



March 4, 2024

RLC Admin Meeting at Main Line Reform Temple
410 Montgomery Avenue, Wynnewood PA 19096

and Join by Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81143971804>

Meeting ID: 811 4397 1804

Notes

9:00a.m. **Welcome and Roll Call**

Msgr. Fairbanks- Archdiocese of Philadelphia (ZOOM)

Richard Hedberg- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

Rev. Geneva Butz- PSEC

Imam Kenneth Nuriddin- Philadelphia Masjid

Jay Gardner- Interfaith Philadelphia

Gity Etemad- Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i

Don Camp- Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'i

Rabbi David Straus- JCRC

Ruben Ortiz- Hispanic Clergy

Rev. Jay Broadnax Black Clergy

Archbishop Maty Floyd Palmer – Philadelphia Council of Clergy

Deacon Gabriel Palmer – Philadelphia Council of Clergy

Bp. Patricia Davenport- Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod ELCA (ZOOM)

Rev. Fritz Fowler- Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod ELCA (ZOOM)

Msgr Greg Fairbanks- Archdiocese of Phila. (ZOOM)

Rev. Nate Goodson, COGIC (ZOOM)

Rebecca Mayes – Religious Society of Friends, Quakers

Kavneet Singh – American Sikh Council

Reverend Edward- Interfaith Philadelphia

Sydney Williams- Intern, Interfaith Philadelphia (ZOOM)

9:15 a.m. **Opening Reflection: Ramadan**

Purpose: Fasting is prescribed that you may be more aware of God. It provides strength to overcome and brings a discipline of self-control and reconsideration of others.

Always been a month of revelation. Ramadan is the revelation that guides us

and restore what can become missing in our lives. It is a reminder and practice to be in service to God.

Description: Moses fasted and received the torah. Jesus also fasted and overcame the temptations of the opponent of God. Fasting brings us more in touch with what requires of us in the Law. Ramadan is the month in which the Quran was revealed. It is a proof that God will guide. It enables the discernment between right and wrong. During the year, we may drift away from the criterion. Ramadan is the period to exercise discipline over our basic desires. Mastery over desires goes beyond the flesh. Mastery must be over our anger and keep us away from being unjust. Fast in the day and stand at night. Standing allows reconnection with our purpose in life: to serve and be in service to God. Gity noted that the Baha'is 19 day fast, celebrating the New Year, happens to coincide with Ramadan this year.

9:25 a.m. **Life of the Council / Business**

- Mayoral Prayer Service (Rev. Edward)

- We achieved our stated purpose of gathering as diverse communities to pray for the city, Mayor, and city council. Nearly 200 registrations online and over 200 in the basilica and more than 500 people watched online
- Seven of the City Council members were in the basilica
- Notes provided of 10 media sources that covered the event
- The mayor and administration had a meaningful time in connection.
- Thank you, letters being sent to City Council and the Mayor
- The mayor has been invited to the May 13 council meeting and we'll keep her in the loop concerning June 7th
- Thanks to the committee who worked efficiently and selflessly on this service
- Thanks to the communications departments of Interfaith Philadelphia, the ELCA, and Archdiocese for their effective coordination
- Thanks to the cheerful volunteers who gave their time and presence
- Comments – sacred time, on one accord, powerful. Embrace of the religious community by this administration. Internally, provided connections across faith expressions – prior to the meeting and during. Noted that six of the Hispanic clergy had never been a part of a service in a catholic sanctuary. Impact at the street level achieved as we educated and shared across traditions. The service was visually beautiful. Experiential example of the beloved community. We missed a

few council people who did not understand that they were invited to join the procession.

- Next steps – notes of thanks to the archbishop, cantor.
 - Follow-up note to Mayor with thanks and an invite to continue the tradition of meeting as mayor and RLC off the record two or three times in the year. Request getting on her calendar now for times throughout the year.
 - Two letters to city council: one thanking those present, and a second inviting to meet off the record two or three times in the year. We hope to meet with you either individually or as a group. Include a letter to the council president to meet in their space to have a conversation. Do not be dismayed if their chief of staff is available.
 - Rev Fritz suggested an outreach to Dr Watlington of the Phila School District for exploring how RLC and community can support the education system. Archbishop Palmer had Watlington on her radio show and supports outreach to Watlington.

- **Toll the Bell: Penn Arts Center is the acting convener**

- Outreach to congregations - how to participate without bells
 - Imam Nuriddin - In Islam, the word for come to worship, can also mean come to cultivate the environment, so that you can be successful. Guns can be seen like weeds, things that strangle out life. Guns can interfere with cultivation. If weeds are growing in your environment, part of cultivating is pulling the weeds out. A call can incorporate this on June 7. The bell, shofar, and adan each have a place in bringing attention to the call.
 - Edward to email the Toll the Bell
 - Richard Hedberg offered that the ZOP should be contacted for drawing their focus on June 7 Toll the Bell effort.
- Interfaith prayer service at City Hall on June 7
 - David Straus put forth an invitation for RLC to organize a gathering like Lament to Action, From Sanctuary to Streets. From a service remembering by name those fallen to gun violence in Philly this year, we would walk together to a location opposite City Hall, the “clothes pin.” There we hold reclaim sacred ground

where blood has been spilled. Then, march across to city hall and call for legislative action to fund efforts of gun violence prevention. Geneva Butts will inquire if Arch Street Methodist Church is available.

- Looking also to incorporate the t-shirts that Heeding provides to enhance the visual representation of the lives lost to gun violence.
 - David Straus open to working with a team to help plan and coordinate.
 -
 - Edward introduced an opportunity to apply for funding to help support the work of ZOP and the RLC. Workshops and training volunteers can be supported from this grant. A one pager was distributed to the attendees in the room. An email of the letter will be sent along with the meeting notes to all. A next step is for Interfaith Philadelphia to submit a letter of support from the RLC as part of the application.
- **Other Gun Violence Reduction Efforts**
- David Straus - Legislative Updates –
 - CeasefirePA is organizing a May 7 advocacy day in Harrisburg. David to provide update that Edward will email out.
 - Advocacy - Episcopal bishops have issued a pastoral letter calling for five pieces of legislation:
 - One handgun sale per month to be introduced. This will stop straw gun sales. Will not limit the volume of long gun sales.
 - Private sales at gun shows will require background check
 - People with restraining orders will not be able to purchase a gun
 - Gun locks at the home is being rewritten
 - Pushback on the legislation requiring to report lost and stolen guns in 24hrs for those with guns stored at vacation homes
 - Blockage at the Senate as Lisa Baker refuses to bring any of this to hearings
 - David to provide letter writing campaign to press Lisa Baker to hold hearings

- There is a link to share that you participated in the campaign to help know how many complete the letter writing
 - Find all of this at the Common Agenda at CeasefirePA.org
- Gun Shop Vigil – an update will be emailed. Brian Miller is managing a serious health crisis in his family.
 - A letter has been drafted to the owner of gun shop to inform of their violation
 - RLC has made an important pivot to witness and also to advocate
 - Rev Ortiz noted personal experience of how effective the demonstrations in front of gun shops. His son was shaped by this experience and continues to advocate for the community.
- Reclaiming Sites of Violence
 - Rev. Ortiz is willing to provide training to help various faith traditions adapt the ritual of reclaiming to meet the needs of their religious traditions. Willing to make time in May, 2024
 - The training will share the components of the ritual of reclaiming from an evangelical perspective and invite various traditions to work the parts of the ritual to adapt
 - Contact of Dr. Gur of the DAO provided to Rev Ortiz for identifying families of those impacted by homicide.
 - Ortiz will reach out to DAO and or Rev Holston to get needed contacts of surviving family to inform that their deceased loved one will be memorialized.
- Off the Record shared learning how the RLC and religious communities can be of support
 - DAO -
 - Philly School Superintendent
 - Mayor
 - City Council
- **Preparing for the Election**
 - Voter Turnout Effort and Call for Civility Focus
 - Fritz Fowler, Christie Duncan Tessmer, Kenneth Nuriddin, Ruben Ortiz, & Jay Broadnax to collaborate on training and shared resources

- Interest in learning what religious communities may have on their calendars civic engagement/ get out the vote efforts to increase voter participation. An example of an effort is to have four levels of participation for people to choose. The first includes offering prayer for the city and various levels of administration to a table with voter registration and applications in the bulletins.
- **Zones of Peace Updates – Rev. Jay G**
 - ZOP successfully completed participation with the Giving Tree of the Latter-day Saints. There will be a disbursement from that participation to the Zones of Peace. The overall effort raised over \$10 million.
 - Richard Hedberg noted the details and locations the vending machines were placed for the Giving Tree effort.
 - Notes to be emailed with updates
- **Check in Dues for 2023-2024 Year**
 - Please review the Fiscal Year comparison by Member Organization for accurate recording of member contributions.
- **Upcoming RLC Dates**
 - May 13th at Esperanza, 4261 N 5th Street, Phila, PA 19140
 - June 10th at Main Line Reform Temple
- **Dare to Understand Awards**
 - Save the date, June 6th honoring Rev. Judy Sullivan, Rev. Jesse Gardner, Imam Quaiser Abdullah, Margie Scharf, and Walking the Walk Alumni and Partners.
- **News of an Interfaith Text Study** and Gathering at St Josephs with JCRC
 - An interfaith text study on a variety of topics. Dates are April 10, 17, and May 1st. This event is hosted by the St Joseph University, Center for Catholic, Jewish Relations and led by Phil Cunningham and Adam Gregerman.
 - This is intended for clergy and welcomes those from traditions that do not have clergy
 - This will include discussion around how Jews and Christians may understand the concepts of peace, justice, and waging war from our different traditions. Anyone from any tradition is welcome to come.

11:00 a.m. **Closing**

- Rabbi David closed with a blessing.