

Introduction to Islam

Lesson 9: Episode “The Archdeacon Cometh”

12.10.2023

Objectives: Introduce interfaith dynamics occurring in the world today, and UU’s role in interfaith work.

Materials: Laptop/TV/DVD.

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

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 is something from another culture or religion – food, music, friend, etc. – that inspired you to learn more about that culture or religion?
 - ▶ What is one thing that learning about Islam has revealed about being UU?
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

2. **Silly Fun: “Go, Grab, Go!”** (5 minutes max)

Participants stand in a circle, arms out to the side. Left hand palm up, right index finger pointing down and touching neighbor’s outstretched palm.

When teacher says “GO,” youth do two things: (1) try to grab the finger in their left hand, and (2) prevent their right finger from being grabbed. Repeat several times.

Then add a bit of challenge by having youth NOT go on “GO” but wait until they hear the word “Rumi” before they try to grab fingers (i.e. “Go... Go... Go... Rumi!”).

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, Rumi)

“You are not a drop in the ocean. You are the entire ocean in a drop.”

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 Archdeacon Cometh”

Reverend Magee is not looking forward to the Archdeacon Gladwin’s upcoming visit. The Reverend is worried about money issues due to declining attendance, and he cannot let the very strict archdeacon know that what little money that is coming in is from Muslim rent. Yasir suggests that a full congregation for the archdeacon’s sermon would be a good idea, the full congregation being Muslims. So they get a crash course in Christianity from ex-Anglican Sarah, who was as devout a Christian as she is a Muslim. But the archdeacon arrives a few days early, and seeing the obvious Muslim faces in the congregation, thinks that the Reverend has done a good conversion job. The plan goes awry when Baber, who was not told of the plan, erects a new larger Mercy Mosque sign above the church door just as the archdeacon has finished his service. The archdeacon is not upset, however, but rather wants to make sure that the archdiocese gets its fair share of the rent money. Ultimately it’s Yasir who pays the price. Meanwhile, Fred is having lower back problems. He goes to both Fatima and Rayaana for a mixture of traditional Nigerian and western medicine to ease his ailment.

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 Archdeacon Cometh”

BEFORE THE EPISODE

Teacher summarizes: What is interfaith dialogue? What is it for? Increasingly, as the world’s cultures and religions come into contact with one another, dialogue has become an important means of promoting understanding and peace between different religions. From the World’s Parliament of Religions of 1893 and its first attempt to create a global dialogue of religions, to the 1991 Pluralism Project at Harvard University that began a pioneering study of America’s changing religious landscape, interreligious dialogue has become an important part of religion in the globalized world. Here in the Twin Cities, Interfaith Action or Interfaith Youth Connection seek to promote interreligious dialogue, learning, and service among faith communities. The Muslim voice remains a very significant partner in those conversations, especially as it takes root in Western culture when historic faith traditions, like Christianity, is struggling to maintain its authority.

Question for Discussion:

- How might Unitarian Universalists uniquely support interfaith work?

FIRST COMMERCIAL BREAK

Teacher summarizes: The episode begins with the mosque sign being removed for repair, but with the Archdeacon visiting, Rev. Magee thinks it’s a good idea to keep quiet about his Anglican church sharing space with a mosque.

Question for Discussion:

- Unity Church-Unitarian shares church space with *Above Every Name Ministries*, a Christian church, and both names have been on signs outside. What do you think about this?

SECOND COMMERCIAL BREAK

Teacher summarizes: The archdeacon seems to view the church as a business (think money!) and wants to ensure that it’s profitable. To convince him that it is being profitable, Rev. Magee and others hatch a plan to make him think that the church is doing fine.

Questions for Discussion:

- What do you think about the plan to deceive the archdeacon by having Muslims pose as Anglicans (a Christian denomination) for the Sunday worship? It may be comical, but it hints at more important questions like:

- (1) People “playing at” or even “appropriating” other people’s faith traditions – using other traditions’ songs or rituals or practices to serve their own interests without acknowledging or belonging to those faith communities. (Note the Muslims of Mercy are **not** out to serve their own interests but genuinely trying to help Rev. Magee.)
 - (2) Muslims, Hindu, Buddhists, and “others” having to assimilate into Western religious cultures that celebrate Christmas/Easter and go to “church” on “Sundays” and have “ministers.”
- When Rev. Magee stops the hymn singing—because Anglicans themselves don’t sing with such vigor!—there’s a subtle message: perhaps the Anglican Church itself is not doing well because the Anglicans themselves are only *pretending* at their religion and not taking their faith seriously. Could having a mosque financially supporting the church in a major way suggest that *Anglicans may be pretending at their Anglican religion*?
 - In a similar way, who is the “witch doctor” and who is the real doctor with real medicine that helps?
 - What is “real” religion and “pretend” religion at time when lots of people are experimenting or “shopping around” for spirituality and religion?
 - How might interfaith dialogue teach us more about *our own* religion than about the other religion?

THIRD COMMERCIAL BREAK

Questions for Discussion:

- Notice the hats covering the *hijab*, all the while the archdeacon’s sermon is about lying and deceiving and prostituting ourselves (acts of falseness or dishonesty). And when the archdeacon finally realizes that there’s a mosque on church property, what does he finally think? (*Answer: Diocese will take their money!*)
- Both the archdeacon and Yasir see the church as being about money and business (Yasir literally has his free office/business in the church building.) And as long as Fatima’s medicine is free of charge, Fred will try it. Might religion today not be threatened so much by other religions but by business and money?

AFTER THE EPISODE

Question for Discussion:

- Amaar says, “There is saying that Muslims should help their Christian neighbors rebuild their churches if they burn down.” As Muslims enter more and more into the interreligious nature of the world, this episode points out possibilities for partnerships and cooperation. What ways can you imagine faith communities, including Unity, partnering with one another?