

**RAMADAN:** the 9th month of the Islamic lunar calendar, each month being twenty-nine or thirty days depending on the emergence of the crescent. The new crescent for Ramadan will be sought by moon-sighters at sunset on Monday 6th May. Depending on sighting, Ramadan commences **Tuesday 7th May or Wednesday 8th May.**

**Ramadan** is the renewal of individual **transformation**, to be maintained year-round; an annual month-long refresher in self-restraint and discipline, strengthening relationships through fostering the **Divine relationship**; a month of resetting priorities and reflecting on the *Qur'ānic* question: “*where, then, are you going?*” — a time to **review life’s direction in a state of disciplined self**, inward calm and clarity, and heightened mindfulness of God — as well as the selfless dedication to others.

**Fasting**, a central feature of Ramadan, is a duty upon healthy adult Muslims, and has remained a longstanding **tradition of many faiths**. It seeks to substitute consumption for deeper self-discipline and gratitude to God for the abundance of blessing, from life to health and provision. It fosters empathy, compassion and generosity for those needy of food, shelter and help — and **solidarity with the deprived and vulnerable**.

**Fasting is** abstaining from eating and drinking, and sexual activity, from dawn until sunset, which in NZ this year is about 12 hours from about **5:30am** to about **5:30pm** (days will shorten). Night prayers and reading and reflecting on the *Holy Qur’ān*, and a general increase in practice of faith are features of this month. **Physical restraint complements a mental and spiritual reset:** a “detox” of mind, body and soul. Ultimately, fasting is the fasting of the **heart: from all inward ills** — from arrogance and envy to slander and selfishness. Divine reward is reserved for each individual’s Divinely-witnessed sacrifice. The ultimate aim is an intimate Divine relationship.

**Employers** may consider working arrangements such as an early start and early finish or other basic practices such as working through lunch to return home for fast-breaking. **Fulfilment of the duty entrusted** by an employer continues to be a spiritual concern in this spiritual month. **Colleagues** may trial abstinence for individual benefit or in solidarity for a cause or the needy, and for the health benefits of fasting. **Workplaces** might hold a shared fast-break event. Fast-breaking time is the culmination of the spiritual day: the moments before fast-break are for **reflection and supplication** to God. Dates, nuts and fruits are the common snacks for fast-breaking.

**Ramadan ends** with the annual festival of **Eid, the main festival of Islam:** a prayer and sermon, followed by celebrations. The day of Eid depends on sighting of the new crescent which will be sought at sunset on 4th June and, if sighted, Eid will be on **Wednesday 5th June, or else Thursday 6th June,**. Eid is three days, but celebrations usually continue over the weekend. The season of Ramadan is one of commitment, compassion, sharing and celebration.