



Hartford International
UNIVERSITY FOR RELIGION & PEACE

HOLIDAYS IN THE WORKPLACE SERIES RESOURCE SHEET

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ISLAM | THE TWO EIDS IN CONTEXT

GROUND RULES

- Listen with an open heart and trust
- Speak using I statements
- Notice any judgments that come up, recognize them as such, and let them go.

PRESENTERS

Aida Mansoor is the Director of Field Education at Hartford International University for Religion and Peace (HIU). She also serves in the community and works with the Muslim Coalition of Connecticut and the Islamic Association of Greater Hartford.

As a community chaplain in the Greater Hartford area, she works on a variety of service projects including a Halal Food Pantry, and a service for burial and funeral preparations. She is also part of the MCCT Speakers Bureau and a board member of the Connecticut Council for Interreligious Understanding. She won the Human Relations Award from the National Conference for Community and Justice in 2011, and in 2019 she was named among the Women of Distinction in the Community from the Hartford Courant. Last year, she was appointed to the state's newly formed Connecticut Hates Crimes Advisory Council.

Imam Khalil Abdullah is the Assistant Dean for Muslim Life in the Office of Religious Life at Princeton University. He works closely with students on campus to support their diverse cultural and spiritual identities while helping to strengthen their religious literacy and mutual respect for others. In addition, Imam Khalil offers pastoral care to students and regularly hosts campus dialogues on various topics related to Islam and spirituality, identity, and meaning.

He has been active in interfaith dialogue, minority male mentoring and various social justice initiatives, with scholarly interests in religious pluralism, Islamic ethics and spirituality, and history of Islam in America with a focus on black Muslim experiences.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

THE ISLAMIC PILLARS OF FAITH

1. Shahadah - Bear witness that there is One God
2. Salat - Prayer
3. Zakat - Charity
4. Sawm - Fasting during the month of Ramadan
5. Hajj - Pilgrimage

Islam has two main festivals: Eid al-Fitr at the end of Ramadan, and Eid al-Adha at the end of Hajj.

RAMADAN AND EID AL-FITR

Ramadan is a lunar month, and it is significant because this was the month the Qur'an - the scripture— was revealed.

During the month of Ramadan, for approximately 30 days depending on the moon, Muslims fast to attain God consciousness. God consciousness means focusing on being closer to God. It is an intensely spiritual time.

Fasting means, no food, drink, or marital relations from dawn to sunset. The fast is broken every evening with a meal called an Iftar.

Any able-bodied Muslim will fast. Some people are not obligated to fast as follows: those suffering from an illness; the elderly; the very young; those who are traveling; and women who are pregnant, nursing, or on their cycle.

Muslims may fast a couple of days a week in before Ramadan to get their minds and bodies in tune for the full month fast.

THE LUNAR CALENDAR

The month of Ramadan (and fasting) begins with the New Moon. The celebration Eid al-Fitr happens at the end of Ramadan when the next New Moon is sighted. The time in between New Moons is approximately 30 days.

Because the Islamic calendar is entirely lunar, Ramadan and the Eids will move every year. Ramadan moves about 10 days earlier every year. Ramadan is not tied to the seasons.

Ramadan won't begin at the beginning of April again for 33 years.

A TYPICAL DAY FOR A MUSLIM DURING RAMADAN*

3:00am - wake up, small meal, keep hydrated, pre-dawn prayer

4:47am - fast begins at dawn

7:00pm - preparing the break fast meal

7:32pm - break fast with traditional dates and water, perform sunset prayer, dinner with family

8:54pm - perform the night prayer

10:00pm - pray at the mosque, family time, SLEEP

*Staying hydrated, and getting enough sleep are the two main challenges Muslims may experience during the month fasting

RAMADAN GREETINGS

Muslims will wish one another "Ramadan Mubarak!" which means "Have a blessed Ramadan." Some might greet with "Ramadan Kareem!", which means "Have a generous Ramadan."

EID AL-FITR

Eid al-Fitr is the festival at the end of the month of Ramadan.

Traditions include:

Wearing one's best clothes, gift-giving, going to the mosque for special Eid prayers; and going to IHOP!

EID AL-FITR GREETINGS

Muslims will say "Eid Mubarak!" or "Have a Happy festival!"

RAMADAN AND EID AL-FITR AT WORK

How does fasting affect employees in the workplace?

- Muslims may request an adjustment of their work schedule
- The last 10 days of Ramadan plus the Eid al-Fitr are especially spiritual, and employees may want to take their vacation during these days
- Employees might attend lunch meetings but will not eat or drink
- Breaking the fast (Iftar) dinners for co-workers might be something Muslim employees may want to host
- Remember, however, that Muslims are not monolithic. Some may wish to adhere to fasting and others may not. There is a huge range in terms of practice.

ON HAJJ AND EID AL-ADHA

Hajj is also observed according to the lunar calendar. About two months after Ramadan, Hajj (pilgrimage) will begin. Everyone is obligated to make the pilgrimage once in their lifetime if they have the means.

During the month of Hajj, one travels to the Ka'aba and performs a number of rituals over the course of several days. The Ka'aba is the black cube building in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, which, according to Islamic tradition, was erected by Abraham and his son Ishmail.

Abraham is seen as the father of the Islamic faith ("the imam of all humanity"), and the Hajj recreates the journey of Abraham.

The Hajj also includes intense prayer, moments of sacrificing, reenactment of the story of Abraham, and the giving of charity.

Whether one travels to Mecca for Hajj or not, all Muslims will be engaged in this spiritual time. Hajj is a physical thing but is also an internal and spiritual journey. During the seasons leading to both Eids, Muslims will be thinking about deeper things.

EID AL-ADHA

Eid al-Adha is the festival of sacrifice that takes place at the end of Hajj.

Eid al-Adha is the bigger Eid, though it doesn't always feel this way. Eid al-Fitr may feel bigger because there is a lot of personal investment through fasting and being closer to God, and if one is not going on Hajj, Eid al-Adha feels somewhat removed from personal experience. But Eid al-Adha is "the brighter sun" and is to remember the sacrifice of Abraham.

WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS AND COLLEAGUES DO TO SUPPORT THE MUSLIM IN THEIR WORKPLACE?

- Know these days are coming up and communicate with your employees. Talk to them and ask: "Are there any things that you require?" Or "How can we support you?"
- Know these holidays are coming up and ask if your Muslim employees would like to take those days off.
- Muslims appreciate gift baskets of food on the Eid day. Be sure the food is Halal, which means food permissible for Muslims. Fruits and nuts are a safe and pleasing choice. Or you can give a gift card, or an Eid greeting card. These small acts of kindness go a long way.
- Muslim employees might like to share the experience of an Iftar — the evening meal to break fast — with their employer and/or colleagues. Try going to an Iftar with your Muslim employee or colleague.

- For employers, an incredible show of support and willingness to understand maybe to fast with your Muslim employee! (If, like Islam dictates, you are also in good health to do so.)
- It's important that your employees feel comfortable to have the conversation about fasting with their employers. And it's important for employers and employees to start the conversation early and be open about it to request any accommodations that one might need.
- Including the team that the employee works with in the conversation about Ramadan creates a supportive environment.