

Supporting Your Muslim Students: A Guide for Clinical Pastoral Supervisors

Rabia Terri Harris

Editor's Note: This guidebook for the supervision of Muslim students was written at the request of the Task Force on Islam of the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education in an effort to enhance effective supervision of Muslim students. At the 2008 meeting of the Muslim Chaplains Association, Rabia Terri Harris was asked to develop a guidebook for clinical pastoral education (CPE) supervisors committed to accepting Muslim students into their program. She brings thirty years of experience in Muslim community affairs to the work of preparing this guidebook. We are grateful for this resource. It is her wish and mine that this guidebook will be a helpful resource, contributing to a mutually fulfilling learning experience both for the pastoral supervisor and for the Muslim student.—C. George Fitzgerald, chair, ACPE Task Force on Islam and president of the Editorial Board of *Reflective Practice*.

In the name of God All-Compassionate, Most Merciful

A MUSLIM'S CONVICTIONS: GOD, GOD'S MESSENGER, GOD'S MESSAGE

A person becomes a consciously responsible member of the community of Muhammad(s)¹ by stating with the tongue, and affirming with the heart, a concise double proposition. It is called the *shahadah*, the witnessing.

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Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry

I bear witness that there is no god but God. And I bear witness that Muhammad is God's servant and messenger.

Whoever states and affirms this double proposition is a Muslim, an inheritor of the great spiritual tradition generally referred to as Islam. Islam, an Arabic term with multiple implications, is frequently translated into English as "surrender" or "submission." I feel it is less misleading to translate it as "acceptance." A Muslim accepts what God does and seeks to be in agreement with what God does. And among the great acts of God is the mission of Muhammad.

Muhammad, when he taught in the seventh century CE, spoke Arabic. Afterwards Arabic became a sacred language, but it had been spoken for centuries before, by people who followed a number of different religions. The word for God in Arabic is *Allah*, literally "the God:" God, God's-self. (The Arabic language has no capital letters, but European usage changes that.) "Allah" is the word for God commonly employed by Arabic-speaking Christians and Jews, as well as by Muslims. Because people who don't speak Arabic frequently misunderstand this word as indicating some special divinity unique to Muslims, in this document we will usually say "God" when talking about the divine.

Still, sometimes words are more than words. "Allah" is indeed understood by Muslims to be a name. It's more than merely a descriptor; it's a form through which Deity Itself may be addressed, engaged by human beings. Islamic scripture insists that God is addressable and may be engaged in many ways. "Allah," despite its importance, is just one among countless divine names. Yet it is the central intuition of Islam that Deity Itself is not just one among countless gods. Ultimate reality is single, and it is to ultimate reality alone that human fealty belongs.

This conviction may, of course, play out among humans in a variety of ways. Distinctive of Muslims is the second half of our profession of faith, affirming the servanthood and messengership of Muhammad. We hold that this particular human figure, embedded in history and controversy, did not merely arise and begin to spread his own ideas in the Arabian Peninsula long ago. He was specifically sent by Deity Itself to teach Deity Itself, in the words of Deity Itself, for the benefit of all. In this calling, he was the last of a very long line, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. This is what Muslims mean when they talk about "the prophets."

Muhammad is venerated, but not worshiped, by the historical community that has inherited what he did and said. We accept that his teachings keep us properly aligned with ultimate reality. And we prefer for ourselves the form in which he brought these teachings to earlier versions of the same divine gift.

As the profession of Islamic faith is double, so the teachings of the Prophet of Islam are also double, with one branch in eternity and another in history. Parallel to "I bear witness that there is no god but God" is *al-qur'an*, The Recital, divine speech making itself audible through human lips. Manifested in episodes over the twenty-three years of the Prophet's mission, yet unified into a single text, the Qur'an, the sacred scripture of Islam, is continually recited and studied throughout the Muslim world. Its phrases, imagery, and subtle textures resonate around us.

The Qur'an shares many points of reference with the Bible, including its overall moral orientation and numerous stories, but does not at all resemble the Bible (or in fact any familiar genre) in its literary form. Muslims hold it to be pure revelation, to be accepted as such even when incompletely understood. We have no room in this brief introduction for even a basic examination of this extraordinary text, which itself forms the deepest sanctuary of Muslim life. But it is important for the sympathetic reader to understand how emotionally and spiritually central the Qur'an is to Muslim religious experience, and how challenging an experience this can be to explain to those who have not tasted it themselves.

Muhammad made a clear distinction between divine revelation and his own preferences and rulings as a spiritual guide and community leader. Yet because the Qur'an recommends the Prophet as a model to be followed, Muslims have made far-reaching efforts to fashion their actions after his. Over the centuries, thousands of eyewitness reports of his words and deeds (called *hadith*, literally "news") have been collected and subjected to a painstaking traditional process of authentication. The results of all this research have been classified according to their level of likely authenticity, from completely reliable to known forgeries, with many degrees of probability in between. (Many of these classifications are argued even today.) This huge corpus, mastered in its entirety by extremely few, but known in some portion or another to every practicing Muslim, shapes the sense the community has of its founder as a unique personality and spiritual force. It is the text basis for what we know of the *sunnah*, the Tradition, according to which we

aspire to live our lives. Following the sunnah makes concrete the second branch of a Muslim's profession of faith: "I bear witness that Muhammad is God's servant and messenger." The second dimension of the Prophetic teaching, therefore, is the enormous exemplary power of the Prophet himself.

Supervisory Note

A Muslim chaplain will be in constant need of consulting this example. Of relevance to supervision is the quality of a student's relationship to it. Is the Muslim student dutifully reciting dicta, or pursuing a deep conversation with the Messenger of God? How does the student profit from the Prophet?

A MUSLIM'S CONVICTIONS: THEOLOGY

A famous hadith report informs us that Muslim faith implies belief in:

- God
- God's angels
- God's scriptures (plural)
- God's messengers (also plural)
- The meeting with God (sometimes phrased as the Last Day or the Day of Judgment)

to which some versions of the report add, in:

- The Divine Decree, that both the good and the bad are under God's control

and to which a very widely used traditional formula adds, in

- The Resurrection after death

Of these, only the matter of the Divine Decree (sometimes translated as destiny) is at all controversial: a modern minority of thinkers denies its authenticity. But the overwhelming majority of Muslims, with the strong backing of Qur'anic texts, will agree on the normative quality of all these doctrinal points. A simple sincere recitation of this list is all that is required for one's faith to be "in good standing." But that, of course, is only the beginning of a long important process.

Supervisory Notes

1. Sometimes it may be necessary for supervisors to help jumpstart this process by encouraging Muslim students to articulate what the

basic points of doctrine mean for them. How does it actually change you to believe in God? Where do angels fit in your twenty-first century life? When on the hospital floor have you met the Divine Decree? Some Muslim students may be startled by questions like these. That cannot be resolved by consulting authorities. Fire away: we need to stretch our theological muscles.

Muslim life is permeated with theologies, but these are rarely made explicit. The theological structures and conclusions we assimilate are often taken as givens, as if they were revelation; yet they are all historical formulations, the products of particular times. Not everything that reaches us is equally useful to us. Faith tells us that revelation and Prophetic example will always provide a trusty framework for making sense of what happens, and the experience of our predecessors may often help us along. But it is we ourselves, ultimately, who are obliged to do the work of uncovering meaning. That prospect may be daunting. Theologically, as long as Muslims' understandings are rooted in Qur'an and sunnah, Islamic tradition has allowed us enormous interpretive freedom. Contemporary Muslims, however, out of humility, are sometimes hesitant to claim this legacy for themselves.

2. Tactful supervision can encourage Muslim chaplaincy students to take the valuable risk of becoming active contributors to their own tradition. But the resistances to assuming this role must also be respected. There is a long story behind the roles. As students discover this, they begin to make interpretive choices. By so doing, they enrich their interior lives.

A MUSLIM'S CONVICTIONS: DIFFERENCES OF OPINION

In a famous hadîth, the Prophet remarks, "Difference of opinion in my community is a mercy." Some tellings of the hadîth, though, limit those benign differences to scholars alone. Over a number of centuries, in many places, the latter version has taken broad precedence over the former. At the same time, the definition of "scholar" has become severely restricted.

Many Muslim societies, in the effort to avoid insecurity and social dissension, have made conformity to the views of selected earlier thinkers into a primary religious virtue. But the thinkers themselves would likely have been dubious about this kind of piety (they did not practice it themselves), while as a guarantor of public peace, the strategy has only sometimes been successful. Factionalism still periodically reaches the point of

violence in many places. A new approach to the civil accommodation of internal differences, according to the Prophetic spirit, is therefore high on the agenda of many concerned Muslims today. And the laboratory of the public need is, as always, the private soul. Your students may show it.

Supervisory Note

Supervisors may find it helpful to know a few basics about continuing differences of opinion in the Muslim community. Your students will teach you more. Some of these differences are identified by established names. Others are less matters of allegiance than of attitude: for convenience, I have coined names for them here. Each of your Muslim students will start out with received opinions located somewhere on a continuum of interpretations. They may very well end up with conscious opinions located somewhere else.

Here is a brief overview of controversies current on the American scene:

- **Sunni/Shi`i.** An early political fork in the road that generated two separate Islamic worldviews. For a very rough historical analogy, think Protestant and Catholic. The strands, despite holding strong views on each other, tend to know astonishingly little about each another.
- **Sufi/Salafi.** The Sufis, esoterics and mystics, are an old presence on the Muslim scene, if sometimes a contested one. The Salafis, puritan reformers, are a phenomenon of the past two hundred years. The latter critique the former for self-indulgence, fantasy, and betrayal of Islam's social promise. The former critique the latter for intolerance, narrow-mindedness, and spiritual failure. The argument can become intense.
- **Traditional/Progressive.** As everywhere, one group seeks to preserve a beautiful past, while the other aims to invite a beautiful future. Traditionalists far outnumber progressives, but, in the United States and a few other places, both views are currently undergoing interesting mutations. The entry of these terms themselves into Muslim usage is part of that transformation.
- **Assimilationist/Separatist.** As happens with other people in other contexts, there are different opinions among Muslims on the practical politics of minority status. Some hold that Muslims should be participants and players in the larger society, while others hold that Muslims should withdraw and establish their own alternative society. (Their presence in a CPE program virtually guarantees that your students will incline in some degree toward the assimilationist pole.)

- **Strict Constructionist/Broad Constructionist.** Not yet in Muslim community use, these terms from U.S. constitutional history nonetheless delineate a relevant difference of opinion. “Strict constructionist” Muslims view the Revelation as primarily law, and read its precepts as precise and binding. “Broad constructionist” Muslims view the Revelation as primarily moral suasion, and read for the “Founder’s intention” behind specific texts.
- **Exclusivist/Inclusivist.** These terms are also not yet in common use. Exclusivist Muslims believe that Islam is now the only religion with salvation value. Inclusivist Muslims believe that other religions maintain salvation value. (Different degrees of inclusivity exist. Some Muslims believe that God may accept Jews and Christians into Paradise, but not Hindus or Buddhists.) All parties base their views on Qur’anic texts.

These differences of opinion are just the first layer of Muslim diversity. Other important variations in style and substance result from culture and background. In the United States, immigrant Muslims differ significantly from converts, and both groups differ from indigenous Muslims. (Some African-American families have been Muslim for decades, if not centuries, while many more recently arrived families from the Arab or Indian subcontinental regions are in their second or third American generation.) Iranian Shi`is differ from Lebanese Shi`is, Nigerian Sunnis from Malaysian Sunnis. African-American converts who drew their first inspiration from the Black Muslim movement differ from African-American converts who drew theirs from Saudi Arabia or from Senegal. Finally, every mosque is independent of every other mosque, and many people are not active in mosques at all. Amid all this, the proponent of Unity must develop a place to stand.

MATTERS OF OBSERVANCE: THE PILLARS AND BEYOND

Islam famously bases itself on five pillars of practice, agreed upon by all:

- *Shahadah*, profession of faith (using the double proposition with which we began)
- *Salah*, regular ritual prayer (following specific forms taught by the Prophet)
- *Zakah*, cleansing of wealth (through a small percentage tax on liquid assets owed by the community at large to its own social maintenance, and particularly to the poor)

- *Sawm*, annual fasting (from before sunrise to sunset during Ramadan, the lunar month when the Qur'an was first revealed)
- *Hajj*, once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage for those who can afford it (to Mecca, where Muslims believe the oldest temple to the One God stands: raised by Adam, rediscovered by Hagar, rebuilt by Abraham, and rededicated by Muhammad, it determines the direction that we turn in prayer).

Supervisory Note

All of these practices will affect the lives of your Muslim students, and several will be directly implicated in their experience of CPE. Supporting students' practice of the Pillars may be unfamiliar to supervisors, but it is essential, and basically simple enough to achieve. Beyond the Pillars, though, opens the sea of sunnah, of the Tradition governing social relationships. Here you will encounter a host of precepts, as well as private adaptations to those precepts. Bewildering at first, it is not so difficult to negotiate as might appear.

THE AFFIRMATION OF UNITY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

A word worth learning: *tawhid*. It means "affirmation of unity," and stands for what the profession of Muslim faith is meant to accomplish: the clear knowledge that God is one, alone, incomparable. Not all faith configures this way. Muslim chaplains serving as trainees in hospitals will be called to attend patients from a variety of faith groups. According to whether their own inclinations are inclusivist or exclusivist, those trainees may or may not feel at ease with the basic faith of those patients. Even inclusivists, though, will not feel comfortable employing language or concepts specific to other faith traditions. For instance, though Muslims revere Jesus as one of the greatest of prophets, we cannot call him God, or the son of God, without transgressing a bedrock principle of our faith. We do not call God "Father" at all, or "Father/Mother" either: Qur'anic revelation bans this kind of analogy. The challenge for Muslim chaplains is, thus, similar to the challenge for Jewish chaplains: to find the means to effectively support suffering persons whose beliefs are not credible to us, and to manage this routinely without either offending them or violating ourselves.

Time for Prayer

All Muslims know that we are religiously obligated to offer five formal prayers a day. (Shi`is liturgically condense these five into three occasions a day.) All of us also know that arranging this can be a problem. Western societies are not organized around calling a halt to the world's work at regular intervals, day in and day out, in order to remember God. The most God-time one is granted by the general culture is a single day a week, and even this has long been eroded. A Muslim, though, should be observing a tiny Sabbath every few waking hours. It's hard to carve out the time for this practice in the first place, and particularly hard to do it and not be considered weird. Yet there is nothing more sustaining for practitioners than thoughtful accommodations for prayer.

Most hospital chapels are full of pews. Muslim prayers require open floor space oriented in the direction of Mecca, the *qiblah*—and there are differences of opinion about the *qiblah*. In the United States, some pray east while others prefer northeast, following the curvature of the earth. Yet neither a lot of space, nor special space, is required. Muslims can offer prayer in any clean location that is not a graveyard or a toilet, and the place can at other times serve some other use. The size of the space is only the room needed to make a prostration: a prayer rug is smaller than a standard yoga mat. (Even the rug does not actually have to be present, only the cleanliness.) The *qiblah* issue, too, may be easily resolved by providing a compass or simple map indications of north or east. Yet for those few minutes—and a prayer episode is only a few minutes—a worshiper is not to be disturbed. And this can be an insuperable obstacle in a place as crowded, stressful, and demanding as a hospital. Even if the physical space is available, the psychological space is all too often not to be found.

Supervisory Notes

1. It is religiously permissible for Muslims who have missed their prayers due to pressure of circumstances to make them up later, ideally before the end of the day. A sensitive supervisor, however, should not take advantage of this permission for convenience and should also be alert to a student who relies on it too much. If the prayer is always delayed, or begins to be missed altogether, then that student is under too much pressure. A regular prayer routine is the gold standard for Muslim self-care.

2. It often happens that individuals have important interior struggles around the offering of prayer. While chaplaincy students are likely to be observant, there is no guarantee of this, and even the most devout may one day find themselves in the middle of a crisis of conscience and practice. If supervisors understand the importance of the ritual prayer and respect it, they may be of use during such crises, which sometimes result in meaningful spiritual gains. But if a student senses that a supervisor is dismissive of the prayer, even if that student is refusing to pray, the relationship is likely to be damaged.
3. Muslim students may have as little experience in talking about their prayer lives as they do in articulating their theologies. They may find it hard to share what they feel. The experiment is strongly to be encouraged.

Blessed Ramadan

The month of fasting is determined according to a purely lunar calendar, and so falls roughly eleven days earlier every solar year. In the year 2009 CE, Ramadan will begin around the twenty-second of August, and the year after that, around the eleventh of August. The cycle takes thirty-three years to complete. Hijri-Gregorian date converters are easily located on the Internet, and are reliable to within about a day. Due to the custom, adhered to by many, of starting a new month with the physical sighting of the lunar crescent rather than basing it on astronomical calculations, there is always a small margin of error. Similarly, it may be impossible to know in advance whether the liturgical month will last twenty-nine or thirty days. Muslims, despite some exasperation, get used to living with this uncertainty. It wreaks a certain amount of havoc on tight schedules, but nonetheless it has to be scheduled.

Ramadan is the central celebration of the Muslim year. Pilgrimage alone is more important. But Pilgrimage visits rarely, like a dignified guest, while Ramadan comes round regularly, like an intimate friend. The days can be quite difficult, but the nights are festive, full of food, family, and conviviality, as well as special devotions. A Muslim without access to community during the nights of Ramadan is likely to be sad.

Fasting Ramadan is an obligation, with exceptions. Children before puberty, and the chronically ill, need not fast. Women during menstruation are temporarily excused; they must make those days up later. Pregnant women, nursing women, travelers, the old, the sick may decide each morning whether to fast or not. And of course, many people are simply not

observant. What's amazing about Ramadan is that, each year, those who are fasting rediscover that the thing is possible. Sometimes we also rediscover that less comfort can mean more joy. Those who are not fasting may wish that they were. It's a process that grows on you.

The fast is quite specific. It begins before daybreak and ends when the sun sets, a day at a time for a month. Fasters abstain from food, drink, tobacco, and any other form of intake (other than breathing) during each day, as well as from sexual stimulation and arguments. You watch your language. You watch your ego. Eventually, you watch your heart.

Supervisory Notes

1. Supervisors expecting Muslim trainees should find out in advance when Ramadan will arrive. Cut your students some slack in Ramadan. The reaction times of fasting people tend to be a little slow and their decisions a little odd, especially late in the afternoon. It is sometimes very hard to stay awake or to get work done, and the nights may be fully committed. Fasting also tends to make one emotional, vulnerable, occasionally even raw. This is a significant part of its value.
2. Eating in front of fasting people rarely bothers them. All sorts of other things may. But along with irritation, one's sense of compassion may increase perceptibly during the month. Ramadan is a great purifier, as well as a premier occasion for spiritual growth. A canny supervisor will learn how to put that to use.

Holidays

The two big holidays of the Muslim year are the end of Ramadan (*Eid al-Fitr*) and the end of the Pilgrimage season (*Eid al-Adha*). The first is generally a one-day holiday; the second a three-day holiday. Both of them are festive family occasions that may involve travel. It is considerate to allow students some wiggle room in their scheduling around these times, given the inevitable last-minute calendar adjustments.

A number of other religious holidays exist and may be inspirational for your students, but are not generally taken as "days off." Iranians celebrate their ancient national new year on the first day of spring, and they will want it off. Shi'i students will also commemorate the tenth of *Muharram*, a day of mourning.

The Tradition

The Tradition, or sunnah, is the daily practice of the Prophet, recorded in painstakingly fine detail. We know how he brushed his teeth, how he slept, what sorts of social etiquette he preferred: nearly everything that could be outwardly observed about a person. We also know many things he advised other people to do. Muslims may or may not be distinctive in dress and behavior, depending on their relationship to the Tradition. And that relationship may be a matter of choice or a matter of habit.

Some Muslims seek to take on as many of these practices as they can manage in their own lives out of love (for the Prophet inspires great love), in order to feel closer to him, and perhaps even to taste part of what he knew. Others do it out of prudence. Since we know that Muhammad was approved by God, it follows that all of his preferences are beneficial. Clinging to them is one clear way of maintaining spiritual safety in an ambiguous world. We cannot be sure with the same certainty that other forms of behavior will be divinely accepted. Others do it to accumulate merit. Others do it because everybody else does, or their families insist that they do, or they feel guilty if they don't.

On the other side of the balance, some Muslims may not dress and act in a distinctively sunnah fashion because they are broad constructionists on the imitation of the Prophet. They feel that if Muhammad were alive today, he would suit his personal exemplary teaching to the contemporary world just as he originally suited it to seventh century Arabia: for teachers, circumstances alter cases. They, therefore, hope to align the spirit of their acts with the spirit of his acts.

Some may feel that engaging in publicly distinctive religious behavior puts one in too much danger of spiritual pride. Some note that the Prophet sharply distinguished Revelation from sunnah; so they feel free to give priority to something else. Some are resisting their own families, an idea of duty, or somebody else's notions about God.

Supervisory Note

The "why" of all this matters, for the Prophet taught that actions are judged by their intentions. So however Muslim students happen to comport themselves, supervisors may be of enormous assistance by helping them to clarify their intent.

Common Religious Scruples

Food. According to the Qur'an, Muslims are to abstain from pork products and alcohol (also carrion, the drinking of blood, and food sacrificed to idols). It further states that the food of the People of the Book—Christians and Jews—is lawful to us, as ours is lawful to them. "Our food" is taken to imply meat slaughtered in a particular sunnah manner, with the pronouncement of the name of God. Such meat is called *halal*, religiously lawful. Halal butchering is very similar to kosher butchering, and, in fact, when halal meat is not available, many Muslims will seek out a kosher butcher, since the food of People of the Book is lawful. Others prefer to abstain, while still others will eat commonly available non-pork meat after pronouncing the name of God over it themselves, like a table grace. (Since this whole country is overwhelmingly Christian, as well as slightly Jewish, by tradition, those who take this course reason that all food produced here is "food of the People of the Book.") Some individuals will require halal beef or lamb, but eat common chicken. Ordinary fish, dairy, and vegetarian meals are always good. When in doubt, ask your student.

Dress. The Qur'an tells Muslims of both sexes to dress modestly. The sunnah is that this means women cover from neck to ankle, men at least from waist to knee, in public places, while tight clothing is to be avoided by everyone. In addition, the Qur'an advises women of childbearing age to wear an additional loose overgarment when leaving the house "in order that they may not be molested." Older women can choose to continue or discontinue this precaution.

Some people simply take modesty requirements into consideration when putting together their different forms of national dress, including American dress, while others enjoy wearing clothes of types that were current in Prophetic times (and in some places remain current). Strict constructionists of the sunnah may hold Arabian-style clothing to be required. These Muslims, however, are unlikely to become chaplains.

Head covering by women is something of a vexed question. Because of different constructions of a single Qur'anic verse, some people hold that God requires women to cover, while others believe covering is a sunnah; all the different points of view about the sunnah may then apply. Female face-covering may also occasionally be found, even in the United States, but its practitioners are now a small minority in the Muslim world. Originally a

mark of aristocracy in pre-Islamic Arabia, the facial veil is prohibited during the Pilgrimage rites at Mecca, when no class distinctions may be displayed. Whatever the decision in the matter may be, covering or not covering is a personal issue for each Muslim woman. The choice should not be a matter of concern in the hospital or in the group.

Gender Relations. All versions of Islam place great importance on the family, and great care is taken in traditional Muslim societies to keep sexual relations within the family, as the Qur'an requires. It is sunnah for families to exercise close supervision over the social encounters of marriageable people of different genders, lest accidents occur. It is also sunnah to marry early (rather than to burn). Neither option may be easily available to Muslims in the West. Immigrant Muslim families often struggle with the morality of adaptation to prevailing social conditions, while indigenous Muslim families may evolve special strategies of their own. In any case, there is always some element of reserve in the public interaction of the sexes when Muslims are involved. There are boundary issues to be respected.

Supervisory Notes

1. Your Muslim students may not be comfortable shaking hands with members of the opposite sex, patting or being patted on the shoulder, or engaging in other forms of social touch that are deemed innocuous by society at large. Male supervisors, in particular, should be careful to let their female Muslim students set the tone for greeting rituals. A simple exchange of good wishes is always appropriate. Among Muslims, the tradition for greeting and parting is *as-salaam alaykum*, meaning "peace be upon you"; its response is *wa alaykum as-salaam*, "and upon you be peace."
2. Similarly, students may not be at ease facing a person of the other gender for a one-on-one interview in a closed room, which is the format of most supervisory sessions. The situation can be alleviated by choosing a room with a glass panel or leaving the door slightly ajar.
3. Some peer groups like to hug. The practice may be a source of anxiety, and a supervisor would do well to watch carefully for feelings of coercion in the student if a hug is accepted, as well as feelings of rejection in the group if a hug is declined. These things should be talked out. In very conservative circles, there may also be a refusal of eye contact. This is not considered an insult, but a courtesy.
4. Tensions may be considerably lessened if your students are married people. Of course, within the Muslim family itself, none of these

strictures apply. There the social expectation is for a warm and lively family life. The Qur'an holds up the ideal that spouses should find peace, security, and comfort in one another, and the Prophet's domestic practice shows us tenderness and mutual support.

CERTIFICATION AND ENDORSEMENT

Islam is not a religion that ordains clergy. There are established certification procedures for traditional scholars, and imams (congregational prayer leaders) are expected to be competent at Qur'an recitation and the basics of religious law. Still Islam has no priesthood, and the pastoral role is not precisely defined. All Muslims are laypersons, and all laypersons are potentially ministers. Those Muslims who are now choosing to become chaplains are simply those who take the task of pastoral care most seriously and who have embraced the opportunity of institutional service. There is no Islamic "church" to help them with their vocation. They are taking this on alone, with the guidance of God.

There is little formal support structure behind your students. There is even less religious structure to receive them when they complete their training. Muslim chaplains, most of whom have learned what they know in the hardest fashion—on the job, are in the process of creating their own profession. Good supervision can help them to make history.

At present, only Hartford Seminary's program in Islamic chaplaincy offers an academic education specifically designed for Muslim chaplains. The Zaytuna Institute's brand-new Islamic Seminary has now begun to transmit traditional scholarship in the United States. Both these programs are strictly voluntary. The U.S. military and the federal prison system have specific rules for the certification of their chaplains. These requirements are addressed by the Leadership Development Center of the Islamic Society of North America.

Concluding Supervisory Note

In your supervision of Muslim students, issues will arise that have not been covered adequately—or perhaps at all—in this limited resource. Should this occur, and if you feel I might be of assistance, please do not hesitate to e-mail me. May we all be blessed in our efforts to grow more aware of God and to serve the growth of awareness in others. May we be permitted to ease the burdens of those who suffer. May the noble work we undertake in

common lead us toward the greater goal of mutual understanding, mutual appreciation, and peace.

Peace be upon you. Rabia Terri Harris.

NOTES

1. It is customary among observant Muslims to implement the Qur'anic injunction to remember the Prophet by adding the benediction *salla Allahu `alayhi wa sallim*—"may God bless him and grant him peace"—whenever his name is mentioned. The names of other prophets and revered persons are also properly recalled with benedictions, as is the name of God. I honor that practice here. Please consider the remainder of benedictions due to be implicit.

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