



## Living Church Young Adults Mosque Visit

In early August, a group of us visited the Holland Park Mosque.

It is hard to imagine that nestled in quiet suburbia is this historic place of worship of great significance to the Australian Muslim community, so much so it has its own documentary on SBS, 'The Mosque Next Door'.

Imam Uzair welcomed us and told us a bit about the mosque itself, built in 1908 and undergoing renovation over the years, the most recent internal refurbishment and 'after hour' worship lawn being completed during Covid closure.

He also explained some of the key elements of Islam particularly the commitment to pray five times a day. As guests, we were all permitted to enter the men's prayer hall and witness the 1pm prayer.

All prayers have a set text, all those in prayer will face a special slit in the wall to indicate the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca, believed to be the first temple built by Adam and Eve.

We noted similarities between elements of the Quran, with the text referencing familiar Old Testament figures such as Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Job, and David – calling all of them prophets. Parts that resemble the Gospels can also be found and the refer to Jesus as a prophet as well. However above all of these, Mohammed is revered as the Final Prophet. This is embedded in the calls to prayer, the prayers themselves and the calligraphic scripts adorning the mosque interior which state that Allah is the greatest and Mohammed is his final prophet.

We learned there are many works of virtue essential to practicing Muslims. Apart from the daily prayers, there is washing before entering the prayer hall (we noticed the high tech bathroom facilities and hand dryers!) fasting, charitable donations, and studying and memorising the Quran. The study of the Quran is run by the mosque via the Islamic School across the road where over two years, children will memorise the text of 114 chapters of the Quran. Unlike the Bible which has been translated into many languages, scholars of the Quran must learn and memorise it in the original ancient Arabic it was written in. This exact same ancient text is what is quoted during the prayers, adding to the unification of worshippers.

We came away with a greater appreciation for the devotion and the importance of the Holland Park Mosque in the local community but also a unanimous sense of 'so close and yet so far'. As a group we had a debrief session together afterwards with Ryan Dehnert to discuss our experience. This was a rich time of discussion helping us to think about how we can love our Muslim neighbours well.

The timing of the visit in the middle of the Life of Abraham series really hit home and stayed with us as we studied the story of Hagar and Ishmael, and the impact centuries later.



Our thanks to Ryan Dehnert for organising this visit and we pray for his ministry and outreach to the Muslim community.