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## Faith Alliance of Metro Atlanta (FAMA) 10th Anniversary of 9/11 Inter Faith Gathering

September 21, 2011 by MedShare

By Clint Fluker, MedShare's Faiths Act Fellow

Sana and I stood side by side at the crosswalk watching silently as dozens of

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people from all directions trickled into the Decatur Hotel Conference Center in Decatur, Georgia. When the traffic light turned red we joined the crowd into the lobby of the hotel where over 600 people representing six different faiths (Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Sikhs) gathered to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks.



Clint Fluker, MedShare's Faiths Act Fellow, at a 9/11 Interfaith Gathering in Decatur

As we moved through the lobby toward the main hall two lively women hopped in front of us bearing quiz sheets. Wide eyed and smiling, they welcomed us to the interfaith gathering, introduced themselves, their religions, and through hysterical laughter held up their sheets to ask, "Are you Muslim? Because we really need some help with some of these questions?"

I stood mute shaking my head. The onlooker's eyes glazed over me and focused on Sana. Sana nodded. The two women jumped for joy and presented their sheets which were filled with bingo-style questions stemming from all the religions represented at the conference. Sana answered their questions about the prophet Muhammad; the women thanked her graciously and moved on to



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the next set of unsuspecting arrivals.

The interfaith questionnaire was one of several mechanisms used throughout the evening to help foster interfaith dialogue. Consequently, when we entered the main hall we saw hundreds of colorful faces glaring at us ready to pounce with interfaith questions. We answered questions about Islam and Christianity respectively as we made our way to two open seats.

The ceremony began with a welcome and introduction by a representative from the [Faith Alliance of Metro Atlanta \(FAMA\)](#) who brought our attention to the beauty of the diversity in the crowd. Next, he pointed to a painting by Norman Rockwell, "The Golden Rule," that was projected prominently on each wall. The speaker then yielded the floor to religious leaders from all faiths present to recite their interpretations of The Golden Rule according to their religious texts.

This presentation was followed by several musical performances, prompted interfaith discussions, and poetry readings. However, perhaps the most powerful moment of the evening was a reading by author Carmen Agra Deedy. Deedy retold a story from a man on the ground in New York City who witnessed the World Trade Center buildings fall. During this story she urged everyone in the audience to face the memory of 9/11 head on, take the lessons we have learned from that day, and apply them to the future in the spirit of peace.

The evening came to a close with a candle light vigil. The silence in the room during those few moments was only broken by quiet tears and prayerful whispers. When the bell rung to mark the end of the gathering, I surveyed the dimly lit room to see newly made friends and strangers alike embracing each other. Baring witness to the bonds of unity formed through the sharing of faith traditions, I opened my arms and joined in.

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