

# Introduction to Islam

## Lesson 5: Episode “The Open House”

10.15.2023

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**Objectives:** Introduce diversity within the Muslim world, identify Five Pillars of Islam, and consider relationship between American media and Muslim Americans.

**Materials:** Laptop/DVD/TV, lesson attachments.

**Time allotments** suggested for 50 minute class, followed by 25 minute closing service.

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### 1. Nametags and Graffiti Wall (5 minutes before class begins)

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
  - ▶ What would you list as 3 core pillars, beliefs, or practices of your religious life?
  - ▶ How many of the 7 UU Principles can you list from memory?
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

### 2. Silly Fun: Performing the Five Pillars (5 minutes max)

Group youth into five groups, giving each group one of the attached sheets describing the Five Pillars of Islam. Each group takes 3 minutes to read through their information and prepare a 20-second creative performance/presentation of their pillar. Cheer for each group’s creativity!

### 3. Chalice Lighting: Light the chalice, saying these words together: “We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.”

**Teacher reads:** (from Sufi mystic, Hafiz)

*“Even after all this time, the sun never says to the earth, ‘You owe me.’ Look what happens with a love like that; it lights the whole sky.”*

### 4. “Little Mosque on the Prairie” Screening and Discussion (see Episode Viewing Guide)

**\*\*Note:** Each episode is about 23 minutes, pausing at several moments during the episode for discussions (amounting to 20 minutes of conversation). Please use viewing-and-discussing time accordingly for the 50 minutes of total classroom time.

Class will watch the episode, but pause before starting and during commercial breaks to reflect on elements of Islam. (Commercial breaks have the logo show up on the screen.) Pause the DVD, summarize the information aloud, and facilitate any discussion that arises. **Important: Teachers should read through content materials ahead of time and be familiar enough to summarize main points and facilitate discussion.**

**For teacher reference—Cast of Characters:**

- Yasir – contractor, Lebanese, married to Sarah, not a particularly observant Muslim
- Amaar – the new imam, from Toronto, moves to Mercy to serve this new mosque
- Rayaana – Yasir’s and Sarah’s daughter, doctor, feminist Muslim
- Mayor Popowicz – Sarah’s boss, mayor of Mercy, Saskatchewan
- Baber – a very conservative Muslim man (not an imam)
- Rev. Magee – Anglican priest, rents his church out to the mosque
- Fred – bigoted radio show host
- Fatima – owner of local café
- Sarah – converted to Islam when she married Yasir, works for Mayor
- Layla – Baber’s teenaged daughter, her mom died so her dad is a single parent
- Joe – a nervous, bigoted citizen of Mercy

**For teacher reference—Plot summary of Season 1, Episode “The Open House”**

To reach out to the non-Muslim residents of Mercy, Amaar wants the mosque to hold an open house. First he needs Yasir to fix the problem wiring in the mosque. Businessman Yasir doesn’t have the time to participate but changes his tune once he learns he can hand out business cards at the open house. Trying to cut corners, non-electrician Yasir decides to fix the wiring himself. The mayor loves the idea of the open house, especially since she sees it as a photo op to push her tax plan. The open house looks to be moving forward and well attended, if only because Fatima is catering and despite Fred’s anti-Muslim rantings on his radio show. However Fatima, Rayaana, and Baber threaten to boycott the event unless each is allowed to make presentations, to which Amaar reluctantly agrees. The big event arrives and everything seems to be going smoothly, until Yasir’s wiring repair job short-circuits and causes a smoke fire which brings in the fire department. It’s just another bump in the road for the Mercy Mosque.

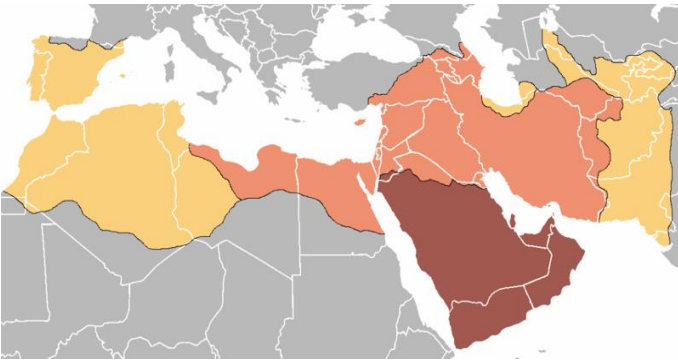
5. **Say goodbye until next time:** Extinguish the chalice, saying together:  
*“May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts.”*
6. **Help clean up classroom** before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.
  - leave lesson plan and all materials organized
  - wipe the whiteboard clean
  - tables and chairs neatly returned
  - nametags collected in Ziploc bag
  - leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheets

# EPISODE VIEWING GUIDE: “The Open House”

## BEFORE THE EPISODE

**Teacher summarizes:** What is the *Ummah*?

*Ummah wahida* (or *ummah*) is the Arabic word for Muslims around the world. The words translate into English as “one community.” Faithful Muslims of a variety of traditions and sects are found around the globe. In its early history, Islam spread faster than any other religion in recorded history.



As of 2017, about 1.8 billion Muslims in the world make up nearly one-fourth of the world's population (Pew Research Center).

Expansion under the Prophet Muhammad, 622-632  
Expansion during the Patriarchal Caliphate, 632-661  
Expansion during the Umayyad Caliphate, 661-750

### The expansion of Islam in its first 100+ years

Characters in the TV show “Little Mosque on the Prairie” are meant to represent the *ummah wahida*, or the Muslim diaspora. Yasir (the contractor) and his family are Lebanese. Amaar (the Imam) is Pakistani-Canadian. Fatima is Nigerian. Baber is an Arab Muslim. Sarah is an Anglo-Canadian convert. Islam has different expressions in different parts of the world, due to regional cultural influences.

## FIRST COMMERCIAL BREAK

### Questions for Discussion:

- Did anyone notice the five clocks on the wall in the mosque? Any guess what those are for?  
(They are for prayer times on a given day. Prayer times for today – Oct. 13, 2019 – in Saint Paul are: 6:06am, 12:59pm, 4:00pm, 6:32pm, 7:52pm)
- Why do prayer times differ every day? (Answer: they rely on sunrise, sunset, and moon sightings)

## SECOND COMMERCIAL BREAK

**Teacher summarizes:** Three common expressions are heard frequently in Muslim speech:

- “*Inshallah!*” means “Thanks be to Allah!” and is an expression of satisfaction and gratitude. Baber says it a lot. Do you say, “Thank God!”? What does it mean to you?
- “*Inshallah!*” means “If Allah wills it.” Muslims say this word at the end of a sentence if they’ve expressed plans or hopes for the future. For example, someone might say, “Hawwa will spend the summer in Europe with the marching band. They leave on June 5... *Inshallah!*” Have you ever heard anyone say the expression, “God willing”? In what situation?

- “Mashallah!” means “Allah has willed it!” Muslims say it in appreciation of something successful or upon getting good news. Example, if someone posted on Facebook: “Here’s a photo of Sadiqa’s new baby!” other Muslims would probably comment, “Mashallah!” It’s a reverent way to say congratulations.

### **THIRD COMMERCIAL BREAK**

#### **Questions for Discussion:**

- What educational content did you notice at the open house?
- Do you think the average Saint Paul citizen would learn a lot at this open house?
- What would the average Saint Paul person already know about Muslims before going to the open house?

### **AFTER THE EPISODE**

#### **Questions for Discussion:**

- Rev. Magee made a comment about the “blue hairs of the congregation” feeling uncomfortable about the Muslims and the mosque. Who are the “blue hairs”?
- How much of the current tension between Muslims and non-Muslims in America do you think will disappear a generation from now? Do you think most non-Muslim Americans your age feel differently about Muslims than folks over the age of 50 feel about Muslims? Will this “just go away” over time?
- How much of a difference does geography make in the perceptions and relations between Muslim Americans and non-Muslim Americans? Do kids from Moorhead or Albert Lea have different experiences of Muslim culture than kids in Minneapolis and St. Paul?
- Why do you think Amaar has such a strong reaction to Baber’s saying “This is our September 11<sup>th</sup>”?