

**InterFaith Alliance of the Southwest**  
**July 2023-June 2024 Annual Report**  
Presented by Rev. Deborah Clugy-Soto, chair  
Approved by IFASW Council 6/7/2024

**IFASW's Accomplishments**

***FLIFA (Faith Leaders Community)***

Participation went from 25 actively participating last year to **35** this year.

Goodbyes were said to Maria Bianca, Odile Corier, Tim Gray and Neema Soratgar who are continuing their journeys in other parts of the country and the world.

Faith Traditions represented at the table are now as follows with new ones this year being highlighted:

***Bahá'í*** (El Paso Community)

***Buddhist***

Tibetan (Chenrezig Center)

Zen (El Paso Zen Center)

***Hindu*** (Southwest Hindu Temple)

***Jewish*** (Temple Mt. Sinai)

***Muslim*** (Turkish)

***None*** (no professed faith tradition)

***Unitarian Universalist*** (El Paso Community)

***Christian/Roman Catholic***

Carmelite

Franciscan Missionaries of Mary

Marist & Maryknoll

Secular Franciscans

***Sisters of St. Joseph***

St. Luke Catholic Church

***Christian/Protestant/Other***

***Baptist (Southern)***

***Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints***

Disciples of Christ

***Episcopal***

***St. Francis on the Hill***

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

Peace Lutheran ELCA

Metropolitan Community Church

Presbyterian (USA)

Quaker (El Paso Community)

United Methodist Church

***Trinity First UMC***

Western Hills UMC

Organizations represented by participants

Abara

Ciudad Nueva

Dialogue Institute of the Southwest

Grief Support El Paso

Jewish Federation

Katie's Pantry

Pax Christi

Raindrop Turkish House

Unity through Creativity

Gatherings for the year totaled **11** compared to 7 last year, with an average attendance of 18. The largest gathering was attended by 30 and the smallest by 12. Many thanks to all the speakers.

Topics included

**Services for Children in El Paso**

Speakers from CASA, CPS, Center for Children

**Wiccan 101**

Speaker: Glenda Dawson

**Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 101**

Speaker: Bishop Curtis Whetten

**Immigration – Current issues**

Speakers: Sami DiPasquale (Abara)

Ruben Garcia (Annunciation House)

Imelda Maynard (Estrella del El Paso)

**Tour of Lhaxhang at UTEP**

Speaker: Daniel Carey-Whalen, Director

**Table Talk** was added and 4 gatherings at Café Mayapán were held, along the annual Holydays gathering

## **CIFA (Community Gatherings)**

Gatherings for the year totaled **6** compared to 5 last year, with an average attendance of **34**. The largest gathering was attended by 90 and the smallest by 9. Many thanks to all the speakers.

Topics included

### **Islam 101**

Speaker: Omar Hernandez, President

### **Fasting**

Speakers: Nosrat Heidarian (Bahá'í)  
Ellen Goodman (Reform Jewish)  
Fr. German Azalte (Catholic)  
Emre Yanmis (Muslim)

### **Hinduism 101**

Speaker: H.K. Singh

### **Themes in Religion**

Speaker: Dr. Ann Horak

### **Universalist/Omnist Faiths**

Speakers: Dr. Aurolyn Luykx (Unitarian Universalist)  
Mona Heydarian (Bahá'í)  
José Luis Barron (Mahajrya Buddhist)

Along with the annual Holydays gathering

Faith Traditions represented by those participating were:

#### ***Bahá'í***

#### ***Buddhist***

Mahajrya  
Tibetan  
Zen

#### ***Hindu***

#### ***Jewish***

Reform

#### ***Muslim***

Turkish  
Various from Islamic Center

#### ***Pagan***

#### ***Unitarian Universalist (El Paso Community)***

#### ***Christian/Protestant/Other***

Disciples of Christ  
Lutheran (ECLA)  
Methodist (UMC)  
Presbyterian  
Quaker  
Unity

#### ***Christian/Roman Catholic***

Various churches  
Various orders

#### ***None (no professed faith tradition)***

#### ***Spiritual but not religious***

The following faith communities and organizations hosted gathering for Faith Leaders' group, the Community group and the IFASW Council. Words are not enough to express IFASW's gratitude to them.

**Abara/Sami DiPasquale**

**Bahá'í Community of El Paso/Nosrat Heidarian**

**Centennial Museum at UTEP/Bettina Escudero**

**Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints/**

Alma Maese

**Ciudad Nueva/Bethany Rivera Molinar**

**Islamic Center of El Paso/Omar Hernández**

**Katie's Pantry/Jeff St. Clair**

**Raindrop Turkish House/Lutfi Dagçi**

**Southwest Hindu Temple/Abha Singh**

**Temple Mount Sinai/Ben Zeidman**

**Trinity First United Methodist Church/Doug Mills**

**Unitarian Universalist Community/Kathy Anderson**

**Western Hills United Methodist Church/Kim Kinsey**

## ***Other Events Co-hosted or Participated in***

September 20, 2023– CommUNITY Encounters – Hosted by Holocaust Museum

September 23, 2023– International Day of Peace Celebration – Co-hosted with Unity Through Creativity at Keystone Heritage Park. Many thanks to Kathy Anderson, Joe Biernacki, Carlos & Deborah Clugy-Soto, Lutfi Dagçi and Brian Sieve for sitting at our table and helping with registration. Also, to Marie Bianca and Pat Delgado for serving on the planning team. And of course, to Laurie Marshall for her incredible leadership and organization of the event.

November 16, 2023 – ThanksGiving Friendship Dinner – Hosted by Raindrop Turkish House

Rev. Deborah Clugy-Soto, chair, presented about IFASW.

March 21, 2024 – March and Vigil for Human Dignity and support of Annunciation House

Rev. Deborah Clugy-Soto, chair, participated in the vigil. 15 other IFASW Faith Leaders marched.

## **IFASW Council**

### **Meetings**

The Council met two times during the year on 8/30/2023 and 2/14/2024. Business was also conducted via email.

### **Content of work completed and in progress**

Organizing Council so as to work together more effectively – Set up Google Workspace

Overseeing Planning Team who met 7/8/23, 9/9/23 and 1/27/24. Next meeting is scheduled for July, 2024

Began process of creating policies. Plan to complete them in August of 2024

Discussed issues around gatherings and cost for those hosting meals

Agreed to begin monthly Faith Leader gatherings by adding every other month a program called Table Talk with set location at Café Mayapán. Purpose of these gatherings is to create a space for open conversation with each other. A topic to be discussed at each table of 8 is also selected each time.

Explore ways to encourage Faith Leaders to invite their faith communities to the Community Gatherings

Discussed ways to increase fundraising and encourage participants to donate on a regular basis.

Approved to appoint a Financial Secretary to assist the Treasurer with the accounting program and other various financial tasks. Joe Biernacki agreed to fill this position.

Discussed guidelines to help the Council to decide when statements in regards to certain issues affecting those who participate in IFASW and also the community of El Paso are appropriate to make.

### **Statements Issued by the IFASW Council**

November 13, 2023– Concern for lives lost during Israel’s War with Hamas, both in Israel & Gaza

February 22, 2024 – Support for Annunciation House

### **Financial Wellbeing**

Bank Balance is currently **\$1513.36**.

Donations received this year were **\$473.05**

Expense movement was all related to **meal income and meal expenses** (reimbursements to hosts)

A detailed end of year report will be available in July and can be provided upon request.

In the future more funds will be needed if IFASW is to increase outreach to youth and children or create new programs that reflect our mission.

### **More Words of Gratitude**

To the **Planning Team** members for all they do in visioning and implementing IFASW’s programs:  
Kathy Anderson (Unitarian Universalist), Joe Biernacki (Zen Buddhist), Deborah Clugy-Soto (Protestant),  
Lutfi Dagçi (Muslim), Nosrat Heidarian (Bahá’í), and Beatriz Vera (Catholic)

To the **Council** for the guidance and decisions made to fulfill IFASW’s mission:  
Deborah Clugy-Soto, chair (Protestant), Arturo Bañuelas, vice chair (Catholic),  
Ben Zeidman, secretary (Reform Jewish), Kathy Anderson, treasurer (Unitarian Universalist),  
Joe Biernacki, financial secretary (Zen Buddhist), Sami DiPasquale, member at large (Christian),  
Lutfi Dagçi, member at large (Muslim), Nosrat Heidarian, member at large (Bahá’í),  
Bethany Rivera Molinar, member at large (Christian)

To **all who made donations** to further IFASW’s mission. You make it possible for IFASW to explore new ways of living into our mission.