

The Muslim Endorsement Council of CT (MECC)

*presents*

National Shura & Best Practices Workshop

Chaplaincy Endorsement and  
Fast Tracking a Muslim American Seminary

March 5, 2011  
8am- 6pm  
Yale University  
63 High Street  
New Haven, CT

Based on a process developed in consultation with: Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences (GSISS), International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), International League of Muslim Women - New England Chapter, Islamic Center of New London (ICNL), Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), Islamic Relief-USA, Islamic Social Services Association-USA (ISSA-USA), Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Masjid Al-Islam (MAI), Muslim American Society (MAS)-Freedom, Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA), Muslim Chaplains Association, New England Council of Masajid, New England Muslim Sisters Association (NEMSA)

## MUSLIM ENDORSEMENT COUNCIL OF CONNECTICUT (MECC)

### National Shura and Best Practices Workshop on Chaplaincy Endorsement & Muslim American Seminary

Conference Chair: Omer Bajwa,  
*Coordinator of Muslim Life at Yale University*

Endorsement Shura Chair: Imam Kashif Abdul-Karim  
*Muhammad Islamic Center - Greater Hartford (CT)*

Seminary Shura Chair: Dr. Ihsan Bagby  
*Associate Professor of Islamic Studies, University of Kentucky*

Operations Chair: Dr. Jimmy Jones  
*Associate Professor of World Religions, Manhattanville College*

Evaluation & Data Retention: Bonita McGee, M.A.  
*Board Member, Islamic Social Services Association-USA (ISSA-USA)*

Operations Consultant: Abdulmalik Negedu

**Masjid Al-Islam, CAIR-CT LEAD Interns**  
Majidah Hagood, *Gateway Community College*  
Zenah Hasan, *Yale University*  
Ankoma Wells, *Riverside Academy High School*

#### **National Advisory Board**

Dean Ahmed Alwani (Cordoba University, Graduate School of Islamic & Social Sciences)

Chaplain Jenanah W. Amatullah (NY State Dept. of Correctional Services)

Dr. Ihsan Bagby (MANA, ISNA, CAIR)

Imam Mahdi Bray (Executive Director, MAS Freedom)

Omer Bajwa (Coordinator of Muslim Life, Yale University)

Dr. Zahid Bukhari (President, ICNA)

Dr. Mukhtar Curtis (Federal Prison Chaplain, PA)

Rabia Harris (President, Muslim Chaplains Association)

Robert Horne (Policeman, MD Prison Chaplain)

Bonita McGee (Board Member, ISSA-USA)

LT Col. Abdul Rasheed Muhammad (US Army Chaplain) Imam

Haazim Rashed (Masjid As-Sabur, Sacramento CA)

Ibrahim Shakoor (Doctoral Candidate, Al Azhar University)

Shamshad Sheikh (College/University Chaplain)

Dr. Iqbal Unus (IIIT, Fairfax Institute)

Safaa Zarzour (Secretary General, ISNA)

#### **Goals**

1. Produce vision and mission statements for endorsement entity
2. Produce vision and mission statements for Muslim American seminary
3. Develop tasks and timeline for next steps for both projects
4. Educate MECC, advisory committees and interested parties regarding best practices in chaplaincy endorsements and seminaries
5. Get feedback from interested stakeholders regarding both projects.

#### **Muslim Endorsement Council of CT**

Established 1431/2010

President	Imam Kashif Abdul-Karim
Vice-President	Imam Mahmoud Mansour
Vice-President	Imam Sheikh Hasan Abunar, Ph.D
Treasurer	Shazeeda Khan
Secretary	Aqil Hashim LCSW

The Muslim Endorsement Council of CT Inc. is an organization that grew out as a sub-committee of the Muslim Coalition of Connecticut's Statewide Leadership Group that was established in March 2006. With the advice and support of CAIR-CT, the International League of Muslim Women CT Chapter, the Islamic Council of New England (ICNE), the New England Council of Masajid, and the New England Muslim Sisters Association, it has developed into an organization with the following mission.

#### **Mission:**

To provide a structure and process for the official endorsement of Muslim Chaplains based on pastoral and Islamic principles and to establish a national standard for such endorsement in order to develop consistency and integrity in the field of Islamic Chaplaincy.

#### **CT Planning Group**

Chaplain Bilal Ansari (Danbury FCI)

Dr. Hasan Abunar (Imam, Masjid An-Noor, Bridgeport, CT)

Dr. Ali Antar (President, Islamic Center of Greater Hartford)

Mongi Dhaouadi (Executive Director, CAIR-CT)

Dr. Mohamed Elmasry (Psychiatrist-Addiction Specialist, New Haven Islamic Center)

Dr. Shadee Elmasry (Lector in Arabic, Yale University)

Aqil Hashim (LCSW, CT DOC volunteer)

Imam Kashif Abdul-Karim (Muhammad Islamic Center-Greater Hartford, Former CT DOC Chaplain)

Shazeeda Khan (Teacher, Danbury FCI)

Chaplain Adrian "Ashir" Kirk (Leadership Intern, Masjid Al-Islam, Yale-New Haven Hospital CPE student)

Imam Mahmoud Mansour (Islamic Center of New London)

Chaplain Nur Moebius (CT DOC Volunteer)

Elmar Shakir (Islamic Center of CT)

Chaplain Matiniah Yahya (Program Director of Al-Azhar University Intensive Summer Arabic Program, Yale-New Haven Hospital CPE student)

**Fiduciary agent:** Masjid Al-Islam Inc., New Haven CT

Make all checks payable to:

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**With Special Thanks To:** Manhattanville College Department of World Religions, Masjid Al-Islam, Yale University Chaplain's Office

## SATURDAY, MARCH 5

8:00 AM | **Registration & Continental Breakfast**, LC 102

9:00 AM | **Welcome & Overview**, LC 102

### 9:30 AM | **Session I**

A. *Why We Need a National Islamic Endorsing Body*, LC 103

**Imam Kashif Abdul-Karim**

B. *Why We Need a Muslim American Seminary*, LC 104

**Dr. Ihsan Bagby**

10:45 AM | **Break**

### 11:00 AM | **Session II**

A. *Current Best Practices – Endorsement*, LC 103

Rev. George Handzo, Vice President for Chaplaincy Care Leadership and Practice, Healthcare Chaplaincy

Chaplain Abdus-Salaam Musa, Co-founder, Islamic Indigenous Pastoral Education

Rev. Dr. Steven Voytovich, Director of Clinical Pastoral Education, Episcopal Health Services

Chaplain Rabia Harris, Moderator

B. *Current Best Practices – Seminaries*, LC 104

Joseph Cumming, Director, Yale Center for Faith and Culture at Yale Divinity School

Dr. Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, Director, Accreditation and Institutional Evaluation, Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS)

Mongi Dhaouadi, Moderator

12:15 PM | **Dhuhr Prayer**

12:45 PM | **Lunch & Networking - Chaplain Matiniah Yahya, Moderator**

### 2:00 PM | **Session III: Parallel Sessions**

A. *Muslim Models/ Principles – Endorsement*, LC 103

Chaplain Abu Qadir Al-Amin, Associate Director, Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (CJCJ)

Chaplain Omer Bajwa, Coordinator of Muslim Life, Yale University

Imam Abdul Shadid Muhammad, President, Muslim American Chaplains Association (MACA)

LTC. Abdul Rasheed Muhammad, Chaplain, US Army

Shazeedah Khan, Moderator

B. *Muslim Models/ Principles – Seminaries*, LC 104

Dr. Hasan Abunar, Imam, Masjid An-Noor, Bridgeport, CT

Dr. Zahid Bukhari, President, Islamic Circle of North America

Dr. Mukhtar Curtis, Chaplain, US Bureau of Prisons, Canaan PA

Dr. Shadee Elmasry, Lector in Arabic, Yale University

Imam Mahmoud Mansour, Moderator

3:15 PM | **Break & Asr Prayers**

### 3:45 PM | **Session IV**

A. *Feedback for the Future - Endorsement*, LC 103

**Imam Kashif Abdul-Karim**

B. *Feedback for the Future - Seminary*, LC 104

**Dr. Ihsan Bagby**

5:00 PM | **Break**

5:15 PM | **Closing Plenary & Endorsement Report/ Seminary Report**, LC 102

6:00 PM | **Close**

# biographies

## CONFERENCE CHAIRS

### Kashif Abdul-Karim

Imam Kashif Abdul-Karim reverted to the religion of Al-Islam on May 15, 1986 in a community that follows the commentary of Imam W. Deen Mohammed. A CT Islamic prison chaplain from 1987 until 2004, he is currently Resident Imam of Muhammad Islamic Center of Greater Hartford where he is very active in interfaith work. Kashif is secretary for The New England Council of Masajid and serves on the boards of CAIR-CT and the Muslim Coalition of Connecticut. Imam Kashif, who resides in Hamden CT with his family, was employed as a CT Juvenile Parole Officer from 1989 until 2010. A graduate of University of Connecticut, he is founding chair of the board of MECC.

### Ihsan Bagby

Dr. Ihsan Bagby is currently Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at University of Kentucky. He obtained a PhD from University of Michigan in Near Eastern Studies. His research for the last 10 years has focused on Muslims in America. In 2001 he published the results of the first comprehensive study of mosques in America, entitled "The Mosque in America: A National Portrait" (available at [www.cair.com](http://www.cair.com)). In April 2004 he published the results of his Detroit Mosque Study, entitled "A Portrait of Detroit Mosques" (available at [www.ispu.us](http://www.ispu.us)). He serves on the advisory board of Hartford Seminary's Hartford Institute for Religion Research, and is active in other organizations including Interfaith Alliance, Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA) and Islamic Society of North America (ISNA).

### Omer Bajwa

Omer Bajwa is Yale's Coordinator of Muslim Life. He earned his Graduate Certificate in Islamic Chaplaincy from Hartford Seminary, and he has been engaged in religious service, social activism, and educational outreach for the past eight years. Before coming to Yale, he served as the Interim Muslim Chaplain at Cornell University (2007-2008). He received his M.A. in Near Eastern Studies, with a specialization in Islamic Studies, from Cornell. He also has an M.S. in Communications from Cornell and a B.A. in English Literature and Rhetoric from Binghamton University.

### Jimmy (James) Jones

Dr. Jimmy (James) Jones is Associate Professor of World Religions with a concurrent appointment in the African Studies Department at Manhattanville College (Purchase, NY). Prof. Jones has been a volunteer prison chaplain with the CT Department of Corrections since 1980 and now serves as a community based mentor in cooperation with the Yale New Haven Hospital Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program. He is also chair of the Board of Masjid Al-Islam (New Haven CT) and has been an unpaid project director for the National Islamic Endorsement project for the last four years. Dr. Jones holds a Master of Arts in Religion from Yale Divinity School and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Hartford Seminary.

### Bonita R. McGee

Bonita R. McGee serves on the board of the Islamic Social Services Association-USA (ISSA-USA), a national organization addressing social issues and promoting social work and related fields in the Muslim Community. She also provides trainings and assessments for communities in need to address the issue of domestic violence. Sr. Bonita is also a board member and co-founder of the Muslim

Family Services of Ohio (formerly the Muslim Women's Network and Community Services). Sr. Bonita received a Masters in Islamic Sciences from the School of Islamic and Social Sciences. She is on the Graduate National Advisory Board of the Islamic Endorsement Project.

## PRESENTERS

### Abu Qadir Al-Amin

Chaplain Abu Qadir Al-Amin is the Associate Director of the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice (CJ/CJ), and is the director and co-founder of CJ/CJ's Supportive Living Program - a pioneering social modal reentry program for parolees with histories of substance abuse. Mr. Al-Amin has worked with formally incarcerated people in various capacities for over 25 years. He provided services at the Federal Correctional Institution in Pleasanton as a Muslim Chaplain and was the Coordinator of the American Muslim Missions' Prison Ministry from 1982 through 1985. Mr. Al-Amin's expertise and commentary on criminal justice issues is regularly sought by major media outlets including past appearances on the News Hour with Jim Lehrer, CNN, and ABC's 20/20.

### Zahid Bukhari

Dr. Zahid Bukhari, President of the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), serves as Executive Director of the Center for Islam and Public Policy (CIPP). He served as Director, American Muslim Studies Program at Prince Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University, Washington DC. He also worked as Director, Project MAPS: Muslims in American Public Square at Georgetown University and is currently serving as a member of Governor of Maryland Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs. Dr. Bukhari has a Masters in Economics from University of Karachi and Ph.D. in Political Science from University of Connecticut. He is on the National Advisory Board of the Islamic Endorsement Project.

### Joseph Cumming

Rev. Joseph Cumming serves as the Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture Reconciliation Program, program he established in October 2005. Joseph established the program in October 2005 and has since provided strategic leadership and academic direction for the program. The Reconciliation Program promotes reconciliation between Muslims and Christians, and between Muslim nations and the West, drawing on the resources of the Abrahamic faiths and the teachings and person of Jesus. Joseph also teaches courses in Islamic Studies as visiting faculty at Fuller Theological Seminary, and he is completing his Ph.D. in Islamic Studies and Christian Theology at Yale. He speaks fluent Arabic, as well as several other languages. He is also an ordained Christian minister (Assemblies of God). Joseph's bachelor's degree (in Religion) is from Princeton University; his M.Div. (concentration: Cross-Cultural Studies) is from Fuller Theological Seminary; and he has M.A. and M.Phil. degrees (in Religious Studies) from Yale.

### Mukhtar Curtis

Dr. Mukhtar Curtis has been a chaplain for the United States bureau of prisons since 1993. He has also taught Islamic Studies at Earlham and Hanover Colleges and served as director of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) Islamic Teaching Center. He holds a PhD in Near Eastern Studies and a Masters in Linguistics from University of Michigan. In addition he holds a Degree in Economics from

Howard University and has participated in Al-Ameen Associates Summer Intensive Arabic Program at Al-Azhar University. He is a member of the National Endorsement Project's Advisory Board.

## **Shadee Elmasry**

Dr. Shadee Elmasry is a fulltime Lecturer in Arabic and founding director of the Center for Islamic Studies at Masjid Al-Islam (New Haven, CT). He was educated at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, where he completed his PhD and at the George Washington University, where he studied world religions. He has taught at Trinity College, Hartford Seminary and Manhattanville College. He is also member of CT Planning body for Islamic Chaplaincy Endorsement.

## **George Handzo**

Rev. George Handzo is Vice President for Chaplaincy Care Leadership and Practice at HealthCare Chaplaincy, Rev. Handzo directs the only consulting service devoted to the strategic assessment, planning and management of chaplaincy services. Clients have included the US Naval Bureau of Medicine and Surgery and Mount Sinai Medical Center (New York), Hospital Corporation of America. George also leads the management of chaplaincy services in thirteen healthcare institutions in the metropolitan New York City area. Rev. Handzo chaired the Commission on Certification and is a Past President of the Association of Professional Chaplains. Prior to his current position, he was the Director of Chaplaincy Services at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center for over twenty years. Rev. Handzo is a graduate of Princeton University and Yale University Divinity School.

## **Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad**

Chaplain Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad is a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army. He has been an imam since 1978 and became the first Muslim chaplain in the armed forces in 1994. Before becoming an Army chaplain, LTC Muhammad served as a chaplain for the Department of Corrections in New York State and consultant on Chaplaincy to ISNA. He also served as an enlisted Soldier in the Army from 1982-1985. He is a member of the National Endorsement Project advisory board.

## **Abdul Shahid Muhammad**

Imam Abdul Shahid Muhammad served as Muslim Chaplain, in the CA Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations (CDCR) for 23 years: (1987 to 2010). As a retired annuitant, he currently provides Islamic religious services for Muslim patients at the Department of Mental Health (DMH), Coalinga State Hospital in Coalinga, California. Imam Muhammad is also the founder and President of the Muslim American Chaplains Association (MACA), and has previously served as Vice President of Associated Chaplains in California State Service (ACCSS). Imam A. S. Muhammad is an avid student of Imam W. Deen Mohammed. He has earned an M.S.E.C., B.S., B.A. and numerous other certificates and certifications.

## **Abdus-Salaam Musa**

Chaplain Abdus-Salaam Musa is currently a Supervisor in Training for Clinical Pastoral Education, from the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy, under the auspices of the Episcopal Health Services. Chaplain Musa is one of the co-founders of Islamic Indigenous Clinical Pastoral Education and has been training Muslims to become clinically competent as pastoral caregivers.

He is a certified Chaplain on the leadership team of New York City Disaster Spiritual Care Services of New York City and is associated with many Islamic organizations that address domestic violence, HIV and AIDS, drug addiction and other social maladies. Chaplain Musa has a Bachelor of Professional Services from Audrey Cohen College of Human Services and a Graduate Certificate in Islamic Chaplaincy from Hartford Seminary. He also started the first women shelter for Muslim women in Queens, was the former Director of the United Muslim Movement against Homelessness and the Muslim Women Help Network.

## **Hasan Abu Nar**

Dr. Hasan Abu Nar is Imam of Masjid An-Noor (Bridgeport, CT). A member of the board of MECC, he travels extensively in the United States and overseas delivering lectures on Islam and the proper pronunciation of the Quran (Tajweed). He is also a member of the faculty at the American Islamic University (online) and has been a lecturer at Jordan University in Amman, Jordan. He holds a PhD in exegesis of the Holy Quran (Tafseer) from Al-Quraan Al-Kareem University (Sudan), Master in Sciences of the Quran (Uloom- ul- Quran) and a Bachelor in Islamic jurisprudence (Shariah) from Jordan University.

## **Lester Edwin J. Ruiz**

Dr. Lester Edwin J. Ruiz joined the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) in 2008 as Director of Accreditation and Institutional Evaluation. His work includes facilitating accrediting reviews, providing education and support to member schools about the process of accreditation, and providing staff support to the work of the Board of Commissioners of the ATS Commission on Accrediting. From 1997-2007, Dr. Ruiz was a faculty member of New York Theological Seminary in New York City where he was Professor of Theology and Culture. He became Vice President for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean in 2005. A graduate with a degree in pastoral care and counseling from Ottawa University (Kansas), Dr. Ruiz holds the Master of Divinity with an emphasis in religion and society and the PhD in social ethics from Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey.

## **Steven Voytovich**

The Rev. Dr. Steven Voytovich is a priest in the Orthodox Christian Church. He holds Doctor of Ministry and Master of Divinity Degrees from St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, and a Master of Arts Degree from Fairfield University in Community Counseling. He is a certified chaplain with the Association of Professional Chaplains, a certified CPE supervisor with the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) and the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP), and licensed professional counselor in CT. Dr. Voytovich assisted in developing institutional chaplaincy within the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), also a relatively new faith tradition to institutional chaplaincy. The OCA joined the Commission on Ministry in Specialized Settings (COMISS) in 2005, and as endorsing representative, he was elected the Chair-Elect of the Association of Religious Endorsing Bodies in November, 2010. He has also served as an executive committee member of the International Congress for Pastoral Care and Counseling (ICPCC).

# proposed vision

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## Endorsing and Advisory Agency for Islamic Leadership and Muslim Chaplains Phase I –A CT Islamic Prison Chaplaincy Endorsement Model

Proposal-Revised 16 Safar 1431/ 27 March, 2010

### I. PROPOSAL SUMMARY

The purpose of this proposal is to begin to fulfill the need for an entity that will serve to support, certify and endorse Muslim chaplains for placement within hospitals, prisons, universities/colleges, police and fire departments, and the Armed Services, as well as other workplaces and public institutions.

### II. BACKGROUND

Chaplaincy as a formal profession emerged in the Christian faith. Over time other faith traditions recognized the need for chaplains from their own tradition. The role of a chaplain is to provide spiritual and religious guidance in an institutional setting; facilitate individual and communal prayer and worship; facilitate religious rites; develop working relationships within and outside of one's own faith; respond to emotional and spiritual crises; cater to the religious needs of congregations; assist in shaping institutional policy, and protect the religious rights of adherents. Chaplains operate in a pluralistic setting and are concerned about the general welfare of all the people whom they serve. They are humanitarians and often meet people who are transient and who may be in the crisis of their lives. Consequently, chaplains also serve people who are not of their faith tradition. Chaplains must nurture the total religious community, encourage moral responsibility, and provide a climate for growth and maturation regardless of creed. To this end, chaplains may conduct programs that are not religious but which may be characterized by character building and preparing people to lead more ethical and moral lives. Chaplains not only serve people as individuals or groups, but they must be aware of the way institutions make decisions or formulate policies.

An increasing need for Muslim chaplains in all institutional settings has been noted in the past two decades. The Armed Services first hired a Muslim chaplain in 1993; since then demand for Muslim chaplains in all branches of the Services has greatly increased. An increasing growth in the American Muslim population as well as awareness within the Muslim community itself of the benefits of having access to Muslim chaplains has driven this need. Despite the need, the Armed Services and other institutions have hesitated in hiring Muslim chaplains due to the lack of a trustworthy endorsing agency. In 2003, the Pentagon announced that it was seeking new agencies to endorse Muslim candidates.

With regard to the hiring of Muslim chaplains within the Federal Prison system, a 2004 report by the Federal Bureau of Prisons ([www.usdoj.gov/oig/special/0404/final.pdf](http://www.usdoj.gov/oig/special/0404/final.pdf)) reviewing the selection of Muslim Service providers found a number of key areas of weakness in the selection process, two of which are worthy of note: the failure of any national Islamic organizations willing or able to provide endorsements for Muslim chaplain candidates, thereby resulting in a freeze on the hiring of Muslim chaplains and a critical shortage thereof, and the failure to use the expertise of its current Muslim chaplains to screen, recruit, and supervise religious service providers. The report notes that no agency other than ISNA has actually completed the required paperwork to become an endorsing agency for the BOP. Furthermore, the report states that a number of Muslim chaplains believed the BOP should require local and not national endorsers; local endorsers being much more likely to know the candidates on a personal basis.

Endorsing agencies traditionally serve to certify that chaplain candidates are well-developed in their religious tradition, can facilitate pluralistic services, have been through a rigorous interview and assessment process, and have no legal, moral, or ethical reason to be denied recommendation. The endorsing bodies may also serve as institutional advisors rendering formal opinions on matters concerning their faith traditions.

A Muslim prison endorsing agency may develop and support female chaplains to address the growing trend of incarcerated women. The number of women imprisoned in the United States over three decades (1997-2007) grew by over 800%. According to the Women's Prison Association's analysis of the figures released by the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics, 115,779 women were imprisoned in State and Federal correctional facilities in mid 2008, up from 107,626 in 2005. Women represented 7.2% of the prison population in 2007. The Christian and Jewish faith traditions both have numerous strong, organized, national endorsing bodies for their respective denominations. As is reflected in both the BOP report and the Pentagon statement, Muslim chaplains and institutional adherents suffer from the failure to develop Islamic endorsing agencies for their recommendation and certification.

### III. THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

The Islamic tradition puts an emphasis on the practice of consultation (shura) and consensus (ijma) in both public and private matters. With regard to consultation, the Qur'an calls repeatedly for Muslims to conduct their affairs through consultation and it was a practice of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to consult with his contemporaries regarding various matters.

In relation to the endorsement, screening, and recruitment of Muslim chaplains and advisement on religious matters to institutions, an Islamic endorsing agency would serve to manifest the Qur'anic enjoyment and Prophetic traditions of consultation and consensus. Therefore this entity would represent the diversity within the Muslim community according to Qur'an and Sunnah.

### IV. THE STRUCTURE OF THE ISLAMIC ENDORSEMENT AGENCY

The endorsing agency would have the authority to grant, deny or withdraw endorsement. The endorsing body will also be responsible for monitoring and evaluating chaplains. The Board of the entity would be composed of appointed members from collective Connecticut masajid. The collective voting board will consist of 5 regional officers from northern, southern, western, eastern, and central Connecticut. The five regional officers will be selected based on experience and desire to help in the field of chaplaincy. The Board would hold a meeting

four times a year and would have the responsibility for policy and process regarding endorsement. The board would also meet as needed to review, interview, and process and endorse leadership.

The endorsing agency would also work towards establishing a training program to certify Muslim chaplains.

Board decisions to approve, deny or withdraw endorsement of candidates will be through the consensus of all Board members during a meeting called for the occasion. In the event of a stalemate where a consensus was failed to be reached, up to two more meetings may be held in order to reach a consensus. After three meetings, in the event that no consensus was reached, the decision will be taken by 2/3 majority vote.

## V. CONCLUSION/SUPPORT

In conclusion, the need for an endorsing agency for Muslim chaplains is plainly recognized across the board, from federal/state agencies to the military and of course, by Muslim chaplains themselves. Furthermore, it is our responsibility towards those Muslims who need the care and commitment of qualified Muslim chaplains to develop such an agency. This effort is supported by CAIR-CT, the International League of Muslim Women-CT Chapter, the Islamic Council of New England and its member organizations, the New England Council of Masajid, The New England Muslim Sisters Association and the Muslim Coalition of Connecticut.

Finally, the following individuals have participated in formulating the core ideas in this document: Kashif Abdul-Karim (Imam, Muhammad Islamic Center of Greater Hartford), Abdullah Antepli (Board Member of Berlin Mosque-Islamic Center of Greater Hartford CT, Bosnian American Islamic Center of Hartford, CT), Mohamed Haidara (Imam, Islamic Center of CT (Medina Masjid), Windsor, CT), Aqil Hashim (Vice President, Masjid Al-Islam, New Haven CT), Dr. Jimmy Jones (President of Masjid Al-Islam, New Haven CT), Elmar Shakir, Member of Islamic Center of CT, Windsor CT).

Islamic Centers Masjid who have approved this document as of March 27, 2010 (Rabi al-akhir,1431): Islamic Association of Central Connecticut c/o Mohammed Bishtawi, Islamic Center of CT c/o Elmar Shakir, Islamic Center of Greater Hartford c/o Dr. Ali Antar, Islamic Center of New London c/o Imam Mahmoud Mansour, Islamic Center of UConn c/o Saleh Ibrahim, Islamic Center of Wallingford c/o Shadee Elmasry, Masjid Al-Islam c/o Aqil Hashim, Muhammad Islamic Center of Greater Hartford c/o Imam Kashif Abdul Karim, New Africa Learning Center c/o Imam Abdul Shaheed Ansari, New Haven Islamic Center (West Haven) c/o Dr. Mohamed Elsamra, United Muslim Masjid, Inc. (Masjid Rahman) c/o A. Majeed, Shoreline Islamic Center (Branford) c/o Muhammad Khan, Al-Azziz Islamic Center c/o Imam Naseef, Danbury Masjid c/o Shaikh Imran Shariff

## Vision for an Islamic Seminary in the United States

The mission of an Islamic Seminary in the U.S. is to be a preeminent institution of Islamic higher learning, whose primary purpose is to prepare Imams and Muslims leaders to serve Islam and the Muslim community, combining rigorous Islamic scholarship with a commitment to strengthening the Muslim community in America and striving for social justice and compassion in the world. The vision for an Islamic Seminary in the U.S. is that it should be:

1. An independent Muslim institution, not subsumed under any other institution whether in North America or the Muslim world.

2. A world-class institution in terms of faculty and facilities, respected by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, on par with other seminaries and Islamic institutions in America and the world.

3. A seminary that confers graduate degrees (Masters of Arts and Masters of Divinity) and certificates of professional training (pastoral care, Islamic studies teacher, youth leadership, mosque leadership, etc.) to both Muslim men and women.

4. A seminary that partners with major American institutions of higher education and overseas Islamic institutions of higher learning to realize mutual benefit in resources and expertise: students in the American institutions might attend classes in the Islamic seminary and vice versa; overseas institutions of higher education might host Arabic language and Islamic studies courses for Islamic seminary students; overseas institutions might provide teachers for the seminary.

5. An inclusive seminary that honors the broad scope of Islamic scholarship within the classical and modern eras, manifested in an inclusive staff, curriculum and board.

6. An institution that serves as a catalyst and platform for rigorous Islamic scholarship, research and training, addressing in particular the relevant fiqh issues and questions of the Muslim community, and the various social and organizational needs of masjids and the Muslim community.

7. An institution that serves as a vehicle for cross-fertilization between Muslims and non-Muslims in order to contribute to the general American ethos and to facilitate the civilizational dialog which was accelerated in the wake of September 11, 2001.

8. An institution that strengthens the role of religion in the public square by countering the current negative portrayals of Islam which tend to affect all religions.

9. An institution that assists in the on-going development of the American Muslim identity, aimed at fostering an authentic identity firmly rooted in both the American and Islamic contexts, and facilitating the "indigenization" of Islam in the United States.

10. An institution that promotes an agenda of social justice and compassion in the world.

# map

