



Religious and Cultural Observations and Festivals to Celebrate in March 2024

March 5, 2024

Dear EMU Community,

As the spring season approaches, there are a number of [religious and cultural observations and festivals to celebrate](#). For example, throughout the month of March, there is Holi (Hinduism), Purim (Judaism), Naw-Ruz (Baha'i), Nowruz (Persian New Year), Hola Mohalla (Sikh), and the Fast of Great Lent (Ethiopian Orthodox Church).

It is in this context that next week our community will observe the beginning of a very special time of the year: **Ramadan**. This year Ramadan, which is the ninth month in the Islamic calendar, will begin Monday March 11th. As the calendar is lunar, the dates for when each month begins move every year.

Ramadan is a special month because it is the time Muslims believe the Prophet Mohammed received a series of revelations from God which combined to form the Quran. As the holiest month of the year for Muslims, Ramadan offers the opportunity to express core values through prayer, good deeds, and giving to charity. You can learn more about [Ramadan at EMU here](#) and [here](#).

Ramadan Fasting: A Holistic Journey of Spiritual Growth for Muslims.

During the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast from dawn to dusk and spend time in contemplation, self-discipline, empathy for those in need, pursuing a stronger connection with God. Fasting is not merely a physical act, but a holistic approach to spiritual growth, self-refinement, and empathy-building.

Fasting in Islam is not just about abstaining from food and drink but also about refraining from negative behaviors like anger, gossip, and lies. It's an opportunity to reset and rejuvenate one's spiritual and moral compass.

A Month of Restoring Relationships. Ramadan is also a month for Muslims to restore the relationships that are strained or even broken, within families, neighborhoods and across communities.

As we enter into this sacred time in our community, the Center for Interfaith Engagement; Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Office on Faith and Spiritual Life; Office of International Student Services; and the Intensive English Program (IEP) are reaching out to offer recognition and support, especially for Muslim members of our learning community:

- Imam Zaheer Alvi from the Islamic Association of the Shenandoah Valley is available to meet and talk with Muslim students at EMU. You can contact him by email at imamzaheeralvi@gmail.com or by phone at (267) 679 9723.
- The Imam also engages in a question and answer conversation with the community over WhatsApp. If you are interested in joining that chat group, please let us know.
- CJP student Ishtiaq Khan is serving as a graduate assistant at CIE this semester and is available to meet and talk with Muslim students in our community. You can feel free to reach out to Ishtiaq directly at ishtiaq.khan@emu.edu or (540) 282-0456.
- A Ramadan calendar is attached for folks in Harrisonburg.

To all of us in the EMU community, we ask that you acknowledge this special time and be mindful of what Muslim members of our community--students, faculty, and staff--may be experiencing during this time of prayer and fasting by providing appropriate accommodations. Learn more about [how to support each other here](#).

To Muslim members of our learning community, **what needs or supports can EMU offer during Ramadan?**

We wish you all a Happy Ramadan!

Attachments from Ishtiaq:

[Ramadan Mubarak - CIE at EMU Image](#)

[Ramadan Calendar 2024](#)