



Interfaith[®] Philadelphia

Gateway to Religious Communities

Guide for Host Religious Communities

Interfaith Philadelphia advances mutual trust, understanding, and cooperation among faith communities, in order to work together for the common good of the region. Thank you for being a part of that vision by extending hospitality to a diverse group of visitors.

PRE-VISIT / PREPARATION

- ❖ Select religious leaders and community members – especially young adults – to meet with the group
 - Even if group is participating in a regularly scheduled community service/program, it's important to have specific leaders/members identified to greet and interact with the group, and a specific time to do that
 - Give consideration to members who might best articulate your community's tradition and practice to young adults, and answer questions knowledgeably, clearly and respectfully
- ❖ With Interfaith Philadelphia Event Coordinator, confirm logistics and timing
- ❖ Once details are confirmed, publicize the visit to the larger community

VISIT / TIPS FOR HOSTING

Overall Considerations & Sensitivities

- ❖ Please keep the following suggestions/sensitivities in mind throughout the visit:
 - Think about what would be most helpful to you if you were visiting a community/tradition unfamiliar to you
 - Assume the group as a whole knows little, if anything, about your tradition (they may, but better to assume they don't)
 - Don't pretend to speak for your whole religious tradition; use "I language"
 - Consider that someone in the group may self-identify as atheist/agnostic or come from a tradition that has a different understanding of the divine.
 - Consider that someone in the group may self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
 - Consider that the group may be diverse when raising issues that may be "charged" (e.g. gender roles, sexuality, politics)
 - Such issues are by no means inappropriate – and may even be useful – for interfaith dialogue, but keep in mind that these are sometimes better addressed in the context

- of more established, ongoing relationships
- Be prepared to address questions/reactions from students in ways that are respectful of their perspective

Welcome/Orientation

- ❖ Have religious leader(s)/ member(s) ready to welcome the group as they arrive •
Make sure whoever is speaking is loud enough for the whole group to hear
 - Clarify how religious leaders should be addressed (e.g. title or first name?)
 - Name tags are recommended; the group will come with name tags as well
 - Point out location of bathrooms and designated prayer space as relevant
- ❖ Review any expectations regarding religious practice/norms (e.g. head coverings, prayer posturing) as necessary, and any “courtesy” requests (e.g. photos allowed or not, note-taking allowed or not)
- ❖ Prior to the worship experience (or other program), provide a brief overview of the community (e.g. history, demographics, identity within broader religious tradition, current programming, social engagement, etc.)

During Visit

- ❖ If possible and appropriate, allow time for the group to observe sacred space first – especially if the group will not be participating in a regular service/program
- ❖ If group is participating in a regular service/program, review general suggestions for group and individual observation vs. participation (i.e. when it’s appropriate to participate or not) •
Consider how students might observe and not participate
 - Be sure to formally welcome group as part of service/program
 - If possible and appropriate during the service/program, allow time for brief explanation of what’s happening
- ❖ Avoid lengthy presentations/lectures and allow plenty of time for questions throughout the visit (and/or at a designated time for questions, preferably after any service/program); the more interactive, the better for college students

Conclusion

- ❖ Thank the group for coming

POST-VISIT / EVALUATION

- ❖ Please “collect” responses from religious leader(s) and community member(s) about the visit; the Event Coordinator will have a formal evaluation form we’ll ask you to complete
- ❖ Event Coordinator will be in touch afterwards to evaluate the visit with you, identifying any areas of concern, suggestions for future visits, etc.