

Noor Cultural Centre: *Jum'ah* and *Īd* Presentation Guidelines

General Objective: To provide a spiritually nourishing, socially relevant, and religiously educational service to the community and to do so in a manner that is absolutely respectful of all people and of all religious traditions (both within and outside the Muslim mosaic).

Specific Objectives: To educate, inspire, guide, and strengthen the faith of the congregation by:

- Encouraging and upholding the performance of communal prayers in an atmosphere of mutual respect, modesty and equal dignity for women and men, an atmosphere in which the male congregation (as a group) and the female congregation (as a group) pray side by side, separated only by an open aisle space;
- Providing the community with encouragement, hope, and guidance for day-to-day living based on Qur'ānic teachings, sound Prophetic traditions, and general Islamic principles;
- Upholding the prophetic injunction to attend to the log in our own eye before we point out the speck in our brother's eye. In other words, the sermon/presentation should strive, first and foremost, to be oriented toward the betterment and transformation of ourselves, our community, and Islam; it should be mindful of our responsibilities as members of and contributors to a world of "nations and tribes," and the spotlight on others should never be brighter than the one we turn on ourselves;
- Stimulating and guiding fellow community members to read and further research their faith in general and the topics covered in the sermon in particular;
- Fostering a deep respect and appreciation for Canada, even when addressing problems or calling for reform, and fostering respect for all its people (particularly the First Peoples) regardless of race, ethnicity, faith, gender, orientation, age or (dis)ability.

Khatībs

Noor Cultural Centre believes that the role of khatīb is best served by those demonstrating the requisite qualities of personal integrity, knowledge and wisdom. The rotating roster of khatībs includes both sisters and brothers who meet these qualifications. Prayers are led by brothers.

Specific Requirements for Khatībs, Imāms, and Religious Presenters

The content of the sermon/presentation must be in compliance with the overall vision and specific objectives of Noor Cultural Centre. Keeping in mind that our congregation is, on

the whole, not Arabic-speaking, the sermon/presentation must incorporate the following elements:

- **A Traditional, Religious Prologue¹:** Every Friday and 'Īd sermon must commence with a prologue, preferably in both Arabic and English, that includes:
 - praising God , proclaiming God's oneness, celebrating God's most beautiful attributes (especially the Divine attributes of mercy, compassion, forgiveness, healing, protection, guidance, etc.);
 - seeking refuge in God from one's own sins and shortcomings;
 - invoking God's blessings upon the Prophet, his family, and his faithful companions;
 - invoking God's blessings upon all of the prophets and messengers and upon their faithful and true companions.
- **Qur'ānic and Prophetic Content:** Every Friday and 'Īd sermon should be explicitly anchored in the Qur'ānic and prophetic foundations of Islam.
- **Social Relevance:** The material of the sermon must be of interest and concern to Muslims living in Canada. A story, current news item, or contemporary issue can be used as a part of the sermon/presentation.
- **Spiritual Focus/Orientation:** The person offering the religious sermon or related presentation must restrain herself/himself from making angry or extreme statements. If a *khatīb*/presenter is contemplating a topic that is potentially controversial, she/he must consult with the Noor Cultural Centre President prior to making the presentation.
- **Inclusiveness:** *All* people must be respected and welcomed. This includes sisters and brothers of all backgrounds and religious traditions (whether they are or are not attending/observing the service). If one is intending to touch on other religious traditions in the course of the sermon, this must be done in a manner that shows the utmost respect and does not in any way misrepresent the tradition. Of course, this principle also applies to those who gather on the prayer mats; at Noor Cultural Centre, no one is considered to have a monopoly on religious matters or the knowledge of Islam, and so any Muslim – regardless of denomination, background, gender, or orientation – shall be welcomed and respected.
- **Moderation:** To be consistent with the character of the Prophet (upon whom be peace) and what we hold to be the true spirit of Islam, as well as with the spirit of Canadian multiculturalism, the sermon/presentation must strive toward moderation and healthy coexistence.
- **Academic and Ethical Integrity:** The sermon/presentation should

- cite relevant sources where reference is made to the Qur’ān or authenticated Hadīth;
- be based on facts and be plausible to the listener’s sense of rationality.

To this end, those presenting from the *minbar* must never argue for positions that run counter to the prevailing scientific wisdom (for example, on man-made global warming, or the fact that evolution occurred) as it is impossible for anyone, least of all a non-expert, to provide the necessary quality of information in the time given. Similarly, “science” should not be invoked to “prove” questionable claims (e.g. the innate inequality of women and men). On the ethical side, no *khatīb*/presenter should ever promote companies, policies, or practices that are linked to any kind of human rights abuses, environmental devastation, or the promotion of injustice anywhere.

- **Modesty and Comportment:** While actively functioning in the capacity of religious teacher and leader, the *khatīb*/presenter must present himself/herself (in attire and conduct) in a manner that is both respectful and respectable. While passion and a practical, “real world” perspective are very welcome at the pulpit, a temperate tone and respectful language and delivery must be maintained at all times so as not to taint the solemnity and dignity of the prayer service. Again, if a *khatīb*/presenter is ever in doubt about a potential topic or approach, she or he should consult with the Noor Cultural Centre President.
- **References to God/Allah:** it is strongly encouraged that gender-exclusive pronouns (such as “He”, “His”, “Him”, “Himself”) are avoided when speaking about Allah in English as they can be theologically misleading. This would mean using terms such as “God”, “Allah” and “Godself” in their place - unique terms befitting the unique being of the Creator. It is understood that the assignment of “Allah” to the male gender in the Arabic language (and so in authoritative texts such as Quran and Hadith) is purely grammatical and, as such, has nothing to do with God’s ineffable essence.

¹ A specially crafted sample of such a traditional prologue, a detailed rubric for supplications and many other resources are available in the Noor Cultural Centre office for the purpose of *khatīb* training and development. They are also available to any community member who expresses interest.

Standard Timetable for the Friday Prayer Service (*Salāt al-Jum’ah*)

First *adhān* | 1:20 p.m.

Second *adhān* | 1:25 p.m.

End of *khutbah* | 1:50 p.m.

End of prayer service | 2:00 p.m.

Community social time | 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Description and Timetable for Fridays when a “Pre-Khutbah” is Offered by a Community Member or Guest

Whenever the opportunity presents itself, Noor Cultural Centre welcomes members of the community as well as guests (including members of other religious communities) to make special Friday presentations drawing upon their knowledge and expertise. The subject and content of the “pre-*khutbah*” presentation are to be mutually agreed upon between the presenter and the presiding *khatīb* for that day. On these special days, the speaker and the topic are introduced to the community by the *khatīb* and the guest speaker then offers a 10-minute presentation from the pulpit after the first call to prayer. Once the presentation is finished, the *khatīb* then rises, greets the congregation with *salām*, and signals the *mu’adhdhin* to call the second *adhān*, which is followed by the *khatīb*’s performance of the ritualistic requirements of the Friday prayer service. On such days, in addition to the religious prologue and the supplications, the *khatīb* will offer a slightly shortened *khutbah*, preferably related in some way to the pre-*khutbah* presentation. The *khatīb* then leads the prayer according to standard procedure. Even with the additional presentation, the service is scheduled to conclude by 2:00 p.m.

First *adhān* | 1:20 p.m.

Welcome, introduction, pre-*khutbah* commences | 1:25 p.m.

Second *adhān* | 1:35 p.m.

End of *khutbah* | 1:50 p.m.

End of prayer service | 2:00 p.m.

Community social time | 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.