

Speaker 1: Imam Abdisalam Adam, ICSA Board Chair and Educator

Speaker 2: Abdullahi Hassan Ganey, WallShare CHW

Q1. What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)? Abdullahi Ganey

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person.

Q2. What can I do to protect myself and prevent the spread of disease? Abdullahi Ganey

You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some simple precautions:

- Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.
- Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

Q3. Protection measures for persons who are in or have recently visited (past 14 days) areas where COVID-19 is spreading – Abdullahi Ganey

- Self-isolate by staying at home if you begin to feel unwell, even with mild symptoms such as headache, low grade fever (37.3 C or above) and slight runny nose, until you recover.
- If it is essential for you to have someone bring you supplies or to go out, e.g. to buy food, then wear a mask to avoid infecting other people.
- If you develop fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical advice promptly as this may be due to a respiratory infection or other serious condition.
- Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.

Q4. Is there a way for someone who speaks only Somali to keep up to date with accurate information? Abdullahi Ganey

- **You can sign up for text message alerts from WellShare and ICSA/OPR Darul Hijrah Mosque in Somali. It is free. Text the word YES to (612) 474-2290. MDH Health Line - 651-201-3920 or 1-800-657-3903 - 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.**

Q5. What is Fasting? Imam Abdisalam Adam

- Fasting in the month of Ramadan is observed as one of the “Five Pillars” or religious obligations of Muslims. It is a time of inner reflection, renewal, devotion, and self-restraint. Muslims all over the world observe at the same time each year.

Q6. Does increased spirituality help with personal development? Imam Abdisalam Adam

- Fasting is obligatory in the Islamic religious texts – the Qur’an and Prophet Muhammad’s statements. The observance has objectives such as attaining piety, self-control, sacrifice, and forgiveness. Due to the lack of preoccupation with satisfying bodily desires, a measure of transformation occurs to one’s spiritual experience. Ramadan is also a time of intensive worship, reading of the Qur’an, giving charity, purifying one's behavior, and doing good deeds. As a secondary goal, fasting is a way of experiencing hunger and thirst to develop empathy for the needy. It builds reliance to overcome adversity.

Q7. Do Muslims have to modify their Fasting practices? Imam Abdisalam Adam

Ramadan Fasting begins on **April 23rd or 24th and ends on May 23rd or May 24th, 2020.**

Muslims fast for 29 or 30 days during the month of Ramadan. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. This year, Fasting lasts for about 16 hours.

- The common greeting during the month is to say *Ramadan Mubarak* (Blessed Ramadan) or *Ramadan Kareem* (Noble Ramadan).
- The beginning of Ramadan shifts by 10-11 days each year and rotates around the seasons.
- ***Eid Al-Fitr* (Feast of Fast Breaking) marking the end of Ramadan is expected to be on May 23rd or May 24th, 2020.** Muslims students and staff may take off the day to observe the holiday.

Q8. Who are the People Exempt from Fasting? Imam Abdisalam Adam

The people exempt from Fasting temporarily or permanently are:

- Children under the age of puberty are not required to fast, but many children start fasting at a young age to practice the Fasting experience. Children also want to be part of the festive family spirit.
- The sick until they recover
- Pregnant or nursing women
- Travelers
- Elderly seniors who are unable to withstand the demands of the month
- Women and girls while observing their menstrual cycle

Q9. What are some of the etiquettes of Fasting? Imam Abdisalam Adam

Muslims abstain from food, drink, smoking, sexual relations, and vulgar speech from dawn to sunset. Some of the etiquette of Ramadan include:

- Muslims eat a pre-dawn early meal called *Suhoor*.
- Family/community break the fast together daily at sunset.
- The meal for breaking the fast at sunset is called *Iftar*.
- Breaking the Fasting begins with call to prayer, supplication, dates, water, juice, sambusa, and other light food - then consume heavier meal afterwards

- Muslims also pray an extra night prayer called *Taraweeh*. This prayer lasts until 12:00 AM (midnight) and that leads to less sleep for those who observe this night prayer.
- Students are expected to participate in regular school activities that are not too demanding physically.

Q10. Can Muslims Join Prayer Services Via Long Distance Online Connections? Imam Abdisalam Adam

- No, prayer services will have in close proximity to the Imam leading the prayer.
- Since, that possibility is restricted, Muslims have the permission to pray at home.

Q11. What are Some of the Ways to Face the Challenges of COVID-19 during the month of Ramadan - Imam Abdisalam Adam

Impact on 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.
- Islamic injunctions on who should keep a fast take on added significance during a time of mass illness. There are historical precedents to look at.
- Muslims are exempt from fasting during illness and such a ruling would naturally extend to those who are suffering from the coronavirus.
- Fasting will likely go on, one tradition that will definitely be impacted is the nightly Taraweeh prayer.

Impact on Social Interactions

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. This is an opportunity to strengthen the bonds of our families and in this way, better serve Allah.

- 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. Due to the danger brought about by the virus, having guests can place the health of those family members and friends at risk. This cannot be acceptable within Islam.
- To compensate for this lack of social interaction, some Muslims will be using video conferencing technologies to arrange communal online iftars.
- Muslims should display model character, kindness, patience, humility, avoid anger, lying, cheating, and fighting, etc. And in this time, above all is the commitment to the protection of life and health for all people.

Impact on Charitable Giving

- Poorer Muslims may also suffer disproportionately as they are normally reliant on communal iftars hosted by wealthier members of their community.
- During COVID-19 the current health restrictions will require creativity and call us to a greater spirit of Ramadan. Acts of charity can still be arranged through organizations that have the logistical capabilities to distribute food to the poor during the lockdown. We encourage you to contact the mosque leadership to see how you can help.

- While Ramadan has many social characteristics, it is primarily a month of personal contemplation. It could be that staying at home with fewer material distractions will help people grow more spiritually than in preceding years.