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## BUILDING THE INTERFAITH COMMUNITY

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**W**e live in a pluralistic society; people representing different faiths and cultures coexist, live, work and struggle together. We are often challenged by misinformation and stereotypes. And those challenges often manifest themselves in mistrust, fear, prejudice and violence. So, how can we, as communities of faith, begin to respond to the challenges of our time while holding to and affirming our own identity?

Clearly, the more we learn about each other and our identity in relation to others, the better we respond to those challenges. On June 26, through Faith Shared, thousands of congregants from all over the nation will share scripture from each others faith communities. Congregations in an intentional and welcoming manner will make space in their houses of worship during their services for friends and neighbors to share sacred and holy text from different religious perspectives. We will, through this simple act of sharing, begin, or in some

cases continue, the process that empowers a community to demonstrate how our faith unites rather than divides us. We will express, on this day, understanding among different faiths.

And, as we move toward the 10th anniversary of the events of September 11, 2001, our pastors and priests, imams and rabbis, and their congregants, can play an important role by adding a measure of mutual respect to the public dialogue.

Urban and rural America will come together on June 26 to worship together and celebrate our shared beliefs and our vision for an America that embraces all of its faith traditions. Whether Faith Shared is integrated in Sunday services or in meetings after church, we hope that it is just the beginning. Think about how you might integrate this important work throughout your community. For some, this will be a continuation of work already underway; for others, it will provide a starting place.

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### MAY WE SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING IDEAS:

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#### COFFEE KLATSCH

Coffee talks (see Prepare New York: <http://prepareny.ning.com/>) throughout the year bring people of different faiths together in an informal manner to over coffee and conversation.

#### YOUTH

Programs (see [interfaithalliance.org/leadd](http://interfaithalliance.org/leadd)) that bring young people together from many different faith traditions to understand religious liberty in this nation and how it manifests itself in their communities.

#### MEDIA

Reach out to local media outlets inviting them to explore the diversity of faith traditions in your community as a positive and healing way to approach the 10th anniversary of September 11, 2001.

## **CELEBRATE!**

Faith traditions embraced by a larger and more diverse faith community.

## **FORUMS**

Foster great public conversation on interfaith relations in houses of worship, school auditoriums and town halls.

## **LIBRARY DISPLAYS**

Celebrate the rich diversity of culture and faith in the community. Feature publications and films that help each other understand faith traditions and cultures different from our own.

## **TIME CAPSULES**

Show people in your community 10, 15, 25 or even 50 years from now how you thought and felt about each other. Today, create a time capsule, invite faith communities to contribute thoughts and items and hold a celebration as you together share with future generations.

## **LOCAL LEGACIES**

Storytelling and narrative focusing on older folk from different cultures and faith traditions. Consider sending high-school students out to various communities to interview these legacies.

## **LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!**

Create a short video that expresses the integral need for interfaith and intercultural exchange. Perhaps a group of budding videographers might create their own 'shorts' and you can present them together in a local interfaith film festival. Look at *Out of Cordoba* (<http://outofcordoba.com/>) or *Beyond Belief* (<http://www.principlepictures.com/beyondbelief/>), two films about interfaith actions.

## **MUSIC**

Bring together a collection of sacred and secular music and/or dance for to produce interfaith performance by and for your community.

## **TOURS OF PLACES OF WORSHIP**

Do an inventory of houses of worship in your community. Contact each and ask if a group from your place of worship could come and visit, sit in for a service or have a clergy member tell your group about that group's history in the area, its belief traditions and even the concerns its members face.