

Interfaith Coalition of Douglas County

2026 Grant Report

Submitted to the High Plains Region (\$4,000) and Sangre de Cristo Region (\$1,000)

Dear friends,

Thank you for your generous support of the Interfaith Coalition of Douglas County. Your grants provided the first institutional funding for this emerging ministry and created the leadership capacity necessary to move from our shared vision of “Sacred Neighbors – Shared Dignity” into a growing network of relationships, partnerships, and community engagement.

The \$5,000 in combined grants from the High Plains and Sangre de Cristo Regions established the Coalition’s initial financial foundation, supporting the Rev. Lauren Grubaugh Thomas’s five hours per week as Convener and President. Holy Companion Episcopal Church continues to serve as the Coalition’s fiscal sponsor, providing administrative infrastructure as the Coalition develops its own organizational identity and capacity.

This dedicated leadership time was catalytic. It allowed the Coalition to form a founding board of four additional members, pursue additional grant funding, develop Friendship Camp in partnership with Highlands Ranch Islamic Association, learn from established interfaith organizations, and collaborate with values-aligned partners including Together Colorado and the Colorado Clergy Alliance.

The Coalition’s first year has demonstrated the importance of creating sustained space for relationships across religious difference. This early support created the foundation from which our current programming and partnerships have grown.



Building Relationships Across Traditions

The Coalition's work is grounded in an ecosystem of good neighboring. Our particular vocation is education and relationship-building: creating opportunities for people of different faith traditions to encounter one another, build trust, and develop the relationships necessary for shared flourishing.



We have developed vital partnerships across Episcopal, ecumenical Christian, and interfaith communities. The Rev. Brian Winter attended early meetings, helping us build momentum, and the Rev. Amy Newell-Large of St. Matthew's in Parker has brought her insight as a priest and Buddhist practitioner to our monthly meetings and Friendship Camp. Grace Presbyterian Church has provided essential hospitality, hosting nearly all Coalition meetings and events and offering a welcoming home for this work. Leaders from the United Methodist Church, United Church of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), and other Christian traditions have participated in Coalition gatherings. Across faith traditions, Highlands Ranch Islamic Association leaders have been consistent partners from the beginning, helping shape the Coalition's vision and partnering with Holy Companion to launch Friendship Camp. Rev. Lauren Grubaugh Thomas and Rida Zafar of the mosque served as co-chairs for this effort.



Our relationships with Muslim neighbors have also deepened through shared moments of celebration and solidarity. Coalition members were warmly welcomed by the Highlands Ranch Islamic Association at an interfaith celebration of Eid, creating space for joy, hospitality, and mutual understanding. In times of grief, these relationships have also become expressions of care and support. Following the tragic shooting at a mosque in San Diego this spring, clergy from the Presbyterian Church (USA), Jewish, and United Methodist communities attended Friday prayers at the mosque in solidarity and support.



Rabbi Michael Kengmana has also been an important partner, serving as Jewish faculty for Friendship Camp and helping the Coalition build relationships with Jewish neighbors in Douglas County. In the absence of an established synagogue in the county, we are excited to support emerging Jewish community efforts, including a developing group in Sterling Ranch. Two Friendship Camp volunteers are already involved in this growing Jewish community.

The Coalition has also been strengthened by the leadership of Brother Dipesh Bhatia, a Brahma Kumaris practitioner who serves on our board and has connected us with the wider Brahma Kumaris community. This fall, we will support the national Brahma Kumaris Peace Summit in Douglas County.

Together Colorado and the Colorado Clergy Alliance provide complementary gifts within this ecosystem, with their focus on advocacy and direct action. The Coalition's focus remains education, dialogue, and relationship-building—the foundation upon which deeper collaboration can grow. We are in conversation with leaders from these other groups to see how we can mutually support one another in values-aligned ways.

Creating Spaces for Connection

Through Sacred Neighbors gatherings, public events, and shared programming, the Coalition has created opportunities for neighbors to encounter one another across religious difference.

This winter, the Coalition hosted a screening of *Abraham's Bridge*, a documentary exploring shared sacred space across faith traditions. More than 100 people attended (including the entire Christ's Episcopal Church youth group!), revealing significant community interest in deeper interfaith connection and collaboration. The gathering helped participants imagine what an Interfaith Center or other cooperative programming might look like in Douglas County—not simply as a building, but as a shared commitment to creating spaces where neighbors of different faiths can learn from one another and work together.

This vision continues to shape our discernment and planning.

Friendship Camp

One of the Coalition's most significant accomplishments this year was launching Friendship Camp, an interfaith day camp created in partnership with Highlands Ranch Islamic Association and Holy Companion Episcopal Church.

The Coalition's early fundraising efforts helped position us to receive a \$40,000 United Thank Offering grant, which supported the inaugural camp. Friendship Camp welcomed thirty-five children representing six religious traditions and engaged thirty-two volunteers from across numerous faith communities.

Through shared meals, STEAM activities, storytelling, worship, and play, children experienced friendship across religious difference. The camp embodied the Coalition's mission: creating spaces where people can encounter one another with curiosity, joy, and mutual respect.





Looking Ahead

The Interfaith Coalition of Douglas County is still a young organization, but this first year has demonstrated both the need and possibility for this work. We look forward to continuing to strengthen relationships across faith traditions, expand Sacred Neighbors gatherings, build on Friendship Camp, and continue discerning possibilities for cooperative programming and an Interfaith Center.

The early support of the High Plains and Sangre de Cristo Regions helped create the foundation for this work. We are grateful for the opportunity to continue building a community where neighbors of different traditions can know one another more deeply, learn together, and seek the common good.

With gratitude,

The Rev. Lauren Grubaugh Thomas
Convener and President
Interfaith Coalition of Douglas County