

Strategies for Coming Together in Interfaith Settings



October 8th provides an excellent opportunity for Christians to join together with other religious communities to engage in actions that call for ending the war in Iraq. Under the theme “From Conquest to Community, from Violence to Reverence,” religious communities across our nation will participate in a fast, candlelight vigils, public actions and interfaith gatherings for breaking the fast. This pamphlet provides some strategies for organizing such events.

- **The planning team:** Please make sure that the planning team represents the diversity in your community as closely as possible. Gather the planning team in early September. That will give you a month for preparation.
- **Fasting:** Most religious communities have a tradition of fasting but others do not. Speak with clergy persons or leaders of religious communities to ask them about how they might use their existing tradition or adjust their tradition to participate in what might for them be an unfamiliar discipline. A bulletin insert on fasting for Christians can be found at our website: www.interfaithfast.org.

Fasting is often considered an individual spiritual discipline for developing one’s interior spirituality, as a sign of repentance and drawing closer to the divine. At other times it is a communal spiritual discipline where a community engages to stand in solidarity to engage sacrificially in the suffering of others. Its effectiveness in community building and agitating for social change is well established in many religious traditions.

- **Confluence of Religious Observances:** Leading up to October 8th, there are several days of religious observance. Protestant and Orthodox Christians would have just celebrated World Communion Sunday (Oct. 7th), Jews would have celebrated Sukkot (Oct 5th), Catholics would have observed the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi (Oct. 4th), several Buddhist communities would have observed Pavarana (Sept 30th), and Muslims would be in the midst of Ramadan. October 8th, also known as the “night of power,” is the holiest day of Ramadan for Muslims.

Programming Ideas

- **Gathering on October 7th evening/night:**

This will be the kick-off event for the interfaith fast (In many religious traditions the day of religious observance begins at sundown the previous day.) If you envisage a meal, make sure that it is scheduled after sundown so that Muslims are able to participate. If it is before sundown, and if there are Muslims present, please know that they will not be able to eat. Out of respect, it is better not to have food available.

Consider a candle-light vigil. For resources such as songs, scriptures, prayers and litanies from a variety of religious traditions, please visit www.seasonofprayer.org



Consider a teach-in. Invite a religious or community leader to speak/teach and engage the gathering in a dialogue on say, the “Role of Religion in Peacemaking.”

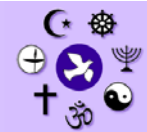
Consider a youth night-out, where young people of different faiths can gather and learn from each other about what our religious traditions say about peacemaking. Please make sure that there are trained youth ministers and counselors present.

- **During the Day on October 8th**

Public vigils in public locations, non-violent demonstrations and a noon-time prayer services at a prominent house of worship are examples of events you could organize on this day. Please note that you may need a police permit.

Please post your event on our website www.interfaithfast.org. Your event can be searched by zip code. Please remember to alert the media to your event. Your goal should be to have a large turn out, a great program and have it broadcast on the evening news.

It is very important that for all the activities of this day you invite public officials and elected representatives, and if you are in a primary state, candidates for the presidency.



For more information click on the banner or go to: <http://www.interfaithfast.org>

- **At Sunset on October 8th – Breaking the Fast**

Gather together once again at a house of worship or similar public location to break bread. Please remember that this is an important night for Muslims. Some Muslim communities will be happy to welcome those who have participated in the interfaith fast to break the fast with them at their *Iftar* meal, but please don't assume that welcome.

Let it be a celebratory event. Have some fun, laughter and music. Use the opportunity to build solidarity among each other. Let the shared meal be a sign of our covenant with one another – as individuals and as communities - to stand against the war in Iraq and to work with one another to stand against violence in our communities and around the world.

Have a sign up sheet where participants write their names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. This is a critical organizing tool for future activities.

- **A Season of Peacemaking**

As a practice of our covenant, we encourage local communities to continue in regular fasting, praying and holding vigils for peace and to take specific actions through the election cycle to stand together against the war in Iraq and against all of the ways in which violence is destroying our communities.

We encourage participants to continue to reach out to elected officials and candidates for congress and the presidency, inviting them to fast with us, break bread with us, pray with us, vigil with us, and publicly express their commitment to end this war.

We encourage those who live in states in which primary elections are held to use that opportunity to engage with the presidential candidates in their public appearances about their commitment to end the war.

For More Information, posting your events, searching for other events, and offering new ideas on a blog, please click on the banner or go to:
www.interfaithfast.org



**Office of Interfaith Relations
National Council of Churches USA
475 Riverside Drive #880
New York, NY 10115
212-870-2560**

Strategies for Coming Together in Interfaith Settings



From Conquest to Community,

From Violence to Reverence

An Interfaith Fast to End the War in Iraq

October 8, 2007