



The Patriot Ledger

OUR VIEW: Imam Talal Eid a steady presence

By: *The Patriot Ledger*

The work of Imam Talal Eid, in Quincy and Sharon and well beyond, will be remembered long after he leaves his post as spiritual director of the Islamic Center of New England.

Imam Eid was far more than head of the Muslim center in Quincy and founder of the larger center built in Sharon a decade ago. Long before Sept. 11, he was the voice and the face of Muslims in a community where the roots and tenets of Islam are little known.

Quietly, under his tutelage, the Islamic Center outgrew the quarters it occupied in Quincy Point and Imam Eid led the way to a new center that found a welcoming home in Sharon, a town known for its religious diversity.

There have been more than a few bumps in the 23 years that Imam Eid has held his position. The Quincy Islamic Center, which has continued to have services even after the new center in Sharon was built, has had two arson fires, in 1990 and 2003. And, when the decision was made to build a larger center, the Muslim congregation met strong resistance in Milton.

Despite setbacks, the congregation based in Sharon has continued to grow. It now numbers more than 2,000.

Imam Eid has always understood he represents a religion little known or understood in the suburbs of Boston. Nevertheless, he was not prepared for what happened after Sept. 11, 2001. At that time, when the attacks on the World Trade Center provoked hatred toward Muslims in general, and since then, the imam has stepped forward. He consistently represents the moderate, mainstream Islam that most American Muslims follow.

Like other leaders of his faith in this country, he expressed horror at Osama bin Laden's satisfaction in the attacks. Imam Eid understood, as do others who practice religions outside the majority Protestant/Catholic denominations, that in the heat of anger people do not resort to reason. They react with emotion.

The South Shore has been fortunate to have a Muslim leader eager to work on community issues and on interfaith projects.

Imam Eid, who is finishing a doctorate at Harvard Divinity School, will go on to other things. But his considerable presence here will long be remembered.

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