



MOSAIC

**User's Guide
Summer 2003**

Understanding Islam

This issue of MOSAIC provides an introduction to Islam and Muslims in the United States. After a summary of Muslim practices and a biographical sketch of the Prophet Muhammad, MOSAIC visits a mosque in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Then the show highlights how Christians and Muslims are working together in two U.S. communities.

I. Before watching the video

Have people write down as many words or expressions that come to mind when they hear the words "Islam" or "Muslim." Share the responses with one another either as a large group or in several smaller groups. You may want to post the responses on a blackboard or flip chart where everyone can see them.

Discuss what your collective responses indicate about:

- 1) stereotyping of Muslims,
- 2) where ideas about Islam and Muslims come from (e.g., movies, news reports, etc.),
- 3) relationships with Muslims.

As you watch the video, listen for the words or ideas generated by your group that are directly or indirectly addressed. Is there anything that surprises or puzzles you in the video? Discuss your observations.

Photocopy the following section and distribute the copies to the group after they have watched the video.

II. Islam and Christianity

Islam focuses on religious practices and on articles of faith. Indeed, Islam's six articles of faith, upon which Muslim practices rest, will be recognizable to Christians and Jews, who are described in the Qur'an as "People of the Book." As you read this list, remember that "Allah" is simply the Arabic word for "God." Try saying God wherever you see Allah in order to see more clearly the parallels between Christianity and Islam.

The Six Articles of Faith

- Belief in the oneness of God [Allah]
- Belief in God's [Allah's] messengers, the last of whom was the Prophet Muhammad
- Belief in the revealed Books
- Belief in God's [Allah's] angels
- Belief in the life after death and the Last Judgment
- Belief in God's [Allah's] absolute sovereignty

Of equal importance to the articles of faith are the ways a Muslim demonstrates his or her faith through accepted practices. These practices are called the Five Pillars of Islam and are required of all Muslims.

The Five Pillars of Islam

Profession of the Faith: I bear witness that there is no god but God [Allah], and that Muhammad is the messenger of God [Allah].

Ritual Worship: prayer five times a day—at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and night.

Alms giving: the obligation to share wealth for charitable purposes, especially to widows and orphans, and the poor and needy.

Fasting: one of the most rigorous disciplines. It is required only during the month of Ramadan, if a person is able.

Pilgrimage (Hajj): obligatory journey once in a lifetime to the Kaaba (House of God [Allah] built by Abraham and Ishmael) in Mecca for those physically and financially able.

After reviewing and discussing the Six Articles of Faith and the Five Pillars of Islam, make a list of the beliefs and practices that Christians and Muslims have in common. Make a second list of those beliefs and practices that are different. Discuss the similarities and differences.

If possible, arrange for a knowledgeable representative from a local Muslim community to participate in this discussion. Arrange to return the visit, perhaps prompting further discussion between the members of your congregation and your Muslim neighbors.

Illustrations



Muslims are expected to pray five times a day.



The Mosque of the Prophet, Medina. Watercolor by G. Montgomery.

Helpful Resources:

Video

PBS has produced a marvelous documentary, *Islam: Empire of Faith*. It is available on DVD and video (\$29.98 each), with or without the accompanying book, *Islam: A Thousand Years of Faith and Power* (\$28). To order go to www.shop.pbs.org

In Print

John Kaltner's *Islam: What Non-Muslims Should Know* (Fortress Press, 2003) is an excellent and readable introduction. Available from Augsburg Fortress. ISBN 0-8006-3583-3. Order on the Web at www.augsburgfortress.org or call 800.328.4648.

On the Web

The April 2003 issue of *Lutheran Woman Today* (LWT) features "Muslim Mothers: Storing Up Riches for Heaven." The article can be downloaded from the Web. Go to the LWT Web site, www.elca.org/wo/lwt/index.html, and click on the link to back issues at the top of the page.

The ELCA Division for Global Mission produces a brochure, "Our Muslim Neighbors," which provides an overview of Islam and its connections with Christianity. Go to www.elca.org/dgm/resource/muslim.html or call 800.328.4648 to order (ISBN 6-0000-2621-8).

For resources to use with youth go to www.elca.org/dcm/youth/resource/helpsheets/muslim.html

MOSAIC

- **focuses on cutting-edge questions** to help you launch group discussions from Sunday morning forums to Saturday afternoon confirmation classes.
- **may be used** for adult and youth forums, confirmation, new member and Sunday school classes, with shut-ins, ministry councils, committees and organizations, and placed in your library for home checkout.
- **offers one year subscriptions** for \$50 (four 30-minute tapes or DVDs) or individual copies for \$19.95. Order by telephone (800.638.3522, ext. 6009), e-mail (mosaic@elca.org) or from MOSAIC Circulation, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631.

MOSAIC on the Web:

For a transcript of this program and for information about other MOSAIC videos go to www.elca.org/mosaic.

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