



**InterFaith Alliance of the Southwest**  
**July 2024-June 2025 Annual Report**  
Presented by Rev. Deborah Clugy-Soto, chair  
Approved by IFASW Council 8/20/2025

**IFASW's Accomplishments**

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

Participation went from 35 actively participating last year to **40** this year.

Goodbyes were said to Lutfi Dagci and Dave Semmons 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***

[SGI-International \(Soka Gakkai\)](#)

Tibetan (Chenrezig Center)

Zen (El Paso Zen Center)

***Christian/Roman Catholic***

Diocese of El Paso

Franciscan Missionaries of Mary

[Maryknoll Sisters](#)

Secular Franciscans

St. Luke Catholic Church

***Church of Scientology*** (El Paso Mission)

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

***Jewish***

Conservative (Congregation B'nai Zion)

Reform (Temple Mt. Sinai)

***Muslim*** (Turkish)

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

***Christian/Protestant/Other***

Baptist (Southern)

Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints

Disciples of Christ

Episcopal

[Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande](#)

[St. Christopher's](#)

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

Peace Lutheran ELCA

Metropolitan Community Church

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Quaker (El Paso Community)

United Methodist Church

Trinity First UMC

Western Hills UMC

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

Organizations represented by participants

Abara

Ciudad Nueva

Dialogue Institute of the Southwest

[ECO El Paso](#)

[EPISO/Border Interfaith](#)

Grief Support El Paso

Jewish Federation

Katie's Pantry

[Maryknoll Monarch Initiative](#)

[Opportunity Center for the Homeless](#)

Pax Christi

[Project Vida](#)

Raindrop Turkish House

Unity through Creativity

[Veterans Affairs](#)

Gatherings for the year totaled **11**, with an average attendance of 18. The largest gathering was attended by 28 and the smallest by 13. Many thanks to all the speakers.

Topics included

***Beatitudes***

Speaker: Edward Schuldts

***Ecology***

Amanecer People's Project

Chihuahuan Desert Education Coalition

Eco El Paso

UTEP Earth, Environmental & Resource Sciences

***Essential Skills for Courageous Dialogue***

Speaker: Beatriz Vera

***State of Religion***

Speaker: Dr. Ann Horak

***Homelessness in El Paso***

El Paso Coalition for the Homeless

Opportunity Center for the Homeless

Rescue Mission

**Table Talks** were held 5 times at Café Mayapán, along with the annual Holydays gathering.

### ***CIFA (Community Gatherings)***

Gatherings for the year totaled **9** compared to 6 last year, with an average attendance of **27**. The largest gathering was attended by 61 and the smallest by 15. Many thanks to all the speakers.

Topics included

#### **Beatitudes**

Speaker: Edward Scholdt

#### **Common Threads in Faith Traditions**

Speakers: Nosrat Heidarian (Bahá'í)

Eternity Ein-Shingetsu Wauls

#### **Ramadan 101**

Speakers from Raindrop Turkish House, Catholic Church, Bahá'í

#### **African Belief Systems**

Speaker: Dr. Tawanda Chabikwa

Interfaith Roundtables were introduced and 4 were held, along with the annual Holydays gathering.

Faith Traditions represented by those participating were:

#### ***Bahá'í***

#### ***Buddhist***

Tibetan

Zen

#### ***Hindu***

#### ***Humanist***

#### ***Jewish***

Conservative

Reform

#### ***Messianic Judaism***

#### ***Muslim***

Turkish

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

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

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

Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints

Disciples of Christ

Episcopalian

Lutheran (ECLA)

Non-Denominational

Methodist (UMC)

Presbyterian

Quaker

Unity

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

Various churches

Various orders

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

The following faith communities and organizations hosted gatherings 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/Daniel Carey-Whalen-**

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

Douglas/Redd Rd/Sumac Chapels

Organizers Don Curnutt & Alma Maese

**St. Francil on the Hill Episcopal Church/Kristin Kopren**

**Temple Mount Sinai/Ben Zeidman**

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

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

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

September 23, 2023– International Day of Peace Symposium – Co-hosted with Unity Through Creativity at UTEP.

Many thanks to Laurie Marshall for her incredible leadership and organization of the event. Also to IFASW affiliates who sat on the planning committee: Pat Delgado, Bettina Escudero, Fernanda Lugo, Aurolyn Luykx, Rachel Quintana, Beatriz Vera, and Eternity Wauls.

Two special events were attempted, a Thanksgiving Dinner and a Prayer Walk. The first was canceled due to logistic issues and the latter due to triple digit temperatures for the day planned. Both will be scheduled again for this coming year.

## **IFASW Council**

### **Meetings**

The Council met two times during the year on 10/18/2024 and 3/6/2025. Business was also conducted via email.

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

Overseeing Planning Team who met 10/5/2024, 11/2/2024, 2/8/2025, 6/21/2025, and 8/9/2025. Next meeting is scheduled for 9/13/2025.

Discussed seeking grants for and Executive Director and oversaw the writing of a job position for and ED.

Explored 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 for Annual meetings to be held in August of each year and for voting to be done electronically.

Agreed to affiliate with Interfaith Alliance (IA) national.

Requested and received a grant from IA for \$2500 to help realize a Thanksgiving event in conjunction with the Raindrop Turkish House.

Added four new members to the Council.

Approved a donation of \$200 to be sent to the Kerr County Relief Fund.

Reviewed a total of 12 new policies. Approved by Council on 8/20/2025.

On 8/20/25, appointed Richard Gutierrez as Secretary and Joe Biernacki as Treasurer. Expressed heartfelt thanks to Ben Zeidman for serving as Secretary and Kathy Anderson as Treasurer for the past 3 years.

Began process to purchase liability insurance for IFASW.

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

February 6, 2025 – Condemning antisemitic vandalism of Congregation B'nai Zion and Temple Mt. Sinai . Letters of support were also sent to both congregations.

July 16, 2025 - Signed a letter being sent by Interfaith Alliance (IA) national to the President of the U.S. that emphasized the importance of religious freedom and protested decisions to eliminate the separation of church and state.

### **Financial Wellbeing**

Cash on Hand as of June 30, 2025 was **\$2567.71**

Grant monies to be spent by November 30, 2025 are **\$2500.00**

Donations increased from **\$473.00** last year to **\$2446.00** this year!

Half of the expense movement is meal income (participant donations) and meal expenses (reimbursements to hosts) and the other half (approximately \$725) went to event and administrative supplies, food for events, brochures, IFASW website and the purchase of a projector screen.

A detailed end of year report has been published.

### **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 (Humanist), Nosrat Heidarian (Bahá'í), Beatriz Vera (Catholic), Bettina Escudero (Tibetan Buddhist), & Bobbie Welch (Catholic).

To the **Council** for the guidance and decisions made to fulfill IFASW's mission:

Deborah Clugy-Soto, chair (Humanist), Arturo Bañuelas, vice chair (Catholic), Ben Zeidman, secretary (Reform Jewish), Kathy Anderson, treasurer (Unitarian Universalist), Joe Biernacki, financial manager (Zen Buddhist), Sami DiPasquale, member at large (Contemplative Christian), 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.