

About Sacred Space International

The mission of Sacred Space International (SSI) is to encourage interfaith dialogue and explore cultural diversity by sharing sacred space. Founded in 2002 as The Center for Religious Architecture, the organization was a response to the events of September 11th, 2001 and the national climate of cultural misunderstanding and fear. Believing that architecture could serve as neutral ground for discussion of these newly ignited issues of cultural and religious difference, this secular organization educates on religious traditions within the context of each tradition's worship space through a carefully designed process that builds relationships and trust across difference.

SSI operates as an arm of The Parliament of the World's Religions, which is a global organization promoting interreligious harmony through education, programming, and activism. For more information please call (203) 500-0166.

Special thanks: SSI thanks the Interfaith Council of SW Connecticut, The Tully Health Center, and The Ferguson Library for its invaluable partnership in this program.



Sacred Space International

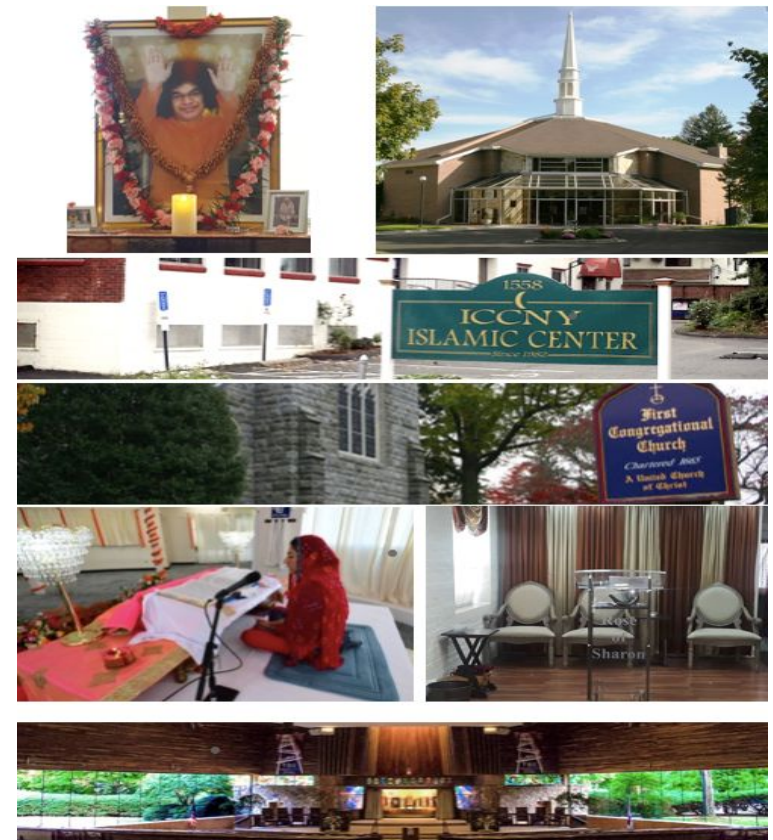


Interfaith Council of Southwestern Connecticut

SHARING SACRED SPACES

FAIRFIELD COUNTY

2020-2021



SACRED SPACE INTERNATIONAL

www.sacredspace.world

Sharing Sacred Spaces

This year, religious and spiritual communities are coming together in partnership to visit one another's sacred spaces, learn about other religions, extend hospitality, equip themselves with some of the tools of interfaith dialogue, and build an interfaith community. The Sharing Sacred Spaces (SSS) program is designed to engage religious diversity within a safe and tested format, and to widen participation in interreligious activity across Stamford and Fairfield County.

Beginning on February 20, 2020, the first of the participating seven congregations will open its doors to extend hospitality to participating congregations and visitors. Each SSS congregation will open its doors in turn, with the last site visit scheduled for January 2021.

Through these visits to spaces where people pray, worship, engage in religious practices and celebrate life's events, participants will be invited to listen, learn, and connect with one another. Each visit will contain specific elements: an architectural /religious tour of the space; an introduction to the religion; sharing from members; a dialogue or a shared activity; and refreshments. Each visit is thus more than a 'tour' or 'open house'; it is an experience. Sharing sacred spaces is designed to deepen understanding of one another to ultimately build trust, generate goodwill, and foster a greater sense of community together.

SSS' third iteration in Stamford is proudly offered in collaboration with the Interfaith Council of Southwestern Connecticut (interfaithcouncil.org).

Why attend?

- Meet your neighbors
- Consider new points of view in dialogue with those of other religions
- Learn about the history and underlying principles of other traditions
- Become aware of community service and outreach programs other traditions are engaged in
- Build relationships with others and find common ground
- Refresh and deepen your own spiritual convictions
- Experience the hospitality, openness, and warmth of all our spiritual partners

We look forward to greeting you over the next few months as you visit each Sacred Space.

How to participate:

- *Attend as many of the Sharing Sacred Spaces events as you can*
- *See the etiquette guide for each sacred space in preparation of your visit*
- *Be respectful of each space and of others*
- *Read the Ground Rules for Dialogue at the end of this booklet and do your best to practice them*
- *Bring your questions and ask them*
- *Enjoy the journey!*

VISIT DATE: THURS., FEBRUARY 20, 2020 6:30-8:30PM

Guru Tegh Bahadur Foundation

633 West Avenue, Norwalk CT 06850

203.857.4460 • www.gtbf.org



What are the origins of Sikhism?

Sikhi is the 5th largest world religion (with about 30 million followers). It originated in South Asia in 1469, specifically in what are now the states of Panjab in India and Pakistan. We prefer to use the term *Sikhi* instead of Sikhism because “-ism” implies two things:

1. A distinctive practice; and
2. Some sort of hierarchy or power structure.

In English, “-ism” has been tacked on to the end of names of religions, like Hinduism, Jainism, Judaism, etc., but it is also the suffix for harmful hierarchical systems such as racism, sexism, classism, etc. Guru Nanak Sahib, the founder of *Sikhi*, modeled a way of life for his followers that involved no hierarchy or power structure, no systems of religious law, etc. Power and law enforcement are easily misused in order to uphold harmful isms such as racism, sexism, casteism, and so on. By being free of

such concepts, his teachings could be truly revolutionary against systemic injustice.

The word *Sikhi* is native to the Sikh lexicon, and is derived from the word “Sikh” which means “student” or “learner.” Sikhs base their learning on *Sikhi*. As we will learn, *Sikhi* is both a distinctive school of thought and a world religion. It can exist and thrive alongside (and even within!) other religious systems. What stands on its own is the Khalsa Panth (Sikh sovereign nation) of those who have chosen the Sikh path and engage in political decision making as a sovereign body.

How did this sacred space come to be built here?

In Sikh thought, every place and every space is sacred. The Gurdwara is a place of learning. The Sikh community was fortunate to be able to secure a building in Norwalk for community worship, hence the Gurdwara is there.

What is distinctive about this community?

The 5 distinct articles of the Sikh faith make the community stand out. The deep reverence for service in the community is also visibly recognizable.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

The Interfaith Council of Connecticut, Connect, and various soup kitchens/shelters.

Etiquette for visiting the Gurdwara:

- All visitors to the Gurdwara need to remove their shoes and cover their heads before entering.
- Liquor and tobacco are not allowed within the premises of the Gurdwara.

"The 1-Light is in all; that Light is the same."

"I see no stranger."

"Fear none; Frighten none."

VISIT DATE: THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2020 6-8:30 PM

Rose of Sharon Fellowship

652 Glenbrook Rd, Stamford, CT 06906

203.658.3644 • admin@roseofsharonct.com



Unique statement about the community:

We are on a mission to help everyone that comes through our doors to understand that everybody is somebody and that Jesus loves them. This is done by upholding the word of God through preaching, bible study, and ministry training, and praying and striving to live according to the word of God.

What is the origin of the Rose of Sharon Ministries?

On July 26, 2000 Rose of Sharon Ministries Inc. was birthed with seven adult members and 9 children in the city of Stamford, CT.

How did this sacred space come to be here?

Our services were initially held in a local hotel. From there we were able to find a small place located on Ludlow Street for one year. From there God gave us favor and we were able to rent a storefront on Pacific Street. At this sight the ministry really began to prosper and grew not only in number but also spiritually. In 2005, Rose of Sharon relocated to 71 Stillwater Avenue, where souls continued to come into the ministry. God

opened the door once again for our current location: 652 Glenbrook Road, still in the great city of Stamford, Connecticut. “And the Lord said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me; I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually (1 Kings 9:3).”

What is distinctive about this community?

We believe that it is important to maintain an atmosphere that everyone who comes through our door will feel the love of God. This house was planted to reach, teach, and preach to God’s people the unadulterated word so that we all come into the unity of the faith.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

Because of our love for God and wanting to do his will, Rose of Sharon can be found outside of its walls doing street witnessing, volunteering at the local pantry, participating in local functions such as the Bennett Cancer Walk, World Aids Day Service, Martin Luther King Walk, and street rallies against crime.

Etiquette for Rose of Sharon Ministries:

- Liturgical Order: Apostle (Dukes), Bishop (Hinton), Elder (Ashford), Deacons, Ministers, Saints (Congregation)
- Dress code: casual but neat and season appropriate.
- Audible & visible expressions: we encourage expressions of praise & worship to the Lord God during services (hand clapping/waving, singing, etc.).

Our motto is: ***“This is the place where the spirit of God is experienced and the love of God is felt.”***

VISIT DATE: THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2020 6-8:30 PM

Temple Beth El

350 Roxbury Road, Stamford CT 06902

203.389.2108 • www.tbe.org



Unique statement about the community:

TBE is a participatory, modern, egalitarian and full-service congregation. We strive to place *Tikkun Olam* (“repairing the world”) at the center of our daily lives. We welcome all to join our inclusive community as we aspire to fill the world with spirituality, learning, and social justice for all humankind.

What is the origin of the Jewish People?

The collective identity of the Jewish people - at various periods known as Israelites, Hebrews, Jews – was formed approximately during the second millennium BCE (Before the Common Era) in the Middle East. Jews are members of countless cultures, ethnicities, and races.

What is distinct about this community?

TBE is a Conservative, egalitarian, spiritual community that challenges itself to sanctify each day through prayer, action, study, and *mitzvot*. We honor our Jewish traditions, practicing them in both traditional and innovative ways. We pray together by combining music, ritual, dialogue, and reflection.

What is the history of this synagogue?

In 1920, a small group met to organize a new congregation in Stamford. Within a year, the congregation acquired a full-time rabbi and took its name. In 1927, the synagogue moved to Prospect Street, where it flourished for over 40 years serving as a driving force in the growth of Stamford’s Jewish population and culture. By the early 1970s, membership had grown to almost 500 families and a new building was required. Ground was broken on Roxbury Road on April 23, 1972.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

Some of our many outreach programs include: visits to homebound congregants; transport to medical appointments; delivering Shabbat Bags to hospitalized patients; serving in local soup kitchens; delivering *shiva* meals; preparing and serving Christmas dinner to shelters and soup kitchens; and partnering with Building One Community to help immigrants.

Etiquette for Temple Beth El:

- The Rabbi is the religious leader. The Cantor leads most prayers primarily in song. The Executive Director oversees all administrative responsibilities. The lay leadership includes: the synagogue President, Executive Board, & Board of Trustees.
- During services men are required to cover their heads with *yarmulkes* (*kipot*) and during morning services wear a *tallit* (prayer shawl). These items are optional for women.
- Those conducting the service stand on the Bema (platform) at the front of the sanctuary. The Torahs are housed in the Ark (cabinet), usually in the back of the Bema. During certain prayers the Ark is opened and all present stand.
- A *kiddush* (meal) is usually served after Saturday morning services, and an Oneg Shabbat (refreshments) on Friday.

“My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” – Isaiah 56:7

VISIT DATE: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2020 6-8:30PM

The First Congregational Church of Greenwich

108 Sound Beach Avenue, Old Greenwich CT 06870

203.637.1791 • www.fccog.org



Unique statement about the community:

We are a progressive, open and affirming congregation that honors the past, celebrates the present and leans forward into the future. The grounding principle that unites us is the great commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul and mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

What is the origin of the congregational church?

The Congregational Church traces its roots to the late 16th century as part of the Reformed tradition. Congregationalist churches practice a grassroots form of governance in which each congregation independently runs its own affairs.

First Church has historical roots in the Congregational tradition and is now part of The United Church of Christ.

How did this sacred space come to be built here?

The first recorded religious services in the town of Greenwich were held in 1656 in the houses of settlers. In 1665, First Church was created by an act of the General Court of the

Colony of Connecticut passed at the May 1665 session authorizing the establishment of "the First Church of Christ in Greenwich" or "First Society of Christ" or "The East Society". In 1667, a newly built schoolhouse became the central place of meeting and worship. The current stone Meetinghouse, dedicated in 1895, was the fourth one built to house the congregation and was an adaptation of an English 1100 Norman-Gothic structure.

What is distinct about this community?

First Church is a community steeped in tradition and rooted in an open, inclusive and thought provoking faith. We seek innovative ways to live into our humanity, build community, and deepen spiritual growth. We are an open and affirming congregation. We believe in the freedom and responsibility of the individual soul and the right of private judgement.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

First Church has a long tradition of partnering with local, national and international non-profit agencies. For over sixty years the congregation has sold Christmas Trees to the public and donated 100% of the proceeds to local non-profit organizations. The church also runs a community second-hand store called the Rummage Room, which also donates significant sums to non-profits who work with women and families. Volunteers at First Church also prepare and serve a monthly meal at New Covenant House in Stamford.

Etiquette for First Congregational:

- All are welcome to come as you are.
- The congregational leader may be referred to as Reverend, Pastor, or by his name and title.

"Rev. Collins said: Being a positive, open and inclusive community of faith is what the community needs during this time."

VISIT DATE: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2020 6-8:30PM

Islamic Cultural Center of NY - Stamford
61558 Washington Blvd., Stamford CT 06905
203.921.1431 • www.iccnystamford.com



Unique statement about the community:

ICCNY has endeavored to be a “model community for humanity” by actively working to improve community life for all people.

What is the origin of this community?

In 1982, seven members founded and established ICCNY in Harrison, New York (hence the NY in the Name). In 2001 they relocated to Stamford, CT. The original plan of the Islamic Cultural Center of New York was to become a Muslim institution comprised of a mosque, school, library, lecture hall, family-friendly play area, and community center.

What is the history of this place of worship?

In 1995 many multicultural members and the original members who established the ICCNY in Harrison, NY made efforts to fundraise and purchase the Center on Washington Boulevard as the new ICCNY. Since then, the Center has acquired three adjacent properties, which have increased the center’s value and have provided for housing for the Imam and a future, larger community center.

What is distinctive about this community?

The board members have a mission to move people to strive for and exemplify justice, liberty and peace within the community. Our facilities include the mosque (with a capacity of 300), a nine-classroom Sunday Islamic School, a game/ entertainment room, and a beautiful multipurpose hall. People of various cultural backgrounds attend the Friday ritual prayer known as *Jumma*, the 5 daily prayers led by an Imam, our Islamic Sunday school, and our daily educational programs.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

The ICCNY is actively involved with the community through local food drives and winter gear collections. Through generous donations, the center also provides occasional temporary assistance for those in immediate/dire need of housing or financial assistance; and select members help support refugee families with rent/food/financial assistance. Additional community projects include visits to the senior living facility, and Park Cleaning Days. During the holy month of Ramadan, ICCNY hosts an *Iftar* dinner each night and all are welcomed at no cost. Attendance of Stamford Police at the dinners strengthen the relationship between the government and the Muslim community. All activity produces a healthy relationship with Mosques, Islamic Schools, and local & national organizations.

Etiquette for the Masjid:

- All are welcome
- The Imam is the one who leads prayers at the mosque
- Please remove all footwear and place in the footwear area
- Women are requested to dress modestly and cover their hair.

“And of his signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge.”

– Qu’ran 30:22

VISIT DATE: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020 6-8:30PM

Sathya Sai Baba Center of Stamford, CT

83 Lockwood Avenue, Stamford, CT 06902

973.954.1231 • saicenterofstamford.wordpress.com



Unique statement about the community:

The main objective of the Sathya Sai Organization is to help man recognize the Divinity that is inherent in him and to conduct himself accordingly in daily life; to fill one's life with joy, harmony, beauty, grace, human excellence, and lasting happiness; to ensure that all human relations are governed by the principles of Sathya (Truth), Dharma (Right Conduct), Shanti (Peace), Prema (Love) and Ahimsa (Non-violence).

What are the origins of the Sathya Sai Baba Organisation and Centers?

The Sathya Sai Organisation was founded in the 1960s by Sathya Sai Baba. It was established to enable its members to conduct service activities and center meetings to study Baba's teachings as a means to spiritual advancement. There are 2,000 Sathya Sai Baba Centers in more than 130 countries.

How did this sacred space come to be built here?

In 2015, we moved out of a private home into the "Domus" building. Domus brings hope and love to kids and youth by

providing many opportunities for tailored education, skill-building and after school enrichment. Our philosophy is common - to give kids, youth and everyone a fair chance in life by giving unconditional love.

What is distinctive about this community?

The Sathya Sai Baba Center of Stamford, like all other centers, is an inclusive and spiritual community. People come from all walks of life and all religions. There are no dues or membership fees, and donations are never solicited.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

Selfless Service is our highest spiritual discipline. Service projects include preparing, serving, and/or providing food for children, the homeless, and incarcerated youth, and other volunteer activities through organizations such as Inspirica, Invictus, the Gillespie Homeless Shelter, the Domus Holiday Mall, and Fairgate Farm. Another project involved introducing Mindfulness Meditation exercises to Stamford Academy High schoolers for better stress management.

Etiquette for Sathya Sai Baba Center:

- Members greet one another by joining hands to say "Sai Ram", signaling that one bows to the same spirit in the other.
- Shoes are left outside before coming into the meeting hall.
- Men and women sit separately, dressed in modest clothing.
- Holy Ash (Vibhuti) is given to members after devotional singing. Many individuals touch it to the forehead as a reminder of one's mortality, to go beyond the name and form, and to cultivate humility.

***"There is only one Caste, the Caste of Humanity
There is only one Religion, the Religion of Love
There is only one Language, the Language of the Heart
There is only One God, and He is Omnipresent"***

--Sathya Sai Baba

VISIT DATE: THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2021 6-8:30PM

Union Baptist Church

805 Newfield Avenue, Stamford, CT 06905

203.322.0881 • www.ubcstamford.org



Unique statement about the community:

The Union Baptist Church is a beacon of light in the Stamford community under the leadership of The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Perry, serving the community for over (45) forty-five years. His vision is to marshal **all** the available resources and technologies to make known the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This good news, which we proclaim is authentic, must be a living witness through those who proclaim, praise, and practice it. Our mission is to ensure, with God's rule in our hearts, we are in partnership with God and in deliverance from the bondage of economic oppression, racial bigotry, and social and political injustice. Our church fosters and promotes praise for our God who gave us Jesus, set us free, and made us whole.

What are the origin of Union Baptist Church?

Our Church was founded over 131 years ago by 25 former slaves who bonded together and transformed an untidy dance hall into an edifice for Sunday worship. With stubborn perseverance, we have weathered many challenges and have emerged into our present Sacred Church through God's guidance and His Grace and Mercy.

How did this sacred space come to be built here?

With Dr. Perry's leadership, the church experienced an explosion in membership. Formerly on Adams Avenue, the church thus relocated to our current location on Newfield Avenue. The church continued to grow. The new building on Newfield Avenue, originally with a seating capacity of 300, was expanded to hold 800.

What is distinctive about this community?

Union Baptist Church embraces everyone who needs a place to worship; we welcome everyone with open arms. Our logo is "Come As You Are". Union Baptist is the oldest African American Church in Lower Fairfield county.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

We do not have any barriers to keep the community out. We have ministries that serve the incarcerated, teens in crisis, senior citizens, youth and children, as well as domestic missions. We also host and support a variety of wider community initiatives in partnership with local organizations.

Etiquette for Union Baptist Church:

- Our church is a sacred place where we give honor to our God. We invite all to hold the space with high regard.
- Arrive early and on-time to enter the sanctuary. If you arrive when church is in session, please follow the ushers' directions.
- Please do not eat or use the telephone during service.
- We meet and greet everyone to make you feel at home.
- If the spirit moves you to become a part of the Body of Jesus Christ when our dear pastor extends the invitation, please feel welcome to walk down to the altar, extend your hand to our pastor, and give your heart to the Lord.

"Where all generations worship, fellowship, and serve God together." --Union Baptist Church

Schedule of Visits to Sacred Spaces

Thursday, February 20, 2020 6:30-8:30 PM

Guru Tegh Bahadur Foundation
633 West Avenue, Norwalk CT 06850
www.gtbf.org

Thursday, May 7, 2020 6-8:30 PM

Rose of Sharon Fellowship
652 Glenbrook Rd, Stamford, CT 06906
admin@roseofsharonct.com

Thursday, June 18, 2020 6-8:30 PM

Temple Beth El
350 Roxbury Road, Stamford CT 06902
www.tbe.org

Thursday, October 22, 2020 6-8:30 PM

The First Congregational Church of Greenwich
108 Sound Beach Avenue, Greenwich CT 06870
www.fccog.org

Thursday, November 12, 2020 6-8:30 PM

Islamic Cultural Center of NY - Stamford
61558 Washington Blvd., Stamford CT 06905
www.iccnystamford.com

Thursday, December 10, 2020 6-8:30 PM

The Sathya Sai Baba Center
83 Lockwood Avenue, Stamford, CT 06902
Saicenterofstamford.wordpress.com

Thursday, January 21, 2021 6-8:30 PM

Union Baptist Church
805 Newfield Avenue, Stamford, CT 06905
www.ubcstamford.org

Finding Common Ground

In February of 2021, all the communities will come together to celebrate. Those communities that feel committed will sign a solidarity pledge, which they will jointly craft, finding common ground in support of one another.

Go to www.sacredspace.world to find out more.

Ground Rules for Dialogue

Vow. Resolve that the space between us will be safe. Resolve that our experience together will be met with openness and compassion.

Listen. 100%. Listening means acknowledging and attending to what is heard, without addition or subtraction. We must be careful not to categorize, define, or otherwise accessorize the already complete truth of what we hear. In other words, if we release our grasp on our supposed “position”, we naturally make room for something new. Practice “deep listening.”

Ask questions. Become curious. Cultivate a willingness to go beyond what we ‘know’ and encounter with genuine interest what arises in the here and now. Invite the wonder of not knowing.

Offer respect and suspend judgment. Honor one another as valued individuals and as participants in multiple social and cultural communities. Notice reactions and judgments to others and ourselves, and let them go.

Confidentiality. Avoid gossip and protect the confidentiality of our exchange.

Speak from experience. Being ourselves, share the confusion and the clarity; look to our experience rather than our opinions. Avoid leaning on the words of experts and authorities. Use “I” statements.

Become new. Risk showing up as we are in the moment, leaving behind our habit mind and also our habitual storylines, both about ourselves and others.

Trust. Pay close attention, and trust the strength and wisdom of the process. This is cultivating the spaciousness of a wide mind. Refrain from the urge to ‘fix’ or give advice— rather, see and reflect the perfection of each person, situation, and condition, just as it is.

Become equal. Each person speaks with the voice of the whole. Everything that arises within us and within the dialogue is some aspect of the truth.

Forgive oneself and one another. We acknowledge we may make mistakes along the journey. We seek out to forgive ourselves and one another for any trespasses, and to commit ourselves to a new beginning.

Adapted from guidelines of Zen Master Jeong Ji, blueheronzen.org, with modifications and additions by the Stamford Sharing Sacred Spaces Planning Committee.

Notes

Notes