



Respect Works Here

Community Champion

As a member of Vernon's Interfaith Bridging, **Muhammad William Saleh** is a representative of the Vernon Muslim Association, and works to fulfill Interfaith's mission of contributing to world peace by promoting understanding and acceptance of all faiths and beliefs in the community. Hearing Muhammad William speak about Islam, you feel his passion. From the depth of his knowledge, you have the sense that he has been steeped in Muslim traditions and culture for a lifetime. The reality is that Muhammad grew up not following any formal religion.

In his early twenties, he started to question the chaos that seemed ever present in his life. As he sought answers and peace, he met a Muslim co-worker whose perspective opened his eyes to what Islam was really about. As he discovered and learned more, he realized that the perceptions he had learned through the media in the post 9/11 world, were in stark contrast to reality.

Muhammad was invited by his co-worker's father to attend a meeting with missionaries, who travel to share the teachings of Islam and strengthen the faith of Muslims. At the meeting's evening prayer, he was so moved by the power of the moment that crystallised for him -- he was on the right path.

"One of the brothers called to prayer. It was just dusk, with the sun going down. It was very beautiful and almost surreal. I remember it brought tears to my eyes," he says. "I didn't understand it because it was in Arabic, but it was so emotional for me. I looked at the people, everyone so different and yet in the prayer, everyone is the same."

"It gave me such a sense of unity and what I had been looking for in my life."

That sense of rightness, of belonging only increased as he joined one of the groups of travelling missionaries, and became more enmeshed in the teachings of Islam.

"It all made sense to me," says Muhammad. "Islam is not really a religion. It's a way of life. It encompasses everything. There is guidance for me, to live my day to day life, to bring peace into it, to be successful, and happy. When I saw that, it answered all my questions."

It was during his travels as a missionary that Muhammad's beliefs really took root, and he felt he made the spiritual conversion. He came home and completed the circle where he had started his journey: with the co-worker who had encouraged him to seek answers in Islam, and who would now become his wife Sana.

“Islam gives me the spiritual balance I never had or understood.”

~ Muhammad William Saleh

His life is peaceful and fulfilled. As an apprentice aircraft maintenance engineer, his career is taking flight and as father to "light of my life" two-year-old Aaminah and second daughter, Zaynab born in May, Muhammad knows how to find the balance for his family life thanks to the teachings of Islam.

"It gives me the spiritual balance I never had or understood," he says. "I never before had such a sense of belonging. I longed for that group of people that, no matter what, would be there for me. Certainly, I have found that with Islam. Muslims are so accepting, so inviting, so open and hospitable."

