

Priest and Imam to read Bible, Koran for September 11 anniversary

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By Lorna Finley, The Scottish Episcopal Church

Local readings from the Bible and Koran give global message of solidarity and peace on 10th anniversary of '9/11' terrorist attacks

A Priest and Imam will together read aloud scripture from the Bible and Koran on Sunday 11 September to mark the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in 2001.

As a symbol of unity for the local community and beyond, The Rev Isaac Poobalan of St John's Episcopal Church, Aberdeen and Imam Sheik Abul Hassan, of the neighbouring Mosque will stand side by side at 1pm on Sunday 11 September outside their respective Church and Mosque and read aloud verses from the Old Testament of the Bible and from the Koran.

The scripture readings and prayers will be followed by a community procession from St John's Episcopal Church to St Nicholas Parish Church, where further readings and prayers will follow. The Bishop of Aberdeen and Orkney, the Rt Rev Dr Bob Gillies, will join the procession and says "the mutual respect and working together of St John's Church and the neighbouring Mosque is an excellent model of collaboration between two historic faiths and there is a very high level of goodwill shared between them. I am particularly delighted that they will read scripture together on 11 September, a date that is etched in the memories of many people. Those who attacked the twin towers on 11 September 2001 were terrorists, and I condemn all acts of terrorism. They were not representative of the historic traditions of Islam, which like Christianity has a message of peace and goodwill that everyone needs to hear. The work between St John's Church and the Mosque is a local illustration of that global message."

The close Christian-Muslim relationship has developed over recent years, following the building of a Mosque on the grounds of St John's Episcopal Church. Last year, both opened their doors as part of the national Doors Open Day to enable people to take part in a walk of peace and harmony along the cloister that joins the Mosque to the Church, and encouraged mutual respect and understanding of different faiths through joint prayers and reflections. The close relationship has an added poignancy in that a member of the St John's congregation, Justin Stratis, was in New York on the day of the twin towers attack and says "as an American Christian living in New York during the terrorist attacks in 2001 the feeling of walking into the Mosque from the Church on Doors Open Day was overwhelming. The sharing of even our most sacred spaces with one another was truly a bright light in what at that time was a dark week for Muslim-Christian relations. Would that more religious groups have the courage and humility to pursue such sharing."