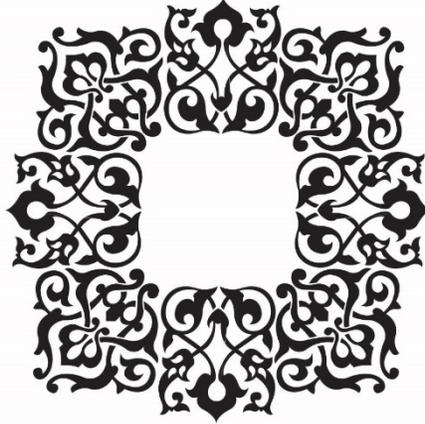


Hello Islam

Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship
January 31, 2016



Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear, henceforth, from error.

Qur'an 2:256

THE ADHAN (Call to Prayer)

WELCOME

At the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship we recognize and celebrate the internal religious diversity among ourselves, as well as the multitude of faith traditions that make up our larger community. We are grateful to be enriched by this diversity: enriched culturally, ethically, and spiritually.

BUF is a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association, a tradition that draws from many sources, including wisdom from religious traditions from around the world and throughout human history—wisdom that inspires us in our individual and collective efforts to live with joy and with purpose. So today we welcome Irfan Khan and Khaled Zaki, who will help us to understand more about their Muslim faith, and its rich traditions in which they find inspiration.

LIGHTING THE CHALICE

READING “Take Down a Musical Instrument” Rumi (Melanie)

“Today, like every other day,
We wake up empty and frightened.
Don't open the door to the study and begin reading.
Take down a musical instrument.
Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are hundreds of ways to
Kneel and kiss the ground.”

INTRODUCTION

When we hold our own religious practices and expectations up against those of other traditions, we are likely to discover both similarities and differences. As we do this today, I especially look forward to learning about aspects of Islam that go beyond the academic essentials; I anticipate that today we'll have a chance to see into the real lives of a couple of ordinary American Muslims ... and to see how they, with their personal commitments, fit into the Pacific Northwest, and into the larger world of Islam.

With over a billion adherents and several major divisions within Islam, there is significant diversity in the ways of life and faith of Muslims around the world. Like Christians and Jews and humanist and unitarian universalist groups, I'm going to assume, there are differences in priorities, and internal squabbles about how to best embody such undisputable ideals as peace and mercy and respect for others.

And though news of so-called "Muslim" extremists would have us thinking otherwise, there is a clear message within Islam which rejects the idea that it is ok to force religion upon others.

As a professor from the American Islamic College writes: "The Qur'an categorically prohibits coercion in matters of religion, be it by sheer force or [by] deceptive ways. Muslims are obliged to call [hu]mankind toward submission to God by wisdom, good example, and sincere exhortation, not in argument, but with kind manner."

This ethic will sound familiar coming from this pulpit where over the last two Sundays I've spoken about the enlightened progress humanity is gradually making from coercion toward an ethic of persuasion...and the incredible example of this in Martin Luther King Jr's charge to his supporters to be calm and polite even in the face of violence from others.

I understand that Khan and Khaled come to us with a similar perspective: that each of us will live however we live. That along the way we can learn from one another, but that it is not for us to judge one another.

PRESENTATION

[Khan and Khaled spoke of their devotion to the practices of Islam. They demonstrated (with intense beauty) the differences between recitation of the Qur'an, chanting, and singing and discussed why these differences exist. And they told us of their efforts to practice their faith as ordinary Americans while too often being held in suspicion for this.]

THE CHOIR

[And speaking of intense beauty...! The BUF choir offered "Zikr," with its sounds of both quiet yearning and exuberant joy. And another piece with the lyric: *Many windows, one light. Many waters, one sea. All lifted hearts are free.*]