

Three Muslims mourned, speakers blame hate crime despite initial police report

By EMERY P. DALESIO and MICHAEL BIESECKER
Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — The fathers of three young Muslims allegedly slain by a neighbor who was angry over parking spots stood before their caskets Thursday and urged a crowd of thousands to protect others by demanding justice.

More than 5,000 people came to the funeral of Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23; his wife, Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, 21; and her sister Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, 19, who were killed Tuesday in the couple's Chapel Hill apartment.

A self-described "gun toting" atheist with a reputation for bullying his neighbors, Craig Stephen Hicks, turned himself in and was jailed on first-degree murder charges.

Chapel Hill police said they are investigating whether religious or ethnic hatred motivated Hicks in any way, and federal investigators said hate crimes haven't been ruled out. The FBI also announced Thursday that it has "opened a parallel preliminary inquiry to determine whether any federal laws were violated."

U.S. Attorney Ripley Rand, the district's top federal prosecutor, had said Wednesday that there was no immediate evidence Muslims were being targeted.

And that didn't sit well with many at the funeral, where the victims were hailed as martyrs for their faith.

"When we say this was a hate crime it is all about protecting all other children in the USA," Dr. Mohammad Yousif Abu-Salha, who lost his daughters, told the crowd. "It's all about making this country that they loved, where they lived and died, peaceful for everybody else."

"We need to identify things the way they really are," Abu-Salha continued. "If somebody picks up a fight about anything they can invent, and they murder three

people execution-style, we know what this is about. And they have posted on their Facebook how much they hated faith, there's no doubt."

The funeral crowd was so large it had to be moved from a mosque to an athletic field at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, where all three studied before Barakat and Mohammad moved to Chapel Hill to pursue careers in dentistry.

The families viewed the victims' bodies in a small building before the funeral. Then midday Muslim prayers were held. The crowd was solemn and silent — only a few children crying in the distance could be heard. Finally, hearses carried the three coffins, in gray, white and silver, to an Islamic cemetery outside Raleigh.

Namee Barakat told the AP that Hicks had visited his son's condo before, flashing his gun as he demanded they stop using visitors' parking spots.

"Yusor told her dad that this guy, he does not like us," Barakat said. "He does not like our hijab. She was concerned."

Abu-Salha told the AP that he's certain his daughters "were targeted for their religion."

"This is not a parking dispute," he said. "These children were executed with shots in the back of the head."

Police have said they are not commenting on evidence in the case, including manner of death.

"We understand the concerns about the possibility that this was hate-motivated, and we will exhaust every lead to determine if that is the case," Chapel Hill police Chief Chris Blue said in an email Wednesday.

Hicks, 46, is a Second Amendment rights advocate with a concealed weapons permit who often complained about organized religion on Facebook. "Some call me a gun toting Liberal, others call me an open-minded Conservative," Hicks wrote.

Mormon ousted for website that doubts church teaching

By BRADY MCCOMBS
Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — A Mormon man who gained notoriety over the past decade for running a website that offers doubting Latter-day Saints a forum to chat has been kicked out of the religion.

John Dehlin announced the decision from regional church leaders Tuesday. He becomes the second high-profile church member to be excommunicated in the past year in what Mormon scholars consider to be the Utah-based faith's way of keeping dissenters in line.

A regional church leader in North Logan told Dehlin in a letter that Mormon officials made a unanimous decision to excommunicate him for apostasy, defined by the church as repeatedly acting in clear public opposition to the faith.

While not a lifelong ban, excommunication is a rare move that amounts to the harshest punishment available for a church member.

The letter from Bryan King says Dehlin is being kicked out not because he doubted and asked questions about church doctrine, but because he made categorical statements opposing the faith that were disseminated on his website. King wrote that Dehlin's actions have led others to leave the faith.

"You do not have the right to remain a member of the church in good standing while openly and publicly trying to convince others that church teachings are in



AP Photo/The Salt Lake Tribune
John Dehlin arrives with his wife Margi at the North Logan Stake Center for a disciplinary council in North Logan, Utah, on Sunday.

error," King wrote. Dehlin lives in North Logan, a city of 9,600 about 85 miles north of Salt Lake City.

The decision comes two days after he met with church leaders in a four-hour disciplinary hearing.

Dehlin, 45, is a married father of four who has been a Latter-day Saint his entire life. He is a doctoral candidate in psychology who previously worked in the high-tech industry.

He hoped he wouldn't be excommunicated but told church leaders he could not in good conscience stop operating his website, Mormonstories.org.

"We're going to keep telling stories and keep providing support and community for Mormons who are

unorthodox," Dehlin said Tuesday.

The family hasn't been attending church services since June and doesn't plan to return. "We're happy to use our Sundays to bond together as a family," he said.

Dehlin said he was told last year that his website and his public support of same-sex marriage were reasons he was being accused of apostasy.

But Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints spokesman Eric Hawkins said in a statement that while Dehlin's views on gay marriage go against church teachings, they were not the reasons for his discipline.

The letter cites three key issues, including Dehlin's belief that the Book of Mormon and Book of Abraham

are fraudulent and his rejection of the religion being the "true church with power and authority from God."

Hawkins said excommunication is not the end, but rather the "beginning of the road back to full fellowship."

People who are kicked out or leave the church are welcome to return "through the grace and Atonement of Jesus Christ," Hawkins said.

The move is likely to send ripples through the Mormon community. It comes on the heels of the June ouster of Kate Kelly, founder of a group pushing for women to be allowed in the religion's lay clergy.

Scholars say Kelly and Dehlin are the most high-profile examples of excommunication proceedings since 1993. That year, the church disciplined six Mormon writers who questioned church doctrine, ousting five and kicking out a sixth temporarily.

"The church is sending a message with this: 'Don't express your doubts or concerns publicly, or you risk excommunication,'" said Mike Huband, a Dehlin supporter and active Mormon. "They are saying to those people on the fringes, 'We don't want you in the church.' It's very disappointing."

To supporters like Huband, Dehlin is a hero who risked his standing in the faith to create a much-needed forum where church members could openly discuss sensitive or controversial issues about the faith.

BRIEFLY

Walla Walla couple to share testimony

WALLA WALLA — Journey Church leaders are the featured speakers of the upcoming Walla Walla Aglow Community Lighthouse.

Andrew and Heather Robinson will share their testimony. Everyone is invited Saturday from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Whitman Court, 305 Ash St., Walla Walla — with entry at the south entrance on Isaacs. A freewill offering will be taken for the event, which includes lunch.

For more information, call Paula McKee at 509-220-1408 or Darya Tucker at 509-876-1668.

celebration, precedes Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent.

The all-you-can-eat meal at St. John's, which includes pancakes, ham, scrambled eggs, applesauce and a beverage, is \$6 each or \$15 per family. It's Tuesday from 5-7 p.m. at 665 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston.

The Redeemer Church all-you-can-eat dinner features pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausage and a beverage for \$7 per person, with children under 3 free, or \$20 for a family. The meal is Tuesday from 5:30-7 p.m. at 241 S.E. Second St., Pendleton.

Everyone is welcome at both meals. For more information, call 541-567-8683 in Hermiston or 541-276-3809 in Pendleton.

Evangelist to speak at Faith Center Church

PENDLETON — Evangelist Dr. Greg Romine will speak about "Fulfilling Your Prophetic Destiny" at the Faith Center Church Sunday during the 10:30 a.m. service. The church is located at 108 S. Main St., Pendleton.

Dr. Romine is pastor of King's Church in Vancouver, Wash., president of The College of Global Deployment, host of the TV show "Options" and co-leader with wife Cyndi of Called to Rescue, a ministry that defends and rescues children from sex trafficking.

For more information, contact Pastor Ray O'Grady at 541-276-9569.

Christian musician to perform in Pendleton

PENDLETON — Living near a tobacco farm in Kentucky, Charlie Walker grew up singing songs such as "I Never Picked Cotton" and "Do Lord."

Now living in central Oregon, Walker presents Biblically based, life-inspired songs that make it easy for audiences to relate to him. The country Christian artist will perform in Pendleton.

The free concert is Sunday, Feb. 22 at 11 a.m. at Pendleton Baptist Church, 3202 S.W. Nye Ave., Pendleton.

Walker's musical career began in 1985 when he and a friend formed the country band Countryfied. They performed at fairs, conventions and opened for big name acts across the Pacific Northwest.

Following a call from God in 1997, Walker began a solo career.

For more information, call the church at 541-276-7590. For more about Walker, visit www.charliewalkermusic.com.

Churches announce Shrove Tuesday meals

St. John's Episcopal Church in Hermiston and Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Pendleton are planning Shrove Tuesday meals.

Shrove Tuesday, which is marked with feasting and

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Worship with us!

<p>Adams Community Church Duane Geyer, Pastor 140 N. Main, Adams, OR 566-9457 Worship 9 am</p>	<p>GRACE AND MERCY LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA OPEN HEARTS - OPEN DOOR www.graceandmercy.lutheran.org Sunday Worship 9:00 a.m. 541-289-4535 Dot Hensley, President 164 E. Main St. Hermiston, Oregon 97838</p>	<p>St. Johns Episcopal Church All People Are Welcome Scripture, Tradition and Reason Family service 9am Sunday Gladys Ave & 7th Hermiston Fr. Dan Lediard, Priest. PH: 567-6672</p>	<p>Redeemer Episcopal Church 241 SE Second St. Pendleton (541)276-3809 www.pendletonepiscopal.org Sunday Morning Worship 9:00 a.m. Wednesday Worship Noon Wednesday Evening Prayer and Pot Luck 6:00 p.m. All Are Welcome</p>
<p>Grace Baptist Church 555 SW 11th, Hermiston 567-9497 Nursery provided for all services Sunday School - 9:30 AM Worship - 10:45 AM 6:00 pm Wed Prayer & Worship - 7:00 PM "Proclaiming God's word, growing in God's grace"</p>	<p>First Church of God "Love Is Spoken Here" 712 SW 27th Pendleton 541-276-1894 Early Service: 8:30 am Sunday School: 9:30 am Second Service: 10:30 am Wednesday Service (All Ages) 7 pm www.fcgpendleton.com</p>	<p>FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH -Presbyterian Church (USA)- 201 SW Dorion Ave. Pendleton Service of Worship - 10:00 am Children's Sunday School - 10:20 am Fellowship - 11:00 am www.pendletonpresbyterian.com Open Hearted...Open Minded</p>	<p>Come meet Jesus at PENDLETON BAPTIST CHURCH 3202 S.W. Nye Avenue, Pendleton, OR 541-276-7590 Sunday Morning Worship 8:30 & 11:00 AM Sunday Bible Classes 9:45 AM Sunday Youth Group 6:00 PM Awana Kids Club Tuesdays 6:30 - 8:00 PM K - 6th Grade (Sept-May)</p>
<p>FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH Pastor Jon Jensen in Mission for Christ LCMC Bible Study.....9:00 AM Sunday Worship.....10:30 AM Red Lion Hotel (Oregon Trail Room) www.faithpendleton.org</p>	<p>Living Word Christian Center Sunday Worship Service 10:00 AM Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 PM Sharon Miller, Pastor 401 Northgate • Pendleton 278-8082 www.livingwordcc.com</p>	<p>The Salvation Army Center for Worship & Service Sunday Worship Service 9:30 - Sunday School 10:30 - Worship Service Wednesday Bible Study 5:30 Family Fellowship Meal 6:00 Bible Study COME AS YOU ARE 150 SE EMIGRANT (541)276-3369</p>	<p>Peace Lutheran Church ELCA 210 NW 9th, Pendleton Join us Sundays 9:30 am Sunday Worship 10:30 am Fellowship 11:00 am Sunday School & Adult Class ~Come and be at Peace~ on 1290 KUMA noon each Sunday</p>
<p>Community Presbyterian Church 14 Martin Drive, Umatilla, OR 922-3250 Worship: 10 AM Sunday School at 11:30</p>	<p>Faith Center Church Worshiping God • Loving People 108 S. Main • 276-9569 Sunday School 9:30 am Sunday Worship 10:30 am Sr. Pastor, Ray O'Grady pendletonfaithcenter.org</p>	<p>FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) 215 N Main • Pendleton Ph: 541-276-5358 Web: www.fccpendleton.org Join us for 10:40am Sunday Worship with Sunday School at 9:30am. Wednesday Fellowship Meal & Study Groups-Open to All Ages-at 5:15pm. Quality Nursery Care is Offered at No Charge.</p>	<p>New Hope Community Church Ministries for the entire family 1350 S Hwy 395, Hermiston Sunday Worship Services: 9 a.m. & 10:45 a.m. Classes for kids during both! Call 567-8441 Servicios en Español</p>
<p>Seventh-Day Adventist Church Saturday Services Pendleton 1401 SW Goodwin Place 276-0882 Sabbath School 9:20 am Worship Service 10:45 am Pilot Rock 104 W. Main Sabbath School 9:30 am Worship Service 11:00 am</p>	<p>a place to belong Pendleton First INVITING ENRICHING INVOLVING EMPOWERING SUNDAY SERVICES AM Celebration-10:00am AM Kids Place -10:00am The Connection--6:00pm Groups for all ages: Adults, Children, Youth, & College Thursdays Celebrate Recovery-6:00pm Celebration Place-6:00pm Other Groups Available Weekly For more info visit WWW.PENDLETONFIRST.COM 1911 SE Court Ave 541-276-6417 Assembly of God Church</p>	<p>First United Methodist Church 352 SE 2nd St., Pendleton, OR Office 276-2616 New Pastor Dr. Jim Pierce Worship Service 9:00 AM Fellowship 10:15 AM Broadcast KUMA 11:00 AM Childcare Available Choir practice Sundays 8:30 AM</p>	<p>PILOT ROCK BAPTIST CHURCH 585 SW Birch, Pilot Rock, OR 97868 (541) 443-2500 prbconline.blogspot.com Sunday School: 9:30 am Worship Service: 10:45 am Wednesday Services: Kids' Club: 6:00 pm Youth Group: 7:00 pm</p>

To share your worship times call
Amanda Jacobs
541-278-2683