Ramadan

A presentation to help non Muslims understand this month in the Islamic calendar
- What is Ramadan?
- Why is Ramadan so significant?
- Practices during Ramadan
- Eid Al-Fitr: Marking the end of Ramadan
- Working with Muslim colleagues and students
- Travelling or working in Muslim countries
- Summary
What is Ramadan?

- Ramadan (Ramazan (Persian); Ramzān (Urdu)) is the ninth month of the lunar based Islamic (Hijri) calendar.
- Ramadan is derived from an Arabic word meaning intense heat, scorched ground, shortness of food and drink.
- Many Muslims in Australia welcome Ramadan as a period of prayer, fasting, philanthropy and self-accountability.
What is Ramadan?

- There may be a variation of the date for Islamic holidays, which begin at sundown the day before the date specified for the holiday.

- The lunar calendar is 11-12 days shorter than the Gregorian / solar calendar, therefore the dates of Islamic holidays will vary and be 11-12 days earlier from year to year.

- There may also be a difference in dates around the world depending on when the New Moon is first seen.
Why is Ramadan so significant?

- Ramadan is considered to be the most holy and blessed month in Islam.
- Ramadan commemorates when the first verses of the Koran (Qu'ran) were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (Mohammad; Muhammed). This occurred on Laylat Al-Qadr, one of the last 10 nights of the month.
- Fasting during Ramadan is one of the Five Pillars (fundamental religious duties) of Islam.
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Practices during Ramadan

- Many Muslims in Australia fast during the daylight hours in the month of Ramadan.
- It is a time of self-examination, increased charity and increased religious devotion.
- It is common to have a pre-fast meal (suhoor) before sunrise and an evening meal (iftar) after sunset during Ramadan.
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Practices during Ramadan

- Some groups of people (including children, the mentally and physically ill, the elderly, expectant or breast feeding mothers) are exempt from fasting (for health reasons).
- Many who are exempt from fasting will donate food to the poor instead.
- Travellers are expected to make up the days they miss.
- Charity is very important in Islam, and Ramadan is a time for increased philanthropy.
- Muslims are also encouraged to read the Qur'an often during Ramadan. Some Muslims recite the entire Qur'an by the end of Ramadan through special prayers known as Tarawih, which are held in the mosques every night of the month, during which a section of the Qur'an is recited.
Practices during Ramadan

- Fasting is an important part of Ramadan which provides the following benefits to Muslims:
  - Helps Muslims draw closer to God
  - Dual physical and spiritual aspect of withdrawing from food and drink and withdrawing from impure thoughts and actions
  - A fasting person experiences some of the hardships of the poor and hungry and therefore encourages charitable activities to the less fortunate
Eid Al-Fitr: Marking the end of Ramadan

- Ramadan ends when the first crescent of the new moon is sighted again, marking the new lunar month’s start.
- Eid-al-Fitr is the Islamic holiday that marks the end of Ramadan.
- As the concept of fasting during Ramadan could be likened to the Jewish practice of fasting on Yom Kippur, Eid al-Fitr could be likened to the celebrations of Christmas in Christianity: Enjoying festive meals, praising God, wearing their best (often new) clothes, visiting relatives and friends, and gift giving.
- Food or money to feed a poor person is given.
Working with Muslim colleagues and students

- Be considerate that this is the most special month in a Muslim’s calendar.
- It is common for Muslims to take the last week of Ramadan as a holiday.
- Eid-Al-Fitr is usually taken as a holiday.
- Many Islamic businesses and organisations may amend opening hours to suit prayer times during Ramadan.
- Expect some congestion around mosques during prayer times, such as in the evenings.
Working with Muslim colleagues and students

- Avoid the following for Muslim colleagues and students during Ramadan:
  - Meetings or classes which include snacks or lunch
  - Meetings or classes extending past 5pm
  - Department or class social events
- To cross cultural and faith boundaries:
  - Share in the Iftar (evening meal) if invited
  - Greet colleagues with “Ramadan Mubarak” (Blessed Ramadan)
Travelling or working in Muslim countries

- Be aware many Islamic businesses and organisations may amend opening hours to suit prayer times during Ramadan.
- Expect congestion around mosques during prayer times, such as in the evenings.
- Expect flights to be fully booked to and from the Gulf area during the second half of Ramadan (with people making their pilgrimage to Mecca).
- Expect congestion getting into and out of Muslim countries from about a week prior to Ramadan until 3 days after Eid-Al-Fitr.
Summary

- Many Muslims in Australia welcome Ramadan as a period of prayer, fasting, philanthropy and self-accountability.
- Ramadan is considered to be the most holy and blessed month in Islam.
- Many Muslims in Australia fast during the daylight hours in the month of Ramadan.
- Eid-al-Fitr is the Islamic holiday that marks the end of Ramadan.
- Be considerate that this is the most special month in a Muslim’s calendar.
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This presentation has been made in consultation with the Swinburne Islamic Society, and the Muslim Chaplain at Swinburne