



Internally displaced Pakistani children from tribal areas attend madrassa, or Islamic school, set up in a mosque on the outskirts of Islamabad, Pakistan. There's no exact number of madrassas in Pakistan but estimates put the number in the tens of thousands. They provide food, housing and a religious education to students from around the country. Many teach both male and female students.

Pakistani religious schools in spotlight



A Pakistani student of a madrassa uses tweezers to groom his beard, at the seminary dorms on the outskirts of Islamabad, Pakistan.

Story and photos by MUHAMMED MUHEISEN
Associated Press

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan — Sitting on the ground, the students sway back and forth, deep in thought as they read Islam’s holy book, the Quran. Their white skull caps signify that they are students at one of the tens of thousands of religious schools across the country that have become embroiled in a debate about where militancy comes from.

Following the Pakistani Taliban attack on a school in Peshawar in December that killed 150 people — almost all of them children — the Pakistani government has been under intense pressure to show that it is combating militancy and terrorism. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif proposed 20 measures including reintroducing the death penalty for terrorism-related cases, freezing funding for militants, ending religious extremism and protecting minorities.

The action plan included a proposal to register and regulate religious seminaries — often called madrassas — which face



Shoes of students of a madrassa are placed at the entrance of a classroom in a seminary on the outskirts of Islamabad, Pakistan.



A Pakistani student of a madrassa splashes water on the ground while he and others clean the dorms of the seminary that is located on the outskirts of Islamabad, Pakistan.

accusations of incubating religious extremism. Critics say the religious schools operate with little to no oversight of their curriculum, do not prepare students with real-world skills and often promote religious intolerance.

“It is true that madrassas are not the sole source of militancy and religious extremism in the country, but they certainly are the main source,” Pakistani security analyst Zahid Hussain wrote in the English-language *Dawn* newspaper.

But many of those working at religious schools say they are being unfairly painted as contributing to militancy.

“We condemn all those who indulge in terrorism. This is our country. Anyone who is doing anything against Pakistan, against Islam, against the army ... we condemn them,” said Abrar ul-Haq, who teaches at the Taleem-ul-Quran school in Rawalpindi.

There’s no exact number of madrassas in Pakistan but estimates put the number in the tens of thousands. They provide food, housing and a religious education to students from around the country. Many teach both male and female students.

LGBT anti-discrimination bill passes first test in Utah

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A landmark Utah proposal protecting gay and transgender individuals passed its first test at the state Legislature on Thursday when a Republican-controlled Senate committee offered its unanimous and at times emotional support of the measure.

Todd Weiler, a Republican senator from Woods Cross, said he comes from “a conservative, Mormon background” but he’s met many transgender individuals, including one in his neighborhood who grew up with his son.

“I don’t understand those things,” Weiler said, “I understand that those people are different than I am, and that they have rights, and I am 100 percent convinced that they should be protected.”

Weiler, who struggled to stay composed, said the bill would send a message to young people struggling with

their identity and “struggling with whether they want to stay alive.”

The bill, which has earned the rare stamp of approval from the Utah-based Mormon church, bars discrimination against gay and transgender individuals while protecting the rights of religious groups and individuals. Drafters of the bill said they hope it serves as a model to other states looking to balance the issues.

It advances to the full Senate for a vote.

Republican Gov. Gary Herbert said Thursday afternoon that if the bill makes it to his desk, he’ll sign it.

During a two-hour hearing Thursday, lawmakers heard from gay and transgender residents who described their fears and experiences, including being evicted after landlords learned of their sexual orientation.

BRIEFLY

Concordia group to perform in Hermiston

HERMISTON — The Concordia University Wind Ensemble is making a stop in Hermiston during its spring tour.

The free concert is Friday, March 20 at 7 p.m. at Hermiston High School, 600 S. First St. There is no admission charge, but a freewill offering will be taken.

Directed by William Kuhn, Wind Ensemble members serve as student ambassadors and representatives of Concordia University through their concerts and other performances.

Located in Portland, Concordia is a private, Christian liberal arts university. It is affiliated with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

For more information about the local concert, contact Kathy Nichols at secretary@bethlehemhermiston.org.

Irrigon church hosts gospel bluegrass concert

IRRIGON — Gospel bluegrass will be performed during a concert at the

Irrigon Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Hand Picked will perform in concert Saturday, March 14 at 11 a.m. at 205 Tumbleweed Blvd., Irrigon. There’s no admission charge, but a freewill offering will be taken. A fellowship lunch will follow. Those who desire may bring a vegetarian dish to share.

For more information, call Linda Anderson at 541-701-1687.

Aglow advisor to share testimony

WALLA WALLA — Cindy Devary, the Aglow advisor for the Walla Walla Lighthouse, is the featured speaker for the upcoming Walla Walla Aglow Community Lighthouse meeting.

Devary will share her testimony and her Aglow experiences, which have included prayer chair and recording secretary. Everyone is invited to the gathering Saturday, March 14 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Whitman Court, 305 Ash St., Walla Walla. 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.

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

Adams Community Church <i>Duane Geyer, Pastor</i> 140 N. Main, Adams, OR 566-9457 <u>Worship</u> 9 am	GRACE AND MERCY LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA OPEN HEARTS – OPEN DOOR www.graceandmercylutheran.org Sunday Worship 9:00 a.m. 541-289-4535 Dot Hensley, President 164 E. Main St. Hermiston, Oregon 97838	St. Johns Episcopal Church All People Are Welcome <i>Scripture, Tradition and Reason</i> Family service 9am Sunday Gladys Ave & 7th Hermiston Fr. Dan Lediard, Priest. PH: 567-6672	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
Grace Baptist Church 555 SW 11th, Hermiston 567-9497 <i>Nursery provided for all services</i> 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”	<i>First Church of God “Love Is Spoken Here”</i> 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	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	<i>Come meet Jesus at</i> 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)
FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH <i>Pastor Jon Jensen</i> <i>in Mission for Christ LCMC</i> Bible Study.....9:00 AM Sunday Worship.....10:30 AM Red Lion Hotel (Oregon Trail Room) www.faithpendleton.org	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	The Salvation Army <i>Center for Worship & Service</i> 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	Peace Lutheran Church 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
Community Presbyterian Church 14 Martin Drive, Umatilla, OR 922-3250 Worship: 10 AM Sunday School at 11:30	Faith Center Church Worshipping 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	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.	New Hope Community Church <i>Ministries for the entire family</i> 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
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	<i>a place to belong</i> 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	First United Methodist Church 352 SE 2nd St., Pendleton, OR Office 276-2616 <i>New Pastor Dr. Jim Pierce</i> Worship Service 9:00 AM Fellowship 10:15 AM Broadcast KUMA 11:00 AM Childcare Available Choir practice Sundays 8:30 AM	BAHA’I FAITH “The Unity of All Mankind” Pendleton Baha’i Center at 1015 SE Court Place Devotions Sundays @ 11:00am; Everyone invited! (541) 276-9360 visit us at www.pendletonbahais.org
Pendleton FREE METHODIST CHURCH Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m. Mid-Week Children & Youth • Weekly Adult Life Groups 1711 SW 44th St. • 541-276-6015 • www.pendfmc.org			