subject between two or more persons with differing views, the primary purpose of which is for each participant to learn from the other so that s/he can change and grow.”

Swidler and the other authors in this collection are aware of the groundswell of interest and concern since 9/11 for what can ensue from the absence of dialogue. In assembling these essays, we hope to empower imams, rabbis, pastors, and their congregants to take up the work of interreligious dialogue as a peacemaking activity. We encourage the same intentional work among all religious traditions. For the sake of focus and accessibility, the authors in this collection build on the scholars’ dialogues among the Abrahamic traditions—Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. We want to add many others than scholars to the team, including theologians, religious leaders, teenagers and young adults, educators, and congregants for the fruition of the labor. To that end, a less formal understanding of dialogue is encouraged in several chapters. “Conversation” replaces “dialogue” in order to emphasize how interreligious engagement can be more commonplace when some basic understandings are in place.

In Chapter One, “Understanding Dialogue,” Leonard Swidler discusses the basic reasons for creating interfaith encounters, delineates ten guidelines for conducting them, and tells some of the story of what can happen for people who take up the dialogue. Then Miriam Therese Winter, in Chapter Two, “Doing Effective Dialogue—and Loving It,” describes “circles of conversation” that help make the encounter safe and productive. She and the next author, Eboo Patel, agree that one of the best ways to conduct encounters is to tell stories as the major part of any conversation—most especially in the interfaith youth work Patel does. In Chapter Three, “Storytelling as a Key Methodology for Interfaith Youth Work,” Patel and two of his co-workers, April Kunze and Noah Silverman, outline

why and how storytelling works so well. Drawing on assumptions about spiritual formation, they help us to understand just how powerful a simple yet sincere conversation can be.

Then, in Chapter Four, “The Next Thing to Dialogue,” Edith Howe and *Introduction* 3 S. Mark Heim discuss a good step to take to help start constructive conversations where a different use of stories happens; they outline in instructive detail how to organize a book study group, choose effective books, and open the conversations that can evolve from reading. How do we begin to learn to do this conversation with skill and with safety? Michael S. Kogan offers us a compelling model in Chapter Five, “Bringing the Dialogue Home,” for how the home church or synagogue is a good starting place for doing grassroots interfaith work. By being rooted in our own tradition and knowing it well, we are better able to comprehend the depth of wisdom in a different tradition. Accordingly, then, we move toward a healthy pluralism where engaged contact can expand each person’s faith and understanding without creating a sense of threat or loss of one’s own particular faith. Khaleel Mohammed, in Chapter Six, “The Art of Heeding,” then offers a frank, feisty, and refreshing appraisal of our attempts at this difficult enterprise. He calls us to humility within a renewed vigor of heeding what “the other,” the person who represents the unknown and the unfamiliar to us, actually has to say with his or her words and life. Then, in Chapter Seven, “The Power of Hope,” Racelle Weiman appeals to our inability to comprehend a God who allows for great suffering. In the face of the assault to our sensibilities of the history of the *Shoah*, she claims the power of interfaith work to inspire our hope as a religious people. She calls on each of the Abrahamic traditions represented in this collection to establish just and peaceful communities.

We want to create practices and programs for real differences to coexist without the beast of fear devouring life, light, and laughter. We hope readers will continue the conversation these writers have started. All of us have had interfaith encounters, both organized and spontaneous. How do we conduct ourselves? Do we recognize our resistances and know how to engage or disengage with appropriate respect? Do we know how to respect the differences even when we don’t want to change and to grow? If we want to grow and to change, can we do so safely without mockery or exploitation? Are understanding and tolerance enough? What else is needed? If our own beliefs are shaky, how can the encounter with difference strengthen our own faith without tearing down the other? After all these and other questions are pondered, how do we take responsibility for the most important one: Do we walk with Micah, the prophet, in doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God?

We invite readers to engage this collection with eyes open to the possibilities for interfaith encounters in the churches, synagogues, and mosques in the neighborhoods where you live. We join you in sharing some of the questions and obstacles that we know arise when trying to do interfaith activities of any kind. We encourage trust in the assumption common to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Each of us is an equal before God, held in that reconciling and unconditional love and truthfulness we are intended to practice.

To encourage our practice, Joseph Stoutzenberger writes questions for reflection and suggestions for action at the end of each of the eight chapters. These questions and suggestions can be reframed and inspire different ones depending on each particular occasion for dialogue. Whatever our situation, Maria Hornung’s conclusion guides us through three important exercises. First, she describes the many roles within a faith community participants can assume in order to facilitate interreligious engagement. Second, she places Swidler’s “Dialogue Decalogue” in context. Finally, she draws on Swidler’s stages of change in engaging interreligious dialogue in order to invite each of us to reflection our own experiences.

This collection adds an epilogue. Why? Good conversation or fruitful dialogue grows out of real-life stories at the grass roots of our communities. After all the questions, suggestions, and discussions about interfaith dialogue, we wanted to share stories of grassroots dialogue as it happens. Achmad Munjid tells the story of his Indonesian people in their struggle to build a home for everyone. In his story, he refers often to the heart of interfaith dialogue happening when friendship is born.

In the final story of the epilogue, Marcia Prager and I tell the story of our interfaith friendship, of how, out of each of our search within our own religious tradition for its depth, we found ourselves facilitating a Christian Quaker/Jewish interfaith dialogue. These closing stories of lived experience invite the telling of your own.

Each of us is needed in the work of religious reconciliation. We need many more persons who are skilled in interpreting our sacred texts; we need those who can lead worship with respect for differing practices; we need people who choose to build friendships with the joy of knowing “the other.” When the needs are met, we befriend

one another as followers of the one God. And perhaps, just maybe, we can catch a glimpse of the peace that is our inheritance as those followers.

—*Rebecca Kratz Mays*

Sample Questions for Reflection and Suggestions for Action (from Chapter 2)

Questions for Reflection

1. How important is it for members of one religion to feel comfortable in the setting of another religion? How can interreligious engagement serve this end?
2. The author suggests shifting emphasis from dialogue to building relationships. How could we fashion dialogue events that would foster creating friendships? Should this be an implicit or explicit goal of dialogue?
3. What factors affect how we do interreligious dialogue today? (For instance, how do we do interreligious dialogue when “the other” lives next door or is married to our cousin? How do we do dialogue when so many people are only marginally involved in their own tradition?)
4. The author is comfortable with entering into an unfamiliar world, confident that the spirit will provide guidance. Have you found this to be true when people from diverse backgrounds come together dedicated to mutual listening and learning? Do you agree with her advice: “Just do it”?
5. Is the three-step series of questions the author used in her “conversation circles” applicable to interreligious dialogue sessions in general? Why or why not?
6. Is it better to delay hard questions until some sense of community has been established within a group?
7. An effective teaching model integrates what is taught with how it is taught. How can this principle be applied to interreligious dialogue?
8. What possible collaborative actions might accompany interreligious dialogue?

Suggestions for Action

- A. Reflect on your story, your experience of faith, your religion, and your cultural background. What would you want others to know about you in an interreligious context?
- B. Begin formulating questions that you have regarding members of other religions and their experience.
- C. Design a “conversation circle” as described by the author.

Q & A with Editor Rebecca Kratz Mays

1. What does "dialogue" mean?

Most simply put, dialogue is a conversation between two interested persons. In the context of doing intrafaith or interfaith dialogue, the intention is more explicit. Dialogue is a two-way communication between persons who hold significantly differing views on a subject, with the purpose of learning more truth about the subject from the other. It is not the process of imparting truth, however gently and kindly, to the ignorant. Genuine dialogue assumes that no one person or group has a monopoly on the truth on any given subject.

2. What does "interfaith" or "interreligious" dialogue mean?

Since World War II, a sense of our world, our planet as a global community has mushroomed. With the click of a computer mouse, any one of us can now connect to any other part of the world or subject matter beyond our ken. Our very economic securities are now enmeshed in a web of "globalization" where we can no longer deny our interdependence on one another. Interfaith or interreligious are terms to help us recognize the pluralism of religion. If no one religion can claim all of the truth, then each religious path now has a responsibility to share its truth with respect for the interdependence of truth among them all.

3. How do economics and religion impact interfaith dialogue?

In the 20th century, socialist and capitalist systems vied for primacy in nation-states around the globe and both systems eschewed religion as irrelevant. The 21st century is seeing a resurgence of religious life everywhere and the power of choosing to live religiously impacts how one buys and sells and runs a business. Some even see this rise in religious life as a necessary corrective influence on the excess of greed that can occur in either a capitalist or socialist economic system. When "mega churches" in the US and "heavy metal" bands in Pakistan all have access to global technologies, we must learn how to dialogue well, to listen and to learn from one another.

4. How will this book help?

The chapters in this book are written from the experiences of persons who are steeped in doing dialogue where it is most needed. Each author describes his or her experience and offers very practical, easy suggestions for taking a first step to create dialogue in one's own neighborhood. Whether it is a book discussion group, a storytelling session, "twinning" - matching a local church with a local mosque or a mosque with a synagogue, the suggestions assume urgency and a simplicity of getting started.

5. Who can use this book?

Anyone interested in doing interfaith dialogue. It is written for a lay audience and it is aimed at theologians and religious leaders, religious educators, and local-level animators for interreligious engagement and congregants at the local level. For example, the Dialogue Institute at Temple University organized a "trialogue" among Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Amman, Jordan, in the spring of 2008. After the event, the Amman Prince ordered several copies for use among imams to help spread the word of what had happened at the trialogue.

6. What is the most important reason for doing interfaith dialogue?

To build peace among people. The sad irony of history is that most wars and the tragic killing of

innocent lives have started or continued because of the misuse of religious creeds. Ultimately, the religious life is to establish just and peaceful societies for all persons. Interfaith dialogue is one of the surest paths to reach that goal. It requires patience and perseverance; it is not a "quick fix."

One of the book's contributors, Eboo Patel, said it well at the recent American Academy of Religion meeting in Chicago. In the 1950s, very few persons talked about or knew a "civil rights activist" in the US; by the 1970s, we all knew one or were one. He claims that now is the era to make known "interfaith activists." This book hopes to contribute to helping create such a movement.