



Can we live in religious harmony?

A discussion of faith and how it can unite communities

Speaker Biographies



Reverend Gregory Schlarb

Pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church, Scottsdale, AZ

Reverend Gregory Schlarb received his Master of Divinity and Master of Arts from St. John Seminary in Camarillo, California and was ordained a priest on May 17, 1997 as a priest for the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentian Fathers).

He is currently serving as the Vicar of Stewardship for the Diocese of Phoenix as well as pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Scottsdale. He has served as pastor of St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church in Scottsdale, St. Anne Catholic Church in Gilbert, St. Paul Catholic Church in Moon Valley, AZ and Dean of the Northeast Deanery. He served as parochial vicar at St. Vincent de Paul in Maryvale and St. Paul's in Moon Valley. He was incardinated into the Diocese of Phoenix in March 2005.

Rev. Schlarb previously served on the Board of Directors for the Catholic Community Foundation as well as several other diocesan boards and committees. In May 2015,

Rev. Schlarb completed his Nonprofit Executive Leadership Certificate Program at the Arizona State University Lodestar Center for Philanthropy.



Rabbi Micah Caplan

Spiritual Leader at Congregation Or Tzion

Rabbi Caplan joined Congregation Or Tzion on July 1, 2010. He has long-standing ties to Phoenix, having grown up here as a young kid. Previously, Rabbi Caplan has served congregations in Florida and California where he introduced exciting adult learning and youth programming. Under Rabbi Caplan's leadership our community has grown from 110 to 500 families. His vision is creating a place of learning, sharing and celebrating Jewish living together as a Kehillah Kedosha — a holy community. He is known for his warm, personal outreach. Rabbi Caplan and his wife Michelle are the proud parents of three beautiful children: Brianah (16), Julia (13) and Avi (8). Rabbi Caplan is an avid sports fan and his favorite teams are The Phoenix Suns, Arizona Cardinals, and the Los

Angeles Dodgers. He is always willing to attend a game with anyone who wishes to take him.

Congregation Or Tzion was born in May 2014 with the merging of two Conservative synagogues — Congregation Or Chadash and Har Zion Congregation. Today, we are a unified entity of nearly 500 families, building upon the strong Conservative Jewish presence both legacy congregations have brought to the Valley.

They are a multigenerational, highly participatory, family friendly community in the north Phoenix/north Scottsdale area. They are affiliated with United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and pride themselves on offering compelling programming, innovative learning opportunities and spiritual prayer services for all ages. These include Shabbat services, holiday celebrations, religious school, Bar/Bat Mitzvah training, adult education, youth groups, programs for adults, and so much more.

The feelings shared as a congregational family and holy community is summed up in a reading from a Friday night Siddur: “May the door to this synagogue be wide enough to receive all who hunger for love, all who are lonely for fellowship. May it welcome all who have cares to unburden, thanks to express, hopes to nurture. May the door of this synagogue be narrow enough to shut out pettiness and pride, envy and enmity. May its threshold be no stumbling block to young or straying feet. May it be too high to admit complacency, selfishness and harshness. May this synagogue be, for all who enter, the doorway to a richer and more meaningful life.”



Bridget Nielsen

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Bridget Nielsen currently serves as the Community Outreach Specialist for Scottsdale and Paradise Valley for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Nielsen promotes the belief that God uses people of all faiths to carry out His great and marvelous work. She has helped in organizing several interfaith events in the past few years. She is the mother of three teenagers and she is a Scottsdale business owner along with her husband providing an internet financial technology system for the construction trades.



Tessa Watson

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Tessa Watson is a lifelong member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. She is currently serving as the Stake Relief Society President (leader of the local LDS women's charitable organization.) Living throughout the United States and Canada she has had experience with the Church in many different areas of North America. Tessa earned a degree in occupational therapy and worked with the blind and visually impaired before deciding to stay home full time with her children. Tessa and her husband, Steve, have been married 16 years and are the parents of 6 lovably rambunctious children.



Dr. M. Zuhdi Jasser

President and Founder, American Islamic Forum for Democracy

AIFD is an organization dedicated to providing an American Muslim voice advocating for liberty and genuine Muslim reform against Islamism and the ideologies which fuel global Muslim radicalization. Dr. Jasser has testified to Congress on numerous occasions as an expert on Muslim radicalization, foreign policy (Syria, Egypt, Middle East), anti-Semitism, and international religious freedom to name a few.

Dr. Jasser has authored numerous articles, is a contributing writer to a number of books and appears in several documentaries. He is a frequent guest on multiple national news outlets including the Fox News Channel, CNN, and MSNBC in addition to being a frequent guest on many national radio programs. He is the author of the book, *The Battle for the Soul of Islam: An American Muslim Patriot Fight to Save His Faith*,

published by Threshold Editions of Simon and Schuster in 2013.

He served 11 years as a medical officer in the U.S. Navy and is a recipient of the Meritorious Medal. He is currently a respected physician in private practice in Phoenix, Ariz. specializing in internal medicine and nuclear cardiology.



Yaser Ali

Islamic Center of the Northeast Valley in Scottsdale

Yaser Ali is an attorney and Imam at the Islamic Center of the Northeast Valley in Scottsdale, Arizona. Having spent several years studying classical Islamic jurisprudence and committing the entire Quran to memory in its native Arabic language, Yaser is uniquely able to synthesize the classical Islamic tradition into a modern American context.

In addition to his religious training, Yaser earned his undergraduate degree from the University of Florida, master's degree from Harvard University, and law degree from the University of California. After law school Yaser clerked on the United States Court of Appeals and worked at a large commercial law firm before establishing his own estate and business planning law firm in Tempe last year.

Yaser lives with his wife Nadia and son Yusuf in Scottsdale.



Bryan McAnally

Pastor of Evangelism & Discipleship at Scottsdale Bible Church

Pastor Brian McAnally proudly serves the Scottsdale Bible Church and has been on staff since 2011. He has been in full-time Christian ministry since 1998 and has served in churches in Colorado, Georgia, Texas, and Arizona.

Pastor McAnally is an accomplished writer and published author of five books, including: *The Servant Principle*; *Heaven, Hell, & Life after Death*; and *World Religions & What People Believe*.

On a personal level, Brian has been married for twenty years to his wife Kelli, and they are parents to three children: Kaylyn (a student at ASU), Cotter (at Desert Mountain High), and Kelsi (at Mountainside Middle School).



Dr. Jaswant Singh Sachdev

Board member, Arizona Interfaith Movement

Dr. Jaswant Singh Sachdev, M.D., F.A.A.N., a board certified Fellow of the American Academy of Neurology, has been practicing Neurology in Phoenix, Arizona, U.S.A since 1976. Dr. Sachdev is a board member for Arizona Inter Faith Movement (AIFM) representing Sikh Community.

Before migrating to United States in 1972, Dr. Sachdev completed his post-graduate studies in medicine (M.D.) and taught at the Government Medical College, Patiala, Pb., India. He had a bright academic career and was the recipient of several Gold Medals including an award for the “Best Graduate” of the MBBS class of 1967.

He has been a well-known local Indian community service volunteer. Since 2,000, every month, he has been heading a Seva group with the help of his wife and several other volunteers to prepare and serve free hot fresh full meals to about 250 +- homeless citizens. He has been offering Sikh Awareness presentations to non-Sikh groups when they visit Gurdwara Sahib and he also reaches out to various colleges, community centers, groups and other religious places for presenting similar talks. He has been appointed as the convener for the Grand Canyon Zone for International Hemkunt Foundation that helps Sikh children learn the art of public speaking and Kirtan.

At a personal level, he continues to be an active Rotarian now for over couple of years. Furthermore, he has been helping out in planning of the yearly event of “Discover India” arranged by India Association of Phoenix. For his various community service efforts and activities, “Arizona Asian American Association” recognized Dr. Sachdev with its “Outstanding Citizen’s Award” in 2004

Besides being a physician of repute, Dr. Sachdev is an author with an interest in the issues pertaining to the Indian Subcontinent diaspora as well as Sikh faith. Several of his essays are regularly published in many ethnic weeklies in U.S. and Canada. In addition he has already published three books and fourth is in the offering by the end of 2015. His first book titled “Square Pegs, Round Holes” dealing with diaspora issues was very well received by Indian community. His second book dealing with similar matters, “One Coin, Two Sides” appeared on shelves in 2011. It was followed by a 3rd book in the same year, “Sikhism: Points to Ponder; Perspectives of a Sikh Living Abroad” that primarily deals with the diaspora Sikh issues. His fourth book “Melting Pot or Bouquet of Flowers” will be launched soon.

The columns published here under the title “Dr. Sachdev’s perspectives on Cross-Cultural Dilemma of Indian Subcontinent Diaspora” are somewhat representatives of similar kind of subject matters.