

KEEPING the FAITH

Diverse group unites for local prayer tradition

By BRENDA SCHORY
bschory@nwnewsgroup.com

he prayers for peace came from all corners. Baha'i. Buddhist. Christian. Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Jain, Native American, Sikh and Zoroastrian.

Led by Mazher Ahmed of Batavia, a Sunni Muslim, about 50 members of the Interfaith Prayer for Peace group took turns reading aloud each faith's prayer for peace.

"We all pray for peace, but praying together seems to be a lot more powerful," Ahmed said.

In its own way, each prayer acknowledged human frailty and called upon God to aid each person to be compassionate and to reject violence.

For almost a year, the group has met - sometimes every month, sometimes every six weeks - at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Geneva and at other local churches.

Always, they focus on including other faith traditions in seeking in-

Want to go?

Upcoming peace prayer sessions:

- 7 p.m. Feb. 23 at Calvary Episcopal Church, 222 S. Batavia Ave., Batavia.
- 7 p.m. March 23 at Theosophical Society in America, 1926 N. Main St., Wheaton.

For information, e-mail hmahmed@hotmail.com.

tervention for peace.

The idea got started when Edward Manning, 50, of Geneva, who attends St. Charles Episcopal, called the Batavia Islamic Center after cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad sparked riots in Europe.

"I said, 'I'm going to go and ask those people if they want to pray for peace with me,'" Manning said.

The Batavia Islamic Center is housed in the lower level of the Calvary Episcopal Church in Batavia.



Chris Birks - cbirks@kcchronicle.com

Mazher Ahmed of Batavia is a Muslim who organized a group that meets locally to pray for peace.

See PEACE, page 7A

Interfaith Prayer for Peace includes prayers from many religions

- **Christian:** "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace."
- **Muslim:** "Praise be to the Lord of the Universe who has created us ... that we may know each other, not that we may despise each other."
- **Hindu:** "May there be peace on earth."
- **Jewish:** "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation - neither shall they learn war any more."
- **Native American:** "I pray that ... on the great island, there be no war."
- **Buddhist:** "May those frightened cease to be afraid."
- **Baha'i:** "Be a breath of light to the body of humankind."
- **Jain:** "No weapon can, however, be superior to nonviolence and love."
- **Sikh:** "We attain God when we love."
- **Zoroastrian:** "We pray to God to eradicate all the misery in the world."

KANE COUNTY CHRONICLE / kcchronicle.com

Members believe in peace

• PEACE
Continued from page 1A

"I was afraid," Manning said. "I did not know what I was getting into. But they were very receptive to it. They were very happy to do it, and we kind of took it from there."

Katie Thomson of St. Charles said the prayers were very moving.

"To have the great faiths and the people who are gathered, all for the same purpose, to pray for peace - it's just a powerful, powerful thing," said Thomson, who attends St. Charles Episcopal Church.

George Tattersfield, a Unitarian church member from St. Charles, said, "We're here because we believe in peace and not fighting."

"I just think it brings people together for a very worthy cause," said Geneva resident Caroline Simpson, who attends Calvary Episcopal.

Ahmed and Manning urged people not to think that they could pray for peace once and then not keep it up.

"You have to keep at it," Ahmed said. "My heart tells me we should not stop it here. I think it is God's hand that we are here. Keep hope, keep faith and, God willing, we will have peace."