



ENCOURAGING AND ENGAGING MUSLIM CHAPLAINS

M1.12 Monday, February 2, 2009 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Presenter: C. George Fitzgerald

Islam has a long, unique and intriguing history in the United States. The first Muslims arrived in the colonial period as unwilling immigrants, having been kidnapped from their tribes and families in Africa and sold into slavery. Their names were changed and they were forced to embrace Christianity. Early in the twentieth century, many African Americans began to reclaim their Islamic heritage. One of the most widely known, Elijah Muhammad, founder of the Nation of Islam, equated the faith with Black Nationalism. One of the founder's sons, Wallace Deen Muhammad (who, unfortunately, died this past September), encouraged his followers to embrace the traditional and inclusive elements of Islam, and the official name was changed to The Mosque Cares.

In 1965, President L. B. Johnson signed a new immigration bill which opened the doors for many Muslims to become U. S. citizens. At the end of four decades this new immigrant population numbered 35 million individuals. As a part of their adjustment to the culture and practices of their new setting, religious leaders became acquainted with the structure and practice of chaplaincy. On a religious level, the concept of pastoral care was firmly rooted in the foundation of Islam. The ministry of the prophet Muhammad, like that of Jesus and many prophets of Israel, consistently found expression in extending care to the sick and the oppressed. But what does it mean to integrate this heritage with contemporary notions of pastoral care and counseling and the somewhat elusive practices of "ordination" and "endorsement?"

At the present time, Muslim chaplaincy is occurring in three distinct settings: state and federal prisons, in all branches of the military, and on many university campuses. Muslim chaplaincy in medical center settings, however, is a work in progress. This workshop will be a part of that process of Encouraging and Engaging Muslim Chaplains. Board certified chaplains and CPE supervisors, along with Muslim students in CPE, will share their experiences. An additional resource person will be Abdullah T. Antepli, a graduate of Hartford Seminary, a former CPE student, and currently the Muslim chaplain at Duke University.

Recommended Background Reading

- Abdo, Geneive, *Mecca and Main Street, Muslim Life in America After 9/11*, Oxford (2006).
- Armstrong, Karen, *Muhammad, A Biography of the Prophet*, Harper (1993)
- Aslan, Reza, *No God But God: The Origin, Evolution and Future of Islam*, Random House (2005)
- Kobeisy, Ahmed, *Counseling American Muslims*, Praeger (2004).
- Yee, James, *For God and Country, Faith and Patriotism Under Fire*, Public Affairs (2005).