In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

**Importance and Role of the Masjid**

“In houses which Allah has permitted to be built and in which His name is remembered, there are men who pro-
claim His glory morning and evening, not distracted by trade or commerce from the remembrance of Allah and
the establishment of salat and the payment of zakah; fearing a day when all hearts and eyes will be over
turned; so that Allah can reward them for the best of what they did and give them more from His unbounded
favor. Allah provides for anyone He wills without accounting.” (al-Nur, 24:36-38)

The above ayaat of Surat al-Nur explains the purpose, the importance and the role of the masjid in Islam. Mas-
jid is derived from the three letter root word (sa-ja-da) which means to prostrate. Masjid, therefore, means the
place where Muslims come and humble themselves before Allah (SWT). An ‘abd (slave) is closest to Allah (SWT) when he is in a state of Sajdah or prostration.

The Prophet (SAW) is reported to have said that whoever built a masjid, solely for the purpose that Allah
(SWT)’s name is mentioned therein, Allah (SWT) will build a house for him in paradise. He (SAW) is also re-
ported to have said that the masjid should be simple and modest rather than showy and ostentatious like the
decorated houses of worship of the Jews and the Christians. A masjid is a place to gather and worship Allah
(SWT) in all humility. There is no need to show off or brag about the architectural or decorative aspects of the
masjid. In a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah (RA), Allah’s Messenger said, “Allah neither looks at your figures,
nor at your outward appearance; He looks at your hearts and your deeds.” In another hadith, the Prophet
(SAW) is reported to have said that Hour (al-Qiyamah) will not come until people show off in building masajid.

Indeed, it is highly meritorious to go to the masjid and pray in congregation. According to the meaning of a
hadith, a man’s prayer in congregation is 25 times better than his prayer in his house or the market place. If he
performs his wudu’ (ablution) well, and goes to the masjid for no other purpose than to worship Allah (SWT),
every step he takes increases his status by one level and removes one sin of his. The angels continue sending
blessings on him as long as he prays and they implore Allah (SWT) to have mercy on him, and he will remain in
a state of prayer as long as he is waiting for the prayer. Another Prophetic tradition recorded in the Sunan
speaks of giving glad tidings of complete light on the Day of Judgment to those who walk to the masjid in the
dark (at the time before dawn and after dusk and thereafter).

Such believers who frequent the masjid are those who build it, maintain it, inhabit it, establish prayers in it, give
zakah, remember Allah (SWT) through engaging in activities that increase their faith such as reciting the
Qur’an, increasing religious knowledge, and doing da’wah. Allah (SWT) rewards them from his limitless boun-
ties for the best of what they do, and gives provision to those He wills without any measure or accountability.

The masjid has a significant role to play in the lives of Muslims. A scholar has said very aptly that the masjid in
reality is the beating heart of the Muslim society. Allah (SWT) likes to see the love and brotherhood/sisterhood
spread among believers. “The believers are brothers; so make peace between your brothers and have taqwa of
Allah so that hopefully you will gain mercy” (al-Hujurat, 49:10). It is here in the masjid where believers truly fulfill
their Godly ordained bond of brotherhood and sisterhood and cling together to the Rope of Allah, which accord-
ing to Ibn Mas’ud (RA) is the Book of Allah (SWT). The Qur’an is the only common thing between the believers
that binds them. “Hold fast to God’s rope all together; do not split into factions” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:103).
It is in the masjid where believers engage themselves in numerous activities just to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT). They offer their five daily prayers; break their fast and offer their tarawih prayers during Ramadan; collect zakah; purify their souls; conduct marriages; settle disputes, establish brotherhood; run schools for children to teach them Qur’an, hadith, Arabic, Islamic morals and manners (akhlaq); hold classes for adults to reinforce their learning of the deen; and invite non-Muslims to learn about Islam and cooperate with them in issues of social justice. It is the masjid where egalitarianism is practiced. There is no difference between the ruler and the ruled, the rich and the poor or the scholar and the illiterate. All are equal when standing before Allah (SWT). The masjid for all practical purposes is an authentic learning center and a base for da’wah for the Muslim community; especially when it comes to understanding and practicing our deen. This is how the masjid of the Prophet (SAW) was because Allah (SWT) wants Islam to be the prevailing deen. “It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the Deen of Truth to exalt it over every other deen, even though the idolaters detest it” (al-Tawbah, 9:33).

The Islamic Organization of North America (IONA) strives to make the IONA Masjid & Learning Center here at its headquarters in Warren, Michigan to be one such masjid. “The mosques of Allah should only be built/maintained/inhabited by those who have iman in Allah and the Last Day and establish salah and pay zakah, and fear no one but Allah; they are the ones who are most likely to be guided” (al-Tawbah, 9:18). This ayah very clearly lays down the criteria for those who are eligible for the honor of building, maintaining, inhabiting, and frequenting the masajid. Even in today’s adverse conditions when the Muslim ummah faces untold challenges of religious bigotry, negative stereotyping, malicious accusations, and Islamophobia, nothing deters the true believers from building masajid and frequenting them because they fear none but Allah (SWT). These are the people who are most likely to be guided. According to Imam Tabari, they will definitely be guided, for the usage of the word ??? in the above ayah implies a meaning of definiteness. There is a hadith which says that very soon a time will come upon the people when nothing remains of Islam except its name and nothing remains of the Qur’an except its script. The masajid will be embellished but in reality will be devoid of guidance.

This is true as things stand today. The generality of the so-called Muslims are neither sincere to Islam nor to the Qur’an. How much do we know about Islam as a deen? How much do we understand the Qur’an and act upon its teachings? The masajid and even Muslim homes have many copies of the Qur’an in them but the Book of Allah is not read, understood, and acted upon as it should be. The masajid often become venues for socialization. It is to be borne in mind that masajid have to be built on taqwa (God consciousness). “A mosque founded on taqwa from the first day has a greater right for you to stand in it. In it there are men who love to purify themselves; Allah loves those who are pure (in nature)” (al-Tawbah, 9:108). Our very purpose to come to the masjid is to be purified, and Allah (SWT) loves those who are pure in their hearts and pure in their intentions.

Fundraising for IONA Masjid
Alhamdulillah, by Allah (SWT)’s blessing, from day one, the IONA Masjid was founded on taqwa, and Allah (SWT) is witness to it. With about 250 congregants attending the Friday prayers when the masjid was founded in 2007, the number has increased four-folds to about 1000 as of now. As one congregational prayer cannot accommodate this number because of lack of space, two separate congregations have to be held. This, besides other pressing needs have necessitated an urgent need for expansion of our masjid cum learning center.

IONA – Who are we?
We are an organization of Muslims in North America who have embarked on a journey to transform ourselves and our surrounding communities to become righteous, God-fearing people, who collectively strive for the highest moral standard and constantly seek forgiveness from our Lord to earn His pleasure. We seek His compassion and mercy in this life and in the hereafter. We rejuvenate our souls through struggle and spiritual exercise in worship of our creator, Allah (SWT). The strength of our belief in Allah (SWT) gives us the courage to establish good, and forbid evil, thus promoting a system of justice for all mankind.

What is Our Vision?
Our vision for the new center is to make it an expression of our commitment to the Almighty Allah (SWT) in our mission to raise a strong and vibrant community of believers who can experience the joy and brotherhood/sisterhood in worshipping, learning, and engaging together for the sake of Allah (SWT). Our aim is to make it an environmentally friendly and energy efficient center with a focus on strengthening our Iman (faith) and empha-
sizing our Islamic and family values.

What is the Need?
Besides the need of expansion to accommodate 1000 Friday prayer congregants as explained above, there is also shortage of space and facilities to cater to the rigorous Islamic school program, which alhamdulillah attracts many children, especially from Southeast Michigan. During each enrollment period, we are constrained to decline admissions in Sunday school and Summer school to many deserving students because of lack of space and resources.

IONA also regularly organizes conferences and seminars, including the annual Islam, Sirah, and Qur’an conferences. IONA is committed to adult education and lifelong learning in order to rejuvenate and renew our faith. Our adult education program provides courses in Arabic, Qur’an, Hadith, and Tajweed. In addition, a live weekly Tafsir program, which is also webcast, is offered at the IONA Center. Being devoted to its in-house community, close-by community, as well as the community at large, IONA holds many interfaith and open house events for the non-Muslim community also.

The space shortage is an impediment toward fulfilling the needs of our community, and hence the appeal for funds. Our short term (two years) future plans include the purchase of 5 to 10 acres of land and construction of a multi-phased architectural structure thereon. The funds required for the expansion project is US Dollars 1.5 million. We appeal to all our brothers and sisters to contribute whatever they can for this noble cause. “Shaytan promises you poverty and commands you to do foul deeds. Allah promises you forgiveness from Him and abundance. Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing” (al-Baqarah, 2:268).

As Muslims, we believe in every word of the Qur’an. Allah (SWT) says that He compensates us for what we spend in His way many times over, which may be 10 times, 700 times or without any limit or measure, both in this world and in the next. We have to be weary not to be dissuaded by Shaytan from spending in the path of Allah (SWT). We have to avail ourselves of the opportunity to earn the maghfirah (forgiveness) of Allah (SWT).

End

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