

Christian educator James Tebbe receives high-level civilian honor in Pakistan

Analogous to the US Presidential Medal of Freedom, the award honors Tebbe’s leadership at Forman Christian College in Lahore.

by [Christian Century staff](#) in the [May 22, 2019](#) issue



James Tebbe receives the Sitara-e-Imtiaz, or Star of Excellence, award from Pakistani president Arif Alvi in March 2019. Photo courtesy of Friends of Forman Christian College.

Christian educator James Tebbe received the Sitara-e-Imtiaz, or Star of Excellence, award from Pakistani president Arif Alvi—the third-highest honor and civilian award given in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The award honored Tebbe’s leadership at [Forman Christian College in Lahore](#), which has helped make it “a world-class Christian liberal arts university where interfaith harmony is practiced,” wrote [Friends of Forman Christian College](#), a US-based nonprofit supporting the school in Pakistan. Tebbe has been rector of the school since 2012.

Analogous to the US Presidential Medal of Freedom, the honor recognizes “especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of Pakistan, world peace, cultural or other significant public endeavors.” The award was bestowed in a ceremony on March 23.

“Jim would be the first to point out that this recognition is really an honor bestowed on the entire community at Forman Christian College,” said Mike Murphy, Friends of Forman board member, in a statement. “We believe we are making a difference in this nation.”

Christians are less than 2 percent of the population of Pakistan and have suffered mistreatment by some of their neighbors; high-profile cases include that of Asia Bibi, a Christian who spent eight years in prison after being falsely accused of blasphemy. She was freed in November after the Supreme Court of Pakistan acquitted her, and was reunited with her family in Canada on May 8.

Amid such tensions, Forman Christian College provides “an environment where Christians and Muslims are allowed to live and study side-by-side, many for the first time,” Friends of Forman writes on its website. Its more than 7,700 students from across Pakistan as well as other nations sign a “shared commitment” document highlighting core values such as integrity, respect for the dignity of each human being, fairness and justice, and service.

The school was founded as Lahore Mission College in 1864 by an American Presbyterian missionary, Charles W. Forman. Thirty years later, the school changed the name to honor him.

A version of this article appears in the print edition under the title “People: James Tebbe and Arif Alvi.”