

## INTERFAITH INSIGHTS

## Differing calendars bring us two interfaith celebrations

**By Douglas Kindschi**

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It is an interesting couple of weeks from an interfaith perspective.

Recently, for Muslims, it was Al-Hijra, the beginning of the new year. Since Muslims use a lunar calendar, this day is different each year, but this year, it was Oct. 15 on the Gregorian calendar. This coming Saturday, Nov. 1, traditionally is celebrated by Christians as All Saints' Day, also known as All Hallows Day, making the night before "Hallows Eve" or Halloween. What originally was a day to remember and hallow (honor as



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because of the lunar calendar a couple of days later this year, on Monday, Sunni Muslims will celebrate Ashura. This day has a particular interfaith history, since it is said that, when Mohammed went to Medina, he observed the Jews fasting on this day and inquired why. He was told it was to commemorate the liberation of the children of Israel from the

holy) the departed saints has become a day to mock death itself, often in bizarre and grotesque ways.

Again, because of

the Egyptian pharaoh, and so Moses commanded it be a fasting day to give thanks to God. Since Moses also is one of the prophets for Muslims, Mohammed commanded they, too, should fast on this day to praise and thank God.

This tradition reminds me of a recent interview I heard on the radio with an Egyptian who had come to America and said the Passover story was his story. It was not leaving Egypt that is celebrated but the liberation from an oppressive pharaoh. Since he, too, received freedom from an oppressive dictator, he claimed the Passover story as his story.

It is important for all of us to remember every religious tradi-

tion has examples of the misuse of Scripture and religion by those who do not respect freedom but resort to violence to advance a particular cause. It also is important to respect the fact that this does not represent the vast majority of the followers of that tradition.

Here in Michigan this week also is an interesting and important time for interfaith understanding. As mentioned in last week's column, today, Oct. 30, is the annual Abrahamic Dinner, which will feature speakers from the three traditions discussing how to move beyond tolerance to true understanding and respect. The event is held at Park

Congregational Church in downtown Grand Rapids. There still are spaces available by calling 616-331-5702.

A few days later, Monday, Nov. 3, will be the opening reception of the international exhibit on Religious Tolerance at the Grand Rapids Public Library. This important exhibit will run until Nov. 16. It is only the second time it has been featured in the U.S. It is an attempt to tell the positive story that will help us pursue understanding and peace in our conflict-ridden world.

Join us in learning about and celebrating such positive expressions of religious understanding. *Email: [interfaith@gvsu.edu](mailto:interfaith@gvsu.edu)*