

ICNF News

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From the Chairman

Dear Brothers and Sisters:
Us-Salaam Alaikum. I hope you all are enjoying the blessings of Ramadan. I have noticed a dramatic increase in attendance at the Masjid. It is great to see so many families, children and new faces at the Masjid. As new people, from varied backgrounds, attend the iftaars, dinners and get-togethers we will benefit as a community through the strengthening of spiritual values, exchange of ideas, and sharing of experiences. However, there is a possibility of difference of opinions arising too. Islam emphasizes moderation and avoidance of extremes in all aspects of our lives – whether in dealing with others or the rituals of worship. The freedom of choice, a central concept of Islam, is emphasized in the following verse of the Quran “Let there be no compulsion in religion, truth stands out from error” (2:256). Even in religion, no one is to be forced to believe anything against one’s will. Human beings have the free will to believe or to reject faith; however they alone will be held responsible and accountable for their decisions and actions. As Muslims, we should not and cannot differ regarding the basic concepts of Islam. But, we can differ in peripheral issues because of our education, experiences and understandings are different. Even Islamic scholars differed with each other on some peripheral issues, but they were civil and respected each others rights to their opinions provided there was no clear text in the Quran or the Sunnah disputing it. We must also learn to be polite in our disagreements and build on our common goals of pleasing Allah (SWT) irrespective of the path we follow to achieve our goals. Then mundane things such as hot or cold temperature inside the Masjid, children disturbing during the Salaath or conversations outside the Masjid will not bother us as much.
Jazakallahu Qairun,

– DR. MOIZ MUMTAZ
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Feature

How Much Should I Donate to My Masjid?

– by a member of the Masjid

This question came to my mind a couple of years ago. Since I am not an Aalim, and being just a common Muslim, I didn’t have the basic knowledge to answer this question myself. I intentionally did not seek guidance from any Masjid-affiliated person or an Aalim, instead I researched on my own the following focus issues and guidelines.



OUR BELOVED PROPHET (PBUH) SAID:
“Whoever builds for Allah a Masjid, Allah will reward him similarly in paradise.”

SAHIH BUKHARI

Should we establish/support a Masjid?

There are two aspects to this question. First, what did our Prophet (pbuh) teach us, and second how can a Masjid improve/enhance/protect mine and my family’s life here in the United States. I found that our beloved Prophet (pbuh) gave the Masjid a priority over everything else. When he immigrated to Medina, the first thing he did was to establish a Masjid (Nabavi). Even while he was en route to Medina and stopped over for a short time on the outskirts of Medina, he built a Masjid there (Taqwa at Quba). The Prophet (pbuh) used the Masjid not only as a place of worship but also as the headquarters for all Muslim affairs. He gave extreme importance to all regular Muslim gatherings. In those days, often the men prayed in front, children in the middle, and women in the back.

As far as the role of the Masjid in my family’s life – I found that those families that are involved in a Masjid, on a regular basis, were benefiting much from it. Their children were more obedient, caring, attached to their parents, and performed better in regular schools than other families. When they grew up, the children found life partners like themselves, and thus retained their religious values that could be easily passed to the next generation. On the contrary, to my surprise, I found out that in those families that were not attached to a Masjid several children had non-Muslim spouses or with no or minimal affiliation to a religion. Children of such couples seldom had a chance to realize the spirit of Islam or Muslim unity in general. They were left out from retaining our religious values.

Who pays for these beautiful and grand churches?

I learned from volunteers and builders, that it is the church membership that commits a fixed dollar amount on a monthly basis. Moreover, the membership payments are made, on time, exactly like their car and mortgage payments. Again, surprisingly I found out that on average the members pay about 10% of their income to their church. I had assumed that in general Christians were not as close to their religion as Muslims and that religion might not be as important to them. It is for sure not true

Four Huffaz Lead This Year's Tarahwee Prayers



Under the leadership of our Masjid's Imam, Hafiz Mohammad Mehmood, three young and emerging Huffaz (Hafiz Mohammad Ahmedullah [19], Hafiz Syed Ahmed Jafri [13] and Hafiz Syed Mohammad Jafri [13] are taking part this year in leading Tarahwee prayers. ICNF is determined to promote local young Huffaz so that these youngsters could become mature leaders of our community in the near future.

Imam Hafiz Mohammad Mehmood became a Hafiz when he was 13 years old. He attended the famous Jamiatul Qur'an of Hyderabad, India. Before joining ICNF, he lead masjids in Clarkston and Chicago. Hafiz Mohammad Ahmedullah (son of Dr. Zafarullah) became a Hafiz when he was 12 years old (Islamabad, Pakistan). He is 19 years old now and attending GA Perimeter College. Twin brothers Syed Ahmed Jafri and Syed Mohammad Jafri (sons of Br. Syed Masood Jafri) are currently thirteen years old. They became Huffaz last year when they were 12. They attended the Darul Uloom Madrassah at Al-Farooq Masjid on 14th street.

Islamic School

Ramadan Benefits are Bountiful....

These are ten benefits a Muslim receives by observing fast during the month of Ramadan:

1. It strengthens our ties with Allah
2. It enforces patience and determination
3. It promotes sincerity and keeps us away from being arrogant
4. It promotes good characteristics, like truthfulness
5. It encourages us to let go of bad habits, and replace them with good habits
6. It enhances generosity and spending for charitable causes
7. It reinforces our feelings of unity in the Muslim community
8. It helps us to remember the value of time
9. It helps children to practice more acts of worship towards Allah
10. It balances our attention between physical and spiritual needs

During the month of Ramadan, all Muslims should take advantage of these benefits. Every Muslim should make an effort to change for the better and also help others do so. Ramadan only comes once a year, and it is everyone's chance to be a better person and hold on to the habits and values they learn during this month through the rest of the year.

By Mona Ahmad, student – Level 5 Girls

Faith Reinforced

Ramadan is practiced differently in Muslim countries than in non-Muslim countries. For example in Pakistan, Bangladesh and some Arab countries school days and work hours are reduced to allow people time for Zikr of Allah(swt). The environment in these countries is encouraging and comfortable for the Muslims. The community at-large abstains from food and participates in Ramadan activities and celebrations. However, there seems to be a growing trend in Muslim countries that made me reflect upon the differences more critically. Ramadan is becoming a more commercialized observance in these countries like that of holidays here in America. As soon as the fast is ended and Iftaar is completed, a glamorous world of shopping, feasting, and partying opens up. Perhaps, the true meaning and purpose of this Holy month gets diminished when indulging in the activities mentioned above.

On the contrary, Muslim-American communities must fulfill their religious duties in a non-Muslim environment. We strive as Muslims and a community to utilize this month for prayer, fasting, charity work and remembrance of Allah (swt). The work and school hours stay the same and we are required to make adjustments to fulfill our obligations of Deen and 'Duniya'. However, these inconveniences only make our faith stronger and reinforce Taqwa. Insha'Allah we all may reap the rewards of this special month of Ramadan.

RAMADAN SCHOLAR VISITS:

- Renowned scholar Mufti Ibrahim Desai will speak on October 22nd after Maghrib at the Masjid
- Imam Abdul Malik Ali of California will speak on October 28 (Jummah Khutba and on October 29th after Maghrib at the Masjid.

By Shareen Rehman, student – Level 5 Girls

PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE: 10,000 ADDITIONAL CHILDREN COULD DIE, WARNS UNICEF

UNICEF warned that 10,000 more children could die from hunger, cold and disease in the coming weeks because aid has still not reached certain parts of quake-hit Pakistan. Up to 120,000 children remain un-reached in mountain areas devastated by the Oct 8 quake.

UNICEF called for immediate steps to push through more supplies, saying that children would be the first victims in a possible "second wave of deaths" as the cold winter months soon approach.

PLEASE DONATE GENEROUSLY TO ANY CHARITY OF YOUR CHOICE TO HELP THESE VICTIMS. WE ARE LISTING THE FOLLOWING TWO MAJOR CHARITIES:

www.icnareleif.com
www.edhifoundation.com

Knowledge Gained, Strengthened and Shared...

I have been attending the Islamic Center of North Fulton Sunday School since I moved from Pakistan six years ago. I joined the school as a student and am currently teaching Level 4 boys. Coming to the Masjid was my only source of meeting fellow Muslims in the community. It also gave me an opportunity to come closer to my religion than I ever was in Pakistan. I had never gone to the Masjid there yet here I could go every Sunday. This helped me with my spiritual growth. As a student, I learned a lot from my teachers and was greatly impressed by their motivation and dedication to teach.

When presented with the opportunity to teach, I accepted excitedly. I have cherished the past couple of years that I have been teaching. It is a very gratifying experience seeing a child progress over a year. I feel a sense of accomplishment along with the children when they have finally memorized a surah or the months of the Islamic calendar. Through teaching, I feel I can make a difference in these Muslim children's lives. I believe we should always be willing to help our fellow Muslims in any way possible. By doing this, not only are we preparing ourselves for a better Hereafter but also making our lives more purposeful in this transitory world.

I would like to show my appreciation to the teachers who come to school every Sunday with a passion to teach our Deen. May Allah (swt) reward all of us for our efforts in this world and the Hereafter. Ameen.

By Mariam Wasim, Teacher – Level 4 Boys

My Ramadan Experience at a Public School

My name is Nadia Khan. I am 14 years old and in Level 4 girls in ICNF Sunday School. I am also home schooled. I have a younger brother named Zeshawn Khan. Last year during Ramadan I was in a public school. Some of you probably know how it feels to be in public school and try to fast. I'd like to share with you my experience of a typical day of fasting in a public school.

My day started with science class and we were having a test. The teacher offered us candy since the sugar would wake us up. I handed my piece back to the teacher and said, "I don't want it". She asked, "Are you fasting". I said "Yes!" and she said, "Yesterday, I had another Muslim student who was fasting. After class, could you answer a few questions I'd like to ask about fasting?" I replied, "Yes".

At lunch time I went to the library. A Muslim friend of mine was already there and studying for a test, so I helped her study. After lunch we went back to our class. Along the way we met a few teachers who asked us about fasting. We answered their questions as best we could.

My day ended with Math class. Once more, our teacher was giving out candy to all of the students since we did well on our test. Again, I said, "No thank you" when she came to me. Then I got a lot of questions from the students: "Why don't you want your candy", "What's Ramadan", "Are you a Muslim", "Why do you fast", "How long do you fast" "Is it hard to fast" and my favorite one "Are you going to die?"

All Muslim children should know the fundamentals of fasting and the importance of the month of Ramadan. So that when asked by a non-Muslim we can share our knowledge with them and answer the questions they ask.

By Nadia Khan, student – Level 4 Girls

DONATIONS NEEDED: Our Masjid, the School and the Islamic Center cannot continue to develop and progress without your generous donations. For your convenience, monthly automatic withdrawals or payment using PayPal (no membership required) can be made for donations as little as \$5. Please download the automatic withdrawal form at: www.alpharettamasjid.com and start making your donations today!

Ramadan Essential – Can't Do Without It!

Ten minutes left until Iftaar time, when Muslims are allowed to break their fast with food and water. The fast has been going on since before the sunrise, and not a single person is complaining; all are waiting patiently. Despite the hunger that is stinging their stomachs, they are humble and refuse to nag about the time or about the fast. THEY WAIT PATIENTLY! This characteristic of patience is common among all Muslims during the month of Ramadan and is one of Allah's (subhanahu wa ta'ala) attributes. Allah's (SWT) exemplification of patience is attributed to Him by His name As-Saboor, meaning "The Patient".

Allah (SWT) emphasizes the importance of patience through parts of the Qur'an such as when He says, "By time! Surely the human being is at loss. Except for those who have faith and do righteous deeds and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to patience," [Sûrah al-'Asr]. This displays the significance of patience up to par with faith, truth, and righteous deeds. It is difficult to exercise patience in the face of temptations and enticements in life, however, without it we are led into prohibited satisfaction. Fasting during Ramadan allows Muslims to obtain the necessary practice and experience in resisting temptations and abiding by the rules of Islam. This fasting is critical for a Muslim to be able to resist pressures intrinsic in this world that test our self-control and patience; hence its position as one of the five central pillars of Islam.

The reward for exercising and employing patience in one's life is the Jannah (paradise). Ramadan allows multiple opportunities for emancipation from previous wrong-doings and hell-fire by rewarding one seventy times more for good deeds and by offering forgiveness of sins to those who feed others who have observed the fast. However, one can only access these opportunities if they encompass the necessary self-restraint and patience to control their desires during the month of Ramadan.

By Ovais Inamullah, student – Level 5 Boys

Ramadan

ATHIF WULANDANA, STUDENT – LEVEL 3 BOYS

*The month of happiness
Ramadan...*

*The month of forgiveness
Ramadan...*

*The month fasting
Ramadan...*

*Break your fast joyfully
Ramadan...*

*The month of Qur'an
Ramadan...*

*The month of rewards
Ramadan...*

if donating money is any indicator. I also found that a major source of church funds are the money and property people leave for it in their wills. Instead of leaving their valuables for their children, a good number of Christians leave it for their churches.

How much is needed to construct and run a Masjid?

In Muslim countries, rich people or wakhf boards (government) build Masaajids. Since a majority of us here are immigrants we must not assume that this could happen here. Across our country, from New York to Los Angeles and Seattle to Miami, there are a variety of Masaajids. While some are small, others are huge. However, our Masjid (the Islamic Center of North Fulton) is a good example of an “average” sized organization. Most of the ground preparation is already done. By today’s estimates, our project when completed will cost about \$2 Million while the monthly maintenance expenditure is about \$5,000.

What are the demographics of our Masjid attendees?

About 300 families, with an average household annual income of \$80K, regularly participate in various activities at the Masjid. About 75% of them own residences with an average value of \$275,000. Thus, attendees of our Masjid own personal property worth \$61 Million and their annual gross income is \$24 Million.

I humbly suggest the following minimum contribution guidelines:

INCOME	% OF SALARY	CONTRIBUTION	YEARLY EQUIVALENTS
\$24K/year	2%	\$120	3 gallons of gas per month
\$25K/year	2%	\$500	1/2 of average phone bill
\$42K/year	2%	\$840	1/2 of average electricity bill
\$60K/year	2%	\$1,200	one car’s insurance premium
\$61K/year	2.5%	\$1,500	1/2 of one person’s grocery
\$70K/year	2.5%	\$1,750	average house electricity bill
\$80K/year	2.5%	\$2,000	less than one person’s grocery
\$81K/year	3.0%	\$2,400	small size car lease payment
\$100K/year	3.0%	\$3,000	mid size car lease payment
> \$100K	3.0%	> \$3000	

This a very generic proposal. Of course, family size, other commitments, level and quality of our Imaan, all have to be factored in. We need to take our destiny in our hands. We should not rely on “rich people” to build our Masjid. Allah Subhanawatala has given us capabilities and we have to take advantage of this opportunity. People who lack financial resources can equally contribute to the welfare of the Masjid by donating time by helping in cleanups, renovations, and enhancements of the facility. This in itself is very noble. We must keep in mind that this is an investment and not an expense; and that our contributions are being accepted by Allah (SWT), and recorded in our Day of Judgment books. Also, the rewards for all our contributions are not just given out in Aakhirah. Most contributors experience continued positive results – financial or otherwise, in this world too. The decisions you make will have a significant effect on us and our families in this world and the Hereafter.

Building a Masjid is Sadqha Jaariha (continuous charity) and a donor continues to get the reward even after death. Building Masjid is one of those rare such acts.

“The Masajid of Allah shall be maintained only by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day; offer prayers perfectly, and give Zakat and fear none but Allah. It is they who are expected to be on true guidance.” (Surat At-Tauba 9:18)

Special Interest

Seven Ideas to Train Kids this Ramadan

Excerpted from an article in islamonline.net by Shehnaz Toorawa.

The Prophet (pbuh) said, “No father has given a greater gift to his children than good moral training.” (Tirmidhi)

The many aspects of Ramadan – fasting, prayers, moral values, charity, Qur’an, family, Eid – provide a valuable opportunity to train kids. Whether they are your own kids or kids you teach, education or training isn’t an automatic or easy process. Children don’t bring empty minds and fill them with what we say. Training requires effort, energy, and a few techniques to take off.

Here are some training tips and techniques to transform your children’s minds and memories this Ramadan:



1. Let them get their Hands Dirty On average, students retain 75% of a lesson when they learn through hands-on activities compared to 5% through a lecture or 10% through reading. A concept becomes real and important to children when they experience it rather than simply read about it. For example, if you want to teach your kids the concept of zakah, get them to help you calculate your zakah, decide where to send the money, and mail the envelopes.

2. Involve their Emotions When children get emotionally involved in an activity, they rarely want to leave it. Stories, songs, skits, crafts, and games grab children’s emotions. Once a child is interested and excited, they’re more likely to stay attentive till the end and get the message you want to give. If the kids enjoy it, they’ll come back for more!

3. Reveal the Purpose Like us, if children don’t see the purpose or importance of an action, they won’t have the motivation to complete it. To avoid negative comments from your kids about prayer or fasting, make sure they understand the purpose. Remind your children that they are doing acts of worship to please Allah, not you.

4. Highlight the Big Ideas Children will not retain all the fiqh rulings of zakah, wudu’, or Salah, and they won’t need to! Make sure the little that they retain is exactly what you want them to remember. Focus on the big ideas, such as the awareness that Allah is watching us, that we get our rulings from the Qur’an and the Sunnah, that Prayer is a means of self-purification, etc.

5. Let them Lead! Children often take responsibilities more seriously than adults. Give children leadership over important tasks and step out of the picture. Allow children to make mistakes and realize on their own what they should have done. Experience often trains better than instruction.

6. Get Excited! Kids catch on to your enthusiasm. Show some excitement and passion about the topic you’re teaching. Show your kids that you can’t wait for Ramadan to begin. Be cheerful at Prayer times. Decorate the house in anticipation of Eid.

7. Combine Love with Learning The Prophet (pbuh) would greet children warmly by hugging them, kissing them and picking them up. Show children that you love them, regardless of how they perform. Allow each child to progress at their own pace. Excessive competition and comparison can often result in helplessness and lack of motivation for children.

Make this Ramadan the beginning of a memorable and long-lasting experience for you and your children!