

## CONTENTS

### 27 KNOWING MY NEIGHBOUR

a workshop on Islamophobia

### 30 HOW TO BE AN ADVOCATE

a training workshop on advocacy

### 30 THE MEDICINE WHEEL APPROACH

using an Indigenous process to counter racism

## Knowing My Neighbour

**A workshop on Islamophobia** by Lynda Trono and Shahina Siddiqui

Two years ago my son Joel, a convert to Islam, had an unfortunate encounter with some men who didn't like the way he was dressed. It woke me up to reality.

**M**y neighbours of other faiths encounter much more hardship living out their faith than I do as a Christian, particularly when it comes to dress. Wearing a hijab, a turban, or a kipa sets you apart. It makes you a target. Since September 11, 2001, Muslims have been targeted through

being discriminated against in the workplace; being harassed, particularly when travelling; through negative images in the media and vandalism. Much attention has been focused on stereotyped Muslims—the male suicide bomber and the passive, oppressed female. This workshop will explore

some aspects of Islamophobia and suggest three ways to counter it: building relationships, getting accurate information, and being willing to act.

The purpose of this one-and-a-half to two-hour workshop is to explore what it means to love my Muslim neighbour.

**PREPARATION**

- Preview the suggested YouTube clip for the Opening. Arrange to have the equipment to show the video(s).
- Decide in advance on Options A, B, or C in “Deconstructing Stereotypes.” Preparation for each of these will be significantly different.
- Write out any questions you will use on newsprint in advance.
- Make copies of “Peace and Violence in Islam” and “A Word about Women.”

**OPENING** (5 min.)

Begin by listening to the Muslim call to prayer at [youtube.com/watch?v=mUHDYIJHaOQ](http://youtube.com/watch?v=mUHDYIJHaOQ).

Write out the following for people to follow as they listen:

God is the greatest (2X)  
 I bear witness that there is no god but God (2X)  
 I bear witness that Muhammad is the

messenger of God (2X)  
 Come to pray (2X)  
 Come to true prosperity (2X)  
 God is the greatest  
 There is no god except God

**WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?**

(15 min.)

Read the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), replacing the word “Samaritan” with the word “Muslim.”

Have someone read out the following information about Samaritans:

- The Samaritans were descendants of the northern tribes of Israel, hence cousins of the Jews of Judea. By the time of Jesus they were considered half-breeds and heretics and were ostracized by the Jews. At one point, some Samaritans had desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem by scattering bones in it. This was considered an outrage. Jews wouldn’t even eat or drink from the same vessels as

Samaritans. This is why the woman at the well is surprised when Jesus asks her for a drink (John 4:9).

Divide into groups of three and discuss the following questions:

- How is the situation of Muslims today similar to or different from that of Samaritans during the time of Jesus?
- If a Muslim person is my neighbour, how am I called to act? If loving my neighbour goes beyond responding to an individual on the road, what does it entail?

**DECONSTRUCTING STEREOTYPES** (40–80 min.)

Explain that a stereotype is a fixed, commonly held notion or image of a person or group, based on an oversimplification of some observed or imagined trait. There is often a grain of truth in a stereotype. Deconstructing a stereotype means asking questions about root causes and cultural understandings that are different from our own.

Once we have some understanding of the root of a stereotype, we can begin to challenge it. Jesus’ telling of the story of the good Samaritan challenges a stereotype that his listeners probably held about Samaritans—that they were bad people.

1. Have the group name the stereotypes that are prevalent about Islam or Muslims. List them on newsprint. The stereotypes most often fall into two categories: peace and violence, or the role of women.
2. Choose one of three options.

**Option A**

Invite a Muslim guest to address some of the issues you have listed. This option will add much more depth to your study and will allow your questions to be answered.

**Option B**

Watch the video *Inside Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think*. This video, based on research undertaken by the Gallup Organization, gives insight into Muslim perspectives and the role of media in forming our perceptions. You can find it

**A WORD ABOUT WOMEN**

Islam accepts both men and women as equal in their creation and in their relationship to Allah.

In Qur’an 4:1, it says, “O humankind, be careful of your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate...Be careful of your duty to Allah in Whom you claim your mutual rights.”

The following declaration was issued in August 2010 by the Canadian Council of Imams:

“We believe in gender equity and each man and each woman’s divine right to education, social contribution, work, and treatment with respect and dignity. Men and women complement each other, and healthy relationships between them are essential to a healthy society.”

Discuss the following questions:

- When has the Bible or the Christianity been used to subjugate women?
- How does this compare to what is happening in Islam?



online at [snagfilms.com/films/title/inside\\_islam\\_what\\_a\\_billion\\_muslims\\_really\\_think/?sms\\_ss=facebook](http://snagfilms.com/films/title/inside_islam_what_a_billion_muslims_really_think/?sms_ss=facebook)

### Option C

Read from *That We May Know Each Other*, available on the United Church website [united-church.ca](http://united-church.ca) (search for the title). This is a comprehensive study done from a United Church perspective, which includes the Statement on the Relationship of The United Church of Canada and Islam, and which was passed by the 39th General Council in 2006.

Have people choose which of the two issues they will focus on and divide into small groups. For peace and violence, read pages 47–48. For the role of women, read pages 48–50.

3. Review the information in “Peace and Violence in Islam” and “A Word about Women” and discuss in small groups the questions at the bottom of each. Have groups share their learnings with one another.

### WHAT WOULD YOU DO

(20 min.)

Divide into three groups and give each one of the following scenarios to consider and report back.

1. A Muslim woman with a niqab (face veil) is in line for coffee in front of you at a coffee shop. The vendor raises her voice, stating, “I can’t see you and I can’t hear you!” even though the order was made in an audible voice that even you heard. The woman repeats her order. The vendor ignores her and moves on to you. What do you do?
2. Your employer is always making jokes at the expense of your two Muslim colleagues. His racist remarks are hurtful, but he is the boss. What do you do?
3. You have just learned that a Christian group is planning to protest Muslim immigration to Canada by tearing up the Qur’an on the street corner a block away from the legislature. How do you respond as a community?

### TAKING ACTION (20 min.)

Consider the three areas mentioned in the introduction for countering Islamophobia: building relationships, getting accurate information, and being willing to act. How might we love our neighbours? Discuss the following questions.

- How might you build relationships with Muslims as individuals, as a group, or as a congregation? If you live in a community where there are no Muslims, the work ahead of you is different. How can this be done?
- How will you continue to inform yourselves about Islam?
- What is currently happening to Muslims in your community, country, or in the world? How can you respond as individuals, a group, a faith community?

**Lynda Trono** is in team ministry at St. Mary’s Road United Church in Winnipeg. **Shahina Siddiqui** is Executive Director of Islamic Social Services Agency in Winnipeg.

## PEACE AND VIOLENCE IN ISLAM

**IN HIS BOOK *THE WORLD’S RELIGIONS*** (HarperCollins, New York, 1991), Huston Smith notes that the word “Islam” means the peace that comes when you surrender your life to God.

The Canadian Council of Imams issued a declaration in August 2010 that says:

“We believe in peaceful coexistence, dialogue, bridge building, and cooperation among all faiths and people for the common good of humanity. Islam does not permit the killing of innocent people, regardless of their creed, ethnicity, race, or nationality. The sanctity of human life overrides the sanctity of religious laws. Islamic rulings do not—and should not—contradict natural laws. Islam is a religion that promotes peace, justice, equality, dignity, and freedom for all human beings.”

United Church–Muslim relations are outlined in *That We May Know Each Other*. “Jihad—‘striving in the cause of God’—is usually translated as ‘holy struggle,’ but this is misleading,” the United Church document says. “Jihad is divided into two categories, the greater and the lesser. The greater jihad is the warfare within oneself against any evil or temptation.” The internal struggle Paul describes in his letter to the Romans would be his jihad (Romans 7:14–25).

“The lesser jihad is the defence of Islam, or of a Muslim country or community, against aggression,” says the document. “It may be a jihad of the pen or of the tongue. If it involves conflict, it is strictly regulated, and can only be defensive.”

To use the word “jihad” to describe terrorism only reinforces the idea that Islam condones terrorism.

Consider the following questions:

- When has the Bible or the Christian tradition been used to support violence?
- When do Christians understand violence to be justified?
- Why do you think Christians have not been stereotyped as violent, even though some Christians have committed violent acts, for example, bombing abortion clinics?