



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cultivating Peace through Inter-spiritual Practices and Sufi Whirling

From: Congregation Har Shalom

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August 24, 2016—MISSOULIANS INVITED TO CHANT AND WHIRL WITH A DERVISH

Continuing the momentum from a week of “Celebrating Islam” in April, Har Shalom will host three peace-building events in September. One of these, an introduction to “The Turn” of the whirling dervishes, may be the first time that Missoulians have been offered an opportunity to try Sufi whirling for themselves and learn about the underlying principles of this unique contemplative middle eastern practice. A second event will invite participants to join a Sufi chanting practice called “Zikr,” and a third event will echo the popular final event of “Celebrating Islam Week” with an evening of Dances of Universal Peace.

“We are pleased to offer these further opportunities for inter-spiritual sharing,” said Laurie Franklin, Spiritual Leader at Har Shalom, who was active in organizing the Islamic celebration week in April. “Islamic culture is multi-dimensional and not well understood,” she said. “These upcoming events are important because they involve participants actively, engaging people's bodies, hearts, and souls as well as their minds. This creates experiential knowledge and wisdom, and builds understanding and peace.”

In chronological sequence, the upcoming events are:

Wednesday September 7, 6:30-8:30pm

Dances of Universal Peace. These easy circle dances bring people together with live music to move in harmony using short phrases from the world's sacred traditions. The theme for the evening will be “The Simple Pulse of Peace,” emphasizing that peace is natural, rhythmic, and not complicated, like breath.

Saturday September 17, 7-9pm

Zikr: A Sufi Ceremony of Remembrance. This introspective chanting practice uses short mantric phrases, honoring a principle that hearts find peace in remembrance of the sacred. The Zikr will be introduced and led by Hafizullah Chisti, a shaikh in the Sufi Ināyati Order, with opportunities for questions and discussion.

Sunday September 18, 1-5pm

The Inner *Turn* of the Whirling Dervishes: A Workshop. Led by Hafizullah Chisti, who studied for over 20 years with the Mevlevi Dervishes, this workshop will introduce the spiritual alchemy of The Turn, a moving meditation and embodied prayer that engages all planes of one's being. It harnesses the ego, frees the soul to know itself more deeply, and allows one to act more authentically in life. Participants need not desire to learn the physical Turn to benefit.

According to Chisti, “First of all, you won’t get dizzy. That’s because we aren’t going to be spinning at first. We’ll be doing exercises that will impart awareness of how our life-force moves differently on the two sides of the body, how consciousness moves between the 'inner' and 'outer' of life, and how these things act upon us in all aspects of our life.”

Chisti, the Sufi leader who will be visiting from Seattle, has “walked, stumbled, crawled, and danced the Sufi path” since 1976. He is an elder, lineage-holder, senior teacher, and mentor of teachers-in-training. His passion is sharing spiritual practice, with a teaching style that is informal, humorous, free of dogma, and accessible.

According to Franklin, “The three 'Abrahamic' faiths—Islam, Judaism, and Christianity—have much in common. We are literally and figuratively cousins, and deeply kindred when it comes to the inner life. It makes sense for us to come together with open hearts, and share each other's practices.”

All three events will be held at Har Shalom, 3035 S. Russell St. in Missoula. Pre-registration is required for the whirling workshop, which will have a fee of \$15-35. Donations will be requested for the Zikr and Dances of Universal Peace events. To register or for more information, visit “Dances of Universal Peace Missoula” on Facebook, or contact jenny@one4allddevelopment.com or 406-240-6474.

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