

Ramadan Community Engagement Report

Building Friendship, Dialogue, and Community Through Shared Iftar Tables



Table of Contents

1

Message from the Executive Director

2

PII Boston Overview

3

What is Ramadan?

4

Our Ramadan Vision

5

Ramadan 2026 at a Glance

6

Partnerships Organizations

7

Reflections From Partner Organizations

12

Photo Highlights

15

Looking Ahead: Ramadan 2027

16

How to Get Involved

17

Contact Page

Message from the Executive Director



A Season of Reflection, Hospitality, and Friendship

Ramadan is a time of reflection, generosity, and community. For Muslims around the world, it is a month that invites us to slow down, reconnect with our values, and strengthen our relationships with both God and one another. One of the most beautiful traditions of Ramadan is the gathering at the iftar table, where families, friends, neighbors, and guests come together to break the fast at sunset.

At the Peace Islands Institute Boston, we believe that the iftar table is more than a meal. It is a space where friendships are built, cultures are shared, and meaningful conversations take place. In a world where misunderstandings can easily grow, simply sitting together around a dinner table can create powerful moments of connection and mutual understanding.

During Ramadan 2026, we were grateful to host a variety of gatherings that brought together people from many different backgrounds, faith traditions, and professional communities. Through home iftars and organizational partnerships, hundreds of guests joined us to experience the spirit of Ramadan. These gatherings created opportunities for dialogue, hospitality, and genuine human connection.

This report highlights the many ways our community came together during Ramadan 2026. It reflects the generosity of our hosts, the openness of our guests, and the commitment of our partner organizations who helped make these experiences possible.

As we look ahead to Ramadan 2027, we warmly invite individuals, families, and organizations to join us in continuing this tradition. Whether by hosting an iftar, attending a gathering, or partnering with us to create new opportunities for dialogue, we welcome you to be part of this growing community effort.

Thank you to everyone who contributed their time, hospitality, and friendship during this special month.

With gratitude,

Benjamin Aysan
Executive Director
Peace Islands Institute Boston

PII Boston Overview



Vision

In a diverse world, where even the farthest point is a click away, every culture, race, religion, tradition and nation become neighbors. We have to live and interact together in this “global island” we call Earth. Peace Islands Institute Boston (PIIB) serves to act as the soil for fruitful dialogue, peace, and civil service just as the soil on this “global island” gives forth flowers of different colors, scents and shapes. PIIB envisions a world becoming an island of peace in the ocean of our universe; a community in which people from all walks of life interact with each other and cooperate to serve their communities, thereby strengthening civil society and promoting the development of human values.

Mission

Peace Islands Institute Boston (PIIB) aspires to facilitate a forum of mutual respect and collaboration, both welcoming and accepting varied viewpoints and voices with the intent to develop original and alternative perspectives on vital issues that our society is facing, generate solutions to these issues, support successful practices, thus promoting education, friendship and harmony and acting as an island of peace for all peoples in a society of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

What is Ramadan?

Understanding Ramadan

Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is one of the most sacred times for Muslims. During this month, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset as an act of spiritual reflection, self-discipline, and devotion. Ramadan is not only about abstaining from food and drink but also about strengthening one's character, practicing compassion, and deepening relationships with family, neighbors, and the broader community.

Throughout Ramadan, Muslims focus on generosity, gratitude, and service to others. Many people increase their charitable giving, volunteer in their communities, and make special efforts to reconnect with friends and family.

Why Muslims Fast

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, the core acts of worship practiced by Muslims. By refraining from food and drink during daylight hours, Muslims develop patience, self-control, and empathy for those who are less fortunate. Fasting is also a way to cultivate mindfulness, gratitude, and spiritual growth.

What is Iftar?

Iftar is the meal that Muslims share at sunset to break their daily fast. Families, friends, and neighbors often gather together for this meal, creating a welcoming and joyful atmosphere. Traditionally, Muslims break their fast with dates and water, followed by a shared dinner.

Iftar gatherings are an important part of Ramadan and are often occasions for hospitality, friendship, and community connection.

Why Sharing Iftar Matters

Sharing an iftar meal with others especially guests from different backgrounds is a meaningful way to build understanding and strengthen relationships. Around the iftar table, people have the opportunity to learn from one another, share stories, and experience the values of hospitality and generosity that are central to Ramadan.

For many communities, interfaith and community iftars have become a powerful way to bring people together and celebrate the spirit of unity, respect, and friendship.



Our Ramadan Vision

Why We Organize Community Iftars

At the Peace Islands Institute Boston, we view Ramadan as a unique opportunity to bring people together across cultures, faith traditions, and communities. While fasting is a deeply personal act of devotion, the spirit of Ramadan is also rooted in hospitality, generosity, and human connection.

Community iftars allow people from different backgrounds to gather around the same table, share a meal, and engage in meaningful conversation. These gatherings create spaces where individuals can learn from one another, build friendships, and experience the values of respect, empathy, and understanding.

Our goal is not simply to host dinners, but to cultivate genuine relationships within the broader community. Through both home iftars and organizational partnerships, we invite neighbors, community leaders, students, professionals, and people of all faiths to experience the welcoming spirit of Ramadan.

These shared moments often lead to deeper dialogue, lasting friendships, and stronger partnerships that continue well beyond the month of Ramadan. By opening our tables and our homes, we hope to contribute to a more connected, compassionate, and understanding society. As our community continues to grow, we look forward to expanding these opportunities and welcoming even more individuals and organizations to join us in celebrating the values that Ramadan represents.



Ramadan 2026 at a Glance

Ramadan 2026 Impact

Ramadan 2026 was a meaningful season of connection, reflection, and community engagement. Through a series of home gatherings and organizational partnerships, we had the privilege of bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds around the same table.

This year, our efforts focused on creating welcoming spaces where people could experience the spirit of Ramadan firsthand through shared meals, sincere conversations, and lasting friendships.

Our Impact in Numbers:

- 50 Home Iftar Gatherings
- 10 Organizational Iftar Programs
- 580+ Participants
- 12 Partner Organizations

Each number represents more than just participation; it reflects conversations shared, perspectives broadened, and relationships built.

From intimate home dinners to large community events, Ramadan 2026 demonstrated the power of hospitality and dialogue in strengthening our community bonds. These gatherings not only introduced the traditions of Ramadan but also created opportunities for mutual understanding and long-term connection.

As we reflect on this month, we are grateful for every individual and organization that contributed to making this experience impactful and memorable.



10

Organizational Iftars

50

Home Iftars

580

Participants

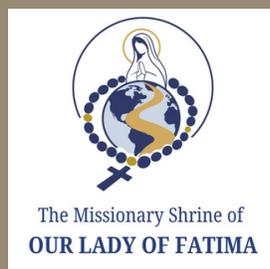
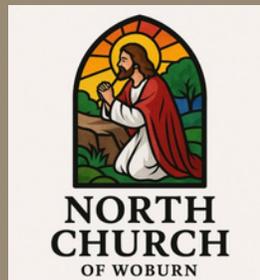
12

Partner Organizations

Ramadan 2026

Partner Organizations

We're Grateful to Work With



Reflections From Partner Organizations

Chris DiMeo

Executive Director at Know Your Neighbor Woburn

Know Your Neighbor Woburn was truly honored to co-sponsor the first Iftar dinner in Woburn on March 7th, 2026 in partnership with Peace Islands Institute and North Church, Woburn. It was a shining success and wonderful opportunity to embrace our Muslim community during the sacred observance of Ramadan. The joyful and educational evening brought neighbors and friends together to share good food, good will, enriching dialog, and our common humanity.

Matthew Anderson

Executive Director at Mosaic Action | Leadership, Nonprofit

We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to partner with Peace Islands Institute Boston for the Spring Holiday Celebration and Iftar, which brought together over 100 individuals from diverse faith traditions. The gathering created a powerful space for connection, where sharing a meal opened the door to meaningful dialogue, relationship-building, and deeper understanding. At a time of growing division, these moments of unity and belonging are both impactful and necessary. We are proud to be part of this work and look forward to continuing to build bridges together.

Robert E. Braitman, M.D. Past President, FJMC International

My first experience at an Iftar dinner was moving and meaningful. I enjoyed the fellowship and warm welcome from our friends at Peace Islands Institute. The presentations about the spiritual meanings of Ramadan were informative and underlined for me the close relationships that we Jews share with our Muslim brothers as did the opportunity to witness and experience the evening prayer starting with the moving call to worship.

Reflections From Partner Organizations

Nevia Selmon

Senior Program Associate at Repair the World Boston

That evening stayed with me in ways I didn't fully anticipate. Walking into the Azerbaijan Cultural Center and seeing so many faces from so many different faith traditions, neighborhoods, and walks of life—all gathered around one table—was something I won't easily forget. There was a warmth in the room from the very beginning that made it feel less like an event and more like a homecoming.

Part of what made it so beautiful was the familiar faces. It was such a joy to reconnect with friends I had first met at a Turkish family dinner—organized by Peace Islands Institute—with Ibrahim Saar and his family last November, and others I had connected with at the Fethullah Gülen conference in New Jersey last October. Seeing those same people again—in a new setting, around a new table—reminded me that this community is not a series of one-time gatherings but an ongoing relationship being built with real intention. The friendliness in the room and the genuine eagerness people had to learn about one another's traditions and lives were simply beautiful.

Speaking about *hachnasat orchim* and the move from service to solidarity felt especially meaningful in that context, because the Peace Islands community wasn't just the backdrop for those ideas—they were the living demonstration of them. The care that went into every detail of the evening, the music, the program, the welcome—that is *hizmet* made visible.

What moved me most was what happened after the formal program: watching people who had arrived as strangers pack soup jars side by side for the Allston Brighton Food Pantry. That moment captured everything I had tried to say in my remarks. Solidarity isn't only spoken—it's done, shoulder to shoulder, with our hands.

I left with a full heart, a long list of ideas for future collaboration, and the deep conviction that evenings like this one are exactly what our city needs more of. I am so grateful to be in partnership with Peace Islands Institute Boston, and I look forward to everything we will build together.

Reflections From Partner Organizations

Senator John F. Keenan

I deeply appreciated the opportunity to join a family in Quincy for Ramadan iftar," said Senator John F. Keenan. "Sharing a delicious meal and meaningful conversation served as a powerful reminder of the importance of engaging with and learning from people from a variety of backgrounds. Understanding differences and what we share increases community strength and, more broadly, prospects for peace.

Jill Silverstain- The Sisters in Spirit

The Sisters in Spirit, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim women from Central Reform Temple (CRT), Emmanuel Episcopal Church and Peace Islands Institute, have been meeting together for over 15 years. It was a true delight to be able to co-host a PII Iftar dinner at Emmanuel Church, where CRT also makes its home. Having Rabbi Shire and the Rev. Pam Werntz welcome everyone (Saturday evening being the end of the Jewish Sabbath and this being the season of Lent for Christians) made it especially warm and meaningful to celebrate Ramadan with our Muslim brothers and sisters. Conversation, community, food, and friendship flowed throughout the evening and the space. It is another precious reminder of the power of seeing and knowing one another, and recognizing our common bonds and values as good people of faith.

Fr. Carl Chudy, D.Min-Metrowest Interfaith Community

I have had the opportunity to work with the Peace Islands Institute in the New Jersey/New York area and, in the last few years, in the Boston area. Recently, we held an interfaith Iftar at Our Lady of Fatima Shrine, which is a Catholic shrine that promotes interfaith outreach, in particular, through the Metrowest Interfaith Community. The sharing of our traditions, our faiths, and inspiration has contributed greatly to building bridges in our community. For this we are grateful. One effect has been a group of friends who came to our iftar from Plymouth and who felt so moved that they are seeking to do something similar in their area. Love is contagious.

Reflections From Partner Organizations

Rabbi Lior Nevo—Community Rabbi and Chaplain, Hebrew SeniorLife Jack Satter House

The annual interfaith Iftar, that we hold at the Jack Satter House, in partnership with Peace Islands Institute, the Turkish Cultural Center, is one of the highlights of year for our residents and staff. The opportunity to meet across cultures and faiths, is so meaningful and invigorating. In a world in which there is so much baseless hate and fear being encouraged by the administration, meeting together face to face, in informal settings, brings hope for a better world - a world with dialogue, curiosity, trust, and love. I look forward to more opportunities for our communities to collaborate.

Martin Paley - Regional President FJMC International

Last July, I had the pleasure of meeting the men of the Hizmet movement at our FJMC Convention. I was puzzled at first by their presence; was there a hidden agenda? Why was this group of Turkish Muslim men so interested in forging friendships with our men? But I found the men truly interested and engaged. When I returned to Boston, I reached out to the local leader of the movement, Benjamin Aysan, and we agreed to meet over lunch. Since that initial meeting, we have gotten together several times and included other men of both groups. We have gotten to know each other as friends and with no agenda other than to build bridges of understanding and camaraderie. The men of the New England region of the FJMC were proud to host our new friends at a Hanukkah party this past December, and just a few weeks ago, we attended an Iftar dinner. Ben and I planned out the events carefully, including the opportunity to observe the men in their daily prayer ritual. The food was delicious and plentiful. Our men felt welcome. We embraced and left as friends. We look forward to more joint gatherings in the future.

Reflections From Partner Organizations

Senator Jamie Eldridge

Ramadan Mubarak! As part of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, the Turkish American Peace Island Institute of Boston invited legislators to have an Iftar dinner with a local Muslim family.

I was truly honored to be invited into the home of Yasin Giray and his family, who recently bought a home in Billerica, for a delicious Turkish meal with fellow Hizmet (“Service”) Massachusetts members. Yasin is a math teacher.

Thank you for the conversations over dinner about how welcoming Massachusetts has been to the Turkish community, education policy, universal healthcare, traffic and the good ol’ MBTA!

Massachusetts Hizmet leaders are also organizing Turkish civil society cultural celebrations, and encouraging Turkish American youth to be more engaged in politics and governance. Special night, and I’m excited to attend community Iftars in March!

Stephen Shrago-Member of FJMC New England

I did not know what to expect when I decided to go to the Iftar gathering. When I arrived, I was greeted as if I had been a long-lost friend. We were invited into their prayer service, and it was amazing to see how they prayed. Following a delicious meal and some presentations by the leaders, we enjoyed some music by one of the Peace Island Institute members. When we were leaving, there were many hugs given to the attendees. I wished we could have stayed longer and talked more with each other.

I look forward to getting together again with my new friends.

Elliot (Feldman)-Member of FJMC New England

I was very happy to have participated in the Iftar dinner. Our Peace Island hosts did everything possible to make us feel welcome. It was a very enriching experience to make new friend and also to learn more about Islam. I was eager to learn and asked our hosts many questions. They welcomed my questions because we share the same father, Abraham. I very much look forward to our next joint gathering.

Photo Highlights



Jaxk Satter House



Jaxk Satter House



North Church-Woburn



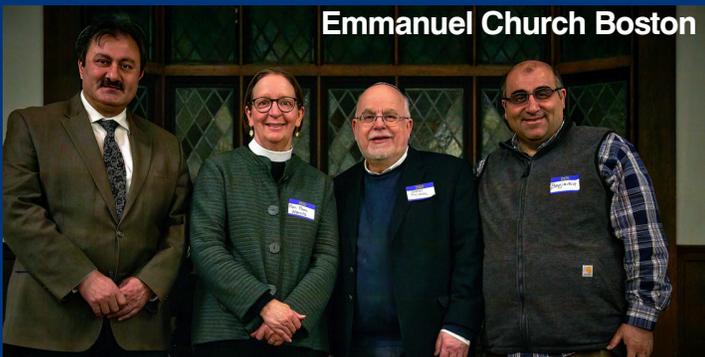
Jaxk Satter House



Wayland Community Center



Wayland Community Center



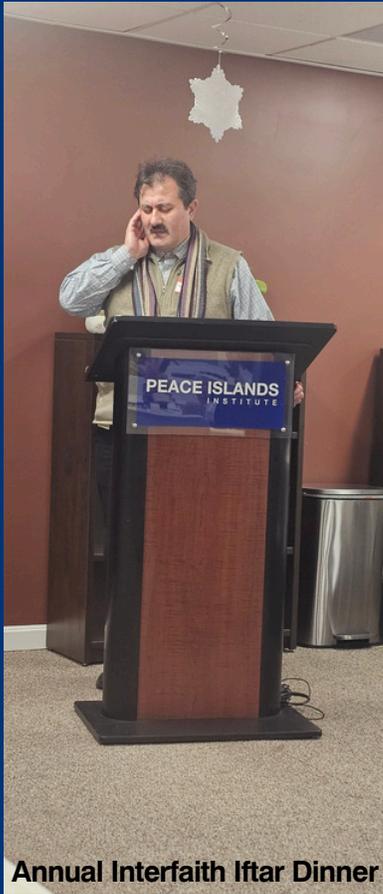
Emmanuel Church Boston



FJMC



Photo Highlights



Annual Interfaith Iftar Dinner



Annual Interfaith Iftar Dinner



Annual Interfaith Iftar Dinner



Emmanuel Church Boston



Senator Jamie Eldridge



Senator John F. Keenan

Photo Highlights



Emmanuel Church Boston



Emmanuel Church Boston



Metrowest Interfaith Group



Revere Mayor Office



Metrowest Interfaith Group

Looking Ahead Ramadan 2027

As we reflect on the meaningful connections and friendships built during Ramadan 2026, we are excited to continue this journey together in the coming year.

Ramadan is more than a time of fasting; it is a time of opening our hearts, our homes, and our tables to one another. Through shared meals and sincere conversations, we create spaces where understanding grows and lasting friendships begin.

For Ramadan 2027, we warmly invite individuals, families, and organizations to be part of this beautiful experience. Whether you're new or returning, there's a spot for you.

No matter how you choose to get involved, your presence contributes to building a stronger, more understanding, and more compassionate community.

Let's continue to build bridges, one iftar at a time.

**We welcome community members and organizations
who would like to:**



How to Get Involved

We would love to have you join us for Ramadan 2027 and be part of this meaningful journey of connection, hospitality, and dialogue.

Whether you are opening your home, attending as a guest, or supporting our efforts, your involvement makes a real difference.

You can get involved in the following ways:

- Join a Home Iftar to experience Ramadan and connect with new friends
- Become a Partner for an Organizational Iftar Dinner and help bring diverse communities together
- Sponsor an Organizational Iftar Dinner to support inclusive and impactful community gatherings

Home Iftar Dinner

To participate in a Home Iftar Dinner in 2027, please scan the QR code below.



Become a Partner for an Organizational Iftar Dinner

To partner for an organizational Iftar dinner in 2027, please scan the QR code below.



To sponsor an organizational iftar dinner in 2027, please scan the QR code.



Contact Page



Phone

 814-844-7940

Email

 info@piiboston.org

Website

 www.piiboston.org/

MORE THAN A MEAL

Ramadan reminds us that the simplest acts, sharing food, opening our homes, and listening to one another, can bring people closer in the most meaningful way. These moments help us build understanding, strengthen friendships, and create a sense of true community. Thank you for being part of this journey and for sharing your time, presence, and kindness with us. We look forward to welcoming you again and continuing these beautiful gatherings together.

PEACE ISLANDS Unity
Education
Wellness
Progress
INSTITUTE BOSTON