

Christian Muslim Forum

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Monday 27 April, 2020

Dear Friends,

With the arrival of Ramadan this week, we thought we might share some useful guidance and tips on how you can connect with Muslim families and neighbours during the month. We know that under normal circumstances, many of you would be attending fast-breaking gatherings in mosques, local Muslim community centres, at family homes or even, as has become popular in recent years, street iftars. Social distancing rules mean that much of this is beyond reach this year but it need not limit your ability to share in festivities with Mosque twins and Muslim communities in your local area.

There are several ways in which you can reach out to your Muslim neighbours:

- **A letter to your local mosque(s)** welcoming the arrival of Ramadan. It is the most significant month in the Muslim calendar and for thirty days Muslims will fast from before sunrise until sunset. The month is spent in extra devotional prayers during the night when the Qur'an is recited in its entirety over the 30 days. It is a month of spiritual upliftment, and a time when families and communities come together to share the breaking of the fast. This year, public health guidelines will restrict many of the social aspects of the month, but the deep spirituality will perhaps be heightened under lockdown conditions. You might want to share your experiences of celebrating Easter under strained circumstances, just as Muslims are facing now, and how periods of spiritual reflection take on greater significance with the global pandemic and the condition of communities around the world. If you need any help with locating the email address(es) of mosques in your area, please get in touch and CMF will help as best we can to connect you.
- **Arranging a 'virtual iftar'** with a local Muslim family through various online video calling facilities available such as Zoom, House Party, FaceTime or WhatsApp video call. There are many options that can be used to organise a 'virtual iftar' where you can join in the breaking of fast with a family. You might use the opportunity to ask about how local Muslims are adjusting to the new conditions, what Ramadan under lockdown feels like; both the positive and negative aspects of living under lockdown, and what is foremost in prayers offered by Muslims at this time?

You might already know of Muslim families in your area whom you could approach to a virtual iftar, or the imam of the local mosque may be able to assist you and put you in touch with a family keen to undertake an interfaith conversation in a virtual iftar setting.

Trustees:

Rt Revd Paul Hendricks
Aliya Azam MBE
Qari Muhammad Asim MBE

Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra
Rt Revd Dr Toby Howarth
Canon Anthony Ball

Founding Patron:

The Archbishop of Canterbury

Interim Director:

Shenaz Bunglawala

Things to bear in mind when organising a virtual iftar:

- (a) The time of fast breaking varies daily, with the appointed time for sunset, so it is useful to plan a date in advance and then check in closer to the time to know the exact timing of the breaking of fast on the appointed day when scheduling a meet-up online.
- (b) Normally, Muslims would break their fast and then retreat for the sunset prayer. In a virtual setting, this can be a little disorienting if the person on the other side of the call disappears for a short time. You might consider a call timed to coincide with the breaking of fast, and then a re-connection once the sunset prayer has been offered and families sit down to a meal to engage in a longer conversation.
- (c) Different apps have different security settings, so it is useful to determine what app you will be using and the enabled security features to give some assurance to a Muslim family that their privacy will be protected at all times.
- In the past, CMF have supported the Ramadan Tent Project (RTP) with their 'Open Iftar' initiative. These are events where the breaking of fast is held at public venues and open to the general public to attend and learn more about Ramadan, what the month means to Muslims, and about some of the challenges facing British Muslim communities. This year, RTP will be hosting online events. If you would like to join an 'open virtual iftar' during the month, please contact Ramadan Tent Project for details of their schedule by emailing: info@ramadantentproject.com.

As ever, if CMF can assist you in your work with a local mosque twin, or local mosques in your area more generally, please drop us a line and we will help as best we can.

Sincerely yours,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The signature on the left is 'P. Hendricks' with a horizontal line underneath. The signature on the right is more stylized and appears to be 'Ibrahim Mogra'.

Bishop Paul Hendricks and Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra
Co-chairs of the Christian Muslim Forum