



Galaxies Evening Service 21 October 2007

Service by Pete Cowley



Welcome:

Tonight we are celebrating and learning about the Islamic festivals of Ramadan & Eid ul-Fitr (Feast of the Breaking of the Fast).

Gathering together:

Leader: Lying under the heavy rocks of tradition is the determined life of God. Springing up in the most unlikely places is the rebellious life of God.

Moving and flying and soaring is the leaping energy of the life of God.

People: Let us worship God,
the one who lives in eternal freedom.

Introduction:

Leader:

We are so grateful for the gift of worship,
for the recklessness of it,
for the unquestioned giving
that makes us to throw our hearts out
like hats to be caught and filled
by the everything of love that we name God,
for the rightness of it,
as it leads us out of the wasteland
and into the blossoming way
where we discover love moving
in everything like fragrance
on the breath of a flower,
for the richness of it,
the manner in which we are lavishly filled,
in spite of ourselves,
with wisdom beyond mind,
seeing beyond vision,
rejoicing beyond words
and the human knowledge that now
is the eternity of Love we have been waiting for.



Ramadan Lantern, Cairo

Affirmation of faith (said all together):

We believe

in God the creator who gives birth to all that is .. with labour and sighing and looks to the world with joy and love.

We believe

in Christ the reconciler, who is earthed in our life and enfleshed in its patterns of dying and rising, who gives honour to our reality and grace to our way.

We believe

in God the free Spirit, who weeps with our grieving in the depths of our darkness and dances among us high on life's mountains – the Spirit who finds us with newness and hope.

We believe

in the community of faith, which is born of our humanness, is nurtured in sharing and grows whole in our struggling and celebration as one people of God.

Passing the Peace:

Leader: Now that we are reminded that God the free Spirit shares itself with us, we can share our peace and love with one another.

Let us feel the power of the earth that holds us together.

Let us celebrate our gifts in song and dance.

Let us all rejoice in our power and our beauty.

People: We open our hearts to the miracle of birth and the mystery of God's love in all Creation. We carry in us the divine light, which shone so brightly the night of Christ's birth. The gift of love, which we share tonight, deepens us as people, deepens us as sisters and brothers.

Each person shares hugs or whatever those around them.

Notices:

If you have any notices to bring to our attention please speak up.

Contemporary reflections:

The Fast of Ramadan and Festival of Eid ul-Fitr

Ramadan (or Ramazan in Iran, Pakistan, India, Turkey and other countries) is a Muslim religious observance that takes place during the ninth month of the [Islamic calendar](#), when the [Qur'an](#) was revealed. The name "Ramadan" is taken from the name of this month; the word itself derived from an Arabic word for intense heat, scorched ground, and shortness of rations. It is considered the most venerated and blessed month of the Islamic year. Prayers, [sawm](#) (fasting), charity, and self-accountability are especially stressed at this time; religious observances associated with [Ramadan](#) are kept throughout the month.

[Laylat al-Qadr](#), which falls during the last third, commemorates the revelation of the first verses of the Qur'an and is considered the most holy night of the year. Ramadan ends with the

holiday [Eid ul-Fitr](#), on which feasts are held. During the month following Ramadan, called Shawaal, Muslims are encouraged to fast for a further six days.

The Islamic calendar is a [lunar calendar](#), and months begin when the first crescent of a new moon is sighted. Since the Islamic lunar calendar year is 11 to 12 days shorter than the solar year, Ramadan migrates through the seasons. In 2007 (1428 [AH](#)), Ramadan lasts from [September 13](#) to [October 13](#) and October 12 in Saudi Arabia.^[1]

The ill and travelers may substitute other days to perform their Ramadan obligations.

[[Qur'an 2:185](#)] Children, the elderly and pregnant women are viewed as excused. Menstruating women also make up the days missed, usually in [Shawwal](#)

In addition to fasting, Muslims are encouraged to read the entire Qur'an.

Sunni Muslims tend to perform the recitation of the entire Qur'an by means of special prayers, called [Tarawih](#), which are held in the mosques every night of the month, during which a whole section of the Qur'an ('Juz', which is 1/30 of the Qur'an) is recited, so that by the end of the month the entire Qur'an has been completed. Tarawih is an [Arabic](#) phrase referring to those extra prayers. This prayer is performed after [salah](#) of [Isha'a](#), but before the Wit'r Rakat.

Muslims also pay Zakaat (only applicable if one can afford it) during the month. For those who qualify to pay Zakaat, as per the Islamic 'Nisab' (that is those whose wealth exceeds their necessities), have to pay 2.5% of the leftover of their wealth earned in that Islamic calendar year. Although Zakaat can be paid any time of the year, it has to be calculated on a year to year basis, and many Muslims use Ramadan as the month for calculation and disbursement.

Ramadan is also a time when Muslims are supposed to slow down from their worldly affairs and focus on self reformation, spiritual cleansing and enlightenment and establish the link between the God almighty and themselves by prayer, supplication, charity and showing good deeds, kindness and helping others.

Since it is a festival of giving and sharing, Muslims prepare special foods and buy gifts for their family and friends and for giving to the poor and needy who cannot afford it.

It is a festival time where Muslims buy new clothes, shoes, jewelery, other items of need, prepare special foods, invite people for Iftar (meal and snacks commemorating the breaking of Fast).

In many Muslim and non Muslim countries with large Muslim populations, markets close down in the evening to enable people to perform prayer, Iftar (break fast) and then re-open in the night, and stay open for a good part of night. Muslims can be seen shopping, eating, spending time with their friends and family during the evening hours.

[Laylat al-Qadr](#) (also known as Shab-e-Qadr in Farsi), literally the "Night of Decree or Night of Measures", is the anniversary of two very important dates in Islam that occurred in the month of Ramadan. Muslims believe that it was the night of the Laylat al-Qadr that the Quran's first verse was revealed. The exact night of the Laylat al-Qadr is only known to God and Muhammed but he chose to keep it to himself so that Muslims won't pray only that night. That is why Muhammad indicated that it was one of the last ten odd nights of Ramadan.

The Islamic holiday of [Eid ul-Fitr](#) marks the end of the fasting period of Ramadan and the first day of the following month, after another new moon has been sighted. The Eid falls after 29 or 30 days of fasting, as per the lunar sighting. Eid ul-Fitr means the Festival of Breaking the Fast, a special celebration is made. Food is donated to the poor, everyone puts on their best, preferably new, clothes, and communal prayers are held in the early morning, followed by feasting and visiting relatives and friends. The prayer is two rakaahs only, and it is an optional prayer as opposed to the compulsory 5 daily prayers. According to one current school of thought, it is suggested that North American Muslims arrange their work-schedule for Eid by requesting the two most likely days of Eid as Holidays or simply as days off from work. This allows for quality family time, and is akin to the Christian/North American tradition of taking Christmas and Christmas eve off as holidays. This also allows for time off to celebrate the Eid prayer at a mosque and with family. The fast always ends after 29 or 30 days of fasting, and thus the request would be for the 29th and 30th day after the start of the fast.

Muslims are encouraged to fast six days in [Shawwal](#), the month following Ramadan that begins after [Eid ul-Fitr](#); these days need not be consecutive. According to [hadith](#), one who fasts the month of Ramadan and six days during Shawaal will be rewarded as though he fasted the entire year.



Eid Ul-Fitr meal, Malaysia

Prayer:

Leader: Spirit, open our hearts to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may we love, in receiving and in giving,
Spirit, open our hearts.

People: Write your love upon my heart
as my law, my goal, my story.
In each thought, word, and deed,
May my living bring you glory.

Ruth C Duck from the hymn "Spirit, Open My Heart (More Voices #79)"

Departure:

As we depart from this place
of light,

love,

and warm hearts

may we be a light to others

may we treat all we meet with loving-kindness

may we warm others hearts with our care and commitment

to compassion, truth and justice

in all our dealings.