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 Eglinton Rotary Club and The Christian Jewish Dialogue of Toronto for their invaluable partnership in this program.







SHARING SACRED SPACES, INC. www.sharingsacredspaces.org

SHARING SACRED SPACES

The Interreligious
Communities Project
Toronto, Ontario
2020-2021

















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 Toronto.

Beginning on October 15, 2020, 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 September 24, 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, if in person, refreshments. Each visit is thus 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.

Due to COVID restrictions and safety concerns, all visits will, for now, be conducted over Zoom, and have been redesigned to remain effective and meet our ultimate objectives while accommodating the online platform. We hope you will join in!

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 events as you can (now on ZOOM, register at www.sharingsacredspaces.org)
- 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., OCTOBER 15, 2020 7-8:30 PM

Islamic Foundation of Toronto (Nugget Mosque)

441 Nugget Ave, Scarborough, ON M1S 5E1 416.402.8542 (Imam Badat) / 416.992.2608 (Imam Ismail) https://islamicfoundation.ca/



Unique statement about this community:

The Islamic Foundation of Toronto is one of the largest and oldest Islamic community centers in Canada. It is one of the most widely recognized Mosques in the Greater Toronto Area and has hosted many internationally renowned speakers and guests. Since the 1969, the Islamic Foundation has been serving the Muslim community in Toronto and all over Canada.

What are the origins of Islam?

According to Islamic texts and tradition, Islam (meaning submission) began with Prophet Adam (first man on Earth), and continued in a long line of prophets that Include Prophet Abraham, Prophet Moses, and Prophet Jesus - peace be upon them all – each of whom called people to the same God but with a message that would resonate with that particular community. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is regarded as the last messenger in that line of prophethood. He received revelation from Angel Gabriel in 610 A.D. at the age of 40 while meditating in the Cave of Hira in Mecca, Arabia. These revelations were memorized by his companions and written with Prophet Muhammad's instruction. Later, they were compiled to be the Qur'an (meaning "the recitation").

How did this sacred space come to be built here?

The Islamic Foundation of Toronto was established in 1969 when an old 3,000-square-foot (280 m2) building was purchased at Rhodes Avenue and converted into a mosque. The 2.3-acre (9,300 m2) site, where the Islamic Foundation currently stands, was purchased in 1984.

What is distinct about this community?

The Islamic Community Centre is accessible by public transportation and is open for the five daily prayers. The Friday congregation prayer is attended by 2,000 worshippers. The full-time school has a qualified staff with over 300 students from Junior Kindergarten to grade eight. More than four hundred students attend the evening and weekend Islamic classes.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

The Islamic Foundation is promoting diversity and providing services for people. It strives to help out the community and promote togetherness. It aims to provide the best for the people and help them achieve. Islamic Foundation is very much involved in inviting other religious people for visits. It has held many tours such as the one when Imam Ismail Ulghar and Imam Yusuf Badat gave a tour to some Jewish members from the Parliament of World Religions for the purpose of understanding how Jews and Muslims work in the funeral department and bring peace (meaning both religions have similar rules when it comes to carrying out the funeral).

Etiquette for people visiting the Nugget Mosque:

There aren't any specific clothing for those just coming to visit. But as always, respect for the place of worship must be there. It would be best for the visitor to notify before visiting or book an appointment.

"And fear a day when you will return to God and every soul will be compensated for what it earned" --Al-Quran

VISIT DATE: THURS., JANUARY 21, 2021 7-8:30 PM

Regent Park Community Ministry

40 Oak S., Toronto, ON, M5A 2C6 416.834.5121 crc@tcrc.ca



Unique statement about the community:

We are a United Church community of faith and justice based primarily in Regent Park. We are creating a peaceful community where all are listened to and respected. We express God's compassionate love demonstrated in Jesus and present to us in and through the Holy Spirit. We are committed to being innovative, intercultural, and open to all.

What is the origin of Regent Park Community Ministry?

The United Church of Canada is the largest Protestant denomination in Canada. We minister to over 2 million people in about 3,000 congregations.

The history of the United Church is closely entwined with the history of Canada itself. The United Church was inaugurated on June 10, 1925 in Toronto, Ontario, when the Methodist Church, Canada, the Congregational Union of Canada, and 70 per cent of the Presbyterian Church of Canada entered into a union. Also joining was the small General Council of Union Churches, centred largely in Western Canada. It was the first union of churches in the world to cross historical denominational lines

and received international acclaim. Each of the founding churches had a long history in Canada prior to 1925. (www.united-church.ca)

What is the history of this specific religious community?

This project was begun over a decade ago to establish a new model for deeply urban ministry in the diverse and burgeoning community of Regent Park where there is a viable need for creative church presence.

What is distinct about the community?

While we are a United Church community of faith, we are a very inclusive community that includes people of other faiths and those who would not identify with any particular faith. We focus on community, spirituality and social justice.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

We endeavour to meet the spiritual and other needs of Regent Park residents in innovative non-conventional ministry; to respond to the desires of the spiritual-but-not-religious through various means including community activities such as refugee sponsorship, worship in various forms, interfaith partnerships, study and discussion groups in local coffee shops and pubs, etc.

Etiquette for Regent Park Community Ministry:

We are housed at the Toronto CRC, a very active and innovative community space that stands on the grounds of the old Regent Park United Church. This is an informal and welcoming space and you will be greeted by Regent Park Community Ministry in the same manner.

"For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." -- Isaiah 56:7

VISIT DATE: THURS., FEBRUARY 18, 2021 7-8:30PM

The Ganapathy Temple

468 Gerrard Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 2H3, Canada 647.699.0565

<u>srimahaganapathytemple468@gmail.com</u> <u>https://torontosrimahaganapathytemple.com</u>



Unique statement about the community:

Our community started in Cabbage Town. We are an ethnic diverse community representing Hindu communities in the Greater Toronto Area.

What is the origin of the Ganapathy Temple?

There are many Hindus in Toronto who came from many countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius, Trinidad, Guyana, Trinidad, Fiji and many others. The earliest known Hindu temple is the Hindu Pirarthana Sabha at 62 Fern Avenue, which conducts prayers according to the North Indian traditions.

What is the history of this house of worship?

When Sri Lankan Tamils started arriving in Canada in the 80s, they and the South Indians started a Temple at 10865 Bayview Avenue known as Ganesha Temple and registered as The Hindu Temple Society of Canada. As it was far for the Tamil Hindu population in Toronto, many other Temples were started on a small scale and gradually developed in many parts of Greater Toronto.

Ganesha or (**Ganesh**) is the elephant-headed god in Hinduism. He is the son of Shiva and Parvati. Ganesha is a very popular god in Hinduism, and is one of the most worshipped. Hindu tradition states that Ganesha is a god of wisdom, success and good luck. He is also the giver of different types of favors and a god of listening.

The Ganapthy (another name for Ganesha) Temple in Gerrard Street also started in the latter part of the last century on Parliament Street as there were many Tamil Hindus living and conducting businesses in St. James Town, Cabbage Town and Regent Park neighborhoods. It relocated temporarily to Gerrard and Broadview due to a fire and later moved to the present location at 468 Gerrard Street near River Street. Hindus who originated from many countries patronize it, as the common puja is done in Sanskrit.

What is distinct about the community?

We practice Indian Hinduism. Ours is a storefront temple which is easily accessible in the core of Toronto. We have 1,000 members in our community.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

We welcome all people from all over the GTA. We offer 6 different times for daily prayers and meals for visitors and our community. We have an annual 3-day birthday celebration for Ganesh with 300 members in attendance.

Etiquette for people visiting the Temple:

Please take off your shoes, hats, and jackets upon entry. Be humble and respectful. Practice "Namaste" as a greeting with one another.

"May God give you a rainbow for every storm, a smile for every tear. A promise for every care and an answer to every prayer!!" --Ganesh Mantra

VISIT DATE: THURS., MARCH 18, 2021 7-8:30 PM

Ossington Chapel of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints

851 Ossington Avenue, Toronto Ontario, M6G 3V2 416.531.0535

Churchofjesuschrist.org



Unique statement about the community:

All members of the congregation are involved in some degree in the administration or implementation of the efforts needed to fulfill the mission of the Church.

What is the origin of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints?

In 1820, God appeared to 14-year-old Joseph Smith, setting in motion the events that led to the "restoration" of the ancient Church of Jesus Christ to the earth. Joseph Smith was born in 1805 in Vermont and later moved with his family to the rural community of Palmyra, New York. Confused by the conflicting claims of various faiths, Joseph went to the Bible for guidance, and there found the challenge to "ask of God" for himself. As a result, the most dramatic revelation since biblical times occurred -- God and his Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to the boy and gave him instructions. He was commanded to join none of the existing churches and was told that God would restore to earth the Church originally organized by Jesus Christ, with all of its truths and priesthood authority. Ten years later, after a series of

revelations and dramatic visitations to Joseph and others, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints was officially organized on April 6th, 1830, in Fayette, New York.

What is the history of your house of worship?

The building was dedicated June 25th, 1939 by the Prophet and President of the church Heber J Grant. It's unusual to have the President dedicate a local church building. However the Ossington Chapel was the first building in eastern Canada at the time.

What is distinct about your community?

Our local community follows a worldwide belief of personal ministry. Each member is asked to watch over specific members to assist in following the Lord Jesus Christ's teaching to be our brother's keeper, in good times and in times of need and support.

What kind of outreach are you involved in?

Members participate in our web-based interface called "Just Serve," which enables needs to be matched with members' resources. Genealogical research is available at family history centers within our buildings along with free English lessons. A self-reliance program is also available to assist people in personal and family development. Lastly, the Bishop's storehouse is available to people with short term food needs.

Etiquette for people visiting our house of worship:

We are encouraged to wear clothing that would be dignified and reverent. This means different things to different people and we encourage all to attend regardless of their attire.

"And behold I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God." --Mosiah 2:17

VISIT DATE: THURS., APRIL 15, 2021 7-8:30PM

College Street United Church

454 College Street, Toronto, ON, M4J 4N3 416.929.3019

collegestreetunited.com



Unique statement about the community:

We come together to learn about God and to share in the rich heritage of persons who come from every "corner of the world" to Toronto.

What is the origin of College Street United Church?

Like other Christian churches, The United Church of Canada is rooted in God, Jesus, and the Bible. However, the way we understand God, practice our faith, and read the Bible is distinct, just as it is distinct in other denominations of the Christian church. A New Creed and A Song of Faith outline some of the basic elements of Christianity as understood and practised in The United Church of Canada.

We have two sacraments, baptism and communion, both of which are open to people of any age. We recognize the sacraments of baptism from other Christian denominations. The United Church works together with other Christian churches

whenever possible, and among people of other religions in Canada and throughout the world on matters of social justice, peace, and human dignity.

How did this sacred space come to be built here?

In the late 1800's there was nothing but farms and cornfield around what is now Bathurst and College Street. But in 1873, two small girls taking refuge from a snowstorm in the home of Alex Grimson led to the beginning of a Sunday School in the home of Mr. A. Milne. Soon a congregation developed, and a rough cast church was built in late 1873. On February 24th, 1874 College Street Presbyterian Church became official.

What is distinct about this community?

We're a diverse congregation and fluid in downtown Toronto, being close to Universities and Colleges. We are active in our local community and committed to making our church a welcoming place for everyone, whether you're just visiting or looking for a community to worship with permanently.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

Hospitality for the community, thriving to become a community hub. Serving meals, practicing our open door policy where everyone is welcome to come in, relax, find a listening ear and help when needed.

Etiquette for people visiting our house of worship:

Our Church is accessible to all forms of locomotion. Wheelchairs and walkers can roll right into the sanctuary from the street. Plenty of space out front for bikes, skateboards, and longboards. Seekers and guests are welcome, everyone is welcome. Come as you are.

"Share with the Lord's people who are in need.

Practice hospitality." -- Romans 12:13

VISIT DATE: THURS., MAY 13, 2021 7-8:30PM

First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto

175 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, M4V 1P7 416.924.9654

www.firstunitariantoronto.org



Unique statement about the community:

Unitarian Universalists are not bound by a common creed, or by obedience to an outside authority. We are united by a shared covenant of principles and values. We draw wisdom and inspiration from many of the world's great religious traditions, as well as science, philosophy, and literature.

What is the origin of Unitarian Universalism?

Unitarian Universalism is a liberal religious tradition formed from the consolidation of two branches of Christianity: Unitarianism and Universalism. In 1961, in North America, these faiths consolidated to become the new religion of Unitarian Universalism as the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).

What is the history of this Congregation?

First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto was established in 1845 by 15 members who had brought their Unitarian faith with them as immigrants from the British Isles. The church, originally located on George St., moved in 1850 to a new gothic style building on Jarvis St. designed by William Thomas, the architect of the St. Lawrence Hall. By 1943, the area had become the "red light district" and in 1950 the congregation moved to a new,

modern building at 175 St. Clair Ave. W. where it remains to this day. When the building was renovated in 1992 a stained-glass tower was added, representing the flaming chalice, the symbol of the UU faith.

What is distinct about your community?

Our congregation's members hold a wide range of religious and theological beliefs. We actively welcome all who share our values and principles regardless of their religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, age, gender, family structure or economic circumstances.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

In keeping with the history of social justice as a cornerstone of Unitarian Universalism, our congregation is involved in, among other things: refugee sponsorship, Regent Park School of Music, Amnesty International, volunteer construction trips in Central America, a Truth and Reconciliation working group, and is a Green Sanctuary.

Etiquette for people visiting your house of worship:

All are welcome! Our ministers are ordained clergy and are referred to as Reverend. They serve regardless of gender, sexual orientation or gender identity. Join us as you are. Dress as you feel comfortable. The chalice in our sanctuary is a sacred symbol.

"Love is our doctrine,
The quest for truth is our sacrament
And service is our prayer.
To dwell together in peace,
To seek knowledge in freedom
To serve life to the end that all souls shall grow Into harmony with the divine,
Thus do we covenant with each other and with all."

VISIT DATE: THURS., JULY 15, 2021 7-8:30 PM

Toronto Buddhist Church

1011 Sheppard Avenue W. Toronto, ON M3H 2T7 416. 534.4302 tbc@tbc.on.ca



Unique statement about the community:

The Toronto Buddhist Church (TBC) is the only Jodo Shinshu temple in Toronto.

What is the origin of the religion?

The tradition taught at Toronto Buddhist Church is Jodo Shinshu Buddhism and is one of the largest sects of Buddhism in Japan. Our founder, Shinran Shonin (1173-1262), conceived the term 'Jodo Shinshu' to represent the True Teaching of the Pure Land received from his master Honen.

What is the history of this house of worship?

The first Buddhist Temple in Canada was established in 1905 in Vancouver. In 1947, we purchased our first home in downtown Toronto. Our current building is stylish with large rooms for classes, meetings and workshops and is complete with a library, meditation room, and commercial kitchen.

What is distinct about the community?

The Toronto Buddhist Church has its roots in the immigrant experience of the Japanese diaspora in Canada in the late 1800s and was largely shaped by the impact of the forced

evacuation of Japanese Canadians from the BC coast in World War II. Today we welcome anyone who is interested in following the teachings of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism – regardless of age, race, gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

Our Sangha (community) includes 300 members. We hold weekly services on Sunday morning at 11:00 am, as well as weddings, funerals, and memorial services. We also hold Kids Sangha services and programs on the first and third Sundays of each month.

Etiquette for people visiting our house of worship:

Nenju And Gassho:

The Nenju (or Juzu) is a circle of beads carried in the left hand or worn on the wrist to make us mindful of the Buddha. Gassho means to put our palms together with the onenju encircling them.

Shoko:

An incense offering is made in front of Amida Buddha. In Shin Buddhism, offering incense is an expression of reverence and gratitude.

Naijin:

The Naijin is the altar area and represents the Pure Land of Amida Buddha or nirvana. When facing the Naijin, the altar on the right honors the founder of our Jodo Shinshu tradition, Shinran Shonin.

"The light of wisdom exceeds all measure,
And every finite living being
Receives this illumination that is like the dawn.
So take refuge in Amida, the true and real light."
--Shoshinge

VISIT DATE: THURS., SEPTEMBER 24, 2021 7-8:30PM

First Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC)

116 Bond St, Toronto, ON M5B 1X8 416.977.4786

firstelc.ca



Unique statement about the community:

First Lutheran is a small church with a big heart in downtown Toronto. We seek to embody and practice the expansive and unconditional love of Jesus Christ by combining tradition and ongoing reformation in the post-modern urban context.

What is the origin of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church?

During the European renaissance in 1517, Martin Luther, a German monk, challenged the church of his day to return to the original roots of Christianity. During the course of the Reformation, layers of teaching, tradition, rites, and ritual that had accumulated over the centuries were re-examined and discarded, renewed, or reaffirmed.

How did this sacred space come to be built here?

As Toronto's first Lutheran congregation, it traces its origins to 1850 when a number of German Lutheran families in Toronto began to meet in their homes for worship. The congregation

was formally constituted in 1851, and later moved to 116 Bond Street in 1857, the exact site of the present church. The current brick structure was substantially completed by the time of its consecration in late 1898.

What is distinct about the community?

We are a bilingual church, English and German. First Lutheran is Toronto's Lutheran mother church: it has played a role in the founding of many other ethnic Lutheran congregations—Finns, Hungarians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, and Swedes.

What kind of outreach are we involved in?

Our pastor is available on an appointment basis to offer support during difficult times. Seniorenverein is a German-speaking seniors' group that meets monthly. Men's Breakfast is another long-time monthly tradition at First. We also partner with local agencies to provide space, volunteers, and donations for wider outreach. We worked with the Ryerson Student Union Good Food Centre Break-Fast program, providing free breakfasts to students, and the Ryerson Student Christian Movement, with whom we host a weekly Bible study. We host an LGBTQ affirming Gospel choir, In Kloo Siv Voices, and until COVID 19 restrictions were the site of Jumu'ah Prayers of the Hyderi Muslim Congregation.

Etiquette for people visiting our house of worship:

Our church has a "come as you are" atmosphere. Our greeters will give you a friendly welcome and the order of service as you enter. The leaders of the service will invite you to stand at times, if you are able to.

"I give you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, so you also must love each other. This is how everyone will know that you are my disciples, when you love each other." --John 13:34-35

Schedule of Visits to Sacred Spaces

Thursday, October 15, 2020 7-8:30PM

Islamic Foundation of Toronto (Nugget Mosque) 441 Nugget Ave, Scarborough, ON M1S 5E1 https://islamicfoundation.ca/

Thursday, January 21, 2021 7-8:30PM

Regent Park Community Ministry 40 Oak S., Toronto, ON, M5A 2C6 crc@tcrc.ca

Thursday, February 18, 2021 7-8:30PM

The Ganapathy Temple 468 Gerrard Street E, Toronto, ON M5A 2H3, Canada https://torontosrimahaganapathytemple.com/

Thursday, March 18, 2021 7-8:30PM

Ossington Chapel of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints 851 Ossington Avenue, Toronto Ontario, M6G 3V2 Churchofjesuschrist.org

Thursday, April 15, 2021 7-8:30PM

College Street United Church 454 College Street, Toronto, ON, M4J 4N3 collegestreetunited.com

Thursday, May 13, 2021 7-8:30PM

First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto 175 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, M4V 1P7 www.firstunitariantoronto.org

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

Toronto Buddhist Church 1011 Sheppard Avenue W., Toronto, ON M3H 2T7 tbc@tbc.on.ca

Thursday, September 24, 2021 7-8:30PM

First Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) 116 Bond St, Toronto, ON M5B 1X8 firstelc.ca

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.

Go to <u>www.sharingsacredspaces.org</u> 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, with modifications and additions by the Toronto Sharing Sacred Spaces Planning Committee.

<u>Notes</u>