

Muslim, Jewish communities unite: Twinning mosques and synagogues, JAM & All

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InterFaith21: Muslim, Jewish communities unite to find common ground

By C.B. Hanif

Sundown on Friday, Sept.18 marked the beginning of Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year.

The next day, others began observing Eid-ul-Fitr, marking the completion of Ramadan, the Muslim month of rededication.

Still others, including Christian friends (some of whom *The Washington Post* noted had joined in Ramadan fasting) were honoring both holidays with wishes of “L’shana tova” (for a good year)’ and “eid mubarak” (a blessed Eid).

Among them all are those gearing for the second annual Weekend of Twinning of Mosques and Synagogues Across American and Europe, Nov. 13-15, dedicated to the proposition of stronger relations between Jews and Muslims.

In South Florida, that includes members of JAM & All, “An organization of Jews, Muslims, Christians and All Peoples.”

Last November, the New York-based, not-for-profit Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, headed by noted Rabbi Marc Schneier and hip-hop mogul Russell Simmons, united 50 mosques and 50 synagogues across North America in the first Weekend of Twinning, with the theme of “Confronting Islamophobia and anti-Semitism Together.”

This year 75 synagogues and 75 mosques in North America may take part, with “Building a Common Agenda” the theme. FFEU in July hosted more than two dozen rabbis and imams who will join in from European synagogues and mosques.

JAM & All is part of that and more, said Kathleen Leonard of Delray Beach, a vice president and founder of the nonprofit organization whose membership extends from Miami to Delray and is expanding.

Leonard explained that as a member of TAO, the Center for Reform Judaism in Fort Lauderdale:

“Right after 9/11 we got together with the Islamic Foundation of South Florida (of Sunrise) and had an open forum and created this organization to give the opportunity for education and socializing.

“We’ve developed very deep friendships. At the same time we’re presenting events like conferences, town hall meetings, an annual picnic. So there are a variety of activities we do in JAM in order to promote our mission to develop peace and understanding.”

JAM also is participating in sustained dialogue based on the guidebook, *Children of Abraham, Jews and Muslims in Conversation*. In addition to the pairing between TAO and the Islamic Foundation, in some cases the twinning is going to be a kickoff weekend for the beginning of dialogue groups.

“This is what JAM has been all about, is the ability to educate, socialize and learn from each other and about each other,” Leonard said. She welcomes calls at 561-289-4621 from groups that would like JAM’s assistance as facilitator.

C.B. Hanif is a writer, editor and media and inter-religious affairs consultant. He visits or speaks at synagogues, churches and mosques, seeking folks who are making the Golden Rule real, not just an ideal. On the Web at www.interfaith21.com.

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