

## **KANAWHA VALLEY MUSLIMS SEEK TO UNITE ALL FAITHS**

*Publication: THE CHARLESTON GAZETTE*

*Published: 03/15/2003*

*Byline: SUSAN WILLIAMS, Staff Writer*

If people left the Islamic Center in South Charleston Friday night with a heart full of love, they left closer to God, the center's spiritual leader told them.

Members of the Islamic Association of West Virginia opened their doors to neighbors, friends, politicians and spiritual leaders with an event called "We Are One."

With the world poised on the brink of war, speaker after speaker drew attention to the points of commonality shared by the Islamic community and other faiths.

Mohammad Jamal Daoudi, the Imam or spiritual leader of the Islamic Association, invited people to come together and learn about each other and about Islam.

Daoudi explained that the Prophet Mohammad wrote that the followers of Islam should be friends with "the people of the book," Jews and the Christians. He pointed out, "We are brothers and sisters in faith" and the descendants of Father Abraham.

He said there are people who want to create splits and divisions between Muslims and their friends. He said Muslim Americans are like all Americans, good guardians of the country. He also said he and other Muslims pray each day for the leadership in America, "that God inspires them and guides them."

Daoudi said people with hearts full of hate are farther from God.

"God is love," he said.

Even though most of the speakers struck a spiritual tone, there were great moments of laughter throughout the evening.

Many Kanawha Valley doctors are members of the Muslim community. Dr. Faisal Khan asked people to pardon the number of pagers they might hear going off: "There are many physicians in the house."

But when Governor Bob Wise rose to speak, he said, "I just signed the malpractice bill. We want to hear those pagers ringing."

Dr. Raheel Khan gave an award to another famous Dr. Khan. That prompted Dr. Faisal Khan to joke that if any more Khans moved into the area they would rename it the "Khan-awha Valley."

Ministers of many faiths were represented in the evening's program.

At one point, Daoudi said he did not mean to preach. The Rev. Esber Tweel picked up on that line. Tweel looked over the large crowd and told the Imam he should not only preach, "but you should take up an offering and start your building fund now."

On a serious note, Faisal Khan said the atmosphere in the country after the Sept. 11 tragedy pitted security against liberty. He said such a stance and legislation that takes away liberties are contrary to the fundamentals of America.

He also said Muslims are Americans, and “diversity is the very core of America’s strength.” He said he looked for a symbol to help illustrate his remarks, and “I found one right in front of me. E pluribus unum. Out of many one.”

The Rev. Mel Hoover said, “Our humanity is endangered by these times.” He said it is easy to feel brotherly in good times. He said he wondered what people would feel when bombs start to fall.

The Rev. Jim Lewis encouraged everyone to keep crossing lines that separate people. “Cross over the lines we draw between us and them,” he said.

Said Dr. Raheel Khan, “We are your neighbors. We are your co-workers.”

Copyright © 1985-2004 The Charleston Gazette