



The InterFaith Leadership Council  
of Metropolitan Detroit

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Dear Parent,

Your child has been selected as one of only twenty-five students from his/her school district to participate in the 2016 – 2017 Religious Diversity Journeys for Seventh Graders. Involvement in this program is an honor for your child. S/he has been selected by his/her school to represent the district on these Journeys. This program is now in its fifteenth year, and is sponsored by the InterFaith Leadership Council of Metropolitan Detroit. By participating, your child's school district is demonstrating that they understand the dimensions of diversity and the importance of programs that promote inclusive education.

The program's purpose is promoting greater understanding, awareness and knowledge about different religions in metro-Detroit and preparing students for life in our increasingly diverse society.

Students have been chosen from each of the participating school districts in Oakland and Wayne counties. These include Berkley, Birmingham, Beverly Hills Academy, Brandon, Clarkston, Cranbrook, Dearborn, Farmington, Great Revelations Academy, Huda School, Redford Union, Troy, Walled Lake, Waterford, West Bloomfield and the WISE Academy.

These students will participate in six school day-long field trips over the coming school year. They will travel to different houses of worship and learn about the differences and similarities between some of the major religions practiced in metro-Detroit, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Sikhism with a summation session at either the Holocaust Memorial Center or the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Part of the success of the program is the opportunity for students to experience this journey with their parents. We hope you will join us for as many of our visits as your schedule permits. Students and parents who participated in Religious Diversity Journeys over the last several years have enjoyed it immensely and repeatedly commented that they were pleased to have gained a much better understanding of their neighbors and their traditions as well as learned a great deal about our shared values.

The organizers of this program are very cognizant of the Constitutional provision for the separation of church and state. We want to be clear that this program is teaching *about* religion, not teaching religion itself. Students will learn about some of the traditions and holidays associated with each religion, but will not be preached to or proselytized. The intent is to allow students to experience religious cultures and customs in a way that will help them learn about the different religions in their community in order to dispel myths and stereotypes. It is not intended to convert or to influence students' decisions about religion.

The schedule for the Journeys is listed below. The Journeys run from 8:45 a.m. until 1:45 p.m. The staff at each of the participating schools will be looking for parent drivers, so please contact the appropriate staff person if you are interested in being part of this valuable program.

## **2016 – 2017 Journey Schedule:**

### **Thursday, November 17, 2016- Judaism**

Temple Beth El  
7400 Telegraph Road  
Bloomfield Hills, 48301

### **Tuesday, February 7, 2017- Sikhism**

Sterling Heights Gurdwara  
33340 Dequindre  
Sterling Heights, 48310

### **Thursday, December 15, 2016- Christianity**

St. Mary's Antiochian Orthodox Church  
18100 Merriman  
Livonia, 48152

### **Thursday, March 16, 2017- Hinduism**

The Hindu Temple of Canton  
44955 Cherry Hill  
Canton, 48188

### **Thursday, January 19, 2017- Islam**

Islamic Center of America  
19500 Ford Road  
Dearborn, 48128

### **Thursday, April 20, 2017- Summation Session**

Holocaust Memorial Center  
28123 Orchard Lake Road  
Farmington Hills, 48334

If you agree to allow your student to participate in this program, you will need to sign your school's permission slip for these field trips, which will also include a media release and writing release in the event we take pictures, videos or the news media decides to showcase one or more of our Journeys.

To view a video of the Religious Diversity Journeys Program and to learn more about the InterFaith Leadership Council of Metropolitan Detroit, please visit our website at: <https://vimeo.com/143729993>

Your donations to the program are always welcome and deeply appreciated. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to the Religious Diversity Journeys Program, please click on the "Donate" button located at the bottom of our website's homepage: <http://detroitinterfaithcouncil.com/>.

And be sure to "like" our Facebook page where we post updates and photos from our Journey year: <https://www.facebook.com/IFLCreligiousdiversityjourneys>

I look forward to a very exciting year working with your students, their teachers, you and the other parents. Please feel free to contact me with any questions!

All the best,

*Meredith Skowronski*

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