



Lutheran Social Service
of Minnesota
for changing lives

Loving Our Muslim Neighbors

A lesson plan for
Christian Youth Group
leaders to use to start
interfaith dialogue

**Authored by: Sarah Kretschmann at Lutheran Social
Service of Minnesota**

“Mosque Visit” activity adapted from Kids4Peace Curriculum developed by
Emily Holm, Luther College

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GLOSSARY

Adhan	[ad-hah-n]	- Call to prayer - Reminder to Muslims it is time to pray
Allah	[ah-la]	- “The one and only God” in English - Arabic word for God
As-salamu Alaykum	[ahs-sah-lah-mu-al-ay-koom]	- “Peace be upon you” in English - A respectful greeting
Eid al-Fitr	[Īd-ahl-Fiṭ-r]	- Series of feasts lasting several days that takes place at the end of Ramadan - Involves food, exchanging gifts and prayer together
Five Pillars of Islam	<i>See individual pronunciations</i>	1. Shahada- The Declaration of Faith 2. Salat- Five daily prayers 3. Zakat- Charity 4. Sawm- Fasting 5. Hajj- Holy Pilgrimage to Mecca
Hadith	[hə- 'dēth]	- Collection of recorded sayings and daily actions of the Prophet Muhammad
Hajj	[hæ-dj]	- Holy pilgrimage to Mecca - Mandatory once in a lifetime for every adult Muslim, if you have the physical and financial ability - Takes place during the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar
Hijab	[hi'djah-b]	- Head scarf worn by some Muslim women
Iftar	[if-ṭār]	- Evening meal that breaks the daily fast during Ramadan
Imam	[ɪ'mah-m]	- The respected title given to a mosque leader
Jihad	[dj-ee-hah-d]	- The challenge to achieve piety, submission and obedience to Allah
Jumu'ah	[djum-ah]	- Noon Friday prayer - Muslim men are required to attend Mosque then, women are encouraged
Kaaba	[ka'bah]	- Considered the first house of worship of the one God - Muslims walk around it as a ritual during hajj (the holy pilgrimage)
Mecca	[meh-ka]	- City in Saudi Arabia - Birthplace of the prophet Muhammad - Site of Muhammad's first revelation of the Qur'an - Regarded as the holiest city in the religion of Islam

Mihrab	[miḥ-rāhb]	- A niche in the wall of most Mosques which indicates the direction of Mecca
Mosque	[mah-sk]	- Holy place of prayer where those who practice Islam can gather
Niqab	[ni'kɑ-b]	- Face covering worn by some Muslim women
Qur'an	[kə'ræn]	- Central religious text of Islam which Muslims believe to be the word of God revealed to the prophet Muhammad
Ramadan	[ræm-a'dɑh-n]	- Ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar - A time of fasting from food, drink and desires from dawn to sunset
Salah	[ʃɑ-lāh]	- Daily prayers - Muslims pray 5 times each day: dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and evening - Muslims can pray at the mosque, in their workplace or at home - When Muslims pray, they face toward Mecca, Islam's holiest city
Sawm	[ʃaw-m]	- Fasting which takes place during Ramadan
Shahada	[sha-ha-da]	- Basic profession of Muslim faith - "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God" - Heard in the call to prayer
Wudu	[wudhu]	- Ritual washing of one's face, mouth, hands, and feet to physically and mentally prepare for prayers
Zakat	[zah-kāt]	- Almsgiving (giving to charity) - An annual payment of 2.5% of Muslims' net worth to be spent to help those in need

PROMOTING CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

BEFORE THE LESSON

We encourage all teachers to download and review the “My Neighbor is Muslim” small group study guide prior to teaching this lesson. It is a wonderful way to learn more about the Muslim faith and also reflect upon your Christian faith as well. “My Neighbor is Muslim” is a 7-week small group study intended for adult education sessions with contributions from Luther College Professor Todd Green and commentary from faculty at Luther Seminary and LSS staff. Our intention is that this resource will open doors, minds, and hearts and dispel stereotypes and myths about Muslim neighbors enough to start more conversations.

Download FREE of charge at: <http://www.lssmn.org/refugeeservices/study/>

OBJECTIVES

To dispel stereotypes about our Muslim neighbors and to promote mutual respect and interfaith understanding founded in our call to live out our Christian faith in love for our neighbors.

HANDOUTS/ TAKE HOME MATERIALS FOR STUDENTS

- “GLOSSARY”
- “TWO TRUTHS AND A STEREOTYPE”
- “STEREOTYPE ANSWER KEY”
- “GUIDE TO CREATING A GROUP VIDEO OF SUPPORT”
- “SUPPORTING BIBLICAL THEMES”

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- What are some of the basic tenets of the Muslim faith?
- Why is it important to understand the practices of members of different religions?
- How can knowledge about Islam promote acceptance and tolerance of others?
- What can we learn about our Christian faith by studying the beliefs and practices of people of a different religion?

TWO TRUTHS AND A STEREOTYPE ACTIVITY

1. Start the class time by discussing stereotypes. As a class, come up with a definition for the term. What is a stereotype? What are some stereotypes you may have experienced? Do people sometimes make assumptions about you based on how you look or the activities you are involved in? What is wrong about those assumptions and how do they make you feel?

2. Divide the class into small groups to explore “Two Truths and A Stereotype”. Have each group decide together which of the three statements is untrue. When they have finished picking out the eight stereotypes, bring the group together to share answers and address questions. When you have finished debunking stereotypes, have each individual formulate a statement to submit that completes this prompt: “In this activity about stereotypes, we learned _____.”

GROUP VIDEO ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL)

In small groups again, work to create a video to teach others about what you learned in class today; how to love our neighbors of all faiths. Share “Guide to Writing a Script” with each group. How can we take what we learned today and make a video showing support for our Muslim neighbors who have been experiencing discrimination?

Discuss the importance of cultural sensitivity. Emphasize that students should take into account the point of view of a member of that religion, remaining respectful throughout.

REFLECTION/SELF-EVALUATION

Bring the class back together for reflection time. How has what they have learned changed their thinking? Choose a handful of the following prompts to guide you in a reflection about this lesson:

1. What similarities do our Muslim and Christian faiths have?
2. If you were Muslim and looked at Christianity, what might seem odd, or unique? Even scary?
3. What can you appreciate about the Muslim faith?
4. What was something you learned today that surprised you?
5. What biases, assumptions and even fears do you have about Islam, or have you had in the past?
6. How do you work through these fears?
7. When have you felt wrongly judged, or had assumptions placed on you? What was that like? How did you react?
8. Have you seen students in your school who dress differently than you for religious reasons or who live out their faith in a different way? How can awareness about other religions help these students and the school community at large?

TWO TRUTHS AND A STEREOTYPE

Mark the untrue stereotype:

1. ___ a. The history of American Muslims goes back more than 400 years
___ b. *All Muslims are from the Middle East*
___ c. “Jihad” literally means striving in pursuit of obedience to Allah

2. ___ a. *All Muslim women must wear head and face coverings*
___ b. The Hadith is a collection of sayings & stories of the prophet Muhammad
___ c. Muslims are expected to give 2.5% of their net-worth to charity each year

3. ___ a. *Muslims believe in multiple gods*
___ b. Muslims have great respect for Jesus as a prophet sent by God
___ c. The Qur’an acknowledges the God worshipped by Muslims is the same God of Jewish and Christian scriptures

4. ___ a. Every adult Muslim should make a holy pilgrimage to Mecca if able to
___ b. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn to sunset
___ c. *Muslims can’t be involved in politics*

5. ___ a. Mosque leaders are respectfully called “Imam”
___ b. Muslims pray 5 times/day: dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset & evening
___ c. *The Arabic word ‘Allah’ is different from the English word for ‘God’*

6. ___ a. The Qur’an requires men and women to dress modestly
___ b. *Muslim women have no power in their communities*
___ c. Muslim prayers are accompanied by a series of movements: standing, bowing, kneeling and sitting

7. ___ a. Some Muslims do not shake hands with members of the opposite gender
___ b. When Muslims pray, they face toward Mecca, Islam’s holiest city
___ c. *Actions by Muslim extremists fit the beliefs of most Muslims*

8. ___ a. *All Muslims practice Islam in the same way*
___ b. Muslims recite all their daily prayers in Arabic
___ c. Mecca, the birthplace of Muhammad, is regarded as Islam’s holiest city

TWO TRUTHS AND A STEREOTYPE- ANSWER KEY

1. b America is home to one of the most diverse Muslim populations in the world. Approximately one third of the community is African American, one third is of South Asian descent, one quarter is of Arab descent, and the rest vary greatly. Here in Minnesota, Muslims are students, Vikings fans, activists, mothers, doctors, artists and so much more. Like Christians, our Muslim neighbors all have their own stories and their own ways of practicing their faith. Listen to some awesome stories at <http://www.mprnews.org/story/2016/02/02/being-muslim-in-minnesota>.
2. a Covering your head or face is an expression of faith that some but not all Muslim women choose to take part in.
3. a Islam is a monotheistic religion; a religion that believes there is only one God. Muslims believe “There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.” Allah is the Arabic word for God.
4. c Representative Keith Ellison, a Democratic member of the Minnesota Congress, was the first Muslim elected to that role. Many Muslims hold political office throughout the country.
5. c ‘Allah’ is the Arabic word for the God of Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam). Abrahamic religions all accept that God was revealed to Abraham.
6. b Muslim women have consistently served as revolutionary and heroic leaders. Since 1988, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Mali, Pakistan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Senegal and Turkey have been led, at some point, by a Muslim woman president or prime minister.
7. c In the aftermath of each traumatic terror attack of these past few decades, Muslim leaders consistently have spoken out against such actions. Terrorists are just a small portion of the population of the world who may identify as Muslim and often it is Muslims who are the victims of such violence. The faith of 1.8 billion Muslims, almost a quarter of the world’s population, is far too complex to define broadly as a “religion of violence.”
8. a Like Christians, all Muslims practice their faith in their own unique way according to their family traditions, the branch of Islam they adhere to, and individual values. The three most well-known sects of Islam are Sunni Muslims, Shi`ite Muslims, and Sufis, but there are many more, just like denominations of Christian churches.

GUIDE TO WRITING A SCRIPT

STEP 1: Each group will be asked to come up with a title for their short film.

Title: _____

STEP 2: To help you develop a script for your skit, discuss the following questions with your group.

What are some new things you learned today about the practice of Islam?

How can understanding this practice help you to combat prejudice?

How do we help our neighbors of all kinds feel welcome? Why is this important?

What have you learned about your own Christian faith by studying a little about Islam?

Plot:

STEP 3: On a separate sheet of paper, record the script for your skit in the following format:

CHARACTER'S NAME: Write your dialogue here.

[Write stage directions in brackets.]

STEP 4: Film your video to be shared with the rest of the class and the congregation.

SERVING OUR NEIGHBOR

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to love our neighbor?
- Why should we be kind to our neighbors of all kinds?

COMPARING SCRIPTURE

Abrahamic religions have many teachings in common. One of the most well-known teachings is the Golden Rule. Can anyone explain what the Golden Rule says?

We can find the Golden Rule in all of our sacred texts. Although it's written a little differently in each one, they all share a similar message.

Torah (Jewish)	New Testament (Christian)	Hadith (Muslim)
The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I the L-RD am your God. (Leviticus 19:34)	Do for others what you want them to do for you: this is the meaning of the Law of Moses and of the teachings of the prophets. (Matthew 7:12)	None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself. (Hadith 13)

As people of God, we are all called to treat others with kindness. It is a part of our life as Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Since we share this calling, we can work together to accomplish it. Even though we have some differences, we all can agree that we should treat others as we would like to be treated.

SERVICE PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES!

1. Contact your local mosque, synagogue or community center to see if they have any ministries you can assist with (free clinics, food shelves, shelters, etc...).
2. Put together Welcoming Kits for LSS of MN Refugee Services.

Cleaning Kit

- Broom/dust pan • Bucket • Sponges (2-4) • Dishes Scrub Brush (1) • Multi-purpose cleaner (1 bottle) • Dish Soap (1 large bottle) • Laundry Soap (1 large bottle) • Dish Towel and Rag • Toilet Brush and Plunger

Toiletry Kit

- Small cloth/reusable bag or box to put items into • 1 large bottle of shampoo* • 1 large bottle of conditioner* • 1 large bottle of lotion* • 2 (women's or men's) deodorants* • 2 bars of soap* • 1 large package of regular/super feminine pads OR • 1 package of razors (6-8) and large can of shaving cream • 2 adult or children's toothbrushes* • 1 regular or children's tube toothpaste* • 2-4 combs

*Full sized, not hotel or travel size

School Supply Kit

- 3 Folders with Pockets • 3 Wide Ruled Notebooks • #2 Pencils • 1 Eraser • 1 Scissors • 1 Glue Stick • 1 Pencil/Crayon Sharpener (We always needs lots of these!) • 1 Box of Crayons • 1 Pencil Bag • 1 Backpack
(Place all supplies inside!)

3. Organize a fundraiser to make a financial contribution to help make a challenging transition smoother for refugee families coming to Minnesota.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Have youth reflect on these questions individually in their journals, and then discuss as a large group if there is time:

- Why is the project you did today important?
- What difference do you think you made today?
- What does your faith tradition say about helping others?
- How did Jesus serve as an example of service to others?
- What do you plan to do to continue helping others in the future?
- Why do you think is it important to work together with people of all faiths?

MOSQUE VISIT & DEBRIEF

PRE-DEPARTURE REMINDERS

- Remind youth about respecting religious sites and why it's important.
- Carefully vet the mosque or Muslim Community Center and the one who will teach your youth. Let them know what your goals are for engaging in this experience.
- Prepare your youth, families, and congregation about why you are doing this and what you hope to accomplish. Make it clear that this experience is not intended to evangelize either Christians or Muslims.
- Ask what is appropriate dress for females and males and communicate that clearly and directly with your youth and any supporting adults who will join your group. (Remind female youth and leaders to avoid wearing tight or revealing clothing and to bring along a scarf to cover their head.)
- Ask your youth to write down their questions ahead of time. Make certain that the questions are clear and respectful.
- Request that the Imam address the difference between beliefs of Islam and some cultural interpretations and differences.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Muslims perform Wudu before the service to prepare themselves mentally and physically for prayer. This involves the washing of one's face, mouth, hands, and feet.

At the beginning of the service, Muslims will stand as the first chapter of the Quran is recited. It can be translated as:

"In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Master of the Day of Judgment. Thee alone we worship and Thee alone we ask for help. Show us the straight path. The path of those whom Thou hast favored; Not the (path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray." (1:1-1:7)

"Allahu Akbar" is Arabic for "God is great." Muslims recite this phrase many times throughout their prayers.

Muslims pray facing the Kaaba in the city of Mecca. Facing this mosque is simply for uniformity and homogeneity in the prayers of all Muslims around the world and not as an act of worship to the mosque itself.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What did you learn about this particular religious community or tradition?
- What did you see or hear that was similar to your own tradition? What was different?
- What questions do you still have?

VISIT A MOSQUE NEAR YOU

Reach out to a mosque in your area to schedule a visit!

Reach out to a mosque in your area to arrange a time to visit and learn more about their community. Let them know what your goals are for engaging in this experience. Be sure to also prepare your youth, families, and congregation about why you are doing this and what you hope to accomplish. Make it clear that this experience is not intended to evangelize either Christians or Muslims.

Find a mosque near you by going to: <http://www.qiblanow.com/mosque-finder>

Attend an open-house Iftar dinner through the Taking Heart Program!

As our Muslim neighbors prepare for the sacred month of Ramadan this June/July 2016, the Minnesota Council of Churches, in partnership with the Muslim American Society of Minnesota, is excited to announce a series of open houses at Metro area mosques organized by the council's Taking Heart program.

Taking Heart was started in 2005 to bring Christians and Muslims together to get to know each other over a meal and conversation. It is designed for regular people of different faiths to interact with each other. It is NOT an academic discussion or a theological debate - just people talking over a meal at Iftar time.

Any community member who wants to meet Muslims for the first time or to visit an Islamic Center can simply register for their desired date and location. MCC will be adding mosques and community centers to the website as dates and details are firmed up for 2016. Join an iftar dinner in your area!

There is no charge and all are welcome. Mosques are generously offering their hospitality. Please complete the form at the link below to reserve a spot.

To learn more, visit:

<http://www.mnchurches.org/respectfulcommunities/interfaithprogramming/takingheart.html>

SUPPORTING BIBLICAL THEMES

Welcome the stranger

- Deuteronomy 10:19 - You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.
- Leviticus 19:34 - The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.
- Matthew 25:35 - I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
- Romans 12:13 - Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

The Great Commandment

- Luke 10:27 - You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.

Love one another as God has loved you

- Hebrews 13:1 - Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Serving God by loving our neighbor

- Matthew 25:40 - Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brethren you did it to me.
- Romans 13:8 - Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.
- Romans 13:10 - Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

God shows no partiality

- Acts 10:34 - Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.
- Colossians 3:11 - In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.

Verses come from the New Revised Standard Version



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This LSS of MN youth lesson plan joins our other free resources - the [“My Neighbor is Muslim”](#) small group study, an [“Abundant Aging” book study](#) and the [“Not Even One Night” Bible study](#) about youth homelessness. LSS of MN will continue to serve as a resource for our church and community, offering materials that come from our experience in supporting and serving our neighbors on behalf of the 1,200 Lutheran congregations in Minnesota.

To learn more go to: <http://www.lssmn.org/congregations/resources/>

LSS staff and volunteers are always available to preach or speak in your congregation or community group. Please let us know how else we might be helpful by contacting congregations@lssmn.org.

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TWO TRUTHS AND A STEREOTYPE

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___ b. When Muslims pray, they face toward Mecca, Islam’s holiest city
___ c. Actions by Muslim extremists fit the beliefs of most Muslims
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TWO TRUTHS AND A STEREOTYPE- ANSWER KEY

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2. a Covering your head or face is an expression of faith that some but not all Muslim women choose to take part in.
3. a Islam is a monotheistic religion; a religion that believes there is only one God. Muslims believe “There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God.” Allah is the Arabic word for God.
4. c Representative Keith Ellison, a Democratic member of the Minnesota Congress, was the first Muslim elected to that role. Many Muslims hold political office throughout the country.
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STEP 1: Each group will be asked to come up with a title for their short film.

Title: _____

STEP 2: To help you develop a script for your skit, discuss the following questions with your group.

What are some new things you learned today about the practice of Islam?

How can understanding this practice help you to combat prejudice?

How do we help our neighbors of all kinds feel welcome? Why is this important?

What have you learned about your own Christian faith by studying a little about Islam?

Plot:

STEP 3: On a separate sheet of paper, record the script for your skit in the following format:

CHARACTER'S NAME: Write your dialogue here.

[Write stage directions in brackets.]

STEP 4: Film your video to be shared with the rest of the class and the congregation.

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- Romans 13:10 - Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

God shows no partiality

- Acts 10:34 - Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.
- Colossians 3:11 - In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.

Verses come from the New Revised Standard Version