

Grace Baptist Church
719 Club Drive Statesville NC

October 12, 2026
For More Information:
Email gracestatesville@gmail.com

Award-winning Author and Islamic Scholar Announced as 2026 Davis Lectures Speaker

Dr. Omid Safi, professor of Islamic Studies at Duke University, is the 2026 Davis Lectures speaker hosted by Grace Baptist Church in Statesville on Oct. 25-26, 7-8:30 p.m. nightly.

Dr. Safi is a teacher in the Islamic mystical tradition of Radical Love and has published extensively on the foundational sources of Islam and Sufism (the mystical tradition within Islam). His *Memories of Muhammad* is an award-winning biography of the Prophet Muhammad. His most recent book is *Radical Love: Teachings from the Islamic Mystical Tradition*.

On Sunday, Oct. 25, Dr. Safi will present the lecture “The Path of Love in Islam: On Love, Human and Divine”. This is a lecture into the heart of the Islamic tradition, exploring the depth of Islamic spirituality through figures like Rumi.

On Monday, Oct. 26, his lecture title is “What do the Prophets have to say to Today’s America? Being Muslim in Today’s America.” Noting that all the great Abrahamic traditions have a prophetic voice that puts the well-being of the poor, the orphan, the widow, the needy, the refugee at the center of God's concern, this conversation moves from the Hebrew Bible and the prophetic voice of Martin Luther King to examine what it is to be Muslim in today's America, and explore how we may--collectively--bring love and justice back to center of our moral concern.

The lectures will be held at Grace Baptist, 719 Club Drive, and are free to the public. Each night also includes an opportunity for conversation and fellowship with the speaker.

“At a time when religious differences are so often used to divide us, we are honored to welcome Dr. Safi to our community,” said Rev. Carrilea Hall, pastor at Grace Baptist. “Dr. Safi invites us to listen, learn, and recognize our shared humanity.

“As a Christian congregation, we believe we have much to learn from the wisdom and spiritual traditions of our Muslim neighbors,” she continued. “These conversations offer an opportunity not only to deepen our understanding of Islam, but also to reflect on the prophetic call to love, justice, and care for the most vulnerable—a call that runs through both of our traditions.”

Dr. Safi’s passion for teaching has been recognized through the ten times that he has been nominated for professor of the year awards. He has given the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. lecture on

"What Does Martin Have to Say to Today's America" on the anniversary of Dr. King's assassination in Memphis.

He also teaches online courses through Illuminated Courses on topics ranging from Rumi to the mystical dimension of the Qur'an, and offers Illuminated Tours, described as spiritually oriented contemplative journeys and retreats to Turkey, Morocco, Andalusia, and now Umrah.

"We hope these lectures will inspire greater understanding, meaningful relationships, and a renewed commitment to building a more just and compassionate world," said Hall.

Grace Baptist Church established the Davis Lectures in 2002 to offer the community an opportunity for serious inquiry and dialogue with respected religious scholars, historians, and authors. It is named in honor of the late Durham minister Dr. Richard T. Davis, who led the first series.

The series has grown to include a summer lecture in conjunction with the annual Wild Goose Festival, a faith-inspired gathering that blends spirituality, social justice, music and the arts, held at VanHoy Farms in Union Grove. Past speakers include John Dominic Crossan, scholar and historian, best known for his work on the historical Jesus; Dianna Butler Bass, popular author and commentator on religion; Brian McLaren, author and leading figure in the emerging church movement, and most recently, NYT best selling author Kristin Kobes Du Mez.

More information can be found at www.gracestatesville.org or email gracestatesville@gmail.com.