

Living & Learning with Muslim Friends and Neighbours

A program for a youth gathering

By Dorothy Henderson

For leaders

1. Bring copies of weekly TV programs and highlighters.
2. Watch in your local paper for news article on Muslim activities. Cut these out and bring them to the program.
3. If possible, provide the book *A World of Faith Introducing Spiritual Traditions to Teens*, by Carolyn Pogue, Copper House, 2007. This excellent and colourful book offers a summary of 10 world religions, including Islam. This book may be purchased (\$29.95) from bookroom@presbyterian.ca.
4. Copy and cut out the eight boxes on page 4; copy and cut out the nine strips on page 5.
5. Bring sheets of newsprint or poster board and tape or glue.
6. Bring hymn books (optional).
7. Optional: Use this program for a breakfast gathering. Bring food items for a simple meal.

Objectives

1. To identify and talk about relationships between Muslims and Christians.
2. To begin learning about Islam, reflecting on similarities/differences with Christianity.
3. To begin developing an appreciation for the Islam faith tradition and respect for its followers.

Welcome and check-in

As youth arrive welcome them and make appropriate introductions. Invite youth to look through the TV programs and mark the shows they have watched. When everyone has arrived, gather in a circle and read out some of the shows the youth have marked. After each, ask everyone for a “thumbs up” or a “thumbs down” to indicate their feelings about the show. Afterwards, discuss what makes a good TV show.

Starter

Explain that the theme of this gathering is “Living and Learning with Muslim Friends.” Ask the youth if they have watched the TV show “Little Mosque on the Prairie”? (It’s on CBC TV on Wednesday evenings at 8 p.m.) In pairs talk about why they watched it or haven’t watched it; if they have watched it, talk about what they remember and felt about the episode(s) they watched and about the characters. Discuss:

1. Why do you think this show has become so popular?
2. What might be some of the challenges for a Muslim living in a predominately non-Muslim community in Canada?

Article

Together skim the newspaper articles you have gathered. Ask:

1. What do you think of the article?
2. Do you know any Muslims, perhaps as friends at school, as colleagues of your parents, or as neighbours in your community?
3. Why do you think some Canadians equate being Muslim with being a terrorist? How do you think Muslim Canadians might feel about this?

Story

If you have been able to find the book *A World of Faith*, read the interview with Farah Hattab, pp. 110-113. In this story, there is a photo of Farah wearing a hijab—the headscarf worn by some Muslim women. If you have been unable to find this book, read the following excerpt from the interview.

My name is Farah Hattab and I'm 17 years old. I'm in my first year of undergrad at the University of Calgary and hope to major in International Relations. Just like any other girl, I enjoy being with my friends. Whether it is sitting around together at home or going camping together, we can always find something to make us laugh. For the past three or four years, I have spent a lot of my free time volunteering in the Calgary Muslim community. Two years ago, a group of teenage girls and myself started an all-girls youth group, Young Muslimahs of Calgary. We meet weekly to discuss our day-to-day issues and how we can apply our own religion to help us find solutions to our concerns. Some of the things that we have done include:

- a number of summer camping trips all over Alberta
- bake sales to raise money for our group
- annual basketball tournaments
- a bi-monthly bulletin at the Calgary Islamic Centre, with articles written by members
- mother and daughter events

One of my new favourite hobbies that I started last year was snowboarding. I'm afraid of heights so it was a great accomplishment, and it now gives me something to look forward to for the cold winter.

Discuss this: How does the story of Farah fit with the newspaper articles you read?

Digging Deeper

1. Learning about Islam

As Christians follow the Christian faith, so Muslims follow the Islamic faith. Hand out the boxes cut from “Learning about Islam, the Muslim Faith” on page 4. Find who has the matching question or answer for each box. Then spread these out and mount them on a sheet of newspaper or poster board. What was surprising about this information?

2. Muslims' beliefs and practices

Spread out on a table face down the slips of paper cut from “Muslims' beliefs and practices” on page 5. Take turns drawing a slip until they are all taken. Set out one poster or newsprint sheet titled “Some Islamic beliefs” and another one “Some Islamic practices.” Invite everyone to tape or glue their slips of paper on the corresponding sheet. Then gather and look at each sheet in turn, reading the information aloud. Then discuss:

1. How do these Islamic beliefs compare with our Christian beliefs?
2. How do these Islamic practices compare with our Christian practices?
3. What is the difference between religious beliefs and practices?

Closing

In “popcorn” fashion, invite everyone to say in one word or phrase something they've learned today about Muslims or the Islamic faith. Then ask:

1. Is there anything you would like to do as a result of this learning?
2. Think about the newspaper articles. How has this program affected your reaction to them?
3. How would you respond if there was a proposal for a mosque in your neighbourhood?

Invite two youth to read aloud the following:

Our Mission and Other Faiths (from *Living Faith* 9.2.1)

Some whom we encounter belong to other religions
and already have a faith.

Their lives often give evidence of devotion
and reverence for life.

We recognize that truth and goodness in them
are the work of God's Spirit, the author of all truth.

We should not address others in a spirit of arrogance
implying that we are better than they.

But rather, in the spirit of humility,
as beggars telling others where food is to be found,
we point to life in Christ.

We witness to God in Christ
as the Way, the Truth, the Life,
and invite others to accept from him
the forgiveness of God.

We are compelled to share this good news.

The Apostle Paul speaking to Athenians (Acts 17:24-27)

The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he had all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each of us.

Sing # 727 "Let there be light," *The Book of Praise*, The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Prayer

God of all nations and all creation, we search for you and your guidance. Helps us understand and appreciate Muslims and their faith. May we go out into the world always speaking and acting in ways that enable people of different faiths to live in peace. Amen.

Learning about the Muslim Faith known as Islam *(cut out boxes)*

Question	Answer
1. Does Islam have the same root as any other religion?	<p>There are three religions that all came from the same root:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Judaism (the oldest) from which arose... 2. Christianity (around 3 AD) 3. Islam (around 600 AD)
2. What do Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have in common?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They all arose in the Middle East; • They all believe in one God; • They all believe in obedience to God; • They all value and read from the first books of the Old Testament Bible so they are known as “the people of the Book.”
3. What do you know about Muhammad, the founder of Islam?	<p>Islam originated because of one man, called Muhammad. Muhammad was orphaned at six. He later became a caravan manager of Khadijah, a wealthy widow. Because she was wealthy, Muhammad had the opportunity to pursue the religious questions which had troubled him from youth. He spent time meditating in a cave and he received a revelation from God. He wrote down the revelation and today it is the book called the Koran.</p>
4. What parallels do you see between Muhammad and Jesus?	<p>Both Jesus and Muhammad were close to God as children. As adults, both were charismatic and had followers. Both remained close to God. One main difference is that Muhammad is considered God’s prophet by his followers whereas the followers of Jesus proclaim him as Lord and Saviour, the very likeness of God.</p>
5. Why is it that Islam is sometimes associated with war and conquest?	<p>After Muhammad began to tell others of his revelation from God, the people in the city know today as Medina in Saudi Arabia, began to organize themselves into religious communities. Muhammad organized mosques for worship, prayer, giving alms to the poor, and set up basic Muslim rules. In 630 A.D. he waged a war on a nearby city called Mecca. From this moment, he directed all Muslims to turn toward Mecca.</p>

Beliefs and Practices of Islam

Some Islamic Beliefs *(cut on lines)*

In Islam there is an absolute focus upon the unity of God, as God as one being.

In Islam there is a strong belief in angels – Muhammad believed his revelation from God came from an angel.

In Islam the role of prophets is held in high esteem. Of their list of prophets, 18 are individuals from the Old Testament. They also include three from the New Testament: Zechariah, John the Baptist and Jesus.

Islam is, more than any other faith, a religion of the book. Although Muhammad could neither read nor write, the Koran is the Holy Scripture to Muslims because Muslims believe it to be God's revelation.

Muhammad's original message was centered on warnings of divine judgment to come. At least 852 verses of the Koran are on this theme. Hell is a dreadful place to be avoided; heaven is a place of delight.

Some Islamic Practices *(cut out on lines)*

Prayer: Devout Muslims pray five times a day – at dawn, midday, mid-afternoon, sunset, fall of darkness.

Almsgiving: Devout Muslims share annual income and a proportion of their capital wealth.

Fasting: During the ninth month, called Ramadan, of the Islamic calendar, Muslims abstain from all food and drink from sunrise to sunset.

Pilgrimage: Every Muslim is required once in his or her lifetime, if able, to make a "hadj" or pilgrimage to the city of Mecca.
