

### About Sharing Sacred Spaces, Inc.

The mission of Sharing Sacred Spaces (SSS) is to encourage 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.

**Special thanks:** SSS thanks The Rumi Forum, The William and Mary Greve Foundation, and The Hudson Community Foundation for their generous support and invaluable partnership in this program.



SHARING SACRED SPACES, INC.  
[www.sharingsacredspaces.org](http://www.sharingsacredspaces.org)

RUMI FORUM  
[www.rumiforum.org](http://www.rumiforum.org)

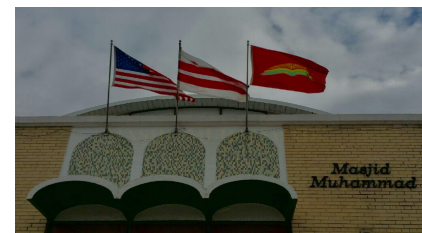
# SHARING SACRED SPACES

## with Rumi Forum

### The Interreligious Communities Project

Northern Virginia

2023-2024



## **The Interreligious Communities Project**

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 tools of interfaith dialogue, and build an interfaith community. The Interreligious Communities Project (ICP) is designed to engage religious diversity within a safe and tested format, and to widen participation in interreligious activity in Northern Virginia.

Beginning on June 15, 2023, the first of the participating congregations will open its virtual door to extend hospitality to their partner congregations and visitors. Each ICP congregation will open its doors in turn, with the last site visit scheduled for February 11, 2024.

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; a communal history; sharing from members; a dialogue or a shared activity; and a delicious meal! Each visit is more than a 'tour' or 'open house'; it is an experience. The ICP is designed to deepen understanding of one another to ultimately build trust, generate goodwill, and foster a greater sense of community together.

## **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.

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## **How to participate:**

- *Attend as many of the 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., JUNE 15, 2023 7-9:30 PM**

**Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center**

46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905

(301) 384-5009

<https://cmwrc.chinmayadc.org/cmwrc-home>



**Unique statement about this community:**

Chinmaya Mission is a Hindu organization that follows the Vedic teacher-student tradition (guru-shishya parampara) and makes available the ageless wisdom of Advaita Vedanta, the knowledge of universal oneness, providing the tools to realize the wisdom in one's life. Vedanta, the essential core of Hinduism, is the universal science of life, relevant to all people of all backgrounds and faiths as a way to enhance one's own faith. As a spiritual movement that aims for inner growth at individual and collective levels, the mission offers a wide array of Vedanta study forums, promotes Indian classical art forms, and operates numerous social service projects. To date, millions worldwide have benefited directly or indirectly from Chinmaya Mission's offerings.

**What is the origin of Chinmaya Mission?**

While Hinduism is an ancient religion dating back more than 7,000 years, Chinmaya Mission® was established in India in 1953 by devotees of the world-renowned Vedanta teacher, His Holiness Swami Chinmayananda. Guided by his vision, devotees all around the world formed the nucleus of a spiritual renaissance movement that now encompasses a wide range of activities, ennobling the lives of thousands globally. Presently, headed by His Holiness Swami Swaroopananda, the Mission is

administered by Central Chinmaya Mission Trust in Mumbai, India, with over 300 centers worldwide. Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center was established in the late 1980's, has five chapters, and Chinmaya Somnath is one of these.

**How did this sacred space come to be built here?**

Services in Virginia were originally held at homes of volunteers or in rental spaces in schools and community centers. As the congregation grew, these spaces were not enough to accommodate the different schedules and classes and hence the idea to build our own building was born. By God and our Gurudev's Blessing, Chinmaya Somnath was established in 2014 in Chantilly Virginia and continues to grow.

**What is distinct about this community?**

There is something here for everyone in the family, to gain the wisdom of Vedanta and the practical means for spiritual growth and happiness! We provide programming to individuals from any background, and age appropriate spiritual classes from pre-pregnancy till 55+ age. We also offer personal, physical and mental development programs, devotional programs, fun activities and community activities. Activities are year-round.

**What kind of outreach are we involved in?**

Fully volunteer driven, we do food drives for local pantries, home cooked meals for local shelters, run book drives and backpack drives to support back to school activities, and have supported seniors by writing postcards and arranging masks.

**Etiquette for people visiting Chinmaya Mission:**

Modest clothing covering shoulders and knees is recommended. Most of the congregation wears traditional Indian clothes. Animal skin or leather are generally not worn at houses of worship. Shoes are not allowed beyond the foyer of the building and need to be removed and kept in the shoe area. Only Vegetarian food is allowed inside the building. Food is not allowed in the auditorium or classrooms.

***"Happiness depends on what you can give,  
not on what you can get." -- Swami Chinmayananda***

**VISIT DATE: SUN., JULY 16, 2023 6-8:30 PM**

**St. Bernadette Catholic Church**

7600 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield, VA 22152

703-451-8576

<https://www.stbernpar.org>



**Unique statement about the community:**

Saint Bernadette Catholic Church is a parish of the Catholic Diocese of Arlington in Springfield, VA. Founded in 1960, the current church was constructed in 1981 after 20 years of meeting for Mass in the school gymnasium. Today we have 4,100 registered families, about 11,200 members, representing great diversity. A primary ministry of the parish is a PreK–8th grade parochial school with full enrollment of 490 children. We also teach the faith through a religious education program for 520 children. We offer Masses daily and six Masses for the Lord's Day. Saint Bernadette is a vibrant, growing community whose generosity in time and talent is noted in outreach and donations. We seek to be the visible presence of Jesus Christ in the context of the daily life of our community.

**What is the origin of this religious tradition?**

The Roman Catholic Church claims its origins in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became a human person, whose willing offering of himself to the Father on the cross and subsequent resurrection formed a "New Way," which came to be called Christianity in the second century. He chose Peter as the leader among his 12 apostles. After Peter's martyrdom in Rome, the church lived as the sole heart of Christianity until the schism of the Eastern Orthodox Churches in Constantinople in 1054, then

through the divisions of Christianity resulting from the Reformation of the Protestant Churches by Martin Luther in 1517.

**How did this sacred space come to be built here?**

The Catholic Diocese of Arlington was formed in 1974. Prior to that there was only one diocese in Virginia, in Richmond. There was great growth in the Metro DC area in the 60s, and as suburbs were developed churches were built. Most neighborhoods in the parish were built around 1960. Today the Diocese has 575K Catholics in 71 parishes, so parishes tend to be large. Ours is average size. Several parishes surrounding Saint Bernadette were built in subsequent years.

**What is distinct about the community?**

We are an average Catholic parish with a school. Our congregation tends to be more contemporary with a dedication to the teachings of Vatican II, with an emphasis on liturgy and community development. Our parish family is very diverse, both ethnically and economically, and very welcoming.

**What kind of outreach are we involved in?**

Our parish supports Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington, through whom we serve the financial, housing, and counseling needs of anyone in need, regardless of faith. We are also a principal participant in ECHO (Ecumenical Community Helping Others), a local non-profit supported both by ecumenical and interreligious congregations. We participate in other programs such as refugee resettlement, supporting missions, and feeding programs.

**Etiquette for people visiting St. Bernadette Church:**

All are invited to visit any day from 6:30am to 8pm. Often there are activities taking place in the church, and people come throughout the day to pray. An atmosphere of reverent silence is customary, as we believe that Jesus (God) is truly present in the hosts which we consecrate at Mass, which are kept in the gold tabernacle behind the altar.



**VISIT DATE: SUN., OCTOBER 15, 2023 3-5:30PM**

**The Firefly House**  
info@thefireflyhouse.org  
<https://thefireflyhouse.org>



**Unique statement about the community:**

The Firefly House is a pan-Pagan organization based in the Washington, DC area. Our ceremonies are rooted in Wiccan traditions, but our membership encompasses everything from druids, witches, heathens, and ceremonial magicians to polytheists, pantheists, animists, and even atheists. We aim to learn about our spiritual beliefs and practices, including ritual and witchcraft, by sharing knowledge collaboratively across our community and through public rituals and events.

**What is the origin of this religious tradition?**

Modern Paganism, sometimes called Neopaganism, is a collection of faith traditions that draws inspiration from the ancient world, including the religious and cultural traditions of Europe and the Mediterranean. These traditions, frequently interrupted by imperialism and conquest, were reinterpreted in the 19th and 20th Centuries for modern practice.

**How did this sacred space come to be built here?**

The “house” is metaphorical, i.e. there is no actual house for the Fireflies. Instead, as Pagan religions tend to fall into the category of earth-centered spiritualities, we practice our religion outside, typically in public parks, whenever possible. When it’s

not, we operate in the capacity of a “home church,” where members (whom we call initiates) invite others into their homes for services.

**What is distinct about the community?**

The Firefly House prides itself on being a spiritual home, or at least a rest stop, for those who haven’t found one elsewhere. We’re a pan-Pagan; non-exclusive, meaning we don’t require that you cut ties with or avoid other religious or spiritual communities; and radically inclusive of folks, including those traditionally excluded or ostracized by other religious and spiritual communities.

**What kind of outreach are we involved in?**

The size of the Firefly House is quite small so that limits the outreach we’re able to do. We’re also very aware that some of our members are active duty military or hold other jobs within the federal government which makes their involvement in a Pagan organization something that they may not be willing to disclose. For that matter, there are any number of reasons that a person might not be out of the “Broom Closet,” so to speak. As such, we tend to focus inward rather than outward. This program is the first time in many years that we’ve been a part of a program like this.

**Etiquette for people visiting the Firefly House:**

Please, come with an open mind. Paganism carries a lot of baggage, as do many of our terms and symbols. We’re very excited to host you and your guests, as hospitality is a core virtue.

***“The wisdom of Pagan theology is in its flexibility,  
its willingness to honor and remember the past  
while seeking to engage the present moment.”***

— Dr. Christine Hoff Kraemer

**VISIT DATE: THURS., NOVEMBER 16, 2023 7-9:30 PM**

**Burke Presbyterian Church**

5690 Oak Leather Drive, Burke, VA 22015

703-764-0456

*burkepreschurch.org*



**Unique statement about the community:**

We are a dynamic, energetic, uplifting, and thoughtful Christian congregation. We believe we are called by God to be a welcoming community of faith, offering hospitality to all people. Our church has always leaned into new things. We embrace changes, and those changes require us to go out and serve our evolving world.

**What is the origin of the Presbyterian Church (USA)?**

The Presbyterian Church is rooted in the reformed tradition of the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. As part of this tradition, we believe that we are always being reformed and growing in our faith. We believe in the holy trinity of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit and believe that the Bible is the written word of God. In a Presbytery, church leadership is a partnership between pastors and church members who have been called to be elders and deacons.

**How did this sacred space come to be built here?**

The congregation began meeting in 1978 in a local elementary school. Burke Presbyterian Church was chartered in April,

1980. The congregation designed the building with their theology in mind. Our worship space feels open. Large windows provide daylight, and a view of surrounding woods. Through windows we see the world and the greatness of God's creation. The large communion table at the front of the meeting house, which children love to sit under during the children's message, was designed so that the congregation could gather around it in sharing the sacrament of communion. The building has been expanded twice since originally constructed to continue serving the community with the most recent expansion completed in 2020.

**What is distinct about your community?**

We call the main space of the building the Meeting House, rather than a sanctuary. It was designed to not only be a place of worship, but also a room to gather for meals, meetings, and activities. There are no fixed pews, but chairs which can be rearranged for community meals, youth musicals, or play space for preschoolers.

**What kind of outreach are you involved in?**

We participate in many local and global ministries. We have recently started a monthly community dinner on the Second Tuesday of each month. We actively support social justice initiatives in Northern Virginia, such as affordable housing, FACETS, Homestretch, Christ House, and ECHO. We have partnered with our sister church in Kibwezi, Kenya since 1987. We have also had strong interfaith partnerships, including a Thanksgiving Interfaith service for 39 years.

**Etiquette for people visiting our house of worship:**

There is no formal dress code. Come as you are. Our worship space and gathering space are designed to build community. On Sunday mornings you will find people enjoying fellowship in the Gathering Space, as well as children playing on the climbing structure in front of the building.

***"For behold I am doing a new thing..." — Isaiah 43:19***

**VISIT DATE: SUN., DECEMBER 3, 2023 7-9:30PM**

**McLean Islamic Center**

1519 4th St NW Washington, DC 20001

202-483-8832

*thenationsmosque.org*



**What is distinct about this community?**

Coming soon

**What kind of outreach are we involved in?**

Coming soon

**Unique statement about the community:**

Coming soon

**Etiquette for people visiting our house of worship:**

Coming soon

**What is the origin of this religious tradition?**

Coming soon

**How did this sacred space come to be built here?**

Coming soon

**VISIT DATE: SUN., JANUARY 28, 2024 7-9:30PM**

**Drikung Dharma Surya Center**  
5300 Ox Road, Fairfax, Virginia 22030  
drikungdharmasurya@gmail.com  
*drikungdharmasurya.org*



**Unique statement about the community:**

DDSC temple was founded by His Eminence the 8th Garchen Rinpoche, a much-revered lama of the profound, unbroken Drikung Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Through education/teachings, training, meditation retreat and community services, DDSC temple engages in preserving and transmitting Buddhist teachings and values, particularly the authentic Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist tradition and practices of the 800-year-old profound, unbroken Drikung Kagyu lineage. The goal of the temple is to generate loving kindness and peace for the benefit of all and to eliminate violence and war.

**What is the origin of your religious tradition?**

We are rooted in Drikung Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, sometimes referred to as the “lineage of oral-instructions”. The “Ka” of Kagyu refers to the authoritative instructions, precepts or words of the Buddha while “gyu” is the uninterrupted lineage of masters and students. The origin of Drikung Kagyü can be traced back to the Great Indian Mahasiddha Tilopa (988-1069), who passed on his teachings to Mahasiddha Naropa who lived around the 10th-11th century. The founder of the Drikung Kagyü lineage was Lord Jigten Sumgön (1143-1217). From the founding of Drikung Thil Monastery in 1179 to now, the Drikung Kagyü lineage has been led by a succession of spiritual heads (“throne-holders”).

**How did this sacred space come to be built here?**

DDSC was established in 2011. In May 2015, we acquired a permanent physical temple, which originally was the Korean Borimsa Zen Buddhist Temple. We expanded the space and added several special features such as: Buddha Shakyamuni and Compassion Bodhisattva statues; 100 volumes of sacred “Words of the Buddha”; 1,000+ Buddha golden statues; a golden prayer wheel; and a World Peace Sand Mandala.

**What is distinct about this community?**

Our local sangha consists of various local Buddhist ethnic communities including Tibetan, Vietnamese, Mongolian, Chinese, Nepalese, Indian, Korean, Bhutanese, Laotian, Cambodian, and diverse Americans. Our worldwide sangha (through virtual online programs) expands over four continents. We bring everyone together to achieve happiness, freedom, and inner peace thereby bringing genuine relief from suffering for all sentient beings without exception.

**What kind of outreach are we involved in?**

We are a trusted monastic sangha and “Neighboring Home” resource for all those who seek spiritual refuge to alleviate suffering and seek guidance on the Buddhist path, offering yoga meditation, chanting, mindfulness training, and Tai-Chi.

**Etiquette for people visiting your house of worship:**

Everyone is welcome, and we ask visitors to abide by the rules of Bodhisattva Conduct: 1) Protect all life including animals and insects; 2) Refrain from discursive speech and creating discord in the Sangha; 3) Refrain from sexual misconduct; 4) Refrain from taking what is not given; and 5) Refrain from smoking and intoxicants of any kind. Our resident spiritual masters are ordained monk and nun, and are referred to as Venerable. As a sacred space, dress as you feel comfortable, yet humble and respectful. Please remove shoes upon entry.

***“It doesn’t matter whether one calls oneself a Buddhist or not a Buddhist. The Dharma is Love. Love is the only cause of happiness. Its nature is all-pervasive like space. Love is the sunlight of the mind.”***

*His Eminence the 8th Garchen Rinpoche*



**VISIT DATE: SUN., FEBRUARY 11, 2024 7-9:30 PM**

**Temple Rodef Shalom**

2100 Westmoreland St., Falls Church, VA 22043

(703) 532-2217

[www.templerodefshalom.org](http://www.templerodefshalom.org)



**Unique statement about the community:**

Temple Rodef Shalom (“TRS”) works to create sacred spaces and relationships inside and outside our building in the hopes that the Divine will always be present with us.

We are a thriving, vibrant, inclusive, sacred, loving Reform Jewish congregation. Founded in 1962, we have grown into the largest Jewish congregation in Virginia, and one of the largest in the United States, serving almost 1800 families. We are a community built on the idea that the divine spark lives in each of us. The coming together of those sparks results in a collective that is aglow with talents, skills, and aptitudes that benefit us all.

**What is the origin of this religious tradition?**

The Jewish People gained self-awareness as a people and faith about 3,300 years ago. Judaism is premised upon the belief in a singularity of God, Adonai, and as a people dedicated to the ideals of faith and life as revealed at Mt. Sinai and beyond. Reform Judaism is a tradition that has modernized and adapted the revelation to modernity.

**How did this sacred space come to be built here?**

In 1962, 37 families agreed to constitute a new Reform congregation in Northern Virginia. Most of these families had been members of Temple Beth El in Alexandria; others were unaffiliated families looking for a congregation in or near Falls Church. The community gathered initially in local rented spaces, and in May 1963, purchased 7 acres of wooded land in Falls Church on Westmoreland Street. In December of 1966 planning began on the future Temple building, designed to accommodate a congregation of 400-500 families. When the building was completed in 1970, there were 240 families. The building’s architecture reflects the tall trees nearby and it has been expanded 4 different times.

**What is distinct about the community?**

Our founding Rabbi, the late Laszlo Berkowits, was a survivor of the Holocaust and he brought to the congregation a vision of the sacred nature of every human life and the urgency of supporting the Jewish community. As a result, we’re a radically welcoming community from founding. We have a nursery school open to children of all faiths, and we welcome their families and all visitors to participate in events with us.

**What kind of outreach are we involved in?**

The community puts in practice the commandment to “repair the world” in the form of many social action projects in the broader community of Northern Virginia and beyond such as:

We are dedicated to accessibility to all. We welcome the families of those whose members are not Jewish. We welcome visitors. We have a nursery school open to children of any faith and welcome their parents and families to participate with us in community events.

**Etiquette for people visiting our house of worship:**

There is no required clothing or covering, but we prefer attire that is appropriate to a house of worship and conducive to community gathering. We respect the traditions of all who visit.

***“Make for me a sacred place that I may dwell among you.”***

*— Exodus 25:8*

**Schedule of Visits to Sacred Spaces**

**Thursday, June 15, 2023 7-9:30PM**

[Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center](#)

46 Norwood Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905

<https://cmwrc.chinmayadc.org/cmwrc-home>

**Thursday, July 25, 2023 6-8:30PM**

[St. Bernadette Catholic Church](#)

7600 Old Keene Mill Road, Springfield, VA 22152

<https://www.stbernpar.org>

**Sunday, October 15, 2023 3-5:30PM**

[The Firefly House](#)

<https://thefireflyhouse.org>

**Thursday, November 16, 2023 7-9:30PM**

[Burke Presbyterian Church](#)

5690 Oak Leather Drive, Burke, VA 22015

[burkepreschurch.org](http://burkepreschurch.org)

**Sunday, December 3, 2023 7-9:30PM**

[Masjid Muhammad](#)

1519 4th St NW Washington, DC 20001

[thenationsmosque.org](http://thenationsmosque.org)

**Sunday, January 21, 2024 7-9:30PM**

[Drikung Dharma Surya Center](#)

5300 Ox Road, Fairfax, Virginia 22030

[drikungdharmasurya.org](http://drikungdharmasurya.org)

**Thursday, July 15, 2021 7-8:30 PM**

[Temple Rodef Shalom](#)

2100 Westmoreland St., Falls Church, VA 22043

[www.templerodefshalom.org](http://www.templerodefshalom.org)

### **Finding Common Ground**

At the conclusion of our tours of each space, 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.

The date for this [Solidarity Pledge](#) will be:

**Thursday, May 9, 2024 7- 9PM**

Location to be determined

Go to [www.sharingsacredspaces.org](http://www.sharingsacredspaces.org) to find out more and to register for our events.

## **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.”

**Respect Everyone.** Respect the faith, culture, values, and background of each person. Appreciate common beliefs and respect differences between persons of different religions.

**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.

**Suspend judgment.** 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.

*Adapted from guidelines of Zen Master Jeong Ji, [blueheronzen.org](http://blueheronzen.org), with modifications and additions by the Toronto Sharing Sacred Spaces Planning Committee.*

**Notes**

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