

## **Community Press**

### **Guest Column**

**By Danya Karram, a Muslim and resident of Indian Hill; Mary-Bob Rubenstein, a Jew and resident of Amberley; and Tamara Sullivan, a Christian and resident of Loveland; all members of BRIDGES Interfaith Triologue**

### **Working Title: Three Abrahamic Traditions Find Common Ground**

The world is getting smaller, there's no doubt about that. News of the recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai was reported over our Thanksgiving holiday, a uniquely American tradition that unites us all. In response to this immense tragedy, our local Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati immediately condemned the terror attacks in the strongest terms possible stating, "They cannot claim to be followers of any legitimate faith community."

These are the events that threaten to divide us here in our own community. These and other acts of hatred and prejudice are also the ones that have brought the three of us together as parents, neighbors and active members of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities to find common ground.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam represent the world's three monotheistic religions, worshipping the same God and following the same Biblical lineage from Abraham – the shared ancestor of Jews, Christians and Muslims. Knowledge of the three Abrahamic traditions provides common ground – a great place to start on the path of increased understanding.

Sponsored by BRIDGES for a Just Community, members of our interfaith team initially came together in 2003 to form an informal dialogue group. Through dialogue, study and shared experiences, we are motivated to bridge the differences that divide us. As faithful people, we explore our differences and celebrate our similarities. At times, we have even developed a deeper understanding of our own faith by discussing it with others.

Now we are sharing our conversations with the community by launching "BRIDGES of Faith," a program presented by an interfaith team representing the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths.

The holiday season is very timely for the launch of this new BRIDGES' program – each of the three faith traditions observes major religious holidays in December. Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas on Dec. 25; Jews have the eight-day celebration of Hanukkah, which runs Dec. 22-29, to mark their victory over oppression and re-establishment of religious freedom; and Muslims just celebrated a major holiday called Eid al-Adha or Festival of Sacrifice on Dec. 8 to commemorate the prophet Abraham's obedience to God and have their Islamic New Year celebration on December 29.

While we continue to condemn the terror attacks in Mumbai and elsewhere, there is much we can do to increase our understanding of those we live and work with here in our own community. During this holiday season, we reaffirm our commitment to be respectful of all faiths and ethnicities.

For more information about the BRIDGES of Faith program, details about hosting a BRIDGES of Faith program or forming an Interfaith Trialogue group, please call Shawn Jeffers at BRIDGES at 513-381-4660 or visit online at [www.BRIDGEScincinnati.org](http://www.BRIDGEScincinnati.org).