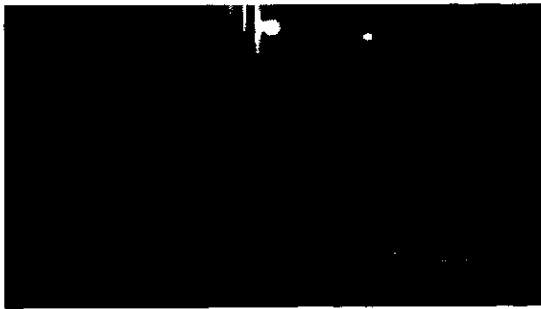
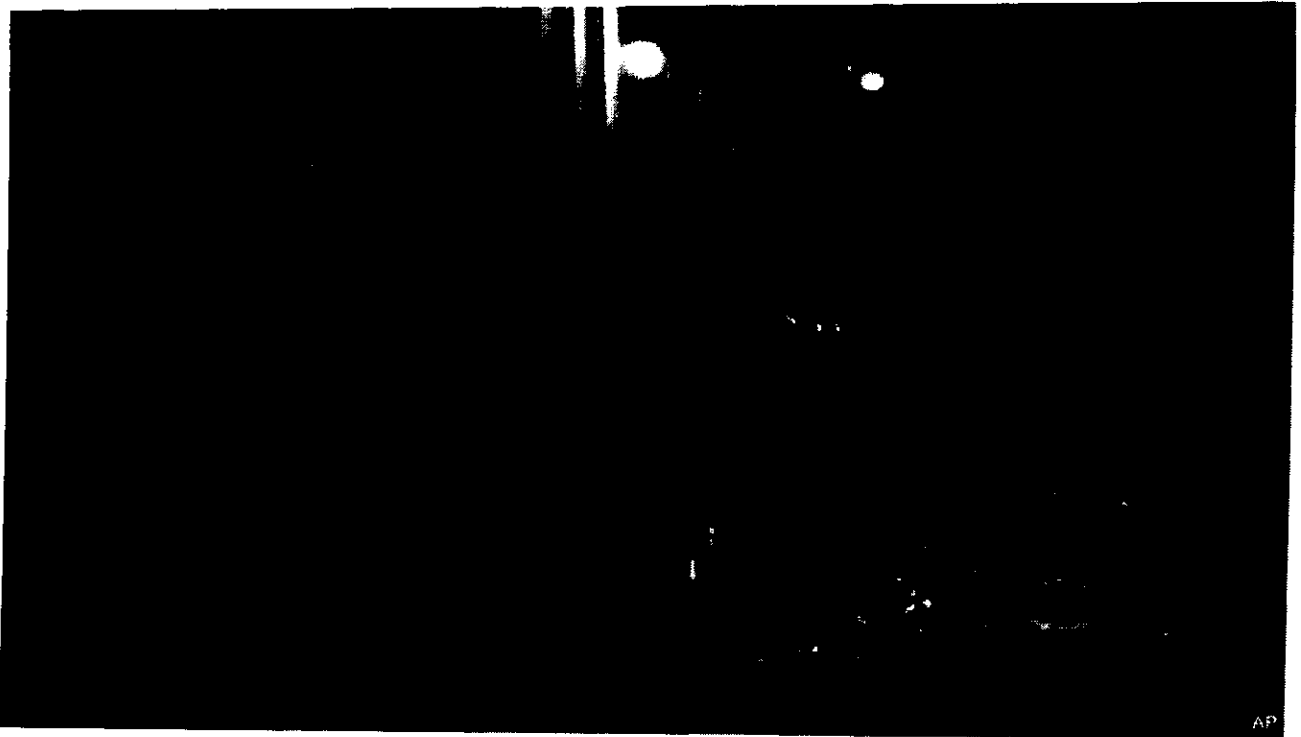


Washington National Cathedral to Hold Friday Muslim Prayers

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FILE - Candles are lit during a service at the National Cathedral in Washington.



FILE - Candles are lit during a service at the National Cathedral in Washington.

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Jerome Socolovsky

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WASHINGTON—

Prayer carpets have been laid out under the soaring arches of the Washington National Cathedral for an unprecedented Muslim worship service in one of America's best-known churches. Church leaders and their Muslim partners say they hope the Friday Jumaa prayers will send a message of interfaith brotherhood that counters extremists' use of religion to justify hatred and strife.

The idea came to the cathedral's director of religious liturgy, Rev. Gina Campbell, and South African Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool, who is a Muslim, when they organized an interfaith memorial service for Nelson Mandela last year. The carpets have been arrayed diagonally in the transept, to the side of the sanctuary, so that worshipers can face in the direction of Mecca without seeing crosses or Christian icons. Muslims are not supposed to pray in view of sacred symbols alien to their faith. Ambassador Rasool said the service is meant to be both a symbol for America's three million Muslims to feel welcomed in its predominantly Christian society, as well as for Muslims in countries where they are the majority, to show hospitality to people of minority faiths.

Despite its name, the Washington National Cathedral is not an official U.S. government church, which is prohibited by the Constitution. However, the Episcopal church, which is funded by private donations, does possess important symbolic value and regularly hosts official events, such as presidential inaugurations and funerals.

<http://www.voanews.com/content/muslim-friday-prayers-to-be-held-for-the-first-time-at-washington-national-cathedral/2520095.html>

Nov 14, 2014