

How to build a community

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Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him, pbuh) had to emigrate from Makkah to Madina. The pagans in Makkah conspired against his life and devised a plan for this purpose. The Prophet (pbuh) lived all his life in Makkah. He had traveled to the Levant a few times as a merchant, and he had ties with people in Madina through his mother. His migration is celebrated as “The Hijrah” [The Migration].

Before The Prophet (pbuh) left for Madina, his call to worship the One God, Allah, and abandon the worshiping of Idols had already reached the people there. A considerable number of them had embraced the new religion two years before and kept asking The Prophet to “come to them” so he could be protected and able to make his call to Islam.

When The Prophet (pbuh) reached Madina, things were different. He indeed had many allies from among the natives of Madina (called the Helpers), but there were also others. The Prophet (pbuh) had to handle the Helpers, who had newly converted to Islam, the Emigrants (Makkans who emigrated to escape torture, leaving behind everything (homes, money, lands, ...), and there were the pagans. There were also a considerable number of Jews (the Hebrews), who had migrat-

ed to Madina from Syria following the Byzantine and Assyrian persecution campaigns.

Among the first steps to build a harmonious community, The Prophet (pbuh) established brotherhood among the Helpers and the Emigrants. He would ask two from each group to become brothers. The Helpers (as the name suggests) were the best brothers to those who migrated to them. They shared their houses and their food with them. This bond went beyond mere friendship; it was an economic and social alliance that ensured mutual support and eliminated divisions based on tribal affiliations.

The Prophet (pbuh) then started to build his mosque as a spiritual and community center. The building of the Prophet’s Mosque was a pivotal step. It served as a place of worship, a center for learning, and a community meeting place. It was where the Muslim community gathered for prayer, education, and discussion of community matters. The mosque was a symbol of unity and inclusivity, welcoming people from all walks of life, and reinforcing the sense of community among the Muslims.

Now that all people are bonded with a brotherhood connection, they gather every day for prayers, standing next to each other in a mere form of equality, all after the same leader,



Guest Column

HATIM HEGAB

The Prophet (pbuh) showed moral and ethical leadership making of himself a rule model to be followed. The Prophet’s character, his honesty, compassion, and fairness, served as a powerful example for the community. His emphasis on moral integrity helped foster a community based on trust and respect.

The Prophet (pbuh) provided spiritual guidance by teaching the Qur’an and explaining its meanings. He emphasized the importance of worship, prayer, and maintaining a connection with God. The Quran says, **“He is the One Who raised for the illiterate ‘people’ a messenger from among themselves—reciting to them His revelations, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom, for indeed they had previously been clearly astray”** [Quran 62: 2].

The Prophet implemented Islamic laws and practices gradually, which allowed the community to adapt to the new way of life without feeling overwhelmed. This included the prohibition of alcohol, the regulation of marriage, and the establishment of family and

social ethics.

The Prophet (pbuh) also started teaching his followers the basics upon which a righteous, faithful, and strong community could be built.

The teachings of The Prophet (pbuh) in the first months of his arrival kept coming to teach his followers and to found the new community that was destined to be the nucleus of the new society, the new Muslim community, and the new state. His teachings (pbuh) included his advice to a man who asked the Messenger of Allāh [pbuh] which of the merits is superior in Islam. He (pbuh) remarked: *“That you provide food and extend greetings to one whom you know or do not know.”*

A rabbi went to meet with The Prophet (to ensure he was the one mentioned in the Torah). When the rabbi met him (pbuh) he heard him say, *“Extend peace greetings amongst yourselves, provide food to the needy, maintain uterine relations, observe prayer at night while people are asleep, then you will peacefully enter the Garden (Paradise).”* He believed him and embraced Islam on the spot.

Among his sayings, (pbuh), *“The Muslim is that one from whose tongue and his hands the Muslims (and everyone else) are safe.”* This Hadith (tradition of The Prophet (pbuh)) alone is a doctrine that if followed will keep any

community safe and happy.

For what else other than the outcome of our tongues and our hands cause others, and us, trouble?

The teachings of The Prophet (pbuh) continued. He taught, *“None amongst you believes (have full and true belief) till one likes for his brother that which he loves for himself.”* He also said, *“He will not enter Paradise, he whose neighbor is not secure from his wrongful conduct.”* Thinking a little about this Hadith, one faces the fact that here is a man who just escaped a conspiracy against his life and just arrived at a safe abode, yet he started at once (he was 53) to teach his followers the basics of being humans, of being civilized.

The Prophet’s teachings continued, *“A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim; he neither oppresses him nor does he fail him. Whosoever removes a worldly grief from a believer, Allāh will remove from him one of the griefs of the Day of Judgment. Whosoever shields a Muslim, Allāh will shield him on the Day of Resurrection.”* On another occasion, The Prophet (pbuh) said, *“Abusing a Muslim is an outrage, and fighting against him is disbelief.”*

His teachings (pbuh) included all aspects of life, he said, *“To remove something harmful from the road, is charity.”* and said, *“Charity erases sins just as water extinguishes fire.”* and said, *“He is not*

a perfect believer, who goes to bed full and knows that his neighbor is hungry.”

He also said, *“Show mercy to people on earth so that Allāh will have mercy on you in heaven (on the day of Judgment).”*

Charity and taking care of others were almost all he advocated during his life. Let us read this, *“Try to avert fire even by half a date (in charity) if not by tendering a good word.”* and *“Clothing (covering) an underclad Muslim, entitles you to a garment from the Paradise; feeding a hungry Muslim will make you eligible (by Allāh’s Will) for the fruit of the Paradise, and if you provide water to a thirsty Muslim, Allāh will provide you with a drink from ‘the Sealed Nectar’.”* He also taught, *“Do not have malice against a Muslim; do not be envious of other Muslims; do not go against a Muslim and forsake him. O the slaves of Allāh! Be like brothers with each other. It is not violable for a Muslim to desert his brother for over three days.”*

These are some of the basic foundations upon which The Prophet of Islam built his community. Who would think that this man, who lived in the desert would care about how his followers behave, would worry about good neighboring?

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Pope and imam of Southeast Asia’s largest mosque make joint call to fight violence

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Pope Francis and the grand imam of Southeast Asia’s largest mosque vowed Thursday to fight religiously inspired violence and protect the environment, issuing a joint call for interfaith friendship and common cause at the heart of Francis’ visit to Indonesia.

A second highlight of the trip came later in the day when Francis celebrated a jubilant afternoon Mass in Jakarta’s steamy stadium before an es-

timated 100,000 people who cheered wildly as he looped the track in his open-topped pope-mobile.

In the morning event at Jakarta’s iconic Istiqlal Mosque, Francis presided over an inter-religious gathering rich with symbolic meaning and personal touches. Present were representatives of the six religions that are officially recognized in Indonesia: Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Catholicism and Protestantism.

Francis and the grand imam, Nasaruddin Umar, stood at the ground-level entrance to the “Tunnel of Friendship,” an underpass which connects the mosque compound with the neighboring Catholic cathedral, Our Lady of the Assumption.

Indonesia, which has the world’s largest Muslim population, has held out the tunnel as a tangible sign of its commitment to religious freedom, which is enshrined in the constitution but has been chal-

lenged by repeated instances of discrimination and violence against religious minorities.

From January 2021 to July 2024, there were at least 123 cases of intolerance, including rejection, closure or destruction of places of worship and physical attacks, Amnesty International noted on the eve of Francis’ visit.

Approaching the elevator to the tunnel, Francis said it was a potent sign of how different religious traditions “have a role

to play in helping everyone pass through the tunnels of life with our eyes turned towards the light.”

He encouraged Indonesians of every religious tradition to “walk in search of God and contribute to building open societies, founded on reciprocal respect and mutual love, capable of protecting against rigidity, fundamentalism and extremism, which are always dangerous and never justifiable.”

— AP

Worship at the church of your choice this week

1 Blessed are all who fear the LORD, who walk in obedience to him.
2 You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours.



Psalms 128:1-2

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The Islamic Society of Stillwater

616 N. Washington St.
Friday (Weekly) Prayers
1:40 PM - 2:10 PM
For Daily Prayer Times
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8:30 | 11:15 a.m.
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Saturday Mass
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