



Muslim pilgrims pray on top of the Jabal Al Rahma holy mountain, or the mountain of forgiveness, upon their arrival to Arafat for the annual hajj pilgrimage, outside the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, Wednesday.

Two million Muslims gather near Mecca for peak of hajj pilgrimage

By OMAR AKOUR and AHMED HATEM
Associated Press

MOUNT ARAFAT, Saudi Arabia — With their palms facing the sky in supplication, and many with tears in their eyes, about 2 million people from around the world gathered Thursday in an effort to start anew, erase past sins and beg God for forgiveness and guidance in the peak day of the hajj pilgrimage.

From dawn until dusk, the massive crowd of people will be gathered here in Mount Arafat to spend the day in supplication and contemplation. It is here, on this mountain surrounded by desert, where the Prophet Muhammad delivered his final sermon more than 1,400 years ago.

“We hope that Allah will forgive our sins, and we hope to have a new start with our God,” said Khaled Ahmed, a 47-year-old pilgrim from Egypt.

In his sermon, the prophet called on his followers to repay their debts, beware of Satan, perform five daily prayers, fast during the month of Ramadan and give to charity. He also called on those with the means to perform the hajj once in a lifetime. He also reminded worshippers

of the rights that women have, and said that no ethnic group or race has superiority over another except in piety and good action.

During the hajj, pilgrims are expected to shed symbols of materialism, though the trip itself can be quite expensive for most. Male pilgrims are required to wear seamless, white terrycloth garments for the entirety of the hajj. Women wear loose clothing, cover their hair and forgo makeup and nail polish to achieve a state of humility and spiritual purity.

The large crowds gathered from more than 160 countries around the world, dressed in nearly identical white garments, are meant to symbolize unity among Muslims, humility and equality before God. The rich and poor among men are to dress the same while performing the rites of hajj.

The hajj is required of all Muslims once in a lifetime. The physically demanding journey tests pilgrims’ patience as they withstand long waits and thick crowds on their path to achieving spiritual purification and repentance.

Noura Sulieman, a pilgrim from the Philippines, said she’d been to the hajj many times before and was here again to pray for her family.

“I came here to Arafat to pray for my family, for my daughter, and my son, and all my family, and all the Philippines Muslims, and all Muslims in all countries,” she said. “God willing, Allah will accept our pilgrimage.”

Muslims believe the rites trace the footsteps of the prophets Ibrahim and Ismail — Abraham and Ishmael in the Bible.

The movement of such a large and diverse crowd of people in a short period of time in limited spaces is a logistical challenge for the Saudi government. Authorities have deployed more than 100,000 security forces to secure the hajj and assist pilgrims. Additional doctors, nurses, ambulances and mobile health centers are also deployed in the areas of hajj.

Many begin their pilgrimage by traveling to Medina, the site of both the Prophet Muhammad’s first mosque and where he is buried.

The rites of the hajj, however, begin in Mecca, the site of Islam’s holiest place of worship. There, pilgrims circulate the cube-shaped Kaaba and kneel in prayer facing it. The Kaaba represents the metaphorical house of God and the oneness of God in Islam.

LIMEY PASTOR

Spike and Lance, prayer warriors

My friend Spike died and his memorial service was held recently at his new church in Washington state, this very day of writing. I write this for him, with thanks for his heart and soul, his gift of prayer. Spike and his friend Lance were instrumental in my life in the spirit. Both congregation members of Christ Lutheran Church, they invited me to join the weekly prayer group at the church as a new member of the congregation. Without them and their weekly spiritual gift of coming together for those we cared for, loved or were concerned about, I wouldn’t have kept twitching forward in my walk.

Spike had been angry at God for a long time before he forgave God. His wife and child had been killed in a tornado. It was years before, and drove him away from the Father. Then something mysterious happened and God and man were reconciled. He remarried. Spike and his new wife came back to the church in Aurora.

Without this weekly gift of practical prayer for others, I wouldn’t have learned much. Their spirit of always coming to God, giving thanks and asking for needed interventions planted roots in me. Later on, their spirit (as well as Pastor Craig’s) encouraged me to go to seminary, to intern in churches as trainee pastor and at a hospital as a chaplain. They provided a lot of wind under the wings.

One of our congregation members at the church had her father, a retired pastor, come regularly to visit. I asked him what he did as a spiritual practice. He told me that every day he would pray individually for each

member of his congregation. He would put a photograph of each member in front of him, bring their needs to mind and also pray for those needs he did not know about — but God did. It drew him closer to each member, and also closer to God.

Of course, praying is not just for pastors. Far from it. It should be part of the world for each Christian; it is the interface with God, and it is the rock face of the mountain of love.

What do you say when you pray? Why, anything that comes to mind or the heart. It isn’t so much what you say, but the direction that you are pointing in. Does the direction include the person you are praying for and the God you are addressing? Anything else is vain.

God invites us in prayer to be partners with him, sharing the love that he has given birth to in our heart with Jesus. We can raise up the greatest load in prayer — we can raise up poor flooded Texas and its people, we can raise up the children traded in slavery around the world, we can raise up ourselves because we must also tend to ourselves to help us repent of our sins and to grow more like the son of the carpenter. It is the heavy lifter.

Eastern Oregon, I challenge you to become a prayer leader of the West, praying continually and incessantly, like a flowing mountain stream. Receive mercy and give your prayer up for the least of your people. Bless them with mercy. Love wholly. Imitate Jesus in his passionate work. Amen.

Colin Brown is the pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Boardman.



COLIN BROWN
Comment

BRIEFLY

J.O.Y. Group hosts special activity

HERMISTON — A J.O.Y. (Just Older Youth) event is planned for those ages 50-and-older.

The JOY Group invites “older youths” to join them in a special activity Saturday, Sept. 9 from 8-10 a.m. at Hermiston Church of the Nazarene, 1520 W. Orchard Ave.

For more information, contact

hermistonnaz@gmail.com, 541-567-3677 or visit www.hermistonnazarene.org.

Evangelist leads Pendleton revival

PENDLETON — Rev. Preston Plemons returns to Pendleton for the Fires of Revival.

The special event kicks off Sunday at 6 p.m. at Pendleton

Lighthouse Church, 417 N.W. 21st St. The services continue Monday through Wednesday at 7 p.m.

In addition, the church is hosting a Labor Day Potluck Monday at 12:30 p.m. People are invited to bring a dish to share with others and enjoy a time of food, fellowship and fun.

For more information, call 541-377-4252 or visit www.pendletonlighthousechurch.

Hermiston church launches kids clubs

HERMISTON — With school back in session, the Hermiston Assembly of God Church is resuming its weekly children’s program.

The Boys & Girls Clubs Launch Night is Wednesday, Sept. 6 from 6:30-7:45 p.m. at the church, 730 E. Hurlburt Ave.,

Hermiston. Open to kids through fifth grade, participants don’t have to be affiliated with the church to attend.

The weekly event includes games, crafts, snacks and much more. Also, transportation can be arranged.

For more information, call 541-567-5831 or visit www.facebook.com/hermistonassembly.



Peace Lutheran Church

210 NW 9th, Pendleton ELCA

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

Worship Community

Community Presbyterian Church

14 Martin Drive, Umatilla, OR 922-3250

Worship: 10 AM

Sunday School at 11:30

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

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

GRACE AND MERCY LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA

OPEN HEARTS - OPEN DOOR

www.graceandmercy.lutheran.org

Sunday Worship 8:45 a.m.

Sunday School 10:00 a.m. (Nursery Provided)

Fellowship, Refreshments & Sunday School

Check Out our Facebook Page or Website for More Information

541-289-4535

Tom Inch, Pastor

Grace and Mercy Lutheran Church, ELCA (First United Methodist Church)

191 E. Gladys Ave. / P.O. Box 1108 Hermiston, Oregon 97838

Come meet Jesus at

PENDLETON BAPTIST CHURCH

3202 SW Nye Ave Pendleton, OR 541-276-7590

Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 AM

Sunday Bible Classes 9:45 AM

Sunday Youth Group 6:00 PM

Mon. Community Women's Study 9:30 AM & 6 PM

Awana Kids Club (K-6th grade) Wed Men's Study 6 PM

MOPS meeting the 1st Thur of the Month 6 PM

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

in Mission for Christ LCMC

Bible Study.....9:00 AM

Sunday Worship.....10:30 AM

Red Lion Hotel (Oregon Trail Room)

www.faithpendleton.org

Living Word Christian Center

401 Northgate, Pendleton

Celebration of Worship

Sundays 10:00 am

Youth: 0-6th grade

Midweek Service

Wednesdays 6:00 pm

Youth: 0-6th grade

Overcomer's Outreach

Tuesday's 6:00 pm

In the Annex

A Christ Centered, 12 Step Recovery Support Group

Pastor Sharon Miller

541-278-8082

www.livingwordcc.com

Redeemer Episcopal Church

241 SE Second St. Pendleton (541)276-3809

www.pendletonepiscopal.org

Sunday Holy Communion 9:00 a.m.

Wednesday Holy Communion Noon

Weekly Adults Spiritual Life Group

All Are Welcome

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"

First United Methodist Church Pendleton

352 SE 2nd Street, Pendleton OR

Sunday Worship 9am • 541-276-2616

Worship Broadcast on KUMA 1290 @ 11am

Worship Livestream at www.facebook.com/FUMCPendleton/

Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors

Rev. Dr. Jim Pierce, pastor

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

Seventh-Day Adventist Church

Saturday Services

Pendleton

1401 SW Goodwin Place 276-0882

Sabbath School 9:20 am

Worship Service 10:45 am

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church LCMC

Sunday worship at 11:00 AM

420 Locust St. • Boardman, OR

541-481-6132

Colin Brown, Pastor

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

(Disciples of Christ)

215 N Main • Pendleton, OR 97801

Behind These Stone Walls Beat the Hearts of Some of the Warmest Most Sincere, Most Caring People in Pendleton.

We Invite You to Come Get Acquainted!

Summer Worship 9:40 am

Fellowship to follow

Office 541-276-5358 M-F: 8:30-12:30

www.fccpendleton.org

St. Johns Episcopal Church

Join Us

On Our Journey With Jesus.

Scripture, Tradition and Reason

Family service 9am Sunday

N.E. Gladys Ave & 7th, Hermiston PH: 567-6672

We are an all inclusive Church who welcomes all.

PENDLETON FIRST CHURCH OF GOD

FIRST SERVICE 8:30 AM

SECOND SERVICE 10:30 AM

712 SW 27TH ST.

541-276-1894

www.fcogpendleton.com

PENDLETON LIGHTHOUSE CHURCH

Sunday Service: 10am & 6pm

Tuesday Kingdom Seekers: 7pm

Wednesday Bible Study: 7pm

We offer: Sunday School • Sign Language Interpreters • Nursery • Transportation • & more!

Pastor Dan Satterwhite

541.377.4252

417 NW 21st St. • Pendleton, OR 97801

www.facebook.com/PendletonLighthouseChurch

Faith Center Church

Worshiping God Loving People

108 S. Main • 276-9569

Sunday Worship 10:00 am

Sr. Pastor, Ray O'Grady

pendletonfaithcenter.org

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

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

To share your worship times call 541-278-2678