

Christian-Muslim Dialogue

First United Church of Oak Park
with the
Villa Park Mosque

Fall 2010

Goal:

To create opportunities for members of both communities to get to know each other and to share what is important in our respective faiths and personal lives.

Objectives:

- To enjoy hospitality offered by each community.
- To learn about the Islamic faith and practice
- To address common misconceptions and prejudices.
- To learn more about our own faith as we seek to explain it to others.

First: Three adult education sessions to help First United Church folks understand the basics of Islam.

Dates: Sundays, September 19, 26, and October 3, 9:30 – 10:30 am.

Speaker: *Azam Nizamuddin*, an attorney with offices in Des Plaines. He also teaches courses on Islam at Loyola U. Chicago. He co-chairs the Interfaith Committee of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago (CIOGC), and is a board member of the Niagra Foundation, a leading interfaith and cultural organization in Chicago.

Second: Gatherings in homes to welcome friends from the Villa Park Mosque and First United Church; we will offer hospitality and a meal, and get acquainted!
(Is your home available?)

Third: All of us are invited to read the book by Dave Eggers, called *Zeitoun*. A “quick read,” it will help First United folks identify misconceptions present in today’s USA about Muslims and enliven our discussions.

Fourth: Other events, gatherings, etc., to be determined by those participating.

The following persons at First United Church are coordinating our plans:

—Bob Worley rworley@wans.net

—Pauline Coffman p.coffman@sbcglobal.net

—Leah Fowler lfowler@firstunitedoakpark.com

Contact us with your questions and ideas and offers of help!

About First United Church of Oak Park

We are a union church of the Presbyterian Church, USA, and the United Church of Christ (UCC).

We seek to be an inclusive expression of Christ’s body as a “More Light/Open and Affirming” congregation.

To read more about our mission, our history, and programs, go to: www.firstunitedoakpark.com

First United Church of Oak Park
848 Lake Street
Oak Park, IL 60301
708-386-5215

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Islamic Foundation: Brief History

- Founded in 1974 and recognized as a tax-exempt organization by the United States in 1975.
- Weekend Islamic school was started in 1975 for children in a rented classroom with 36 students.
- Legal battles began in 1981 for a permit to establish a permanent building facility for the Foundation in the Village of Villa Park, Illinois. We won a strong verdict from the court after spending two years and \$50,000.
- In 1983, a former public school building (24,000 square feet) set in a 7.1-acre lot was purchased for \$585,000. The house adjacent to this land was also purchased at the same time for use as a residence for the Imam.
- Extensive remodeling of the building was done in 1984 at a cost of \$131,000, in order to equip the building for the community's religious, social, and cultural needs.
- A Muslim cemetery with a space for 1125 gravesites was established in 1984.
- In 1988, a full-time school from kindergarten to 8th grade was established. Later we also added pre-school for children ages 3 to 5 years.
- The parking facilities at the Foundation were expanded with installation of floodlights in 1993.
- In 1995, to accommodate our growing community, we began constructing a new Mosque.
- In 1997, we began a high school with 9th grade, added 10th grade in 1998, and later added 11th & 12th grade.

At present we are a complete high school fully certified by Illinois State Board of Education, with excellent record of success and achievements.

- In 1998, we completed the construction of Masjid, which is probably the largest Mosque in North America. In addition to the Masjid, the new building includes a bookstore, library and reading room, banquet/lecture hall, cafeteria and kitchen, a facility for washing the deceased and funeral services, and offices for the Foundation staff. The entire cost of \$3.6 million for this project was raised within the community.
- In February 1999 the parking facility was again extended at a cost of \$120,000.
- In 2003, we added the parking lot on the west side of the Masjid at a cost of over \$200,000.

At present, we are in the process of completing our new school building, at a cost of \$7 million, Insha Allah! (God willing!)

From www.islamicfoundationvp.org "About Us"
The school enrolls almost 700 students in a pre-K through 12th grade program.
Islamic Foundation of Villa Park
300 Highridge Road
Villa Park, IL 60181
630-782-6562