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**INTERFAITH COMMUNITY INITIATIVES (ICI) INTRODUCES SACRED FRIENDS**

(Atlanta) - During this divisive time, many people are missing the connection and opportunity to form meaningful friendships, learn more about their fellow community members, and share thoughts on pressing community issues. Interfaith Community Initiatives (ICI) addresses these needs in its new program **Sacred Friends** by inviting persons of diverse backgrounds and beliefs to consider the opportunity to develop interfaith friendships within small personable groups with diverse beliefs and backgrounds.

**Sacred Friends** conversations encourage curiosity about others’ faiths, cultivates respect for differences, nurtures trust within relationships, and fosters openness in sharing. Through groups comprised of persons with diverse backgrounds, ICI hopes to strengthen communities by helping to build relationships of trust, collaboratively consider civic issues and enhance understanding. The five-week program will be held virtually, in accordance with COVID-19 protocols for social distancing.

Dr. Heidi Tauscher, ICI Board Member and World Religion Professor, developed the program and is excited about its possibilities: “The Sacred Friends Program offers us the opportunity to build close interfaith friendships with people of other faiths centered upon the Divine presence. Listening and sharing in close personal relationship, we open ourselves to learn aspects of the sacred previously unknown and to build a strong communal foundation to address social issues."

This new initiative is in alignment with ICI’s foundational programs World Pilgrims and Interfaith Immersions, which for over twenty years has brought together people of different faiths and backgrounds in creative ways to foster understanding and community

**What past participants say:**

“Participating in SFAR, I have gotten to know dedicated group of women …[and] developed a bond of friendship and respect as we work to make change.”

“I am so grateful to ICI and the Sacred Friends course. Who would have thought that five women from all different faiths would bond and unite in action … ”

“Because of SFAR/ICI, we are five women from diverse backgrounds who have had tough, honest, conversations, who have come to care deeply for each other and who have worked on a project to confront decades-old systemic racism…”

For more information about Sacred Friends, visit [www.interfaithci.org](http://www.interfaithci.org) or email [interfaithcommunityinitiatives@gmail.com](mailto:interfaithcommunityinitiatives@gmail.com).