

I WANT TO FIRST THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO PARTICIPATE IN TONIGHT'S IFTAR DINNER.

BY OPENING YOUR HOME TO US...

YOU SERVE TO BRING US CLOSER TOGETHER AND TEACH US ABOUT YOUR FAITH TRADITIONS AND CULTURE.

AS THE NUMBER OF MUSLIMS IN SOUTH FLORIDA GROWS, THESE OPPORTUNITIES BECOME EVEN MORE IMPORTANT FOR OUR DIVERSE COMMUNITY.

OUR FAITH TRADITIONS SHARE MANY THINGS IN COMMON.

NOT ONLY ARE WE CALLED ON TO HELP THE POOR AND THE NEEDY...

BUT IT ALSO INCLUDES THE NEED FOR FASTING AND PRAYER.

IN FACT, THERE IS A SAYING THAT "FASTING WITHOUT PRAYER IS JUST GOING ON A DIET..."

THE TWO ARE LINKED.

OUR SACRED TEXTS EXTOLL THE VIRTUES AND VALUE OF THIS PRACTICE.

WE ARE ALL CALLED TO PRAY...

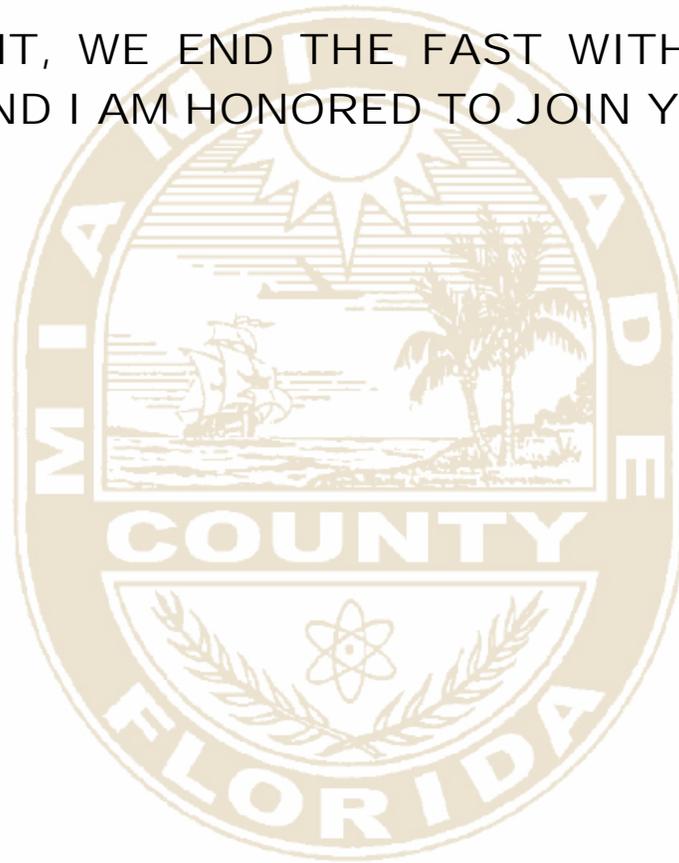
AND WE ARE ALL CALLED TO JOIN OUR PRAYERS
FOR THOSE WHO ARE HUNGRY...

FOR THOSE WHO ARE POOR...

FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE AMONG US....

AND FOR ALL IN OUR COMMUNITY.

SO TONIGHT, WE END THE FAST WITH A SHARED
PRAYER, AND I AM HONORED TO JOIN YOU FOR IT.



ISLAM

- The basic teachings of Islam are similar to those of Christianity and Judaism.
- Islam teaches the belief in one God, the Angels, the Day of Judgment, Heaven and Hell, Adam and Eve, Prophets, Prayer, and Equality.
- There are five Pillars in Islam:
 1. *Faith*: Believe in one God and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as his last messenger
 2. *Prayer*: Pray towards Mecca five times each day to remember God and thank him for his grace
 3. *Charity*: Donate a portion of your wealth to the poor
 4. *Fasting*: Go without food and drink from sunrise to sunset during the month of Ramadan to empathize with the poor and learn self-discipline
 5. *Pilgrimage*: Visit Mecca and perform the Hajj once in a lifetime, if you are able and have the means

RAMADAN

- The ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and the month in which the Quran was revealed. Fasting during the month of Ramadan is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. The month is spent by Muslims fasting during the daylight hours from dawn to sunset.
- Fasting and prayer go together - just hunger and thirst alone will not yield spiritual enlightenment and reward, the act of sincere prayer and worship must accompany it.

IFTAR – BREAKING THE FAST

- Iftar is one of the religious observances of Ramadan and is often done as a community, with people gathering to break their fast together.
- Iftar is taken right after Maghrib time, which is around sunset.
- Traditionally but not mandatory, three dates are eaten to break the fast in emulation of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, who broke his fast in this manner.
- Many Muslims believe that feeding someone iftar as a form of charity is very rewarding and that such was practiced by the Prophet Muhammad.

MUSLIMS IN SOUTH FLORIDA

- The number of Muslims living in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties has grown from about 70,000 10 years ago to more than 100,000 today.