

A brief biography of Muhammad (pbuh)

Islam is one of the major religions of the world. It is also the youngest, and as such, it is also the most well-documented and historically verifiable. The story of Islam begins with the biography of Muhammad ibn Abdullah (peace be upon him, pbuh), born in 570 CE in Mecca, located now in Saudi Arabia.

The prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was born into the Hashemite clan of the influential Quraysh tribe. He was born an orphan as his father died before his birth. When he got older, he earned his living as a trader, and by all accounts was widely considered to be wise and truthful: it is said that his people knew him as al-Amin (the trustworthy one). His morals and ethics led to the prophet Muhammad’s (pbuh) first marriage to a wealthy trader, Khadijah. She employed the prophet (pbuh) to manage her caravans, and after seeing both his professional and personal excellence, she proposed to him via a mutual friend, and they were married in 595 CE. At the time, Khadijah was forty, and the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was twenty-five. By all accounts, it was a happy marriage, and the Prophet did not marry anyone else while she was alive, against all costumes at the time.

The Prophet (pbuh) used to retreat to a mountain

cave, regularly, to meditate and think in solitude. When he was forty (610 CE), while on one of these retreats on Mount Hira, the angel Gabriel appeared to the Prophet (pbuh) for the first time, and the Prophet received what would be the first of many revelations during his lifetime.

The Prophet (pbuh) did not receive any further revelations right away, but they then began coming again; it all contained the same message (these are the Meccan suras (chapters)): The people had turned away from the right worship of the One true God, Allah, pronounced (Allaah), and they needed to stop worshipping idols and begin worshipping Allah alone. In addition, they needed to live more ethical and socially responsible lives. When the Prophet (pbuh) began to share this message publicly he was criticized and ridiculed, and this would get worse.

Around 619, another miraculous event occurred in the life of the Prophet (pbuh). The angel Gabriel visited the Prophet (pbuh), but this time, he took him on what is called the “Night Journey.” First, The Prophet was carried to Jerusalem on a winged steed known as “the Buraq” From there, from the place now marked by the Dome of



Guest Column

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the Rock mosque, the Prophet (pbuh) was taken on a mystical ascent to and then through the heavens into the presence of God. There, God gave the Prophet (pbuh) the final form of the daily prayers. It is primarily this event that makes Jerusalem holy to Muslims; it, along with Mecca and Madina, are the three holiest cities of Islam.

As the persecution of the Prophet (pbuh) and his followers intensified, he began to search for a safer place where they might live in peace. (The word Muslim means “one who submits to the will of God,” and both Muslim and Islam come from the same Arabic root “silm”, which means “submission” or “peace.”) At this time, some of the leaders of Yathrib, an oasis north of Mecca, came to Mecca and invited the Prophet (pbuh) to come to their city and serve as their leader. They promised him that if he came, they would offer protection, abandon worshipping idols, and establish an Islamic rule of life for the city. The

Prophet (pbuh) agreed to leave Mecca, sneaking out and just narrowly avoiding an assassination attempt. He came to Yathrib in 622. Yathrib, subsequently, became known as Madina (“city” of the Prophet). This migration is known in Islam as “the hijra”, it is said to have inaugurated the birth of the Muslim faith; thus 622 CE is year 1 in the Islamic calendar.

While in Madina, the Prophet continued to receive revelations from God. These revelations, recorded as the Madi-nan suras (chapters) in the Qur’an, were more pragmatic and focused on solidifying Islamic society rules and establishing communal norms and rules of behavior. The Prophet (pbuh) is not worshipped in any way by Muslims, and in fact, they would be horrified by the idea. However, the Prophet is the role model to be followed, and the compass that leads to the true path to God.

What Is the Qur’an?

The Qur’an is considered the definitive word of God for Muslims, the complete collection of all the revelations the Prophet received through Gabriel. Since traditional Islamic teaching is that the words of the Qur’an are literally the words of God, Arabic has a privileged place among languages, and therefore while non-Arabic speakers

may read a translation of the Qur’an to better understand its meaning, translations do not have the same weight and authority as the Arabic text.

Reciting the Qur’an is considered spiritually beneficial; it is for this reason that the practice of memorizing the Qur’an is considered a deeply holy act (such a person is called a hafiz—literally, a “guardian” of the Qur’an). The recitation of the Qur’an is considered to be a sacred act in and of itself; it is an act that invites listeners into the presence of God.

Overall, one can detect one primary overarching theme in the Qur’an as a whole: the exhortation to repent and submit to the word and the will of God. To do this, the Qur’an emphasizes several key points that relate to God, humanity, and the relationship between them. First, God is the creator of the universe, and, as such, is its sovereign ruler. Only God is worthy of obedience, respect, and worship. Second, when creating humanity, God gave them reason, which includes the ability to know the difference between right and wrong, and to choose to follow God’s will—or not. Third, the life that one experiences now is transitory, and is, in some ways, a proving ground for life after death. Upon death, each individual will stand

before God and be judged upon her actions and sentenced in the resurrection: right living and obedience to God will lead to eternal happiness with God in paradise; disobedience and unfaithfulness will lead to eternal punishment. To this end, there are repeated and extensive descriptions of both heaven and hell in a variety of suras in the Qur’an. Fourth and last, the Qur’an emphasizes that God repeatedly sent Prophets to different people in different places all through time, each attempting to correct them when and where they had gone astray and call them back to the right worship of the one true God. Finally, God sent the Prophet, the last and final Prophet, and revealed to him the Qur’an—the peerless and complete revelation of God’s divine word and law that now stands in perpetuity as the perfect, timeless guide for religious life. In these ways, the Qur’an attests to the unsurpassable nature of the authority of both the Prophet and the Qur’an itself, and lays out clearly and emphatically a way of life that facilitates a rich and meaningful existence, both in this life and the next.

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United Methodists endorse change that could give regions more say on LGBTQ and other issues

United Methodist delegates have overwhelmingly endorsed a constitutional amendment seen by advocates as a way of defusing debates over the role of LGBTQ people in the church by giving rule-making autonomy to each region of the international church.

Delegates voted 586-164 on Thursday for the “regionalization” proposal on the third day of their 11-day General Conference, the legislative body of the United Methodist Church, meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The plan would create multiple regional conferences — one for

the United States and others covering areas ranging from the Philippines to Europe to Africa.

Existing regions outside the United States — known as central conferences — already have the flexibility to adapt church rules to their local contexts, but the jurisdictions in the United States do not. This constitutional change would give the U.S. church that flexibility, while defining autonomy more closely for all of the regions.

The vote total easily passed the two-thirds majority required for an amendment to the United

Methodist Church’s constitution. To become official, however, it will require approval by two-thirds of its annual conferences, or local governing bodies.

If ratified, one effect of the change is that it could allow for the American church — where support has been growing for the ordination of LGBTQ people and for same-sex marriage — to authorize such rites, even as international churches with more conservative positions on sexuality would not.

“The big change this petition brings is really for our brothers

and sisters here in the United States, where you would finally be given the right to decide things which only concern you among yourselves, the same right that we have enjoyed for a long time,” said Christine Schneider-Oesch of Switzerland, a member of the committee proposing the changes.

The measure comes during the first General Conference since one-quarter of U.S. congregations left the denomination over the past four years — most of them conservative churches reacting to the denomination’s

failure to enforce rules against same-sex marriage and LGBTQ ordination.

Advocates hailed the proposal as a way of decolonizing a church some say is too focused on U.S. issues, though one opponent, a Zimbabwean pastor, said the details of the plan are reminiscent of colonial-era divide-and-conquer strategies.

LGBTQ issues weren’t central to the debate on Thursday, but they are expected to arise in the coming days at the General Conference.

— AP

Worship at the church of your choice this week

1 There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens:
2 a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,



Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

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JB Bond, Senior Pastor

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SUNDAY SCHEDULE
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Sunday School.....10:00am
Closer Walk..... 10 am Family Life Center

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH

4th & Knoblock • 372-2744

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9 am
Worship Service
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421 E. Richmond Rd • 377.0923
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Address - 1223 S. Perkins Rd.
Phone: 405-372-2411
Email: southsidesillwater@gmail.com

The Islamic Society of Stillwater

616 N. Washington St.
Friday (Weekly) Prayers
1:40 PM - 2:10 PM
For Daily Prayer Times
www.icstillwater.org

St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church

711 N. Country Club Rd.

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8:30 | 11:15 a.m.
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Tue & Thu Mass
12:10 p.m.
Wednesday Mass
12:10 p.m.
6 p.m. (en español)

Friday Mass
12:10 p.m.
Saturday Mass
9 a.m. | 5 p.m. (Vigil Mass)
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Wednesday | 5 p.m.
Saturday | 9:45-11 a.m.

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