



# PEACE TOGETHER

## WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT NEEDED TODAY?

HOWARD ROSENTHAL

While there is very little that is easy about the work of the “Peace Together” movement, there is, I suppose, a simple story behind its beginnings. You will likely recall the events of Charlottesville, VA on August 11-12, 2017, the Unite the Right rally. Large groups of people descended upon Charlottesville that weekend. Many carried lighted torches and yelled out anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim chants and among other things wore and displayed swastikas. I found myself more than a little disturbed over what I was seeing. I soon set-up a meeting with my rabbi and friend, Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker. I remember telling Rabbi that I knew I was but one person, hundreds of miles away. Despite this, and even though I had no demonstrative history of drawing a line in the sand to say, “this must stop, right here, right now,” I felt there must be something that could be done.

Rabbi Charlie made some contacts for me with members of the Colleyville Ministerial Alliance. From that point, I began talking to people in the faith community as well as individuals who identified themselves as free thinkers or more commonly known as atheists. It became quite clear that when it came to objecting to the types of hate and intolerance displayed in Charlottesville, we were united in cause. We met regularly at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, and we knew that the actions that had been displayed just a few months prior were not representative of what we wanted for our society, nor importantly for our children and grandchildren. So, one thing led to another and *Peace Together* was born. Programs, big and small, have been held, all focused upon our mission which seems relatively simple on its face, but which is really not that easy to achieve, namely ***Building Relationships With Our Neighbors***.

Sadly, we live in times when area communities or school districts defy reason by pushing back against recognizing and supporting diversity, considering and in some cases banning important books from their shelves, often refusing to accept those that are seen as not fitting the mold they are accustomed to, and sometimes seeming oblivious to growing anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim acts and rhetoric. Despite these troublesome issues, and the horrific incident at Congregation Beth Israel on January 15, 2022, I never fully appreciated the full significance of the *Peace Together* mission until I saw the outpouring of concern, love and caring on the day of that hostage taking.

A few of us were with the families and FBI at Good Shepherd Catholic Community up the street from CBI when I received calls and texts from so many people who call *Peace Together* a sanctuary in their busy lives. When Father Michael and others opened their arms to offer shelter, it gave me goose bumps. Amidst the overwhelming stress that permeated every moment, more than any other, that day showed me that what we are attempting to do with the *Peace Together* movement, has been, is and will continue to be the right thing to do. Many of our interfaith friends asked if they could be with us and the families of the hostages. These were friends who, like me, felt the importance of building relationships, no matter if we look or pray differently or possess a different belief system. This is important in good times and times that are not nearly so good, like January 15. The work of *Peace Together* has taught me the importance

of learning from one another. By building these kinds of relationships I hope that together we can resist the efforts of those who would use divide and conquer techniques-to pit one cultural group against another.



Young volunteers at Colleyville Masjid.



Beginning of a Peace Walk, the organization's annual signature event.

**PLEASE SUPPORT PEACE TOGETHER BY JOINING THE PEACE WALK ON NOVEMBER 4, 2023, 12:30-1:15 PM / Leave your car at Good Shepherd Catholic Community, 1000 Tinker Road, Colleyville. You will be transported to the Islamic Association of Mid-Cities from where the walk to Congregation Beth Israel will begin approximately 2 PM. If walking is not your thing, a ride will be furnished you to CBI. No charge of course, only your presence is requested.**