

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

# Dismantle and Build



**ICJS**

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## Mission

To dismantle religious bias and bigotry, ICJS builds learning communities where religious difference becomes a powerful force for good.

## Vision

ICJS envisions an interreligious society in which dialogue replaces division, friendship overcomes fear, and education eradicates ignorance.

## Values

Difference  
Equity  
Dialogue  
Learning  
Community

# DISMANTLE AND BUILD

To renovate and rebuild a house, sometimes you need to tear down damaged parts that could threaten the integrity and stability of the home. But good builders know that you can't just tear out the old. You have to rebuild with strong materials to create a healthy place to live.

To build a multireligious, multiracial society requires this same two-part process. That's why ICJS aims **to dismantle** religious bias and bigotry while we also seek **to build** an interreligious society characterized by dialogue over division, friendship over fear, and education over ignorance. Both tasks are vital to creating vibrant neighborhoods, thriving communities, and a dynamic, democratic country filled with diverse people committed to making our differences a force for good.

This report highlights how we address both dismantling and building at ICJS. To do this work, ICJS offers study courses and lectures; leads three fellowship cohorts for nonprofit leaders, teachers, and congregational leaders; runs week-long seminars for university professors; offers summer intensives for seminarians, rabbinical students, and emerging Muslim leaders; and participates in advancing the academic field of Interreligious and Interfaith Studies.

The topics, formats, and attendees vary, yet we hear recurring themes in evaluations. Here are three:

**First, interreligious dialogue allows people to understand their own religious life, as well as their own religious traditions, more deeply.** This was the #1 theme we heard from participants at the ICJS virtual listening session for Pope Francis. (Officially, this ICJS session was part of "Synod 2021-2023," a global listening effort of the entire Roman Catholic church.) We hear this sentiment echoed in many programs.

**Second, interreligious learning sheds light on common challenges, helping the whole community move forward in**

**collaboration.** Whether looking at how to build a just society, support democracy, reduce racial bias and bigotry, or teach more honestly in a high school classroom, interreligious encounters equip us to live a life of dignity and purpose within a diverse society. At a time of deep societal divisions, this work is urgent.

**Third, ICJS attendees value their experience.** This simple comment from a survey respondent sums up the thoughts of many: "Thank you. Keep on. Savor. Share."

With this annual report, we pause to savor and share what we have built this past year with you. Yet we know that the work of building must continue because we are striving for no less than an interreligious society that offers all deep respect and full belonging.

Thank you for partnering with us as we dismantle and build together.

**Irfan Malik**  
*President,*  
*Board of Trustees*

**Heather Miller Rubens, Ph.D.**  
*Executive Director and*  
*Roman Catholic Scholar*



## ICJS IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

# 860

Total participants in an ICJS event or course this year

# 100

*Super Students* – participants who registered for 5 or more events

# 3,880

Online views of this year's courses and events, including the Manekin-Clark Lecture with Susannah Heschel



Photo by Bill Hahn

ICJS courses and events are available both in-person at the ICJS Library (above) and online.



Photo by Adam Senior

"Immersive. Mind-bending. Empathetic" – Three words a survey respondent used to describe their experience at the Emerging Religious Leaders intensive course, where ICJS gathered 24 Muslim and Christian religious leaders-in-training. Pictured: Chris Bonner, student at Howard University School of Divinity.

# 35

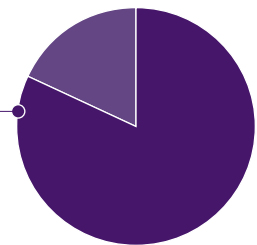
U.S. states where attendees at virtual events live

# 50

Ways participants in ICJS programs self-identify (see detail on back cover)

# 82%

Attendees who rated a course or event as "Excellent!"



**What new learning did you gain as a result of this course?** "I discovered the sacredness of each and every human being, hence the imperative to suspend my own prejudice, and engage in 'sacrificial' dialogue, which can paradoxically bring me closer to God."

**SURVEY COMMENT FROM PARTICIPANT IN "MARTIN BUBER & THE LIFE OF DIALOGUE" COURSE**

“I joined the Teachers Fellowship to learn about best practices for teaching about different religious traditions. The program fulfilled my goals and more. Not only did it give me the opportunity to learn more about Islam, Judaism, and Christianity from the ICJS scholars, it introduced me to phenomenal educators whose thoughts and ideas will have an immediate impact on my approach to teaching.”

**SURVEY COMMENT FROM 2022 TEACHER FELLOW**

# 84

Participants in one of three ICJS Fellowships or in the residential Emerging Religious Leaders course. These are ICJS' most intensive programs.

# 3,500

Estimated secondary students taught by Teacher Fellows (including alums) this year. This is the impact leveraged by the Teachers Fellowship program.



Photo by Angela Cava

Teacher Fellow Maximo Alfaro Rivera, a Spanish teacher in a Baltimore City school, presents his lesson on Semana Santa (religious syncretism) in Guatemala.

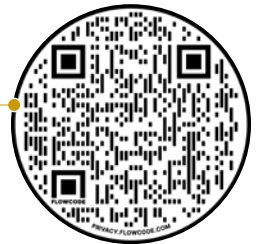


Fatimah Fanusie, ICJS Program Director for Justice Leaders, speaks at Princeton University at an annual forum on the legacy of Imam W.D. Muhammad, hosted by the Office of Religious Life.

# 2,900

Total views for ICJS' premier video: "Dialogue vs. Debate"

Watch video now (Use your phone camera to scan this code)



# 39

Events, panels, or lectures featuring an ICJS speaker

# DISMANTLE RELIGIOUS BIAS AND BIGOTRY

## Threats to religious pluralism loom large

Antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of religious hate fray the ties that bind us together as a community and contribute to the “othering” of minority groups that leads to prejudice, discrimination, and increasingly, violence. To dismantle religious bias and bigotry, ICJS focuses on the power of education, paired with relationship-building, to change hearts and minds.

While outbursts of outrage against bias and bigotry have their place, they function like fireworks, creating a bright flash that does not endure. Also, outrage, if left to its own devices, can lead to despair, hopelessness, and inaction.

That’s why ICJS aims to not only highlight the current threats to the interreligious society, but to provide the tools of dialogue and understanding that can help build a healthy, vibrant, multireligious, multiracial democracy.

Today the rise of Christian nationalism brings an increasingly prominent and urgent threat to democracy and to the religious pluralism that democracy can support. Christian nationalism is an ideology antithetical to the religious pluralism supported by ICJS—where no single religious tradition or identity is privileged in society.

All ICJS programs, events, and cohort experiences aim to dismantle religious bias and bigotry, while fostering this religious pluralism. This pluralism calls for energetic engagement with diversity, active seeking of understanding across lines of difference, an encounter of commitments (not relativism), and dialogue. *(Definition of pluralism is from The Pluralism Project at Harvard University)*



“The rhetoric of Christian violence, narratives of spiritual warfare in American politics, and religiously inflected support for Donald Trump that surged into view [on Jan. 6th] are all still present and have been, if anything, galvanized by the riot... The same groups and leaders have turned their attention and considerable networks to the presidential election of 2024. Whether Donald Trump is the Republican nominee or not, we could well see further outbreaks of violence fueled by the worldview of Christian nationalism.”

**MATTHEW D. TAYLOR, ICJS Protestant Scholar, in an op-ed in *The Baltimore Sun* (11/4/2021)**



## What’s “Christian” about Christian nationalism?

Is the United States a “Christian nation”? Some American Christians who answer “yes” aim to “take back” and “restore” America’s Christian identity, sometimes using violence. About one-quarter of American Christians ascribe to some form of Christian nationalism, says ICJS Protestant Scholar Matthew D. Taylor. He says that understanding the deep religious roots and realities of this political movement will help us all comprehend the threat that this poses to American religious pluralism where diverse religions are supported. Taylor taught a three-part course on Christian nationalism and an online event with an update on the movement.

Demonstrators at the U.S. Capitol on January 6th express their support for Christian nationalism.



Zeke Cohen, Baltimore City Councilmember, shared with ICJS communities his story of speaking up when his neighborhood experienced public displays of antisemitism.

### Speaking up; Recovering voices

Seven decades after the Holocaust, we continue to be confronted with antisemitism and violent acts of anti-Jewish hatred. We felt first horror, then relief after worshippers in a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, were rescued after being taken hostage while in the midst of Sabbath worship.

Closer to home, after swastikas were painted on light posts in a neighborhood represented by Baltimore City Councilmember Zeke Cohen, above, he took to Facebook to celebrate a spontaneous community action to cover them up by painting rainbow hearts. Cohen joined ICJS in an online event to discuss the importance of denouncing acts of religious hate in our community, as well as the positive role local faith-based organizations are playing in Baltimore.

ICJS also explored the artistic toll of the Holocaust in a special online event with Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Artistic Advisor James Conlon (below). He has made it his life’s work to revive the works of composers—mostly, but not exclusively Jewish—who were silenced by the Nazi regime.



Photo by Bill Hahn

Zeyneb Sayilgan, ICJS Muslim Scholar, led a field trip to the Muslim Diyanet Center of America with students from her ICJS course.

### Understanding Muslim prayer

“Many people today have a negative view of Muslims,” said Zeyneb Sayilgan, ICJS Muslim Scholar, to an ICJS online audience, as she shared stereotypical images depicting Muslims as “violent, radical, fanatic, or angry.” Sayilgan’s goal as an interreligious scholar is to help more Americans understand the “goodness and beauty that I’ve experienced as a Muslim,” she says.

In the spring she focused on bringing greater understanding of Muslim religious practice and spirituality to a general audience with a course and an online introductory event. Participants explored the deep significance of Salat, the ritual prayer performed five times each day, which is the centerpiece of Muslim spiritual practice. The course concluded with a field trip to the Diyanet Center of America, a mosque and community center in Lanham.



“Undoing injustice, when and where one can, is a moral mandate for all citizens of a civilized world. We cannot restore to these composers their lost lives. We can, however, return the gift that would mean more to them than any other—that of performing their music.”

**MAESTRO JAMES CONLON**, artistic advisor to the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, speaking at an ICJS-BSO online event, “Recovered Voices,” highlighting composers silenced by the Third Reich.

# BUILD LEARNING COMMUNITIES

## Fellows discover themselves and others in cohorts

ICJS creates and supports three sector-based fellowships where congregational leaders, community & nonprofit leaders, or teachers can learn and encounter difference together. Fellows have time and opportunity to truly build both relationships and religious literacy. Below, three Fellows describe their experiences.

“Through the monthly ICJS meetings, but most of all in our project group, where my synagogue is paired with a Jesuit Catholic parish, I have been learning how to communicate across difference. It is hard for me to open up to these new capacities to interact with others on matters evoking deep personal and spiritual conviction, but I am trying. It’s hard: I bear these generational scars and I carry strong political commitments that shape the ways I am open. So I appreciate the safe spaces to build trust. That’s what the ICJS Fellowship has meant to me.”

**SHARON ACHINSTEIN, Congregational Leader Fellow (pictured at right with Krista Wallace)**



Photo by Bill Hahn

“Before the fellowship, I didn’t know much about the other faiths and their beliefs. As a result, I was operating under the perception that I would need to disrobe my beliefs in order to work with someone else. What I came to discover is all the intersections between what we believe, especially as it relates to economic justice. It’s energized the work I do. It really makes the work more meaningful because we don’t have to be less of what we are or what we believe in order to work together.”

**LEON F. PINKETT III, Justice Leader Fellow**



“A really awesome part about the fellowship is hearing how experienced teachers have approached difficult topics. Also, hearing people’s personal stories and wanting to transfer that to my own kids is really inspiring. I’ve learned so much from the other teachers in the fellowship. Their experiences and backgrounds are totally different from my own. Learning how they approach different topics and how they bring them up in their classrooms has been really helpful and powerful.”

**NIKI CREAMER, Teacher Fellow**





## MANEKIN-CLARK LECTURE

### Susannah Heschel calls on a prophetic voice

The work of building the interreligious community requires foresight, patience, and courage, said Susannah Heschel, preeminent Jewish theologian and daughter of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, in her 2021 ICJS Manekin-Clark Lecture at Goucher College and via live stream. She said we should justly be proud of our achievements in interreligious dialogue, but we should also be willing to raise a prophetic voice to our failings. “Interfaith dialogue should speak not only with religious pride, but also address areas of practice where we have not lived up to our own principles of human dignity,” she said.



Photo by Angela Cava

### Emerging Religious Leaders gather

Creating an opportunity for structured, honest, open, and—at times—difficult conversations between Muslim and Christian students was the goal of the new ICJS Emerging Religious Leaders course held at Virginia Theological Seminary in June 2022. Twelve Christian seminarians and 12 Muslim religious leaders in training gathered for five days of mutual learning, challenging discussion, and blossoming friendships in this interreligious dialogue course co-directed by two ICJS scholars, Matthew D. Taylor and Zeyneb Sayilgan. 100% of the participants said they would recommend the course to colleagues.

The unique course is modeled after ICJS’ successful Jewish-Christian encounter course for Rabbinical students and Christian seminarians, held annually from 2013 to 2019. Students continue to call the intensive course one of their most profound experiences in their seminary education.

“I learned more at the Emerging Religious Leaders Course than I did in all of my (fabulous) Muslim-Christian studies classes combined. The proximity that we were in, and the examination of hard questions fostered growth in empathy in a way I would not have thought possible.”

**ANNMARIE D. HANSEN, student at Virginia Theological Seminary and participant in ICJS 2022 Emerging Religious Leaders Course**

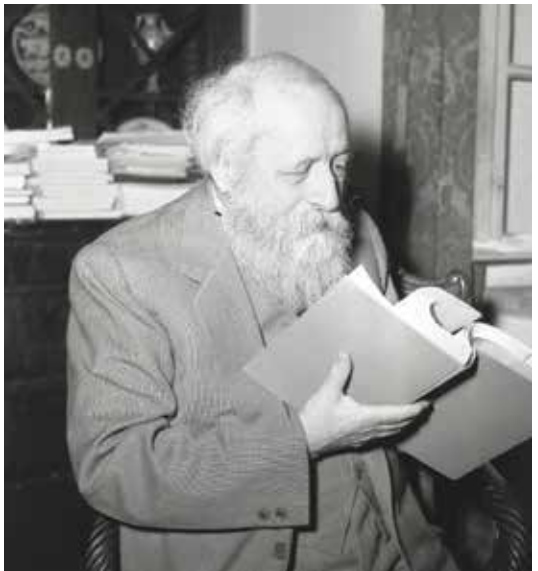
# BUILD LEARNING COMMUNITIES

## Dialogue as a religious experience

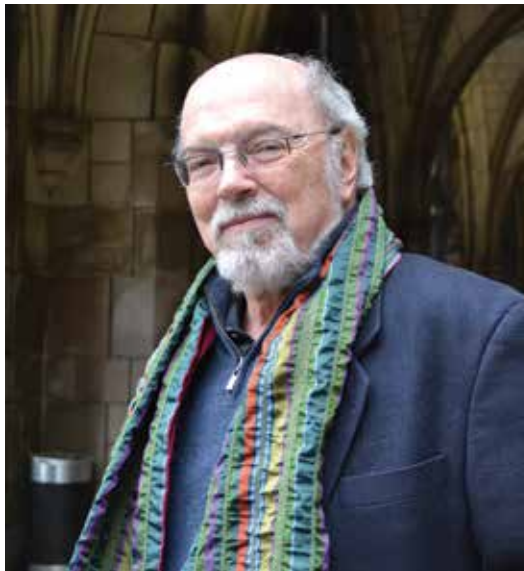
Few thinkers have been more influential on the theory and practice of dialogue than Martin Buber. He is most known for his confounding and profound masterwork, *I and Thou*, first published in German in 1923.

ICJS scholar Ben Sax brought the teaching and philosophy of Buber to life for a new generation last winter in a six-week ICJS course. Participants were invited to think about how Buber's views on dialogue can inform not only their own perspective, but also how religious and political leaders can work together toward achieving this complicated, yet also simple dialogical orientation to the "Thou."

Sax followed the course with an online discussion with Paul Mendes-Flohr, one of the world's foremost Buber scholars and Buber's biographer. "In *I and Thou*, the little word 'and' is crucial," Mendes-Flohr said. "It signifies a bridge between one person and the other. In the Hebrew Bible it says, 'you shall love to the same degree that you wish to be loved.' We all are in need of love. In that sense *I and Thou*, Buber's concept of dialogue, is not simply ethical, it is a deeply existential moment—a religious moment."



Martin Buber



Paul Mendes-Flohr



### Listening Project for the Vatican

While the Roman Catholic Church held "listening sessions" across the globe in 2021-22 to hear how the church could open itself to wider engagement, ICJS was one of the few non-Catholic organizations invited to contribute feedback for the church. ICJS learning communities were invited to share their experiences of interreligious dialogue.

The most prevalent theme running through participants' responses is that interreligious dialogue allows them to understand their own religious lives and traditions more deeply. Respondents also stressed the importance of having one-on-one conversations with people of different faiths, which reveals the common ground that exists for building an interreligious society.

The responses were compiled into a report shared with the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Vatican.

## Considering four views on justice

In winter, the ICJS scholar team taught a four-part course on economic justice through the lens of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim teachings. The view was like a kaleidoscope, showing a different light on similar topics, such as:

- The obligation to the stranger, as reflected in the life and writings of activist Dorothy Day and Catholic social teaching;
- The cosmic level of justice presented in Islam, as the divine character of justice is embedded in the universe;

- The societal obligations and responsibilities to each other visible in Jewish teaching;
- The possibilities for interpersonal dignity and fairness presented in the New Testament letter of Philemon.

Each of the reflections showed a way to "engage with the world, while also engaging with God," said Heather Miller Rubens, Executive Director and Roman Catholic Scholar.

## Big Ideas matter: Reflections from our scholars

The four ICJS resident scholars straddle the worlds of academia and community. They speak and write with other academics to advance the field of Interreligious and Interfaith Studies. Yet their community work keeps them teaching, coaching, and mentoring both in ICJS learning communities and in the broader local, national, and even global public. We asked each to share a snippet of their own highlights from the year as scholars at ICJS.

### **HEATHER MILLER RUBENS, Executive Director and Roman Catholic Scholar**

“My writing projects this year had me thinking about the possibilities of women’s leadership in interreligious spaces: first, Mary Magdalene as an apostle to the Apostles, and revisiting Catholic theologian Eva Fleishner.”

Invited contributor to the Indiana University’s Noli Me Tangere (“Touch Me Not”) Project to reflect on Covid-19

Keynote speaker at Women’s Consultation on Constructive Theology at the Catholic Theological Society of America Annual Meeting



### **ZEYNEB SAYILGAN, Muslim Scholar**

“The pandemic presented a challenge for all religious communities. I welcomed the opportunity to be in conversation with colleagues from different congregations and wrestle with questions of meaning. Thinking interreligiously about a shared concern has been nothing but fruitful.”

Panelist at the Global Lehrhaus Institute’s series on the pandemic, including one called “Quo Vadis? Post-Corona Homecoming and Tikkum Olam”

Co-presenter at the Oxford Interfaith Forum, highlighting how Mother Hajar (Hagar) is a profound figure of inspiration to Muslims



### **BEN SAX, Jewish Scholar**

“In discussing the history of Christian anti-Judaism and its relationship to antisemitism, I suggested that interreligious dialogue is irrelevant if it does not consider the contemporary political situation and the power dynamics present between communities.”

Panelist on Christian anti-Judaism at the Washington National Cathedral on the occasion of the installation of a sculpture of Elie Weisel

Prepared for the first ICJS Faculty Seminar, which considered the intersection of Genocide Studies and Interreligious Studies



### **MATTHEW D. TAYLOR, Protestant Scholar**

“The past year many of my research projects and passions have started to come to fruition: from Muslim-Christian dialogue, to completing my first book on Salafism in America, to digging into contemporary Christian nationalism. I’ve loved the support of ICJS as a space where I can work on, share about, live with, and receive feedback on my research.”

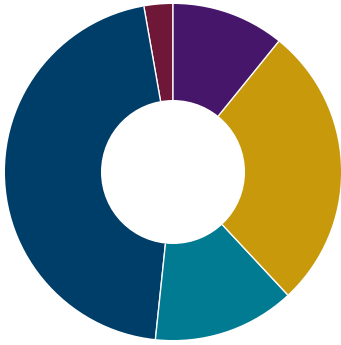
First book under contract with Cambridge University Press (publication date early 2023)

Researching and writing a book on Christians at the Capitol Riot



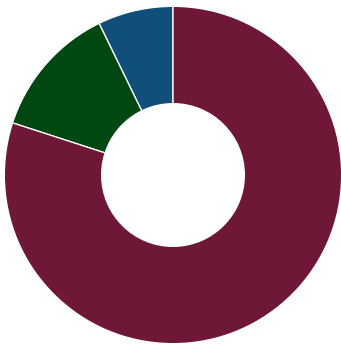
# FINANCES

# WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR DONORS



## RESOURCES FY22 OPERATING BUDGET

<b>GRANTS</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>\$ 161,094</b>
<b>CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>\$ 426,098</b>
<b>EXPANDING OUR LEGACY FUND</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>\$ 221,844</b>
<b>DRAW FROM ENDOWMENT</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>\$ 747,100</b>
<b>OTHER</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>\$ 5,324</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$ 1,561,460</b>



## EXPENSES FY22 OPERATING BUDGET

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>\$ 1,243,080</b>
<b>MANAGEMENT &amp; GENERAL</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>\$ 207,765</b>
<b>FUNDRAISING</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>\$ 110,615</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$ 1,561,460</b>

Note: All information based on unaudited FY22 financials. Audited Financial Statements will be available after January 1, 2023 at [icjs.org/annual-reports/](https://icjs.org/annual-reports/).

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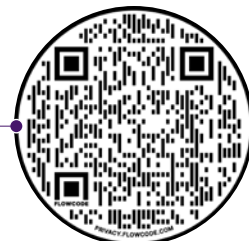
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Members of Beth Israel Congregation and Faith Presbyterian Church worked together to assemble backpacks for newly arrived refugees as part of their inter-congregational project in the ICJS Congregational Fellowship.

To view recordings of the ICJS events or courses featured in this report, visit [icjs.org/past-events](https://icjs.org/past-events) or use your phone to scan the QR code.



### ANNUAL REPORT CREDITS

#### Design

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#### Text

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## 50 WAYS TO SELF-IDENTIFY

### “How do you describe your current religion?”

When we asked that question of ICJS participants this year, we heard a broad range of responses, as listed here. This reflects the national pattern of the changing American religious landscape in recent decades. It also reflects the diversity of religious experience and identity that we welcome at ICJS.

Humanistic Judaism / Roman Catholic / I really prefer not having to put a label on my beliefs. I'm not sure why people are so intent on labeling people, checking them into little boxes, not just religiously but in many ways, from politics to gender. Why can't we just let people BE? / somewhere between Judaism and Christianity / Just spiritual with no affiliation / Sunni / Non-Christian (Jesus was prophet, not son of God) who participates actively in the Episcopal Church. / Born and bred Catholic. Eager to grow in faith and to learn so much more. / peripheral and recovering Catholic / mainline Protestant / Quaker seeker / Christian / Conservative Judaism / traditional Hinduism / Episcopalian (former Methodist and then Roman Catholic) / Southern Baptist / follower of Jesus the Jewish Rabbi / Presbyterian Church (USA) / Catholic according to the Gospel of Jesus where all are precious and loved equally / Non-Christ believer, that is, I see Jesus as one of the prophets / Pentecostal Holiness / Jewish / Islam is considered a way of life for humanity. It's open to all mankind. / Presbyterian but very progressive / spiritual but not religious / Quaker / United Church of Christ / unaffiliated / Atheist / Buddhism, Stoicism, and those who encourage and have room for independent thought while refraining from pontification, dogma, and parochial institutional compliance. / Buddhist-Stoic / Catholic / Christian background, but more spiritual than anything else / Christianish / Culture / Episcopalian / Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) / Methodist / Hindu (where's the "H" in ICJS? :-)) / Unitarian Universalism / Interfaith Contemplative / Muslim / Buddhist / Jewish by heritage and history. Non-believer, often working alongside people of faith / Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) / Muslim peace network / Not religious, spiritual / "postmodern" Buddhist / progressive Catholic / Reform Judaism / I have a fairly well developed set of beliefs and values but I haven't been able to find a label that seems like a good fit.

