# Sacred Spaces Policy and Developing the Sacred Spaces Calendar

## Sacred Spaces Policy

1. The project of Sacred Spaces reflects in its calendar the faith and spiritual diversity of Halifax, particularly in the central Halifax area.
2. Spaces with only one place of assembly or the only community within Halifax include: Baha'i, Brahma Kumaris, Hindu, Humanist, Indigenous, Sikh, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Taoist, Pagan, Universalist-Unitarian, Zoroastrian, etc. It is thus essential that these communities be considered as sites to visit.
3. Rotation among other Spaces needs the consideration of factors like meeting time, travel distance and convenient bus routes, accessibility and an established and sufficient space for meeting and socializing, as well as parking and winter constraints, etc. These other spaces include Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim.
4. Because of the number of Christian communities, only one Christian community will be included in the schedule, and there will be no repeat annual visits to any one Christian community. The entire breadth of the Christian communities will be part of the rotation, including Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic, as well as a variety in traditional, emergent, and contemporary expressions of the faith.
5. A proposal for the February calendar of Sacred Spaces will be finalized by the Interfaith Harmony Halifax (IHH) team no later than its final spring meeting. No additions to the calendar will be made after this point, unless there are extenuating circumstances. This decision will be up to the Sacred Spaces team in coordination with the IHH coordinator.
6. Requests being made to be included as a future site for inclusion in the calendar will be received by the Sacred Spaces team. Applicants should be aware of the considerations outlined in item 3 in "Steps for Developing a Sacred Spaces Calendar."
7. General Guidelines.
   (a) The WIHW committee in Jordan, in reviewing submissions on the Week, has cautioned against syncretism. Religious syncretism exhibits blending of two or more religious belief systems into a new system, or the incorporation into a religious tradition of beliefs from unrelated traditions.
   (b) The events of the Week are not to be used for purposes of proselytizing. The public is vigilant of and suspicious about attempts to convert someone from one religion, belief, or opinion to another. The Week will not be used for this purpose.
   (c) The events offered at the Sacred Spaces offer representative glimpses of the way each community regularly gathers. Visits should not result in any distortion of how the community is accustomed to worship/gather.
   (d) Host communities are appreciative of diversity, and they are sensitive to being welcoming to guests from diverse faiths, beliefs, and cultures.
   (e) Cultivating respect, expecting and acknowledging differences, viewing others faiths with understanding, being tolerant of differences in beliefs/theologies/practices, etc. are important stances in living harmoniously.
   (f) Political and governance differences vary greatly among the world's faiths. It is recommended that debates on controversial matters, while they are realities urging

change that often comes through conflict and struggle, should not be raised at Interfaith Harmony Week events to which the general public who may hold differing opinions has been invited. While some issues beg to be addressed, matters that cause discomfort to guests who have been invited is not an hospitable act. Such discussions more appropriately belong to the Library Conversations where diversity will be welcomed.

## Steps in Developing a Sacred Spaces Calendar

1. Develop a calendar of visits for the upcoming year in consultation with the Sacred Spaces team. This calendar covers as many days and times as possible, without conflicts among events. The Sunday after the Week is used for additional events and the Celebration. Present the calendar to the IHH team at its final spring meeting for input and/or approval.
2. Honour the relationships with host communities developed in the past. However, the Sacred Spaces team will explain the need for rotation when circumstances require.
3. Recognize the limitations of potential host communities based on considerations like location, facilities, interest/understandings and willingness to fully participate, parking considerations, winter challenges, languages used to accommodate guests, and so on.
4. Meet with the leadership of the proposed new host/s to explain the intention and history of World Interfaith Harmony Week, review the history of IHH, explain the needs in hosting at this proposed location, such as: develop website descriptions on the history of the community and a guide for guests, confirm a proposed date for the fall meeting of the host communities, get contact information of the two or three hosts who will attend the host meeting and who will serve as greeters the day of the visit, etc. After a full introduction to the needs and a time to consider the request, see if the proposed host (both leadership and the community) is interested.
5. Emphasize the importance of all hosts – especially new hosts – gathering at the fall meeting of hosts.
6. Revise the new Sacred Space calendar and Guide for Guests.

## Fall Gathering of Hosts

1. Set the date for the meeting while being attentive to conflicts with religious holidays.
2. Book a space for the meeting.
3. Plan the format of the hosts' meeting, including the facilitation.
4. Inform the hosts – and the designated two or three hosts from each community – of the details of the meeting. Encourage that more hosts than a single designated leader attend from each community.
5. Develop the packets of materials for all attendees. These materials include: a description of WIHW's origins, a Sacred Spaces calendar, an Interfaith Engagement poster, a page of IE Participant quotes, a Declaration Template, a host welcome message for the community, Hints for Hosts, Guide for Guests, the previous year's Celebration program, poster of Library Conversations, sample passport from previous year, etc.

6. Prepare nametags for the designated hosts within the communities and deliver them just prior to the Week.
7. After all events have been concluded, send thank you messages to the communities and their leadership by letters, emails, and/or phone calls.