**The impact of COVID-19 on Islamic religious practices with a focus on the Greenville, NC**

**Islamic community**

Without exception COVID-19 has posed the biggest challenge in modern times to Muslims

practicing their religion. COVID-19 has posed challenges to two foundational pillars of Muslim

lifestyles, the family, and the mosque. Traditionally, Muslims have larger families with religious

practices involving the immediate and extended families. The immigrant Muslims usually do not

place their parents and elders in retirement homes which means they live together. This makes

isolation or quarantine of certain individuals extremely difficult. The other center of religious

practice is the mosque. Like other Abrahamic houses of worship such as church and synagogue

the mosques have not escaped the impact of COVID-19 social distancing.

The major impact has been the closure of mosques especially for the **obligatory Friday prayer**.

Closing mosques services for daily prayers, Sunday school, interfaith activities and various

social activities was difficult but not as challenging or controversial as closing or limiting the

number of attendees for the Friday prayer. Traditionally Friday noon mosque prayer is

obligatory upon each Muslim and cannot be performed individually or at home. Educating the

community was on the seriousness of the pandemic was a must and still many in the community

were upset for the closure. When the coronavirus was first discovered, nobody expected it to

blow up the way it did. In fact, the virus was not perceived as dangerous at all until it took lives

in communities.

The other major impact was on the **Muslim fasting month called Ramadan**. The upcoming

Ramadan is about a month away and it is anticipated the social distancing regulation will still be

in place like last year. During the month of Ramadan Muslims fast from sun-up to sun-down

with **the Eid festival ending the month**. Traditionally, the Muslims break their fast with their

extended families in a festive fashion with the mosque full of worshippers throughout the month

especially for the special night prayers.

The other **disruption is the annual pilgrimage**, **Hajj**, which will fall in July. The Hajj can only be

performed in the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. The pilgrimage is obligatory for each able

Muslim once in a lifetime. Usually, around two million Muslims from around the world perform

Hajj. Last years Hajj was **cancelled for the first time in Islam’s history**. It is most likely the

upcoming Hajj will also be cancelled or severely restricted.

Like the entire world, especially in USA our local communities Muslims continue to face the challenges posed by COVID-19. The Muslims in Greenville community has proven to be resilient with helping each

other and fully complying with all social distancing policies and with God’s help we will all get

through this pandemic and god willing life will slowly return to normal.