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News

Many Faiths Commemorate 9/11

Hundreds attend interfaith service at Decatur Hotel and Conference Center.

By [Kalin Thomas](#) | [Email the author](#) | September 13, 2011 [Print](#)

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As President Obama and the country honored the 10th Anniversary of 9/11 in ceremonies across America, nearly 600 people attended the 9/11 Interfaith Gathering at the Decatur Hotel and Conference Center. The event was sponsored by [the Faith Alliance of Metro Atlanta](#).

"Our organization was first formed after 9/11, 2001, when we created an interfaith memorial service for the first anniversary of 9/11," said Faith Alliance media relations coordinator Gillian Renault. "Our interfaith community includes Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Sikhs. Our goal is to move forward and heal the wounds of 9/11, by fostering relationships between people of different faiths."

Gloria Sylvester of Atlanta said she came because she wanted to be a part of a collective event for 9/11.

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"I am non denominational, that's why I liked the idea of an interfaith gathering," she said. "And I wanted to celebrate the lives of those people who were brave and sacrificing for peace in the world. I prefer to look at the positives of 9/11."

Amira Wazer of Lithonia, a Muslim, said, "9/11 helped bring people closer together. That is what God wanted – for us to know each other and put aside our [differences] and know that we are one universal consciousness."

One of the highlights of the event was when a representative of each faith recited "The Golden Rule" – which is a part of every faith. Each faith has its own version of "Do unto others ..." or "Treat others the way you want to be treated."

Afterward, participants broke into smaller groups to discuss how they practice the Golden Rule in their own lives.

"We had a Hindu, a Christian, a Muslim and a person who didn't profess any religion in our group," said Tayyibah Taylor, a Muslim and publisher/editor-in-chief of Azizah Magazine. "We felt that the essence of The Golden Rule is compassion. I'm optimistic about the future of humanity, and hope that people can get beyond the stereotypes of Muslims."

Clint Fluker, a non practicing Christian from Decatur, said, "I learned that as we talk about The Golden Rule, the idea of being of service comes up regularly. I work in a service business [to underserved healthcare communities], so it's good to know that you can still practice The Golden Rule even if you're not in a specific religion.

Barbara Stahnke, a Unitarian from Marietta, said, "No matter what our religion, we are all living our values."

Stahnke and Fluker exchanged business cards and said they hope to stay in touch beyond today's event.

"That was our blessing – that people saw this not just as one event, but as a process," said Interfaith Service coordinator, Jan Swanson. "They want to continue the process where you spend enough time with each other to be transformed. That's how the world is changed."

The Faith Alliance of Metro Atlanta holds various interfaith events throughout the year, but the 9/11 gathering is their largest. For more information visit www.faithallianceofmetroatlanta.org.

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Diane Loupe

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12:09pm on Tuesday, September 13, 2011

I commemorated the event by donating blood on behalf of the Muslims for Life National Blood Drive, which seeks to collect 10,000 pints of blood in September in memory of the victims of 9/11. Anyone eligible can donate at any blood drive, just tell them it's for Muslims for life.

<http://www.ajc.com/news/muslim-group-holds-blood-1162859.html>

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James Brewer-Calvert

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12:48pm on Wednesday, September 14, 2011

We are delighted to have had so many hundreds of fellow citizens participate. Thank you for this follow-up article. One correction: many, many groups and religious bodies sponsored the event. FAMA is one of many bodies of people who co-sponsored the interfaith gathering. Also, while some of the event organizers also serve on the FAMA board, not all of us do. This was a truly, deeply cross-cultural, multi-faith experience from beginning to end and beyond. Thanks for your support, everyone! Shalom, James Brewer-Calvert, Pastor, First Christian Church of Decatur

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