

On March 11, 2012, The Reformed Church of Highland Park in New Jersey, opened their doors and hearts to the volunteers of the Peace Islands Institute. They ate and shared personal stories of their journeys in faith.

Rev. Seth Kaper-Dale then invited everyone to a discussion about lent and the history of Christianity. He asked his people about their sacrifices during the 40-day holy period before Easter. People spoke about focus groups that helped them deepen their faith during this time of penance and self-deprivation.

Sam Tuna, from the Turkish American community, in turn, spoke about Ramadan. He spoke about the meaning of "Assalaimu Alaikum" and the spiritual importance of 40 days in all religions. He said "most religions used this 40 day period as a break to quit something they regret, or start something they aspire to". Ramadan was explained, using the activities of eating and drinking as the essential source to life. Tuna said Ramadan fasting, helps Muslims realize the purpose of all life- to meet the Creator who sustains everything.

All the participants in the discussion related to the inter-personal similarities and differences and the ultimate realization that everyone ultimately believes in One God.

Ferhan Tunagur, a Professor at Rutgers University talked about the purpose of dialogue to deal with similarities and differences. The catastrophic events of 9/11 polarized the U.S population and many looked at Muslims with suspicion. Inter-faith dialogue was the only way to bridge the gap and now the Peace Islands Institute is working hard to foster that relationship between followers of the Abrahamic religions.

It was a wonderful event well spent together.

Picture from the event:



