

MUSLIMS AND BUDDHISTS HOLD DIALOGUE IN VIRGINIA
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On Nov. 3 at the Northern Virginia Community Center, 39 SGI-USA members held an interfaith dialogue with four Muslims from the All Dulles Area Muslim Society. The goal of the meeting was to educate Buddhists and Muslims about one another's religious practice, develop bonds of friendship and trust, and create a sense of harmony among people of both faiths.

The meeting opened with the Muslims witnessing the Buddhist prayer. Later the Buddhists witnessed the Muslim prayer as well. Syaiful Idris, a Muslim and the event's emcee, introduced SGI-USA member Jennifer Zarbock, who spoke about the founder of Islam, quoting SGI President Ikeda: "Muhammad was a man of great patience, acuity and farsightedness. Muhammad united the Arab tribes through his ability to inspire trust in and make allies of the people who were brought under Muslim rule. Muhammad combined painstaking attention to detail with passionate enthusiasm. He was generous, honest and principled" (May 23, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 7).

Muslim Ahmed Hussain noted that the tradition of dialogue between Buddhists and Muslims goes back 300 years. In 1704, Liu Chi, a Chinese Buddhist, wrote *The Philosophy of Islam*, a comparison of Islam and Buddhism that emphasizes their similarities.

After a lively dialogue between the two groups, SGI-USA member Colleen Parks pointed out that dialogue is necessary to create peace, because it removes suffering and replaces it with joy.

When Syaiful said, "Now we will end the meeting with *sansho*," the SGI-USA members laughed, pleased that a Muslim respected the SGI tradition of ending Buddhist discussion meetings by chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo three times.

"This is the beginning of something great and wonderful," said Ahmed Hussain afterward. "This is the way to develop understanding between two of the great world religions." Paul Schienle added, "It was the most beautiful expression of world peace I have seen in this [community center]." In the words of Peggy Goldman: "This is the way to create peace. Interfaith dialogue is theoretical until one actually does it. It was a powerful experience."