



HANDS OF PEACE

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HANDS OF PEACE

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AN UPDATE ON HANDS OF PEACE FROM DEBBY FOSDICK, HOP BOARD CHAIR

2009 has been an exciting and challenging year for Hands of Peace. Events in Gaza challenged our participants and staff as participants sought to practice the skills they learned at Hands of Peace as they communicated with one another about the Gaza crisis. Closer to home, the leadership of Hands of Peace got creative about fund raising in a time of economic belt tightening. We sponsored a three part lecture series, as well as a benefit theatrical performance of "The Arab Israeli Cookbook". And, after some concern that we might have to scale back the number of participants accepted for this year, I'm proud to say that we took an educated leap of faith and accepted our usual number. But we do have more money to raise, approximately \$10,000., from individual donations. If we are to meet our 2009 budget goal. The HOP leadership, volunteers, and staff are busily preparing for this summer's program. It seems appropriate to take a minute to reflect on how far we've come – in no small part because of the generous support offered by GCC. Here are just a few reminders of how GCC has nurtured HOP over the years:

- When HOP founder Gretchen Grad first approached Reverend Howard Roberts with the idea for this program, Howard encouraged her to involve GCC in her planning.
- GCC provides facilities where our visitors feel welcomed and supported.
- GCC Missions Board, as well as The Women's Association, provides financial support each year. So does UCC.
- Reverend Sally Iberg provides wise counsel to the HOP leadership and introduced us to other local congregations as we've worked to broaden our contacts and base of support.
- The Women's Association has rolled up their sleeves and fed our participants so many lunches that we've lost count. Not to mention dealing with complex dietary restrictions!
- GCC teens have been enthusiastic HOP participants over the years.
- GCC families have been wonderful host families to our Middle East visitors.
- GCC members have generously donated dollars and volunteer hours, time after time.

As a member of GCC, I am so proud of how GCC has embraced the Hands of Peace mission. In a year when fund raising is especially challenging, I am asking you to consider helping us to close our \$10,000. budget gap. You can donate by leaving your check in the Hands of Peace mailbox in the GCC office (or mailing to the office for HOP). I look forward to Sunday, July 26, when GCC will welcome the HOP participants to our worship service and each of you will have the opportunity to see for yourselves the fruits of the generous support that GCC consistently provides to HOP.

Thank you to the members of GCC for all you do to support Hands of Peace.