



**Islamic Association of Raleigh**

## **EID Prayer & Celebration FAQs**

Alhamdulillah have reached capacity for our drive-in Eid salah. As such, if your plans have changed, we encourage you to reach out to [registration@islam1.org](mailto:registration@islam1.org) if you need to cancel.

Should you have concerns or questions, please see below for more information.

### **Why is IAR offering Eid prayer this way?**

Eid ul Fitr is one of only two mainstream Muslim holidays that are essential to the Muslim American identity. First and foremost, we wanted to create an event that was inclusive and accessible to all-- particularly to those 65 and older and young children who are not able to join more communal Eid prayers locally. This event also allows us to accommodate the largest and broadest event in the Triangle area (as many 3,000+ people; multiple people per vehicle, 600 total vehicles). Our community is big and diverse and it is critical to offer the opportunity for anyone who wants to participate in Eid prayers communially, to be able to do so.

We aimed to create a sense of community and celebration during what has been described by many as a difficult and isolating Ramadan. But we also want to be mindful of ongoing public health concerns. This event is a way to gather as a community without creating additional risk to the health and safety of all community members.

For those community members looking for a more traditional prayer experience, there are several masjids in the Triangle area offering outdoor and socially distant prayers--but please be mindful that those over 65 and children may not be able to attend. Alternatively, it is also sufficient to pray at home with one's family.

**Is there an individual obligation to attend the Eid prayer in the “drive up” setting rather than at home with family?**

The scholars’ ruling on Eid prayers vary, deeming it a communal obligation, an individual obligation, or at least a highly stressed sunnah under normal circumstances. In the present emergency, an overwhelming body of recognized national and international scholarly councils have indicated that there is no religious obligation to attend due to the prevailing circumstances. IAR has created an opportunity for those electing to have a communal prayer experience to do so through our “drive up” event.

The Office of the Imam has clarified that there is no expectation to attend, nor encouragement to attend - prayer at home by offering two *rak’at* with one’s family is sufficient.

**Is a drive-up Eid prayer allowed? Is it permissible to pray in a car, sitting down, when you are able-bodied? Is the prayer permissible with rows arranged outside the typical order? Can women and men pray side by side in this setting? Isn’t this (“drive-up” prayer) considered a religious innovation (*bid’ah*)? Did the Prophet (saw) do this?**

Preservation of human life is one of the cornerstone principles of Islamic law, and allows temporary adjustment of particular practices within the framework of our religion.

A number of adjustments to communal worship, including social distancing during prayers, would be disliked or disallowed under normal circumstances. Many of them would invalidate prayer altogether without an excuse, whether in a car or standing separated in a field. However, the recognized Islamic *fiqh* maxim states, “What can not be attained in its entirety, is not abandoned altogether” - that is, our religion is one of practicality, sense, and solutions. Further, many of you have performed these very modifications in your own lives, when praying under a modified format in an airplane, car, boat, or train. These rulings are uncommon, but not unprecedented - the field of *fiqh an-nawazil* applies special, temporary rulings within our religion due to emergency circumstances.

Our decision is based on our context, and in particular our community’s extremely large size. It is to be expected that in other contexts, such as smaller congregations or jurisdiction of different state regulations, other formats may be appropriate. In our case, in order to accommodate this cornerstone principle of

preservation of life during the COVID-19 pandemic, we will need to adjust our Eid rituals to the “drive-up” format.

**Can people who choose to stay and pray at home still follow the Imam on youtube or should families pray individually?**

There is no harm in performing Eid prayer at home, whether individually or with one’s family, due to the present circumstances. They may also listen to a sermon virtually as a general reminder. They should not offer the ritual two *raka’at* behind a virtual imam, but rather offer this in their own congregation at home. We will be offering an option to tune in remotely for those at home.

**How can we ensure people will abide by social distancing rules during the “drive-up” prayer?**

We are taking all the possible measures to ensure the safety of our community, including a deliberate and extensive planning process and thorough communication to our community. We trust that our congregation realizes that the health and wellbeing of us all is paramount and that following these guidelines is mandatory. We have asked any who are uncomfortable with any of these regulations to stay home.

While we expect cooperation from our congregants, we will have security, law enforcement, and facilities staff onsite to assist. Anyone purposefully violating the regulations may face consequences including and up to dismissal from the prayer, and being banned from future prayer services.

**Why was this not performed for *Salat-ul-Jumuah*, when it is more important than Eid?**

Salat ul Jumuah is an obligatory act (fardh) and therefore, fewer adjustments are permissible. Eid prayer is a preferred act (sunnah), which allows for some adjustments.

Our guidance on both is in line with recognized thought leaders and Muslim scholars nationally and internationally, as well as established principles of Islamic jurisprudence and *usul-al-fiqh*.

**What about the lawsuit that now allows North Carolinians to gather for prayer? Shouldn't we be able to pray traditionally?**

Our methodology for decision-making has been consistent from the outset, based on our determination, in consultation with religious scholars and councils as well as a broad group of subject matter experts, that any gathering of people in our mosques poses a danger for themselves and others. Despite the lawsuit being successful on grounds of individual religious liberties, the governing authorities and North Carolina public health officials offered a rationale why gathering was still problematic and requested voluntary compliance until NC Phase II.

As our position is a moral and ethical one, we committed to doing our part and emphasizing our duty towards public health and the common good over our individual needs, despite the holy and special time of year and our intense desire to return to communal worship as soon as possible. The Islamic Association of Raleigh is taking the necessary precautions to promote the safety and well being of all worshippers.