



THE 5TH ANNUAL SOCIAL WORK AND RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY CONFERENCE

Being Together While We're Apart
Building Community and Providing Care, in the Pandemic
and Beyond

Conference for Mental Health, Social Service, and Spiritual Care Professionals, Offering **6.5 Continuing Education Credit Hours** for New York State LMSWs and LCSWs.

Wednesday, July 22 • 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Online in Zoom Meetings, due to Public Health Conditions

Zoom Link and Password Required

Found in Email to Registered Participants

The Interfaith Center of New York SW CPE is recognized by the New York State Education Department's State Board for Social Work as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed social workers – provider # 0163.

Summary and Learning Goals:

The social distancing and self-isolation required to fight the COVID-19 pandemic have cast a stark new light on the human need for social and emotional connection. New Yorkers and others have been isolated by the pandemic – cut off from family and friends, congregation and community – at precisely the time when we need each other the most. Faith communities have responded to this crisis of connection with remarkable creativity, developing new forms of religious life online, including new ways of mourning for loved ones lost in the pandemic. Mental health care providers have stepped up to care for clients wrestling with grief and trauma, offering tele-mental health services on an unprecedented scale. But difficult questions remain: What are the strengths and weaknesses of these online forms of care and community? Are they engaging or accessible to all New Yorkers? To what extent can they take the place of in-person, embodied social ties?

On July 22, the Interfaith Center of New York, the Psychotherapy and Spirituality Institute, and the Jewish Board will host a full-day online conference for social workers and their colleagues, to explore these issues in conversation with diverse religious leaders and faith-based service providers. We are disappointed that we cannot meet in person this year, but we will still learn from each other by being together. The conference will include both formal presentations and small group dialogues, inviting participants to share and reflect on their own experiences of building community, providing care, and grappling with loss during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants will learn innovative strategies for online connection, and learn to work more effectively with religiously diverse clients.

Program and Speakers:

8:45 - 9:00 **Zoom Meeting Room Opens**

Our Zoom Meeting Room will open at 8:45, and the conference will start promptly at 9:00. Please plan to log on before 9:00, to leave time to resolve technical difficulties if necessary. Technical support will be available to ensure that participants can connect effectively (see contact info below).

9:00 - 9:20 **Introduction to the Conference, and to the Online Format**

A brief introduction to our online meeting format, and to the substantive themes of the conference, including the experiences of diverse New Yorkers during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as faith-based and secular approaches to the public health challenge of social isolation.

❖ **Dr. Henry Goldschmidt**, Director of Programs at the Interfaith Center of New York

9:20 - 10:00 **Introduction to Colleagues, and Discussion in Breakout Rooms**

An opportunity to share and reflect on personal and professional experiences during the pandemic, in small group breakout rooms. Participants will meet in the same small groups a number of times over the course of the day, for ongoing dialogue and relationship-building.

10:00 - 12:00 **Being Together – The Psychological and Spiritual Significance of Human Connection**

In their own distinctive ways, our diverse faith traditions all stress the importance of being together in relationship and community, through collective ritual, fellowship, and mutual support. A panel of religious leaders and faith-based service providers will reflect on the public health challenge of social isolation, and the fundamental value of being together. The conversation will explore the (irreplaceable?) significance of in-person social ties, as well as exciting new possibilities for social life online. Christian, Jewish, and Sikh perspectives will help conference participants work more effectively with diverse clients, by engaging with diverse understandings of human connection and interdependence.

The session will include formal presentations, small group dialogue, full group questions and conversation, and a brief yoga break for grounding and focusing while we sit by our screens at home. Speakers will include:

- ❖ **Rev. Kyndra Frazier, LMSW, MDiv**, Founder and CEO of KYND Consulting Inc., Former Associate Pastor for Congregational Care and Wellness at First Corinthian Baptist Church, and Founding Director of the HOPE Center Harlem
- ❖ **Dr. Simran Jeet Singh**, Visiting Professor at Union Theological Seminary, and Senior Religion Fellow at the Sikh Coalition
- ❖ **Rabbi Simkha Weintraub, LCSW**, Rabbinic Director of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services

12:00 - 1:00 **Lunch and Laundry – Downtime at Home**

1:00 - 2:20 **Being Together Online – Lessons from New York Faith Communities During the Pandemic**

A panel of local religious leaders will share and reflect on the ways their faith communities have maintained connection and provided mutual support during the COVID-19 pandemic, including new forms of online religious practice, pastoral care, and mourning rituals. Conference participants will learn innovative strategies for online care and community building that they can incorporate into their own work during and after the pandemic.

The session will include brief formal presentations, small group dialogue, full group questions and conversation, and a brief yoga break for grounding and focusing while we sit by our screens at home. Speakers will include:

- ❖ **A. Jesse Jiryu Davis and Traven Fusho Rice**, Senior Students and Meditation Teachers at the Village Zendo
- ❖ **Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, DDiv**, Senior Rabbi at Congregation Beit Simchat Torah
- ❖ **Imam Khalid Latif**, Executive Director and Chaplain of the Islamic Center at New York University

2:20 - 2:50

Coffee Break and Clean the Cat Box – Downtime at Home

2:50 - 4:10

Being Together in Teletherapy – Lessons from Spiritually Grounded Clinicians During the Pandemic

A panel of faith-based and spiritually grounded clinicians will explore the strengths and weaknesses of tele-mental health care, by discussing their work supporting clients' mental health and spiritual well-being through the anxieties and traumas of the COVID-19 pandemic. The conversation will focus, in part, on the challenges and opportunities of offering spiritually integrated therapies online. Conference participants will draw lessons to enrich their own practice once the pandemic has passed.

The session will include brief formal presentations, small group dialogue, full group questions and conversation, and a brief yoga break for grounding and focusing while we sit by our screens at home. Speakers will include:

- ❖ **Maryum Khwaja, LCSW**, Psychotherapist in Private Practice at Nasiha Counseling
- ❖ **Rev. Sarah McCaslin, MDiv, LCSW**, Psychotherapist, and Site Coordinator of the Psychotherapy and Spirituality Institute's Trinity Counseling Center
- ❖ **Sarah Ward, LCSW, MDiv, CYT**, Psychotherapist and Yoga Therapist in Private Practice

4:10 - 5:00

Closing Reflection and Discussion

Following a brief presentation by a leading social work educator, participants will reflect on key points and practical implications of the conference in small group conversations and a facilitated town-hall discussion. The conversation will be framed and facilitated by:

- ❖ **Dr. Mary Ragan, LCSW**, Executive Director of the Psychotherapy and Spirituality Institute, and Former Adjunct Professor at the Columbia University School of Social Work

Important Details to Keep in Mind

Technical support is available to ensure that participants can connect to the Zoom Meetings platform. If you need help connecting, please call or text **Eddie Diaz, 646-202-3677**. If you have other questions or concerns about the conference, please call or text **Henry Goldschmidt, 917-847-6056**.

We hope you will connect to Zoom from a **quiet, private space that allows for deep engagement** with our speakers and other participants. We hope to truly be together online.

If you have registered for continuing education credits as a NY State LMSW or LCSW, credit-bearing **certificates of completion will be sent by email on Friday, July 24**. Participation in all panel discussions and small group dialogues is required to receive continuing education credit – following NYSSED regulations, no partial credit is available.

Following the conference, **please complete an online evaluation**. Your honest and anonymous responses will help us serve mental health, social service, and spiritual care providers more effectively in the future. The evaluation form is available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GQRR96V>.

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Being Together While We're Apart

Speakers' Biographies

Introduction to the Conference



Dr. Henry Goldschmidt is the Director of Programs at the Interfaith Center of New York. He is a cultural anthropologist, community educator, interfaith organizer, and scholar of religion. In his work at ICNY, he develops programs for a range of audiences, including religious and civic leaders, K-12 teachers and students, social workers, and the general public. He has also taught religious studies and cultural anthropology at Wesleyan University and elsewhere, and is the author of academic and popular works including *Race and Religion among the Chosen Peoples of Crown Heights*.

Being Together – The Psychological and Spiritual Significance of Human Connection



Rev. Kyndra Frazier, MDiv, LMSW, is the Founder and CEO of KYND Consulting, Inc. which offers trauma-informed care through direct clinical services, spiritual direction and coaching, trauma-informed training for ecclesial and corporate entities, and listening sessions for executives. Most recently she served as Associate Pastor for Congregational Care & Wellness at First Corinthian Baptist Church, and Founding Executive Director of The HOPE Center (a free community-based mental wellness facility in Harlem). Kyndra holds an MSW from Columbia University where she concentrated in Advanced Clinical Practice, as well as an MDiv from Emory University's Candler School of Theology where she focused in Congregational Leadership. Kyndra is also a lecturer at the Columbia University School of Social Work, and a filmmaker working on a documentary series, "A Love Supreme: Black, Queer and Christian in the South," which will foster healing opportunities for LGBTQIA+ people impacted by religious trauma.



Dr. Simran Jeet Singh is an educator, writer, activist, and scholar who speaks regularly on issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity. Among other professional roles, he is currently a Visiting Professor at Union Theological Seminary, Senior Religion Fellow at the Sikh Coalition, Chaplain at New York University and Columbia University, and the first Sikh wire-service columnist in US history. Simran is the author of *Fauja Singh Keeps Going: The True Story of the Oldest Person to Run a Marathon*, the first-ever children's book from a major publisher to center a Sikh story, and is currently writing an adult non-fiction book on Sikh wisdom to help navigate today's contentious world.



Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW is the Rabbinic Director of the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services. He leads support groups and workshops on spiritual resources for living with illness, loss, and trauma, as well as seminars for clergy and health care professionals, writing and lecturing widely on the integration of Jewish texts and practices with mental health recovery. An adjunct lecturer in Pastoral Skills at the Jewish Theological Seminary, he helped design and taught in the Post-Master's Certificate Program in Spirituality and Social Work at NYU's Silver School of Social Work. He has maintained a private practice in couples and family therapy with a special focus on bereavement counseling.

Being Together Online – Lessons from New York Faith Communities During the Pandemic



A. Jesse Jiryu Davis is a senior student and meditation teacher at the Village Zendo, where he has studied and practiced since 2002. He is the assistant coordinator of the Zendo's meditation programs at Sing Sing Correctional Facility and the Manhattan Detention Center, and helped create the "Online Zendo" platform for collective meditation practice and online Dharma talks early in the COVID-19 pandemic. Jiryu is a computer programmer at MongoDB, and lives in the East Village with his partner Jennifer Keishin Armstrong and their two hamsters.



Traven Fusho Rice is a senior student and meditation teacher at the Village Zendo, where she has studied and practiced since 2006. She has helped to lead the Zendo's feminist and anti-racist activism, volunteered with the Zendo's meditation program at Sing Sing Correctional Facility, and helped to create the "Online Zendo" platform for collective meditation practice and online Dharma talks early in the COVID-19 pandemic. Fusho is a filmmaker and journalist. She currently works with the Patton Veterans Project, teaching filmmaking workshops to veterans throughout the country, and in 2009 she co-founded The Lo-Down, a local news website covering the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where she resides with her husband, Ed Litvak.



Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, DDiv, serves as the Senior Rabbi of Congregation Beit Simchat Torah. She was installed as CBST's first rabbi in 1992, arriving at the height of the AIDS crisis when the synagogue was in desperate need of pastoral care and spiritual leadership, and she has continued to lead the community through today's COVID-19 pandemic. Under her leadership, CBST has become a powerful voice in the movement for equality and justice for people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions, and a significant force challenging the radical right's dominance over religious and political life. For many years Rabbi Kleinbaum has been ranked by Newsweek among the 50 most influential rabbis in America.



Imam Khalid Latif is the Executive Director of the Islamic Center at New York University, as well as a University Chaplain, cofounder of the Of Many Institute for Multifaith Leadership, and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Public Administration. Under his leadership, ICNYU became the first formal Muslim student center established at an institution of higher education in the United States. In addition to his work at NYU, Imam Latif is extremely active in New York civic life, serving on the NYC Public Advocate's Task Force to Combat Hate, and in many other public roles. He is a highly sought-after speaker and commentator, offering his unique blend of spiritual and practical insight to diverse audiences in New York and beyond.

Being Together in Teletherapy – Lessons from Spiritually Grounded Clinicians During the Pandemic



Maryum Khwaja, LCSW, is a psychotherapist in private practice at Nasiha Counseling, a practice she co-founded that specializes in, but is not restricted to, working with Muslim clients. (She is also a Supervisor of Brooklyn Care Management at the Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services.) Maryum has extensive experience working with children, adolescents, parents, and families in the New York and New Jersey child welfare systems, and with emotionally disturbed children and adolescents. She graduated from the Silver School of Social Work at New York University in 2001.



Rev. Sarah Segal McCaslin, MDiv, LCSW, is a Psychotherapist at the Psychotherapy and Spirituality Institute, and Site Coordinator of PSI’s Trinity Counseling Center. She is a licensed clinical social worker and an ordained Presbyterian minister, with an MSW in Advanced Clinical Practice from Columbia University, MDiv from Union Theological Seminary, and post-graduate certificate in family therapy from the Ackerman Institute for the Family. Sarah is devoted to fostering the human capacity for resilience, growth and meaning-making, even under the most daunting circumstances. She believes in the inherent spirituality of all people to be a resource for achieving healing and wholeness.



Sarah Ward, MDiv, LCSW, CYT is a psychotherapist and yoga therapist in private practice in Brooklyn. She holds an MSW in Advanced Clinical Practice from Columbia University, an MDiv from Union Theological Seminary, and certifications in yoga, yoga therapy, and trauma-sensitive yoga from the Integral Yoga Institute, Phoenix Rising Yoga Therapy, the Trauma Center in Boston, and Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health. Sarah has taught yoga since 2000, and has practiced psychotherapy and therapeutic yoga in a variety of settings since 2009. She specializes in working with anxiety, stress, and trauma by helping clients find connections between mind, body, and spirit to foster profound healing.

Closing Reflection and Discussion



Dr. Mary Ragan, LCSW is the Executive Director of the Psychotherapy and Spirituality Institute, and maintains a clinical practice at PSI's Trinity Church Wall Street site. Her research explores the contours of traumatic grief, its differences from general bereavement, and the clinical interventions that proved most effective. This research informed her own trauma work with first-responders and family members after 9/11, and with survivors of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Mary recently concluded ten years as an Adjunct Professor at the Columbia University School of Social Work, where she regularly taught a course on "Spirituality and Social Work." In addition to her work as a clinician, administrator, and educator, Dr. Ragan has served as a consultant to a wide range of faith-based and secular organizations.