

MOSQUE MEMBERS AIM FOR ACCEPTANCE

Islamic Society works to win over planned site's neighbors

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ASHWAUBENON — The floor is covered with colorful rugs. In keeping with tradition, no one wears shoes.

Thirty or more men and boys sit cross-legged on the floor, bumping one another's knees in a space not much larger than the waiting room in a typical doctor's office.

All women and girls are gathered behind a curtain.

A minister speaking partly in Arabic tells the story of an ancient prophet

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who returned from exile and resolved all conflicts among his followers without shedding a drop of blood.

"Whoever puts his sword down," the prophet declared, "he is safe."

It is the regular Friday afternoon prayer service at the Green Bay mosque of the Islamic Society of Wis-

consin.

With about 150 to 200 members, the mosque has become congested in its modest storefront location in a strip mall at 2615 Packerland Drive. New members have arrived from Somalia, India and other Middle East nations.

Despite meeting here unnoticed for many years, the group has been thrust into the spotlight recently and finds itself working to win over newfound skeptics.

The Green Bay City Council last

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Muslim men chat Friday outside of the Islamic Society of Wisconsin's Green Bay-area mosque in Ashwaubenon.