



Fast, but never furious

Moulana Faruk Ali, Muslim Airport Chaplain, considers how this year's observance of Ramadan will be distinctly different this year.

The Islamic holy month is just weeks away and many Muslim believers are preparing to put traditions on hold due to social distancing and life under lockdown.

The Muslim's holy month of Ramadan is expected to start on April 24 and will go on until the day of Eid al Fitr on approximately May 23.

Ramadan is a special time for the world's 1.6 billion Muslims, not just for the spiritual obligations they undertake such as fasting, but also for its social function.

For many, it is a time spent with family members for the daily evening meal called iftar and the morning meal, known as suhoor.

But this year's event comes amid exceptional circumstances, which could force Muslims to do away with some of their most valued traditions - temporarily.

A highly contagious disease, with an apparent death rate of between one and three percent, the Covid-19 virus has forced governments across the world to implement lockdowns and enforce social distancing measures, such as a ban on public gatherings.

These have invariably included religious gatherings, with a vast majority of Muslim countries suspending congregational prayers and services, such as the weekly Friday prayer.

With the pandemic, and following lockdown measures expected to continue for weeks, Muslims are preparing for an inevitable adjustment in practices.

Impact on duties and rituals

The signature act of the month of Ramadan is fasting, and for the vast majority of the faithful there should be no impact on that particular tradition. Keeping the fast may even be easier if people stay at home and

avoid the physically taxing activities they would be participating in outside in the heat.

Nevertheless, Islamic injunctions on who should keep a fast take on added significance during a time of mass illness.

Muslims are exempt from fasting during illness and such a ruling would naturally extend to those who are suffering from the coronavirus.

But while fasting will likely go on, one tradition that will definitely be impacted is the nightly **Taraweeh** prayer.

Each night in Ramadan, Muslims gather at mosques for an additional prayer, which is in addition to their five daily ones.

With obligatory congregational prayers, such as Friday prayers, cancelled, there is little likelihood Taraweeh prayers will commence this year.

Social impact

Religious traditions are just one aspect of the Muslim holy month, as it is also a time in which Muslims make a special effort to spend time with their families, particularly during the iftar meal.

To be clear, for people isolating with their immediate family members, life would continue on pretty much normally. However, one of the great traditions of Ramadan, is inviting friends and relatives over to break the fast together. Lockdowns and social distancing measures will make doing so in 2020 near impossible, unless the pandemic dies down before the Eid holiday.

To compensate for this lack of social interaction, some Muslims are using technologies such as Zoom to arrange communal online iftars.

Ramadan Mubarak to All

Keep Safe

Keeping the fast may even be easier if people stay at home and avoid the physically taxing activities they would be participating in outside in the heat.

It's the situation that's strange, not you!

Here are some tips borrowed from the Hull University Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust:

GET THE BASICS RIGHT

Eat. Stay hydrated. Get enough rest. Get a bit of exercise.

KEEP YOUR ROUTINES IN PLACE

Don't forget still to do the things you love and use your normal healthy coping strategies.

CHECK YOUR 'PSYCHOLOGICAL TANK'

No-one can run on empty forever, so find time to fill yours up with things that restore you.

CONNECT WITH FAMILY & FRIENDS

Find ways to interact socially (safely and in line with any social distancing recommendations).

COMMUNICATE

Take time to talk about how you're feeling and listen to those who might be struggling.

Remember! You are having a normal response to a completely abnormal situation, and so...

IT'S OK NOT TO BE OK *

* so long as you have somewhere to ask for help!

A Prayer for Key-Workers*

*especially for those who may have been previously referred to as 'low-skilled' workers.

We are not people of **fear**:
we are people of **courage**.
We are not people who selfishly preserve our own safety at all costs:
we are people who protect our neighbours' wellbeing for all our sakes.
We are not people of **greed**:
we are people of **generosity**.
We are your people God,
giving and **loving**,
wherever we are,
whatever it costs
For as long as it takes
wherever you call us.

Barbara Glasson
President of the Methodist Conference
(amended)

Multifaith Prayer Rooms are still open, but all corporate worship is suspended until further notice.

Use of Prayer Rooms is subject to government restrictions on numbers and proximity.

Please be mindful of other users and give space to them.

Eating, drinking and sleeping in prayer rooms all remain prohibited.

We'll Get Through This - Together

A pick-and-mix of thoughts and information to get through lockdown...

Where are You?



3 Stages of Pandemic Response

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Can you recognise which stage you're in today?

Here's the thing: You're going to move around the stages, in and out of them, back and forth, depending on many factors. This is an evolving process, you're adapting and changing just as the situation is.

And none of it is wrong. **How you're feeling is not wrong.**

Spending time in one stage more than another isn't a reflection on who you are or your ability to deal with what's happening. It's simply an aid to help you to understand what's going on in your head and heart. And, with that knowledge, look at what will help you.

In **Survival** it could look like giving yourself a break and allowing yourself to just get through the day.

In **Acceptance** it could mean looking for others to talk with, share what you're thinking and feeling, find new ways of dealing with the challenges and be inspired to look for and explore the potential and possibilities that lie within this time.

And if you're spending (or wanting to spend) more time in the **Growth** stage it could mean looking at what will help you with the changes that you're feeling called to make.

Again, what support feels right for you is up to you.

Just as in 'ordinary' life where we each respond, act and feel differently, where we each have different needs, the same applies in these extraordinary circumstances.

Diagram and excerpts from Gabrielle's blog used with permission.

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As we express our **gratitude**, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter **words**, but to **live** by them.

John F Kennedy, 35th President of the United States of America



From *The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse* by Charlie Macksey Ebury Press, 2019
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Everyone needs a person to whom you can actually tell the truth when they ask, "How are you?"

—TINKU RAZORIA

