

GFWI visit to Majid-e-Noor Mosque, Gloucester

Monday 11th April 2016

I had been looking forward to this visit since it was discussed at the Synagogue visit last year and I was not disappointed as it was an excellent! We were warmly welcomed by the Imam and introduced to the three ladies who would give us an insight into the Muslim faith. It was interesting to hear about the 5 pillars of their faith, **Shadadah** - declaration of faith; **Salat** - praying five times a day; **Zakat** - giving money to charity; **Sawm** - fasting during the month of Ramadan; **Hajj** - at least one pilgrimage to Mecca. However it was the insight into the Muslim faith from a women's point of view that fascinated us all, as the many questions from the floor proved. The ladies were very keen to stress that underneath their hijab they are no different to any other woman; they have the same worries, concerns, tears and joy and are constantly juggling work and home life. However, contrary to public belief, they find the hijab liberating as they are judged as individuals, not just by their looks, whereas the simple plain clothing is practical and frees them from the whims of fashion!

We were split into teams to take part in a general knowledge quiz which proved to be interesting as most of us were sat on the floor so movement was somewhat challenging! Our answers showed how informed WI members are as there was a close call on the prize for the most correct answers. However the quiz did highlight some misconceptions which our lovely ladies were able to correct.

One issue that was discussed is how Muslim women are respected within their community. The women stated that the Koran held women in high esteem; their dress is to protect their modesty whereas when praying at the Mosque this is done apart from men to enable the men to stay focused whilst protecting their dignity during prayer positions.

Our final treat was to have the prayer process demonstrated to us and informed how the Imam carried out proceedings before he shared a prayer with us. I found this very moving as his voice was so melodic and by the responses around I was not alone!

The time certainly went very quickly, as we were so enthralled, and has left me keen to do more research into this ancient faith. Thank you GFWI!!