SHINING THE LIGHT
OF JUSTICE
2017 IMPACT REPORT

Greater Boston Interfaith Organization
About GBIO

WHO WE ARE

The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO), founded in 1998, is a broad-based organization that works for the public good by coalescing, training, and organizing people across religious, racial, ethnic, class, and neighborhood lines. Membership consists of 40 congregations in Greater Boston representing more than 45,000 individuals. GBIO organizes people and institutions at neighborhood, city, and state levels.

By engaging thousands of people in identifying important problems and using proven organizing methods to engage and develop leaders, GBIO has built and demonstrated collective strength to achieve a wide variety of purposeful goals. As times change, so, too, do the issues GBIO selects.

NATIONAL AFFILIATION

GBIO is affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), the nation’s first and largest network of citizen organizations. Today, the IAF is made up of 65 organizations working in cities and metropolitan areas across the country and internationally, on issues ranging from health care to education to housing.

GBIO works most closely with the 22 IAF organizations operating in the East, Midwest, and Southeast that have joined together to form Metro IAF. Those organizations have secured the construction of thousands of units of affordable housing, pioneered work on health care reform, transformed dilapidated and underperforming urban schools, and more—improving the quality of life for tens of thousands of people.

To learn more: www.metro-iaf.org
www.facebook.com/metroiaf
@MetroIAF

We are non-ideological and pragmatic—building working relationships, based on shared interests, across many of the lines that divide individuals and institutions. We are also strictly non-partisan.

SEEING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

This year, in the midst of all the divisiveness in our own country and world, I am reminded that in times like these, we need night vision—the ability to see in conditions of low light or no light.

Let us take a lesson from the Book of Nehemiah, which tells a story of courage and triumph in the face of tremendous challenges. Not a religious leader but a layman, Nehemiah responded with decisive action when he felt the call to guide and lead his people out of physical and moral laxity.

In the darkness of night, Nehemiah surveyed the fallen walls and broken gates of Jerusalem. He saw the “great trouble and shame” of its citizens. Though he was not always the most inclusive in his vision, Nehemiah had a real and powerful vision—not just about urban renewal, but about rebuilding the people and a just community within those walls. This story about a Jewish bureaucrat in the land of Persia tells us so much about what it takes to see in the dark.

Under Nehemiah’s direction, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, restoring physical security to the city’s populace. But Nehemiah also helped restore the moral fiber of the community by insisting that the division between rich and poor be diminished. He forbade the land-grabbing, freedom-robbing practices of the wealthy that put the poor into slavery and the community into disarray. In rebuilding the city walls, Nehemiah helped to once again cement the bonds of community that made everyone responsible to and for one another.

At all times, but especially in times like these, God is looking for those who have developed their night vision—who can see while others are sleeping or weeping, who move when others are locked behind doors, who expect the impossible, feel the intangible, and see the opportunity to bring light to overcome the darkness.

- Reflections from GBIO Strategy Team Member
Reverend Dr. Ray Hammond
Pastor, Bethel AME Church, Jamaica Plain
**HIGHLIGHTS OF 2017**

The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization held many significant large public actions:

- **February 2017** — over 900 people met to advance our issues at Bethel AME Church:
  - GBIO’s Criminal Justice Reform team launched a campaign for the new legislative session, receiving commitments on our four priority issues (read more below) from Senate President Rosenberg, Senate Joint Judiciary Chair Brownsberger, and Senate Co-chair of the Black and Latino Caucus Chang-Diaz.

- **GBIO’s Affordable Housing team secured significant commitments from City of Boston Councilors on the Community Preservation Act, a new fund which will provide up to $20 million per year for affordable housing, green space, and historic preservation.**

- **May 2017** — 1000 people convened at Temple Israel for a Delegates Assembly to celebrate our Criminal Justice Reform in-district actions with State Legislators and initiate outreach beyond Greater Boston.

- **August 2017** — 1800 people gathered at Temple Israel for an Interfaith Service to condemn the recent white supremacist march in Charlottesville. This community-wide response included Governor Baker, Mayor Walsh, Attorney General Maura Healey, and many other community leaders, clergy and GBIO member organizations. (See page 10 for more information.)

- **Summer 2017** — A combined total of 580 people attended Muslim-led teach-ins at First Church in Cambridge, Temple Isaiah in Lexington, Temple Beth Zion in Brookline, and Temple Israel in Boston, and Upstander/Bystander training at Bethel AME Church in Jamaica Plain.

- **November 2017** — 350 GBIO leaders and clergy held an action at the Massachusetts State House before the House of Representatives vote on Criminal Justice Reform Legislation.

**During 2017 GBIO achieved new victories on major issue campaigns and on important internal initiatives:**

- **Criminal Justice Reform** in 2017 GBIO celebrates that all four of our priority issues were included in both the Senate and the House bills that passed by veto-proof margins late in 2017 and as signed into law on April 13th 2018 by Governor Baker.
  1. Repeal of mandatory minimums for low level drug offenses
  2. Bail reform
  3. Reduction of excessive post release fees and fines
  4. Reduction of excessive time in solitary confinement

(See page 6 for more information.)

- **Affordable Housing** GBIO secured $6 million from developer Boston Properties to support Affordable Homeownership and Historic Preservation. (See page 8 for more information.)

- **Impact Fund** GBIO increased contributions from $76,730 from over 361 individuals and families in 2016 to $100,126 from 393 donors in 2017. (See page 12 for more information.)

- **New Members**

  “Relational, one-to-one meetings in the fall allowed Reservoir to learn about community organizing and to better understand the public passions of our members. Holding these meetings has been of high value to us,” says Senior Pastor Steve Watson. “As a new member of GBIO, we dove in with enthusiasm, and we are pleased with the results.”

New member congregations include:

- Reservoir Church of North Cambridge
- Grant AME of Boston’s South End

- **Affordable Healthcare** GBIO’s Healthcare team launched a house meeting campaign to better tackle healthcare consumer cost issues.

**HOW WE WORK**

Although no rigid pattern governs our work, GBIO typically acts in an iterative cycle:

- **We listen** by bringing people together in our member institutions to share stories about issues that will affect the quality of our lives, our families, and our communities. Then we choose to focus on issues we all can support;

- **We find and develop leaders** in our member institutions, creating cross-institutional teams that work to build and refine the issues, potential actions, and timing of our strategy to effect change;

- **We identify themes**, looking for issues of common interest across our membership, then do more focused research on these issues, identifying opportunities for relevant, timely, effective action;

- **We build strong relationships** through cross-institutional issue teams. We develop strategies and propose them through periodic Delegate Assemblies across the entire GBIO membership. There we affirm consent for moving forward on specific actions;

- **We act** through GBIO Actions where we gather key public and/or private decision-makers, share members’ stories, define specific solutions, and negotiate with those decision makers;

- **We celebrate success.** We follow issues, often for years, maintain connections with and accountability from our allies and public officials, and celebrate the collective accomplishments of GBIO;

- **We evaluate** continuously to grow, develop, and improve leadership.

Twenty years after its founders first met, GBIO has fulfilled the promise to work across historic barriers to effectively promote social justice on an increasing number of issues.
In 2017, GBIO celebrated that all four of our priority issues were included in the legislation that overwhelmingly passed with a 37-0 vote in the Senate and a 148-5 vote in the House. As of this writing, on April 13th 2018, Governor Baker has signed the bill into law.

We were recognized by State Sen. Cindy Friedman, who observed, “As with many of our major advances on issues of social justice, GBIO has been a leader on this one!” State Rep. Jay Kaufman said, “I can say with certainty that we would not have arrived at this moment without GBIO’s persistent and substantive focus.”

The legislation had been overlooked for decades. When we consider how far the Commonwealth has come, we realize that it’s time to take a deep breath and give thanks to everyone, including many criminal justice reform advocates who, along with GBIO, made up The Working Group for Criminal Justice Reform. We worked courageously together on these critical issues.

Some of GBIO’s 2017 actions included:

In January, we organized and conducted a 915 person action that drew widespread attention and resulted in commitments from the Senate President, the Senate Judiciary Chairs, and other leading Senators. They promised to draft bills that would move GBIO’s four issues onto the floor for a vote. In the end, the Senate passed its bill with a veto-proof majority (27-10).

We strengthened the criminal justice team, welcoming Alan Epstein as co-chair alongside long-standing chair Beverly Williams, and adding new steering team members: Aisha Samuels-Francis, Mardi Fuller, Doug Lomax, Frank Laski, and Abrigal Forrester. Through the leadership of Chuck Koplik, from Temple Isaiah, GBIO engaged Reform Jewish Synagogues throughout the state. Ben Poor, a member of Temple Israel and organizer with the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston, led GBIO in making over 800 phone calls to legislators.

The Bishop of the 1st district of the AME Connectional Churches endorsed and mandated its churches to take action under the leadership of GBIO. Clergy from these churches, along with over 50 Jewish Reform Clergy across the State of Massachusetts, signed letters sent to state leadership—Governor Baker, Lieutenant Governor Polito, Senate President Rosenberg, Chief Justice Gants, and House Speaker DeLeo—expressing support for all four legislative priorities.

In November 2017, twenty five GBIO and allied clergy led an overflow crowd of more than 300 constituents to push for criminal justice reform on the day of a critical vote in the House of Representatives. Following the action, constituents went to speak with House Representatives. As 2018 begins, we continue to work toward victory.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Since 2015, GBIO has fought for strong reforms and greater transparency that will reduce barriers to a fair criminal justice system. GBIO has pushed for comprehensive action to address four issues:

1. Repeal of mandatory minimums for low level drug offenses
2. Reform of an unjust and ineffective bail system
3. Elimination of excessive post release fees and fines
4. Elimination of excessive time in solitary confinement

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GBIO congregations hosted in-district actions with their district Senators and Representatives, and received commitments to support the bills that were our focus.

9 IN-DISTRICT MEETINGS WITH 23 STATE REPRESENTATIVES LED BY OVER 60 GBIO LEADERS

District meetings with legislators, led by GBIO congregational team leaders, were held in Cambridge, Lexington, West Roxbury, Boston, and South Boston, allowing many neighborhoods and congregations to work together for criminal justice reform.

One representative said, “Thank you for doing this. Many bills come by my desk and I have to be honest, this was not one of them. I will support this.”

In addition to GBIO member institutions, leaders from twelve other Reform Jewish congregations and African Methodist Episcopal churches took actions with us to support reform. These denominational alliances allowed us to reach districts outside of our usual membership area.

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Community Preservation Act:
In 2017, the affordable housing team built on prior 2016 Get Out the Vote work to support the passage of the Community Preservation Act (CPA), which will provide about $20 million/year to be spent on affordable housing, parks and recreation, and historic preservation. Starting at the February 2017 action at Bethel AME, GBIO secured significant commitments regarding CPA transparency and implementation from City of Boston Councilors. Jumaada Smith of St. Katharine Drexel Parish and affiliate member of Grant AME now sits on the steering team for Yes for a Better Boston. GBIO looks forward to working further with the CPA in 2018.

Alan Epstein
Criminal Justice Reform Team Co-Chair
Alan Epstein is a new member of the GBIO Strategy Team as well as co-chair of GBIO’s Criminal Justice Action Group. He is a long-standing member of Congregation Dorshei Tzedek (dor-shay’ tze’-dek), a Reconstructionist synagogue in West Newton, where he leads anti-racism groups and criminal justice work. Alan’s work in criminal justice reform began in the 1970s as a volunteer computer skills teacher at Framingham State Prison, and he recently participated in the Restorative Justice Responsibility Retreat at Norfolk State Prison. As a Tikun Olam (social action) leader at Dorshei Tzedek, Alan has led numerous education and awareness programs in both criminal justice and ending racism. He has also been a featured speaker in various criminal justice forums. Alan is employed as a project manager for new technology systems in the Cambridge Public Schools.

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT:
A VICTORY FOR AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP IN BOSTON

“Homeownership for lower-income families provides a chance to build wealth and is key to a family’s chance to enter the middle class. For Boston to be a great city, it has to be a place where everyone can get ahead. This is just the beginning, but it is an exciting beginning.” – Jumaada Smith

$6 Million for Homeownership and Preservation:
In April 2017, the Massachusetts Historical Commission issued findings that developer Boston Properties’ proposed Back Bay/South End Gateway Project would have “adverse effects” on Old South Church and Trinity Church (both registered National Historic Landmarks). Leaders at these two GBIO congregations sprang into action. Shadows cast by the 365-foot building, along with additional development in the area, would exacerbate wind and water damage to the old churches, and permanently shadow the beautiful stained-glass windows of Old South Church. Moreover, Boston Properties’ plans were strategically filed with the Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA) one day before an increase to the Inclusionary Development Policies (IDP) supporting affordable housing was due to take effect – circumventing an expected $28 million dollar requirement.

Led by members Old South and Trinity Church, GBIO campaigned to obtain an agreement with Boston Properties to protect the churches and secure additional funding for affordable housing, a priority of both congregations.

GBIO proposed a permanent, restricted fund to cover increased preservation costs and seed funding for a not-for-profit city-wide Homeownership Fund. As affordable housing is a crying need in Boston, GBIO was steadfast in seeking a multi-million dollar investment in keeping with current inclusionary development requirements.

GBIO leaders met with the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA), formerly the Boston Redevelopment Agency (BRA), and engaged in tense negotiations with BPDA and developer Boston Properties; following these negotiations, 115 GBIO leaders attended the November BPDA meeting.

As a result of GBIO actions, Boston Properties agreed to pay $6 Million into two funds to be administered by the City of Boston: $3 million for Affordable Homeownership, in addition to the 78-unit-affordable housing component required by the Inclusionary Development Policy, and $3 million for Historic Preservation.

With this work, GBIO demonstrated its power to ensure communities gain a greater share of the benefit when wealthy developers capitalize on Greater Boston’s booming economy.

Old South Church, Boston, MA
IN THE SHADOW OF RACISM, GBIO’S OUT OF MANY, ONE BrINGS UNITY AND ACTION

At GBIO’s Spring Delegates Assembly in April 2017, GBIO adopted the Out of Many, One campaign to fight against threats to vulnerable communities and to unite our Christian, Jewish and Muslim congregations in a call for greater tolerance and mutual understanding. This work sprang from our December 2016 gathering when the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center (ISBCC) and GBIO brought together more than 2600 people to stand against the hate speech, incivility, and violence surrounding the presidential election.

Led by the ISBCC, GBIO launched a series of Teach-Ins. On April 30, a diverse group of over 150 GBIO leaders gathered for a first Muslim-led Teach-in to learn about threats to Muslim civil liberties under the new administration. In 2017, three additional Muslim-led teach-ins took place at Temple Isaiah, Temple Beth Zion, and Temple Israel. The Teach-Ins, attended by more than 550 people, focused on threats facing the Muslim community and ways to take action.

Then on August 12th came the horrific events in Charlottesville. Our GBIO clergy swiftly responded with a powerful letter expressing outrage at the “hate-mongers” and imploring our political and religious leaders to “call out this behavior instantly, unequivocally—to decry it with instinctive, full-throated condemnation.” Days later, GBIO brought 1800 people together for an interfaith service at Temple Israel. Governor Charlie Baker, Attorney General Maura Healey, Boston Mayor Marty Walsh, Boston Police Commissioner William Evans, and Police Chief William Gross, along with 75 clergy, joined Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders to denounce racism, Islamophobia, and anti-semitism.

SUZAN EL-RAYESS, CHAIR
OUT OF MANY, ONE

Suzan El-Rayess was the Chair of GBIO’s Out of Many, One campaign and a member of GBIO’s Strategy Team. With a Political Science degree from Northeastern, three years of work experience with the Women and Public Policy Program at the Harvard Kennedy School, and an MPA in Public Sector Management from Columbia, Suzan has a formidable background in public sector leadership. In 2010, she co-chaired a GBIO event bringing then Governor Deval Patrick to the mosque at the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center. She later co-chaired a GBIO Mayoral Forum at ISBCC and a Gubernatorial Forum at Fourth Presbyterian. As a powerful leader in the Muslim community, Suzan was among the first to help the broader GBIO community understand the threats faced by community members in times such as these. “GBIO has opened doors to bringing down cultural barriers, while offering practical tools and actions for Muslims against discriminatory situations.” Suzan has recently started a new challenge, working to develop leadership among America’s future Muslim political leaders. GBIO thanks Suzan for her leadership!
Users of our 2017 donors. Congregations and in our communities could financially support GBIO. In 2014, GBIO launched the Impact Fund so individuals in our communities could financially support GBIO.

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GBIO FINANCES

HOW WE ARE FUNDED

GBIO is funded by dues from member groups, individual donations, corporate donors and foundations. The current annual budget pays for two full-time and three part-time staff, who guide and serve the member organizations. The budget also funds the training of our volunteer leaders each year and covers expenses associated with operating issue campaigns.

GBIO does not accept government funds so that we can remain autonomous and politically independent.

GBIO REVENUE

- **Foundation Grants** – $198,500
- **Member Dues** – $141,346
- **Impact Fund/Individual Donations** – $100,126
- **Corporate Donations** – $45,000
- **Other** – $6,137

GBIO USE OF FUNDS

- **Organizers & Support Team** – $356,468
- **Administration Costs** – $75,323
- **Consulting** – $57,000
- **Rent/Utilities/Technology** – $21,398

2017 Strategy Team

Serving as GBIO’s Board of Directors, leaders from our member organizations are elected to serve three-year terms on the Strategy Team. The Strategy Team authorizes the initiation of new issue campaigns, reviews the progress of current campaigns, and attends to financial and structural aspects of the organization.

MEMBERS

- Ms. Barbara Berke
- Dr. Jeanette Callahan
- Rev. Rainey Dankel
- Rev. John Edgerton
- Ms. Suzan El-Rayess
- Ms. Abby Flam
- Min. Dieufort Fleurissaint
- Ms. Bonny Gilbert
- Ms. Fran Godine
- Rev. Ray Hammond
- Dr. Paul Hattis
- Mr. Chuck Koplik
- Ms. Nahma Nadich
- Ms. Faith Perry
- Rev. Dan Smith
- Ms. Jumaada Smith
- Rev. Burns Stanfield
- Mr. Yusufi Vali
- Ms. Beverly Williams
- Temple Israel, Boston
- Bethel AME Church, Jamaica Plain
- Trinity Church, Boston
- Old South Church, Boston
- Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center, Roxbury
- Temple Emanuel, Newton
- Voice of the Gospel Tabernacle, Mattapan
- Temple Sinai, Brookline
- Temple Israel, Boston
- Bethel AME Church, Jamaica Plain
- Congregation Dorshi Tzedek, Newton
- Temple Isaiah, Lexington
- Jewish Community Relations Council, Boston
- Church of the Covenant, Boston
- First Church, Cambridge
- St. Katharine Drexel Parish, Roxbury
- Fourth Presbyterian Church, South Boston
- Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center, Roxbury
- Bethel AME Church, Jamaica Plain

A big thank you to the team that created this year’s annual report:

GBIO Leaders Andy Zucker, Barbara Berke, Chuck Koplik.

Special thanks to creative design By: Jonathan Gundlach and Kevin McGeen

Headshots: Leslie Jackson

Photography: Mira Whiting
2017 Member Organizations
Dues paying member organizations make up our political power in Greater Boston. Leaders from each organization are the people who create and shape our issue campaigns. Within each of these organizations is a Core Team of people who participate in a variety of ways, depending on their interests, talents and passions.

Current Member Organizations

Beth El Temple Center, Belmont
Bethel AME Church, Jamaica Plain
Church of the Covenant, Boston
Congregation Dorshei Tzedek, Newton
Dorchester Bay EDC, Dorchester
First Church Boston, Unitarian Universalist
First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC
First Parish Cambridge, Unitarian Universalist
Fourth Presbyterian Church, South Boston
Grant AME Church, South End
Hillel B’nai Torah, West Roxbury
Hope Central Church
Hyde Park Presbyterian
Islamic Council of New England
Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center, Roxbury
Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston
Keke Financial Group
Lutheran Church of the Newtons
Moishe Kavod House, Boston
Nehar Shalom Community Synagogue, Jamaica Plain
Old South Church, Boston
Reservoir Church, North Cambridge
Resurrection Lutheran Church, Roxbury
Roxbury Presbyterian Church
St. James Episcopal Church, Cambridge
St. Katharine Drexel Parish, Roxbury
Temple Beth Elohim, Wellesley
Temple Beth Zion, Brookline
Temple B’nai Brith, Somerville
Temple Emanuel, Newton
Temple Isaiah, Lexington
Temple Israel, Boston
Temple Shalom of Newton
Temple Shir Tikvah, Winchester
Temple Sinai, Brookline
Trinity Church, Boston
Union Church of Waban
University Lutheran Association of Boston
Workmen’s Circle

Are you interested in becoming a GBIO member?
Is your organization interested in joining GBIO?
Email us at GBIOLeaders@gmail.com and we’ll get in touch with you.

Greater Boston Interfaith Organization

Contact Us
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Fran Early, Volunteer Organizer, Fearly295@aol.com, 617.794.9471
Jessica Adler, Office Manager, Jessica.Adler.GBIO@gmail.com

Learn More
On our website: www.GBIO.org
“Like” us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/gbio
Follow us on Twitter: @GBInterfaith