

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

All-day Festival of Interfaith Unity this Sunday, April 25, 11 AM, at Iranian American Culture Center, Featuring: International Food, Music, Film, Unity Prayers, Interfaith Dialogue, Rumi Lecture, and a Call to Action.

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“The times are a changin’,” as Bob Dylan would say, and there’s a new wind blowing in the interfaith world, especially in Los Angeles, home to one of the most diverse populations in the world.

Many mosques and Muslim communities, in an effort to build interfaith bridges and counteract the growing racial and religious unrest that resulted from 9/11, are stepping forward to promote interfaith events. This Sunday, May 25, IMAN, the Iranian American Culture Center in West LA, is hosting a Festival of Interfaith Unity, open to the entire city. The organizing committee includes, among others, Rabbi Robert Gan, of Temple Isaiah, Father Alexei Smith of the Catholic Archdiocese, Rev. Connor Lynn, Mr. Salam Al-Marayati of the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), and Dr. Sadegh Namazikhah, president and CEO of the IMAN Center.

Featured at the festival will be cross-cultural sacred music of the Middle-East, provided by Israeli-born Yuval Ron and his Quartet; the documentary film, ***GOD AND ALLAH NEED TO TALK***, by LA filmmaker Ruth Broyde-Sharone; interfaith unity prayer, interfaith dialogue on the “Faiths of Abraham,” and a lecture by Professor Majid Naimi on the Muslim poet, Rumi, the most popular poet in America today.

President of the IMAN Center, Dr. Namazikhah, says he was inspired to create an environment of congeniality and understanding, starting with the Abrahamic religions, for the sake of Los Angeles and in memory of his daughter, Sepideh, who died tragically at age 17. The pallbearers at his daughter’s funeral were friends of the family from the local LA Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities, and Dr. Namazikhah vowed at that event that he would become a tireless advocate for interfaith unity.

GOD AND ALLAH NEED TO TALK, a film for healing and reconciliation, which premiered last September to a sold-out crowd at the Laemmle Fairfax theatre, has been making the rounds in mosques, churches, synagogues and, most recently, at the University of Southern California. After the screening this Sunday, filmmaker Broyde-Sharone and her interfaith colleague, Dr. Thomas Hedberg, a former Catholic priest, will direct an interfaith feedback session and a “call to action,” to create ongoing grassroots activities in the future. Broyde-Sharone explains: “After viewing the film most people ask, ‘So, where do we go from here?’ So we say to them: Let’s make an action plan. Let’s find out how we can stretch ourselves to welcome the stranger and be willing to be the stranger.”

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