

## *Brief History of the Islamic Society of Augusta*

- 1975** The establishment of 'Islamic Society of Augusta' (ISA) as a Not-for-Profit Corporation was first envisioned in 1975 by five families living at the time in Augusta. A constitution and by-laws were developed, approved by the members and submitted to Georgia Secretary of State.
- 1976** Certificate of Incorporation was issued in the name of Islamic Society of Augusta in May, 1976.
- 1979** Land for the Center located at 3416 Middleton Drive, Augusta was purchased in September 1979.
- 1983** All property (land, building, future construction, etc.) was put in trust with North American Islamic Trust (NAIT).
- 1984** Construction for the new mosque and the center began in June, 1984.
- 1985** After nearly a year of construction and fund raising, the new Center was inaugurated in March. Tax exempt status as a charitable organization was granted by IRS on 12/03/1985, (under IRS file Folder Number 580066330). Not for Profit Tax ID or EIN # is 58-1566513.
- 1986** The constitution and the by-laws were first amended and approved by the General Membership, February 23.
- 1988** A 50 grave site section was purchased from Hillcrest Memorial Cemetery in May. Amendment to by-laws approved, Quarterly Business meeting, June 12.
- 1990** A discussion for "Mosque Expansion" project was initiated in December 1990.
- 1992** Amendment to by-laws approved, Quarterly Business meeting, June 7.
- 1993** Amendment to by-laws approved, Quarterly Business meeting, May 30.
- 1994** Construction for the mosque expansion began, June 1994.
- 1995** An existing house (adjacent to the Center) on '120-Davant Road' was purchased for the Imam's residence in April. Amendment to by-laws approved, Business meeting, December 17.
- 1996** The expansion and other improvements of the Center were completed in August 1996, increasing the covered area of the Center from 3,200 to 9,250 sq. ft. Imam Mahsoub was loaned to ISA by the Egyptian government. He became the first full time Imam of the Center.
- 1997** Amendment to by-laws approved, Weekly Business meeting, December 7.
- 1998** The attendance at ISA increased from 20 participating families in 1985 to nearly 120 families. The weekend Islamic school has almost 80 children enrolled in grades I-VI. Besides five times daily prayer and Dawa activities, other important programs such as Quranic Tafseer, seminars, Seerat conferences, youth activities, etc. continue throughout the year.
- 1999** Amendment to by-laws approved, General Body (GB) Meeting, January 10.
- 2000** Imam Mahsoub term working thru the Egyptian government ended. He elected to remain in Augusta and was hired by ISA. Meanwhile a search for a new Imam began.
- 2002** Imam Mohamad al-Homsi was hired as new Imam for the Masjid.
- 2005** The concept of constructing a new Islamic Center was discussed over several meetings and finally approved. Plans for the Center, type of facilities including community hall, sports and gymnasium were discussed over several meetings. Fundraising events were conducted annually.
- 2006** Panacea Development Company comprising of four ISA members donated 7.97 acres of their property on Old Evans Rd in Martinez, GA to ISA for construction of the new Center on 3/8/2006. A plan for grading and site works was developed.
- 2007** Mitigation of approximately 1.5 acres of wet land was approved by Columbia County. Site work was completed. Imam Majed Sabke was hired as new Imam for the Center.
- 2008** Several special meetings of GB were conducted to solicit the needs/wishes of community members for the new Center. Fundraising events continued to be conducted to raise funds.
- 2009** More fundraising events and meetings to discuss the structures and design of the new center.
- 2010** Funds continued to be collected. A sketch for the design of the new Center was drawn and approved by the General Body. Approximate cost of the project was estimated. A construction committee was appointed by the Islamic Center Committee (ICC). When the funds collected

exceeded approximately 50% of the estimated cost, an architectural firm from Houston, TX was hired to begin making the drawings. Request for construction bids were solicited. One of ISA members was chosen to be the general contractor. Another member was hired to be a supervisor of the project.

The Interfaith Fellowship of Augusta (IFFA), an interfaith group was established in a meeting called for by ISA and attended by 45 clergy from different congregations.

- 2011** Building Permit was issued on 1/2/2011. Ground breaking of the new Center was held on 2/27/11 and construction began earnestly and continued as well as fundraising.

The Islamic permissibility of sale of the old Masjid was approved by the Fiqh Council of North America on 4/13/11. NAIT agreed for the sale in principle. Negotiations with NAIT for the proceeds of the sale of the old Masjid started.

The concept of reorganizing the governing body by forming a Board of Trustees in addition to the Executive Committee was approved in principle but many concerns were raised.

Mitigation over the creek was approved 8/12/11 and work started.

- 2012** The funds were still short. Several members loaned \$725,100.0 as 'Qard Hasan' to ISA to complete the new Center project while others donated smaller amounts on a regular basis to a special account for the repayment of the loans to the first group of donors on an annual basis over a 5-year period. Construction of the new Center completed. Certificate of occupancy awarded. First prayer in the new Center was held on 9/12/2012. Total cost of the construction of the new Islamic Community Center was approximately five Million dollars.

Panacea Company donated another 1.58 acres to ISA, June 2012.

ICC hired a Muslim attorney from Atlanta to help the negotiations with NAIT.

Imam Mohammed Jamal Dauodi was hired in October.

- 2013** An Open House event for the new Center was arranged in Feb 2013.

ICC appointed a "BOT committee" that prepared a framework for the new structure of the governing body. The framework was approved by ICC and presented to the General Body several times for discussion.

Two hundred new cemetery lots at Hillcrest Memorial Cemetery were purchased in August for \$200,000; first payment was made on 8/16/2013, and final payment a year later on 9/7/2014.

Agreement with NAIT was reached. The old Masjid was allowed to be sold. The proceeds would be in trust with NAIT for investment; the dividends would be distributed to ISA annually.

The old Masjid was put on the market in December.

- 2014** Hafiz Sajid Ali Khan was hired to begin "Hifz" program and lead Ramadan Taraveeh prayers.

Several meetings were conducted to revisit the concept of a Board of Trustees (BOT), its structure, role viz-a-viz the executive committee, method of selection, and criteria for the selection of its members. Several surveys were conducted to get the opinion of ISA members.

Meanwhile several amendments to the By-laws were proposed and some got approved.

A political forum was pursued wherein the Democratic and Republican party candidates for the 12th Congressional district addressed our community and the general public, and explained their respective views, followed by question and answer session.

A leadership Columbia County conference was arranged and held at the Islamic Center.

There were couple of offers for the purchase of the Middleton mosque but did not materialize.

- 2015** A By-laws committee was selected. After several meetings, the committee drafted a revised Constitution and By-Laws incorporating the formation of a BOT and a new Executive Committee (EC) structure on 6/28/15 that was submitted to the ICC, which made some changes and had it discussed over several Business meetings with additional modifications. A final document was approved and then submitted to an attorney for review to assure compliance with Georgia law. After approval by the attorney, the revised Constitution and Bylaws were adopted on 12/18/2015. It was decided to withdraw the Middleton Mosque from the market and to have it remain at ISA. Election of a new EC and BOT was scheduled for January 24, 2016.

Two loan payments (# 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>) were paid this year, in April and December, respectively. A project for covering the creek and grading the land behind the existing building which will have the effect of adding approximately 3 acres of usable land was approved and was called 'Phase 2 Expansion' project.

- 2016** The fifth and final payment of the loan for the completion of ICCA was paid on 5/13/2016 one year earlier than initially scheduled in 2012. An open house was held to celebrate 40 yrs. of ISA. A monthly program "Lift the Veil" was initiated in July to inform the general public about Islam and to dispel some of the myths propagated about it. Several GB meetings were conducted to explain and discuss the merits of Phase 2 expansion. It was approved by the GB on 7/10/16. Bids were initiated, and the contract was awarded to Site Master. Another contract was awarded to Matrix engineering for supervising the work of the contractor. Permit was obtained on 12/12/16. An interfaith panel was held to discuss how to deal with strangers in response to the influx of Syrian refugees. Muslim Community Services of Augusta (MCSA) was established to help the needy in the community at large. It began operating at 120-Davant Rd. on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays of each month. Shifa Care Clinic Inc. was established in March, 2016 offering a free medical clinic to uninsured. Both, MCSA and Shifa Care Clinic are independent organizations, fully supported by ISA for the cause they serve and for the good of humanity. An 'Imam Search Committee' was formed towards the end of the year. Columbia Leadership conference was held in December.
- 2017** Funding for Phase 2 expansion was started in a GB meeting on 1/19/17. There were donations as well as pledges for loans. Work started shortly thereafter and continued thru 2018. BOT initiated a "Student Scholarship Fund" for our students to further their Islamic education. Shifa Care Clinic held its first clinic on March 18, 2017 at University Hospital, 820 St. Sebastian Way, Suite 2A, Augusta, GA 30901. Its schedule of operation is 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month. The Imam Search committee was able to recruit several candidates. It decided to invite 3 candidates to visit ICCA for a weekend. Imam Jawad Rasul was selected in a combined BOT and EC board meeting in April. Imam Jawad Rasul accepted the offer, joining ISA on April 24, 2017. BOT appointed a committee to establish a full time Islamic School. The committee became the school board and named the school "Augusta Islamic Academy" (AIA). The board was able to start the school in August, selecting and hiring a Principal and 2 teachers from amongst current members, while Hafiz Sajid Khan would teach Qur'an in the school. Funds were provided by the BOT. The school uses GA Cyber educational curriculum. The renovation of the old Masjid that began in 2016 was completed and it was named the 'First Islamic Center'. In addition to offering daily prayers, the Center became available on rental basis to hold meetings, conferences, or social gatherings suitable for up to 125 persons. Election of a new EC and new members of the BOT occurred in the last weekend of Sep, 2017.
- 2018** Phase 2 construction was completed at the end of July. Its total cost was \$770,000. Panacea Development Co. donated the remaining 9.5 acres to ISA for residential development. An outside individual who made several threatening vulgar phone messages to our community was arrested and convicted for interference in religious freedom. Mr. Howard was sentenced, as announced on 7/24/2018, to two years in prison followed by three years of supervised release. Shifa Care Clinic, under the umbrella of the BOT, began its operations at the 2<sup>nd</sup> location on July 21, 2018 at the First Islamic Center located at 3416-Middleton Dr., Augusta GA 30907. Mootaz Mohamed Koriem was hired as the Principal of full time school, joining on July 1. The name of full time school was officially changed from AIA to ASA-Augusta Science Academy. Ibrahim Abdul Latif was hired to replace Hafiz Sajid, who resigned his position in July in order to pursue professional opportunities elsewhere. Hafiz Ibrahim joined ISA on 8/22/2018 to continue Hifz program in weekly children classes and in full time school, as well as lead Traveeh prayers.