

M A S T E R Y



F O U N D A T I O N

# 2004 Annual Report

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The Mastery Foundation exists to empower individuals and communities in their ministries, in the reconciliation and healing of divisions, and in creating new conversations and possibilities for the future.

Why ministry? The world's religions form one of the most ancient and far-reaching networks dedicated to the transformation of people's lives. The Mastery Foundation was created to enliven clergy and those who serve others so that they and the institutions they represent have the positive impact they are committed to making.

Why community? We live on this earth together. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "The choice before us is chaos or community." Why reconciliation? It is the fundamental work to be done if humanity is to flourish in this century. Why new conversations and possibilities? The old ones simply lead us into a future that repeats the problems of the past.

And why the Mastery Foundation? We are uniquely effective at empowering the individuals and communities we serve.

**We work with the right people.** If you have a concern for healing and reconciliation, the individuals we work with and empower are grass roots leaders in ministry, in community, and on the front lines of peace and reconciliation. Reconciliation is not the work of experts or political figures. It is the day-to-day work of those who live in communities in need of healing.

Most of them work at what the Irish call "the coal face" – up against the hard realities of difficult and often dangerous situations. And because they are already working with others, the results of our work extend significantly beyond these leaders into the organizations and communities they serve.

**We offer unique approaches and new ways of thinking that produce real transformation.** The tools and ideas available to us from the work of Peter Block and Werner Erhard give us a powerful and innovative knowledge base from which to design the programs we offer. Instead of solving problems or resolving past conflicts, we help people create new possibilities for the future.

Creating possibility is a radical approach that requires a willingness to deal with our individual and group identities and our own lack of authenticity. Working from possibility calls on all our resources of creativity; it calls on us to risk living without answers and to take on the larger questions – How do we create a society in which all our children can live in peace? – questions that have no definitive answers.

**We include an authentic spiritual dimension in all our programs.** We are blessed to have as one of our founders and our chairman, Father Basil Pennington, an internationally recognized author and teacher of Centering Prayer. Through the teaching and practice of this form of contemplative prayer or through regular periods sitting together in silence, participants are able to be together and share that experience. We regularly hear from the majority of those in our programs that this experience is as valuable to them as other aspects of our work.

**Our volunteers are a remarkable group of committed individuals.** Every non-profit organization depends on volunteers, but few have been blessed with those as enthusiastic, loyal, and able to move heaven and earth to get things done. Our professional program leaders and consultants give us time and talent we could never afford to buy. Board members and workshop leaders pay their own expenses to attend meetings and courses. And those who invest in our work with their contributions often join us in the delivery and success of our programs.

In one of his books, Frank O'Connor, the Irish writer, tells a story about how, as a boy, he and his friends would make their way across the countryside. When they came to an orchard wall that seemed too high and difficult to permit them to continue, they took off their hats and tossed them over the wall. After that, they had no choice but to follow them.

The men and women the Mastery Foundation serves have tossed their hats over impossibly high and difficult walls. We have tossed our hats after theirs. Our choice is to follow and empower them.





## INTERFAITH

If you want to make a difference in the world, where do you start? The Mastery Foundation began in 1983 with the recognition that religious institutions form the most enduring and wide-spread network dedicated to the well-being and transformation of humanity.

It is estimated that as much as 90 percent of the world's population believe in God, though the expressions of that belief are amazingly diverse. A study in 2001 cataloged 10,000 distinct religions in the world, 150 of which have one million or more followers. Within just one of those religions – Christianity – 33,830 denominations were counted.

Underlying the doctrine and dogma of each faith is a concern for that which transcends our separation, a concern for that which connects us with the best in ourselves and each other, and a concern with that which is eternal. Yet religious institutions are also among the most tradition-bound and slow to change. Fr. Basil Pennington likens them to “sleeping giants” waiting to be roused from their dormant state to deliver on their promise.

As the original program of the Mastery Foundation, the Making a Difference course is designed to empower religious leaders – both clergy and laity – to challenge them to rethink what is possible and to make the full power and promise of their faith available to those they serve. It is a unique and powerful program for those who are radical enough to preach and practice transformation in today's world.

In 2004 we completed and launched a new, redesigned Making a Difference course. Since our first course in 1984, the nature and concerns of ministry have changed considerably. For example, interfaith work was much less common then, and lay ministry was only beginning to come into its own.

Now, more than before, clergy are likely to be dealing with lessening job security, declining congregations and economic resources,

### 2004 Making a Difference

Number of programs	6
Number of participants	123
Number of people touched by their ministries	32,000+
Number of volunteers	55

divisive social issues, and overwork. In addition, their role as leaders has become less defined and more difficult. For most denominations, the days of rigid hierarchy are past, but there is no clear-cut model or method for building a new sense of community and participation. As one Episcopal priest told us, “Most clergy are still trained to be 19<sup>th</sup> century vicars in England.” In the face of all this, it is not surprising to discover an underlying sense of powerlessness among clergy that narrows their individual vision of what is possible.

The Making a Difference Course allows those who minister to reclaim the power that originally called them into ministry and gives them the tools to return again and again to the source of their calling, tools they use to awaken within themselves and others new ways of being and acting.

The teaching and practice of Centering Prayer is integral to the workshop. This simple form of contemplation is a powerful tool in this era of increased awareness of the need for interfaith relationship and reconciliation. Centering Prayer is a shared spiritual experience where there is no liturgy, no text, no one theology. There is each person sitting in silence, dwelling for those minutes in relationship to the divine presence at the center of each person's religious faith. Being together in this sacred silence, is a powerful and meaningful way to open ourselves to being with those from other traditions and faiths without ignoring or focusing on our differences.

Lay or ordained, experienced or just beginning, participants

I participated in the Making a Difference Workshop in the fall of 2004. My confidence in the path I am on and the strength of my belief in my ministry expanded. The three days shined a light on ways I had been limiting myself and places it could be said I was seeing the woods for the trees. I have noticed when preparing talks and sermons I now have much more freedom to create, really to come out of my corner and make God available.

As a Muslim originally from the Sudan, I am part of the Sufi tradition. While Americans often misidentify it as the mystical tradition of Islam, Sufism is actually the spiritual tradition. Part of my ministry is to bring a better understanding of spirituality to our community since in some ways the original message of Islam

has been lost in the focus on strict adherence – more focus on the “how to” than the essence of the faith. In the Sufi tradition we have a daily practice that is similar to Centering Prayer. I found practicing Centering Prayer with those of other faith traditions during the workshop a rich and powerful experience.

The workshop provided an opportunity to have a profound connection with people of other faiths with similar commitments and to see the effect of that connection through the interactions in the workshop. It was very powerful and moving to have that connection confirmed and each person's contribution in the group confirmed -- to be known and appreciated for the contribution I have to make made a difference. There is so much strife in

the world – the workshop is one of the places where one can begin to see some light at the end of the tunnel.

I would especially encourage Muslims to attend the workshop. It is very useful in the world we live in for Muslims and non-Muslims to come together – they become less inhibited about each other. People especially in the Muslim tradition (and likely others who don't do interfaith work) are inhibited by misconceptions. The more we talk together and pray together the more we realize how close we are to each other; we share so many of the same underlying concerns and the same desire to do good.

*Sadig Taha*

*London, England*

## INTERFAITH (continued)

are able to apply what they learn in the Making a Difference course naturally and with renewed confidence and commitment. Years later, they write to tell us that the power of what they learned and declared for themselves continues to bless them with new possibilities and abundant grace.

Ministry, like community, is about caring for the whole, and even for the most devoted, it is a daunting commitment. Because it challenges the status quo and the limitations we place on ourselves, because it empowers deeper questioning rather than providing answers, the Making a Difference workshop is and remains one of the most powerful and valuable experiences available for those rebels and mystics among us who are called to minister and to bring God present for others.

### Jesse Watson 1948 - 2004

Our friend and board member, Jesse Watson, died in a one-car accident on Monday, September 20, 2004. While Jesse had problems with his eyesight in recent years, as best as can be determined, the cause of the accident was a heart attack. He is survived by his wife, Yin, their four grown children, his mother and his brother.

Jesse began participating with the Mastery Foundation in 1984 when we were just beginning. He was a long-time board member and one of our very best workshop leaders. We thought he would be with us longer, but we are grateful for the opportunity to have known him and for the contribution he made. We will miss him terribly.



The need for just reconciliation is one of the most fundamental development needs in our contemporary world. Religion, which commonly presumes to be society's arbiter of the values that govern human behavior and relationships, must surely play a central role. While religion is all too often invoked as the rallying cry of the intolerant and hateful in the cause of violence, the basic message of all the world's great religious teachers has been one of love, brotherhood and tolerance. Those who follow in the tradition of these great teachers are among the most important development workers of our day because they are attacking a root cause of human suffering.

—David C. Korten

When I first did the Making A Difference Course 16 years ago I had been ordained for about five years. The workshop was the most profound work I had done in figuring out who I wanted to be as a Rabbi and why I do what I do. We go into the seminary with ideals and thoughts about what we want to do and accomplish and learn a tremendous amount about how to do our ministry. There is not always a focus on what it means and why we are doing it. The workshop provided a great opportunity to frame what it was all about – the declaration I made at that time has helped to shape and form my Rabbinate and continues to do so. What I took away from the workshop really kept me centered in terms of my work – it was sometimes the only thing that made a difference for me when things were difficult – as it allowed me to reference my commitment.

Participating in the interfaith environment of the workshop added to the experience – there is a power in hearing expressions from other faith traditions – and

the requirement to choose words carefully so that my expressions communicate and translate to those of other traditions was one of the gifts of the Making A Difference workshop.

In the Jewish tradition congregations often reflect the Rabbi – people will say I belong to Bookman's congregation rather than naming the synagogue itself. I have been privileged to serve two congregations. Each of the congregations was struggling and wanting to know how to attract new members when I arrived, and both are now thriving. One of the things that was important in my leadership was being able to say what I stand for and the ability to stand forth with the congregation.

I have encouraged many people over the years to attend the workshop and suggest to them to come with their openness and be prepared to look at yourself in ways you have not previously been taught to look at yourself and what you can do.

Rabbi Terry Bookman Miami, FL



## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

We continued our work in the communities of Clarksdale, Mississippi, and Derry-Londonderry, Northern Ireland in 2004 with a Community Empowerment Program in each city. In Clarksdale, we also offered a day of leadership training and an evening public lecture by Peter Block.

While this was our first year working on community empowerment in Derry-Londonderry, it was our third year in Clarksdale. What results have we seen in that time? We can identify at least six specific ways participation in the Mastery Foundation's programs has made a difference.

**We are creating relationships based on trust and respect.** The Community Empowerment Program indeed all the work of the Mastery Foundation – is built on the recognition that relationship is the foundation of all other accomplishment and results. Where relationships among citizens of a community are based on trust and respect, there is the possibility of harmony and of working together on issues of common concern.

Every participant in the program experiences either a shift from no relationship or a shift from the everyday kind of social (and often superficial) relationship to a new relationship of trust and respect with at least one person from “the other side” of the community. This significant outcome happens in the course of only two days and is the basis for each of the other benefits of the program.

**We are nurturing an unprecedented dialogue.** People who trust and respect each other can take on and discuss their concerns for their community with a much greater degree of freedom and honesty. The Community Empowerment Program has encouraged and nurtured this kind of dialogue. As Steve Stewart, the person who brought the program to Clarksdale, says, “Never in Clarksdale’s history, according to the old-timers I’ve spoken with, has such a diverse group of people come together – voluntarily – for an in-depth discussion of community.”

**We are generating and encouraging new activism and new conversations.** Over time, it is easy to become resigned about things we feel will never change. That resignation limits our efforts and dampens our enthusiasm. After all, if you don’t think you have a chance of having an impact, why bother? The Community Empowerment Program lets people free themselves from their resignation and encourages them to get involved, often in ways beyond anything they had considered possible before. Our continuing involvement in the communities where we work is intended to help keep this new spirit alive.

**We are expanding the circle of those committed to the community.** Ultimately, communities are about who is (or isn’t) included and whose gifts are welcomed and valued. In divided communities, whether or not you receive an invitation – or a look of recognition, a handshake, or a hug – can make all the difference in how you feel about your community and the role you take in it.

We have expanded the circle of participation by bringing more

### 2004 Community Empowerment

Number of communities	2
Number of programs	4 <sup>a</sup>
Number of participants	223
Number of volunteers	33

*a. Includes one public lecture and one leader training program.*

citizens from the edges of the community into the center through our programs, events, and conversations. All of these programs bring together a wonderful cross section of the community from all racial and economic levels and have included elected representatives, bankers, clergy, small business owners, educators, high school and college students, community activists, and those who work in tourism.

**We are teaching new ways to bring people together and build community.** Once we have people together, we teach them – by discussion and experience – simple tools and methods they can use in their own community work and their personal lives. In addition to these practical skills of invitation, connection, and communication, most participants experience a shift or transformation in their attitude that has a lasting impact on how they see and relate to their community. Reports consistently filter back to us that in those places where they participate, there is new energy poured into civic causes and better cooperation among both individuals and community organizations.

**We are developing local leadership.** Participation in our programs results in more citizens who step forward to take on new accountabilities in their communities. We also provide additional leadership training in our programs to develop and strengthen their skills and to turn over to them, through the form of local Community Councils, the work of organizing and continuing the process of empowering others.

In the early stages of the Community Empowerment program, most of those who participate are already active in their communities. But as the circle of participants grows beyond those already engaged in community building, the conversations and the work becomes more challenging. Indeed, many worthwhile community efforts die out after a year or two – because that is when they have worked their way to the edges of the community where the real work needs to be done.

Community building is long-term work, work that is never finished. It is carried forward by those who want to make a difference in the lives of others and to leave a legacy of hope and possibility for generations yet to come. Our commitment is to stay on as long as the invitation remains open and to bring more and more people into the circle of those who want to make Clarksdale and Derry-Londonderry better places to live.

## COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (continued)

The work with The Mastery Foundation gave me a new outlook on Clarksdale. I feel like I'm certainly a better person and hopefully a better community leader as a result of spending those couple of days in that environment. I actually rescheduled my monthly board meeting to be able to attend that two-day session. And as you well know, I was quick to say afterward that it was one of the best decisions I had ever made. I think there were 60 or 70 of us from all walks of

life: African-American, white, rich, poor, public schools, private school educations. It was just a great assortment of people. It allowed all of us to come together and to open up and share with each other.

This is a good area and a good community even though we've certainly got our challenges. We didn't solve all the challenges in those two days, but at least we got a lot of them out on the table, talked about things that we wouldn't normally talk about. It

allowed me to get a broader feel of the needs of the people in Clarksdale, especially the African-American community. I've got a lot of close African-American friends now that I didn't have before. It was just great to see the breaking down of the racial barriers and trying to work closer together. I have become a big believer in what The Mastery Foundation can do, especially in a rural community like this.

*Willis Fraser, Clarksdale, Mississippi*



*I am done with great things and big plans, great institutions and big successes. I am for those tiny, invisible loving human forces that work from individual to individual, creeping through the crannies of the world like so many rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, yet which, if given time, will rend the hardest monuments of human pride.*

*William James*

I accepted my call into the ministry in 1997. I didn't feel that my ministry was in line with what I had been exposed to in Jonestown, which was you'd get a church and you just preached. I never felt my ministry was that type of ministry. I felt my ministry was a call to be really involved in the community, to help build community.

Doris Miller told me a lot of things about The Mastery Foundation so I felt like it was something I wanted to be involved in. I was a little burned out. I was looking for a way to spark my vision for the town. A lot of things I wanted to go further on; other things I felt like I was being held back. So I felt like this would keep me going, inspire me to go ahead on and do what I was doing in spite of some of the obstacles I was running into.

Those two days we took time to see what was going on. It was good for me to know that there was a group of people out there with the type of thoughts, feelings and perceptions that I had and who add some structure to these things. You know, so many times when you're in a small community like this, everybody's saying that this won't work or that won't work. To have a group that the emphasis is on possibilities, you automatically get excited because in your heart you

know that when people go to work, anything that you put your mind to will work.

That's what was exciting about me being at the meeting with The Mastery Foundation those two days – listening, seeing other

people in communities who've been busy working, and just being revived as to what I was doing, you

know? It was a form of revival for me. I got the feeling I could keep on doing it, that a lot of the help that I needed was within me. So I got quite a bit out of that.

It also helped me to understand that I have to be a little more patient with my community. I hear people say, "Oh that once was a great community. Now it's gone to the dogs." How did it go there? It was a process that took it to where you think it has gone to the dogs. Then how can you blame every-

thing on the people who live there? If the banks left, if there was no emphasis on re-investment in the community, if there was no reconstruction after the great migration, then how can you blame people for the predicament that they're in?

You have communities here that have suffered because of historical things that have happened, and we never talk about rebuilding them. We never talk about rebuilding. All of a sudden you think people can pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, and they don't even have boots! So, when you understand what is happening, you get more of a feel for what your job is, and you learn that a lot of things are not going to happen overnight.

I think it helps you to realize that I have to keep working regardless of some of the things that are pressing up against me. Persistence, you know, you're more persistent.

*Rev. Bennie Brown, Jonestown, Mississippi*

“In your heart **you know**  
that **anything**  
you put your **mind** to  
will **work**”



## PEACE & RECONCILIATION

### Ireland Initiative

In 2004, for the second year, we held a two-day Community Empowerment Program in Derry-Londonderry at the invitation of local leaders and grassroots activists. To support those in the group committed to passing on what they had learned, we also added an additional day of conversation about applying the tools and skills of the program.

In addition to the 30 participants from Northern Ireland, we also invited Ahmad Hijazi from Israel. Ahmad came to Ireland in 2002 with the first large group of Israelis to participate in the Intensive and then was so provoked by some of the discussion that he withdrew for a part of the program.

Nevertheless, he found it hard to escape the questions raised by the Intensive and the ideas discussed. Over time, as he thought about it, he realized there was value there for him and perhaps for others. So he invited us to come to his family village of Tamra in northern Israel and work with the people there. Participating in this Community Empowerment Program was a step on the way to realizing that commitment.

Because in 2003 we completed a comprehensive design of the Ireland Intensive, our breakthrough program in peace and reconciliation, it was delivered this year by a team of senior Mastery Foundation leaders: Allan Cohen, Ann Overton, Jinendra Jain, Michael Johnston, and Pat Dillan.

There were 38 participants; about the same number as in previous years. The difference was that for the first time in two years, we did not have any participants from Israel since we are now doing programs there. And for the first time, we did not have a group of previous participants repeating the program as a refresher course. Instead, they participated in Intensive II two months later.

The three-day program, now called Intensive I, produces a real transformation or breakthrough in how the participants see themselves and their work. By breakthrough we mean opening up a new realm of possibility for yourself. While that sounds nice, it can be a disconcerting experience. A participant in one of our programs in the U.S. compared it to opening the door to your coat closet and finding the Rocky Mountains. Suddenly, there are new and previously unseen dimensions to the world, which in turn call for new tools and new ways of thinking and acting.

Participants in Intensive I are carefully invited based on the recommendations of previous participants. They are singularly remarkable individuals, both for their qualities of ordinariness (there is no one you wouldn't bump into at the grocery store or school play) and for their extraordinary commitment to cross-community work (most of them do their work while ignoring disapproval and threats of violence from some in the community).

It is their commitment to make a difference through their grassroots community work that brings them to Intensive I. Once

### 2004 Northern Ireland

Number of programs in Northern Ireland	7 <sup>b</sup>
Number of participants in Intensive I	38
Number of participants in Intensive II	37
Number of organizations they represent	58
Number of volunteers	48
Number of sponsors attending	9

*b. The number of programs includes two interfaith courses, one Community Empowerment Program and two Intensives. It does not include the more than 50 persons who attended six dinners in Northern Ireland to find out about Intensive I, the more than 40 persons who attended meetings prior to Intensive II, or numerous local gatherings.*

there, they seriously confront and explore whatever they say is keeping them from making a difference. It is dealing with this *story* about their limitation – not the limitation itself – that, rather surprisingly, leads to a breakthrough into new possibilities for the future.

It is one thing to create a breakthrough for yourself and the new possibilities that come with it; it is quite another to effectively deliver on those possibilities and the promises you have made. Intensive II, lead by Peter Block and Werner Erhard, was designed around the feedback given to us by participants in Intensive I about where they felt a need for more work and more tools. The promise of Intensive II was to provide powerful access to the tools and the ways of being with which to transform possibilities into accomplished realities.

Part of that promise was that for that to happen, the participants would need to wrest those tools into their own hands during the three days of the course. Using small group work and individual coaching, Peter and Werner together with the participants worked out the tools of distinction, of recreating communication, that is being able to listen to and fully comprehend what another is saying without needing to respond, working with groups, and the practice of silence.

The more work we do in areas of division and conflict, the more we see the value of including periods of silence or of Centering Prayer as an integral part of our programs. Too often, those whose lives are committed to grassroots work and to peace and reconciliation neglect to take the time to replenish themselves.

As Thomas Merton said, “There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence to which the idealist fighting for peace by nonviolent methods most easily succumbs: activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by the multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence. More than that, it is cooperation in violence. The frenzy of the activist neutralizes one’s inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of one’s work, because it kills the root of inner

## PEACE & RECONCILIATION (continued)

“Are you not afraid of ‘them’ coming?” The child who asked this question was, of course, referring to the people from the ‘other’ community. During her short life, the two main communities of Northern Ireland have had endless meetings and breakdowns, arguments, stand-offs, disagreements, threats, warnings, violence, the undermining of the peace process by those who are determined it won’t work, and the refusal of the para-military

“Are you  
not afraid  
of  
‘them’  
coming?”

groups to decommission their weapons.

The basic problem is a problem between people, a problem of divided relationships stemming from religious, social, economic, cultural and political factors. The issue is not whether the future will be shared – it will be. The issue is whether we share division and conflict or whether we share a positive future together.

This year I asked myself: What does it mean to be Christian in the context of a segregated and broken society, of Belfast with its eight interface areas of Protestants and Catholics? My best response is that reconciliation is the single greatest priority at this time. And the programmes offered by the Mastery Foundation have introduced

new ways of bringing people together, of creating new conversations, opening up new possibilities for a shared future.

In 2004 I attended the Community Empowerment Programme, was an assistant at Intensive I, and a participant at Intensive II.

My first concern was: Do the tools of Mastery have a universal application, or does it offer a more esoteric system accessible only to the few? Community Empowerment and work at

the grassroots convinced me that the tools have the potential to enable a breakthrough in the ability and power of even the most disadvantaged groups to accomplish what they are committed to in their lives.

My next query was: Why do participants in Intensive I – people deeply committed to peace building, healing and reconciliation – struggle so fiercely against listening to the input by the programme leaders? What I witnessed was good people who expected another ‘fix-it Northern Ireland’ course of new solutions to be added to what they already knew. Instead they were brought to the heart of who we are as human beings and how we are as conveners and members of community. Hard questions were asked about the

identity the past gives and the toll exacted by living into a future that can only repeat the past. This led to an opening for creating possibility that is a real possibility, not one that could or maybe or might happen.

Intensive II was for me the most challenging and empowering of the 2004 programmes. I am busy distilling the wisdom in such concepts as distinguishing distinction; ‘I’ as constituted by identity and position; the power of questions, requests and promises. The tool that stands out is the teaching on listening, on being able to listen to anything and be with it – without judgment or evaluation – so that the speaker has been truly heard.

A child who lives near one of the flash-points in Northern Ireland asked: “How can ‘they’ be afraid of ‘us’ when I am afraid of ‘them’?” Such a query cries out for a new conversation about who owns our country, our culture and our future.

I thank the Mastery Foundation for its commitment to enabling such conversations to occur.

*Brighde Vallely is a Dominican sister who lives in Belfast. She is the Northern Ireland director of the Conference of Religious of Ireland, an organization that works with women and men living in religious communities who are committed to the development of a society built on principles of justice and reconciliation, non-violence, equality, partnership and mutual trust.*

wisdom, which makes work fruitful.”

Throughout the year we continued to work on expanding both the capacity of our local leadership teams and the network of those who participate with us. We have a local team now able to deliver our interfaith program, and several individuals who can participate in delivering parts of the Community Empowerment workshop.

When we began the Ireland Initiative in 1999, very few in Northern Ireland knew about the Mastery Foundation. Today there is a robust network of grassroots and community leaders who know us and who – more importantly – through participating with us have come to know each other. Indeed, the network is already international in scope. For the second summer, two participants who met at the 2002 Intensive – Amit Lesham from Israel and Margaret Geelan from Omagh – organized a visit of Israelis and Palestinians to meet

with their Protestant and Catholic counterparts in Northern Ireland.

The people of Northern Ireland are experiencing the longest period of peace they have known since 1968. A number of very thorny issues – among them policing, decommissioning para-military weapons, and the demilitarization of army bases and the security presence – need to be worked out if peace is to last. While politics must play a role, the everyday work of reconciliation and community building is not the work of politicians but of citizens. And citizens cannot effectively do their part in an atmosphere of tension and of deep-seated suspicion and distrust. Recognizing this is what prompted the involvement of the Mastery Foundation in the first place, and it is what keeps us involved in helping women and men of goodwill build relationships, restore trust, deal with the past, and create new conversations and new possibilities for the future.

## PEACE & RECONCILIATION (continued)

### Israel Initiative

2004 was our first year of working entirely on the ground in Israel, rather than inviting participants from that region to join us in Northern Ireland and Mississippi. This year, we hosted a Community Empowerment program for neighboring Jewish and Arab villages, offered an Advanced Leadership Workshop for people associated with the Rabin Center who had joined us in previous programs, and began two exploratory conversations with an Arab village and a Jewish education center. We also continue to visit with the activists we have met over the past three years, deepening the bonds of friendship and our network of relationships throughout Israel.

In August, we hosted a Community Empowerment program in Israel with participants from Rosh Ha'ayin and Kfar Kassem. Rosh Ha'ayin was originally a traditional Yemenite Jewish community, but 20 years ago it began to attract a younger and more Westernized Jewish population. Across the road, is Kfar Kassem, a poor Arab municipality. To further complicate the relationship, an industrial park built in the 50s at the border of Rosh Ha'ayin is on land taken from Kfar Kassem. Today, Kfar Kassem would like to receive some of the taxes earned by that industrial park, for which negotiations are now underway.

There were 30 participants in the two-day program, mostly educators, including a number of Orthodox Jews and observant Muslims. So our words in English were translated first into Hebrew, and then into Arabic. All of the Arabs in the group were fluent in Hebrew, but language is the primary carrier of the traditions and culture of a people. Although the three-way translation slowed things down, it was clear the Arabs wanted to use both translators. It seemed a point of equality and pride for them. "Let them hear our language for a change," one participant said.

The experience of sitting in small groups, exploring questions that probe ever deeper into underlying concerns and assumptions

### 2004 Israel

Number of programs	4
Number of participants from Israel	92
Number of volunteers (in Israel only)	7

had a rhythm that challenged the fast-paced, action orientation of this region of the Middle East. Many participants were frustrated that first day, and our partners were worried that they might not want to come back for day two. But they did come back, and by the end of day two, they had a new and previously unimaginable relationship with each other, an expanded range of abilities and possibilities, and renewed spirits and energy for the tasks ahead of them. They invited us to stay longer and asked, "When can you come back? We want and need more of the empowerment you provide."

The Rabin Center also invited us to offer an advanced leadership course for people who had participated in previous programs with us. This included a mix of Rabin Center staff, volunteers who work with their programs, and a few participants from the Rosh Ha'ayin/Kfar Kassem course a week earlier. The participants were eager to deepen their relationship to creating possibility, as well as to do more work with listening. In a culture driven by speaking, our work on listening is enormously powerful. Again and again, they catch themselves and each other listening in ways that limit their awareness and the possibilities in front of them.

Among the new conversations we began in 2004, the first was in Tamra, where we hosted an evening discussion about the possibilities of Community Empowerment work. Tamra is an Arab municipality in the Galilee with a population of about 25,000—all of it Arab and Muslim. Almost half of the population is 19 years old or younger, and two-thirds of the population is younger than 45. Locals told us that the unemployment rate is 27 percent.

Tamra is also the hometown of Ahmad Hijazi, a participant in

## Israel now — optimism or pessimism?

*On our trips to Israel, we have noticed the atmosphere there about the possibilities for peace often is very different from that in the United States. With the death of Yassar Arafat, the leader of the Palestinians, and the election of Mahmoud Abbas as the new leader, we wondered what the mood would be among those we know working in the coexistence field. We asked two past participants in Israel to share their feelings with us.*

Some of those on the extreme right are hesitant because they cannot trust the Arabs, but the ordinary Israeli is quite optimistic because of the cease fire. For some months now there are no significant terrorist attacks except in peripheral territories. The second reason for optimism is there is new hope following the change in leadership. The media is feeding that optimism — showing the handshake and talking about new horizons.

As I know mainly my [the Jewish Israeli] side, I think that maybe in the short term it will

be positive. Certainly it is much better than shooting and cursing each other and blaming each other's leaders for all kinds of things. There is a change of image [of the Palestinian leadership] with Abu Mazen [the familiar name for Mahmoud Abbas]. He looks much more like the good grandfather than Arafat. He looks like a harmless elderly man. You can hardly hate this person.

I believe the Israeli government is returning to the formula which eventually will give the Palestinians some control over towns, cities and people and emphasize having the Palestinians maintain control over

## PEACE & RECONCILIATION (continued)

our Intensive program in Northern Ireland in 2002. Ahmad invited us to spend an evening at the village in conversation with a cross section of the community. The newly elected mayor joined us, along with the deputy mayor, teachers, social workers, engineers and lawyers. Once everyone in the room introduced themselves, we asked them to break into small groups and answer this question, "Why did you accept the invitation to come here tonight?" Their answers revealed some common themes of wanting to contribute to the community's welfare but not knowing how, and feeling frustrated or resigned at having so little to show for their efforts to create change.

We told them we do not have answers for them, that the solutions to the problems of Tamra must come from the people of Tamra. But what we can do, we said, is empower them with new ideas and tools that will transform their resignation and help them reclaim the power of having something to say about the way it is. It was clear to us that the people of Tamra have a dream and a desire for a better Tamra. We have agreed to explore this with them further in 2005.

We also began a conversation with the Leo Baeck Education Center. Founded in 1938, Leo Baeck is the leading institution of Reform Judaism in Israel. It carries on a tradition of social action and education

as well as providing services to at-risk populations. The center includes a junior and senior high school, an early childhood education center, the community center, a sports center, the Lokey Academy, a synagogue, and several other community centers and outreach programs.

We were invited to Leo Baeck by its Managing Director, Eran Dubovi, a participant in the 2003 Northern Ireland Intensive. Eran set up a meeting for us with 16 staff members, half from the Community Center and half from the Lokey Academy of Jewish Studies. We began the three-hour gathering by exploring what it means to become deeply connected to one another. We will continue this conversation in April 2005, when we return to Haifa to lead a workshop for the staff of the Lokey Academy.

During one of our programs this year, someone told us about a popular Israeli song which says, "The things you see from here, you cannot see from there." We are learning how little we know about what it means to live in this region at this time. But with each visit, we understand a little more about what empowers and encourages these committed people to continually move forward despite so little evidence of success. We are moved and inspired by their heart and persistence in continuing to work for coexistence and peace.

most of their territory. One of the formulas that failed before was the formula that the Palestinians should control people and take care of security while the Israeli's would still control most of the territories in the West Bank. I'm afraid it's going to be the same thing once more. But that's my opinion.

The Israeli government -- Sharon and the Likud (parliament) -- and the settlers have a strange common interest to magnify the so called "traumatic experience" of the evacuation of the settlers from the Gaza Strip in order to make it the last one and avoid evacuating much larger settlements in the Western Bank in the future.

Maybe I am too pessimistic, realistic or suspicious, but I've seen this optimism before. I've seen the mistakes committed after the historic summit meeting in Washington, DC, in 1993, and I don't want to live that chain of events again.

You have to know how to read the news. Don't listen to the melody, listen to the tone. It's always good advice for the Middle East.

*Ronen Zeidel, a professor of Middle Eastern Studies and a member of the Hadar Neighborhood Council in Haifa*



Your request is complicated because there is no clear atmosphere here. People in general, and especially Arabs in Israel, have ambivalent feelings about the whole thing.

That is because we are aware of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's policy and the conditions of the negotiations, which are based mainly on the premise that everything must go according to Sharon's plan. Then if everything works well, they will begin talking about the road map and other agreements that were approved before [at summit meetings in earlier years].

What happened in Sharam El Sheik, Egypt [a declaration of a truce in hostilities on February 8, 2005], is a tactic of Sharon and not a strategy for a real peace. It will move the conflict a few years ahead. And as usual, many obstacles will be encountered throughout the process which will delay dealing with the hard issues that might re-inflate the conflict.

I was watching the news last night alone, and then I urged my wife and oldest daughters to join me to hear about this

"event" in Sharam El Sheik. My daughter's reaction was, "I am really surprised at you watching that at all. You know that it is a game."

Others think it's a good opportunity and it gives some hope. The Palestinians in the occupied territories were the most excited. They look for any hope and see any opportunity as a chance for some relief. You cannot imagine what they have been facing in the last four years. To understand that you would have to spend only two days there and see the reality which has not been shown on TV.

Also, there is a real concern within the Arab community in Israel about the fact that if and when settlers will be evacuated from Gaza they will be settled in Galilee and the Negev. This will not be popular with the people there as most of the settlers are very dangerous people and extreme at all levels. And, as usual, the whole situation will be seen as having been caused by the Arabs.

I'm sorry for being a pessimist, but in general, I do not witness any real happiness.

*Fathi Marshood, a senior organizational consultant for NGOs, director of the Haifa office of Shatil, and a community activist.*

The Mastery Foundation's accomplishments are directly attributable to the work and generosity of the extraordinary individuals who are our donors and volunteers. Together they make the work of the Mastery Foundation possible.

Of the thousands of hours spent each year preparing for and leading programs, performing administrative tasks, developing new programs, enrolling participants and donors, managing finances, developing and maintaining communications programs, along with countless other tasks, perhaps 1% of those hours are spent by Mastery Foundation's two staff members, neither of whom is paid full time. Nearly everything the Mastery Foundation does is accomplished through the commitment and hard work of volunteers. They donate their professional skills, organize dinners, centering prayer groups, and e-mail lists. They host events, participate in conference calls, and get trained to lead our programs. Volunteers conduct follow-up surveys of program participants, research program facilities, pick up the mail and make bank deposits. They take pictures, shoot video, and run audio recording equipment. They host out-of-town guests, provide tours, and pick people up at the airport. The Mastery Foundation works by virtue of each donated hour, every extra effort, and

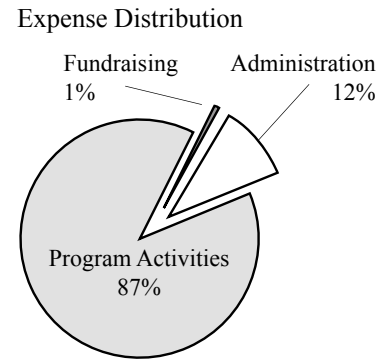
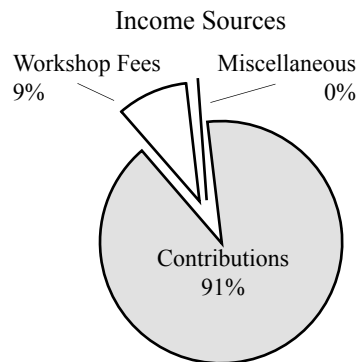
the enormous energy that our volunteers provide.

But this energy and work alone could not sustain us. It takes money to pay for all the phone calls, conference rooms, travel, equipment and supplies necessary to produce our programs and to be able to say yes to the opportunities and invitations in front of us.

We are funded almost exclusively by individual donors. In 2004, as in the previous five years, most of these funds were donated by our Sponsors, who make contributions of \$10,000 or more. These donors are among our most enthusiastic supporters and volunteers. Several have formed an Investor Community which in 2004 created a program for multi-year commitments. These now-and-future commitments provide a new financial structure that permits long-term planning in a way that has not been previously available. There are three levels of five-year commitments: *Legacy Sponsors* (\$25,000 each year), *Leadership Sponsors* (\$10,000 yearly) and *Foundation 500* members (at least \$1,000 yearly). We are deeply grateful for the commitments made to each of these programs as they not only allow us to plan and grow, but also acknowledge the difference that our work makes in the lives of the people who support us, as well as the people we support.

The following table and charts provide an overview of our financial results for the 2004 calendar year. Income is generated primarily through contributions from individual donors, the largest source of which is the sponsorship program begun in 1999. The success of the sponsorship program along with decreases in several expense categories created a modest surplus of income over expenses for the year. One of the financial goals for the future is the development of a broader base of financial support for the activities of the foundation though giving programs beyond sponsorship.

#### 2004 Financial Information



(in US Dollars)	Interfaith	Community Empowerment	Peace & Reconciliation	General	Total
<b>Income</b>					
Contributions	4,101	2,000	12,000	191,405	209,505
Workshop Fees	14,777	5,460			20,237
Miscellaneous				219	219
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>18,877</b>	<b>7,460</b>	<b>12,000</b>	<b>191,623</b>	<b>229,961</b>
<b>Expenses</b>					
Program Activities	40,943	27,288	109,968	9,760	187,959
Fundraising				3,078	3,078
Administration	7,711	4,914	11,869	2,722	27,217
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>48,654</b>	<b>32,202</b>	<b>121,837</b>	<b>15,560</b>	<b>218,253</b>