

VALLEY MUSLIM VOICE

Featuring an interview with Muslim city council leader Nasser Alsaadun, Palestinian Ceasefire, Insight on Kurdish Sunday School, Mosque renovation updates, and community news.

How to Prepare for Ramadan: An Interview with Imam Zaheer Alvi

Guest Writer Feature: Khadija Alvi

As Ramadan approaches, Muslims are seeking ways to maximize the month's benefits. Imam Zaheer Alvi offers wisdom on spiritual, physical, and mental preparation for the holy month.

Preparing for Ramadan: A Brief Guide

Ramadan is a sacred month for Muslims, offering a time for spiritual growth, self-discipline, and devotion to Allah. Preparing in advance can help maximize its benefits. Imam Zaheer highlights key areas of preparation: spiritual, physical, and mental readiness.

Physical Preparation

Fasting can be physically demanding. Imam Zaheer suggests optional fasting in Sha'ban to help the body adjust. Maintaining a balanced diet and reducing caffeine and sugar intake can prevent headaches and fatigue, making fasting more manageable.

Charity and Giving

Charity is a core aspect of Ramadan. Planning Zakat and Sadaqah contributions in advance ensures meaningful giving. Every sincere act of generosity is greatly rewarded during this blessed month.

Conclusion

By preparing spiritually, physically, and mentally, Muslims can fully embrace Ramadan's blessings. With sincere effort and commitment, Ramadan becomes a transformative experience, fostering growth and devotion to Allah.

Spiritual Preparation

The first step is renewing one's intentions and increasing acts of worship. Engaging in extra nafl prayers, performing dhikr, and reciting the Quran can strengthen one's connection to faith. Additionally, making sincere dua ensures a meaningful Ramadan experience.

Mental and Emotional Preparation

A strong mindset is crucial for Ramadan. Cultivating patience, gratitude, and self-control helps maintain focus. Reducing distractions like excessive social media use and setting personal goals—such as improving character and increasing kindness—enhance the Ramadan experience.



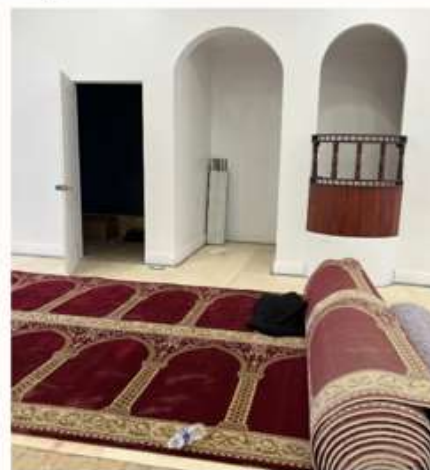
Imam Zaheer Alvi pictured above.

Article by: Khadija Alvi

Transforming Faith: From Church to Mosque – A Community's Inspiring Journey

A dedicated army of volunteers from all walks of life is transforming an old church into a mosque in Harrisonburg, VA, located at 1244 Old Depot Lane. This historic building, which served as a church for over a century, began being carefully renovated on December 5th through collaborative community efforts. Specialized teams have worked on different aspects of the renovation, including a new minbar/pulpit, bathrooms, plumbing, roofing, and new carpet.

On January 31st, volunteers moved furniture from Alakram Mosque to the new location, symbolizing a new beginning. The community has raised over \$40,000 through donations, with ongoing fundraising efforts. Local families and newcomers have supported the project by providing meals and volunteering their time. The renovation expenses according to Dr. Hasan Hamdan have reached over \$47,000, not including the parking area, electricity, and window replacement. This renovation is more than a physical transformation; it represents community unity, mutual respect, and the evolving nature of religious spaces. Without mentioning names for fear of missing someone, VMCF extends heartfelt gratitude to all volunteers who contributed through construction, support, food providing, cleaning, and moving furniture. Special thanks to the donors who continue to support and to the MSA officers who helped in moving furniture.



Photos displaying chronological progress of the Mosque renovation

Article by: Ayah Zuhour, photos by Sabrine Hamdan

Meet Nasser Alsaadun

First Elected Muslim and Refugee for Harrisonburg City Council



Mr. Alsaadun's journey to city council is inspiring. Arriving in the U.S. as a refugee from Iraq in 2008, he has spent the last 15 years helping newcomers adjust to life in Harrisonburg. His work with organizations like Church World Services, the Multicultural Harrisonburg Council, and Faith in Action has provided great support, from offering hot meals to arranging transportation and translation services. His deep commitment to service and desire to represent the city's diverse population ultimately inspired him to run for office.

As a Muslim leader, Mr. Alsaadun's faith strongly influences his leadership. "Islam teaches us to help others so Allah (SWT) may reward us," he shared. He hopes to set an example for Muslim youth, showing them they can be leaders while staying true to their identity. When asked about key concerns for Harrisonburg's Muslim community, he emphasized education as a top priority. "We want the best education for our kids," he said, acknowledging the hard work and sacrifices many immigrant families make. He also spoke about housing challenges, something he has personally faced. "As a renter for 15 years, affording rent was difficult, it sometimes took two thirds of my income. We need to find solutions," he said.

Mr. Alsaadun also believes in the power of interfaith dialogue to unite the community. "Harrisonburg is unique; synagogues, churches, and mosques work together. We respect each other and focus on what we have in common," he noted. Despite initial concerns, he was surprised to find little resistance during his campaign. "I thought it would be difficult to be accepted, but my good relationships helped," he shared. He emphasized the importance of being present and engaged: "If I had stayed home, people wouldn't know who I am or what I stand for."

Through his leadership, Mr. Nasser Alsaadun is helping to build a more inclusive and united Harrisonburg, proving that diversity is one of the city's greatest strengths.

Photos by Nasser Alsaadun, city council, Mr. Alsaadun taking the oath at city hall, 01/02

Article by Salma Al Massad

KURDISH SUNDAY SCHOOL

Within the walls of the EMU Suter Science Center, the Kurdish community educates its young. Specifically, the Salah-Addin Center Virginia Sunday School, which is housed under the broader wing of the Muslim Salah-Addin community, has been teaching a variety of classes to the next Kurdish generation. Given it's a school that has been operating since November of 2022 and boasts a whopping eighty-seven students this year, the Kurdish community is understandably optimistic about their children's knowledge of their roots and identity.

Salah-Addin School currently runs from 11 AM to 1:30 PM, with staff typically arriving a half-hour early to prep classrooms. Two main educational sessions are held, with each lasting an hour, and are divided by a 15-minute break. Classes offered range from Deen to the fine-tunings of Tajweed, and they combine Islamic Studies with the Kurdish language, as many of these sciences are taught in the Kurdish tongue.

The school's principal, Zana Abdul-Rahman, is known for his work ethic and cheer, among other things. When asked about challenges that the school might be facing, he cited administrative and organization difficulties, some of which include curriculum-building and registering student information. However, he was keen to follow that up with gratitude to Allah SWT for the success, in addition to praise for the numerous Kurdish parents and teachers that "make it work". All in all, the Salah-Addin Virginia Sunday School acts as a place for thriving education, identity, and faith among the Kurdish Community, for which we are thankful, and all credits and praise belong to Allah SWT.



Article by: Hind Mousa, photos by Sabrine Hamdan

PALESTINIAN CEASEFIRE

The January 19, 2025, ceasefire between Israel and Hamas ended 15 months of conflict, bringing relief and hope to communities worldwide, including our community. Nearly a year ago, Harrisonburg City Council became the first governmental body in Virginia to pass a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza thanks to our community efforts. Families in Palestine are reuniting with released detainees, while mourning continues for lost loved ones. Many community members have also expressed their relief and overwhelming joy about this news. The truce has sparked a surge in global and local donations through online fundraisers to support Gaza's recovery by providing food, medical supplies, and shelter. Though concerns remain about the ceasefire's durability and long-term peace, the community is optimistic that unity and humanitarian efforts will aid Gaza's recovering process.



Photos from: Al Jazeera, flag of Palestine, Palestinian children celebrate the ceasefire announcement, ceasefire sign

Article by: Ayah Zuhour

COMMUNITY NEWS



Additional Photos displaying chronological progress of the Mosque renovation

Our annual **Guran competition** for all ages will be held at the VMCF-Islamic Center on **3/22/2025**. This is a wonderful opportunity for people of all ages to showcase their memorization and recitation skills for awards on eid! We urge you to join and spread the word to all!



ANNUAL QURAN CONTEST

CHILDREN'S RAMADAN CELEBRATION

On February 22, 2025, the IASV Mosque hosted a Ramadan Welcome Event for children aged 6 to 10, offering fun and educational activities to introduce them to the spiritual significance of the holy month. Children gathered to celebrate, engage in interactive learning, such as coloring, listening to ramadan stories, and building a cardboard mosque. This allowed them to truly embrace the Ramadan spirit!



Contributors: Israa Alhassani, Salma Al Massad, Ayah Zuhour, Hind Mousa, Sabrine Hamdan

