



SUGGESTED PROGRAM FOR SYNAGOGUES AND MOSQUES PARTICIPATING IN THE 2ND ANNUAL WEEKEND OF TWINNINGSM ACROSS NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE November 13-15, 2009

I. Welcoming Remarks

A leading figure from each 'twinning' synagogue and mosque will take the stage as chairperson for the event and greet those assembled.

Suggested opening remarks:

- The 2nd Annual Weekend of TwinningSM of Mosques and Synagogues Across North America and Europe is the largest-ever "gathering" of Muslims and Jews in the world. This year's event will include scores of synagogues, mosques and Jewish and Muslim student groups in the United States, Canada, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium and Russia, holding one-on-one gatherings on the weekend of November 13-15 to consider the theme "Building a Common Agenda".

By taking part in the Weekend of TwinningSM and ongoing follow-up activities, our congregations are joining a burgeoning international campaign to nurture ties of communication, friendship, trust and cooperation between Muslims and Jews. We believe that strengthening our relationship and working together as allies on issues of mutual concern is a moral imperative that will greatly benefit our communities and societies we live in.

The Weekend of TwinningSM represents an opportunity to examine and celebrate the commonalities in our faiths and traditions and to begin a discussion of issues on which Muslims and Jews can work together fruitfully for the betterment of both communities and for society as a whole. These include saving the Environment, Fighting Poverty, Protecting Immigrants and Confronting Islamophobia and anti-Semitism Together.

Note: Participating synagogues and mosques may decide to engage a professional moderator for the event. This is at the organizers' discretion, and fees associated with enlisting such a moderator are to be absorbed by the two institutions.

II. Protocol

Chairpersons lay out the guidelines that will be adhered to in conducting the event to ensure that it remains a mutually beneficial sharing of ideas and opinions. These guidelines include:

- The right of each person who asks to address the gathering to fully share his or her own perspective without assigning blame to or ridiculing those who may express contrary opinions or come from differing perspectives.
- All participants in the event should listen to each other in a courteous and respectful fashion, without interrupting or shouting down those with whom they disagree.
- The chairpersons should inform the audience that the purpose of the event is to strengthen relations between Muslims and Jews in North America and Europe. Therefore, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should not be allowed to dominate the discussion during Weekend of TwinningSM programs. The chairpersons are encouraged to make a joint statement near the beginning of the meeting, acknowledging the pain that Muslims and Jews alike feel about the ongoing violence and suffering that impacts both of our peoples in the Middle East and encouraging all of those assembled to pray together for an early end to the conflict. However, they should urge participants not to focus on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict since such a conversation would likely take over the overall discussion and create more discord than understanding. They should emphasize that our coming together to strengthen communication, reconciliation and cooperation between Jews and Muslims will be a win-win for both of our communities and for society as a whole.
- Once the chairpersons have outlined the goals, objectives and protocol, they should make clear that they will rule out of bounds comments or behaviors by the participants that violate the guiding principles.



As noted, twinned congregations are urged to begin a discussion during their Weekend of Twinningsm program on a societal issue on which they can work together. They should agree to appoint a joint follow-up committee to continue the discussion after the Weekend of Twinningsm to determine not only which issue the two congregations will focus their efforts on, but specific actions they wish to take on that issue. For example, if the twinned congregations decide to work together on Saving The Environment, they may choose to do a tree planting event together during National Arbor Day, join together to clean up a blighted area, or to take some other action together that will tangibly improve the environment in their area.

Our recommendation of the four topic areas mentioned above is only that—a recommendation. Synagogues and mosques may decide to choose a different topic altogether about which they share deep concerns. The issues they choose may be national or international in character or it may be local. We recognize that issues of concern in one part of North America or Europe may be very different than in others. That is why we leave this decision up to the twinned congregations.

Why are we urging twinned congregations to settle on a societal issue on which they can work together? First, because doing so will help to ensure continuity in the relationship between congregations. Not only will they meet once a year on the Weekend of Twinningsm, but will begin working together on an ongoing and sustained basis on an issue that is of importance to both.

Secondly, we are convinced that by working together on a societal issue, mosques and synagogues can role-model to our own communities and to people of all backgrounds, the understanding that Jews and Muslims can indeed work together constructively and harmoniously in order to improve conditions for all members of society. We believe this will have a transformative impact on both of our communities and on the larger society as well. Let us therefore resolve to take this important step forward together.

V. Closing Statements

- A joint prayer for peace and reconciliation may be offered by the rabbi and imam of the two congregations.
- The chairpersons may make a brief statement avowing that from now on we will truly be “our brothers and sisters’ keepers” and will resolve not to be indifferent to injustice inflicted on members of the other community. They should remind participants that they are now part of a rapidly growing international movement dedicated to building ties of friendship, trust and mutually beneficial cooperation between Muslims and Jews, and to take inspiration from that reality.



VI. Follow Up

- The chairpersons should remind participants in the Weekend of Twinningsm event before its conclusion that a joint follow up committee has been constituted. There should be one chairperson selected from both the mosque and synagogue, if possible before the conclusion of the Weekend of Twinningsm itself (these decisions may be made informally between the leaders of the two congregations before the event itself). All participants in the Weekend of Twinningsm should be provided with the e-mails and phone numbers of the chairpersons of the follow-up committee. Persons who wish to serve on the follow-up committee should make the chairperson of said committee aware of their desire to participate in the work of the committee at the conclusion of the Weekend of Twinningsm event or as soon as possible thereafter. The chairpersons of the follow up committee will determine the size of the committee and the frequency of its meetings. It is recommended that all persons wishing to serve on the committee should be free to do so, but if it turns out that there are significantly more would-be participants on the follow-up committee from one side or the other, the chairpersons may choose to equalize the number of participants on the committee.
- Participants are asked to submit suggestions to the chairpersons of the joint follow-up committee, given their candid appraisal of the pros and cons of the just-concluded event and suggestions for improvement.
- The chairpersons of the joint follow up committee should take immediate steps to ensure that decisions taken at the end of the meeting are implemented in a timely manner.
- The first meeting of the joint follow up committee should take place within one month of the Weekend of Twinningsm. Meetings should be held at regular intervals going forward. The joint follow-up committee should strive to create periodic congregation-wide gatherings and, as mentioned, decide on specific actions the two congregations can take together on a societal issue of importance.
- By taking those steps together, we can ensure that the momentum of the Weekend of Twinningsm carries forward and the two congregations are successful in their quest to build a fruitful relationship that will continue to evolve and strengthen over time. If we can accomplish these aims, we will have truly realized the promise of the Weekend of Twinningsm.