Discussion Questions Part A:

Invitation to a Tri-Faith Neighborhood

1. How did the Tri-Faith Initiative begin? Did anything surprise you about the process?

2. What do you think motivates Rabbi Azriel to be in this kind of relationship with Muslims and Christians? What do you think motivates Dr. Mohiuddin?

3. Imagine your church, synagogue or mosque has been invited to join the Tri-Faith Initiative. What would your initial reaction be? How well do you know the members of the other two faith groups? What questions or concerns do you want to raise for your leaders?

4. Assume for the moment that the Episcopal Diocese is leaning toward accepting the invitation to join Tri-Faith. Divide into small groups, and imagine that your group is an Exploratory Task Force made up of representatives from Temple Israel, the AIISC, and the Episcopal Diocese. You have been asked to explore what co-location might look like in terms of physical space. Some members of the task force recommend building one large building with a central worship space that could be used by each of the three faith groups at different times, perhaps with a large movable stage on one end that rotates to reflect one of three distinct religious settings at a time—e.g., the Christian setting might include a cross, the Jewish setting an ark of the covenant, and the Muslim setting a mihrab that indicates the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca.

   What do you think of this idea? What are some of the building design challenges if these three faith traditions share one building? What are some of the operating challenges, not only related to worship but other activities during the week, on holidays, etc.?

5. Are there any alternatives to one building that could mitigate the challenges for the three faith groups but capture the benefits of being in relationship? For example, if the primary benefit of co-locating is interaction, is it possible to have 3 buildings but a shared common space? It will be helpful to consider what members of these three groups will do together if they form this intentional community. Will they worship together? Pray together? Eat or study together? What are they trying to create here?

6. Temple Israel’s congregation includes over 750 families. The Muslim group involved in Tri-Faith is very small, and the Episcopalians would need to start an entirely new congregation if they join Tri-Faith. Should the Episcopalians or the Muslims be concerned about this wide disparity in size? If the three faith groups share space, will the size of the group be a factor in determining each group’s financial obligation or scheduling priority for space?

7. How do you think the wider community of Omaha will respond to Jews, Christians and Muslims undertaking a cooperative building project? Should this be a factor?

8. Why do you think the Jewish and Muslim leaders of Tri-Faith chose the Episcopal Church when they looked for a potential Christian partner?
9. Did the description of what was important to the Muslims when they incorporated as the AIISC surprise you? How are their values similar to the values often associated with the Episcopal Church and Reform Judaism? To learn more about these two denominations, go to their websites: [http://www.episcopalchurch.org](http://www.episcopalchurch.org), [http://urj.org/about/reform/whatisreform/](http://urj.org/about/reform/whatisreform/). To learn more about the AIISC’s values, go to its website: [http://www.aiisc.org/](http://www.aiisc.org/). In what ways are their values similar to the values in your own tradition?

10. What Biblical stories or texts might guide Rev. Anderson and the other Episcopal leaders as they consider this invitation? What texts or stories in your tradition would help you make a decision like this?

11. It’s time to vote: Should the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska say “Yes” or “No” to the invitation to join Tri-Faith? But first, let’s review: For the Episcopalians—what are the risks of joining Tri-Faith, or other reasons for anxiety? What are the rewards of joining Tri-Faith, or other reasons for enthusiasm?

**For Expanded Study**

Explore your faith group’s or denomination’s national website to learn about its position concerning interfaith relationships.

As the Episcopal leaders think about how to respond to the invitation, one text they might look at is the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-42). The irony in this parable is that it is the Samaritan—a member of an ethnic/religious group disparaged in Jesus’ day—who turns out to be the best neighbor. What characterizes a good neighbor in the text?

If you were a member of the Episcopal diocese, and if you believed Christianity to be the only “true” religion, how might this discourage you from supporting Tri-Faith? Are there any civic reasons for a person to become involved in interfaith dialogue, even if they believe in the superiority of their own religion?