

Press Release: March 9, 2007

***Massachusetts Interfaith Book Group Inspires Formation
of New Groups Around the Country***

In response to an outpouring of interest from around the country, the Massachusetts-based Daughters of Abraham interfaith book group is offering new groups guidance on how to form similar groups in their area.

The Daughters of Abraham has become a model for enlightening women about each other's faith traditions through the discussions, insights and relationships that grow out of regular book group meetings. Currently, more than 100 Massachusetts women are members in one of the six Daughters of Abraham book groups in the state. Requests for information about starting new groups have come from fourteen states and Washington, DC.

The idea for the Daughters of Abraham was born in response to 9/11 when Edie Howe formed a book group of women from the three Abrahamic faiths with the goal of overcoming stereotypes and fostering mutual respect and understanding among Muslim, Jewish and Christian women.

The Daughters of Abraham has been featured on PBS, in articles in U.S. News and World Report, the Christian Science Monitor and the Boston Globe. The group taped a segment for the Hallmark Channel that will be shown on Jet Blue's in-flight televisions. To view the PBS segment or get more information, go to <http://www.daughtersofabraham.info>.

The groups alternate readings in the three traditions and, on occasion, read books that encompass all three faiths, such as *Abraham*, by Bruce Feiler or *The Rock*, by Kanan Makiya. "We are not an academic study group or a dialogue group," said Carol M. Flett, an Episcopal priest who is a facilitator of one of the Massachusetts groups. "We engage with novels, history, biography, memoirs, poetry and articles that speak about faith and religious practice in our three religions to explore the meanings, shape and practice of our own and one another's faith." As Rona Fischman, another of the facilitators, noted: "the books offer a window into a faith and its cultural backgrounds in a way that is accessible to women in these groups. By reading and discussing these books, we get a chance to develop a deep and personal understanding of how life is affected by faith." Saadia Baloch, another book group facilitator, commented: "As a Muslim, reading about the life experiences of Christian and Jewish women has made me realize how much we share in

common in the way we live our lives, raise our families, participate in our communities, and adhere to our faiths.”

In some cases, members have expanded their interfaith learning by traveling together to historic and religious sites in Spain and Jerusalem. To date there have been three interfaith trips.

Any Jewish, Christian or Muslim woman who shares the group’s mission is welcome to join. The goal is to keep a balance among the three faiths, so not everyone who applies to a particular group may be admitted to that group; however, new groups are always being formed.

For information on how to form a Daughters of Abraham book group, look on the group’s web site (<http://www.daughtersofabraham.com>).