



JEFF RICHARDS/Star-Gazette

Worshippers gather Friday for midday prayers at the Islamic Center in Big Flats. They are, from left, Usman Qadewer, Basit Naseeb, Dr. Tariq Hussain, Dr. Najeeb Rehman and Dr. Mushtaq Sheikh.

Area program aims to help Christians, Muslims connect

By RAY FINGER

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BEAVER DAMS — While some Americans are saying civil liberties should be restricted for American Muslims, a local pastor hopes a special program will increase people's knowledge of Islam.

"Understanding Islam," a live satellite program being broadcast nationally, will be shown at 7 p.m. Jan. 25 at Beaver Dams United Methodist Church, 1285 Main St. It is free and open to the public.

"We know that Islam is one of the world's fastest-growing religions, but what do we really know about it?" asked the Rev. Grant Nicholls, church pastor.

Because of the war in Iraq, increasing people's knowledge about Islam is more important than ever, Nicholls said.

"How can I as a pastor, and how can we as a congregation, preach about all of us being God's children and liv-



The five pillars of Islam

All branches of the religion of Islam have hold five fundamental practices or beliefs which are called the "Five Pillars."

These are:

- **The Declaration of Faith:** The "shahadah," or belief that there is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God.
- **Prayer:** A muslim, or believer in the religion of Islam, prays five times a day: at dawn, midday, afternoon, sunset, and during the night. The prayers can take five to 10 minutes, and are oriented in the direction of Mecca as a symbol of unity.
- **Zakat:** A tax on assets gathered by the community members and distributed according to need. It is generally 2-1/2 percent of one's savings.
- **Fasting:** Muslims abstain from food, drink and sexual activity from dawn to sunset during the lunar month of "Ramadan."
- **Hajj:** A muslim must make the "hajj," or pilgrimage to Mecca, at least once in his or her lifetime if physically and financially able to do so. The hajj symbolizes unity and equality.

SOURCE: The American Muslim Council

Gannett News Service

We have faith

Today the Star-Gazette begins a new occasional series that examines the religious diversity and traditions found in the Twin

We have faith

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■ Museum series begins with Islamic culture, glass

