

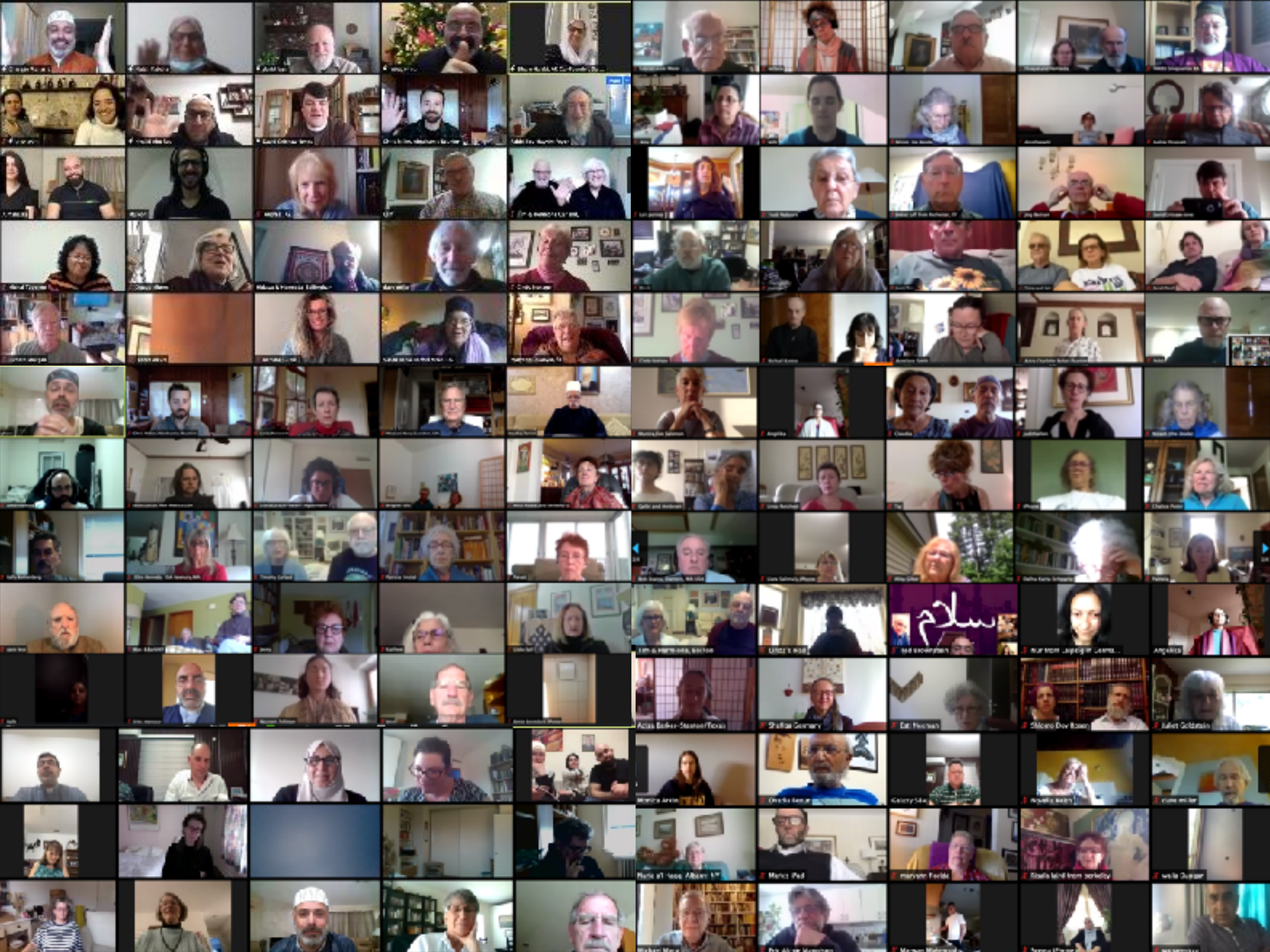


# Building Peace IN THE PANDEMIC

2020 Annual Report  
on Peacebuilding

ABRAHAMIC REUNION





Thanks to the Peacebuilders all around the world



# *Over 2100 Participants From 22 Countries Helped Build Peace in 2020*

## **What did the Abrahamic Reunion do in the middle of a world-wide pandemic and lock-down in 2020?**



6 On-line Cross-Border Interfaith Youth Meetings

Online Interfaith Iftar meal with 200 participants

Mural Painting, Jericho, West Bank Team of 25 Muslim and Christian Youth

6 Interfaith Online Unity Prayers for the Holy Land

Online Succoth Celebration with 15 Interfaith Clergy Participating

Meeting of 17 Interfaith Women's Leaders Online

"Taste of Peacemaking in the Holy Land" On-line Series— Men, Women, Youth

Worldwide Coordinated Prayer for Peace & Understanding in the Holy Land, Jenin, 96 people

## *Supported by 252 Donors in 13 Countries*

# *A Letter from the Chairman*

Dear Friends of the Abrahamic Reunion,

Last year —2020— was quite a remarkable year for us, as it was for most people on this planet. Because of the pandemic, and the need to do everything virtually, we actually reached more people than in 2019, and we were able to invite our worldwide community to many of our programs.

Our Unity Prayers brought together not only clergy from all of the major faiths of the Holy Land, but also many new participants who enjoyed the opportunity to share prayers in the different faith traditions. Video and Zoom programming increased our exposure to the citizens of Palestine and Israel who, in the past, could not or would not come to in-person meetings. We constantly put forth our theme of activating religion as a force for peace, and it was very well received.

Without exception, all of the programs that we held this year had increased participation over the programs in 2019. We were also pleased that the Abrahamic Reunion was seen as a magnetic center pole for the forces advocating for peace and tolerance in the Holy Land.

We are very proud of our team, of Ghassan Manasra, Abed Alsalam Manasra, and Mohamad Jamous, as well as all the local people who worked with them and whose heroic efforts to bring together people created new possibilities for many Israelis and Palestinians to get to know each other for the first time. This year has been fraught with danger, but our coworkers have exhibited remarkable courage as they held aloft the ideal of Peace, even during in perilous circumstances.

Ghassan Manasra continues to demonstrate remarkable skill in recruiting renowned clergy to be part of our programs, as well as his behind-the-scenes ability to bridge disparate communities. We are exceptionally fortunate to have an International Director of his vast capacity. Administratively, Chris Miller has woven together all of the loose ends in communication, fundraising, and general organization that we had hoped would become part of our infrastructure.

As Chairman of the Board, I want to thank and honor the members of the Board of Directors for their steadfast and hands-on help in guiding the direction of the Abrahamic Reunion.



In this report, please read about the different programs that have come of age in 2020.

Yours, in peace,

David Less  
Chairman of the Board



# Staff



**Sheikh Ghassan Manasra**  
**International Director**

Ghassan oversees all programming in the Holy Land and works extensively on online offerings, project development, grant writing, and much more. He is constantly moving from meeting to meeting with officials, religious leaders, and other peacebuilders.



**Chris Miller**  
**Executive Administrator**

Chris is responsible for many of the AR's day-to-day operations be it communications, fundraising, grantwriting, administration, video production, or coordinating online programs.



**Mohamad Jamous**  
**Palestine Director**

Mohamad develops and coordinates all programs in Palestine for the Abrahamic Reunion, organizing text studies, in-person peace gatherings and celebrations (when possible), videos, and cross-border youth programs via Zoom.



**Abed Alsalam Manasra**  
**Israel Director**

Abed coordinates and develops multi-faith in-person and online programs in Israel and is the liaison for peace builders, religious leaders, and the Reunion there. He works on the cross-border youth programs, Iftar, videos, and Peace Summit.

# Board of Directors

## United States

David Less (Chair)

Hermione Garland

Neil Rothenberg

Anna Less

Michael Macy

Ted Brownstein

Linda Hall

*Tim Garland (Treasurer only)*

## Israel

Khalil Albaz (Co-Chair)

Rabbi Yakov Nagen (Co-Chair)

Siham Halabi

*Tim Garland (Treasurer only)*

## AR Germany

Roland Stepan (Chair)

Hans-Ulrich Wurm (Treasurer)

Bjoern Rech

Winfried Henkes

## Abrahamic Reunion UK Trust

Michael & Amanda Kenton

Rabbi Mordechai Zeller

## ABRAHAMIC REUNION INCOME STATEMENT 2020

### INCOME

Donations - Large Donors	\$95,565
Other Donations	65,969
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>161,534</b>

### EXPENSES

Computer/Internet	3,523
Fees	1,894
Miscellaneous	96
Peacemaker Support/Programs	143,354
Professional Services	943
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>149,810</b>

<b>NET SURPLUS</b>	<b>\$11,724</b>
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## BALANCE SHEET 12/31/2020

### ASSETS

Cash and Equivalents	\$45,839
Accounts Receivable	178
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$46,017</b>

### LIABILITIES

Credit Cards	\$187
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>187</b>

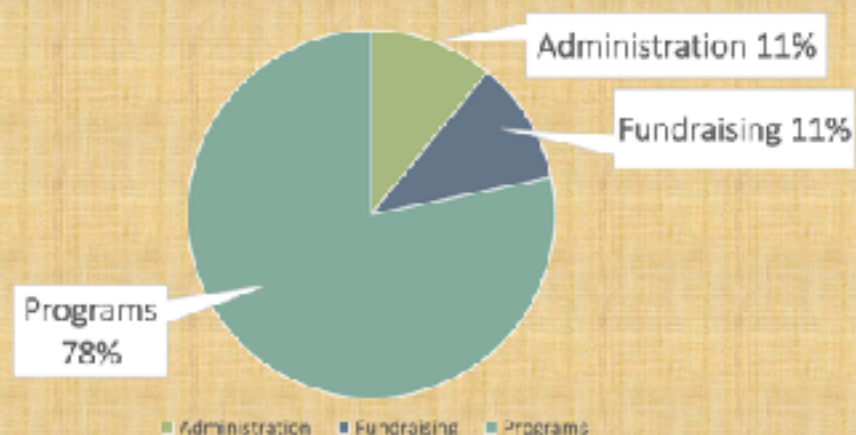
### EQUITY

Unrestricted Net Assets	34,106
Net Income	11,724
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>45,830</b>

<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>\$46,017</b>
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2100+	22	752	36
Event Participants	Online Events	Donations	Monthly Donors
27	5	252	\$19,085
Multifaith Events	In-Person events	Donors	Monthly Donations

### Expenses - 2020





# Peacebuilding Goes Online - *and International*

## Unity Prayers

During the Pandemic, 7 online inter-religious prayer gatherings buoyed our spirits, provided space for reflection, created a forum of comfort and commentary on the Pandemic, and exposed 989 people around the world to each other's prayer and religious thought.

These gatherings featured prayers from 29 different peacebuilders over seven different Unity Prayers, ranging from the peace prayer of a seven-year-old child to those of elder statespeople of the interfaith movement, including Rabbi David Rosen (Former Chief Rabbi of Ireland), Sheikh Mowafaq Tarif (Leader of the Druze Community in Israel), Sheikh Mohamad Salah Isaid (Mufti of the Palestinian Defense Forces), or younger prominent clergy such as Rabbi Dahlia Shaham (Haifa), Fr. Issa Thaljieh (Church of the Nativity), & many old and new faces.



## *A Taste of Peacemaking in the Holy Land* *with Female, Male, and Youth Peacebuilders of Israel & Palestine*

In this three-part series of panels interviewed by Sheikh Ghassan Manasra and Anat Lev Or, 228 live participants got to know peacebuilders in the Holy Land by surveying their perspectives and messages. We asked these women, men, and youth, how did they come to be involved with peace building? How do they make peace in everyday life? How can we make peace during the pandemic? How does their faith support their peace building?

We were able to showcase a range of 13 voices from the multi-faith peace-building movement, including long-time peace builders, youth newer to the movement, and those who seek to build peace through religious experience or through everyday human connection. The stories featured Palestinian, East Jerusalem, Israeli, Jewish, Christian, Druze, Muslim, and Sufi perspectives, and were offered in both English and Arabic.



# Cross-Border Youth

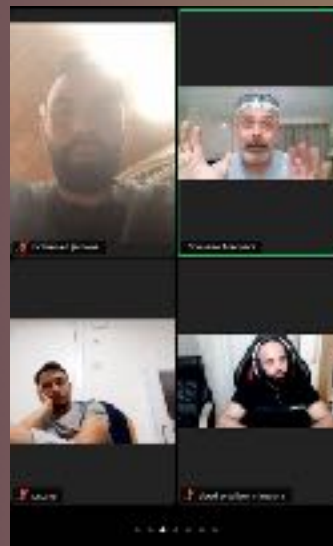
## Multifaith text study is bringing Palestinian & Israeli youth together in a new way.

During the pandemic, the use of Zoom has given us an opportunity to bring together young people from Israel and the Palestinian West bank in a whole new way.

We created seven programs, in which 217 youth participants met to study each other's sacred texts. These sessions were organized by our Israeli and Palestinian Program Directors, Abed Manasra and Mohamad Jamous, and were led by Sheikh Ghassan Manasra, Rabbi Yakov Nagen, Hadassah Froman, and Father Issa Thaljieh.

Societal pressures often force potential participants to stay away from AR's gatherings. But on Zoom, the ability to turn off their video helped many feel safe to participate more anonymously. These circumstances created an outlet for connection and confidence for these young people, who are so often the primary targets for radical recruitment.

The youth are now eager to meet face-to-face, when COVID-19 restrictions lift, to gather as they did back in March to paint murals (pictured below), meet in each other's sacred places, and eat, talk, and walk together.

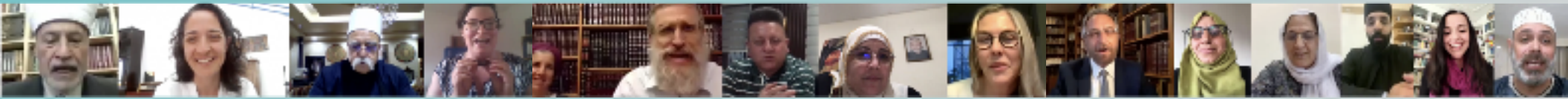


Formerly radicalized youth sometimes participated in online multi faith text studies with the condition and need for anonymity.





# 17th Annual Multifaith Iftar Peace Dinner



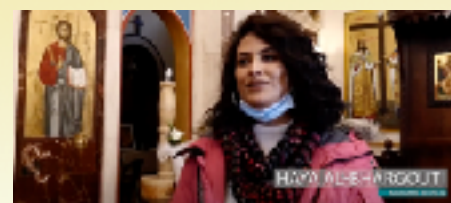
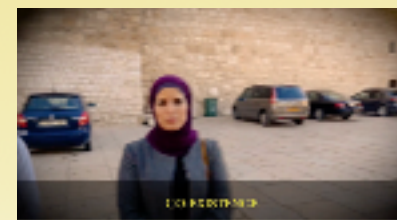
Since 2004, the Abrahamic Reunion has held a Multifaith Iftar Dinner during Ramadan to show solidarity with our Muslim brothers and sisters. The Iftar is the longest running peace offering of the Abrahamic Reunion.

Over 350 people from around the world attended our first Online Iftar, which included 15 prayer leaders!



## 3rd Annual Multifaith Christmas in Bethlehem

For the last two years, we gathered in Bethlehem to celebrate Christmas in Palestine. This year, because of the pandemic, we held a small multi-faith gathering. Religious leaders, youth, and officials filmed their statements and prayers with the sights and sounds of Christmas in Bethlehem as their backdrop. We offered a live video screening of their courageous religious solidarity and friendship.



# CORE PRINCIPLES

*Today, 89% of Palestinians believe Israeli Jews are untrustworthy; and 68% of Israelis don't trust their Palestinian neighbors. Meanwhile 65% of Israeli Jews fear Palestinians, and 45% of Palestinians live in fear of Israeli Jews. (BICOM, British Israel Communications and Research Centre)*

The Abrahamic Reunion has been building peace in the Holy Land for over 15 years. We recognize that creating understanding and empathy between diverse communities is fundamental to developing multicultural acceptance, constructive cooperation, and peaceful coexistence.

Since 2004, The Abrahamic Reunion has utilized its signature multifaith community-encounter techniques to create trust, dialogue, and long-term peacebuilders in communities across the Holy Land.

Providing a living example of peace is critical to create a template for the future. The Abrahamic Reunion is an exemplar of inclusion and harmony with Muslim, Jewish, Christian, and Druze men, women, and youth from Israel and the Palestinian Territories active as collaborating, co-creating peacebuilders, directors, and participants.

*“When women participate in peace processes, the resulting agreement is 35% more likely to last at least 15 years.” (UN WOMEN)*

The Abrahamic Reunion:

- Has enabled more than 100 events and programs
- Reached more than 15,000 participants
- Developed and implemented programs for women and youth
- Included women in all levels of the organization and as leaders

The Abrahamic Reunion is working to:

- Train a new generation of leaders
- Anchor and fund their local projects to reach more communities
- And facilitate learning programs amongst peacebuilders in the Holy Land.



# The Contact Hypothesis

*Bringing people together can reduce prejudice, mistrust, and fear*

**The Abrahamic Reunion's programs are based on the theory of change known as The Contact Hypothesis. It is based on the idea that direct intergroup contact can effectively reduce prejudice, mistrust and fear.**

The foundational text for the AR's Theory of Change is Gordon Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954). Social scientists have built on Allport's research and applied the Contact Hypothesis to a variety of situations and conflicts.

Recent studies on the effect of human contact include an assessment of electronic contact. "Improving intergroup relations in the Internet age: A critical review," a 2015 research paper in the American Psychological Association's quarterly journal, has supported the foundational supposition about direct contact.

Other research has established that even imagined and extended contact can lead to more positive attitudes towards the "other". For example, knowing that a member of one's own group has a close relationship with someone on the other side can lead to increased trust and mutual understanding.

The AR's 20 years of grassroots, people-to-people programs in Israel and the West Bank support the observations of the cited research. The AR has organized cross-border conversations, inter-community meals and celebrations, and peace summits, among other events.

**From this experience, the AR has learnt the following:**

Enabling contact between people on different sides improves relations and provides a common starting point to discuss ways to resolve the larger conflict.

People who participate in peacebuilding events stay engaged. A Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM) study has found that one in five participants in Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding activities is still heavily involved in working for peace 20 years after their first event. The study also said that while the majority of Israelis and Palestinians don't trust each other, more than 80% of participants in peacebuilding activities said they trusted the other community more than before.

For peacebuilding experiences to be effective, certain conditions are essential. The host organization needs to be neutral and seen as such, in that it takes no position on issues, promotes no solution, and does not have ties to any particular community or political party.

**One-in-five participants in Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding activities is still heavily involved in working for peace 20 years after their first event.**

**While the majority of Israelis and Palestinians don't trust each other, more than 80% of participants in peacebuilding activities said they trusted the other community more than before.**

**- BICOM (The British Israel Communications and Research Centre**

# Ways to Get Involved

## Volunteer

**Seeking extra hands and skilled help for various projects**

Have skills in interfaith, journalism, graphics, videography, translation, are you an artist, musician, religious leader, or have any other talents, connections, or skills that might help us build peace? Or maybe just some extra time and willingness?

Fill out our volunteer survey and we'll be in touch.

[abrahamicrounion.org/volunteer](http://abrahamicrounion.org/volunteer)

## Donate

**Support Palestinian and Israeli grassroots peacebuilders dedicated to nonviolence**

We can't do the work we need to without our network of donors that support our work - **individuals make up 100% of the Abrahamic Reunion's funding at this point.**

Give peace a stronger chance - make a donation to the Abrahamic Reunion today!

[abrahamicrounion.org/online-donations](http://abrahamicrounion.org/online-donations)

## Invite

**Bring the Peacebuilders to your community**

During the Pandemic, we're offering virtual peacebuilding programs via Zoom. Help us meet new people that support peace.

[abrahamicrounion.org/invite](http://abrahamicrounion.org/invite)

## Promote

Follow the Abrahamic Reunion on social media and forward our posts, events, invite friends.

[facebook.com/abrahamicrounion](https://facebook.com/abrahamicrounion)

[twitter.com/abrahamicrounion](https://twitter.com/abrahamicrounion)

[instagram.com/abrahamicrounion](https://instagram.com/abrahamicrounion)

# The Abrahamic Reunion

2372 Arden Drive, Sarasota, FL 34232 United States

[info@abrahamicrounion.org](mailto:info@abrahamicrounion.org)

+1 941-993-9994

**Holy Land Branch:** [holyland@abrahamicrounion.org](mailto:holyland@abrahamicrounion.org)

**Abrahamic Reunion DE, Germany:** [germany@abrahamicrounion.org](mailto:germany@abrahamicrounion.org)

**Abrahamic Reunion Charitable Trust, UK:** [peace@abrahamicrounion.co.uk](mailto:peace@abrahamicrounion.co.uk)

[www.abrahamicrounion.org](http://www.abrahamicrounion.org)